EDUCATION, THEORY AND PEDAGOGIES OF CHANGE IN A GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Role of Theory in Doctoral Research

Edited by

VICTORIA PERSELLI

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Victoria Perselli
Associate Professor, Kingston University, UK

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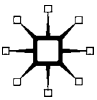

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Summary: "Where does theory come from in educational research – and how is it operationalized in diverse, interdisciplinary contexts and professional settings? This volume examines the places and spaces of theory in the work of nine pre- to post-doctoral scholars, whose narratives transport us across a wide range of interdisciplinary themes and fields of inquiry from Irigaray on mothering in higher education to Jamison among Danish engineering undergraduates; from Te Whariki in a New Zealand kindergarten to ren wen in contemporary China. Drawing on a range of theorists such as Butler, Bhabah, Bourdieu, Freire, Foucault, Levi-Strauss and Žižek, the book provides numerous opportunities for debate and discussion on theory and the doctoral thesis and their interrelations with pedagogy and methodology in times of great insecurity across the globe. In doing so it develops new possibilities for pedagogies of change in and beyond our current educational systems and structures" — Provided by publisher.
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In loving memory of Peter Cox
(1918–2015)
Dartington, Devon
Arts administrator and pioneer of interdisciplinary curricula and practices

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Annouchka Bayley currently develops practice-as-research, inter-/transdisciplinary courses between performance and business studies at Warwick University. She has designed and developed several under- and postgraduate courses and received the Warwick Award for Teaching Excellence (WATEPGR) in 2014. She undertook an MA by Research with Professor Baz Kershaw in Practice-as-Research processes at Warwick, and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London). Previously she lectured in Devising, Storytelling and Composition courses at the Birmingham School of Acting and has performed over 15 one-woman shows in Europe and Asia. She is also an Emerging Director with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Mari Cruice has been an English, Drama and Philosophy teacher for over 15 years. She is a visiting lecturer at Roehampton University, where she leads on the English Postgraduate Certificate in Education programme. She also teaches at a secondary school in south-west London. She is a member of the National Teachers' Research Panel, which seeks to engage teachers in and with educational research. She is an executive committee member of the National Writing Project, the aim of which is to encourage teachers to write and to share their writing. She recently completed her doctoral thesis, which is an analysis of the impact of the removal of standardised testing in secondary schooling in England and in Wales. Her research interests include teachers' identities as writers, and she regularly writes poetry and short pieces of prose fiction with other teachers.

Simone Galea is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy of Education in the Department of Education Studies, Faculty of Education, at the University of Malta. She studied at the University of Malta and then at Nottingham Trent University where she was awarded a scholarship to complete her PhD studies on teachers as maternal subjects at the Faculties of Education and the Humanities. She was a teacher in primary, secondary and tertiary education for several years before focusing on her practice and studies of philosophy of education and its contribution in Higher Education. She has published numerous papers in the areas of philosophy of education, feminist philosophy and theory, narrative research and the educational aspects of migration. She also writes poetry and children's stories.

Sanne Haase is a postdoctoral researcher at the Danish Centre for Studies in Research and Research Policy, Aarhus University. She currently works with policy evaluation and professional identity in the context of higher education. Her research spans cross-disciplinary fields of research and covers a mixed-methods approach. In 2011, she was awarded a visiting scholarship at Stanford University, H-STARS (Human Sciences and Technologies Advanced Research Institute, California). Previously, she held a project management position in the Danish public administration providing practical experience with innovation support policies. Her doctoral dissertation investigated the construal of professional identity and societal responsibility among Danish engineering students and has been reported in international journals of engineering education. Most recently she presented her work at the World Congress of Sociology in Tokyo, hosted by the International Sociological Association.

John Hammond graduated as a physiotherapist in Melbourne, Australia, in 1990. Following work as a physiotherapist in Australia and the UK he took up a full-time position in higher education in 2004. He is an associate professor at Kingston University and St George's University of London, where he is also Pre-Registration Physiotherapy Programmes Lead and Associate Dean for Widening Participation. His research centres on pedagogic practices and social justice, including issues such as gender, widening participation and reflective practice. Similarly, his teaching interests centre on issues of social justice, specifically diversity, gender, reflective practice and interprofessional working. He obtained his PhD in Education in 2013, for which his research used a critical pedagogic approach to explore how students construct gender identities in physiotherapy education.

Xiang Li was born and raised in the traditional Chinese cultural environment. She also has substantial professional experience in Europe and North America as a research assistant, ESL teacher and teaching assistant. The interplay of different cultures has constructed a unique shape to her identity and her way of understanding the world, having spent six years studying the cultural contradictions behind language translation in China. She is now a PhD candidate at the University of Calgary, Canada, where her research focuses on the intersubjectivity of cultures and values projected onto Chinese students who are living in North America. She has contributed to courses in diversity in learning, sociocultural studies in education and interpretive studies in education at the University of Calgary, and has worked as an ESL teacher at a Centre for Newcomers, a non-profitmaking organisation funded by the Canadian government.

Karen McNerney is Head of an independent preparatory school in Hertfordshire, UK. She has over 20 years' teaching experience in a variety of schools and age ranges. Her major specialism is in early childhood education and for her doctorate she chose to conduct a study of the early years curricula in New Zealand and Wales. As a result of this research, which focused on contrasting conceptualisations of childhood, she is passionate about creating and delivering an early childhood curriculum that promotes *learning dispositions* rather than the predominant 'schoolification' agenda.

Gill Nah is a course leader at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) where she has worked for 14 years. She runs the creative arts education suite of three courses that provide teacher education for internal and external staff members who work in creative arts disciplines and/or professional support contexts. She entered the higher education arena in 2001 having taught in the post-compulsory sector for over 20 years. She became fascinated by the challenge of supporting art and design students with the theoretical aspect of their degrees and completed an MA in education to establish a theoretically and empirically informed knowledge-base for her teaching. With similar intent her doctoral study focused on the experience of participants on the postgraduate teaching and learning course at UCA in order to facilitate these colleagues' professional self-development.

Victoria Perselli is an associate professor in the School of Education at Kingston University, UK. Her major research interests are

interprofessional and intercultural learning in higher education, with a particular focus on the relationships between theory, methodology, pedagogy and practice. She has taught, researched and designed curricula in various fields of education, most recently including English language teaching, in which context she is currently experimenting with new learning and teaching methodologies.

Preface

Disjuncture

I made for myself a surreal haven.
Of sounding boards and acoustic baffles.
Discourses disconnected.
Of hemiola
on highly polished dance floors,
and other elite,
sexual syncopations.

I put women in rooms
with décor of their own choosing.
Catalogued cruelties –
like Duke Bluebeard.
And this I find effective
towards 'closure' on pain.

Now – by extension – I am worried that
one lovely, Lancastrian
landscape might wake
up, and find itself
ostracised.

Or – to put it another way – if
I never let you read a single
word I have written,
would you keep
me always?

1
Theory, Theorising and Pedagogies of Change

Victoria Perselli

Introduction and contextualisation

Diverse contemporary perspectives regarding what education is and what it is for, combined with a more generalised insistence that change – rather than continuity – is a relentless and irreversible feature of professional life-experience 'in postmodernity', can be evidenced via the proliferation of particular linguistic tropes and research foci currently reverberating around the globe (Schön, 1973; Stronach & MacLure, 1997; Milella, 2007; Toscano, 2007). *Curious collocations* (Perselli, 2014b, 2015) such as 'widening participation' 'inclusive education', 'lifelong learning', 'quality assurance', 'audit society' and 'the new public management' have all been constructed and co-opted – as is the way with language – into our educational systems and structures via aspirant agendas of 'access', 'accountability', 'excellence', 'improvement', 'impact' and so forth. A common assumption behind these collocations is that education workers form part of a more general populous characterised as 'the learning society', with Higher Education (HE) nominated as the conduit through which substantial portions of this populous will eventually pass (Crosland, 1966; Hood, 1991; Power, 1994, 1999; UNESCO, 1994, 2009; Reisman, 1997; EHEA, 1999; OECD, 2000; ESIB, 2005; European Commission, 2007, 2014; Chang, 2008).

A visible response to the multiple expectations of education – and the perpetual motion of postmodernity more generally – has been the emergence of research paradigms and methods that seek to articulate the variously imbricated positionalities and subjectivities of HE workers: 'Institutional research', 'higher education research', 'academic development', 'the scholarship of teaching and learning' all constitute efforts

to describe, interpret and influence what HE is, what it is for, what HE workers do and the matrix of relationships between HE and wider society. Well-worn metaphors and models of HE research – Mode 2 (Gibbons et al., 1994), Triple Helix (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000), Third Space (Whitchurch, 2013) – further reveal and reinforce a notion of traditional disciplinary and professional boundaries and divisions dissolving if not disintegrating, with HE workers now finding ourselves juxtaposed variously as administrators, teachers, researchers, policy makers and – most recently – business folk; purveyors of the generation, transferal or mobilisation of knowledge 'in new times' (Quicke, 1998; Whitty, 2000).

The chapters in this volume are similarly representative of a distinct lexis of learning and teaching – here tentatively proposed as 'pedagogies of change' (Perselli, 2014a; see also Armstrong & Juhl, 2007; Muro, 2012; Blake, Sterling & Goodson, 2013) – that likewise inform and give shape to the various problematics posed in and on HE, but as an embodied, experiential and professional reality, rather than in broad brush-stroke terms. They seek to address in direct and practical ways some of the challenges of how to be, how to do and make, but also how to *think* – whether as individual practitioners or as a community of scholars – in the politically quixotic and socio-economically contradictory environment that constitutes contemporary manifestations of the university. In so doing they offer us detailed descriptions of what can be done to resist forms of 'theory-austerity' (Perselli, 2014a) that have arguably been imposed on educational settings, whereby 'what works', or alternatively 'what saves/makes money', is king.

Design and methodology: The 'architecting' of the project

The project from which this volume emerged began with desk-based considerations of the various scenarios in which educational research takes place, its principal themes, methodologies, methods and tools. More specifically, a question arose regarding how, where and when in their professional practices do HE folk find time and space for thinking; and when they do, what kinds of theory or theorising take shape in their minds (Perselli, 2011)? How are such ideas/theories being operationalised in the various contexts and settings that they thereby inhabit? These questions emerged in tandem with a curiosity about the ways that being, thinking, doing and making are understood contemporarily among emerging and research-young scholars; the most immediate context for this being the doctoral project and the process through which

doctoral scholars construct, develop and defend their work (Perselli, 2011, 2014b, 2015).

In this way, a realisable research project was born, whereby practitioners of education from pre- to postdoctoral status and at various stages in their academic careers were invited to consider the question: *Where does theory come from…?* in relation to their specific professional or disciplinary areas (see also Winter, 1998) and to present their individual stories – in narrative form – by way of response; the overarching objective being the generation of a compendium that represents a cross-section of research topics, methodologies, theories and theorists; albeit without any pretence of – or desire for – 'comprehensivity' as the ultimate prize.

Doctoral research is particularly amenable to this treatment in that, once accomplished, it emerges as a unique, multidimensional artefact, protean with possibilities for further exploration. By this I mean that whereas reportage in the form of the journal article or book chapter will tend to focus on discrete elements of the research project (its claim to originality, its 'contribution to the knowledge base', for example), a thesis typically conforms to a range of more general requirements (rationale, context and setting, methodology, methods and tools, ethical considerations, empirical data, analysis, findings, evaluation), all of which must be given their due weight and rendered more or less explicit on the page. In simple terms, a research activity (the project) is translated into a distinct and familiar representational form (the thesis), but one which is interpretable from a multiplicity of sightlines and perspectives. This is perhaps what makes formal defence of the thesis (typically, the viva voce) so troublesome, since each observer will be seeing – or expecting to see – different things. But it also suggests that there is an open-endedness regarding doctoral education that is frequently under-explored as a phenomenon in its own right. Furthermore, from the ontological, experiential vantage point specifically, whilst successful candidates may be urged to 'get publications' from their theses, how to go about this can be almost as daunting as it was to finish the thing itself, and having worked so hard and for so long many folk are happy to put the experience to one side and move on in their lives. Paradoxically then, whilst practitioner researchers such as those contributing to this volume are on the one hand expected to demonstrate the significance of their work towards bringing about change in the world of lived experience – its *impact*, currently – other insights that might be gained through revisiting and re-examining the project-as-object are lost. This is evident not least in the apparent demise of the monograph in many

research constituencies of Europe, where publication in numerically rated elite journals champions the cause of competitivity. This phenomenon arguably constitutes a form of postdoctoral lacuna (Perselli, 2014a) which this compendium may help to redress.

Ethics and aesthetics

Open-endedness in the ways that doctoral research may be (re)viewed or revisited implies open-endedness in the approach taken here. Added to which, what constitutes *theory* in educational research (as conceptual knowledge . . . ? curricular knowledge . . . ? as theorising in/from practice . . . ?) and where its boundaries with ontology, epistemology, methodology and so forth may lie, is already in my eyes a complex phenomenon that can best be considered 'in its appearing' (Ashworth, Freewood & Macdonald, 2003; Clegg & Flint, 2006); in this case via the first-person testimonials of individual scholars. Suffice to say that from the outset participants were invited to interpret the task according to their own understandings of theory and its place in their work; my hope being that each of these authors, whether applying the task to the doctorate itself or to their ensuing, postdoctoral activities, would simultaneously relish the opportunity to consider this afresh.

In turn these solitary, desk-based reflections and preparations raised issues of editorship: What would the storytellers' responses be like? Would there be sufficient coherence between them to constitute an overarching story or metanarrative – and was this desirable or necessary? Might there be cranky, 'off-the-wall' submissions that were either too opaque or too dense to be useful to a potential readership that includes neophyte researchers – and how should this be navigated? Alternatively, would the project present sufficient challenge for accomplished researchers? Having once committed to producing something, why might participants chose to stay engaged with the process, with so many competing agendas elsewhere? Was it necessary to be driven by clock-time, or by the demands of a particular publishing house? Was the project a good place to be? How might the role of the editor in this instance be similar – yet different – to the supervisory relationship? How not to '*drown the poem of the other with the sound of [one's] own voice*' (Lather, 1997: xvi, italics mine) – and what does this mean in the context of exercising *aesthetic* judgement? Having nominated the doctoral project as a 'prismatic' educational artefact that can be illuminated from a variety of angles and examined in numerous ways, what curatorial skills are being called forth here?

Anxieties of this kind were useful towards mapping out some simple plans and protocols. They provided the underwriting for the design of the project: namely, to be '*in educative relations*' (Lomax, 1998, italics mine) with the storytellers and their work, and to produce something substantive – and preferably cohesive, not fragmented – from these engagements. This meant first and foremost being in dialogue about the writing and its potential as an intercommunicative text and teaching tool for self and others: those aspects of educational research that aspire to 'the greater good'. They underwrote the research also in terms of a sensibility that all educators are artists, so that what is produced by way of manifestations of our art is not dissimilar to that of composers, choreographers, poets or sculptors; just more transient and more flawed perhaps: representations of experience as opposed to 'the thing itself', which many artists consider their work to be.

To this end, whilst acknowledging the pain that invariably accompanies production, it was also important to remember that neither artists, educators nor even postgraduate students work entirely alone; the necessity for solitude may be counterbalanced by what we conventionally refer to as 'critical friendship', 'triangulation', 'peer review'; but which could just as usefully be equated with the back-office (that is, less lauded) skills of the record producer or movie production team: 'What do you mean by . . . ?' 'How do you want this . . . ?' 'Supposing we add a treble voice here . . . ?' Wherever feasible, therefore, opportunities were sought from early on in the project to present chapter ideas as work in progress to outside audiences. This gave individual contributors the possibility to locate their understanding of the problematic of theory within the wider discourse: of our individual institutions, local, national or international organisations, or indeed in our daily work with students.

Protocols and pedagogy

In the initial stages no deadlines were set for submission of full texts, but each draft was responded to within the space of a few weeks. That way, the momentum of the project was sustained and generally increased as full chapters began to emerge. My sense of being in educative relations intensified via the reciprocal learning that came through engagement with each of these authors in the progressive iterations of their texts. Reviewing individual submissions, and the conversations centred on them, continuously provided clues regarding how to be useful to writers – and how to get in their way (Lather, 1997; MacLure, 2010) – individually and as a collective. Inevitably only a flavour of that relational element can be offered here.

Chapter 2: Engendering knowledge: Education, the maternal and doing research with women

Particularly informative and provocative in the early days was the chapter that heads up the collection: 'Engendering Knowledge . . . ' by Simone Galea. The main draft of this text appeared in my inbox on the day that a Master's student coincidentally addressed me as 'our research mother' – to which I had had no ready response, but which set me thinking further about some of the problems and dilemmas articulated above.

For Galea, following Luce Irigaray, *mothering* the production of research is 'a process of becoming by which one gives birth to oneself as speaking subject in relation to others and in relation to the birth of new knowledges'. Galea reassures me that I am not alone in finding the term 'mother' and the process of mothering difficult, and that there is a literary and philosophical trajectory of the West that illustrates how this is so. Yet this is further complicated if we try to reinvent a new 'concept' of woman/mother, since it resorts back to the very language game invented by men:

> Irigaray's philosophical practice deconstructs man-made definitions of the feminine, especially those generated by philosophical discourse. She argues instead for the social symbolisation of women in women's own terms. This would necessitate a radically different way of thinking the feminine subject; one that is independent of the phallocentric order, requiring a re-organisation of sexual, linguistic and socio-symbolic systems (Grosz 1989: 110).
>
> [Chapter 2, p.33]

Thus Galea detonates any easy, formulaic representations whereby 'theory' = concept, or 'theorising' = new conceptualisation; compelling us to seek alternative forms in language. From Irigaray's deconstruction of Plato's Cave, Galea proposes a new allegory of womanhood illustrative of the triadic pedagogic relationship between, self, other and the act of producing new knowledge, thus disrupting the often intense Western dyad of other versus self. Galea's text is moreover protean in its capacity to challenge received wisdoms generally, the full extent of which cannot be realised within the chapter itself. This is not least because, without patronising neophyte scholars, she deals adroitly with the bigger issue of alternative knowledges to that of the idealised Western, phallocentric version, including what constitutes 'research'. She does this in

terms not only of 'gender issues' but also regarding the twisted forms of propositional language and logic that we fall into when attempting to describe particular forms of lived experience (being a mother or, in the case of my Masters student, being a member of a diaspora, whereby 'home' – Kurdistan – is frequently acknowledged in the West more for what it is not than what it is; a form of lack) in ways that we believe will render our accounting more acceptable to the academy. This is vividly illustrated by Simone's research participants, in the way that they struggle – and largely fail – to find a 'correct' version of mother:

> [M]y question 'What is a mother?' or 'What does a mother mean to you?' was not intended to elicit some unconventional radical response. I considered it a straightforward question that would not demand a great deal of thought. The mother is generally taken for granted. Yet most of the participants hesitated in answering, remarking that this question was *'very difficult'* (Tarah) – too difficult in fact *'without really taking the time to think how one should answer it'* (Barbara).
>
> [Chapter 2, p.37]

Of necessity then, the issue of mother when seen as a problematic of *language and language forms* remains unresolved in this chapter. However what Galea also does – whether self-consciously or coincidentally is immaterial just now – is to open up new procedural possibilities, in this instance friendship and conversation, as trustworthy and effective forms of *doing and making* (ergo 'research methodology', ergo 'praxis'); in particular but by no means exclusively in contexts of alterity. These ideological and methodological moves are reiterated to powerful effect in the chapters of Xiang Li and Mari Cruice (below), and from this viewpoint could usefully be read consecutively, although I shall consider them separately here.

Chapter 3: Negotiating gender concepts and critical pedagogy: A reflective account of doctoral research in physiotherapy education

Consideration of the problematic of language in relation to gender and to systems of power and control also coincide in John Hammond's final thoughts on his research project. Hammond's recollection of his doctoral experience is punctuated by self-doubts about becoming simultaneously a lecturer in HE, an educational researcher and doctoral

scholar from a context and background of medical science. He thus renders visible a shared anxiety of accomplished professionals who transit beyond their familiar disciplinary domain to become practitioners in HE (see also Nah, Haase, Bayley, below). As a gay academic Hammond is likewise not alone in appealing to Michel Foucault in order to foreground issues of regulatory power such as that of the state and its institutions, which 'dictate how we must describe and experience our bodies'. He explains how, according to Foucault, social systems and their vocabularies limit the possibilities for fuller expressions of identity; for example in their insistence on male/female, masculine/feminine binaries. A tension is thus established around positivistic thinking about the body, such as Hammond encounters within his professional field of physiotherapy, and the stance of Judith Butler:

> Butler takes Foucault's ideas further to conceive gender and other forms of identity as 'performative'. She claims that gender is an expression or output that is 'constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing' (Butler, 1999, p.34). According to this premise, gender is *active, negotiated and challenged* in different social situations. Importantly, behaviours, gestures and speech are not the *result* of gender, but an *expression* of gender (Butler, 1999).
>
> [Chapter 3, p.50]

These ideas may have afforded more insightful readings of the empirical data in Hammond's doctoral project, but they did not as yet indicate where to go with this in terms of gender inequalities in his practice. Neither did the 'application' of critical pedagogy initially aid the relocation from what he identified as positivistic/scientistic uses of language and ways of being to those of an active agent of change. In the ensuing development of his doctoral project, Hammond shows how experimentation with ideas, metaphors and images, such as that of the heteroglossic Olympic runner Caster Semenya, become both a doing and subsequently a new identity formation within his practice and his representation of the work.

But in the final paragraph of his chapter Hammond reflexively doubles back on the intersections of language, power, the academy and the precariousness of identities in HE – including the doctorate. Here he seems to be suggesting, as does Galea, that theory *as conceptualisation* may only lead us to repeat the old mistakes; that it can never be liberating in and of itself. In expressing a desire for 'conditions of

openness and mutual respect' which he envisions in future educative relationships, Hammond raises for me two further tensions and realisations. Firstly, in the currently constituted, high-wired and highly strung political climate of HE (see Nah, Agnello, Haase, below), I am not sure that many of us know how best to enact critical pedagogy – the theoretical and methodological premise underlying many of these chapters. Critical pedagogy is fundamentally about disturbance if not disruption (see particularly Bayley, below) of the status quo (see also Lather, 1997, above) and to do this effectively means to live simultaneously inside and outside the usual frames of reference ('official knowledge' in Freire, 2007 [1968, 1970]). But in the predominantly hierarchised, 'high stakes' context of HE – and the doctorate in particular, given the level of personal investment this demands – it is difficult to sustain equanimity, which could imply relational stasis, yet simultaneously bring about change; be it of an ontological/interpersonal or structural/systemic nature. It is tempting to think that in a kinder social contexts it would be possible for learners and teachers to engage in serious argumentation without being mortally bruised in the process. However it is also possible, secondly, that the real shock of the doctorate – not least for professionals transmigrating from the purportedly 'hard' world of science – is the realisation of just how permeable as a field and/or discipline (Lomax, 1998) education can be, whether as a site *of* or *for* 'intervention'; something that the originators of change-oriented methods such as action research and reflective practice may or may not have anticipated. (As compared, for instance, to Freirian critical pedagogy, which from its inception directly and explicitly problematised the oppressor/oppressed dyad in education (Freire, 2007 [1968, 1970])). From this perspective – and in Foucauldian terms – all methodologies are 'dangerous', so that whether proclaiming oneself a critical pedagogue, action researcher or indeed 'Foucauldian' (Haase, below), one should not – must not – smooth this over; that, I think, would be a deception and a lie.

As if in response to Hammond's wishes and aspirations, a number of contributors (Bayley and Agnello, below, in sympathy with Galea, above) provide detailed illustrations of how the conditions for mutuality and reciprocity might be generated, alongside the robustness and resilience of mind that develops in recognition of the fact that, in the field/discipline of education, everything is, if not dangerous, at the very least *contestable*. To this end they suggest that what constitutes the academy – as a representation of broader society and therefore also 'permeable' – must also be collectively challenged and changed. Such

a mandate contests the ubiquity, still, of propositional language as the assumed mode of argumentation; of binary or 'Cartesian' logic applied in complex cultural and social scenarios; of theory as a phenomenon separate from ontology, rather than – like gender identity – as a verb, a doing; something we can best come to understand in accordance with how we internalise it, speak it and consider the consequences of our actions (Bauman, 1993). McNerney and Cruice (below) present parallel arguments in relation to schooling, whilst Li and Nah (below) offer stellar examples of how this works when researching identity and selfhood specifically.

Chapter 4: Troubling critical management learning with theatre and performance practice: Inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches to curriculum design

Annouchka Bayley summons these notions elegantly when referring to 'temporary presencing' and '[the] fallout of unitary representational systems' to describe how Homi Bhabha, in his use of the term Third Space, 'disrupts the binaries that predicate the constructions upon which language, grammar, sign, cultural 'belonging' are built, and is in effect a process that affects rupture'. However, the poststructural strategy of deconstruction (see also Galea, above) Bayley describes as the 'slippery fish' of critical theory, because 'it remains either within the bourgeois walls of the academy or becomes re-inscribed within the environment of neo-colonial/neo-liberal agendas even as it leaves the gates of the campus'.

These value positions provide the frame for a critique of 'creativity', which Bayley has been charged with introducing into the critical management learning component of an undergraduate business studies programme in a business school. Bayley's account of her transmigration across disciplinary boundaries is deliberate and knowing; any internecine wrangling or other political shenanigans burble beneath the surface of this dramatist's tale, with its emphasis on cultural production and practice-as-research 'creating small acts of change through which critically vibrant teaching and learning practices can be developed'; arguably blurring further any distinction one might make between theory as object and theory as action. The knowingness lies in simultaneously demonstrating how anything and everything may be appropriated and reinscribed within predominantly neo-liberal environments. Therefore alongside her anxiety about 'creativity' one could add: reflective practice, reflexivity, interdisciplinarity, third space/way/place

(as in the coffee shop which, with its squashy sofas and free wi-fi, transitions us between workplace and homestead) – indeed all the curious collocations listed at the outset of this chapter. Bayley's usual domain is theatre, and by way of further illustration she shows how the metaphor of the doorway, which at one time signified the esoteric/exoteric in the performance arts, is now 'incorporated within the ideological circle of educational institutions, publishing industries and funding agencies' (Camilleri, 2009: 34, in Bayley). On this view, 'threshold concepts' (Meyer, Land, Baillie et al., 2010), 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998) and the familiar-made-uncomfortable 'learning journey' metaphor ubiquitous to accredited postgraduate programmes are all neatly illustrative of this tendency.

However, nothing is ever quite as it seems, and Bayley's standpoint does not imply a straightforward anti-academic, anti-establishment correlation; such a response would, I think, be considered reactionary if not revisionist. Bayley is interested in how the (literal) occupation of time and place (in HE buildings, in the construction of curricula) provide opportunities for the transdisciplinary experiences that constitute the main focus of her project. She proceeds to demonstrate how issues-based theatre operates to provide, from Ian Sutherland (2012), 'memories with momentum' for the undergraduate students on the business studies course, emphasising also the necessity to 'ravel back up' to academic language in their final assignment, since academic writing becomes 'a form and a strategy' for reflection on the process and product of making theatre.

Like Galea, Bayley simultaneously proffers a significant methodological and ideological message regarding the demarcation of agency on the part of the researcher-storyteller, for instance in her explicit call to write in the first person voice, which, following Slavoj Zizek, emphasises authorial choice and responsibility. These are, moreover, shared prerequisites of critical pedagogy and of the professional practice methodologies in general, where educational research is understood as a compellingly moral undertaking (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

Chapter 5: Lessons from Te Whāriki: Insights into the relevance of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in the debate about 'schoolification' of early childhood

In many of the projects in this collection the protagonists seek to fuse their professional practices or disciplinary areas with education: two lifeworlds colliding with/disrupting/intercepting each other, and

in accounting for their experiences these researchers illustrate how particular forms of theory and theorising were operationalised or emerged. But in some of the studies the process is reversed, since it is the educational practitioner who transmigrates away from their usual sphere of influence in search of new knowledge; which I will turn to next.

Within a typology of curious collocations normalised into the – predominantly Western – vernacular, the term 'child-centred' must be one of the most perplexing in terms of its ideological contradictions. Karen McNerney's physical migration from her regular practice in early childhood education in England to a kindergarten in New Zealand neatly sidesteps Anglophone obsessions with child as centre/client/customer or commodity, to discover an alternative rationale for praxis.

McNerney's desk-based activity includes a summary review of the current politicisation and 'schoolification' of early childhood in England and the United States. In an overt critical pedagogic move she compares the predominating early childhood ideologies in these two locations with Paolo Freire's banking model of education, 'in which children are empty vessels needing to be filled with knowledge on their journey of realisation from incompleteness to maturity'. According to the State's construct of early education, children are perceived to be the future saviours of society, were it not for the fact that they are – inconveniently – failing in the 'basic skills' that would give them competitive advantage over other nations of children; early childhood here being interpreted as a preparation for school as opposed to a condition of being in its own right. But whose 'basic' is this? McNerney contrasts an 'outcomes' model of early childhood education that is measurable and quantifiable with one where quality of experiences and dispositions for learning are foregrounded. Her analysis turns on the point that in actuality, interpretations of childhood do not – or should not – depend on centralised, opposing ideologies. Instead they are determined locally because, from Lev Vygotsky, notions of childhood – what it is and what it is for – are culturally and contextually bound.

McNerney's methodology is anthropological-ethnographic in so far as she actively removes herself from her familiar curricular context in order to come to understand what a sociocultural curriculum for early childhood might look like, because:

> Whilst formal education for children may act as a preparation for adulthood, education should also recognize children as active agents

> in their own childhoods, co-constructors not receivers of knowledge, human *beings* rather than human *becomings* (Qvortrup, 1994).
> [Chapter 5, p.89]

In this way McNerney challenges the falsely dichotomised child-centred/state controlled curricular models of the US and England (false in my view not least because, in those settings, all learners are commodities traded on the stock market of international ranking systems – as indeed are academic researchers), effectively demonstrating possible and plausible alternatives according to the lived realities of the participants in her research.

McNerney's chapter helpfully unpacks the practicalities of critical pedagogy for the reader by way of Barbara Rogoff's delineation of sociocultural planes of analysis: personal, interpersonal, community; further differentiated in Rogoff as 'participatory appropriation', 'guided participation' and 'apprenticeship' (Rogoff in McNerney, Chapter 5). Within this configuration, as recorded by McNerney in the Auckland kindergarten where her project is based, 'habitus', 'extended learning periods' and 'provocation' are key themes. 'Adult mediation', 'peer collaboration', 'intent participation' and 'mediation through communication' (Rogoff in McNerney (Chapter 5)) further illustrate how a sociocultural curriculum fuses practice with theory, here grounded in the cultural specificities of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki, with its explicit emphasis on 'positive dispositions for learning'.

A neat symmetry emerges in this chapter between what is arguably a decentred curricular relationship: learners and teachers + time and place + purposeful thinking, doing and making (for self, community; the 'greater good') and a cultural studies approach to conducting educational research (Steinberg, 2012). Citing Fleer & Richardson (2009), McNerney also refers briefly to *artefacts as resources for provoking learning* which 'used in context are a symbolic representation of the community plane'.

It is through these words that I come to recognise elements of cohesion in the projects described in this volume and their utility beyond whatever might be referred to as the-thing-itself (*noumenon* in Li, below): Here is a conglomeration of artefacts which, in their similarities and differences, partially and collectively constitute the *community plane* of contemporary theory and theorising, which may – practically and discursively – provoke further learning amongst their observers, that is, ourselves the readership.

Chapter 6: Reflection on students' dialoguing about Foucauldian discourses: Contextualising power in the curriculum

Considered simultaneously with Chapter 10, below

Chapter 7: Rethinking advanced culture: A China-characterised bricolage

From the cultural specificity of Te Whāriki I now turn to the work of Xiang Li. In sympathy with Bayley (above) Li cuts to the chase in claiming that cultural production *is* the 'third industry' in contemporary China. This, she says, contradicts the stated ideology of the Chinese government, which is Marxist materialism. This point of conflict and tension is the springboard for her research, in which Li operationalises critical theory to demonstrate how the collective identity of her generation was formed through its socio-economic context. Additional layers of complication are added in the form of her parents and elders, whose conviction that 'West is best' is contrasted with the profound and continuing influence in their lives of traditional Chinese values such as Confucianism and Taoism.

From Claude Lévi-Strauss through Shirley Steinberg and her co-writers, Li delineates her personal interpretation of bricolage as methodology, comprising 'autobiography, life story interviews and materialist dialectics' to contextualise and theorise contemporary advanced culture in China. In a minutely differentiated version of the doctoral 'learning journey', Li's aim is:

> [T]o demonstrate how my journey of 'searching for theory' is also a journey of transformation from Marxist materialism, which focuses on objectivity, to a conceptual framework in which the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity is contextually rebalanced.
>
> [Chapter 7, p.127]

This is achieved in a variety of ways, beginning with an etymological exploration of the Chinese language; most notably *wen* and *hua* ('culture') which, when the two words are combined:

> [. . .] shows the empowerment of individuals in that what they did in the past and what they are doing in the present has been shaping society and will further influence its future.
>
> [Chapter 7, p.129]

Within this cultural and linguistic analysis, Marxist materialism is similarly differentiated and complexitised, since 'criticality is the spirit of the prevailing Marxist philosophy as interpreted and publicised by the Chinese government, which includes two principles when dealing with social issues: contextualising and evolving'.

In the ensuing autobiographical narrative Li systematically unfolds her experiences of growing up under the one-child policy in China: the generation known as 'Chinese Post-80s'. Using semi-structured, life story interviews she then turns her attention to a subgroup of this generation, specifically Post-80s now living in the West.

The chapter is interwoven with critical readings from a range of textual artefacts salient to Li's emerging argument, the basis of which in Western thought is *noumenon* (in Emanuel Kant) 'the "thing-in-itself" which generates the complexity of our feelings and experiences' and corresponds with 'well' or 'root' in the literatures and in Chinese culture:

> Just as the 'Yin (cause) -Guo (effect)' theory of Zen asserts that everything happens for a reason, the root reason for the occurrence of all life stories has to do with 'cultural influences'. Although culture itself may develop into a variety of shapes and into multiple layers, thus impacting on different dimensions of life stories, the origin, the 'well', is always there.
>
> [Chapter 7, p.138]

Summing up her methodology Li makes the case for objectivity *in* subjectivity, since:

> There is no subjectivity without objectivity, and there is no particularity without unity and generality. Under culture's ambiguity of subjectivity and its variation of particularity there lies a relatively stable and regular pattern, applicable to a specific context. That is relative objectivity abstracted from subjectivity and the unity of particularity. According to Atkinson (1997), life story interview is a methodology not necessarily immune from objectivity. It must be 'scientific', otherwise it descends into agnosticism, that is, 'absolute subjectivity'. The premise, rather, is that it is first and foremost 'an art' (p. 26), whose function is to seek the meaning of life stories.
>
> [Chapter 7, p.139]

Working with Li on the various iterations of her chapter played out this point, whereby conversations about the writing as object/artefact/cultural text also helped me to tease out its relations to

and direct comparisons with the other projects, research themes and methodologies, whilst simultaneously coming to appreciate the specificity and delicacy of the story contained within it. During this process a number of intellectual and translational challenges arose, such as our intertextual struggle over how complicated manifestations of culture, 'Chinese Marxist materialism', for example, might be rendered recognisable to – yet distinct from – their Western counterparts. These draft versions of Li's emerging text, with their vibrant and vividly coloured tracked changes, marginal comments and questions, became treasured possessions in their own right. Through these the growth of the theory project was rendered visible on the page – and therefore tangible for me; and from them patterns indicative of how *pedagogies of change* might be constituted began to take shape.

Chapter 8: Teaching in higher education: Deriving a context-specific knowledge-base through praxis

Bricolage was also the preferred methodology of Gill Nah. Her story likewise sustains the familiar tropes of journeying, transitioning and threshold-crossing told from the inside out; in this instance the quest for knowledge that constitutes the professional doctorate in education ('EdD'), but problematised within an intricately configured conceptual canvas or storyboard:

> [T]he potential of employing different methodologies and methods according to the intention of each chapter, and the opportunity to use the thesis as a space to explore methodological possibilities, was enticing . . .
>
> I read chapter after chapter of [Norman] Denzin and [Yvonna] Lincoln's tome . . .
>
> [I]n my mind's eye I saw portraits of participants (a combination of visual and written texts) hanging in a gallery space . . .
>
> [S]o many of the methodological approaches outlined were replete with possibility . . .
>
> '[G]etting lost' [after Patti Lather] is essential to research practice and [. . .] when it happens, rather than entering into phases of despair and desperation, it is better to accept and embrace these phases as milestones passed on the road to new knowledge . . .
>
> [Chapter 8, p.158]

As a consequence of this immersion in the literature, a cornucopia of authors, ideas and influences weave their way through the doctorate-as-practice-as-*quest for methodology*. From her starting point – a school teacher turned academic developer in a creative arts university setting – Nah's desk-based activities code-switch continuously between the literary fields of cultural theory, cultural studies, sociology and philosophy of education. She settles on a Foucauldian analysis of recent HE policy in order to 'place' her participants in the 'ground' of the politics of HE; specifically the professionalisation of learning and teaching, which, she argues, cannot be understood merely as 'quantifiable functional knowledge' or 'a prescribed set of skills'.

From the outset Nah takes a stand against the trend of consumption over production in neo-liberal societies, so that each point of reference in her project is put to work to create something new, whether in terms of being, thinking or doing and making. Her co-constructed portraits of HE lecturers, who are themselves professional artists and craftspeople, challenge the received – and generally negative – wisdom regarding academic development and training in HE. But at the same time, in response to these data and in an oblique methodological move from (Foucauldian) social constructionism to (Freirian) critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978; see also Hammond, above), Nah raises questions about material issues such as workload and employment insecurity:

> As novice academics without research degrees, [the artists] identities as lecturers/academics were insecure. Whilst participants did not relate to the feelings of limited autonomy, lack of trust or lack of academic freedom, as represented in the literature, they were like-minded about the lack of time to attend to everything demanded of them, referring to this as 'exploitation' and being 'milked dry'.
>
> [Chapter 8, p.167]

From her findings Nah identifies a deficit in HE that might equally apply across neo-liberalised sites of learning and teaching generally, and which goes some way towards accounting for the predominant Foucauldian turn in these chapters:

> [A]s a result of this study I became acutely aware of the power of discourses to subjectify and that it is awareness at this level that best equips us with the power to resist. Having generated an interpretation of the prevailing discourses in higher education at the time of my study I am now better able to 'read' – using discourse analysis –

> the objects and subjects that policy constructs. This knowledge makes deliberation of a subjective stance an active process. Without it I am but a governmental agent who, through pedagogic action (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), seeks to normalise course participants into constructions of the 'good teacher'. Such action is symbolic violence (ibid.) because we use the positions of power we hold as teachers/supporters of learning to present disciplinary discourses as *regimes of truth* to our learners.
>
> [Chapter 8, p.168]

In this evaluation Nah reveals how, on the one hand, disciplinary regimes and one's awareness of how they function in relation to power may (re)define or (re)determine elements of selfhood and identity ('the scientist' 'the artist' 'the educationalist', 'the Foucauldian', in Haase, below), but on the other, that this should not be separated out from the material and affective conditions of being in the world (HE policy and its implications) that also inform – or inhibit – being and doing. Hence the significance of moving from (desk-based) critical discourse analysis to (real time) critical dialogue in the HE classroom. This is the place from which a 'new music' may eventually emerge, according to Nah.

Chapter 9: Setting a new course or stepping out of line? Challenges of connecting previously disconnected theoretical fields in a Danish profession-oriented HE context

The chapter by **Sanne Haase** analyses similar issues within the context of the Danish HE system. Haase's project is an effective realisation of what Nah is proposing, in so far as, like Bayley (above), she deliberatively transposes her disciplinary grounding in the arts and humanities, where she feels theoretically (and presumably *ontologically*) more secure, into the more unfamiliar/uncomfortable field of engineering, here understood as a social science, specifically because:

> [T]he work practices of engineers involve an appropriation of science and technology with massive potential implications for societal development and sustainability. In other words, engineering students hold an important key to the way in which society should confront a range of global, societal challenges in the future.
>
> [Chapter 9, p.175]

From Andrew Jamison, Haase introduces a terminology for this: the hybrid imagination and intertextuality hybridity:

> [W]hich relates to various things. First, it is used in ethnography to refer to the dynamic mixing and development of cultures initially conceived of as distinct and separate in postcolonial contexts. Within biology, the term means cross-breeding, which is a mixing of previously incommensurable species. Finally, Jamison utilises the term in opposition to the Greek notion of hubris that describes an overconfident, blinding arrogance that has been connoted to much technological development driven by the urge to transcend nature's limitations.
>
> [Chapter 9, p.180]

All well and good, but Haase further cautions that however well argued or intentioned, standpoint-taking in the research process does not automatically equate to authorial recognition or liberation. She proceeds to forensically unpick the power/knowledge problematic of her particular disciplinary transmigration, contrasting the constructs of *field* and *habitus* of Pierre Bourdieu in France with the academy in Denmark, which, she claims, is configured differently, but where '[t]he choice of theory appears [. . .] to play an important role towards positioning oneself in Academia. Such a choice seems to be a highly visible – and punishable – element of academic productivity.'

On this premise, the deselection of a particular theory is as significant as those which the researcher adopts, since it becomes a determining factor in whether or not one is accepted into the material fabric of the establishment. This presents a profound dilemma for the doctoral researcher, because, to become epistemologically as well as ontologically convincing, theory cannot be imposed (as a crowd-pleasing measure, for instance); it must be carefully crafted in accordance with the unfolding of the endeavour itself, as illustrated in Haase's narrative.

For me this chapter raises interesting ethical questions around the 'getting' of theory; specifically the role of supervisors and the critical community at large towards honouring the value-position and intent of doctoral scholars, whilst provoking/facilitating innovative, 'fashionable' and/or personally preferred avenues of thought. Haase acknowledges this early on in her project, and her engagement with this struggle clearly suggests that aspects of ontology (that is, selfhood) are not only challenged but also possibly changed in the process – 'journey' – towards doctoral status. However, contrary to the ways that this metaphor is

usually understood, she makes it clear that the experience of wrestling theory (my term) may or may not be 'liberatory'; that would depend on where you started *from*, such as in the account by Li (above), or, as in Cruice (below), your position in institutional hierarchies. In this way the chapters of the research-young scholars in this volume are collectively indicative of how change through transmigrations of one form or another do not necessarily lead to the re-establishment or rebirth of 'ontological security' (in Nah, above) immediately following successful completion of the doctorate – hence the myth of 'transformation' or 'empowerment' in this sense. It is rather the postdoctoral practices of establishing and consolidating what has been achieved (and very importantly, its sedimentation over time) that enable postdoctoral scholars to put theory to work with increasing autonomy and skill. This is not to undermine the significance of doctorate itself, but indeed to underscore its importance as a process of preparation for reflexivity in praxis after the event, and as a societal and cultural place/space where the conditions for reflexive praxis may flourish. In a climate of ridicule or fear, where it becomes increasingly dangerous to state one's intellectual credentials (as a supervisor, as a student), all the potential insights and material benefits of these endeavours are lost; attrition being the all-pervasive 'elephant in the room' of the doctorate – and beyond.

On the broadest cultural and social plane this intellectual loss, which is also a spiritual loss in my view, has been illustrated historically time and time again in the forms of ignorance that are played out– even as we speak – in so many contemporary conflicts and atrocities (Menchú, 1984; Weiwei, 2014; Slahi, 2015). Politicians of the democratic and 'free' world might therefore think twice about the limits of freedom – *barriers to learning* in the current educational vernacular – imposed on teachers and educators by their ever-proliferating 'austerity', 'security' and 'sustainability' measures: that is, a proliferating geopolitical and economic *hegemony* (Gramsci in Thomas, 2013) of risk-aversion, deployed to override all forms of pedagogic and professional discussion and decision-making that (might) disrupt the status quo.

Chapter 6: Reflection on students' dialoguing about Foucauldian discourses: Contextualising power in the curriculum, and Chapter 10: Keeping the lights on: A play in two acts

The final two chapters to be considered here, by Mary Frances Agnello and Mari Cruice respectively, directly transmigrate across perceived

divisions between education and art, and in so doing arguably lead us as close as maybe to the 'thing itself' of lived experience as a describable, physical reality. The latter was the only contribution which I commissioned directly; having reviewed the other submissions and recognising the extent to which the creative forms of music, art and drama played figurative and sometimes literal roles in our various narratives, what would Cruice, who regularly uses drama in her research representations, make of the current situation, I wondered, having not worked with her for several years?

Underlying both of these contributions, whilst providing rich theoretical tapestries 'from the literature' and being sparklingly illustrative of the ways in which theory may be formulated as *talk*, there are also glimpses of said material factors that mitigate against thinking, feeling, making and speaking theory in the world of lived experience; to the attentive listening ear euphemistically and apparently benignly referred to as 'busy-work' and 'stuff to do'. For an outsider to the discipline of education the significance of this is not immediately obvious or comprehensible, since it invariably takes its shape and form from the *very peculiar* vocabularies and practices of localised bureaucracies. Thus it becomes difficult to convey the impact on teachers' working lives of 'Ofsted', 'EBIs', or 'A FOREST' (in Cruice) to a non-British audience, unless you are prepared to expend valuable wordage to that restricted end. Similarly 'CSCOPE and 'STAAR' (in Agnello) when thrown into the mix must be enunciated in full for the uninitiated – that is, the rest of the world – whilst within their own domain they behave (linguistically) as if sacrosanct; hence the utility of the drama towards conveying this affectively and viscerally. These chapters illustrate nicely how localised, colloquial speech becomes hegemonic (in the sense of all-powerful and exclusionary) (Eagleton, 1991), since to be uninitiated into these practices and forms of words means to be effectively debarred from the communities in which they function – as parents attempting to decode their child's first school report, or colleagues from overseas seeking employment in these contexts, will readily testify. Therefore, whilst authentic transmigrations as forms of professional development across disciplinary and geopolitical boundaries do occur – and productively so, as can be seen in the projects represented here – in other ways education is being continuously reparochialised, so that only after periods of intense enculturation into the reserved languages, the *really weird collocations*, can practitioners begin to feel 'accepted', if not subsumed.

In these two dramatisations of practice, the teachers defend themselves against forces they understand to be inhibiting the generation

of new knowledge by opening up spaces for dialogue and discussion; putting theory to work in the form of critical lenses through which to analyse how discourse and, particularly *power* – including its material and affective dimensions – operate in their classrooms. In both instances there is a lightness of touch in these writers' use of humour that only superficially veils the audience from the effects of neo-liberalisation and bureaucratisation on learning and teaching: somebody else's (whose?) 'theory of money'.

The very necessity of reasserting the place of theory as integral to practice – a birthright and cultural heritage of teachers, surely, not a privilege of the professoriate – implies that the neo-liberal condition, far from being innovative or forward thinking, has nudged ordinary, 'massified' learning and teaching in a downward spiral towards intellectual illiteracy. To 'get theory', as Cruice reminds us, we need our 'Athens' passwords, our HE membership swipecards and passcodes; supported no doubt by our internet banking facilities and the salaries that are automatically paid into them. Except that fewer and fewer teachers and educators obtain these material goods, or the space and time to use them, and those who do are often *fearful* of the consequences when they overstep the party line – as is arguably expected in the doctoral project regarding 'claims to original knowledge'. It becomes risky even to enunciate strategies and tactics for survival, because, as Sam in Cruice's play informs us, 'they' will find out and immediately launch counter-attacking moves.

In this way, ordinary qualities of friendship, trust and caring are stretched thin and take on a special significance; a love that dare not speak its name, because to do so is to be ridiculed and reviled as 'progressive' 'feminine', 'dangerous' or 'weak'; dirty hippies (my terms) of the twenty-first century. Yet across the world heritage of theories and theoreticians, philosophers, historians and theologians, the place of love has always been intimately, differentially and problematically associated with the pedagogic endeavour. In the long run it is therefore unrealistic on the part of those politicians and managers who determine education policy to suppose that, having driven love underground, somehow the no-touch, no-child-left-behind, every-child-matters, teacher-proof, techno-rationalist, acronym-obsessed and logocentric sloganising of C.21 can be palmed off as plausible substitutes. There is no baying crowd 'out there' that (naturally) believes in such practices, in my opinion. As long as folk can speak, listen, touch, feel, taste, smell; can obtain information in print, sound, images (in jest, in whispers behind the hand, notes passed under desks) (Siems in Slahi,

2015, pp. xvii–li; Weiwei, 2015), the 'universals' of learning + love (the 'well' or 'root', in Li, above), in combination with their practical counterparts – art and science – provide the wherewithal for the production of new knowledge forms, activities and inter-relations so urgently required to dissipate totalising forces and regimes (Weiwei, 2015). In so far as there are important social, ethical, economic and scientific issues that need our urgent attention and action in exactly these ways, to ignore theory as we know it – 'memories with momentum', to borrow from Sutherland (2012; in Bayley, above) – and the creative knowledge generation that comes through theorising as an interpersonal, educative activity, is surely to precipitate humankind faster towards the next upcoming catastrophe? From this standpoint it does not matter whether theory is being employed in emergent or light-touch ways: as mash-up, voice-over, sample, remix; or more classically and contrapuntally; nor does it matter how the beholder appreciates the outcome, in aesthetic terms. What is more important is that in the process of considering and evaluating these texts, our possibly depleted affective, intellectual and lexical resources are being restimulated and provoked in non-violent ways and from the artistic (meaning ontologically uncertain, insecure, tentative) mindset always of 'doing it better next time' (see especially Hammond, Nah, Haase).

Therefore it seems to me appropriate that this volume should begin and end with friendship, or what critical pedagogues refer to as *radical love* (Gómez, 2015). In her Foundations of Education summer seminar, Mary Frances Agnello grapples with two practical dilemmas: students who can't physically attend her noon-time teaching session and an out-of-county student who can only take the course by distance learning. These concerns temper her misgivings about online courses, which she perceives as a paradigm shift with a political motive behind it:

> At the university, the professoriate is facing new horizons concerning the role of tenured faculty, the ownership of course and course materials, and the possibility for replacement by adjunct professors who can be assigned teaching classes that are already in a teaching format online. With many decisions being made with corporate and financial motivations, faculty who have been in the university for ten or more years fear that posting of more and more courses onto the web make it much easier for university administrators to replace tenured faculty with lesser credentialled and qualified individuals to teach online classes for much lower salaries (Giroux, 2007).
>
> [Chapter 6, p.123]

This particular tension Agnello turns into an opportunity for critical exploration of what is meant by curriculum and its place in the power/knowledge struggle. She does this using both online and face-to-face discussion with the teachers in her class:

> [S]tudents [. . .] posited that the power of policymakers has facilitated the oversight of teaching and learning in the K-12 educational setting in many unsettling ways, such as a top-down hierarchical mandate of what is to be taught (the scope of the curriculum) and when (the sequence of the curriculum), as well as how learning will be measured (via high-stakes testing). They emphasised that such curricular manipulation and testing drive the assessment of curricular instruction, therefore exerting formidable control over education.
>
> [Chapter 6, p.112]

Through their readings of Michel Foucault and the development of dialogue about curriculum, the students identify a range of problems that curricular control – which also signifies manipulation of professionals' available time, use of space and physical presence in the classroom – can have in terms of restricting what is to be taught; project or theme-based learning being a case in point. Agnello's summing up of the learning that took place in this programme and her reflexive self-evaluation implicitly arrive at what is now a key issue for educators, namely the internet as a field and site of cultural production, and by whom and how it is mediated and monitored for the purposes of learning and teaching:

> Paradoxically, building and disseminating my foundations courses online helps me sustain the field of foundations of education that are under fire in so many sectors of our society and world (Martusewicz, 2013). Critical to successful teaching and learning in either the live or digital learning environment, is teacher reflection. Through reflective practice and discourse analysis, we observe that students' dialogue with theorists promotes insight into how to improve the teaching of theories.
>
> [Chapter 6, p.124]

Chiaroscuro

In Cruice's play *Keeping the Lights On* – and in contrast with Bayley's crisp discussion of identity, verb tenses and use of the personal pronoun – political power is solidified but never brought fully into view. 'The

powers that be', 'the Senior Leader', 'the system', 'the inspectorate', 'the dominant political group', 'middle management', 'the emperor with no clothes', 'the state of Denmark' (in *Hamlet* …) cumulatively convey densely oppressive forces in the lives of the two postdoctoral protagonists, Sam and Megan. Following Stephen Ball and his contemporaries, the 'emptying out' of social relations in institutions of learning coheres with the flatness of the tasks of the day: 'laminating plenary cards', 'inserting linguistic devices in texts', 'levelling' children's work. Here transmigration takes the form of three systematised out-of-hours activities: firstly, the two teachers' prior experience of the education doctorate ('the ivory tower', the 'massive libraries of the universities'); secondly, Sam's writing group, which gathers in museums, parks and cultural centres; 'a grass roots movement and the most powerful professional development I've ever had'; thirdly, Megan's online engagement via her iPad and phone: 'real, meaningful communities of practice through digital networks'.

Thus the unreality of the day job is counterbalanced for Cruice by reading, translated via her two characters into dialogue, and thereby transgressing the routinised drudgery that constitutes 'school'. Citing John Elliott, Cruice reminds us that 'teachers have been encouraged to view pedagogy as the construction of rationally ordered learning environments', rather than the 'discretionary space' envisaged by her character Sam. From this pivotal moment in the play, the characters shun the dystopian scenario that has been foisted onto them in favour of the 'kinder social contexts' (Perselli, above) and third spaces (Bayley et al., above) – virtual, physical and imaginary – that they themselves have created through their friendships and critical communities.

Concluding remarks: Towards a methodology for 'pedagogies of change'

In these practitioner narratives the familiar tropes of doctoral education, journey, gateway, threshold, transition, change, transformation, are all present, but (re)problematised and carefully differentiated, as are the 'curious collocations' of this introductory chapter, which must likewise be continuously reinterrogated and reinterpreted, if not remade, in order to willingly alter the (apparently normative) behavioural courses of language and speech. In this volume pedagogy of change is achieved in each instance, broadly speaking, through the *architecting* of the project (Perselli, 2014b, 2015), for example by creatively conjoining two or

more structural features of the research design in non-compromising ways, whether as a diversity of domains and/or theoretical fields, held in tension with each other:

- HE + mothering
- physiotherapy education + gender studies
- theatre + business studies
- early childhood education + England/New Zealand
- foundations of education + readers' theatre
- autobiography/bricolage + China/North America
- academic development + visual arts
- environmental social science + engineering
- curricular English/theatre + policy sociology

Cumulatively they are 'emancipatory' in the sense that theory 'in its appearing' is neither obfuscated nor confined to the academy, nor is it being oversimplified or commodified, but rather put to use relationally and in anti-hierarchical, non-exclusive ways that are simultaneously and inevitably held in tension with the elements of contingency and pragmatism that constitute research 'in the real world' of education. This suggests that whilst theory/thinking is highly significant to these researchers in its own right – typically in the solitary or desk-based activities that punctuate their projects – it never claims supremacy over the spaces that it occupies, since of itself, by itself, theory cannot *do* anything; it must be operationalised relationally: inside our own minds and in our educative relations with significant others. In this volume these activities are seen to be unequivocally non-parochial, outward facing and participatory: realisations in many instances of 'third space' as counter-discourses to neo-liberalism and consumerism – to which nevertheless all ideas and practices are susceptible.

Likewise, the extent to which doing educational research may bring about change that is transformatory or liberatory for self and others cannot depend entirely on its contextual features of stage, script, performance, actors or audience. Systemic and structural conditions such as time, understanding and the persistence of courageous educational leaders also contribute substantively towards ameliorating the anxiety (of the bad kind), exhaustion or disillusionment that creeps in, seemingly of its own accord, among practitioners who must daily undertake intellectual work whilst simultaneously exercising political astuteness – 'fabrication' (Ball in Cruice), 'double bind' (Gayatri Spivak in Bayley) – in

our professional practices. Workers in HE like myself and my colleagues must therefore better educate both our own bosses and the public at large about the field of activity we call theory, why it is important and what can be done, politically and economically, to valorise *thinking as pre- and post-cursor to action* in material terms; those desk-based, back-office and, especially, sedimentation periods that were evidently axiomatic to success for each of these scholars.

As an entity, this compendium therefore constitutes a modest manifesto for the places and spaces of thinking: in, around and beyond what is currently understood by education, with its permeable boundaries and contested ideals, yet often brittle and brutal systems, structures and signs. At a more intimate level this volume serves as a memory bank and repository for the experiences and reflections of nine, Janus-like practitioner researchers; 'resourceful peers' (Perselli & Moehrke, in press; Moehrke & Perselli, under review) whose stories constitute their contribution to the universe of stories in education. I hope you enjoy all of them as much as I have.

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2

Engendering Knowledge: Education, the Maternal and Doing Research with Women

Simone Galea

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the participation of women in the generation of knowledge by problematising some important methodological aspects of a research project that sought to create possibilities for women to articulate their subjugated and unvoiced knowledges. I draw on the feminist philosophical arguments of Luce Irigaray that point to the way women have been silenced and excluded in the public construction of knowledge and in the institutional practice of philosophy. Irigaray explains how women's social constructions as maternal subjects have rendered them an unacknowledged base for men's quest for knowledge. Yet she also argues that women can become creators of their own knowledges that emerge from their sexually differentiated positions.

Drawing on my PhD research project consisting of a genealogical study of the constitution of women educators as maternal subjects (Galea, 2002) I shall argue that theory in research comes from complex relations between the researcher and the participants as well as from the theoretical frameworks and philosophical positions that inform the study. I envisage theory as the spinning together of different threads aimed at producing new knowledge. In the case of my research project, this began by intertwining my personal interest in the association between mothering and teaching with the more theoretical perspectives of Luce Irigaray, which in turn led me to a series of conversations with eight women teachers. These conversations became an important source for the generation of theory, but they also served to problematise some important methodological aspects of research, particularly when, as

here, it is concerned with women teachers as subjects of knowledge. The process of producing knowledge by doing research with women I also envisaged in terms of mothering the research process. This is mainly understood in terms of my responsibility in creating spaces and events that bring together different women participants, myself as researcher and philosophers in conversations with each other. As I will explain, this involves a process of becoming by which one gives birth to oneself as speaking subject in relation to others and in relation to the birth of new knowledges.

The maternal and questions of knowledge

In the parable of the cave Plato metaphorically represents an individual's journey in the acquisition of knowledge and the struggles through which this knowledge can be obtained. Plato's is a representation of the various processes by which the individual moves away from a lower world of illusions and beliefs towards an enlightened upper one of true knowledge (Plato, 1980). For Plato, knowledge is acquired when one does not remain chained in the dark cave of appearances but is able to access an intelligible world by analysing and questioning that which is acquired through the senses. According to Plato, when one thinks in a rational way one is able to acquire absolute knowledge and universal forms of truth. Theories are achieved when one is able to soar above that which is seen, observed or heard in the everyday world towards that which is acquired when one sees the light of the sun through abstract thought. One of the important but generally unacknowledged aspects of this philosophical journey is the dark cave from which prisoners seek to escape. Plato describes it as the place that is deprived of true knowledge, yet the cave is essential to the process by which knowledge is acquired. Through the cave one is able to move to the enlightened world above it.

Irigaray (1985a), in her feminist deconstructive reading of Plato's parable, explains that the images of the underground cave represent the position of the feminine in the process of knowledge acquisition. It is the maternal womb, essentially figured through the passive, immobile, confused, fixed and silent spaces from which those held captive within it strive to escape. Irigaray explains that Plato's association of the maternal with the journey towards knowledge sheds light on patriarchal legitimisation of knowledge construction processes that exclude and other the feminine. The strategy of using and silencing the maternal at the same time is all the more insidious in that it symbolises

the maternal to figure and disfigure the feminine as the empty foundation for man's quest for knowledge (Walker, 1998). The maternal conceived as an essential representation of the feminine is phallocratically appropriated and strategically used by Plato in his construction of a universal epistemology. Irigaray argues that dominating forms of language and symbolising systems that legitimise patriarchal forms of knowledge leave no space for different knowledges or active symbolisations of the maternal in their production. Systems of thought that universalise a particular, masculine form of subjectivity and rationality do not allow other forms of being and speaking. Dominating phallocentrically constructed conceptions and symbolisations of the male rational subject leave women without a language of their own to conceive themselves. According to Irigaray, whilst women have not participated in setting up these Western cultural symbols and discourses, they must defer to these legitimate forms in order to speak. At this point women find themselves in a double bind, because if they follow legitimate social practices and use a man-made language to symbolise themselves they act as reproducers of the same dominant social systems that devalue them. On the other hand women cannot simply step out of phallocentric standards of rationality to critique the way discourses have systematically subjected and excluded the feminine as other.

In her philosophical texts, Irigaray (1985a, 1985b, 1993a, 1993b) explains that the position of women in relation to the quest for knowledge is not dissimilar to women's place in the tradition of philosophy. Women are not simply placed outside philosophical quests; they are important internal constructive spaces that nourish philosophical growth. Nevertheless, their presence remains passive and silent. Irigaray argues that other philosophical practices are needed to open up and sexually differentiate the highly mono-sexual cultural discourses that essentialise feminine subjects. The only identification that women get from a masculinised cultural imaginary is of an 'incomplete and uncompletable' being (Irigaray, 1985a: 165). To overcome such discourses, Irigaray's philosophical practice deconstructs man-made definitions of the feminine, especially those generated by philosophical discourse. She argues instead for the social symbolisation of women in women's own terms. This would necessitate a radically different way of thinking the feminine subject; one that is independent of the phallocentric order, requiring a reorganisation of sexual, linguistic and socio-symbolic systems (Grosz, 1989: 110). The feminine cannot be conceived 'in the form of a concept' because this implies that one

> [...] is to allow oneself to be caught up again in a system of masculine representations ... If it is really a matter of calling femininity into question, there is still no need to elaborate another 'concept' – unless a woman is renouncing her sex and wants to speak like men. For the elaboration of a theory of woman, men, I think, suffice. In a woman ('s) language, the concept as such would have no place.
>
> (Irigaray, 1985b:122–23)

Irigaray's philosophical strategies suggest that the positioning of the feminine by phallocratic discourse can be used to deconstruct the discourse itself. This is not a matter of creating an opposing discourse but to engender alternative systems of meaning, values and thinking to enable women to give birth to themselves and their femininity. These strategies, termed as mimetic, make use of the 'natural' characteristics assigned to women to create new ways of thinking the feminine – a feminine that is not singular and absolute but fluid and changeable.

Fuss (1989) explains that there have been numerous critics who argue that Irigaray's proposal of re-enacting the feminine might continue to reify women into an essentialised concept of Woman, particularly as a reproducing maternal self. However, Irigaray's notion of mimesis aims to play with phallogocentric languages to deconstruct meanings of the feminine that reduce her to a reflective receptacle. Irigaray's is a feminist philosophical practice that draws on the more creative aspects of the maternal. It allows for the social symbolisation of the feminine through women's own speech, which would also generate the possibility for other forms of language and ways of knowing that can subvert the monolithic dimensions of thought to which women have been subjected.

The maternal in conversation

It is within these frames of thought that the research methodology of doing conversations with women has been taken up in my research project *Symbolising the Maternal. A Genealogical Study of Women Educators* (Galea, 2002; see also Galea, 2005). In my analysis of the historical, social and cultural constitutions of women educators as maternal subjects I drew on the philosophical works of both Irigaray and Foucault on genealogy. Foucault's genealogical method (1991) was used to trace the discourses that constitute the idea of the teacher as mother as we have come to know it today. Irigaray's notion of genealogy and her philosophical critique, which is more relevant to this chapter, refers to her

arguments for the need for women to establish relations between themselves in creating their own language and in symbolising themselves as subjects of knowledge. The study was particularly informed by her notion that women can use their maternal positioning as women and as educators to go beyond the limited associations of the maternal with passive, non-speaking subjects. Conversations with women as maternal subjects were conceived as spaces for the 'enunciation' of the feminine; ways to symbolise maternal subjects as subjects who speak, subverting the epistemological passivity associated with them. As Irigaray would have it, the methodology of doing conversations with women whereby space is created for women to speak their own selves was also aimed at presenting them as maternal subjects in their own terms.

In the research project, a series of conversations with eight individual women educators developed after I encountered the women individually for the first time to ask for their consent to participate in the research. I initiated our one-to-one discussions by asking a few open-ended questions to each woman participant about mothering, education and her experiences of teaching. After our first encounter, I prepared further questions and points for discussion drawing on each woman's particular ideas during this encounter. The issues discussed during my second encounter were particular to each woman as each one focused her talk on aspects that pertained to her different experiences and concepts of teaching and mothering. Nevertheless, all the individual conversations explored the women's ideas about mothering, their notions of caring (including those of self-care – see below) and their concepts of education. These were intended for women to symbolise themselves as creators of their own knowledges as well as creators of their own selves. Following my individual conversations with each woman, I invited the women to a group conversation in order to develop further their different notions of the maternal as well as to develop links among themselves, considering they had never met and had conversations with each other. Here again my comments and questions to start the group conversation drew on the in-depth conversations I had had with each woman, which further provoked my thought about her concepts of education and the maternal. During the group conversations I initiated and facilitated the discussions between women. Here, however, I did not want to restrain the conversations within the usual 'I, researcher – you, participant' format. The group conversations were intended to provide a more open space for women to discuss and raise issues with each other rather than have them always directed by my powerful self as a researcher.

Nevertheless, this methodological strategy for portraying the maternal feminine as a speaking subject was not straightforward. Contradictions arose around my claiming to go beyond women's essentialised maternal identities by encouraging women to speak the maternal, including questions in relation to the scenario I have created of constructing knowledge with women. How could I ensure that conversations with women – and this representation of them – did not replicate the same phallogocentric and stereotypical symbolisations of the maternal feminine? Through conversations I sought to subversively represent women as speaking subjects, yet I was concerned with the extent to which women's speech itself challenged essential meanings of the feminine. Furthermore, as a researcher I was thinking about my responsibilities in engendering other forms of knowledge, of 'creating an alterity in masculine discourse' (Irigaray, 1985b: 140). What implications did these have for the conceptions of the knowing subject? In what ways could I conceive my role as a researcher through the symbolisation of the maternal as a generator of different forms of knowledge? How could I mother the research process?

These philosophical questions point to the problem of a possible alterity in the creation of knowledge. Sexual difference here is not just considered a subject for philosophical thought but a question that rethinks and engenders it (Derrida, 1999). As I have argued earlier, conventional philosophical practices grounded in phallogocentric discourses tend to repress other forms of being and knowing. This means that the question of sexual difference, as Derrida explains, needs to be asked in such a way to 'unlock or displace, the neutralisation and the creation of hierarchies' (Derrida, 1999: 12) of phallogocentric systems that claim absolute truth and determinate knowledge.

In this project therefore I adopted an epistemology of doing conversations with women that was informed by a deconstructive strategy aimed to engender other possibilities for women to speak; in relation to the maternal in particular and to speak it otherwise. It was also informed by a feminist research methodology that endeavours to continually question its own limits and rethink 'its response to the call of the wholly other' (Lather, 2007: xi). In this project, women's construction of their own selves as knowers was not an individual journey as represented in Plato's cave but an inquiry that 'relates'. This reflects the Greek etymology of the term 'methodology', 'a shared quest for the path to truth' (Hawkesworth, 2006: 5). It also reflects the feminist philosophical practice 'of rethinking the usual' (Greene & Griffiths, 2003: 73).

Engendering knowledge: A morphology of the two lips

Feminist research practices acknowledge the importance of women becoming speaking subjects – rather than being spoken about (Whitford, 1991: 42). Nevertheless, as I explained earlier, women cannot completely step out of the predominantly phallocentric discursive systems that have constituted them as feminine and maternal subjects. Furthermore, considering their powerful positions as maternal subjects it is not beneficial for women to disassociate themselves completely from extant sociocultural symbolisations of the maternal. Rather, as Irigaray suggests, it is more productive to use the positioning of the feminine by phallocentric discourse against the discourse itself. This is not a matter of creating an opposing discourse, for example, by speaking women as non-maternal subjects, but by using the maternal aspects that have been attributed to women to generate alternative systems of thought about the maternal.

Throughout the research process, I became aware of the women's strategy of using conventional discourses that appear to trap them to renovate their own maternal selves beyond patriarchal parameters. For instance, my questions 'What is a mother?' or 'What does a mother mean to you?' were not intended to elicit some unconventional radical response. I considered them to be straightforward questions that would not demand a great deal of thought. The mother is generally taken for granted. Yet most of the participants hesitated in answering, remarking that the question was 'very difficult' (Tarah) – too difficult in fact 'without really taking the time to think how one should answer it' (Barbara).

SIMONE: What does it mean to be a mother?
MARTINA: What a loaded question!
RITA: Ah! You know I cannot simply tell you . . . I become emotional when I think of it . . .

Their hesitation in answering the question made me ask why my inquiry into women's definitions of the mother begot such a response and whether this could be the women's ways of resisting conventional perspectives. The participants' responses were neither a direct articulation of their understanding and meaning of mothering, nor a direct expression of their resistance to rigid conventional ways of conceiving the mother. Their momentary hesitations reflect their unstable maternal positionings, an indication that the mother cannot be easily pinned down in words. Their replies can be considered as moments of resistance

to an attempt to define the mother in a rigid manner. In fact, the women's responses opened up my reading of their deconstructive articulations of their maternal selves. They could not capture the maternal in words and this rendered it fluid and indeterminate, a concept that opens up avenues of becoming other than conforming to what the mother is expected to be.

During the group conversation, I introduced Simone de Beauvoir's idea that mothering can be a form of slavery. The women, especially those who had children, refused to adhere to this point of view, highlighting the more conventional notion of the mother who automatically and naturally bonds with her child. For many of them this relationship is what makes mothering so rewardingly unpredictable.

> ANTOINETTE: Slavery? No! There is nothing more beautiful than becoming a mother. When you give birth you will know. You'll see your child, you are close to her and you feel a bond, you talk to her, love her and be with her . . . . and you never know exactly how this grows. It is a tremendous sensation that is related to another person that you have created.

Here the idea that the maternal is something that can be defined is once again deconstructed. For Antoinette, the maternal can be conceived through her growing relation with her child rather than through a relation with some universalised form of thought or some rigid definition of what mothers should be. Being a mother is unpredictable because it has to be understood in relation to a different other, and cannot be expressed through language that fixes or reifies the mother.

Significantly, I think this deconstructive strategy does not entail that women resist references to their bodily characteristics of procreation, or to the 'natural' bond and bodily connections they have with their children. Rather, they use these aspects of maternal relations to contest discourses that disallow the maternal from being articulated in terms of becoming, and especially in terms of becoming in relation to the becoming of someone else. In speaking the feminine one risks being caught up in existing discourses that would reproduce existing thoughts (such as the idea of the bonding between the mother and the child). However, speaking opens the possibility of conceiving it differently, as suggested by my conversations with Antoinette.

The strategy of conceiving the feminine and the maternal through conventional morphological, bodily characteristics to rethink it reflects Irigaray's mimetic strategy. Irigaray calls on women to

> [...] invent the words, the sentences that speak of the most ancient and most current relationships that we know – the relationship to the mother's body, to our body – sentences that translate the bond between our body, her body, the body of our daughter. We need to discover a language that is not a substitute for the experience of corps-a-corps as paternal language but which accompanies that bodily experience, clothing it in words that do not erase the body but speak the body.
>
> (Irigaray, 1993b: 18–19)

For Irigaray, this would vindicate the embodiment of women that has been used to render them unthinking, speechless subjects. Irigaray herself refers to an anatomical aspect of women's bodies, the labia, to symbolise women as speaking subjects. The labia or the two lips become a metaphorical and theoretical exposition of the possibility of speaking differently and the infinite possibilities of open, loving exchanges between different lips (Irigaray, 1985a). Furthermore, the lips symbolise the multiple possibilities of being woman rather than a singular, dominating economy of the phallus that prohibits the touching of the lips in speech. As Whitford explains, through this feminine morphology 'the langue which is the corpus of language available to the speaker' can be used in particular ways (language) to go beyond the mind-body binaries' (Whitford, 1991: 420).

The morphology of the two lips has important epistemological, political and ethical implications for the project of doing research with women. It symbolises the means by which women give birth to their selves as speaking subjects as well as the possibilities of being engaged in conversations with others. It also points to (1) creations of knowledge that do not assume a singular unified subject on an individualised journey in search of the Truth and (2) a concept of woman as a process of becoming in relation to others. This reflects a feminist philosophical practice that does not claim to express the feminine in the form of a readily defined concept, just as phallocentric systems of knowledge do, but develops concepts and practices by which women invent themselves as subjects of knowledge.

The conversations with women in this project sought to allow for the procreation of feminine imaginaries rather than seek some kind of essence of a singular researched subject. By encouraging them to speak I intended to give space for women to give birth to their particular different selves and culturally contextualised expressions of femininity and maternity that neither conform to nor disregard conventional,

standard perceptions of the maternal. Drawing on the very idea that becoming maternal may parallel the uncertainties of research processes, I conceived the conversations as fluid processes full of expectations and change, based on practices of knowledge creation through an engagement of subjects in relation to others and their life contexts.

Caring and women in research

Irigaray's symbolisation of the two lips presents an alternative system of exchange in knowledge production. Whitford (1991) interprets Irigaray's imagery of the two lips as symbolising contiguity; that which associates, combines, touches rather than substitutes, replaces and separates. It conveys the importance of exchanges by women in establishing relations and interchanges with each other. The lips come together, they touch each other, make contact, but they are also separate and different. They are symbolic of a different interchange of love; 'such a love is possible only among women who are able to talk to each other' (Irigaray, 1993a: 104).

It seems paradoxical that Irigaray's texts follow a conventional philosophical method, consisting of critical discussions and deconstructive readings of some of the most well-known philosophers. Her work does not include women's own thoughts and voices, even though she calls for women to actively involve themselves in overcoming phallogocentric essentialising discourses. Furthermore, in spite of her philosophical reflections on the importance of developing relations between women, and for women to speak to each other, in her texts she does not speak with women to explore these thoughts. These ideas had particular implications for me as a researcher who was considering conversation as a research practice within a different social organisation; one that would allow women to speak with each other as well as with me as a researcher. My practice of doing research with women sought to overcome the limits of a philosophical practice that speaks *about* women rather than encouraging them to speak *amongst* themselves. Underlying the conversations with women was my desire to initiate relations between women, making sure that every one of us was respected as a knowing subject. As a researcher I followed the usual ethical procedures that are required of a researcher, namely requesting their consent in participating in the research project but also reconfirming it when referring to their subversive articulations about mothering. As a researcher, being ethical in research consisted of caring for women in terms of ensuring that their rights as research participants were respected. However, I also

sought to care for them by being responsible for creating good caring relations between them especially through group conversation. As Noddings explains, this kind of caring for 'requires engrossment, commitment, displacement of motivation [...] it requires that caring has been maintained and completed in the others' (Noddings, 1984: 112).

Furthermore, being ethical also meant that I provided opportunities for women to care for their selves. These included creating spaces where women could express their own particular selves. I envisaged the ethical aspects of research as being highlighted by their own articulation of their concepts of the maternal and of teaching, reflecting their own particular and preferred ways of living. In this manner, I understood research as an ethical exercise by which women took care of their selves in making themselves subjects. This idea reflects Foucault's notion of 'a practice of the self' – 'an exercise of the self on the self, by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself and to attain a certain mode of being' (Foucault, 1996: 433). The research was a means by which women engaged in the cultivation of their selves especially through the cultivation of their own thoughts about mothering and teaching. In an earlier section, I gave examples of how women interpreted socially accepted notions of mothering. Although they were subject to regimes of thought that regulate their mothering, they sought to transform the fixed meanings of the maternal and symbolise their selves in different ways to conceive themselves differently.

In this way, the research created further opportunities for women to subvert conventional maternal obligations, particularly those related to caring. During our conversations, some women repeatedly commented on the importance of envisaging maternal relations in terms of having the possibility to care for oneself in relation to others. The meaning of being woman or mother extended beyond that of forgetting oneself in the exclusive care of others. For them the subversion of conventional motherly caring, where one completely dedicates oneself to the needs of others, can take place without renouncing the position of caring for oneself. This challenges the dichotomous relationship through which caring is generally conceived as referring to the one cared for as compared with the one who does the caring (Noddings, 1984).

MARTINA: It is important to take care of yourself. Otherwise how can you take care of others who need you?

NANCY: I make time for myself. You have to organise your time. I don't really give much importance to housework. I need to take care of myself also because I have to think of others around me as well.

This practice can be thought of as mimetic in that Martina and Nancy do not dismiss the principle of taking care of others, yet they reformulate it in a way that includes caring for their selves. It becomes an essential part of the regulation that obliges them to care for others in a maximum way possible. As Noddings explains, a caring self

> [. . .] is born of the fundamental recognition of relatedness; that which connects me naturally to the other, reconnects me to the other to myself. As I care for others and am cared for by them, I become able to care for myself.
>
> (Noddings, 1984: 49)

The female participants in this research project conceive teaching as an important way of caring for their selves that incorporates the caring of others at the same time. They do not disassociate teaching from its maternal connotations; rather they draw on the relational aspects of the maternal to conceive teaching differently. Deborah, for example, draws on her relationship with her daughter to conceptualise student–teacher relationships beyond conventional ones prevalent in schools. Pedagogical relations for her should not be constrained by regulative timetables that narrow teaching to the passing on of stipulated amounts of knowledge at a particular time. In fact, what distinguishes her philosophy of education is her concern with conceptualising time for teaching otherwise. Her ideas symbolise her as a particular maternal subject, one who establishes particular rhythms of growth that she painfully perseveres to establish with her pupils.

> DEBORAH: You cannot grade relationships you have with other human beings into rigid blocks of time. We are not dealing with something static; students are different and they themselves change so you need to find a modus vivendi with them – but surely not in minutes.

This reflects Barbara's concern with the extent to which learning and teaching have become regulated:

> BARBARA: This rigid compartmentalisation of time in schools is becoming extreme. Lately the Education Officer has been insisting that we take note of the minutes dedicated to particular activities during the lesson. For example six minutes dedicated for reading, the other ten for discussion and so on. Lately he is suggesting that our reading during the listening comprehension test is between 120 and 150 words per minute. He tries to measure everything in an exact way. You cannot teach in this way.

One can argue that the maternalisation of teaching is therefore encouraged not in terms of the extent to which teachers dedicate their selves to teaching or the amount of time they allot their students but once again through the meaningful relations that are developed with their students.

Tarah, on the other hand, brings in another aspect of caring that is more focused on the care of the carer's self. It echoes the Foucauldian notion of the care of the self, aimed at constituting oneself as subject and which involves 'work done at the limits of ourselves' (Foucault, 1997: 316). For Tarah, caring for others entails drawing on them to enhance her own self creation. As she explains, one can conceive oneself and other women as subjects who establish caring relations with others; but they do not necessarily do so only out of their natural, altruistic need to care or because of some social conditioning that obliges them to devote their time and energy to others. They care to make their own selves and take care of their own selves:

> TARAH: I live through people. I live through my relationship with them. It is like having an umbilical cord, metaphorically. The things you consider important for your own being you take them from other persons.

Here Tarah rethinks the 'usual' symbolisation of the umbilical cord as that which sustains the one being cared for. For her, the umbilical cord acts in the self-cultivation of the mother in terms of the way she uses it for her own self-creation. This reflects a Foucauldian understanding of the care of the self that is concerned with the creation of oneself as subject; a form of self-cultivation that one takes up from her sociocultural milieu to create herself in the practice of freedom. This idea of the care of the self in terms of self-creation directly addresses Irigaray's concerns regarding how a woman annihilates herself into the exclusive caring for others. Irigaray explains that woman 'does not have an affect of her own but one that is for the other and in exile from her or herself' (Irigaray, 1993a: 146). She is a maternal machine designed to have babies, populate the home, keep it clean and supplied with food:

> She would have to give up her sensibility, the singularity of her desire, in order to enter into the immediately universal of her family duty. Women would be wife and mother without desire. Pure obligation dissociates her from her affect.
>
> (Irigaray, 1993a: 117)

Irigaray contends that the maternal can still be a symbol of connectedness with others but that this can also be subversively used to cultivate oneself through the unique relations that develop with others. She argues that women are shaped by cultural representations of women 'as living matter at the service of the other's desire and of reproduction'. Since they live in relation to this cultural tradition they find it difficult to renounce that which essentially symbolises them in relation to the other. However, women can 'effect a gesture that is at least double: deconstruct the basic elements of the culture which alienate me and discover the symbolic norms which can at the same time preserve the singularity of my nature and allow me to elaborate its culture' (Irigaray, 2000: 148). This means that women can reconceptualise their relations with others in a way which is not necessarily subservient to the needs of others. Rather than leading to a loss of oneself, the maternal can be reconceived as an act of creation of the self, also in relation to others.

Mothering the research process: Power, knowledge and the responsibilities of the researcher

As I have shown, the research was informed by some complex philosophical standpoints, including those of Irigaray discussed in more detail here; yet the knowledges of women were spiralled in through the conversational exchanges that I had with them. The conversations sought to enhance their participation in the production of knowledge at the same time as portraying their 'epistemic authority' (Skeggs, 1997). Thinking about research as a process of exchange between women challenges humanist conceptions of a fixed and completely autonomous subjectivity that precedes anything that it does or says. It also goes beyond the male-defined rationality that thinks of the researcher as the author; the father who is the sole creator of the text. It works against the notion that authors are born with their texts, proposing instead the idea of subjects-in-process made through actual doing, whereby the researcher is not the only creator of knowledge, even though the responsibilities of representing women and their texts remain her own. The researcher herself initiates the interactions between women, and participates in the instability and unpredictable outcomes that reflect processes of becoming women who are capable of transformation through their developing relations with others.

In this view, the researcher can be conceptualised as a fluid entity, wavering around the various, often differing, conceptual planes, actively engaging with them to transgress their boundaries. An understanding of

the researcher as author in this manner has much in common with the unstable, unexpected, creative and transformative potential of maternal becomings. In mothering the research process, I take on the responsibilities of questioning ethical, political and epistemological issues that give shape to knowledge through encounters with other women. What paradoxically sustains the metaphor of the maternal in knowledge creation processes is its capacity to allow spaces for further growth and change. Interactions between mother and others cannot be understood with reference to some exterior standard practice of relating, but are seen to be culturally and contextually interrelated. The meanings of these exchanges are understood within the particular contexts and relations that developed between me as a researcher and the women, as well as between women themselves. As I have illustrated here, taking up conversations with women in relation to the maternal was intended as a subversive strategy that creates spaces for women to construct different knowledges and to enhance relations with each other. The possibilities for women to use their power in unobstructed ways also turned out to be one of the most important sources of change in the direction of the research. The conversations were left as open as possible so that women could evade questions, or ask questions themselves, divert comments in different directions and even interact with the research process itself. At times my relations with women developed through a reciprocal sharing of experiences and perspectives, including my personal thoughts and feelings as well as my theoretical backgrounds that informed our conversations.

However, the metaphor of the researcher as mothering the research process addresses another political and ethical aspect of creating knowledge with others, in that it became my responsibility to create the space, however temporary, for knowledge-producing and transformative experiences. Although my engagement with women in conversations took place in a collaborative exchange that gave the participants enough space to go beyond my particular interests as a researcher, this did not mean that the conversations were ideal speech situations free from the exercise of power. For example, I see myself very much as the author of the research, acknowledging that my interests in mothering, concepts of education and conversational methodology itself rose out of my personal sociocultural and academic experiences. Moreover, through the written text I have mainly chosen to present women's narratives of life, the concepts of the maternal that are meaningful to them and their own concepts of education. The recognition that my power within knowledge production sites is inevitable and perhaps even essential intensified

my commitment towards opening spaces where this power is exercised with 'a minimum of domination' (Foucault, 1984: 18). Neither did the conversational format automatically imply that these participants were geared for consensual agreements and conclusions. I endeavoured to exercise my power as a researcher to nourish and stimulate different thinking, encouraging mutual challenging and problematising of issues that would possibly symbolise the maternal in an alternative way. This different thinking implies challenging consensual agreement, which tends to establish itself as the 'usual' democratic aim of doing conversations (Todd, 2009), including the 'usual' practices of research ethics. I also mothered the research process through my endeavours to conscientise women about positions of power they hold in respect to knowledge production and in challenging conventional forms of knowledge.

I do not, however, claim to empower women in terms of 'giving them voice'. I understand women's positions, as teachers and mothers, as already empowered; as subjects of knowledge their voices have powerful potential in the context of teaching others. On the other hand, assumptions about maternal power in giving birth to subjugated knowledges as shared dilemmas between researcher and women reflect many of the emancipatory concerns of feminist researchers embroiled with 'the politics of knowing and being known' (Lather, 2007: 49). The process of doing conversations with women was itself generated by my philosophical interest as a researcher in engendering different knowledges with others, even though the process was not entirely collaborative. Yet what it shares with mothering processes, and interwoven with the theoretical stance of Luce Irigaray, are the uncertainties of relating to others and the prospects of powerful interactions among women that symbolise them as creators of their own situated knowledges.

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3

Negotiating Gender Concepts and Critical Pedagogy: A Reflective Account of Doctoral Research in Physiotherapy Education

John A. Hammond

Introduction

The search for theory in my doctoral research might be described as a convoluted pathway through paradigms and methodologies. In this chapter, I reflect on some of the tensions negotiated throughout the course of my project in order to demonstrate how theory came into being in my research. The aim is to use examples from my enquiry into gender identities in physiotherapy education to illustrate these theoretical deliberations. Where possible, I will present these in chronological order; however, this is complicated by the iterative process of posing questions, making choices and challenging previous assumptions at all stages of the project. In the crafting of this chapter I hope to bring some coherence to the messy work of engaging and seeking theory in educational research. To conclude, I will discuss the writing process and how, despite many pitfalls, I claimed success in finding a 'voice' for my thesis.

My context

The spur for my research stemmed from observations of gender ambiguities in the field of physiotherapy. From experience in professional practice and later as an educator in higher education, I have seen a growing proportion of men enter the profession, which was historically a female domain. Furthermore, in recent times a masculine, sporty image of physiotherapy 'by the pitch side' has been frequently portrayed in the mass media. For instance, it is not uncommon to see a physiotherapist,

typically male, called upon in a significant sporting moment. In these incidents all attention is on the 'physiotherapist in action', in the hope that the practitioner will be able to heal their sporting hero's injury, enabling them to resume play and succeed. In a prior research project, I analysed the assessment results of over 200 physiotherapy students on the undergraduate programme that I teach. I found noticeable gender differences in student attainment in the clinical practice components of the course, with men more likely to fail at the first attempt (Hammond, 2009). In sum, these observed inequalities made me question how, if at all, students themselves considered aspects of gender during the programme. More specifically, my research aimed to investigate the significance of gender in physiotherapy students' constructions of professional identity during their pre-qualifying education.

Having made a relatively recent transition from physiotherapy practitioner to educator at the commencement of my doctoral studies, I felt myself to be a novice both in education and research. Therefore the early stages of my doctoral studies required some working through the *dilemma*: 'Am I an education professional in physiotherapy or a physiotherapist in education?' (Hammond, 2006). Similarly, I began to explore self-study methods with which to analyse my personal and professional identities and to make sense of how I live my life as a gay academic in education and other social and cultural spaces (Hammond, 2007). These writings enabled me to rehearse the preliminary paradigmatic, theoretical and methodological justifications for my doctoral project, which later shaped the dilemmas presented in this chapter.

Dilemmas in negotiating theory

Identities: Establishing a theoretical stance

Following initial explorations of my own sexuality and gender identity as a professional in practice, I became interested in how these are theorised in the literature. As such the work of Michel Foucault (1980, 1979) and Judith Butler (2004, 1999) inspired me to take a particular theoretical stance whereby identities, including gender and sexuality, are socially constructed between individuals through communication and language. Social constructionists are interested in human relationships and how the world becomes meaningful through a process of co-action (Gergen, 2009: 97). They claim that meaning is socially constructed between individuals, through the collaborative process of communication, reinforcing their shared knowledge of reality. Most importantly, from this perspective, identities are not internal and psychological,

but rather they are the result of relationships within a given social context.

For example, Foucault not only reiterates that gender and sexuality are constructed through language and discourse, but that they are also historically interconnected within social systems and structures (Foucault, 1979). A central tenet of Foucault's work is that systems of power, such as the state and institutions, dictate how we must describe and experience our bodies. Therefore individuals are constrained by power, which he suggests 'is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Foucault, 1979: 93).

Foucault's work emphasises how systems of power serve as a form of social regulation, and that it is impossible to define ourselves in any other way than by using discourses available to us through various social systems. In the case of gender, this is frequently reduced to identity binaries of male/female, masculine/feminine (Foucault, 1979).

However, Butler takes Foucault's ideas further to conceive gender and other forms of identity as 'performative'. She claims that gender is an expression or output that is 'constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing' (Butler, 1999: 34). According to this premise, gender is *active, negotiated and challenged* in different social situations. Importantly, behaviours, gestures and speech are not the *result* of gender but are *expressions* of gender (Butler, 1999). These notions were particularly liberating in exploring my own gender and sexuality in my professional practice (Hammond, 2007). It was at this stage and through dialogue with my supervisory team that these concepts became imperative for investigating how gender is expressed in the discursive acts of physiotherapy students.

For instance, the following narrative from one of the participants in the study (Hammond, 2013) can be read as an illustration of what Butler is saying. At the beginning of her second year, Louise (pseudonym) was uncertain about studying physiotherapy:

> [...] and that first week back was like, 'Oh gosh, I really don't know if I'm doing the right thing' [laughs]. 'Um, but I, I mean I didn't really kind of make it known to too many people, I thought it might just be my hormones or something' [laughs].

If we apply a social constructionist stance, we can say that Louise's speech act of attributing her uncertainty to her hormones is not a result of her gender but an expression of gender that is bound up with the social discourses and stereotypes that are available to her. Taking this

stance enabled me to critique the discourses that made this possible in Louise's narrative, whereas using lenses more closely aligned to psychological theories might have led to a very different analysis. Psychological perspectives might suggest that Louise was articulating an 'internal' gender versus professional struggle, as though this were 'fixed' or 'real', rather than dynamic and (therefore) discursive. The difference between these two readings is important in that the implication for the research, and thereby for my practice in the field, might be to provide 'remedial' action to reduce her distress. However well intended, this may not confront the educational and professional structures that act to regulate Louise's behaviour as a physiotherapy student.

While social constructionism and performativity provided appropriate lenses to emphasise the sociocultural nature of education and the significance of power in relationships in my research, they immediately presented challenges. In the field of physiotherapy and healthcare research, in which I am immersed, positivist paradigms and psychological perspectives are predominant. For instance, essentialised understandings of the 'productive' male body and the 'reproductive' female body continue to operate in professional settings, as I discovered in my own context (Roininen, 2008). Therefore, as well as reflexively reviewing my personal conceptions of identity, I had to learn methods to communicate my research developments with my colleagues and peers that were both comprehensible and faithful to these emerging ideas, yet not alienating. Establishing critical friends through fellow doctoral colleagues and my supervisory team enabled me to develop the courage to defend my theoretical perspective.

Identifying my position in the research

A second consideration in my theoretical deliberations was my practical position in the research with students as participants in my own setting. As indicated previously when discussing 'my context', I was aware of and had demonstrated gender ambiguities that are already 'out there' in physiotherapy education. I did not wish to ignore my beliefs and simply 'bracket' them in the aim of sustaining objectivity in the research, hence I could never be a neutral observer (Dowling, 2006). Furthermore, as I was both teacher and researcher, my aim was not simply to understand gender in the context of education, but also to bring about change for those participants and future students because of inequalities that I had previously observed. The interpretive paradigm felt limiting in this respect and critical/realist perspectives were a necessary but new terrain. Nevertheless, I negotiated the literature on critical

pedagogy (Freire, 1971; Giroux, 2011), began to apply it and write with it.

Other authors (McLaren, 2009; Giroux, 2011) deal with the tenets of critical pedagogy in more detail, but there are key principles that resonate with my research. The first principle is that people strive to make sense of and inhabit the world, which is full of asymmetries of power (Giroux, 2011). Secondly, critical theorists believe that democracy is a basis for addressing these inequalities and empowering individual freedoms (McLaren, 2009). Finally, as Giroux proclaims, critical pedagogy:

> [...] functions as a lens for viewing public and higher education as important sites of struggle that are capable of providing students with alternative modes of teaching, social relations and imagining.
>
> (Giroux, 2011: 6)

Taking a critical pedagogic approach required me to constantly renegotiate my position in relation to the participants, their narratives and my analysis. It also demanded that I take an active and political role in transforming the curriculum, with curriculum being viewed essentially as 'praxis' (Freire, 1971: 60). This was particularly important in the final stages of my thesis where my analysis through the writing was challenging and facilitating changes to my pedagogic practices, which were then re-examined through further writing. Although I found critical pedagogy liberating regarding my practice, I struggled to find an assertive and active 'voice'. I recall my supervisors saying 'where are you in your thesis?' and 'what are you doing about it?'

I think this was because in my earliest drafts I had conformed to traditional conventions of research reporting, and wrote the implications and conclusions in the third person. This felt like a safe option, so that any claims to knowledge and practice were not overstated. The following is an example from an early draft:

> [...] this study has implications for pedagogical practices in physiotherapy. From the narratives, gender was rarely discussed overtly, yet it was implicit in the students' constructions of identity. Therefore a first focus might be to include opportunities in the curriculum to theoretically examine gender along with other identity classifications. Curricula could be designed to facilitate debate about categories such as 'man', 'woman', 'masculinity' and 'femininity' that might challenge binary divisions according to biological sex.

Yet this was distant from me both personally and professionally and did not sound very much like critical pedagogy. This was also noted by my supervisors, for example in email communication and tutorial discussions, with one even suggesting that 'if critical pedagogy is the main methodological approach then bring out your own reflexivity more' (personal communication). So I spent some time reading works by critical pedagogy researchers such as Michael Apple (2009), Michelle Fine (2009) and Kathleen Weiler (2009) to see how they wrote. As I did so I began to recognise that there was a lack of 'agency' in my early drafts. I spent considerable time reviewing these sections, adding reflective and reflexive comments to indicate that the implications were in fact things that I felt necessary and important in my writing and subsequently in my teaching practice. The following illustrates how the previous draft was revised:

> From the narratives, it is clear that gender was rarely discussed overtly, yet it was implicit in the students' constructions of identity. With this in mind, my first focus has been to include opportunities in the curriculum to theoretically examine gender along with other identity classifications. As an example, I have utilised the contentious issue of the Olympic runner Caster Semenya to facilitate debate about categories such as 'man', 'woman', 'masculinity' and 'femininity' and challenge binary divisions according to biological sex.
>
> (Hammond, 2013)

Here, it is not *the* but *my* first focus which denotes conscious ownership of the pedagogic implication. Secondly, I used an actual example of a change to demonstrate that my implications were 'live' or 'in process' rather than some abstract concept that an educator 'might' or 'could' do. Although I felt I made a better attempt at addressing my own practice, it occasionally felt too boastful, but with continual reflection and refinement the implications and conclusions became specific and real rather than 'merely' theoretical. Therefore the constructive criticism of my supervisors and my constant returning to the specific critical pedagogic research in the literature helped to develop coherence in my approach that continued in an iterative process.

Paradigm and methodological coherence

In addition, establishing coherence between the research paradigm, theoretical positions and methodological choices was also necessary for trustworthiness of the research (Howell, 2013). Fortunately

I came across an article by Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) that proposed a way of conceptualising epistemological decision-making in educational research. Drawing on studies published in education journals, the paper analysed epistemological and theoretical positions posed by the authors and whether there was coherence between all stages of the research reporting. The authors highlighted substantial inconsistencies in several instances and proposed a way for authors to conceptualise epistemological decision-making to improve trustworthiness in the process and reporting of qualitative research methodologies.

Reinterpreting this proposal, I created a visual representation to assist my own meta-cognitive development within the doctoral research (see Figure 3.1). Far from a simple recipe to follow, the framework provided me with a way to think with the research, at every stage, from the research proposal, to collecting the data, to interacting with the participants before, during and after data collection and how to frame my thinking, actions and writing. Constructing this framework enabled me to establish mechanisms of checking for consistency in my own decision-making that otherwise would have been too messy

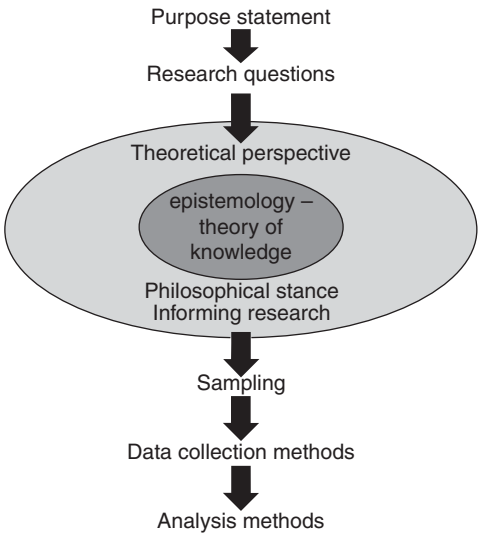

Figure 3.1 Decision junctures for epistemological awareness in education research: Visual representation of conceptual stages
Source: Hammond (2013).

and uncertain to be comprehendible. This is not to say that the framework restricted and limited my analysis. On the contrary, it empowered me to reinterpret the data and theoretical perspectives in practical and malleable ways.

The framework helped to clarify how epistemological conceptualisations of social constructionism could be embedded within the philosophical stance of critical pedagogy. From my readings I noted that there were many similarities. For instance, both Foucauldians and critical pedagogues recognise that discourse is shaped through social and historical processes, that power is produced and reproduced in systems and structures, and that resistance is part of the situation of power (Wylie, 2014). Yet there are some differences. Critical pedagogues problematise traditional structures of power and control in the classroom and proclaim that individuals can be liberated through practices of democracy or emancipation. However, Foucault did not posit a pedagogic model and he questioned the notion of liberation, since it reinforces the idea that an essential human nature exists that has been concealed by oppression (Foucault, 1997).

Despite these ideological distinctions I felt both arguments were useful as they each related to a specific research question. That is, in addressing the question 'How do students construct gender identities in physiotherapy?' a social constructionist (Foucault and Butler) lens would be helpful, whilst a critical pedagogic approach would enable exploration of the research question 'What are the implications for gender in physiotherapy education and practice?' But it was not simply a case of separating the two perspectives for different questions; on the contrary they generated a productive tension in the research.

The development of my analytical framework provides an example of how social constructionist and critical pedagogy perspectives were integrated in an iterative way. As I was interested in how students spoke (or did not) about (their own) gender I became increasingly aware of the discourses that made their narratives and identity constructions possible. At the commencement and during the data collection period I immersed myself in Foucault's works as well as those who illustrated his methods (Kendall & Wickham, 1999; Carabine, 2001; Willig, 2001). To deepen my understanding of the application of Foucault's methods, I made some preliminary attempts at analysis of the transcripts, inviting constructive criticism from my supervisors and critical friends. I then turned my attention to literature on critical approaches and thus the analytic framework was further shaped and refined (Van Dijk, 2001; Fairclough, 2010).

To clarify how these different theoretical and epistemological approaches were incorporated into the research, I developed a framework for analysis (see Table 3.1). Primarily based on Willig's six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis (Willig, 2001) columns one and two were derived. Using this framework I approached the data in two phases. The first phase enabled me to examine the participant narratives on a case-by-case basis. Essentially, Foucauldian principles influenced this phase as I interpreted how gender identities were socially constructed within the various systems and structures of physiotherapy practices. The second phase involved identifying themes and inequalities across the cases. Here principles of critical pedagogy helped me to problematise the systems and structures in physiotherapy education. Rather than emancipate or liberate the participants in my study, I sought to create the conditions in which this might be possible. I developed prompt questions that related the analysis to the research questions specifically focusing on gender, represented in the right hand column. This provided an aide memoir to systematise my analysis.

Although some arguably necessary tensions remained between the paradigms and theoretical conceptualisations I was using, the process of making my epistemological decisions transparent helped build my own theoretical position within the project.

Power and voice of writing

Finally, I turn to the related factor of writing as representation. The difficulties of writing must be acknowledged in the search for theory in educational research. Burke (2008) outlines the complex interplay between writing, power and voice in academia to highlight issues of access and participation. Although I sit within academia I recognise Burke's description and initially struggled with the uncertainty of whether I could 'really do it'. I had felt overwhelmed when reading published work that embraced theoretical concepts in an articulate and cogent manner. I imagined these authors and researchers writing with ease and certainty. The procrastination and deliberation over sentence and paragraph structure seemed a solitary problem that positioned me as 'other' and not worthy to participate in educational research. However, the theoretical perspectives on gender identity that I was reading and applying in practice also enabled me to come to terms with my own positioning and feelings. Rather than focus directly on my inadequacies, I began to interrogate the systems and structures in physiotherapy education and through my own acts of resistance I gained confidence in my writing.

Table 3.1 Framework for analysing transcripts case by case

Stage	Description	Application to this study working with student narratives
Discursive constructions	Objects – which ones are focused on, including injustices or inequalities	Identify the different ways professional and gender identity is talked about. For example: • Being a man/woman in physiotherapy • Being a man/woman in other aspects of life • Relation to other gendered beings • Being a student/becoming (being) a physiotherapist/being professional
Discourses	Focus on differences between constructions for same individual or text within wider discourses	Are there different perspectives on professional or gender identities in how discussed? Are there certain sets of statements? What is expressed as normative or 'common sense'? Do they present inequalities? • Gender/sexuality – for example expectations/bodily functions/capabilities/social responsibilities
Action orientation	Closer examination of discursive contexts. Why this way? Why this point in time? Is it in response? To identify inequalities or injustices?	Look at in context of professional/gender discourses above in context of other text. • Why said? • What is the function/purpose? • Why now? • Who is intended audience (just me)?

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Stage	Description	Application to this study working with student narratives
Positionings	What subject positions are available from the discourse?	What positions are possible from the constructions of identity in the narratives? What are the possibilities for positions in which the (male/female) student is: • Professional/unprofessional? • Good/bad? • Appropriate/not appropriate?
Practice	Relationship between discourse and practice. Do discursive constructions and subject positions enable/resist opportunities for action?	Do the positions enable students to succeed? Or do they hold them back – student concerned not made for this, 'not me' What is legitimised for men/women in physiotherapy and what is not? What are the obstacles to addressing the inequalities in relation to gender?
Subjectivity	Discourse and subjectivity (most speculative) – try to make links between discursive constructions and implications for subject experience	What are the consequences of the student taking up or being forced into a position (identity)? How might the students be feeling? Demotivated, motivated, empowered, enabled, restricted?

Source: Hammond (2013).

Nevertheless, there were times when I found the language of theory oppressive. Despite my attempts at coherence, my writing 'voice' changed at different phases of the thesis dependent on the experimental attempts at expression, my mood and the feedback that I so desired yet at the same time dreaded. Apart from the situations previously sited, there were other instances where I struggled to find an appropriate 'voice'. For instance, I found myself using expressions such as 'reveal' and 'expose' when presenting the participants' narratives. On reflection these terms have resonance with psychological perspectives on identity, which indicate that 'identities' are something that can be got at (that is, revealed), rather than something that is co-constructed through a relationship. As I had spent considerable time deliberating over my analysis and writing, I was embarrassed to receive feedback from my supervisors that pointed this out following several iterations. I worried that they might interpret this as either a failure to understand the methodology or a lack of care taken in my approach. It took some time to counsel myself over these thoughts, with support from friends and colleagues, and I learned to counter these tendencies and present my analysis of the narratives rather than making any truth claims of the participants that may unintentionally lead to what post-structuralists, after Bourdieu, refer to as *symbolic violence* (Dillabough, 2004).

Conclusion

Overall the search for and claims to theory in my project illustrate the complex, messy and affective (Clegg, 2008) nature of undertaking educational research. It is easy to look back and romanticise about how I mastered my journey; however, Butler's (1997: 116–17) reiteration of Althusser's conceptualisation of the simultaneous acts of *mastery* and *submission* is perennially humbling. Through this process I have simultaneously *mastered* theoretical discourse and *submitted* to the systems and structures of educational research. While this is rewarding, Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009: 15) remind us that 'theoretical language ultimately functions to create a new form of oppression'. I aim to be mindful of this in future projects and when working with colleagues on a similar journey, by seeking to create the conditions for openness and mutual respect and regularly question my own interpretation of whether or not this is the case.

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4

Troubling Critical Management Learning with Theatre and Performance Practice: Inter- and Transdisciplinary Approaches to Curriculum Design

Annouchka C. Bayley

Ruptures in the discipline: A practitioner enters the building!

> This is the ground of theatre as performance: theatre not as deployment of character, narrative and plot in the elaboration of a drama, nor as the iteration of representations as the production of so many cultural meanings, but as the scene of what appears to be coming to presence, and going from it.
>
> (Simon Bayly, 2011:16)

Rupture!

> For more than ten years I have been writing, directing, performing, and teaching theatre. Not usually either, the kind of theatre that appears in playhouses on well-lit streets, or in places that sell bottled water, wine and programmes on thick paper. My theatre has mostly existed in the dark, in factories, in bathrooms, in squats, in the underground space of a former bank vault. When it wasn't within walls it was on the street, in phone booths in far-flung places, on a hillside river in Japan, in the main 'Red Hero' square and later the steppe of Mongolia (whose capital city itself feels dropped onto the empty green-gold expanse like a graft of social skin from another planet – the road finishes a few miles past the city gate, where even the naked eye can see the gathering approach of its singular and abrupt termination . . .)

The point is this: My engagement with making theatre has always existed at the margins. I have always been on reclaimed space – temporarily claimed, that is – and as such, the framing principle that has emerged from all this marginal play has become one of critical presencing, or in other words a theory of 'becoming' itself. This presencing is not a negation of Jacques Derrida, of absence, or of putting in place an affirmation of Enlightenment principles of truth and meaning. Rather it has come to frame a burgeoning understanding of temporariness, of existing in the space *between* stable units of being, between sites of unified identity and properties of cultural construction (akin to monitoring forms that ask you to tick a single box that encapsulates your entire ethnic identity . . .). This in-between space, which has been described in some poststructural and feminist writings as a fallout of unitary representational systems – of the symbolic order, as Helene Cixous might term it (Segarra, 2010) – has been wonderfully investigated in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (2004), where 'in-between' is a space of 'neither/nor'.

Engaging the term Third Space within a critical theoretical discourse, Bhabha points towards a temporary presencing that by virtue of its slide from the grasp of the semiotic (that is, its complex quality of 'neither this/nor that'), disrupts the binaries that predicate the constructions upon which language, grammar, sign and cultural 'belonging' are built, and is in effect a process that affects rupture. Third Space, as he terms it, tears the veil-between that allows for such binary epistemic constructions. In his own words

> It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew'.
>
> (Bhabha, 2004: 55)

In *The Location of Culture* (2004), Bhabha discusses the constitution of the colonial subject via the application of binary thinking and terminologies regarding theories of being. He explicates how the so-called critically aware language of theory (and of the academy) unfortunately exists in a double bind. This double bind is predicated on the following: the language of deconstruction itself paradoxically privileges a reconstruction of neo-colonial identities. This is the slippery fish of critical theory, because although deconstruction may be used to effect ruptures

to the symbolic order and its use of power, it remains either within the bourgeois walls of the academy or becomes re-inscribed within the environment of neo-colonial/neo-liberal agendas even as it leaves the gates of the campus. It is within this double bind of theory and practice, within the field of these poststructural/postcolonial critiques, that I find myself entering a Business School with a remit to incorporate 'creativity' into the teaching, research and pedagogy of critical management learning. With my background in theatre and performance theory and making, and my orientation within the academy to 'practice-as-research' styles of teaching and learning (more on this to follow), this emigration to the Business School continues to provide me with the challenge of dislocation. Both I, and those I interact with on either side of the disciplinary fence, are suddenly, *simultaneously*, on unfamiliar territory.

But how have I 'found myself' here, a performance artist and drama conservatoire teacher concerned with the critical theoretical processes and *becomings* associated with performance at the margins? Perhaps even here, right at the start, something is amiss with the very question itself. To claim that I 'find myself' in this or that space is perhaps to renege my *participatory* responsibility in my own becoming, in my practice of the everyday. This problem begins to unravel the heart of my engagement with the teaching and learning of management in neo-liberal times. In a chapter entitled 'Denial' in his book on late capitalism *Living in the End Times* (2011), Slavoj Zizek explores the issue whereby asking 'how' one has come to be involved in something actively negates the possibility of using the passive voice when talking about that engagement. Zizek deconstructs the identity that is passively built upon phrases such as '*I found myself . . .* ' Using as an example Pablo Neruda's *Memoirs*, Zizek frames this reneging of responsibility in the description Neruda penned himself of an encounter on his travels with a low-caste Indian woman, which he clearly details, '"She let herself be led away, and was soon naked in my bed" – how did she come to be naked? Obviously, she didn't do it herself, [this is] the mystification of the victim's passivity into a divine indifference . . . ' (Zizek, 2011: 25). The point Zizek makes here, and by extension the point I am arguing, is that as a practitioner and as a critical theorist there is no 'finding oneself here' and making do. Each act and event is a critical step into a field of cultural production, in the case of Neruda outlined here, of a colonial reproduction. It was not that 'she let her herself be led away' but that Neruda led her. By using the passive voice Neruda reneges his responsibility in this action. He cannot claim to speak for the silent woman, but he can claim his own participation, his own responsibility in this personal account. Put more simply, according to

the famous feminist agenda: the personal is [always already] political. To 'find oneself' here – or there – is to renege responsibility for one's participation in cultural production. So, I have entered into a new territory. I have not 'found', but placed myself directly here. Here: the temporary, paradoxical site of a moment of rupture-in-pedagogical expectations. A suspension, a space in-between where the promise of investigating innovative, critically aware pedagogical actions in the teaching of management learning becomes an opportunity to deterritorialise *both* the discipline of management *and* the discipline of theatre/performance studies. Where such a deterritorialisation occurs in Business Studies becomes apparent in both the teaching methodology and curriculum design, where performance can operate at the level of applied theatre practice, thus creating small acts of change through which critically vibrant teaching and learning practices can be developed. Where it occurs in terms of the discipline of Theatre and Performance Studies is perhaps in the migration of theatre and performance practice to the site of the Business School. Can performance embed itself here as a doorway to enhanced criticality through creative practice – and if so does it indeed remain theatre and performance practice? As Camilleri (2009) suggests in *Performance Research*, '[T]he moment doors are open, a practice becomes amenable to commodification.' (Camilleri, 2009: 32). Camilleri goes on to argue that performance practice, once developed behind closed doors (esoteric), has become increasingly public (exoteric) via its presence (and conscription) within the academic institution. He further states that

> [W]hen a new technique is discovered, it is only a question of time before it is incorporated within the ideological circle of educational institutions, publishing industries and funding agencies . . . The challenge is to find a way of working within the institution that acknowledges the esoteric dimension of exoteric practice.
>
> (Camilleri, 2009: 34)

What follows is an exploration into ways that this deterritorialisation has taken shape, through the development of a transdisciplinary course at a UK Business School.

Rupturing space: (De)territorialisation in your local neo-liberal institution

All becomings are minoritarian; that is to say they inevitably and necessarily move into the direction of the others of classical dualism –

displacing and re-territorialising them in the process, but always and only on a temporary basis. (Braidotti, 2002: 119)

> I walk along the chrome and tiles through doors that open and close magnetically on presentation of my access card, into the atrium of the Business School building. What kind of space have I entered? In contrast to the streets, the steppe, the squats and warehouses, this space is marked initially (on my performed journey across the hall) as expensive. It reminds me of the atriums of certain banks in the City of London – not as big of course, but in its diminution, existing as a kind of homage to an 'original' architectural character, an echo that in its distance has become miniaturised both in kilometres and in (future) time. A speck on the horizon of a trajectory of graduate immersion in the market where an increasing number of Business School graduates will find employment in the years following their time here.

This echo or trace of the bank in the design of the building and its architecture is by no means accidental. It sets the 'stage' for student, teacher and administrator alike to immerse themselves in the performance of the dominant narratives associated with neo-liberal education: how to fully participate in the free market; how to play in the game, set and match of new managerialism (Lorenz, 2012) and financial capitalism. It also points to the act of presencing mentioned above. As Simon Bayly (2011) states, 'theatre deals with what comes to presence, with 'the things themselves' as they come to presence in experience, even if presence as such is never achieved, or at least maintained' (Bayly, 2011: 16).

Read in this way, what I enter into is both physically and metaphorically a presencing space of the market in its most apparent form: a neo-liberal architecture of higher education par excellence. In this sense, it is entirely performative as everything *is* exactly as it seems. Here there is no 'cover up' or pretence to be other-than a function of the neo-liberal machine. The neo-liberal underpinning of this educational endeavour does not take place behind closed doors, away from the arts studio or the radical humanities classroom, where managerial discourses are engaged with almost as if 'behind the scenes'. The school appears to *be* that which it *does*: it is a chrome, glass and tile corporate building within which its members simultaneously interpret and create the dictates of contemporary OECD (Organisation for Economic

Cooperation and Development) policies, inviting students to both fund and participate in this system. Paying for access.

Functioning thus at the neo-liberal apex, the Business School describes one of its primary remits as that of finding ways to incorporate and develop 'creativity' in its students, characterised as the business leaders of tomorrow. One such way is via the promotion of artistic and aesthetic metaphors and disciplinary idioms, including music, visual art and design, theatre and performance. Perhaps this is a sign of the times we live in, where New Public Management, which extols a combination of free market rhetorics and managerial control practices, has become fully institutionalised within all corners of Higher Education in order to achieve a primary objective of a demonstrable rise in graduate employment. Thus, critical inquiry and aesthetic theory and practice in their own right appear lower down in the ranks of its overall institutional aims (Docherty, 2011; Lorenz, 2012).

A term also often associated with managerial control practices is *efficiency* (Lorenz, 2012). As efficiency becomes institutionally synonymous with 'cost efficiency', the role of the humanities as a series of subjects leading towards marketable employment in a neo-liberal landscape becomes overshadowed somewhat by the role of sciences, not least by the role of 'Business Studies', which, described both as a science and arguably, as a value-for-money investment, promises to lead students towards swifter immersion in the market (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; Docherty, 2011; Lorenz, 2012). However, as student satisfaction becomes deeply interwoven with the concept of value for money (to the tune of £30,000 per capita and rising in the UK), it is perhaps not surprising to encounter an agenda that simultaneously places value on student engagement, student satisfaction and student-centred styles of teaching and learning. These value placements imply that studying should be more 'fun' and more 'participatory', and thus become key inclusions into disciplinary agendas. At this point, styles of teaching and learning borrowed from emancipatory agendas in the arts become ubiquitous aspects of curriculum design in service of this goal. 'Creativity' in this frame becomes a catchword for the act of borrowing from the arts – fostering interdisciplinary propositions which have seen visual, musical and performance projects appropriated into management learning and research.

This chapter focuses on a particular instance of curricular 'borrowing' from the more marginalised discipline of theatre and performance and practice-as-research styles of teaching and learning. The entire endeavour is of course highly problematic, but I argue that critically

investigating the very nature of this problematic and its reason for being now – that is, for its appearing in contemporary business education – reveals much about the changing and challenging landscape of higher education, and in particular, the changing landscape of higher educational *practices*.

Interjection!

The relationship between the university and the Business School has largely been reversed. Having undertaken, in a previous incarnation, to confer on management the academic charisma it sought in order to become respectable, the thoroughly rationalised, bureaucratised, disenchanted (in the Weberian sense) university of today, as some have said, looks to management for guidance on how to be respected (Lorenz, 2012: 628).

So, as I, with my background of performance art and drama conservatoire teaching, start to inhabit this space inscribed with such architectural and spatial echoes of the bank, I also begin to construct a position as teacher and researcher in this field of multiple pedagogical signs and symbols. This position is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the position of theatre at the margins. What does this actually mean? Existing in a literal, metaphorical and performative space of neo-liberal education, which performs its functions as if with a devotional integrity to the neo-liberal agenda, I in turn perform the function of the émigré, creating a temporary deterritorialisation of the standardised functions of this symbolic, which the building – as a *place* – demands positioning to. I ask myself: What kind of theoretical position is this? Perhaps it is a combination of the following: An interweaving of Slavoj Zizek's discussion of *interpassivity*, Homi Bhabha's *Third Space*, Gayatri Spivak's *double binds*.

I understand through the practice of walking the space (Certeau, 1984) and *attempting* to read the space (Lefebvre, 1974) that to use a process of rendering, that is, to use theatre to uncritically render data or narrative (the face value of performance work), would be to become absorbed entirely into the space I am in. To be territorialised. However, to remain deterritorialised but yet participatory I must reimagine ways to work with the critical processes used in theatre and performance making, to reimagine processes of teaching Business Studies. In my teaching, these processes start with an investigation of how interpassivity operates at the managerial level and how interpassivity is taught – subtly – as part of a business curriculum. This is where the vibrant field of Critical Management Pedagogy, a subdivision of Business Studies

with its own vital research community, becomes an integral aid in the development of new pedagogical practice in management learning. The position adopted – one of a marginal, a deterritorialised person, field or discipline – begins to take on a somewhat postcolonial feel in terms of its analytical genre. Instead of engaging solely with the problematics of appropriation here (or indeed of colonisation – as Business Studies in this instance seemingly 'colonises' theatre and performance, and where, in this analogy, performance studies grafts itself onto the dominant order by undergoing a series of adaptations, mutations and translations when displaced and 'migrated' to Business Studies) it may be of use to examine the processes of deterritorialisation of the discipline, and how this act comes to perform moments of critical rupture.

> Even though it has been such a radical change, the colonization of higher education by management has never been openly discussed, as the hegemony of neoliberalism makes such discussion impossible, even after the financial crisis.
>
> (Lorenz, 2012: 608)

Thus, I argue that it is important to investigate such strange and problematic activities via a reading, not of the coloniser (where we have plenty of discourses fermenting on how neo-liberalisation affects the role of critical inquiry and even further the role of humanities, let alone more 'marginalised' subjects such as, say, theatre) but rather, of the 'colonised' position. That is to say, an important reading emerges when using aspects of postcolonial theory to frame what is occurring at the disciplinary level in this situation as it appears on the margins.

Such a theoretical framing also arguably allows for an active, participatory approach to emerge. This is contradictory to a criticality that passively remains at the level of analysing 'the coloniser' position alone, rather than analysing acts of rupture, which resist the dominant discourse. To bemoan a view from above, in place of examining the network of rupturing, viral practices occurring from below, may well point to the danger of engaging exclusively at the level of critique – until *all* action becomes muted in the fear of breaking a deconstructionary silence. Risking interruption of such a silence, how does a 'migrant' discipline of theatre and performance find a new, critical home in a business school? And perhaps more subversively, what acts of rupture does such a move allow for and indeed initiate? How does the dominant disciplinary order of business and management learning become *home* for the kinds of critical engagement and pedagogic practice associated

with theatre and performance studies? I will start by examining what levels of rupture may be in operation here: (1) rupture of identities: students' identity as 'business students'; (2) my identity as a performance specialist; (3) the identity of the building as a place of research (rather than a performance site). Each of these ruptures (no doubt there are many more) might be described as small but nonetheless significant acts of destabilising *nomenclature*. This is significant because, as exhaustive interpretations of J.L Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) have shown, the function of *naming* has immense sociopolitical importance. By squeezing complex, shifting ontologies into names, identity formation becomes countable, representable, disciplined and thus politicised. Engaging in ruptures of the nomenclature of disciplines allows for interesting pedagogical dynamics to emerge that impact upon innovations in teaching and learning. Instead of either working to resist neo-liberal 'colonisation' or remain at the level of representing or rendering one discipline's practice within another, rupture allows for moments of transdisciplinarity rather than just of multi or even interdisciplinarity (Kershaw & Nicholson, 2011; Monk et al., 2011). Thus attempting to exist in the space between disciplines, that is, neither taking on the language of business studies nor remaining within the language of performance, I find myself instead engaging with a hybridisation of disciplinary languages functioning at the level of curriculum design.

> The first performative articulation of this theorising-in-development takes place in the lift of the Business School atrium. I encourage students to undertake a project involving speaking a received text set by the School's Dean (Shakespearian) in the lift of the building itself. As students and onlookers are ferried up and down in the main elevator their peers enact the scene given in this most temporary of places. As part of this first performance project, I encourage students to critically discuss the 'meaning' of the act of performing in the lift. Drawing from site-specific performance theory, I attempt to engage students with notions of hybridity, temporariness and marginality associated with the quality of the space itself. Evidently this is no classroom; neither, however, is it a theatre. Rather, it is a literal space of transit, performing at once the vital function of transporting students in between classes and places; existing vertically along the central and necessary spine of the building; continually in motion, making short pauses to give and receive people at different stages in their careers, as well as simply within the building. Simultaneously, it

> acts as metaphor for the deterritorialised position of arts in a business school: nomadic, multiple, vital, between spaces.

This space and students' discursive engagement with their own responses, within the interpretively rich space of the elevator, epitomised the start of my journey into the role transdisciplinarity might play in a critically aware business school. Such a transdisciplinarity functions differently from multi- or interdisciplinary practices, where the former places different disciplines side by side in a curricular scheme (such as a weekly lecture given by different disciplinary specialists), and where the latter seeks to see how two disciplines interact, whilst still preserving integral, recognisable identities of difference. An example of this might be when a student-manager is asked to conduct an orchestra and then draw comparisons between languages of conducting and languages of management. Transdisciplinarity, however, operates more at the level of hybridised epistemological and ontological *processes* (methodologies) rather than solely at the level of effects and outcomes (for example, essays, presentations or papers). Such *processes* might be described as stemming from the interaction between, say, collaborative processes of performance-based devising (how the world and subjects' interaction in it is conceived at the ontological level, and how therefore students will construct and present creative approaches to knowledge of this world through performance), and how collaborative or individual conceptions of managerialism in a neo-liberal context are conceived (and how students go about collecting and representing this 'data'). Rather than interrogating each other and then choosing one *single* disciplinary language to represent the findings/research of the interrogation, a transdisciplinary project operates in the neither/nor space between the disciplines, creating something of a hybridised language that is more-than interdisciplinary in that both have been altered at the level of methodological (or here pedagogical) research processes to create something new. Consequently, what emerges are hybrid articulations and representations of research processes that have ruptured the usual representational languages of both traditions in the production of a third.

Transdisciplinary curriculum design: Practice-as-research methodologies

Thus far, the level of 'rupture' discussed remains at the level of ontology or relational positionality: positionality of the students, teachers

and the shared space they inhabit. Discussing this critically, students are first invited to begin to engage with the realities of their position and how they participate in structuring such positions in a literal space already awash with echoes of the bank, the market and all manner of attendant meanings. The second part of this investigation asks: What happens when we investigate rupture at the level of ideologies and double binds (Spivak, 2012) – loosely defined here as pairs of opposites that create their identity *by virtue of being opposed* to each other. Such double binds might be loosely identified as existing in the following forms: theory and practice; arts and sciences; corporate and academic research interests. My contention is that at the level of institutional ontology – and therefore directly at the level of the theories and practices governing pedagogical choices – the unpacking of such double binds can be approached through Homi Bhabha's frame of Third Space semiotics (2004). Third Space is necessary here as it reads right into the rhizomatic roots and veins of a double bind. By reading curriculum design via a theoretical framing that de/repositions double binds through an ontology of neither/nor ('neither this' 'nor that' but the problematic and paradoxical Third Space that lies in between and simultaneously within), nomenclature and the performativity of names are *temporarily* displaced in order to allow for experimentation and change at the level of process, rather than merely at the level of rendering content.

Returning now to the function of the transdisciplinary – which differs from interdisciplinarity in that, rather than accommodating respective disciplinary languages and finding points of correlation within that frame, it seeks to rupture both disciplinary languages by hybridising processes and create something new – I argue that despite the best intentions of the transdisciplinary, certain double binds act to reaffirm dominant social orders. Indeed, a vital question I engaged with in order to form the spine of the development of a practice-as-research approach to *Critical Issues in Law and Management* is as follows: Does the notion of the 'transdisciplinary' necessarily, even if sometimes accidentally, operate to reinstate neo-liberal approaches, for example to 'empower' students to deal with risk, multiple languages of the market and global capital (within a consistent frame of increasing student debt, financial capitalism, and 'austerity'?), whereby taking responsibility for themselves means, actually, to work towards increasing the efficiency of their academic output in a Business School context, rather than their ability to critically evaluate and participate in knowledge-making as an 'end' in itself?

I argue that though repetition of dominant social discourses in the transdisciplinary sphere is neither erased nor alternatively offered as a one-stop solution that savvy students can learn to 'play' (Spivak, 2012), Third Space-inspired, transdisciplinary pedagogic 'interventions' can equip students with relevant critical experiences that lead to the production of enhanced critical *participation* in their epistemological choices, rather than the taking on of employability techniques 'wholesale'. To return to my earlier point, such participation is premised on the idea of drawing students' attention to the myriad reasons they have 'not *found* but *positioned* themselves here', in this space, in this time. By creating both a theoretical and a physical space for students to explore the process by which they make choices during the various exercises they commit to in each class, my aim is to invite students to reflect on the forces that impact on their choice-making and further, the forces they use to affirm or rupture the choices made within their Business Studies degrees. Thus, my intention is not to affect a critical awareness that leads to ultimately to passivity (in the wake of deconstructionary processes of engagement with the course material), but to attempt a move pedagogically towards active participation, choice-making, and critical reflection-in-action.

It is important to note that the course design I embarked upon interwove both interdisciplinary modes of teaching and learning – where theatre and performance *languages* interacted with those of Business Studies – and attempted transdisciplinary modes. These transdisciplinary modes emerged as the course moved through hybridisation processes and began to produce new disciplinary identities that were neither entirely of one disciplinary *language* nor of another (more to follow).

Several beginning exercises, drawn from the teaching and learning of awareness of space and observational dynamics (usually more associated with the performer's studio than the academic classroom) were interwoven into the general arc of the course design and its more traditional content. Thus, I developed exercises to slowly draw students' attention to factors subtly embedded within their own assumption of positionality both within the institution and the wider world. Such factors include readings of the space they learn in, the spaces they leave behind when they enter the building (whether physical or digital) the objects they use (and their complex position within forces of production), the interrelationships they engage in (with classmates, administrative staff and teachers) and how knowledge is controlled or how it 'flows' within the classroom space (Ball, 2013).

I argue that the key to introducing such spaces of critical reflexivity lies in the manner in which the invitation to participate in this kind of pedagogical journey is made to students. The non-traditional way of using creative performance and devising practices to approach – here *Critical Issues in Law and Management* – will therefore be engaged with slowly and must always be reflected upon in the classroom. This will be accompanied by class discussions on how the exercises directly engage students with:

1. generating knowledge that is directly related to the case-based material which forms the traditional course content.
2. generating self-knowledge of students' own critical positioning with regards to their analysis of the course material.
3. generating knowledge about the critical networks of knowledge that are simultaneously created and ruptured when students work together in the (here physical) creation of argumentation. This in itself points to challenging students to embody their knowledge in present-time refigurations of arguments in non-traditional ways (for example, digital performance, live art installation, improvisation, script generation).
4. generating practical knowledge on how to critically articulate arguments and analysis in the moment of feedback to peers. The problematic engaged with here is how to respond maturely to critical knowledge when that very knowledge is presented outside the usual canonical style of academic language (Cixous in Segarra, 2010).

Postscript!

At the end of all this students need to be encouraged to 'ravel back up' as it were into academic language, writing a critical report or essay analysing the various critical thematics (including teaching and learning aims) of the course material.

The 'ravelling up' is important here, since to remain in the 'play' stage of knowledge generation is perhaps to remain at the level of paradox, immersed in discussion of the double bind between theory and practice, and thus disengaged from participatory action. The point is rather to rupture forms of passivity in teaching and learning, implicating the knowledge generated around the course material in students' creative approaches to the cultural production of space, object, text (digital or physical) with which they engage every day, not just to render them into a passivity that comes from removing themselves from the language of the academy altogether!

These forms of knowledge creation link directly with the growing body of work that is known as *practice-as-research* in the academy. Practice-as-research gained increased significance in the UK following the PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) project conducted at Bristol University in 2001–2006 (Piccini, 2002). Through a range of outputs, PARIP invited numerous scholars and creative practitioners to examine the generation of knowledge within creative arts practice and its impact on ways of thinking about the location and flow of knowledge in the academy. Working with the premise that knowledge is developed through a polyphony of contexts (academic, creative, embodied, social), rather than just by standing on the shoulders of (the) giants who have gone before (Smith & Dean, 2011: 48), practice-as-research argues that research work that is labour undertaken in the context of the artist's studio (or indeed in the artistic languages of practice) impacts directly upon the development of critically aware scholarly knowledge. Practice-as-Research therefore problematises the notion that academic knowledge is developed through both archival research and research-led teaching, by way of placing an equal importance on the use of multiple, sometimes discordant forms of creative practice in an academic context; hence the rise of the term 'artist-scholar' (Smith & Dean, 2011: 48). These forms often arise by moving from the 'unknown to the known' (Sullivan in Smith & Dean, 2011: 47), rather than from unearthing documents that move research work from a canonical or received 'known' to a re-rendering or further report of that which is already known. Indeed,

> If documentation were the same as knowledge, there would be no need for pedagogy. We could simply tell our students to read a large list of books, and then they would be scholars. Pedagogy is the other essential dimension of academic knowledge. It distinguishes an active research community from an archive or library. To possess a document is not to possess knowledge.
>
> (Spatz, 2001: 55)

Practice-as-research thus engages with the problematisation of the traditional flow of knowledge, moving it from didactic exchange (teacher/archive to student – akin to downloading from a computer source) to a flow that is multidirectional and subject to interruptions, iterations and ruptures. These interruptions, iterations and ruptures controversially take the form not just of dialogue and critical exchange (as with the seminar style of teaching and learning), but also in the form of multiple registers of engagement, research and response. Such

polyphony includes speaking in artistic languages as well as scholarly languages. The difference is that the languages of engagement used are all given representational space within the academy and the text. They are not used to generate knowledge and then, in the final moments, 'air-brushed out'. This is a notion which perhaps has resonances with those already embedded within management learning discourses, where

> [R]esearch processes employed by academics usually contain a wealth of creative, non-standard components that are later removed or glossed over when presenting the research as researchers construct homogeneity in heterogeneous phenomena. By doing so they simplify the phenomena at hand… the enactment of organizational practice is obscured and the logic of practice is closed off.
>
> (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011: 341)

At this moment, however, I should distinguish the inherent difference between practice-*as*-research versus practice-*and*-research. The work undertaken by practice-*as*-researchers within creative arts discourses does not remain at the level of inquiry into how embodied, creative practice can produce scholarly knowledge as an end, but rather, examines the inherent kinds of knowledge at work within practice itself (Spatz, 2001).

The use of practice-as-research in management learning contexts begins with a quest for scholarly knowledge, for sure, but with an investigative interest (beyond the scope of this chapter), into how the knowledge produced may carry into the working lives of graduates. Drawing from Sutherland's (2012) consideration of aesthetic reflexivity in the management setting: does aesthetic – or here more specifically creative, performance based practice – have the ability to generate 'memories with momentum' in graduates (Sutherland, 2012)? The next step in the puzzle of research into the pedagogical role of practice-as-research in management learning contexts would perhaps be a longitudinal study into just such an arena. For now I will instead detail the pedagogical practices I developed in the hope of inspiring debate and further experimentation in this field.

Rupture: The design of Critical Issues in Law and Management

> I wind my way along the endlessly turning hallways toward a pedagogical meeting with the module leader. Momentarily, I am distracted

from the questions turning in my mind as to what she will expect from me. This hallway, like all the hallways in this building, is a precise replica of those on every level. The doors, the lighting, the carpets: homogeneous. I feel as if I have walked into a system of mirrors. I experiment with the thought that in this system of mirrors, simultaneously another 'me' could well be walking along each of the building's levels. What are her/my thoughts about testing out a transdisciplinary pedagogy in the module starting next week? Is she a mimetic replica of the 'me' here, or are there infinitesimal differences that mean that if I were to break through in a moment of rupture and see myself coming back down the other way, we would meet and talk? Perhaps the other 'me' has arrived in the building straight from the theatre department. If she were to meet the 'me' who had been in the Business School for years, what would we talk about? Would we preserve a space between us, which, as in her book *To be Two*, Luce Irigaray suggests is the only way to safeguard the other in encounter? Or would we merge into one consciousness that was neither of one discipline, nor of the other, but of a Third? Luckily, the moment I shake hands with the module leader in real time, these thoughts are dispelled. I do not share them with her; rather, we talk about transdisciplinarity, practice-as-research and criticality in management learning. Perhaps I have indeed just shared my thoughts with another version of me, only in a different (slightly less mad) language?

Codex

Critical Issues in Law and Management (CILM) is a compulsory course, currently taught to undergraduate finalists of the business school. Begun as Critical Issues in Management (a course that continues to run in the present) CILM gives students the opportunity to combine investigations into managerial and legal theories and practices. The course began with John Mingers' (2000) call to develop a critical approach to *manag-ing* as a practice (where the gerund *-ing* foregrounds the notion of practice) rather than *manage-ment* as a hierarchical system (of names, or nouns which bring notions of fixity to the foreground of meaning) with the aim of 'synthesizing the often competing demands of *morality* (our duties and responsibilities towards others), *ethics* (our concern with our own worth and self-identity), *pragmatics* (the need to be effective in our own activities)' (Mingers, 2000: 222). Based on the premise that 'proposals for action involve implicit assumptions or validity claims that should

be questioned' (Mingers, 2000: 225), Mingers identifies four areas that the course must encourage students to address: *rhetoric* – the manner and logics of the representation of the argument; *tradition* – values that are taken for granted or considered factual or acceptable and standard social practice; *authority* – assumptions on legitimacy and privilege of viewpoint; *objectivity* – the validity of information (ibid.) What made Mingers' work exceptional was that he also stressed the importance of what he called an 'interdisciplinary' approach to achieve this kind of critical thinking or critical evaluation of validity claims pertaining to management practices. Thus, CILM was built upon this approach, and had undergone several years of being pedagogically experimented with, within Mingers' remit, by different teachers associated with the course.

When I was invited to work on the pedagogical development of CILM I decided to combine not just inter- but also transdisciplinary approaches to the investigation of manag-*ing* practices and theories, drawing from a combination of practice-as-research style pedagogical exercises which I wove into the fabric of Mingers' original argument for the course, as outlined in his article upon which the course recommendations and remit were based. As the second term would be largely devoted to law, I was invited to develop a curriculum for the first term specifically. My first observation of the course material was that it was built around case-study narratives. Traditionally, business students develop a corpus of knowledge on business practice via real-life case scenarios, which they analyse (individually or in groups) and comment on. From a performance-based perspective I noted that this working practice perhaps occupies a similar position to the research and performance development practices associated with *issues-based* theatre.

As its name suggests, issues-based theatre involves the selection of a current social issue that is then researched and explored and finally presented in a public performance. Often, the creators of issues-based theatre will conduct extensive interviews with relevant groups and individuals, developing rich oral histories or verbatim scripts, where the literal recorded responses of interviewees form the script – see, for example, the work of the UK playwright David Hare (Hammond and Steward, 2008). Drawing from this, I decided to introduce students to their cases via this approach to the investigation and presentation of the critical issues present in the extant case material. Using both methods of research akin to issues-based theatre creation *and* methods associated with case-study research, students embarked on a unique pedagogical journey designed to attempt to rupture preconceived notions (or double binds) existing about theory and practice, performance and business

studies, and studio based creative research and academic research. These I divided into pedagogical stages, as follows; presenting perhaps the beginnings of a model with which to further develop the arena of critical approaches to management learning (with its attendant invitation to rupture in due course).

Stage 1: *Learning to identify event and narrative*. What in the material is the main event (Badiou & Zizek, 2009) around which the various stakeholder perspectives are premised?

The group worked on various exercises on this theme, including splitting into small groups and receiving an effervescent Vitamin C tablet and one glass of water. I asked them to work collaboratively to agree on how they would drop the tablet into the water. Their primary research question was to identify what the moment of event was as distinct from moments of narrative build. Students discussed the visible difference between the still water (before the tablet was introduced) and the changing of the water (when the tablet began dramatically fizzing and dissolving). They decided that the moment of change, or the event, could be identified as the moment the tablet 'hit' the water. This moment became an indicative metaphor for 'event', where 'narrative' (both in case study and in the rendering of performance) was here related to context, surrounding and storyline; and 'event' was the singular moment of change (or causal action). We then discussed their responses to the research question (what is the main event?) as a group, spending a little time identifying and evaluating the various approaches the students used to working collaboratively in this basic research exercise (including observational techniques, discussion, movement, interruption, listening and decision-making).

A further exercise involved students improvising without words the actions of a ball being kicked through a window and the ensuing situation. Students were given the remit of making it clear to the audience what they wanted to foreground as the main 'event', and what actions formed part of the narrative built up around it. The group therefore had to physically render the characters, the ball, the window smashing and the responses with their bodies, thus beginning to gently engage with using physical performance as a method of collaboratively understanding and identifying the difference between event and narrative. The exercise was further designed to encourage students to notice the difference between character performance (or 'acting') and non-character-based performance (representing a ball and a window breaking). I introduced these themes via very quick exercises drawn from Jacques Lecoq's work on devising 'materials' (Lecoq, 2002).

The purpose here was to encourage the use of objects, space and physical performance to help participants devise research using non-traditional processes; exploring the differences between event, narrative and critical inquiry into stakeholder perspectives.

Stage 2: *Critical framing of the case material*. During this stage the four tools of critical investigation, as outlined by Mingers, were used to frame the critical research objectives of the course: objectivity, authority, tradition and rhetoric.

Students had already been given their first case to research and present (via performance practice) and were tasked with presenting it to the rest of the group. Furthermore, all groups as a whole were asked to demonstrate their engagement with Mingers' critical themes via the way they gave feedback on each small group's presentation. Simply put, each small group would perform the case, with the rest sitting together as one audience. After each presentation, the audience would then critically feedback using the four tools, paying attention to elements such as 'voice' or 'text' and how this related to Mingers' conception of *rhetoric*. Furthermore, the audience would then discuss exemplars of *tradition* emerging in the dynamics between characters and engage with how the performance used the organisation of space and the power relations implicit in the organisation of spaces (Foucault, 1977; Lefebvre, 1974) to represent issues of *authority*. Lastly, they would discuss how tools such as audiovisual material or objects created opportunities for discussion on *objectivity*. Such pairings acted only as guidelines, since students discovered through peer feedback and discussion that objects could be used to establish *tradition*, voice/text could be used to establish *authority*; and so on. All students worked on the same case (regarding the Notting Hill Carnival), and so were well placed to compare and contrast each group's approach with their own, bringing issues of plurality of perspective to the fore in the practice(s) of feedback.

Stage 3: *Going deeper with critical practice-as-research and methods of cultural production*. Having drawn students' attention to how object, space and voice/text are saturated in meanings that can be critically analysed through Mingers' frame for critical inquiry, students were given a new case to work on with the remit of further deepening their critical use of object, space, voice/text. As before, they would demonstrate this via small group performances and wider group feedback on the performances developed and presented by their peers.

Particularly interesting here was the dexterity students had by now acquired in their use of performance 'languages' to develop critical research. Thus their presentations became more comedic, with many

more intertextual references, including, for instance, the interweaving of references to contemporary pop culture into the presentations. Rather than portray 'serious' newsroom-style performances (which had characterised many of their previously performed cases), now they were using characters and technologies from their own lifeworlds outside the management learning classroom: satirical homages to news items and pop music icons, references to viral YouTube videos, Facebook as a digital performance media – including an entire presentation on Facebook in real time, which students logged into in the classroom using their phones. In this way the students' work itself provoked the impetus for peer-led classroom debate on critical discussions of cultural production as a whole, which became woven into the feedback part of the sessions. Thus, from out of the peer discussions I was able to further draw students' attention to how they *participated* in processes of cultural production in everyday life, and how awareness of such participation might be understood in the context of their management learning experience, both in the here and now and in later life.

Furthermore, these class-time conversations provided the critical frame for their next presentation, with students explicitly bringing their awareness of cultural production in popular media and its technologies into their final assessed presentations. I would argue here that students' use of comedy might be read as a tentative entry into more radical forms of critical performance, within a well-established tradition of comedy and radical social commentary stretching back to the origins of Western theatre: Greek comedy.

Stage 4: *Ravelling back up into the language of academic research.* At this point in the arc of the course, it was time to (re)introduce a moment of more traditional scholarly critical reflection. Students' final assessed presentations would be accompanied by a reflexive outline, written collaboratively in their groups. This outline would comprise of: (1) the research question; (2) a brief presentation of the different critical perspectives they would manifest in the performance; (3) how they would use object, space, voice/text to performatively 'discuss' the critical issues implicit in the case; (4) what their group research and devising 'process' was and how they 'managed' it.

Here 'academic writing' became the primary form through which students could articulate the complex and diverse research processes and products they had produced. By reflecting on their practice and how they themselves had developed a demonstrable critical corpus or toolkit over the term, students could not only see for themselves how practice had informed research (in line with practice-*and*-research processes as

outlined above). They came to understand how research had informed their practice, both at the level of presentation and performance, and also at the level of group management.

Stage 5: ***RUPTUROUS PERFORMANCES!*** Students chose a highly contentious environmental and political focus – the Hinkley Point C nuclear power plant, which in 2011 attracted much in the way of protest and media coverage in the UK – for their final presentations. They used immersive performance techniques, creating platforms for audience participation in and with the space, with objects handled and even discussion (voice/text), all of which were used to import an improvisational quality to the work. Thus the groups articulated their engagement with others via the performative materials and interventions they devised, implicating the audience in the cases themselves.

The assessment process as scribbled margins

> I walk into the classroom to assess the final presentations of the undergraduates taking CILM. But this is no longer a classroom. The space has become exemplary of theatre at the margins. A well-equipped site of traditional learning has been transformed. It remains simultaneously the same and totally other. The architecture, the position, the chirruping identity card unit – which beeps if the door is left open too long in order to prevent intruders (from other disciplines?): these are the same. But by their actions these are not Business Students! The entire space is filled with the kind of electric buzz to be found in theatres and performance spaces before a show. By site, by context, by discipline, these are undergraduates of the Business School, but here there are multiple, creative and collaborative identities being voiced. I move in further and am at the entrance point to the classroom/performance space. Suddenly I am stopped at the door. 'This is a security check. May we check your bag please, Madam?' The tables have been turned. I the 'teacher', the 'assessor', the 'authority', am at the mercy of the performer-students. In this brief moment I am the suspect one; the one waiting to be assessed. As if to say 'your authority is at question here, this is OUR space, what do you bring to our space? Let us check your bag and see what's really inside.'

Another group asked the audience to create a performance space by holding up fairy lights on a wire in a circle, which were then illuminated, symbolising the decision to go ahead with the Hinkley Point C power plant. Another created a conference-style series of tables manned

by performers 'pitching' different political sides at an imagined open forum, inviting the audience to walk around and decide whose pitch they 'bought into'. Another provided audience members with electronic voting devices, only later revealing (to some uproar and debate) that the results were predetermined! One group addressed the audience from the future: as a Warwick alumnus now caught in a political minefield at cabinet. One recorded and photographed a performed demonstration in the public streets of the university's local town.

> How does one assess in this context? Of course I have been given my guidelines by the module leader, who has indeed taken a leap of pedagogical faith by deciding to incorporate non-traditional, performance-based styles of teaching and learning into this module. I know that I am looking for a combination of content analysis and clear representation. But does my voice as interdisciplinary educator become airbrushed out now? Risk; collaborative practice; engagement; the poetics of representation; the use and subversion of cultural icons and items; object manipulation; voice work; multiple forms of writing . . . these are all vital parts of the students' work, all deliberately chosen and critically discussed by them in their outlines and engaged with at a level of practice which reveals a demonstrable level of commitment and passion for the work. And yet none of this features in our marking criteria. In clear lettering I complete the form about the work itself, but in the (literal) margins of the assessment sheet I fill the page with observations on the students-at-work in a transdisciplinary context . . . Perhaps this is illustrative of Camilleri's (2009) distinction between the 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' nature of a dual-heritage of disciplines in process? Even this piece of writing here exists in parentheses as if to say: This is different from the 'real' writing of institutional typefaces. I am speaking in parentheses because my context now requires a different register, a different voice. Perhaps the space-in-between, the transdisciplinary, occurs when both these typefaces disappear . . .

I argue that performance methodologies of this kind, accompanied by the more traditional written outlines of each group's critical decision-making, indicates a burgeoning *participatory* critical engagement with others-in-the-world via performance practice and critically reflexive choices about those practices. To this effect, any curriculum built in this manner requires a broader framework (?) for assessment, if it is to capture the complex processes at work in students' engagement with

the material. Perhaps it will be possible to give equal weight to *all* an assessor's scribbles – the ones inside the comments box that appears on the assessor's page– and to the scribbles that take shape outside those margins . . .

Conclusions/beginnings

In summation, by using practice-as-research techniques to trouble the double bind between 'theory and practice', 'arts and (social) sciences' inherent in higher education settings, students are encouraged to inhabit an educational space that exists between disciplines. This space in-between – here neither management learning nor theatre and performance, but something inter – if not potentially transdisciplinary – problematises disciplinary rhetorics that may indirectly prevent students from acquiring and articulating an awareness of their positioning in the world as participants in cultural production. Such a positioning directly impacts on their engagement with models of management learning in a business school, whose remit is to 'prepare the business leaders of the future' by asking: What future do they wish to create? What future do they wish to participate in?

Significant here is my own awareness of some students' anxiety at having to work in the space between disciplines. To exist even for a moment in trans it, on the margins (or perhaps between marginalities and authorities set up in either disciplinary tradition) is by definition disruptive of traditional ways that students encounter education in institutions. However, engaging with critical perspectives at the level of intellectual appreciation and appropriation alone does not always allow for the same level of participatory engagement and self-reflexive awareness of how business students might participate in the processes of knowledge-making and production in – and beyond – the academy. The focus on participation here becomes a means by which to not only critically engage students, but also fellow teachers and pedagogues looking to develop new platforms; to loosen the binary between the 'inside' of the academy and the 'outside' of the graduate world. As Paolo Friere (1974) states:

> If [wo]men are unable to perceive critically the themes of their time, and thus intervene actively in reality, they are carried along in the wake of change . . . and society beginning to move from one epoch to another requires the development of an especially flexible, critical spirit . . . [C]ontradictions increase between the ways of being,

> understanding, behaving, and valuing which announce the future. As contradictions deepen, the 'tidal wave' becomes stronger and its climate increasingly emotional.
>
> (Friere, 1974: 6)

Finally, thinking through my own pedagogical positioning within a Business School, I have come to the following conclusion-beginning: ruptures in practices within the site of education itself simultaneously mirror and necessitate a rupture in educational theory. Such a statement suggests a mutuality of effect in the spheres of theory and practice as practice thinks through research and research thinks through practice. In the space between the double bind of theory and practice lies a kind of rupturous polyphony in pedagogical work, neither entirely present and countable nor entirely ideal or ideological, but one that is nonetheless open to change.

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5

Lessons from Te Whāriki: Insights into the Relevance of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in the Debate about 'Schoolification' of Early Childhood

Karen McNerney

Background to my research: EYFS as the starting point

This research project arose when the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (England. Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2008), the curriculum for children under the age of five in England, became statutory for all settings. As an early childhood ('pre-school') teacher, I had difficulties implementing EYFS because it appeared to contain fundamental contradictions; a view echoed by others in the wider research community (Anning, 2009; Wood, 2010). On the one hand, EYFS refers to learning though play, which by its very nature focuses on the *processes* of learning, but on the other, EYFS is inherently an *outcomes*-based curriculum. Another contradiction is that EYFS refers to the value of child-initiated learning, but at the same time the curriculum is divided into subject domains that prescribe content knowledge (Moss, 2007; Anning, 2009). My concern was augmented by the pervading 'schoolification' (OECD, 2006) discourse within which EYFS was implemented. Children in England begin compulsory schooling earlier than their European counterparts, officially aged five in England compared to aged six in most of Europe (Sharp, 2002) and this already has implications for teachers in the early years sector. Furthermore, the national debate about improving children's performance in standardised assessments has led to a 'top-down' approach in which formal

teaching methods have been advocated for younger children (Wood & Bennett, 2006). As a result, a 'ready for school' culture emerged in which formal education practices for children under five were seen as a way to boost later academic performance (Rose, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

EYFS is unusual in prescribing early literacy and numeracy for pre-school-aged children (Bertram & Pascal, 2002), but the English Government is not isolated in bowing to political pressure perceived as a means to reverse failing academic standards. The Head Start programme in the USA 'gave rise to the pernicious belief that education is a race – and that the earlier you start, the earlier you finish' (Elkind & Whitehurst, 2001: 10). The subsequent 'No Child Left Behind' legislation (Bush, 2001) promoted the teaching of literacy and numeracy at a younger age. Indeed, educators 'across the globe face the same pressure to start teaching academic skills at a progressively younger age at the expense of traditional early childhood activities . . . caused by concerns about . . . children falling behind in their later academic learning' (Bodrova, 2008: 358).

There are doubts as to whether exposing children to a formal curriculum at a younger age generates the desired results of better performance later in their schooling. It would appear that an earlier start to formal learning can give rise to gains in the short-term (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Camilli et al., 2010) but long-term benefits are not sustained (Elkind & Whitehurst, 2001; Sharp, 2002; Barnett et al., 2006; Stephen, 2006; Burger, 2010; National Audit Office, 2012). My concern is that an early start to school and early formal skills may be ineffective in the long-term; moreover it also involves the omission of other important learning experiences which could have serious implications for future learning. Evidence has indeed suggested that this is the case: 'earlier exposure to academic skills appeared to be associated with higher anxiety, lower self-esteem and less motivation towards learning' (Sharp, 2002: 11); and too much formal learning at too young an age stifles young children's 'learnacy' (Claxton, 2000), which is a term that describes the desire to learn and willingness to continue to do so. In addition, the formal nature of some young children's experiences has been at the 'cost of their natural curiosity, creative expression, confidence and love of learning' (Aasen & Waters, 2006: 123). These claims are concerning not least because exposure to early formal learning would be pointless if the benefits are not long-lasting and if it *adversely* affects children's dispositions and motivation to learn.

Different views of childhood

> Children's lives are lived through childhoods constructed for them by adult understandings of childhood and what children are and should be.
>
> (Mayall, 1996: 1)

Early childhood education has been subject to global government involvement. One of the purposes of an intense focus on early childhood education is that research nationally and internationally has revealed that attendance at a high-quality pre-school programme is not only beneficial for children's attainment and social outcomes but that these benefits can be long-lasting (Sylva et al., 2004; Alexander, 2010; Camilli et al., 2010). Early childhood education also has the potential to enhance the social and economic infrastructure of a country (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007: 1). In this way, childhood is conceptualised as *what it can do for society* in terms of the labour market – in encouraging mothers back to work as well as preparing children as members of a future workforce, particularly children from the most deprived backgrounds – and for growth in the economy that this investment in human capital might promote (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007).

The philosophy underpinning this research is a rejection of treating children only as redemptive agents (Moss, 2007) who can 'save the world' and solve the problems of society through the intervention of adults. This construction of childhood is akin to what Freire (1970) criticised as a 'banking' model of education in which children are empty vessels needing to be filled with knowledge on their journey of realisation from incompleteness to maturity (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007). Whilst formal education for children may act as a preparation for adulthood, education should also recognise children as active agents in their own childhoods, co-constructors not receivers of knowledge, human *beings* rather than human *becomings* (Qvortrup, 1994). The starting point for this research is the inherent tension between a philosophy that views childhood as an important state in its own right and the reality of the prescribed early childhood curriculum in England, EYFS, which emphasises childhood as preparation for school (Fleer, Anning and Cullen, 2009).

Neo-liberal discourse surrounding EYFS

EYFS is implemented within a neo-liberal reform agenda, with its associated vocabulary such as 'development', 'quality', 'readiness for

school', 'best practice', 'benchmark' and 'outcomes' (Moss, 2007: 229). Broadhead, Wood and Howard (2010) remind us that:

> [...] we once had a theoretically based, educational play tradition in the UK which derived from the empirical work of, for example, Susan Isaacs and Margaret McMillan, and their followers [...]. This educational play heritage was subsequently eroded by the culture and climate of educational reform from the late 1980s onwards (Broadhead, 2004), to the extent that the status of play in education has been at its lowest point in twenty years.
>
> (pp. 180–81)

The reform agenda that emphasises the importance of the outcomes rather than the processes of education has been described as a dominant discourse (Moss, 2007). Dominant discourses, or what Foucault termed 'regimes of truth', are instruments of power that serve a regulatory function (Dalhberg, Moss & Pence, 2007) which generate an authoritative consensus about what needs to be done and how it should be achieved (MacNaughton, 2005). Ball has described how the reform agenda requires individuals to respond to targets, indicators and evaluations to an extent that 'We become uncertain about the reasons for actions. Are we doing this because it is important, because we believe in it, because it is worthwhile? Or is it being done ultimately because it will be measured or compared?' (Ball, 2003: 220).

A view of childhood influenced by the reform agenda is one in which 'outputs' and notions of 'quality' can be measured in a way that the processes of education, such as learning through play, are not easily quantifiable.

Sociocultural theory as a contrast to EYFS in England

EYFS is based on the premise that a 'universal set of standards' (England. Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2008: 7) can be applied to all settings. Conversely, from a postmodern viewpoint knowledge is seen as 'perspectival and ambiguous, contextualized and localized, incomplete and paradoxical, and produced in diverse ways' (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007: 55), which would suggest that child development is not universal but rather context dependent.

An alternative view of childhood in which development cannot be separated from its context is sociocultural theory (Anning, Cullen & Fleer, 2009). Sociocultural theory, based on the work of Russian

psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978; 1986), sees learning and development as products of society and culture so that there is not one universal view of child development but many versions that are contextually bound (Edwards, 2003). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is central to this project because of the way in which it allows childhood to be defined locally.

Vygotsky also placed practitioners at the heart of his theory, not as transmitters of knowledge but as mediators of children's learning. Vygotsky described the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), which defines the difference between what a child can do independently and what she can do in collaboration with others (1978). Vygotsky proposed that, through the ZPD, mediation and instruction can benefit a child's maturing higher mental functions, such as memory, attention, logic and abstract thinking.

As well as mediation through adults and peers, Vygotsky also believed that psychological tools are powerful mediators in children's learning. Tools such as knives and levers are used by humans for physical tasks, and in a similar fashion Vygotsky proposed that humans invented psychological tools to develop mental abilities. As such, psychological tools are described as 'devices for mastering mental processes' (Daniels, 2005: 8) and they include 'signs, symbols, maps, plans, numbers, musical notation, charts, models, pictures and language' (Dolya & Palmer, 2004). The most important psychological tool, according to Vygotsky, is language, and he believed that language mediates, and is an imperative precursor to, cognitive development: 'Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them' (Vygotsky, 1986: 218).

Vygotsky also theorised that play can mediate a child's learning. He thought that play can create a ZPD for a child and thus increase higher mental functions:

> . . . play creates a zone of proximal development in the child. In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself.
> (Vygotsky, 1978: 101)

Through my reading of Vygotskian theory, I became curious about how to devise a case study that would allow me to observe a sociocultural curriculum and reflect on the following questions: (1) What does a sociocultural curriculum look like in practice? (2) What is the role for practitioners in a sociocultural curriculum? In the generation of

data around these questions, I hoped to be able to provide alternative perspectives about childhood to the one posed by EYFS in England, which were informed by theory as well as experience.

I chose New Zealand for the case study because of the sociocultural underpinnings of its early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Soler & Miller, 2003), and because it does not conceptualise children as human 'becomings' who need to develop skills that will make them ready for school (Smith, 2003). In addition, Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum for New Zealand (New Zealand. Ministry of Education, 1996) focuses on children acquiring positive dispositions for learning rather than concentrating primarily on content knowledge as a preparation for school. Learning dispositions are defined as 'learning [...] strategies that have become habits of the mind, tendencies to respond to, edit and select from, situations in certain ways' (Jordan, 2009: 40). I became interested in a curriculum that explicitly aims to promote learning dispositions, that is locally situated, and the contrast that this offers to EYFS in England. I also wanted to explore how focusing on learning dispositions provides an alternative means of preparation for school to early formal learning.

Research method and analytic framework

The research was conducted as an interpretivist study using ethnographic methods. This methodology accepts that reality is subjectively conceived through a connection between the researcher and the field, and that any truths revealed are partial and situated. Fieldwork was carried out for three weeks in a kindergarten in New Zealand in order to gain direct experience of the cultural specificity of this setting and to provide evidence-informed insights and contextualised knowledge. Data were collected through participant observation and the use of photography. They were analysed using three sociocultural planes:

1. Personal plane, in which the focus is on the individual
2. Interpersonal plane, in which the focus is on the social context
3. Community/institutional plane, in which the focus is on the whole cultural/institutional context (Rogoff, 1998: 688).

Rogoff also identified developmental processes corresponding to the planes of analysis. Within the community plane, she proposed the model of 'apprenticeship', in which there is 'active participation with others in culturally organised activity that has as part of its purpose the

development of mature participation in the activity by less experienced people' (Rogoff, 2008: 60).

Within the interpersonal plane, Rogoff (2008: 60) identified the concept of 'guided participation', in which she describes the 'process and systems of involvement between people as they communicate and coordinate efforts while participating in culturally valued activity'.

Within the personal plane, Rogoff (2008: 60) has used the term 'participatory appropriation' to describe how 'individuals change through their involvement in one or other activity, in the process of being prepared for subsequent involvement in related activities'.

Presentation of data: The case study

Northmont Kindergarten (a pseudonym) is situated in a suburb in Auckland with a below national average socio-economic rating. There were three full-time qualified early childhood teachers working during my visit working with 45 children in the mornings and a further 45 children in the afternoons. The children came from diverse ethnic backgrounds and ranged in age from three to five years old. There was no fixed structure to the sessions at Northmont other than tidy-up time and mat time approximately half an hour before the session ended. The teachers did not lead any formal teaching during the day. Instead the curriculum was child-led, in that children would choose what they wanted to do through self-generated interests rather than have a teacher ask them to do a task.

Analysis through a community lens

Habitus

Te Whāriki, New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, has the specific intent of developing learning dispositions (Smith, 2003). To achieve this aim, learning though play is considered of vital importance. Te Whāriki states the significance of children experiencing 'an environment where their play is valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play is recognized' (New Zealand. Ministry of Education, 1996: 84).

Underlying the discourse of learning through play as defined in Te Whāriki, Northmont had its own community habitus that defined 'the way we do things here'. Bourdieu (1990) used the term habitus to define a system of dispositions which constitute an often unexamined, implicit set of assumptions about the world (Cole, 1996).

At Northmont, child-initiated play was valued as the means to develop learning dispositions. The teachers at Northmont promoted the view of the child as an active and confident participator in their environment as exemplified in the requirement that children had to 'be busy'. It was an expectation that children had a self-chosen purpose for their day. For the teachers, it was the choice that the child made, not one imposed on them by an adult, which would lead to development of learning dispositions. The values that underpinned Northmont's community habitus were transmitted through Rogoff's notion of 'apprenticeship'. Rogoff explained that apprenticeship can be observed by the way in which 'people engage in culturally organized activity in which apprentices become more responsible participants' (2008: 61).

Newcomers to Northmont Kindergarten started as and when a place became available. This meant that it was rare for more than one or two new children to start at the same time. It was more often than not another child who provided 'initiation' for a new arrival, and this was a deliberate act on behalf of the teachers. The teachers felt that in an environment that promotes active and independent children, what better initiation into a community could be provided than by an established member of the community, one of the children? In the case of Northmont, the culturally organised activity that required apprenticeship was child-initiated learning through play in which the children were expected to be active, confident and communicative participants.

In discussion with the teachers about apprenticeship, I learned about two Maori principles that were an important part of the process. Te Whāriki is a bicultural curriculum into which Maori learning principles have been 'woven' (the word Te Whāriki is a Maori word for a woven mat). The first principle is 'tuakana teina', which is an integral part of Maori society whereby an older or more expert family member helps and guides a younger or less experienced relation. A literal example was found one day when Terri showed me how she could swing across the monkey bars independently. On questioning, Terri revealed that her older cousin Jason had come to the kindergarten with her in the recent holidays and had taught her how to swing.

There were not many same family members such as Terri and Jason but the principle of 'tuakana teina' was seen in abundance, with examples of children with an expertise teaching those who were less adept than themselves. This often happened with one of the teachers first demonstrating a new skill or routine to a child and in turn that child teaching other children. This happened when one of the teachers

showed Jake how to use the laminator; he in turn taught Tom, who then instructed Colin and Rhys.

This leads to the second Maori principle, closely related to the first, which is 'ako': a reversal of the learner-teacher roles in recognition of the importance of reciprocal learning. The teacher one day could be the learner the next, and, at Northmont, the teachers reminded themselves that everyone can be a teacher. The principle of 'ako' was seen in many situations, with the teachers being learners so that the children could adopt a teacher mode. For instance, Akash taught one of the teachers, and indeed many other children, the rules of 'rippa rugby' (a non-contact version of rugby).

Extended learning periods

In addition to creating a community habitus of learning through play, the teachers at Northmont also advocated the place of extended learning periods as vital for development of learning dispositions so that the children could be intently involved in their activities without unnecessary interruptions. Through the process of apprenticeship, the children were initiated into an environment in which extended learning periods were valued, which the teachers believed would allow the children's learning dispositions to be applied deeply in a variety of situations.

At Northmont, the children could play for a whole session without interruption. Only 'tidy-up time' was the signal that their activities must cease for the day. The curriculum was child-led so that the teachers did not impose any activities, and this was a deliberate act. The teachers felt that child-initiated activities would lead to greater levels of intrinsic motivation, higher levels of involvement and therefore improved learning dispositions. An example that I observed first-hand was when Mara arrived at kindergarten one morning announcing that she wanted to make a 'frock' and succeeded in doing this for herself with minimal support from an adult. Being able to utilise the whole morning session, without interruption, meant that she could persevere and concentrate on her task in a way that might not have been so successful if she had to work for shorter bursts of time.

Provocation

At Northmont, teachers also made use of resources, types of artefact, as a form of provocation for children's learning. Fleer and Richardson (2009) remind us that artefacts used in context are a symbolic representation of the community plane. There was a variety of resources available for the children with a view to them accessing a range of activities and

transferring their learning dispositions from one activity to another. Organisation of resources was constantly evolving according to the way in which the teachers observed the children using them, and in response to their current needs and interests.

Another form of provocation for the children's learning was their 'learning stories', which are narrative assessments, written by a teacher, that describe how a child is applying learning dispositions in action. Completed learning stories were available as individual 'profiles' for each child, and the teachers considered it extremely important that they were written in a way that made the learning visible, meaningful and accessible for the children. For this reason, the learning stories were full of photographs and even DVDs of the children's learning, for which purpose the teachers always had a camera to hand.

Analysis through an interpersonal lens

Adult mediation

At the same time as uncovering the process of apprenticeship at a community level at Northmont, on the interpersonal plane it was also possible to observe 'guided participation', which Rogoff defined as 'the mutual involvement of individuals and their social partners, communicating and coordinating their involvement as they participate in socially structured collective activity' (Rogoff, 2008: 62).

Guided participation can take place in many forms, the first of which is adult mediation. Knowledge construction within a sociocultural framework is understood to be mediated through social interaction. This process of adult mediation is completely different to the view of transmitting knowledge through 'taught' activities. At Northmont, the lack of teacher-led activities and the promotion of child-initiated learning did not mean that the teachers had no role in mediating the children's learning. However, their role was not immediately obvious to me and took time to uncover. Their role with the younger children was more overt and, at these times, I could clearly see that the teachers played *with* the children on activities chosen by the children. One visible effect of this was that it enabled the children to sustain concentration in their play for much longer periods of time. One of the teachers told me that her ultimate aim was to encourage the younger children to initiate their own learning. She wanted them to be able to think for themselves and sustain their own play, and she wanted to help them along that journey. She saw her role as mediating their development through a process of interaction and collaboration.

Not as many older children required this level of adult mediation to regulate their play. The teachers targeted children whom they felt needed intervention regarding a particular learning disposition. The teachers were also available as and when the children required them. For example, one morning Colin said that he wanted to make a catapult. A teacher immediately responded to Colin's idea, and she told me afterwards that it was because she wanted to support and extend his learning dispositions. Using her laptop, together they looked at pictures of various different catapult designs and talked through which aspects Colin liked and how he thought he was going to make each component. They worked as equal partners in the project as they jointly conceived ideas and evaluated the progress. At no stage did the teacher take over Colin's catapult; it was his idea in both inception and construction, but she helped him to extend his thinking and clarify his ideas through questioning. This episode illustrates the proactive role of teachers within a sociocultural paradigm in mediating the children's learning in a way that recognises them as co-constructors of knowledge.

Peer mediation

The adults at Northmont also used their absence as a means to develop the children's learning. They felt that the deliberate absence of an adult led to more incidences of peer mediation. Examples of collaborative play in the absence of an adult were apparent. Through their playful activities, the children at Northmont were seen to mediate each other's learning. Guided participation and peer mediation often took place in the form of 'tuakana teina', as already described, in which a more-experienced peer mediated another child's learning. This transpired on the day of 'Bush Kindy', which occurred on Fridays when the whole session took place outside. Edward, an 'expert' tree climber, helped Travis to climb a tree that Travis had not successfully managed on his own despite numerous attempts. The adults kept an eye on their collaboration without directly intervening. Through peer mediation, in the absence of an adult, Travis achieved with assistance from Edward what he might never have achieved by himself.

Intent participation

Guided participation does not always involve 'hands-on' contribution and can include observation. As Rogoff pointed out, 'a person who is actively observing and following the decisions made by another is participating whether or not he or she contributes directly to the decisions as they are made' (Rogoff, 2008: 63). Rogoff et al. (2003)

defined this form of observation as 'intent participation'. A key aspect of the concept is the expectation of subsequent involvement, which requires a level of observation quite different to when watching incidentally.

One of the teachers at Northmont told me how much she encourages and recognises intent participation (she called it 'watching') as an important stage of the learning process. She thought that it allows children the space to assimilate what is happening and to make mental plans for their own learning. This process was illustrated by Molly on her first experience at Bush Kindy. Initially hesitant, she followed some children to an area of trees where a teacher had tied some ropes for them to climb across. Molly watched the other children as they confidently travelled across the ropes. She seemed to be assessing the situation, learning from the others, ready for when she would have a turn. Shortly afterwards, she successfully made it across. Undoubtedly she would not have been successful in her first attempt had she not had the time to watch and study her peers first.

Mediation through communication

The community plane at Northmont revealed how extended learning periods with minimal interruptions enabled the children to participate in a variety of activities using resources that were designed to provoke their learning. The impact of this learning environment on the interpersonal plane was the quantity of interactions that occurred.

At Northmont, I observed how children had time to engage deeply in activities of their choice, often in collaboration with others. At key points in their play, when difficulties arose, I witnessed how children had the opportunity to persevere and to seek others to help them with their challenging situation. Shrey and Shamil served as an example of how, through guided participation, learning dispositions were given the opportunity to be enhanced through communication. The two boys spent a whole morning working with saws, hammers, nails, paints and glue guns to make something that they told me was from a television show that they watched at home. They were highly focused on their task and stayed this way throughout, even when things went awry. Shrey and Shamil maintained a constant dialogue about what they were doing and offered advice to each other while they made and modified their constructions. Their level of involvement and concentration might not have been so great if they had not worked together on their task. Their speech acted as a mediator for their learning.

Analysis through a personal lens

The analysis through a community and interpersonal lens shows that through adult mediation, collaboration with a peer or intent participation, children at Northmont were able to achieve and do things that they might not have been able to do on their own. Rogoff described this individual development as 'participatory appropriation', one in which 'individuals change through their involvement in one or other activity in the *process of being prepared for subsequent involvement in related activities* [my emphasis]' (Rogoff, 2008: 60). As a result, children handle a later situation in a different way because of their participation in a previous activity. Rogoff stressed that participatory appropriation does not take place in a static 'acquisition' model, but rather the dynamic and active participation in activities makes it a 'becoming' model, where the outcome of individual development is situated in the local context:

The direction of development varies locally (in accord with cultural values, interpersonal needs and specific circumstances); it does not require the specification of universal or ideal end points of development (Rogoff, 2008: 68).

As described, analysis through community and interpersonal lenses has shown that adults at Northmont valued and expected active participation in culturally bound activities that would develop children's learning dispositions. The children were required to be busy and to have purpose. Through their 'busyness' the teachers wanted the children to develop their learning dispositions. Travis, assisted in climbing a tree by Edward, was changed by this collaborative experience. This was demonstrated a few days later when Carys was having trouble climbing a tree in the kindergarten outdoor play area and Travis showed her, as Edward had shown him, how to use a rope at the bottom of the tree so that she could get a better grip. He showed that his participation in a previous situation had led him to handle a subsequent situation differently.

As well as providing opportunities for language to mediate the children's cognitive development, the sociocultural environment also appeared to help define and influence the children's identity. I refer to identity as an individual's perception of who they are, not in a way that distances themselves from others, but in a way that situates them within a sociocultural environment with shared values, assumptions and purposes. Wenger (1998: 151) describes this situated view of identity as:

> . . . a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other. As we

> encounter our effects on the world and develop our relations with others, these layers build upon each other to produce our identity as a very complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections.

At Northmont, there were communal activities that served to bind the members of each community together at the same time as recognising the individuals contained within. I could see how this contributed to a sense of belonging to the community, an attachment to other members of the group; and this was the teachers' desired outcome. Children demonstrated their connectedness to their peers, such as Shamil and Shrey who noticed that a younger boy, Kallen, was apparently drifting without activity or friend, and he was invited to join their game. The adults also contributed towards the children's sense of belonging. I could see that they created nurturing relationships with the children, and tried to recognise their individual qualities. Families were involved in these relationships with the intent of enhancing the connectivity between home and kindergarten. All children at Northmont had their own learning story profile, which reinforced their status as a member of the community, carefully catalogued by their teachers who noticed, valued and recorded their perceptions of the changes and developments in the children's identities.

The sociocultural environment at Northmont enabled children to perceive themselves as capable and confident; competencies that were recognised and valued in their communities. I could see how the focus on play enabled children to be active agents in the 'here and now' of their childhood. The teachers regarded the children as co-constructors of knowledge, not solely reliant on transmission from an adult, because they wanted the children to view themselves as capable and confident learners. There were several examples of children voluntarily showing or telling me about their capabilities. Many of the children were keen to share their profiles with me and they particularly enjoyed the chronology of starting with photographs of their first day and browsing through their 'journey' through kindergarten. A common conversation at these times was pointing out to me proficiencies that they did not have before. The children at Northmont were not only aware of their capabilities but also believed that qualities such as persistence were responsible for their personal progress. The children's developing concept of their efficacy was also apparent through examples of their independence. In completing tasks independently of adults, the children were being given the opportunity to view themselves as capable and effective members

of the community. The child-led curriculum at Northmont meant that the children had autonomy in choosing their activities, deciding their collaborative partners and the length of time spent on each task.

These descriptions and analyses through three interconnected lenses serve as reminders that the practitioners at Northmont wanted the children to view themselves as capable and confident individuals who were connected to each other. The examples demonstrate that in a sociocultural curriculum learning is a collaborative task and participants take responsibility not just for their own learning but also for the learning of other members of the community.

Realities and lived experiences of a sociocultural curriculum

Subject knowledge

I have presented a brief insight of my observations of a sociocultural curriculum, as delivered through Te Whāriki by the practitioners at Northmont Kindergarten in New Zealand. Whilst the teachers at Northmont were confident and experienced in their practice, the implementation of a sociocultural curriculum is not unproblematic. Indeed, it has been suggested that many teachers in New Zealand have struggled to adapt to the sociocultural pedagogy of Te Whāriki (Anning, 2009). Teachers at Northmont said that colleagues who had visited as part of their continuing professional development had been dismissive of Northmont's practice, in particular the absence of 'taught' content. On several occasions, I observed conversations between a teacher and parent regarding the latter's concerns about the apparent lack of 'formal' subject knowledge at Northmont, and the perceived value of developing learning dispositions through play. The sociocultural nature of Te Whāriki means that there are no prescribed guidelines for teachers relating to subject knowledge (Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Blaiklock, 2010). I can understand both practitioners' and parents' concerns over subject knowledge. From my value-laden position of teaching within the highly prescribed subject domains of EYFS, there were times when it was hard to relinquish feelings of surprise when the practitioners at Northmont apparently 'missed' opportunities to develop children's subject knowledge; for example counting or writing names. However, as the teachers at Northmont explained to me, subject knowledge is not ignored entirely in their approach but rather, in their opinion, the process of responding to children's interests creates knowledge construction that is more *meaningful* than factual information disconnected from the task in hand. One teacher referred to

Colin's catapult construction as a specific example, whereby she used her laptop to review different types and uses of catapult with him to enrich his knowledge base in a way that had situational relevance for Colin.

Other writers (Carr, 2001; Hedges & Cullen, 2005) have commented on the importance of *meaningful* knowledge construction within Te Whāriki whereby knowledge construction is relevant to the children's current situation rather than as part of an adult's agenda. However, Alvestad, Duncan & Berge (2009) have highlighted the potential tension for teachers in exercising their professional judgement to privilege children's interests over the skills and content knowledge that they themselves might have wished children to explore and develop. I attribute this tension, at least partially, to overly politicised views of 'child-centred' education (Alexander, Rose & Woodhead, 1992), whereby the child leads the curriculum, in contrast with the neo-liberal policy agenda of more 'rigorous' outcomes-based curricula. The false dichotomy of the child 'discovering' knowledge alone, versus teachers transmitting knowledge didactically, implies a degree of passivity on the part of either the teacher or learner. A sociocultural curriculum represents an alternative paradigm of knowledge construction, one in which there is reciprocal learning, with both teacher and learner as active participants in the process. As Rogoff (1994) explains, the sociocultural model of learning thus supersedes the pendulum swing from child-centred to didactic approaches. In this view, the adult is conceived as a mediator rather than a facilitator or controller of learning, and the supposedly laissez-faire process of mediation is actually highly strategic, with adults fully aware of their role in negotiating knowledge creation in contexts that have meaning and relevance for children.

This example of teachers' views about the role of subject knowledge highlights the importance of initial teacher education and continued practice-based professional learning. The teachers at Northmont stressed this point to me. These processes can expand the lexicon of discourses about pedagogical approaches, whereby the philosophical underpinnings of Te Whāriki can be established in practice. The teachers at Northmont were aware that their practice was considered to be innovative and that this was not always received positively. It had led all concerned to have periods of unease about their 'otherness'. However, it did not prevent them from working collaboratively with other teachers to bring about reflection and change, despite difficulties they had encountered in challenging colleagues' deeply held beliefs and pedagogies.

Teacher mediation

There were times during my observations at Northmont when the predominance of children playing without adult interaction seemed to contradict the sociocultural premise of teacher mediation. This led to a deep level of observation, reflection and discussion with the staff to understand the nuances of teacher mediation. I came to an interpretation that teacher mediation is a more complex pedagogy than that which is obviously visible and requires skill and reflection on behalf of the practitioner. The adults believed that their role also involved intentional 'absence' in order to promote children's ability to regulate each other's and their own learning, and to sustain engagement in a task. During these times, the practitioners trusted the processes of peer mediation and provocation, both forms of guided participation (Rogoff, 2008). Whilst these processes may seem less direct than the one-to-one interaction between a child and an adult, the teachers at Northmont considered these intentional activities as nonetheless crucial to their role in promoting a sociocultural curriculum. They did not concur that one-to-one adult mediation with children was always more effective than peer mediation and provocation.

Transition to school

A further issue that was apparent from my observations and conversations at Northmont is the transition between kindergarten and school. I had noticed that there was a sizeable discrepancy in different children's learning dispositions, with some children such as Colin demonstrating his advanced learning dispositions through his active involvement in a variety of activities and other children such as Zara and Mina who 'watched' every activity without much apparent participation. I wondered about the effect that differing levels of learning dispositions might have when these children transferred to school, and quizzed the teachers about this. Their view was that practitioners in schools should be cognisant of the different trajectories of children's learning dispositions and that there should be closer links between kindergartens and schools to ensure that children could continue to develop their learning dispositions beyond Te Whāriki. They were working hard to achieve this with schools and practitioners in their area by establishing links and arranging reciprocal visits. Difficulties in the transition between kindergarten and school have been subject to research in New Zealand (May, 2009; Peters, 2010) and has also received government attention. The response of the New Zealand Government has been a ten year

strategic plan aimed at aligning the approaches of the two sectors (New Zealand. Ministry of Education, 2002). Their approach was not 'top-down' or 'schoolification' of early childhood but to 'support schools to use the best evidence about effective teaching and learning in early childhood settings to influence quality teaching in the first years of school' (New Zealand. Ministry of Education, 2008). The result was a reduction in the school curriculum content with an emphasis placed on 'key competences' that promote children as life-long learners (New Zealand. Ministry of Education, 2007).

Relevance of Vygotskian sociocultural theory for practitioners

I view these contradictions and dilemmas that have arisen from researching lived experiences of the practitioners at Northmont as an opportunity to reflect on my own values and assumptions about education and pedagogy, and to consider how Vygotskian sociocultural theory can be relevant to me and other early childhood practitioners in England and beyond.

There are many who believe that Vygotsky's work has increasing relevance and coherence with present-day sociocultural thinking and practice (Damianova & Sullivan, 2011; Fleer, 2011; Veraksa & van Oers, 2011; Gredler, 2012). It has been suggested that this significance is because 'Vygotsky's theory offers us answers to questions that were not asked earlier. It is only now that we have started posing questions that make Vygotsky's answers relevant' (Kozulin, 2003: 15). I believe that there are two key questions for early childhood practitioners that can be addressed by his work. Firstly, Vygotsky's view of the power of play in children's learning has been particularly salient. In conceptualising play as a collaborative and socially mediated act as observed at Northmont, Vygotskian theory furnishes insights into the being/becoming debate. Holzman (2006: 10) explained that the zone of proximal development can be conceived as 'the ever emergent and continuously changing "distance" between being and becoming'. This would mean that play is a mechanism for both 'being' in the present and for what children will 'become' in the future. As Mouritsen (2002: 39) eloquently said about play:

> ... there is a shift from a utilitarian view of the matter ('What use is it?') to the view that play is something in its own right ... It is something different from a tool of education, more than a vehicle for

> development. That it *then* [original emphasis] has many useful side-effects, for example in the form of competencies, is another matter.

My research at Northmont in New Zealand revealed how the teachers enabled time for children's play to occur without interruptions because they wanted the children's learning dispositions to develop and deepen. This afforded children the opportunity to 'be' a child in the present at the same time as developing the skills they would need to 'become' a pupil at school. A sociocultural view of play, in which children develop learning dispositions, provides an alternative way of preparing children to be 'ready for school' than that proposed by the 'schoolification' discourse in which the early teaching of literacy and numeracy is seen as the best preparation for school.

A further issue regarding pedagogy, and addressed by Vygotsky, is the role of the adult in children's learning. Analysis of the data has revealed how adults within a sociocultural paradigm mediate children's learning, both through direct collaboration and through providing a learning environment rich in language and provocation that promote further mediation. In social interactions between children and their peers, and between children and adults, communication is vital. Language was considered by Vygotsky (1978) as the primary psychological tool that mediates higher mental functions as a precursor to cognitive thought. The settings were structured to facilitate the use of speech, through guided participation, as the children worked collaboratively on a variety of tasks. The use of psychological tools at Northmont facilitated higher mental functions in the children and this was visible through their use of speech when working collaboratively. I believe that mediation has a key role for adults in early childhood education, one in which they are active in children's learning but are also mindful of developing children's identities as collaborative, capable, confident and autonomous learners. The experience of the teachers at Northmont is that the nuances of mediation require a high level of expertise, but it is a role that I believe is worth reflective thought and consideration.

Concluding comments

Through this research, I have aimed to provide a practical insight into sociocultural theory and the role for practitioners within such a curriculum. I have examined the lived experiences for practitioners and presented data illustrating how the children at Northmont were developing learning dispositions through child-initiated play that was

mediated by the extensive use of language and extended self-directed learning activities. My project offers an alternative construction of childhood which rejects the idea of a universal definition of childhood. From this postmodern standpoint, all ways of knowing are context-bound and perspectival. The early childhood practice of Northmont Kindergarten in New Zealand, which is underpinned by sociocultural theory, has served to demonstrate how this view of childhood can enable children to be human beings involved in learning through play, at the same time as allowing for development in the process of becoming and preparation for school. Sociocultural theory is highly relevant to early childhood practitioners as a counteraction to the 'schoolification' of early childhood education in neo-liberalised environments such as England. Sociocultural theory provides an alternative means of preparation for school, one where early formal learning is not imposed on children, instead focusing on the acquisition of dispositions that might positively influence children's future learning at school.

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6

‘Finding Foucault’: Contextualising Power in the Curriculum Through Reflections on Students’ Dialoguing About Foucauldian Discourses

Mary Frances Agnello

Introduction

The findings of this study are presented in a Readers’ Theatre (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer 1995) format to illustrate the learning of graduate students in a Curriculum and Instruction summer school seminar at a large university in the Southwest USA. Presented in three acts, and in a drama script format, I wanted to capture the students’ questions, problems, ruminations and assertions about theories of Michel Foucault as they relate to the field of education (Foucault, 1965, 1972, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1985). The intent in offering this course was to introduce students to some lesser applied and sometimes more meaningful research tools and insights than are taught in research core rotation courses (e.g. qualitative, ethnographic, statistical research approaches). I was particularly interested in their identifying how power is exercised in many locations: by policymakers, educational researchers, curriculum producers and supervisors; by teachers as they connect learning and students’ lives; and by students as they attempt to make sense of knowledge and power in their own lives and for their own purposes. For those students who worked at a distance, reading the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) presented an arduous challenge; however, working online did not deter reading and rereading Foucault’s major works and interrogation of his research methods. The students who attended face-to-face class meetings encountered the same challenges with Foucault’s dense and sometimes difficult text. Nevertheless, both the online and face-to-face

students applied his assertions in meaningful ways to grapple with comprehending the exercise of power through the curriculum.

Studying the works of Michel Foucault is not typical of Colleges of Education in the US. Although most Masters and doctoral students of Curriculum and Instruction in my university in the Southwest study procedures, processes and some philosophical considerations of creating curricula for instructional purposes, they rarely critique the creation of curriculum as an exercise of power. This summer school seminar was geared towards inspiring graduate students' engagements with curriculum knowledge as an exercise of power.

Early in Foucault's academic career, he focused on discourses of knowledge as a mechanism of exercising power, usually from a sector of society entrusted with policy formulation, downward to subjects of the lower echelons of society where individuals and groups have less power. Foucault's assertions about discourses as mediated systems that exert social, economic, governmental and other forms of control are an important piece of understanding the curriculum as a set of discourses and associated practices that harness and usually act upon the individual. Later in his career, he focused on the state's harnessing of 'bio-power' (Foucault, 1978: 140) of the masses for social control, as well as for furthering the interests of the state's exertion of bio-power. According to Gordon (1991) in his 'governmental' rationale Foucault discussed 'the conduct of conduct' and 'a form of activity aiming to shape, guide, or affect the conduct of some person or persons' (Gordon, 1991: 3). For Foucault, '*governmentality*' accomplishes both totalising and individualising effects on the populace (Gordon, 1991: 3). ' "Governmentality" is accomplished through the discourses of regulation that emanate from science, law, medicine, social sciences, social and regulatory institutions, as well as the practices that result from the discourses in their various milieus' (Agnello, 2001: 46).

If we consider curriculum from this perspective, a great part of students' developmental experiences is formulated through the state curriculum. Foucault would have encouraged us to ask questions about such a reverence for the curriculum in the following manner: What are the discourses of curriculum? How is power exercised through the curriculum? How does the curriculum become the 'truth' of educational experience? Who is marginalised in the curriculum hierarchy? How are the powers exercised through the curriculum individualising and totalising? Although some of the students in the summer seminar found that Foucault's depiction of the exercise of power in this manner can be unsettling, even leading us to think that we are powerless,

several students in the class urged us to be empowered to become agents who question the totalising effects of various arms of governmental and social control. As operationalised within the contexts of curriculum, students become agents of their own learning as they find spaces for self-development and vocalising their learning from their own perspectives.

The graduate students who took the Foucault and Education Graduate Seminar posited that the power of policymakers has facilitated the oversight of teaching and learning in the K-12 educational setting in many unsettling ways, such as a top-down hierarchical mandate of what is to be taught (the scope of the curriculum) and when (the sequence of the curriculum), as well as how learning will be measured (via high-stakes testing). They emphasised that such curricular manipulation and testing drive the assessment of curricular instruction, therefore exerting formidable control over education. For me it was exciting and a bit surprising to witness and encourage the ways in which students deftly constructed their own theories, drawing from their discrete professional environments and juxtaposing Foucault's assertions with practices in their own settings.

Because of my love of face-to-face philosophical instruction and all that it entails in the foundation courses, I had had doubts about succumbing to requests, expectations and instructions by department chairs and the college dean to put as many courses online as possible. I had specific reservations about teaching the work of Michel Foucault via the internet. Notwithstanding an institutional mandate to increase enrolments in summer classes, I remained unconvinced about putting the instruction into an online format. However, a quandary about how to address the conflicts created for interested students whose work schedules precluded their attendance at a noon seminar persuaded me to give it a try. There was furthermore a student in a neighbouring state who wanted to take the class at a distance. I struck a compromise with the potential students: I would hold the class during its regularly scheduled noon time frame for face-to-face students, and I would create an online course platform in BlackBoard (© 1997–2015 Blackboard Inc.), whereby other students could take the class at a distance.

Driving the decision to teach the course was the need to avail graduate students of some variety in their coursework offerings, as well as to introduce them to some different qualitative research methodologies that they did not encounter in their methodology courses. The summer school session presented many constrictions on what could be done to introduce students to the works of Foucault, which pose challenging

reading for many not steeped in his entangled writing style. In order to present Foucauldian methodological frameworks, we began the course with the study of discourse in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), followed by excerpts from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977) because of its allusions to control of time, space, activity and thought in schooling. We ended the course with genealogy from *The History of Sexuality* (1978, 1990) to move to the ideas of bio-power (mentioned above) and the exercise of power to form knowledge and power relations.

Illustrations were presented from other elements of Foucault's work (Foucault, 1965, 1980, 1984), as well as from other authors who relied on Foucault's premises (Bernstein, 1990; Gore 1993; Shutkin, 1994), including the archaeological genealogy in my book *A Postmodern Literacy Policy Analysis* (Agnello, 2001). Therein I employed the strategies promoted by Foucault for analysing and critiquing how we are formed by literacy discourses, how literacy discourses go through various transitions to reflect different truths, and how there are ruptures in how certain big ideas about literacy are perceived in the scientific community as well as among the public at large. We forged onward armed with works of Foucault and such examples of how his work has been applied in similar instances (Luke, 1992, 1995; Davis, 1996a, 1996b). Relying on some of the insights of other Foucault experts such as Mills (2003) and O'Farrell (2005) and web-based materials, we became intensively engaged with the works of Foucault. The students completed two principal writing assignments in the form of a short and long paper, the former as a reflection of their understanding of one of Foucault's works, the latter, an explication of how his ideas reflect the state of teaching and learning in their own disciplines. I asked them to focus on how the power of truth and knowledge exercised in and through the curriculum determines student learning and teacher work or another professional setting.

The following play in three acts reveals the student-professor exchange of dialogue during an intensive summer school seminar. It is indicative of how blended delivery and/or online instruction can be an effective means of studying foundational courses in education graduate studies, even encompassing difficult theory such as the Foucauldian turn in education.

Prologue

MARY FRANCES: The students' dialogue was the primary data source of this dramatic interpretation of what happened in our short summer session class

on *Foucault and Education*. In it lay evidence from which to discern if teaching and learning about Foucault's relevance to education broadly, and the curriculum as an exercise of power, specifically, had occurred. Because I encouraged students to engage in dialogue with the author's words, I decided to use a theatre script (Donmeyer & Yennie-Donmeyer, 1995) to capture how the class participants encountered, interpreted and applied Foucault's assertions. Their dialogue included questions, risk-taking statements, assertions, applications and interconnectivity of the class's conversation and written discourse. Reflection on practice drove the study (Schön, 1983). As we progressed, I considered and reconsidered what was working/what was not and the degree to which students engaged in the readings, discussions and assignments. In the initial planning of the structure and layout of the class, I thought that providing website addresses and hot links would have made navigation of the website summaries of Foucault's writings accessible enough. On the contrary, the students did not find the materials until I pointed them out. Thus, I found that leading the students to the internet resources saved a lot of angst on their part and provided more tranquillity for me. As I wrestled with the limitations of the compressed summer session, I tried to gear the writing assignments to the students' hectic and pressured summer schedules and not overburden them with busy-work. Despite the short time frame, their class presentations were professionally done and showed they could see the concrete examples of Foucault's abstractions of discourse and power in their settings.

The students' dialogue and the texts of their two written assignments comprised my archival data. The analysis of the data was geared primarily to ascertain the degree to which students had comprehended Foucault's assertions and could apply them to their own educational contexts. Secondarily, I wondered if there would be a difference in students' mastery of the texts and assignments based on which mode of course delivery the students had received – face-to-face or online instruction.

'Finding Foucault': Juxtaposing theory, educational experience and environments

CAST OF CHARACTERS: Participants of the Foucault and Education Graduate Seminar

SOPHIE AND EMILE: A composite of doctoral students (three) who took the class solely online

JEAN and JEANNE: A composite of Master's degree students (four) who took the class face to face

JACQUES: A Master's degree student from the School of Business

MARIE: A doctoral graduate student from the Art Department

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Philosopher and historian

MARY FRANCES: Creator and instructor of the Foucault and Education Graduate Seminar

Act one

Capturing the discourses: Online and face-to-face education – Are you there?

[Act I captures the student and instructor interaction as they engaged in questions on a one-to-one basis and with each other online. Foucault enters into the scene, a bit rattled and frenzied having almost missed his plane to San Francisco for the American Educational Research Association 2013 Convention.]

FOUCAULT [*shaky and hurriedly*]: *Bonjour*! Good morning. I hear that we find ourselves in a play of sorts. I always admired Sartre's drama but I never wrote any myself. *Ah bon*! Where would we like to begin?

JEANNE: I find that after having read your work and really enjoying it that it caused me to think very hard about many educational practices that I took for granted. And yet I find that you do not provide us a way out of the discourse trap. I do not find solutions in the *Archaeology* or the *History of Sexuality*.

JEAN: I actually wanted to read a theorist's insights into education – someone besides John Dewey – not that I do not value what Dewey had to say (Dewey, 1916/2008). Also, I did not understand any of the *Archaeology* until I reread it. But I think I get it… A lot of what we do in school boils down to control of students' minds, bodies, and how they spend their time.

FOUCAULT: Ahh! Well I am getting my breath now and can focus a little better. Yes, it is something that is a bit difficult to come to grips with if one has not studied the rise of scientific discourses – particularly that of psychiatry, but also the social sciences in general.

MARIE: Why are we so bent on framing education as a science? I believe that it is an art – perhaps more so than it is a science because it is ultimately a human experience. How can we measure the depths of depression when we do not understand something or the degree to which we are elated when we finally comprehend a concept – on a five-point or a ten-point scale?

SOPHIE: I honestly do not get how you or your theories can help me grapple with the degree of success that my students are having with creating technology products. What do your ideas have to do with my students' use of what they have learned in my training sessions? What does technology as a vehicle for achieving work or as a medium of communication have to do with controlling bodies and minds?

FOUCAULT: Much of what we do in education is a way to exert control through surveillance and discipline in one way or another.

MARY FRANCES: I wondered how you would consider the use of the computer, I believe that you call it an *ordinateur*, *en français*. I think you would have loved writing at the word processor because it would have made editing much simpler than on a typewriter. Could you have imagined how disciplining the computer has become in the lives of students, workers, people from all walks of life, and people, not just in so-called developed countries, but all over the world?

FOUCAULT: All technologies are disciplining. They usurp human energy and knowledge building, even though they may be time-saving, convenient, and facilitate textual production. As I have attempted to discuss in much of my work, neither the computer nor any technology, is necessarily an indicator of a vector or trajectory toward historical progress.

MARY FRANCES: I find that being disciplined by a computer all day is not exactly my idea of progress toward an idyllic life. Our work in the Information Age disciplines us accordingly, and so it goes in all realms of work. And yet, the role of digital technologies in the political uprising of the Arab Spring (Lotan, Graeff, Ananny, Gaffney & Pearce, 2011) for example, is undeniable. So perhaps, these technologies opened up a space of concrete freedom – that is, to use your words, a place for transformation.

MARIE: Understanding the spaces where freedom can be exercised is a very good thing. We cannot deny that the exercise of power will cause some conflicts in the day-to-day lives of working people who choose to exercise their power in this neoliberal, draconian economy. It is nonetheless important to exercise the spirit of political resistance against oppressive practices of the work environment. We probably will not enjoy all of the results of such resistance, but the possibility of transformation for ourselves and others is opened up in such acts of politics.

MARY FRANCES: I am interested to hear how you see some of the controlling practices of curriculum in your own settings.

MARIE: We know some of the oppressive and de-professionalizing practices of controlling knowledge through teacher and student work in schools with tools of standardization such as CSCOPE, a pre-packaged curriculum we have been using in Texas schools (TESCCC, 2011; Klein, 2013). Researchers have shown such a decontextualized form of curriculum that is transmitted by teachers is harmful to students and teachers (McNeil, 2000). So back to that idea of creating technology projects for the work environment and the creation of art – the exercise of teaching and learning as passages of pleasure, I was interested to see Sophie's insight . . . .

SOPHIE: Yes, I found this passage from Infinito (2003) who puts it aptly in a discussion of Prof. Foucault's work when he says that we become works of art in environments that encourage experimentation with and in collaboration with others the context of teaching and learning in the classroom. And I liked the insight provided by Zemblyas (2005): that it is important to conceptualize the classroom as a space for ongoing transformation of the self – through passionate learning and teaching (Zemblyas, 2005). I must add that it was good to read Mills' (2003) biography about you – it was important and helpful to have her explanations of discourse while trying to comprehend relevant chapters in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* – where I felt like I was missing as much as I was comprehending.

EMILE: We are a learning community here online. Any time you want a sounding board, write it down and I will get back to you as soon as I see it. Often, we all have the same question and I just won't ask. We are in this together. I must

admit that the *Archaeology* was a mystery at first. But now that I understand he was talking about power, I can honestly say from having done a military career, you have no idea about the power in the world.

MARY FRANCES: I love your willingness to promote understanding or scaffolding if you will, Emile. It is so critical in the learning environment and perhaps particularly in our online community. And by the way, the *Archaeology* is the most difficult work of all the Prof. Foucault's texts to read. My experience with the *Archaeology* several years ago was a test of persistence and determination. It entailed a lot of re-reading and going back to re-read yet again. When you have gotten through this one, the others will seem much easier. I am sure that I have some idea about power but so much of what we know is through our experiences.

FOUCAULT: I did not mean to obfuscate meaning in my writing, but writing about the material representations of history and human experience is not clear-cut. Some might even question the possibility of writing about either. If we question the writing of material history as an exercise in representing truth, we might ask if such an endeavor is possible. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or manufactures something that does not as yet exist, producing a historical truth (Foucault, 1995).

MARY FRANCES: Yes, and to understand your work, it is often helpful to rely on outlines that I have laid out in the major works, in additions to others' on line.

EMILE: Yes, these outlines have helped me see what you have outlined and put some logic to it.

SOPHIE: Indeed, I was wondering why Mary Frances had us read the *Archaeology* first . . .

MARY FRANCES: There was method in my madness . . . so to speak. Prof. Foucault lays out what he has based his discourse analysis upon. Think about statements as monuments in archaeology. He proposes digging in the archives. Those statements are what remain of the monuments, and it is upon those remains that he builds his case for the analysis of discourse, as well as power as knowledge relations.

SOPHIE: I have thought about and considered at length how power is exercised and see better how all constituents are able to exercise power; perhaps not necessarily to the ends we would all desire but nonetheless, we are not powerless as some might have us believe.

Act two

Articulating with Foucault: Discourse, politics, human nature, confinement, discipline, economics, art

[Act II distils students' dialogue excerpted from Paper #1, the shorter of two papers assigned in the summer session graduate seminar.]

SOPHIE: I am curious, Prof. Foucault, why you are so interested in politics if you are so concerned with archival evidence that makes science possible?

FOUCAULT: How could I not be interested in what is probably the most crucial subject in our existence? While my colleague, Prof. Chomsky, *par example*, espouses overthrowing repressive regimes, I would define the real political task in society as criticism of workings of institutions – to unmask the political violence exercised obscurely through them (Chomsky & Foucault, 1974; Chomsky, 2011). That is what I was trying to do when I began my *History of Madness* (Foucault, 1965).

EMILE: Yes, another interesting point that brings to mind is your discussion of madness in the countryside during the Classical Age. Nowadays, we see homelessness in cities. And from my perspective we are confining our students to schools to prepare them to contribute to society through disciplining.

MARY FRANCES: How do we think about the many forms of discipline in education?

JEANNE: I do not find disciplining all negative. I got the impression from the readings that Prof. Foucault is saying that discipline is a negative thing. It is true that so much about disciplining is the exercise of power, but what I also see is that discipline means the ability to control impulses and to create an environment of safety and learning.

JEAN: Yes, we absolutely need some discipline and control and perhaps doing what is right rather than what is fun. However, he was not saying that discipline is all bad, but that it is discipline . . . Is it part of human nature to be controlled by one social force or another?

SOPHIE: I enjoyed reading the debate on human nature engaged in by Profs Foucault and Chomsky (Chomsky & Foucault, 1974; Chomsky, 2011). The concrete examples were helpful and once you two started communicating rather than talking at cross purposes, it was quite engaging to discern what a natural human phenomenon is, versus what is socially constructed in most human interaction. And, I must admit, after having read Prof. Foucault, I believe that more and more of what we might take for granted as having been normal or natural, is indeed constructed.

JEANNE: I am intrigued by what I am interpreting as the importance of your work with regard to my understanding of education. I see better how the power of education centers on discourse. I comprehend now that you are not giving us a model – social, economic, or political – but rather you have attempted to uncover power sources, responses, and results that occurred in specific connotations but can occur in any society.

FOUCAULT: Yes, if I take this to the local level, I see some exercises of power over students and teachers by the examination (Foucault, 1995: 184–94) in order to measure their success. Power begets power as student success determines the power the school has in the community and in the decision-making process of the state. Also, student success can determine local enrollments and local economic power. Students in special schools, however, are not normal and yet,

they are judged by a normative system. There are normalizing forces that lead us to take many policies and practices for granted. However, we must not forget that students also have power.

EMILE: I was particularly struck by how the rights of mentally challenged students in the United States were akin to those of the internment of the mad (or non-working) during the Classical Age until the 1970s. And by the 1990s, we see work being given to those in confinement to contribute to the power of all, as opposed to in France when the poor and under-employed or unemployed were classified as mad to separate them from the rest of working society. Both are economic solutions, though.

FOUCAULT: Yes, in the Classical Age confinement was used to reabsorb unemployment or at least eliminate its most visible social effects, and of course to control costs of running the state.

MARIE: I liked the way that you roughed up the smooth description of history that we normally read and learn. In my field, that is, in the world of art, representation of art history as one masterpiece after another is erroneous and superficial. The production of a masterpiece took many attempts and often failures. By explaining art history as one masterpiece or important work after another, the truth of creating is precluded. I mean by saying this we must consider all aspects of the struggle [*short pause*] . . . practice, false starts, and so on . . . that precede the production of a great art work.

MARY FRANCES: So you have found Foucault helpful in your understanding of the artist?

MARIE: Very insightful and helpful for thinking about my dissertation. And of course to consider who is granted the power to speak, to be an author, and, I might to add, to be an artist. And we must put all of these examples into the consideration of who is allowed power and who is denied it.

JEAN: It was extremely interesting how Prof. Foucault connected the doing of art as almost an antidote to madness. Such a view holds that we are contributing to the maladjustment of individuals in our culture because there are so few opportunities to study the arts. I found his work very enlightening on the concept of art and doing art, and of course, with regard to thinking about the exercise of power at all levels of education.

Act three

Sexuality, knowledge and power relations, resistance and transformation: Applying Foucault in our settings

[Act III is a summary of epiphanies from Paper #2, the final and culminating project of the course.]

JACQUES: It has been most beneficial for me to consider how discourses are exercised in my field. In the broadest sense, discourses are typically courses of action based upon a task that is delegated or an action based upon an operating

procedure (law) which results in a measure of work. Discourse in this case is usually a directive received in person in passing, in a meeting, by phone, or by email. And interestingly, I have found that employees, especially those with some authority, are more interested in exercising their power than they are in facilitating the institution's mission.

MARY FRANCES: Jacques, you have taken extensive notes on all of the Foucauldian concepts from most of the major works. I do indeed get the sense that the outcome of your pulling all of these ideas together has served to enhance your understanding. You noted in your writing about *The History of Sexuality*, that it generated more interest than the *Archaeology*, as well as being understandable. In fact, all of the students in the seminar agreed on this point.

JACQUES: It became clearer in *The History of Sexuality* that I had not really thought about the state's and economic systems' intrusions into my life. Now I see why there is little time for pleasure or leisure. Power is exercised throughout institutions and all over the place in ways that one may not consider if entertainment and consumerism are the foci of life as is often the case in the U.S.

JEAN: I found that Foucault gave me the tools and the ability to examine the proliferating literature on teacher mentoring from a different viewpoint that demands an examination of all elements and discourses that have led to the development of mentoring programmes. I applied five of Foucault's principles to analyze particular mentoring reports.

MARY FRANCES: How can we think about teacher education historically as compared to the present?

JACQUES: In fact, we find ourselves at a point in the historical development of teacher education where we are positioned to ask whether these programmes respond to teacher attrition, student achievement and improved teaching and learning, or do they in fact contribute to the status quo of schools' reflection of the social hierarchy? And we cannot deny that schooling for many underprivileged students is being stripped of its pleasure.

JEAN: Using Foucault's method, we must also ask, who is the determinant of truth with regard to mentoring? Would it be safe to find problems with the idea of mentorship? Is the lack of mentorship really a cause of teacher attrition?

MARIE: So you are saying that we must look at other issues with regard to the teacher? What for example?

JEAN: Many . . . .

MARY FRANCES: You brought up a biological term – maximum parsimony – to explain your point. Will you elaborate?

JEAN: Yes, for example, it has been suggested that mentorship will correct the problem of teacher attrition, but what if the problem is really low pay?

JEANNE: Or increased control over teacher work?

JEAN: Yes, project-based learning is a case in point. It's not feasible, yet it is a most important aspect of intellectual skill and development. In the testing era, the race is on for administrators to find a solution that is politically, socially, and

fiscally feasible. Political power has made it necessary to point to the teacher as the problem, rather than to the politicians, administrators or parents.

MARY FRANCES: How do CSCOPE (TESCCC, 2011; Klein, 2013) and other canned curricula figure in all of this?

JEAN: The politicians adopt educational policy change to appease constituents; professors adopt changes to appease their superiors, now more like politicians. Constituents can reject or accept the idea of taking more or less ownership of their children's education. Nowhere in this hierarchy is the teacher.

MARY FRANCES: What would our educational landscape look like if teachers were respected in our culture?

JEAN: Power would be conceded to the teachers, as has been done in Finland, Singapore, Korea, and other nations where the respective students outscore American students on universalist measures such as the PISA. For those of you who don't know, PISA stands for 'Programme for International Student Assessment', an international assessment that measures reading, mathematics, and science literacy of 15-year-old students. It was initiated in the year 2000 and is conducted every three years in the intergovernmental organization of industrialized countries. In Texas, teachers have had what little power they had usurped by the State of Texas Assessments for Academic Readiness ('STAAR') test. Now in the international cultures, not only power, but also salary has rewarded the important professional work of teaching, which is not always the case in the U.S.A., as we see with the salary of the teacher or the social worker. Yet it does seem that the wages of nurses are rising, especially as more males enter the field – further reinforcing that teachers' wages, work, and reputations have been feminised – a problem we can include among many associated with subalterns.

JEANNE: According to the literature, we must mentor teachers. Perhaps this is another form of control over the teachers and the students. It is consistent with Foucauldian thought that teachers are punished as a result of mistakes made by those who possess power.

MARY FRANCES: Yes, researchers who point out such mistakes are also ostracized within the field of education. Certainly if we point out that power wielders feel that we need to mentor teachers because they are mostly female, we marginalize ourselves from the power streams of public K-12 education.

JEAN: In the world of educational research, we rely on the concept of advancing existing knowledge, building on what came before, and therefore suppress the development of new discourses. In nature, inbreeding results in extinction. We must consider the consequences of denying evolution in educational discourses and question the likelihood that such programmes as teacher mentorship will turn around teacher attrition or other educational problems.

JEANNE: Wow, I love how you have taken Foucault's notions of discourse analysis and genealogy and run with them. Great application of the theories as methodologies!

MARY FRANCES: Now I would like to ask a question of Jacques who works outside our field of education. How do you see and interpret Foucault's ideas

of discourses as knowledge and power relations? Perhaps, you could speak to knowledge and power relations, in general, and also in your job.

JACQUES: Foucault essentially said that 'Politics is war pursued by other means and that war is politics pursued by other means' (Foucault, 1990: 93). I believe that the Military-Industrial Congressional Complex ('MICC') referenced in a draft of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower's farewell address is closer to the truth (Eisenhower, 1995). Is this accumulation of power a conspiracy? Perhaps, it is only the greed that has become an acceptable behavior. The new forms of power can be more subtle than our traditional notion – easier to overlook and much harder to resist.

JEAN: How can we resist that power in our workplaces?

JACQUES: I terminated the situation in which a supervisor did not know or respect what comprised my responsibilities. He manipulated the system, and my trump was to be able to quit a job forcing him to take full and direct responsibility for an important operational unit which he is unqualified to oversee. Basically, I withdrew my participation in his authority over me.

MARY FRANCES: So sometimes the power we exert is not the most advantageous to us personally or to our pocket books?

JACQUES: But most importantly, knowledge enables power to resist power and to be who we are.

MARY FRANCES: Prof. Foucault, *excusez-moi*, we have not included you in our dialogue during Act III.

FOUCAULT: It was not as important that I participate as it was that I witness that you are making great use of my ideas. I thank you for the opportunity, for including me in the discussion of my work with regard to education. And as has been stated several times at this conference (which I have been observing from the next world) that knowledge is not enough! It is most important to take that knowledge, to act on it and transform the world through counter discourses. We each do our part and exercise power in our own settings. *Merci beaucoup*! *Au revoir*!

ALL PARTICIPANTS: *Au revoir*!

FOUCAULT: *A la prochaine* . . .

Epilogue – Implications for teaching and researching

MARY FRANCES: Through reflection in, on and for teaching practice, this study promoted critical thinking in action on the parts of educational professionals with respect to the exercise of power through the curriculum (Schön, 1983). The graduate students made sense of their own educational learning as it juxtaposed their professional lives. Such reflection is critical to engaging professionals in liberatory educational efforts as they endure controlling workplace environments. The forms of control vary and are deployed in many ways, which in turn generate new insights into power, and I hope more questions about the power of the teacher/educator.

Conclusion

At the university, the role of the professoriate is changing with respect to the diminution of respect for tenured faculty, the ownership of course and course materials, and the possibility for replacement by adjunct professors who can be assigned teaching classes that are already in a teaching format online. Many decisions being made about the university curriculum with corporate and financial motivations lead faculty who have been in the university for ten or more years to question their positions, security and the future of the graduate seminar as we have known it for hundreds of years. There is fear that posting of more and more courses onto the web make it much easier for university administrators to replace tenured faculty with lesser credentialled and qualified individuals to teach online classes for much lower salaries (Giroux, 2007). However, as more of our students take courses at a distance, the situation demands that we encourage them to tackle the difficult problems posed by the formations of knowledge and power relations that are reflected in the curriculum in the most optimum manner.

The solution to this paradigmatic shift in the delivery of higher education (in part) lies with the students. To date two doctoral students who took this seminar are now working on their dissertations. One in particular is incorporating notions of the curriculum as reflective of knowledge and power relations by studying the effects of high stakes testing on critical thinking. A third finished hers the summer after the class by documenting a community art project and exhibiting a magnificent weaving of a South Plains sunset. This student was concerned with the Foucauldian-inspired question of 'who can be an author/artist?' Overcoming one barrier after another, she was able to oversee and facilitate an art production that emanated from the community, revealing that anyone can be an artist and that groups of people, not just elite (male) individuals can create beautiful art.

The Readers' Theatre methodology (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995) provides a useful medium through which to dialogue about theoretical insights that led to critical and cultural critique and to express self-awareness regarding our capacity to control or liberate others in bureaucratic institutions (Freire, 1970; Foucault, 1995). An honourable degree of mastery and application of Foucault's ideas are evidenced by the students' dialogue depicted in this script. Drawing connections to my own work and workplace, I now find unfunded research is not valued in research institutions of higher education; thus this

kind of analysis will not likely qualify me for a research grant. Paradoxically, aspects of the technological hold on education allowed me to build and disseminate my foundations courses online helping me to *sustain the field* of foundations which is all but disappearing from the curriculum in colleges of education (Martusewicz, 2013). Critical to successful teaching and learning in both the face-to-face and digital learning environment, is teacher reflection (Schön, 1983). Through reflective practice we observe that students' dialogue with theorists promotes insight into how to improve the teaching of theories. Furthermore, as indicated in the students' exchanges, their consideration of theory revealed their abilities to engage in policy analysis (Agnello, 2001) as students try to understand their own positions in education with respect to the dominant policy discourses that circulate around them (Freire, 1970; Foucault, 1972). Understanding theories and applying them to daily practices, with sensitised regard to how students can employ them in their own settings, we create the field in which we originate our own theories, as well as pave the way for future intellectuals to juxtapose theory to lived experience in the field, to find spaces where they can take action in their workplaces, and to become theorists in their own right as they build on the work of theorists who preceded them.

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Rethinking Advanced Culture: A China-Characterised Bricolage

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Introduction

It is my premise in this chapter that critical theory should be developed in accordance with its specific sociocultural context. Within different contexts, critical theory may acquire multiple layers and dimensions and, in combination with the characteristics of its context, can thus produce new and unique forms. In China, which Li (2004) describes as having 'a capitalist body' under the cover of 'a socialist face', the paradigm of Marxist materialism and 'core values' promoted by the Chinese government (Zhang, 2008) contradict the capitalist bias of its practical reality, particularly in 'the third industry', that is, the cultural industry, which, owing to its 'teaching and transforming' function, is arguably an implicit form of education (Du, 2010).

In this chapter, I will present how I used a 'bricolage' (Levi-Strauss, 1966) of autobiography, life story interviews and materialist dialectics to contextualise and theorise contemporary advanced culture in China. I will demonstrate how my journey of 'searching for theory' is also a journey of transformation from Marxist materialism, which focuses on objectivity, to a conceptual framework in which the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity is contextually rebalanced.

'Advanced culture' in contemporary China derives from Marxist values and is advocated by the Chinese government (Ye, 2008). From my own experience and life story interviews, however, I reveal a complex interplay of Marxist materialism, Chinese traditional culture (Confucianism, Taoism and so on) and Western culture concealed within this term. To study the complexity of this phenomenon, I applied what I refer to as a China-characterised bricolage, tailored to the specific context of China in an age of globalisation.

In accordance with this methodology, I will write about my struggles, confusion, and emotions as I gradually stepped out of the Marxist theoretical paradigm after three years of exploration, as well as my personal achievement during the process. I found that such struggles, confusion, emotions and achievement were shared by my interviewees, who are from a similar background to me.

Introduction to the concept of culture

Ever since Tylor (1920) first described 'culture' as 'a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (p. 1), explaining what culture is has become a most controversial issue in academia. There are now over 200 definitions of culture from around the world (Zhao, 2014). Kroeber et al. (1952) collected 166 of these definitions in *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, categorising it from the perspectives of anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, chemistry, biology, geology and politics. This volume can be regarded as a dictionary of culture, from which a plethora of definitions can be found, including but not limited to the descriptive, historic, behavioural, psychological and constructive concept of culture. Here I am not going to review the definitions from work by Kroeber et al. Instead, I will take an in-depth look at the concept of culture from an etymological view of the Chinese language, exploring its development alongside historical changes within the social context of China.

Wen and Hua: An etymological exploration of culture in the Chinese language

The Chinese term for culture contains two words: *wen* and *hua*. *Wen* in ancient Chinese is referred to as interlaced texture. In *Zhouyi*, a Chinese classic composed in the times of Western Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 24), which is also the theoretical origin of *yin* and *yang*, there is an explanation of *wen* as 'the crossing, interaction and hybrid of everything' (Li, 2006). A later concept of *wen* is closely associated with *ren*, which means 'human' in the Chinese language. Thus the term *ren wen* refers to all the attributes of human society, including ethics, aesthetics, ideologies and values. As recorded in *Hou Han Shu* (*Book of the Later Han Dynasty*), a classic of Chinese literature, *ren wen* covers all the human behaviours, as well as the phenomenon in human society which shows the dependent

relationship between *wen* and *ren* (Zhou & Zhuang, 2007). Wu (2003) further explained that in classical Chinese the combinatorial term of *ren wen* speaks of a world that is contradictory to the world of *ke xue* (science). That means that the shape, content and operation of the world of *ren wen* are opposite to those of the world of *ke xue*.

The other term for culture in the Chinese language is *hua*. The most important connotation of this word is 'to change' and, to be more accurate, 'to transform'. *Hua* always comes in the form of *jiao hua*. *Jiao* means 'to teach, to persuade', and the term *jiao hua* has three layers of implications: a standard of the physical behaviours and spiritual activities in human society; the process for such a standard to be produced, spread and passed on to following generations, and finally its integration as a norm of that society (He, 2014).

Putting *wen* and *hua* together, the connotation of 'culture' in the Chinese language is both static and dynamic. First, it shows what *is* in a human society. It covers all that can be generated from that society, representing the attributes and extant phenomena of that society. Second, it implies the dynamic process whereby what *is* evolves and develops into what *can be* and what *should be* in that society. It also shows the empowerment of individuals in that what they did in the past and what they are doing in the present has been shaping society and will further influence its future. Moving to the present day context of a China-characterised culture, Dai and Shen (2013) claim that criticality is the spirit of the prevailing Marxist philosophy as interpreted and publicised by the Chinese government, which includes two principles when dealing with social issues: contextualising and evolving. This accords with my methodology for this research, whereby Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011, 2012) also emphasise the 'evolving criticality' in cultural studies, taking the empowerment of individuals as a core value of criticality (p. 18).

From this etymological exploration we can see that the Chinese interpretation of culture is complex and has a critical underpinning in three ways. First, there is a sense of time and space, in that culture is discussed within the specific context of an historical age. Second, culture has an evolving nature. It changes the context while at the same time being changed as a result of its dynamic capability within that context. Third, culture implies the power of individuals. The Chinese interpretation of culture is based on that of individuals within society, expressed in ancient Chinese as a 'world', rather than each single member of that world. The government appropriated this meaning in its interpretation of Marxist dialectical materialism and stressed the agency of individuals

and their collective power to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the past, the present and the future of that society. In fact, culture comes from human power and in return has a power to shape human society.

Given that the connotation of culture within the Chinese context is complex and critical, I believe that the methodological approach applied to study it should be consistent with such complexity and criticality. The approach should be multilayered and expansive; most importantly, it should be open to possibilities of change and evolution. With these features in mind, I decided to use bricolage to conduct my interpretive research study of Chinese culture. Such a study is grounded in the consistent interpretation of culture via the Chinese language and the government's conceptualisation of Marxist materialism, to which I will add my own understanding.

The bricolage in holistically motivated research

In Claude Levi-Strauss's (1966) view, bricolage refers to a methodological philosophy similar to 'using a toolbox' from which researchers may choose a diversity of methods from different disciplines which both justify and supplement each other, in order to conduct research as holistically as possible. Since different methods examine the research 'object' from different angles, the complexity of the 'object' can be accounted for; its various sides, dimensions and layers become 'researchable' through their application, which is always contextually bound. In short, bricolage breaks down the complexity of the 'object', adding the characteristics of a specific context to the interpretation of each piece of the debris.

Scholars have thus found that bricolage is particularly suitable for cultural studies because of its inclusive nature. For example, Steinberg (2012) justified bricolage as an interdisciplinary approach in cultural studies. She argued that 'the study of culture can be fragmented between the disciplines' (p. 182), so researchers must go beyond the limitations of separate disciplines and integrate multiple perspectives to examine culture. Kincheloe and Berry (2004) described what bricolage may bring about as 'a complex collage', the production process for such a collage being seen as a synthesis of the researcher's position and thoughts, together with what they have done to interpret the connections between cultural texts and their locus.

Bricolage is thus distinguished from mixed methods as it is always in motion, allowing space for the development of the research. It evolves constantly as the research unfolds and must remain fluid in its

interpretations of data (Rogers, 2012). Additionally, according to the discourse of bricolage, any hard demarcation of 'data' and 'results' dissolves, so that results can be reused as new data yet to be examined in the research. This becomes possible through the 'evolving criticality' of bricolage, since the process never ends. Instead, each step during the research process is based on and adds to the previous one, making the research constantly fresh and different. In this way, bricolage empowers researchers as active agents who see no universal mode for the production of knowledge and are thereby able to both inhabit and shape the 'reality' or temporary conditions of their own research (Selfe & Selfe, 1994; Mcleod, 2000; Bresler & Ardichvili, 2002; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2012; Steinberg, 2012; McLaren, 2012).

I chose to combine autobiography, life story interview and dialectics (a method of contradiction analysis which derives from Hegel's (1817) theory of dialectics as the fundamental methods of the study, focusing on mainstream ideology and values prevailing among Chinese people, commonly referred to as 'advanced culture' in China. This is also the official term used by the Chinese government in policies regarding the 'direction' for 'the construction of spiritual civilisation' (a term opposite to 'the construction of material civilisation' in the government terminology).

The path by which I arrived at this collage of methods is not straightforward. In fact, it has been a challenge for me, having come from both a (Chinese) Marxist and a scientific disciplinary background. I have struggled to shift from objective thinking to openness and diversity of thinking, and to see subjectivity as the essence of my theory, as I will now explain.

A life-changing moment occurred in the first class I attended with my supervisor when she asked me to write an autobiography as an academic assignment in order to 'look at yourself'. Throughout my education in China, I had written numerous assignments looking at figures, charts and equations. I had also been asked to look at Mom, Dad, aunts, uncles, 'a best friend' and 'a favourite teacher' in my life. In sum, I had been telling stories about the 'objective world' and 'subjective society' since primary school and was so comfortable with this practice that I even took for granted that it is the way things should be. However, Dr Steinberg was the first person to ask me to 'look at myself': to tell stories of my own life from my own perspective. For the first time 'I' became the leading character and I realised that my voice could be heard. I felt that I became my true self again. I felt happiness. I was in tears. How could I let go of this unprecedented opportunity

to express myself? It was inevitable that the autobiography I wrote was long. I could not stop.

The next step was to review the autobiography and sort out the life themes. I felt clumsy doing this because it had been almost 20 years since the last time I wrote a '*gan xiang*' (feelings and thoughts) based on my own life experience. That was in Grade 3, and since then narratives had faded out of my education. There were 'narrative writing' requirements in school, but students were expected to connect the 'humble me' with the 'greater society and country'; that is, to turn subjectivity into objectivity. Personal feelings were not taken seriously. In fact, too many personal opinions would not get a good grade in exams. I excelled in exams, so I always ran away from any thoughts about personal expressions in writing, and I got used to that. That is why after almost 20 years writing an autobiography was suddenly very challenging for me, not to mention reviewing the autobiography, reviewing my own life and my feelings about it.

My supervisor understood my concerns, and encouraged me to start by making meaning out of my own track of life, seeking the essentials of my life experience, the themes from the turmoil of all the trivial events in my memory. Like a child digging precious stones from all the rocks, I started my journey to explore and theorise my life.

Autobiography as method

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) claim that 'There is no better way to study curriculum than to study ourselves' (p. 31) which is equally applicable in cultural studies. By studying ourselves we may at least provide an insight into the culture and the world where we are located. According to Fivush et al. (2011), autobiography conveys autobiographical memory, which 'is a uniquely human form of memory that integrates individual experiences of self with cultural frames for understanding identities and lives' (p. 321). As I examined my autobiography, I saw a history of the contradictory intersection of self and culture. In terms of individual development, it was a history of being simplified and stupefied. It was also a history of the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of identity. Viewed from a sociocultural perspective, my autobiography indicates a history of an embedded 'advanced' culture that perceives the West as superior without even knowing what the West really means.

In the case of my individual development, the embedding of the culture of Western superiority started when I was a pre-school child. My parents set a life goal for me to be 'international', which not only

means to have global awareness but also implies an identity that can go beyond the boundaries between nations. What was unspoken is that 'international' implies a connection between China and the West that excludes other less-developed countries, so that the identity I was expected to seek was in fact a West-based identity. Significantly, that identity also had to be 'legitimate', which meant it should not only allow me to have free access to the West, but also should assure that I would be integrated into it. My connection to the West should be not that of a visitor but of a local. The desire to have that connection with the West was deeply planted in me, and 'the West' became my faith. That faith was later consolidated by my family, peers and teachers, and I gained affirmation and confidence from them through living my life with that faith as my principal guide.

However, research studies show that adolescence is a most important period for the development of autobiographical reasoning; that is, for an individual to make meaning of his/her experience by connecting their life story with the world as a whole (Grysman & Hudson, 2010; Fivush et al., 2011). Adolescence is seen to be a significant stage of cultural identification and internalisation, whereby the cultural features that are identified as meaningful to an individual can be actively chosen and internalised (Zhang & Zhang, 2008). Yet during my adolescence I was not encouraged to express my emotions, and the test-oriented, objectivist pedagogy I experienced did not encourage autobiographic studies. Although schools still require teenage students to keep diaries, the content of those diaries hardly represents their personal experiences and feelings. Diaries are simply another daily writing practice to prepare students to do better in exams. On occasions, I felt uncomfortable with this, because I wanted to record in the diary the important moments in my life and my emotions. However, the uncomfortable feeling passed quickly when my 'standardised' diary was praised by my teachers, whilst those students who expressed their own feelings in the diaries were branded (in the comments the teachers wrote on their work, which were also announced to the class), 'self-obsessed', 'lacking objectivity' and therefore 'a waste of time' for both the students and the teachers who had to review these 'worthless valetudinarian pieces'. I felt comfortable again. Why would I bother to challenge when I felt comfortable?

There is an implicit cultural rule in China known as 'stand in the right line', whereby if you are obedient to the 'right' leadership you will be rewarded and your time and energy can be saved. This applies to students as well as employees, who are at a loss about how to fit into the prevailing cultural environment. It is the easiest way to gain a

promised future. In the educational context I have described it would have been considered inappropriate for me to question the authority of my parents, family, teachers and the society I lived in. Criticism and challenging the status quo would be punished, but obedience brought appreciation and material rewards. As I have already suggested, the educational context implies the broad sociocultural context. In fact, I chose to obey these authority figures and accept the sociocultural framework they set for me. I did so because safety was guaranteed, and I could live comfortable with a sense of belonging. I benefited from the culture of obedience, silence and uniformity, and that is why I chose to identify and internalise that culture.

In this sense, whilst cultural identification in my case appears autonomous, it was in fact a passive process as there were no other paths for me to choose. I could only follow the path of my peers, the path paved by authority, the path that led to the culture that has long been embedded in me. I have spent years of my life looping in a vicious circle. That is the mechanism by which the combined culture of Western superiority and Chinese tradition has been identified, embedded and internalised within my body and soul, and above all in the way I think and act. In the vicious circle, 'I' and the embedded culture interact as both cause and effect of each other, constructing the intersubjectivity between my past and present, predetermining one possible future: to continue looping in the circle.

It was not easy for me to recognise myself in these terms, although it had occurred to me that there might be a problem, and for once I doubted what I had been asked to do. But the doubt quickly disappeared as the 'intensity' of life went on. I always thought that I would not waste time challenging something that could not be changed by myself, and I found explanations for that too. Life pace is too 'intense' for us to reflect upon those erratic things that we cannot grab firmly in our hands as we grab food and clothes. My doubt is just my emotion, which, as my teachers told me, is too subjective and not neutral. Only the hard, effective objectives can last, like high scores and the benefits they brought about.

Nevertheless I am glad that I finally stepped out of this temporary comfort zone and conducted my research, starting from myself. It would have been 'safer' had I chosen to do a quantitative study, gathering data from mass sampling and 'figuring out' a generalisable 'truth' without having the specific problem of fitting my identity into the picture. In autobiographical research, what I arrive at is not only *about* the research, it *is* the research. *I* am the research, and the research has meaning

because of its construction within myself. Authenticity and subjectivity are foregrounded. Most importantly, through the research process I start to understand myself. I see my tiredness and my struggles through the complex cultural context of my youthful experience. I problematised myself (Kincheloe, 2005), thereby operationalising critical theory, the starting point for bringing about change.

Life narratives of participants

I continued to apply the 'I' interpretation to study those who are from a similar background to myself by conducting life story interviews as a further method in the bricolage. I decided to look at my peers' problems, their tiredness and struggles as they continued to fight their way out of the cultural context in which we are situated. Perhaps we were so busy fighting to survive that we ignored the possibility that it was the context of our fight that had gone wrong? In fact, the context never enabled us to ask this question, as I will now illustrate further.

China's Youth Day is 4 May. It originates from the 4 May Movement in 1919, which, as described in *The Chinese–English Dictionary*, was 'at once anti-imperialist and anti-feudal'. It marks the beginning of the New Democracy Revolution led by pioneers of the Chinese Communist Party, which also gave birth to a brand new cultural force in China: Communist ideology and social revolutionary theory. The cultural underpinning of the 4 May Movement accounts for the fate of the nation, the passionate resolutions about social problems, the awakening and creation of all social sectors. The Chinese government set 4 May as the annual Youth Day to commemorate the 'Spirit of 4 May', which is 'patriotic, progressive, democratic and scientific' (He & Ma, 2013; Qian, 2014). Throughout the history of China's revolution and construction, the 4 May Movement and its spirit remains cohesive and progressive; it has been guiding the development of the youth movement as the aspiration of the times.

According to the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council P.R. China, the official age range of youth is from 14 to 28, which contrasts with the United Nations' standard age range of 14 to 25. In the current era, the Post-80s and especially Post-85 generations are the mainstay of the youth group in China.

On 4 May 2013 *People's Daily*, the organ of the Chinese Communist Party, published an editorial entitled 'Spare the Youth from Senility', criticising the 'over-pre-mature' Post-80s who lack the vitality and enthusiasm which are expected of youthful people. The semantic

meaning of 'youth' in Chinese refers to the green and fresh spring daytime, while 'senility' is related to the dust during sunset. The editorial used this metaphor in the title to indicate that the Post-80s in China act too 'proper', meaning that the way they think and talk is as cautious and meticulous as that of middle-aged people with adequate life experiences. What is missing behind these 'well mannered' people, the author, Bai Long, explained thus:

> I thought about it over and over again, and realized that what is missing is the élan and vigor of a youthful body and mind. Aren't youths expected to be venturous, straightforward, and bold in vision and motion? Aren't they expected to be pioneers for changes and even revolution? Why am I seeing the youths in the current society so *experienced* in life and have already stepped into the generation of their fathers and mothers? (p. 1)

Bai was right in describing the surface outlook of China's Post-80 generation (to which I belong), yet he neglected the sociocultural factors that have exhausted this generation. Unlike our parents' generations of the 1950s and 1960s, who experienced the 'Ten-Year Catastrophe' of Cultural Revolution, the Post-80s live in a context of incomparable material benefits and an open sociopolitical and sociocultural environment unprecedented in modern China, which is exposed to globalisation and a pour-in of diversified cultures, especially those from the West. But the new context has also brought about new challenges. Under the 'reform and opening up policy', material goods from the West crowded in, together with capitalist and consumerist values. When market economy replaced planned economy, social competition became fiercer than ever, with 'the fittest survives and thrives' playing a key role in the construction of the belief system of China, representing the 'advanced culture' in practice (Wang, 2007). The implicit value of such a culture is Western superiority, in which the Western model of modernisation is taken as the standard, together with its culture (Ye, 2008). In this way, 'advanced culture' was embedded in Chinese Post-80s during childhood and has been consolidated and deepened throughout our education, by parents, teachers, all parts of society, including my own generation. Industrialisation and the internet have provided the Post-80s with multiple choices, but the pressure for surviving and thriving also constrains people from exercising choice. My generation stepped into a society featuring unprecedented mobility and possibility, while tasting the helplessness and loneliness conveyed by urbanisation.

Among us there is a loss of faith and a confusion of cultural identity (Zhang, 2009).

To differentiate further, attention should be paid to a special group within the already 'confused and at-loss' Chinese Post-80s; that is, the Chinese Post-80s who are living abroad, and in particular those who are living in the West. Compared to those Post-80s in China, this is a group with life experience of the West, standing on the intersection of the most densely crossing lines of cultures. In order to understand how they became embedded in the 'advanced culture' of Western superiority and West-centralism, I conducted semi-structured, open-ended life story interviews with six Chinese Post-80s who are now living in Alberta, Canada; digging out the root of 'advanced culture' prevailing in this group in connection with the specific social context that nurtured such embeddedness, and exploring how the 'advanced culture' has influenced the construction of their belief system and cultural identification.

Unlike quantitative methods based on objectivity and mass sampling, I focused on the subjectivity of the six participants, interpreting their most personal experiences as they grew up, to the present self in relation to the sociocultural contexts that have shaped their identities, evoking emotions and revealing their struggles and confusions in life, as well as their despair and hope towards the future for themselves and Chinese society. I start with the bewildering affiliations and ramifications generated from this complicated generation, and I intend to finally reach the essence, the true selves of the Post-80s. There is a Chinese saying about branches and their blooms: sometimes the flowers may confuse people and make them neglect the existence of the branches on which they thrive. My research focuses on the branches and even on the roots.

This idea is implied in Walt Whitman's verse 'When I heard the Learn'd Astronomer' in *Leaves of Grass* (1892),

> When I heard the learn'd astronomer
> When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me
> When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them
> When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room
> How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick
> Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time
> Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

In ancient China, people believed that the stars in the night sky represent people on the earth, and they observed the track of those stars to learn the experience of the people they represent. The aesthetic meaning of this tradition remains even now, with the Chinese people seeing the stars as their ancestors protecting and blessing them from the vast 'Tian Jie' ('heaven' in Chinese tradition). Similarly in Whitman's verse, there is no need to add meaning to the stars as the stars are the meaning itself. The interpretive method of life story interview allows me to take an in-depth look at the 'stars' as they are, exploring the meaning they convey. That cannot be realised using quantitative methods, in which the meaning, the myth and beauty of the 'stars' are 'ranged in columns'.

Robert Atkinson (1998) alleged that everything happens in story form. Each of our life stories consists of a beginning, middle and end. All stories develop in a spiral form as the end of one story may be the beginning of another. Although life stories are highly subjective and diversified, they are 'drawn from a well of archetypal experiences common to all human beings' (p. 5). Combining the viewpoint of MacAdams and Pals (2006) that it is culture that produces life stories, culture thereby can be seen as the 'well' from which individuals draw inspiration and develop all forms of colourful life experiences. Just as the 'Yin (cause) – Guo (effect)' theory of Zen asserts that everything happens for a reason, the root reason for the occurrence of all life stories has to do with 'cultural influences'. Although culture itself may develop into a variety of shapes and into multiple layers, thus impacting on different dimensions of life stories, the origin, the 'well' is always there. That is what Kant described in *Critique of Judgement* (1790) as 'noumenon', the 'thing-in-itself', which generates the complexity of our feelings and experiences.

I am not claiming that the only generalisable finding from life story interviews is the understanding of this phenomenon of culture as noumenon, nor that, as Granovetter (1985, 2007) alleged, culture is too ambiguous to study and is unlikely to evince a common 'rule' out of all its representations. I agree that there is no objective rule regarding how culture works which can be universally applied, yet I also believe that there is no such thing as 'absolute subjectivity and particularity' which in itself contradicts subjectivity and particularity. There is no subjectivity without objectivity, and there is no particularity without unity and generality. Under culture's ambiguity of subjectivity and its variation of particularity there lies a relatively stable and regular pattern, applicable to a specific context. That is relative objectivity abstracted

from subjectivity and the unity of particularity. According to Atkinson (1998), life story interview is a methodology not necessarily immune from objectivity. It must be 'scientific', otherwise it descends into agnosticism; that is, 'absolute subjectivity'. The premise, rather, is that it is first and foremost 'an art' (p. 26), whose function is to seek the meaning of life stories.

Thus in my research I read and interpreted my participants' life stories as a cultural text, abstracting from all the subjective feelings and experiences a shared pattern of culture, the mechanism of cultural embeddedness and the identification of individuals within a common context.

Songs of youth

I invited six participants to be interviewed, all of whom were Chinese Post-80s who were born and raised in China. They received their education under the Chinese school system and came to Canada after obtaining a bachelor's degree in a Chinese university. They are now either in graduate programmes in Alberta or have completed their studies within the past 12 months. A significant feature of the research is that they have close relationships with me as the researcher. They are not only my peers, but also my friends and the major part of my social connection in Alberta, besides my supervisor and other academic relatives. I invited them to be participants for reasons of trust. It would be easier for them to open up and share their stories in a 'fair, honest, clear and straightforward' manner to someone they knew who is already close to them, than to an 'outsider' with whom they are not familiar and who does not share their common concerns (Atkinson, 1998, p. 37).

Another significant reason that I see my peers as appropriate and cohesive interviewees is that they 'touch and connect' with my own experience in life, which brings us together in a shared discourse that can evoke reciprocal understandings. In this way it would also be easier to identify the commonalities of our life experience and the regular pattern of culture that generates such commonalities. In this sense, the interview may become more meaningful as an art or indeed praxis of the human world:

> More important in the life story interview than formality, or appearing scientific, is the ability to be humane, empathic, sensitive, and understanding.
>
> (Atkinson, 1998, p. 28)

Another interesting aspect of life story interview is that it not only intrigues mutual understanding between myself and my participant, but also promotes co-evolution for both of us, as well as a development of our relationship. Life stories change lives, and that was a surprise finding as I conducted the interviews. In fact, there are many other surprises that I did not expect before starting the research.

Studies show that compared to Western participants (and North Americans in particular), Chinese participants tend to be less open when asked to talk about their own life experiences, and are less willing to show emotions and feelings about the stories they narrate (Zhang & Zhang, 2008). They tend to be more question-oriented in that they speak according to the questions proposed by the interviewer, adopting a 'modest' manner when talking about themselves (Wang, 2001; Conway et al., 2005). One explanation may be that Chinese tradition values silence over volubility, which is implied in numerous Chinese classics. In *Gui Gu Zi* (the origin of the 'Yin and Yang' thought), Wang (1930) said that 'the more you talk, the more errors you will make' and in *Zhu Zi Jia Xun* (translated in modern Chinese as *Master Zhu's Family Instructions*), Yongchun Zhu (1670) exhorted the younger generation that 'to survive in life, abstain from loquacity as one is bound to have a tongue slip if he talks too much'. In classic literature the talkative people are always portrayed as the fool or villain. Ruisheng Chen (1784) criticised a character in an early feminist novel *Zai Sheng Yuan* by saying that 'she was indeed straightforward, yet not smart enough to know that the tongue cuts the throat, and that her words will soon give her away' (p. 16). In modern and contemporary China, silence is still valued as a life philosophy and a survival strategy in career and leadership, especially when one works for the government and state-owned central industries (Yu, 2008).

With that in mind, I was not expecting the interviewees to fully open up their mouths, not to mention their hearts. As this was ostensibly a semi-structured interview, and taking into consideration the unique characteristics of the Chinese participants, I prepared several questions in order to rebalance the interview if it lost direction or 'flow'. Regarding my relationship with the interviewees, I was going to be happy if they cooperated and elaborated a little based on my prompts. However, they elaborated *a lot*. I was astonished at how willing my participants were to share their experiences and feelings. What surprised me was that I could hardly stop them from talking.

During the interview with one participant, I was trying to drag him back to the question I prepared, assuming that I could get the 'efficient'

information I needed. However, the participant was so eager to express all that he had in mind that he anxiously 'reminded' me three times: 'I haven't done yet . . . ' 'There is another thing I must tell . . . ' 'I still have a lot to say . . . '

When we finally finished the interview, his thoughts were still lingering and we ended up in a coffee shop, where the sharing continued with laughter as he revealed some 'little secrets' affiliated to what he remembered in the interview.

'Did I talk too much?' he asked at last, sheepishly. 'Did you get what you need? I think I was talking off the topic . . . '

I got what I wanted, but not only through the direct asking and answering, nor from the information obtained that was simply based on the presumed 'topic'. There was no absolute topic for the interview, as there is no absolute topic for life. Authenticity and subjectivity are what matters most. Those are the values that made the interview meaningful, as in life.

The willingness of the participants to share their own experiences and feelings reminded me of my own autobiography. Their behaviour in the life story interview resonated with my own experience. But unlike the teachers in my own life narrative, as they unveiled themselves during the storytelling I helped my participants to discover themselves, confronting their concerns in a positive manner. I saw myself in them, and as I conducted the interviews my sense of achievement grew. The power of narratives is enhanced when the order changes.

According to Atkinson (1998), the ideal recording result for a life story interview is a complete life story of the interviewee. The researcher and the questions can be deleted, as the interview process should be a narrative rather than a conversation. In that sense, the 'data gathering' (recording and transcribing the stories) part of the interviews was successful, as all six participants took the main responsibility for the talk; I only played a guiding role. Literally speaking, the interviews were not conversations because most of the time only the interviewee were talking, yet they were truly conversations of mind and feeling, in that they connected me with my peers emotionally. I saw myself in them. I saw my anxiety, fears, struggles, joy and hope in people who are like me, who have black hair and black eyes, in people who have travelled hundreds of thousands of miles far away from home, seeking freedom and the meaning of life. I saw myself in those people who share their life goals, values and culture with me.

One participant comes from a relatively under-developed town in western China. When she was a little girl her daily routine was herding

sheep. Her life goal was to go out from where she lived and from the way she and her family was living. She told me that her only hope was through studying, and that became the meaning of her education.

> [If] you have ever been to western China you will know what I was talking about. Nobody wants to spend a whole life there, only losers end up there. There is hardly any decent university in the whole province.

She achieved her goal of being a 'phoenix' that flew out from a chicken house. She went to one of the best universities in Beijing and was hired by a reputed multinational corporation. She worked there for five years before she resigned and came to Canada. As for how she made her way to Beijing, she thought for a long time but did not come up with any specific memories. She was surprised as well. She said that as she recalled her youth nothing interesting came to her mind: '[My] life as a youth was simple. It's just about school and exams.' I asked her whether she loved her hometown that raised her up. 'Absolutely', she answered without hesitation,

> [but] I am not going back again. It is not because I don't want to make it better, but I cannot do it alone. It is like throwing an egg to a hard rock, and I am not sacrificing my own life for that unpractical noble cause.

She then continued to say that this was why she finally chose to go to Canada and would try whatever she could to stay.

> [It] is not because I don't love my motherland nor I don't want to make it better, but I am not risking my life happiness for it. It is unpractical and meaningless.

At the end of the interview I asked her whether she is happy now in Canada. She lowered her head for several seconds, and then she said in a strong tone as if she was convincing herself as well, 'Absolutely. It can't be worse in a developed country than in a developing one.'

We went for a coffee after the interview. I asked her how she felt about the interview. She sighed, and mocked herself with a forced smile on her face:

> [I] always thought that my life was busy and fulfilled, but today I cannot even remember any interesting moments throughout my life. For the first time I realised that I am no longer with my parents and am far away from home. For the first time I realised that I am alone.

In 2014, *Jue Sheng Wang* issued the '2013 International Education Industry Report', which was the first detailed report of a study focusing on the effects of international education. The report took an in-depth look at the psychological conditions and the current problems of Chinese students who are living abroad. It shows that 44.9 per cent of relatively young students (aged under 30) have a feeling of loneliness during their stay in other countries. One of the reasons is that most of the students in this age range are from the 'single child' era. They tend to be more dependent and lack adequate skills to live without supervision by their parents and teachers. Most of these students went through the traditional Chinese exam-oriented education, which seldom encourages independent thinking. They are more likely to feel helpless when they have to face a new environment on their own. In the satisfaction survey, 90 per cent of students reflect that they have had physical and psychological problems such as exhaustion, confusion, eating disorders, insomnia and algopsychalia since they left China; and 65.1 per cent blame the 'big cultural difference' for their sufferings.

What indeed is this 'cultural difference' referred to here? As in the Chinese interpretation of *wen hua*, both *wen* and *hua* are different. In Edward Hall's (1976) 'cultural iceberg' model, *wen* refers to conscious culture, including behaviours and explicit beliefs; *hua* refers to unconscious culture, including values and ideological patterns (Atkinson, 1998; Zhang, 2009). To see the differences of both *wen* and *hua* that Chinese students may encounter, we must first understand the cultural context they are from; that is, the prevailing, mainstream *wen* and *hua*, or 'advanced culture' of the Chinese students.

In the times when traditional Chinese culture dominated the nation, there was a clear appreciation of cultural diversity. In the concept of '*Yi* and *Xia*', the culture of *Xia* (the origin of China), with Confucianism as its core values, was considered advanced compared to the culture of *Yi* (foreign countries), as the *Xia* culture values morality over power and reason over violence. The underpinning is the culture of '*jun zi*' which means 'people with moral integrity'. The appreciation for '*jun zi*' culture had seldom been shaken for over 2000 years of Chinese history. Despite the fact that what turned out in reality was not what was anticipated

in the *Xia* cultural discourse, the value itself never changed. It was the practice that went awry, not the ideology (Wang, 2007).

The ideology and values of *Xia* culture started to change after the First Opium war in the nineteenth century, when Western culture was introduced to China together with the invasion by foreign powers, *Yi*. Since then, there has been a confusion of judgement about what constitutes advanced culture, with the core values inverted. The culture of *Yi* (which originated in the modern West and came with Western colonisation during the nineteenth century), has been gradually adopted by Chinese authorities and the public, so that utilitarianism and social Darwinism are now firmly embedded in Chinese society. In this discourse, desires are appreciated and made use of; consumerism, capitalism and hegemony hold sway. It is a culture of benefits.

Benefits may cover material interest, military power, market occupation, advanced high technology and cultural invasion (Zhao et al., 2003). In Chinese traditional values, 'benefit' is considered depraved. The literati and officialdom, who constituted the upper class in feudal China, shared a common disdain for 'benefits'; thus the culture of benefits is the culture of '*xiao ren*': the opposite of people with integrity ('*jun zi*') (Jiang & Su, 2007; Qin & Wu, 2009). As the culture of '*xiao ren*' became accepted by Chinese people, what used to be seen as devalued became value itself. This ideological embeddedness of *Yi* is considered to be an unprecedented revolution; the most thorough inversion and inconsistency in the entire Chinese cultural history (Jiang, 2003). The revolution has not yet finished, but has continued to expand and deepen until now. This 'silent' revolution of culture is problematic not simply because of the shift between *Xia* and *Yi*, but because of the shift from '*jun zi*' to '*xiao ren*'.

From a historical perspective, the root cause of the revolution is the practical weakness of the *Xia* culture, despite its advancement in theory. During the First Opium War, Yang Wu Pai, who represented the Westernisationist power in the government of the Qing Dynasty, claimed that China encountered an unprecedented crisis: the *perishing of the nation*, the genocide of the people and the collapse of traditional belief systems. This opinion was adopted by the Emperor and 'to salvage China from subjugation' became the prioritised mission and national policy at that time (Tang & Meng, 2003; Wang, 2011). Morality, which is seen as the core of the *Xia* culture, had no immediate practical effect towards defeating the *Yi* troops equipped with powerful modern weapons. The Qing authorities were forced to make a decision to first protect the nation and the people, 'to learn from *Yi* and fight it back

in its own way', and then recover the belief system and bring back the culture of '*jun zi*' (Wei, 1852). They did not see the level of cultural embeddedness that is the underpinning of conquering forces. At first, Chinese authorities and the public started to adopt 'scientific' values that could produce quick and effective benefits (for example, weapons with advanced technology) in order to 'salvage China'. The culture of '*jun zi*', on the contrary, is slow to show effects. The relationship between the two is like the difference between fast food and a well-prepared dinner. The former produces quick energy and can immediately allay hunger while the latter takes time but produces complete nutrition and the pleasure of eating that satisfies all the senses. Gradually, this 'fast food' became a 'habit' for Chinese people, and they enjoyed the quick benefits generated from the habit, unwilling to step outside this comfort zone and pick up the old '*jun zi*' culture they had lost. That is why after over 100 years of struggles, the nation and the people remained, but the beliefs were lost. The belief in *Yi*, or in today's term the West, has become the advanced culture. The discourse of 'benefits' has become a core value in Chinese culture. The cultural embeddedness of the West has been taking effect and is still in process.

In education, the representation of such cultural embeddedness is the exam-oriented mode of schooling. All participants in the interview, despite the different geographical and socio-economic backgrounds they came from, shared the experience of 12 years of exam-oriented education. When talking about the meaning of their 12 years of schooling, they each had the same view, that high scores in exams was all they wanted. This was expected to bring benefits for them such as shaking off poverty, escaping from underdeveloped hometowns, rewarding careers, an easy life both for themselves and their parents, and most importantly, guaranteed money. From a macroscopic perspective, since 1978 when Deng Xiaoping addressed the PCP Congress on his 'reforming and opening-up' policy by stating that knowledge and technology were the primary productive force, the practical values of education have outweighed its true meaning. The teaching and learning of knowledge, 'objective' facts and that which is 'useful and practical' are the primary tasks of the curriculum, but the critical way of thinking is undermined. Exams are taken as the only way to estimate the effectiveness of education. When students score high marks in exams, all parties, students, teachers and schools are considered to be successful, and the student's education is complete.

During the interviews, when the participants were sharing their life experience, the 12 years of school was often left blank. One participant

was from a rich coastal city designated with an independent budget in the state plan to guarantee its economic development. In his story, he listed 21 childhood episodes which were full of interest and delight. He was excited to remember the details and laughed from time to time. However, when he talked about school life, the light in his eyes immediately went dim. He told me there was nothing interesting, and all his memories of those 12 years were about how he was laughed at because he got low scores in natural sciences; he was reluctant to go into details. 'Life was extremely boring', he said.

In the cultural context of utilitarianism, subjectivity is not as important as that which brings immediate practical benefits. Benefits, as hard *objects* that can be held firmly in the hands, are in essence 'materials', since all upper construction is decided by the material foundation. Such material foundation must be objective; for example, the supplies that can meet needs. Although this ideology stresses the cooperation of both object and subject, the priority goes to object as there will be no subject (upper construction) if the object (material foundation) does not exist. In the government's interpretation (and the prevailing one accepted by the Chinese public), Marxist materialism is thus implemented throughout the Chinese population, and the culture of benefits thrives. Materialism reflects a positivist and scientific value, yet the trick of the Chinese government here is equating 'scientific' with 'advanced'. As materialism is scientific, it is thus advanced. A culture which features materialist, objective and scientific values is taken as normative and 'advanced', with the obedient Chinese people also adapting themselves to the mechanical mode of production because it is the way that leads most easily to benefits. That easiest way is to take in what is taught without doubting or challenging it, and thereby subjectivity is ignored. In a similar manner to 100 years ago, the values for self-cultivation and the belief in integrity are lost. Independence and the intrinsic power of individuals are lost. This may explain why Chinese students encounter uneasiness and even disturbance both physically and psychologically when they come to Canada. They are lost when they are forced to live independently. They are lost when they need to live their own life. That is the root of the so-called 'cultural difference' they have been blaming.

Considering the life experience of myself and my peers, I started to rethink the meaning of 'advanced culture'. Traditional Chinese culture has a deficit in practice which led to its collapse following the Opium Wars, yet the culture of utilitarianism embedded by the modern West and transformed from Marxist materialism can be dangerous when implemented throughout the country. A balancing paradigm of

advanced culture should be a dialectical unity of the two opposites. Instead of centring on either of them, the new paradigm should be in a decentred form based on the interaction and integration of both. Such a paradigm is dynamic, as the conflict and fusion of the two opposite cultures are in constant motion. Only when subjectivity and objectivity coexist as complementary can life be filled with meaning.

Like my interviewees, I never regret stepping out of the comfort zone of objectivity to come to Canada. Here I started my own life as a researcher who is also the essence of her research. As I finally came to the theory of a balancing paradigm of advanced culture, I also gained a theory of life itself.

> Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time
> Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.
> *I*, am the star.

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8

Teaching in Higher Education: Deriving a Context-Specific Knowledge-Base Through Praxis

Gill Nah

Introduction

When deciding the focus of my doctoral thesis I opted to investigate the experience of participants on the in-house Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching course (PGC LT) for staff at the UK higher education institution where I worked. Intrigued by the literature questioning the need for, efficacy of and negative reporting in many accounts of such courses, I wanted to know more. As a professional educator whose identity was only ever that of teacher I was puzzled by the apparent reluctance, reported in the literatures, of many teaching in higher education to take on a teacher persona. However, it was my impression, as there was no evidence to suggest otherwise, that the experience of the PGC LT participants at my institution was largely positive. Hence, I set out to investigate something that appeared not to be a problem.

From the outset I had a clear view of the basic components of the study. Course alumni were invited to volunteer to participate in the research in the form of semi-structured interviews. Determined to position my participants as central to the research I used Trowler's (2008) notion of macro, meso and micro contexts, in other words the national/wider higher education, institutional/course and my own teaching contexts, to 'place the figures in their contextual ground' (ibid.: 19). I wanted to know what the lived experience of the course had been for these alumni, and whether any of the issues emerging from the literature on PG Certs resonated for them. With greater awareness of the wider and institutional contexts that both created and contributed to these participants' lived experience, together with their interpretations

of that experience, I hoped to be able to design and facilitate a better experience for future graduates. This chapter attempts to illustrate how.

What I knew: Theory-informed practice

In the late 1970s, that is, before the undergraduate degree became the common qualification denominator, a certificate in education was deemed to be a sufficient credential for teaching in schools. Even so, at that time, theory was seen to be integral to initial teacher education, and as trainees we were expected to be theoretically informed. Skinner's rats, Pavlov's dogs, Bowlby's attachment theory, Holt on *How Children Learn* and *How Children Fail*, Hirst and Peters on the psychology of education, all played a role, with Piaget's theory of developmental psychology centre stage. By observing teachers and pupils in school and undertaking weeks of teaching practice, increasing in number each year, practice and theory worked separately and together to guide and inform.

On graduation, I taught for many years in the post-compulsory sector. But in 2001, when I moved into an arts-based higher education setting, it quickly became apparent that although my initial teaching qualification had served me well until now, it was inadequate as a knowledge-base for my new role as a Study Advisor. The main function of this role was to support students with the theoretical element of their studies.

I turned initially to study skills handbooks for advice and guidance, but found them of limited use, as they adopted a generic and technicist approach (Lea & Street, 1998, 2006; Wingate, 2006; Smith, 2007). In my view such an approach failed to acknowledge either the complexity of individual learning contexts, or address the difficulties of learning to write or learning to 'be' a student in a higher education setting. As Elton (2009: 131) notes, 'student writing in an academic discipline is, if taught at all, taught . . . in an academic unit, which rarely if ever can go beyond the generic'. I noticed that although students ostensibly came to me for support with writing, reading or taking notes in lectures, there were usually other factors such as anxiety, negative beliefs about ability or parental pressure impacting on their studies.

From my initial teacher education and years of teaching experience I understood that teaching is an intensely human and hugely complex activity that cannot be reduced to a matter of 'skills and strategies'. Feeling inadequate and ill prepared to fulfil this new role, I returned to the study of education in my search for a theory-informed knowledge-base from which to develop my teaching practice.

What I didn't know – Searching for a knowledge-base

On commencing a Master of Education programme I found old friends such as Piaget alive, well and living alongside his contemporary Vygotsky, whose work had remained unknown in the West until it was translated into English in the 1960s. Much has been made of a tension between Piaget's view, that meaning-making occurs in the minds of individuals, and Vygotsky's perspective, that meaning-making is situated and dependent on social contexts, with both somewhat simplistically positioned as binary opposites on a presumed theoretical continuum. However, from Barbara Rogoff (1999) I came to understand that cognitive constructivism and social constructivism are not polarities but part of the same process. According to Rogoff, 'cognitive development occurs as people learn to use cultural tools for thinking with the help of others more experienced' (2008: 49). This sociocultural approach, which views human development as an integration of 'cognitive, social, perceptual, motivational physical and emotional and other processes' (ibid.), proposed a more unifying theorisation of how learners learn and importantly how I might teach my learners how to learn. In my case learners enter into the social context of their subject discipline (fashion design, management and marketing, promotion and imaging; graphic design; music and lifestyle journalism) part of which involves engagement with texts and, in particular, the sometimes challenging writings of cultural theorists (cf. below). However, these taken-for-granted ways of thinking and practising that are second nature to community masters in the arts remain unspoken, hidden barriers to novices who are trying to enter.

Gradually, the skills-based approach to providing study advice, which I considered to be inadequate and reductive, gave way to a sociocultural approach, whereby I set out to identify the social practices of cultural theory for art and design students so that I could make them explicit. Studying the unit handbooks, readings and assessment requirements to understand what students are required to do was easy because here the expectations are visible on the page. More difficult to identify are the tacit demands and pet tastes and preferences of individual lecturers. So in conversations with them I listened for indications of their underlying beliefs and values about what students should know and be able to do. Thus, I could make the practices of cultural theory explicit for my students. In other words, without teaching cultural theory I was able to teach learners how to learn cultural theory. What I learned was the importance of context.

Whilst many educational theorists influenced my thinking and contributed to the development of my practice, I found the sociocultural perspective to be the most helpful in explaining how learners learn, because viewing learning as 'situated' within a process of participation in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 1998) makes it possible to identify what participation involves. Where this was leading me, although I didn't realise it at the time, was towards a social constructionist epistemological perspective.

Via my masters project I was able to examine how my practice had been informed and/or changed through engaging with theory. Here I have merely sketched the unfolding of events as I remember them, in order to illustrate where my belief in the value of theory-informed practice began and how it has continued to serve. I am convinced that its roots lie in my initial teacher education as a result of my participation in that particular sociocultural context. By using theory to conceptualise my specific practice as Study Advisor, I identified a knowledge-base from which to operate. This enabled me to develop approaches and design materials that were context specific. A happenstance consequence of this work, my own engagement with cultural theory, not only revealed the value of theory-informed practice for my students, but was also personally transformative. The privilege of engaging with and divining the possibilities of theory-informed practice was intoxicating, so much so that on reaching the end of my masters studies I immediately enrolled on a part-time doctorate in education.

The process begins – Locating the field

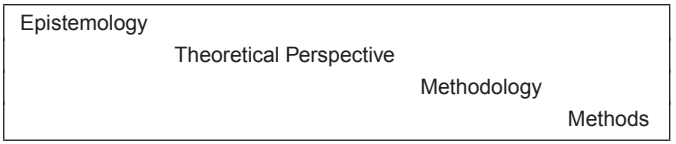
Years 1 and 2 of the doctoral programme consisted of taught modules. In Year 3, I began to develop my research project. By this time, I was already working as an academic developer on the PGC LT, which had come into being as a direct result of government policy for higher education. I knew from the reading I had done for one of my early doctoral assignments that many academic staff in higher education resented being forced to study teaching and were reluctant to let traditional academic identities go (see Walker, 2001; Beck & Young, 2005; Harris, 2005; Henkel, 2005; Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008) and/or to adopt the identity of teacher. Yet learning how to teach and manage student groups of ever increasing size and diversity with greater efficacy, although not a panacea, seemed to me to be replete with possibility. The PGC LT participants whom I taught did not seem unhappy, but what did they really think and feel? Rather than attempting to inflict my own belief in

the value of pedagogy on them it would surely be better to determine where our beliefs and values collided, aligned and merged. The question was how.

Two major challenges – Philosophy and methodology

I held two firm beliefs that I decided to tackle head on. First, that to be a doctor it is surely essential to know something about philosophy. Second, that conducting a doctoral study demands deep methodological awareness. I was aware from my early doctoral assignments that methodology was an enticing treasure chest containing myriad lenses through which to view the world. I also knew that how one looked through them was dependent upon one's personal philosophical orientation. Thus, I determined to establish my own philosophical position and then select the most appropriate methodology and methods for the task at hand.

One publication, *The Foundation of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* by Michael Crotty (2003), became the guiding light through the difficult terrain of research design. There were others, but Crotty provides a succinct overview and explanation of the similarities and differences between epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and method. He astutely notes that 'methodologies and methods are not usually laid out in highly organized fashion and may appear more as a maze than as pathways to organized research' (ibid.: 1). Novice researchers striving to navigate the array of methodologies and methods in search of a robust research design may consider Crotty's view to be an irrefutable truth. Indeed, not only is the sheer number of methodological possibilities overwhelming but also the hair's breadth between many of them is confounding. Crotty (ibid.: 4) suggests that working through the following schema helps the researcher to locate the theoretical framework of their research design.



To start by identifying the methods, 'concrete techniques or procedures' (ibid.: 6) we intend to use, although good advice, is not as

straightforward as it sounds. Neither am I sure that it is where I started. I had a clear view of the contextual ground for my project, as follows:

- The UK policy context that had set the agenda to professionalise teaching in higher education, and the means by which central government intended to achieve this
- The response of the higher education population to that agenda (in the main resistant)
- The institutional interpretation of policy
- How that translated into the PGC LT course
- How it compared to others of similar ilk
- What the lived experience of that course had been for recent alumni
- My contribution to their experience
- My role and how this should develop and change.

I was unsure about how to organise these elements but knew I wanted the research participants to be central to the research process and to the thesis. I also aspired to employing approaches that were sympathetic to the creative arts setting but again I was not sure what, where or how. Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis (1997) and narrative enquiry (Chase, 2005) had potential, and in my mind's eye I saw portraits of participants (a combination of visual and written texts)) hanging in a gallery space. Being thus able to articulate what to research, the next step was working out how.

A robust research framework requires synergies between the parts of the schema, which should be greater than the sum of its parts. It may be possible in some research designs and approaches for each element to be worked out separately and incrementally, but this was not my experience. Mine were engaged simultaneously and allowed to emerge. Knowing that the methods and methodology must reside comfortably within the theoretical perspective, which will in turn derive from the researcher's epistemology of knowledge, provided the key. Crotty's schema (ibid.) was the threshold over which I knew I had to cross (Land, 2011), so that gradually a theoretical framework came into view.

I read chapter after chapter of Denzin and Lincoln's tome *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2002, 2nd ed.). I do not pretend to have understood much of what I read in the early stages but gradually potential methodological approaches emerged as golden nuggets of possibility that held the promise of changing my life forever. At the same time I became aware that the emerging design of my doctoral project

provided an opportunity to try on/out a range of methodologies and methods.

A chapter by Schwandt (2000), 'Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry: Interpretivism, Hermeneutics, and Social Constructivism', enabled me to align with interpretivism and locate this within philosophical hermeneutics, which is described thus:

> [U]nderstanding is not a matter of setting aside, escaping, managing or tracking one's standpoint, prejudgments, biases, or prejudices. On the contrary, understanding requires the *engagement* of one's biases. . . . The point is not to free ourselves of all prejudice, but to examine our historically inherited and unreflexively held prejudices (195).

Further referencing Heidegger and Gadamer, Schwandt brings the interrelationship between epistemology (the theory of knowledge (Crotty, 2003: 10)) and ontology (the study of being (ibid.)) into view. He positions understanding as 'a kind of practical experience in and of the world that, in part, constitutes the kind of persons that we are in the world'. Schwandt explains how, for Heidegger, 'philosophy is ontology'; understanding is 'lived' or 'existential' (ibid.: 196). Building on the work of his teacher Heidegger, Gadamer used the term 'prejudices' to describe 'the inherited notions derived from one's culture', for 'History does not belong to us. We belong to history!' (Crotty, 2003: 102–3). Thus, Schwandt (2000) positions the sociocultural and historical dimension of social constructionism, whereby 'we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, [and] language' (ibid.: 197). This epistemological perspective acknowledges that the interpretation of knowledge by the researcher is socially constructed; it provides the possibility that interpretations may be shared with those who are like-minded but that they may remain incomprehensible or inconceivable to others who are not.

Being able to articulate my interpretive stance thus had several significant implications. First, ontology and epistemology had to reside together in my schema with the interrelationship between them not only acknowledged but also articulated. Second, in spite of a determination to position the research participants at the centre of the work I was already always present in it and must reflexively locate myself in relation to the interpretive paradigm, methodologies and methods I chose to adopt. Third, I had to position any interpretation of the literature, policy analysis, institutional context, participant portraits and findings

as mine and mine alone. This was disconcerting because it raised questions of how research of this kind could be valid, reliable or robust. The answer eventually came to me: by claiming to be nothing other than my story, of interest simply in the telling, and by making no claim of ultimate truth, but rather, recognising tentativeness and partiality, I would offer my work as merely one of many 'sites from which the world is spoken' (Lather, 1991: 33).

Gradually able to push my work forward, and in the way of hermeneutics, I began to grasp the parts that would constitute the whole. I could feel (I use the word intentionally) the research design emerging, although there were still many pressing questions; in particular, what were the epistemological–ontological interconnections and what interpretivist theoretical perspective should I employ?

In my work supporting students with the development of their dissertations I had become familiar with the term postmodernism and was drawn to discussions about its influence on research. In a chapter entitled 'Postmodern Approaches to Research' Usher (in McKenzie, Powell and Usher, 1997: 40) makes the following connections: first he asks 'is it more useful to see research as practice' and then, if research is textual practice, that is, a practice of writing, surely research has a fictional quality? And finally, if this is so then research is 'story-telling'; it is both 'constructed' and 'constructing' (ibid.). Thus, Usher suggests that all research is autobiographical. In other words, since research is situated it thereby requires us to ask 'where is it coming from?' (ibid.). That research is textual practice, that research practice is story-telling, that story-telling is filtered through the sociocultural experience of the teller, chimed with the interpretivist perspective outlined above. Reference to cultural theorists whose work I knew (Barthes, Baudrillard, Eco and Jameson) reminded me that postmodernity can be understood as a condition of being (Lyotard, 1984; Harvey, 1989). Neither a description of the dominant artistic phase of the times nor something that simply followed modernism, on this view postmodernity is a term that heralds the shift from production-oriented societies to those ruled and regulated by consumption. The imperative to consume has not only become the mode by which we live but has also opened the door to what Giroux (2005) refers to as 'pervasive neoliberalism'. With higher education now firmly in the clutches of marketisation (Quicke, 1998; Ball, 2003; Harris, 2005) this ontological–epistemological perspective seemed apposite. As Usher (1997: 33) warns, it is important to notice what is 'underneath' the power structures and the discourses that support them. His warning led me to the work of Foucault, whose approach to discourse analysis

I employed to interrogate the HE policy context. I will explain how I employed Foucault's methodology later, but before doing so there are two important moments of realisation to recount that changed me forever.

First, through engagement with theoretical discussions of ontology, epistemology and theoretical perspectives, and led again by Usher (1997), I began to position/view research as practice. Up until that point I thought that I was *doing* research but I began to see how deeply implicated the researcher is in the research design, approach and findings. The notion of research as part of me – and thus my practice – resounded powerfully. Second, following the first point, Usher (1997: 41) suggests a postmodern approach demands vigilance 'by taking nothing for granted in research' (ibid.: 41). He reminds us to ask: 'What is my research finding out? 'Where is it coming from?; What is it doing and with what is it implicated?' (ibid.: 41). Usher references Patti Lather who, in her work *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern* (1991), presents the same data in the form of four tales, realist, critical, deconstructive and reflexive, and in so doing demonstrates how different findings emanated from the four different approaches. Struck by the possibilities of such an approach I considered whether to emulate it by employing four different methods of analysis to the policy analysis that formed the macro-level contextualisation of my study. Realising that doing so would constitute the entire thesis I rejected the idea. However, the potential of employing different methodologies and methods according to the intention of each chapter, and the opportunity to use the thesis as a space to explore methodological possibilities, was enticing. Somewhat later a third 'moment' occurred. The notion that doing research meant *Getting Smart* (1991) resonated with the belief, referred to earlier, that study at doctoral level demands engagement with philosophy and the endeavour to become methodologically adept. What I didn't know was that in 2007 Lather would publish *Getting Lost: Feminist Efforts toward a Double (d) Science*. This volume confirmed and legitimised what I had already discovered, that 'getting lost' is essential to research practice and that when it happens, rather than entering into phases of despair and desperation, it is better to accept and embrace these phases as milestones passed on the road to new knowledge.

Reading the third edition of the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) was mesmerising and I became continually lost as so many of the methodological approaches outlined were replete with possibility. Searching for a theoretical perspective that was interpretivist and would enable the condition of postmodernity to emerge,

I finally settled on Cultural Studies, as positioned by Saukko (ibid.). Many elements of Saukko's approach aligned with mine, in particular, the interconnectedness of the social, local and research realities and 'hermeneutic interest in lived realities' (ibid.: 343). Saukko provided an analytical framework that recognises and defends contextual validity. Her work also helped with the formulation of the chapter structure (Table 8.1).

Worthy of reiteration at this point is that this methodological approach did not come easily or all at once. It had to be continually worked on as I moved backwards and forwards through the study. I was concerned about a lack of depth and an element of methodological flitting in the range of methods and approaches I was using. I feared that I was providing insufficient justification for these choices in the methodology chapter. However, around this time I was introduced to the epistemological conceptualisation of the bricolage by Kincheloe and Berry (2004). Already familiar with the notion of the bricolage as an approach to design, I could see the possibility of a perfect fit. Finally, I was able to put the last piece of the methodological puzzle in place.

According to Kincheloe and Berry (2004: 11), 'the bricolage is grounded in hermeneutics'. It is also an emergent construction as the bricoleur 'adds different tools, methods, and techniques of representation and interpretation' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 4). Conceptualising the study as a bricolage, 'a pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation' (ibid.), enabled me to complete the methodological road map and focus on understanding 'the whole through grasping the parts, and comprehending the meaning of the parts through divining the whole' (Crotty, 2003: 92).

Discourse analysis

A further epiphany occurred via my reading of Michel Foucault (1977), who asserts that human subjectivities are constructed through the discourses that proliferate in particular societal and historical contexts. Having positioned my epistemological allegiance to social constructionism and determined policy to be an instrument used by government to construct the objects and subjects of the discourse (in this case myself and my students), Foucault's approach to analysis seemed the logical analytical tool. Making this decision proved to be a powerful transforming moment. It changed my perspective of my work, my students and myself and the way I understand the world forever. I outline below some of the tools of analysis I used, but remind the

Table 8.1 Saukko's cultural studies framework, mapped to chapter structure and methods

Analytical framework	Chapter structure	Methods
Social Reality Political and wider culture social structures and processes	Chapter 2: Policy Discourse of teaching and learning in higher education – *Dearing Report* 'Higher Education in the Learning Society' (1997) – *The Future of Higher Education* white paper (2003)	Foucauldian approach to Discourse Analysis derived from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002): identification of competing discourses; institutional types; principles of classification; normative rules (that constrain, obligate and prohibit); objects designed to normalise and control subjects behaviour; how subjects subjectify themselves to the discourse through the instruments of disciplinary power, namely: hierarchical observation; examination and assessment used to compare, differentiate, rank, exclude; normalising judgements;
Local Realities Other Local Contexts how social structures and processes are experienced differently in particular local contexts	Chapter 3: Response to the Policy Discourse of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Literature Review Part 1: Response of wider higher education to the prevailing discourses and the discourse of professionalising teaching and learning in particular. Literature Review Part 2: Generic structures of PGC LT type courses Subjects of the discourse, namely course participants and academic developers Chapter 4: Institutional Response to the Policy Discourse of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Institutional response through Strategic Plan, Academic Strategy, Teaching and Learning Strategy	Identification of prevailing issues and concerns: Identification of prevailing issues and concerns: Analysis of constructions of objects and subjects of the discourse in the literature Postcolonial metaphors of 'otherness' Analysis of how the institutional documents construct the objects and subjects of the discourse: Comparison of in-house PGC LT with generic course structure

Social Shaping of Reality Research Participants	Chapter 5: The Lived Experience of the research participants	Unstructured Interviews with nine PGC LT alumni
Researcher how the research influences the processes it is studying	Chapter 6: Analysis of the Participant Portraits	Analysis of work produced for the PGC LT
	Chapter 7: Findings	Development of visual and written portraits as narratives of course participation
	Conclusion	Interrogate portraits for: awareness of the prevailing and conflicting discourses of higher education
		awareness of the discourse of professionalising teaching in higher education
		resonance with issues emerging from the response of wider higher education
		resonance with issues emerging from the literature on generic teaching and learning courses
		Postcolonial metaphors of 'otherness'
		Using the parts to define the whole
		Defining the whole from the sum of the parts
		Reflexive consideration of how the researcher and research participants impact on the study
		Reasserting the narrative nature of the research
		Explicit handing of the interpretive endeavor over to the reader

Source: Saukko (2005, p. 344)

reader that in line with a bricolage approach, I employed only some of the tools and methods at hand while passing over and ignoring others. This pick-and-mix approach might appear simple, but it is not, for every decision to pick leaves many other dishes untasted. Each selection holds the promise of speaking the world from a particular site while leaving it unspoken through those unused. Ultimately, my purpose was to provide a contextual frame for my participants. I had to keep that imperative at the forefront of my mind and resist the temptation to be diverted. I will outline some of the key Foucauldian tools of analysis that I employed below.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002), Foucault provides the tools of discourse analysis. In Foucault's view, subjects 'assume [...] responsibility for the constraints of power' (1977: 202) and consequently subjectify themselves to the discourse. This process of 'subjectification' (1984: 11) is achieved through the instruments of disciplinary power, namely: hierarchical observation; normalising judgments; examination and assessment which interact to compare, differentiate, rank, exclude and normalise (1977). In addition, disciplinary control employs four techniques: it draws up tables, prescribes movements, imposes exercises and arranges tactics (ibid.: 167). Identifying the principles that classify institutional types and the normative rules that articulate the expected behaviours of institutions and their subjects, I could see how the PGC LT and courses of similar ilk emerge as objects of a discourse designed to normalise and control the behaviour of their subjects. Working alongside other mechanisms of professionalisation and reinforced via policy, a discourse of realignment had repositioned the role of teaching in higher education with research. The normative rules that constrain, prohibit and obligate serve this endeavour.

Foucauldian analysis of policy revealed the discursive formation of higher education constructed by policy (see Figure 8.1) and the objects/mechanisms designed to professionalise teaching and learning in higher education, as constructed by policy (see Figure 8.1).

Those of us who work in education would do well to consider our noble endeavour through the lens of Foucault's analysis, for it not only reveals what we do to our 'subjects' but also how as subjects ourselves we are compliant in our own acts of subjectification.

I became acutely aware of totalising discourses such as these and the power they have to gain access to the bodies of individuals who must choose their subjectivities from them and decide which to adopt and employ or resist. However, if we are to avoid inadvertent subjectification we must be aware of discourse and how it operates in relation to systems

Figure 8.1 The discursive formation of higher education constructed by the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education Report (1997)

and structures. Is it then our responsibility as teachers to make our students aware of the subjectivities that prevailing discourses promote, as well as the alternatives and paradoxical implications of them? By so doing can we help our students negotiate the complexities of 'being' in a postmodern condition (Bauman, 2000)? The extent to which the subjects of the discourses of higher education (myself, colleagues, students) claim or resist (Burr, 2003) the subjectivities put forth by these discourses became the focus of my literature review.

The literature – Making it work

The literature that constitutes this contextual field is huge. Somehow I had to find a way of organising it and making it work for my particular study. Part 1 of my literature review effected the move from the policy context by revealing the response of wider higher education communities to the prevailing policy discourses, and the discourse of teaching and learning in particular. In general, there was little visible compliance among commentators regarding extant discourses. Rather, discussion in the literature had two main foci: either outlining the problems or searching for solutions that would make it possible to navigate them. Thus, the problems of massification, marketisation and managerialism and consequent cultures of audit and performativity were

experienced as limited autonomy, lack of trust, loss of academic freedom and a profound lack of time owing to the imposition of additional (non-traditional, non-discipline-based) activities. The solutions – a means of ameliorating insecurities – lay in collaboration, communication, community membership (whether disciplinary or teaching and learning) and through individual agency. Professional identity whilst eroded on the one hand could be reconstructed on the other. For those unwilling to absorb/accept new subject positions (Burr, 2003) ontological insecurity ensued.

Part 2 focused on the mechanisms designed to professionalise teaching and learning in higher education; in particular courses such as the PGC LT. Nicoll and Harrison's (2003) content analysis revealed strong similarities in their constructions of the 'good teacher' and provided a template for comparison with the PGC LT course content in Chapter 4, from which striking similarities emerged. Focusing on the critique of such courses in the literature brought the questions I should ask of the research participants to the fore. Nicoll and Harrison (2003) and Prosser et al. (2006) are critical of generic course structures and in Elton's (2005) view requiring course attendees to apply generic theories and principles of teaching to their own disciplinary practices is unrealistic. Nicoll and Harrison also warn of the danger of technical rational approaches which 'normalise and fashion what it means to be a good teacher' (2003: 23) by reducing practice to quantifiable functional knowledge and a prescribed set of skills.

According to the literature, the possibility of epistemological insecurity was also apparent owing to a deficit of pedagogic knowledge, a necessary constituent of the knowledge-base of teaching for higher education professionals. In this regard, the multi-disciplinary format of PG Cert courses were also of concern. In Nicoll and Harrison's (2003) view subject knowledge is not sufficiently addressed and in consequence, 'the importance of the discipline' (Neumann, 2001: 142) is undermined. It is inferred that demanding inexperienced staff undertake a teaching qualification may interfere with the profound relationship between discipline and identity and cause/increase ontological insecurity. However, the possibility of epistemological and ontological enrichment was further conceded when different views and values of disciplinary knowledge of practitioners from within the same disciplines were present (Neumann, 2001; Parker, 2002; Rowland, 2002; Jenkins & Burkill; Trowler, 2008). The difficulty of formulating such a firm pedagogic knowledge-base in one year of part time, in-service study also appeared problematic (Daly et al., 2004; Postareff et al., 2007).

Thus, issues of genericism, technicism and normalisation raised concerns about both epistemological and ontological insecurity. The interrelation of the two was also clear. Was disciplinary specificity the answer? The literature on teaching art and design in higher education was useful because it identified the 'signature pedagogies' (Shulman, 2005) of a range of arts disciplines. However, whilst describing *how* curricular subjects are taught, the question *why* traditional practices perpetuate (with seemingly little scrutiny of their efficacy) remained. According to Wareing (2009), how students learn is likely to be the 'consequence of differences between subjects and subject-teaching practices' (ibid.: 61). But as already noted, what disciplinary practitioners value as disciplinary knowledge may differ. Perhaps multidisciplinary formats were not problematic in themselves, but they needed to offer a range of tools that would help course participants identify and articulate *their* discipline specific practices alongside others that would encourage and support reflection on these practices. Contributing authors in Kreber's (2009) edited collection *The University and its Disciplines* offered a range of tools that would help staff in professional learning and teaching fora to challenge perpetuating practices. The intention, as McArthur (2009: 119 in Kreber) succinctly states, is to use a sociocultural perspective to help staff 'enable students to simultaneously achieve two things: to develop a capacity to engage in disciplinary discourse, and thereby acquire a disciplinary "voice": but also retain and develop their own voices'.

It is important to note that disciplinary practitioners are not the only actors in teaching and learning development fora. In addition to traditional roles, the literature refers to those in support for learning positions, including academic managers, professional support staff and academic developers. Such staff reside in blurred and boundary 'third spaces' and may be viewed as 'other' (Whitchurch, 2006, 2008; Manathunga, 2006). In spite of Bhabha's (1994) insistence that the voices of migrants and travellers are most urgently needed, academic developers, who mostly migrate from their original discipline into that of education, are viewed with suspicion; positioned by some in the literature as 'agents of normalisation' (Gosling, 2009) or 'domestication' (Land, 2008). To be constructed thus raised difficult questions that I had not formerly considered: had I subjectified myself to the discourse of professionalising teaching in higher education; was I attempting to normalise course participants and inflicting an unwanted subjectivity on them? If so, did this explain the presence of 'colleagues with folded arms at the back' (Cousin, 2010) whose resistance was evident? Would

increased attention to discipline acknowledge disciplinary allegiance and somehow ameliorate ontological insecurity?

It appeared from the literature that in 'new times' (Quicke, 1998) of 'super-complexity' (Barnett, 2000) epistemological and ontological insecurity is consistent with the condition of postmodernity, whereby discontinuity, fragmentation and the ephemerality of being abound (Harvey, 1998), giving rise to the call from Barnett for an 'ontological turn' (2007: 108). Perhaps, therefore, my role in academic development could be to help staff navigate the discourses at large, in order to find ways to cope. Tools to help this endeavour emerged from the literature. At this point, collation of them seemed to me to be the goal of my study.

Portraits of the participants – Narrative enquiry

After building the contextual frame, the research participants were positioned within it. I used the method of portraiture to create textual narratives of each participant, consisting of words, images, diagrams and quotations which they selected from their PGC LT submissions. In Barthes' view, writing research is a narrative endeavour, for narrative is 'simply there, like life itself' (1977: 79). Story provides a way of explicating 'the emotional investments' made 'in particular discursive positions'; the differences in the 'subject positions' adopted; and why the positions taken are sometimes 'disadvantageous' (Burr, 2003: 179). My research participants had right of veto over the content of the portraits and were keen to ensure the 'accuracy' of their stories. By developing the portraits from a narrative enquiry perspective I was able to argue the interpretive nature of truth and acknowledge the 'plurality of sites from which the world is spoken' (Lather, 1991: 33). Importantly, I was also able to reveal the 'evaluative quality of humanity' (Archer, 2000: 319) by making the 'inner conversations' (ibid.) of the participants visible, and consequently their unique 'enchantment' (ibid.).

The findings

From my reading of the portraits it appeared that the participants were little aware of the prevailing discourses of higher education, articulated above, other than that of massification, which they attributed to the widening participation agenda and viewed in positive light, not least because many considered themselves to be products of that agenda. Neither did they view their managers as governmental agents driving 'quality' and 'audit' processes (Whitchurch, 2006). Indeed, good

managers were valued and participants who received either little attention or support from their managers suffered as a result. Ontological insecurity was present in the portraits for myriad reasons and not least due to negative experiences at school. However, most participants saw their identities as firmly tied to their discipline and professional discipline-related practice, and seemed secure in these.

As novice academics without research degrees, identities as lecturers/academics were insecure. Whilst participants did not relate to the feelings of limited autonomy, lack of trust or lack of academic freedom, as represented in the literature, they were like-minded about the lack of time to attend to everything demanded of them, referring to this as 'exploitation' and being 'milked dry'. Professional identity was tied to discipline, whereby participants working in academic support roles that were not discipline-related experienced distinct unease.

These blurred, boundary spaces were not easy to navigate; furthermore it was apparent that whilst membership of communities of practice generated ontological security, such feelings did not always manifest in disciplinary communities. Whilst some academic support staff recounted significant feelings of otherness in their communities there were also lecturing staff who felt other in their disciplinary or professional practice communities. More than half of the participants acknowledged the value of the PGC LT community in providing them with support, security and collegiality. (I was conscious that a positive course experience may account for the willingness of the participants to contribute to the study, and conversely that those who chose not to participate in the research may have had a more negative course experience.)

Most participants had little awareness of the policy imperative to professionalise their teaching practice. Although some were attending because of a probationary requirement, most saw engagement with the PGC LT as an opportunity to develop a practice they were already engaged in (but had never studied). They considered it advantageous to have the qualification on their curriculum vitae.

Many of the research participants (all course alumni) recognised that their initial approach to teaching/supporting learning derived from their own experience of being taught and realised the limitations of this as a knowledge-base. They valued engaging with pedagogy but acknowledged their pedagogic knowledge-base to be insecure, confirming, as the literature suggested, that one year, part-time study is insufficient to consolidate knowledge and good practice. They expressed insecurity about knowledge of the university systems. Tensions around having

to constrain professional practice into an academic programme also became apparent.

In spite of the similarities between Nicoll and Harrison's (2003) generic structure and that of the PGC LT there was little indication that the research participants considered the course to be generic, technicist or normalising. However, I did not see this in a positive light. Rather I realised that, like me, remaining unaware of the discourses that construct subjectivities means that agentive acceptance or resistance of them is not possible. Thus, as a result of this study I became acutely aware of the power of discourses to subjectify, and that it is awareness at this level that best equips us with the power to resist. Having generated an interpretation of the prevailing discourses in higher education at the time of my study I am now better able to 'read' – using discourse analysis – the objects and subjects that policy constructs. This knowledge makes deliberation of a subjective stance an active process. Without it I am but a governmental agent who, through pedagogic action (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), seeks to normalise course participants into constructions of the 'good teacher'. Such action is symbolic violence (ibid.) because we use the positions of power we hold as teachers/supporters of learning to present disciplinary discourses as *regimes of truth* to our learners. This applies not only to myself but also to the course participants, who are themselves teachers/supporters of their students in turn.

Locating ways of encouraging PGC LT course participants to identify tacit assumptions, implicit theories and reified practices (Wenger, 1998) that engender the teaching and learning environment became the endeavour of my practice as a result of this study.

Conclusion

As I worked on and through the project I became increasingly aware of what it means, existentially, to cope with the condition of postmodernity. I had thought my role was to identify, develop and offer a range of reflective tools that would help PGC LT course participants grapple with the complexity of this condition. However, once aware of the discourses of higher education 'that jostle and compete' (Rose, 2007) and through Foucauldian analysis of the policy discourse of learning and teaching, the mechanisms of control and the subjectivities they produce came into view. I began to see that my goal was not merely to help course participants navigate these discourses by making them visible but to encourage them to make the discourses and subjectivities of

their own disciplines visible to their students – and that I must lead by example.

A Foucauldian perspective suggests that subjects are constructed through discourses which also serve to normalise and homogenise. However, many in the literature call on individual agency to self-author complex and nuanced (not homogeneous) identities (Sachs, 2001; Quinn, 2004; Harris, 2005). Burr does not merely accuse Foucault of paying insufficient attention to the self but considers the absence of the 'self' to be 'the gaping hole left in social constructionist psychology' (2003: 179). What Foucault usefully provides us with is a methodology that brings discursive formations and subjectivities into sharp focus. Once visible, the possibility of alternative stances emerges.

In the conclusion to my study I proposed a curriculum for the PGC LT and courses of a similar kind that is the antithesis of a generic approach, since it would help participants identify and articulate their practice-specific discourses (including habitual ways of thinking and practising; how/why these perpetuate) and become reflexively aware of the subjective positions adopted by themselves and made available to their students; working to understand, if not ameliorate, resistance on the part of reluctant learners. It would provide an opportunity for critique and to challenge 'the unconscious normalisation of the status quo' and its 'reification' (Bhaskar, 2010: 164).

As I moved towards the end of my study, Freire's (1996) call for critical pedagogy to usurp oppression resonated for my context. His assertion that 'pedagogy must be forged *with* and not *for*, the oppressed' (ibid.: 30) reminded me of the term solicitude, borrowed from Heidegger by Barnett which, he says, 'does not reduce the Other by taking away their care but gives it back to them' (2007: 30). Barnett suggests this conceptualisation of solicitude provides 'a striking insight into the character of the pedagogical relationship at its finest' (2007: 130). Thus, the challenge for academic developers is to 'open up possibilities' and 'existential potential-for-Being' (ibid.), reminding us of McArthur's (2009: 119) call to help students 'acquire a disciplinary "voice": but also retain and develop their own voices'. I cannot think of a more worthy endeavour, and was happy to put my work to rest here whilst acknowledging that searching for ways of achieving this goal would continue.

At both masters and doctoral level I had chosen to challenge orthodox approaches to my pedagogic roles at the time by searching for better, more theoretically informed knowledge-bases for my practice. According to Freire (1996) it is through praxis, that is theory and practice working together to create change, that freedom is achieved.

Perhaps in the relative safety of the PGC LT classroom it is possible to hold these forms of oppression at bay and use them to consider the pedagogic endeavour in which we are all engaged. Through praxis I understand resistance better and have come to recognise and value it as a form of agency. This does not necessarily encourage 'those with folded arms at the back' (Cousin, 2010) to adopt a teacher persona but it opens up the possibility of a relationship founded on respect. Such a relationship allows engaging discussion around issues of pedagogy to occur. After all, as Freire (1996) asserts the route to critique is dialogue. Other members of the cohort may fail to understand the resistance of their colleague (and probably my tolerance of it), but when consideration of the resistance of their own students ensues, the diverse and complex subjectivities of students in contemporary HE classrooms (including the PGC LT) becomes the focus. How to work with, support, respect and provide for that diversity is thus the challenge for us all.

As I worked with Foucault's propositions and saw the relevance of Freirian pedagogic approaches; I was struck by their applicability in the contemporary context. It would appear that institutions employ generic and technicist approaches and strive to normalise their subjects as they attempt (often unwillingly) to navigate policy imperatives and the unpredictability of the market. Schools, colleges, universities and hospitals use such forms of oppression in the fight for league table positions and quality audit gold stars. In doing so they may lose sight of the purpose for which they exist and the subjects it is their function to serve.

I read a mountain and learnt a lot, and as a result my philosophic perspective shifted from social constructionism towards critical realism. That said I still hold that adopting multiple perspectives, employing multiple approaches and watching out for paradox, double reading and over-simplistic polarities and binaries have much to offer the researcher. There was much that I discovered that I didn't already know but did I create new knowledge? I owe my understanding of this to postmodern approaches to research design and to the bricolage in particular. The same researcher could research the same context and by juxtaposing a different set of research approaches create further new knowledge of that context. Equally, a different researcher could research the same context and use the same research tools as another and the knowledge created would be different. Thus, the cry 'it's been done before' can be laid to rest. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) employ the worthy metaphor of jazz improvisation to describe the bricolage whereby known notes

are put together in a unique way through the creative endeavour of the musician. Although I like to think of myself thus, I am acutely aware that as a novice researcher the music I produced was unsophisticated and replete with unfulfilled possibilities, but I feel sure I will do better next time.

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9

Setting a New Course or Stepping Out of Line? Challenges to Previously Disconnected Theoretical Fields in a Danish Profession-Oriented Higher Education Context

Sanne Haase

Introduction

At the time when I initiated my PhD project I was fortunate enough to have become simultaneously part of a research alliance working with engineering education. Its mission was to qualify engineering education institutions to reform in order to provide engineers more adequately trained for tackling societal challenges and fulfilling a responsible role in societal development. My colleagues in the alliance were high-ranking researchers mainly based in different engineering education institutions in Denmark. They had ambitions about influencing engineering education and engineering curriculum development in a positive and fruitful direction which contributed to a motivating ambience. However, as a newcomer to the field of engineering and engineering education, having originally graduated from the arts and humanities and later transplanted myself in the social sciences, I felt a frustrating lack of secure theoretical ground under my feet.

My interest in engineering education remains a social scientific interest; the work practices of engineers involve an appropriation of science and technology with massive potential implications for societal development and sustainability. In other words, engineering students hold an important key to the way in which society should confront a range

of global, societal challenges in the future. The fostering and nurturing of professional responsibility and self-critical reflexivity among future engineers is an important task for engineering education systems worldwide. In my PhD I wanted to identify how young engineering students construe that future role and how notions of a professional engineering identity begin to emerge during their education.

This chapter will provide an account of my search for an adequate theoretical field in an interdisciplinary journey involving a great deal of balancing, a great deal of stumbling and a risk of involuntarily offending proponents of the theories that I deemed insufficient for my purpose. This process has been rewarding and has also resulted in much personal gain and growth along the way. However, from a career strategic perspective other routes would arguably have brought me further.

The traditional academic pursuit of the un-traditional

It is an acclaimed ideal of the academic community to pursue new and innovative results. At the same time, however, one must stand solidly on the shoulders of previous researchers. Science is considered a cumulative endeavour and theory does not float freely and undirected. According to Bhaskar (2008: 21 ff.), scientific endeavour is socially produced in a process that builds on previous knowledge. So as a researcher in the making, you are supposed to pay your respects to the founding fathers of your field and then add your own little personal twist, bringing about something new. I was told to search for and select the theoretical foundation I wished to adhere to. However, I found it difficult to decode exactly what was meant by that. Each and every research colleague I met had a different background, hence a different notion of an adequate theoretical framework.

I needed to find a way of balancing the dilemma of, on the one hand, bringing new ideas or angles into a theoretical field and, on the other hand, being satisfactorily grounded in the dogmatic, scientific establishment. This presented the challenging necessity of familiarising myself with a range of academic cultures, involving competing views on theory, theory adequacy and use; competing world views, even, in order to move on with my project. I found it imperative to try to map out for myself the landscape of theoretical fields that could potentially contribute to my research. With hindsight I see that this metaphor was somewhat naive. Such a mapping would have been a never-ending project in itself. Some important clusters or islands in an ocean of theories would have to do.

Coming to belong in the academic field through theoretical positioning

My field of research involved investigating how engineering students initiated their journey towards a professional formation. At the same time I found myself undergoing a parallel process of seeking legitimate membership of the academic field into which I intended to position myself and my emerging professional academic identity. Mere reproduction does not signal a glorious academic career, and given my cross-disciplinary research interest, this did not constitute any real risk for my journey to academia. However, to stray too far from the unwritten rules and traditions of a disciplinary field may not be conducive to one's inclusion in the academic professional community; neither does it contribute to your formation as an academic scientist.

Furthermore, it seems to me that the PhD journey is not just about acquiring the specific skills necessary for initiating a research career. It is also – as much learning theory (such as Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) would put it – about coming to belong in academia. However frustrating it may be, this process lies not entirely in one's own hands. In order to undertake the journey from peripheral practitioner to legitimate member of the academic field, one must gain the acceptance and recognition of the already established members of that community. From the viewpoint of Bourdieu (1988, 1995a, 1995b) the academic community may be considered a field (possibly with various subfields) in which one takes a position by means of a certain habitus. This habitus consists of a taken for granted pattern of values, assumptions and preferences; a set of dispositions that legitimate and 'naturalise' field membership. The current Danish academic community is undoubtedly configured very differently from that described by Bourdieu in France. However, some of the mechanisms of negotiating status, excellence and disciplinary jurisdiction do seem to resemble recent thinking on academic identity formation processes. 'Competitors have both to distinguish themselves from their predecessors and rivals and to integrate the work of these groups into a construction that transcends it' (Henkel, 2000: 18).

The choice of theory appears to me to play an important role towards positioning oneself in academia. Such a choice seems to be a highly visible – and publishable – element of academic productivity. Furthermore it tends to become an important internalised element of an academic's professional identity in that the use of or adherence to a certain theory or method becomes part of who you are, as illustrated by notions such

as 'I am a Foucauldian'. Critical theoretical debate can also be construed as a way to mark your interrelation with and relative position within a particular paradigm as opposed to the theories you deselect.

If I were to realise my aspiration of an academic trajectory, it seemed inevitable that I had to adopt a theoretical stance. However, I am not sure I adhere to the viewpoint that theories are available for picking like apples on a tree. Theoretical foundation must also resonate with what is done, including the research question and design, and with why it is done. Therefore, I will next turn to the motivation for my research question.

Why engineering education deserves a particular interest from social science

This section explains why engineering education is a particularly important field of research; it also provides an overview of engineering and engineering education in Denmark, followed by a presentation of the ideal of a hybrid professional engineering identity.

Climate change, overpopulation, starvation, inequality, resource depletion . . . The list of societal challenges calling for coordinated, global measures is long. Technology optimists believe these problems can be solved by means of a 'smart fix'. Pessimist opponents claim that it is too late to solve any of them and that mankind is doomed. Instead of just awaiting which of the competing diagnoses of contemporary society will prove right, I am committed to the idea that as humans we must at least attempt to take charge of our collective future development. This is where the engineers enter the picture, since they often play the role of facilitators in societal development based on technologies of various kinds. These range from mechanical and construction technology to production, management, and communications technology, whereby securing an appropriate technological development is paramount (Hård & Jamison, 2005). By investigating the issue of societal challenges and sustainability in the nascent professional identity construal of future engineers enrolled in an engineering education in Denmark, I sought to consider the extent to which these students are aware of and interested in eventually taking on a professional responsibility for societal sustainment in the way that surrounding society expects them to do as future engineers.

Historically, the engineering profession is rooted in the military field. The first engineers were occupied with concrete problem-solving of strategic military importance. At a later point in time, engineers found

employment in non-military fields, hence the use of the term 'civil engineer' (Mitcham, 2009). These engineers were publicly employed to develop sanitation or infrastructure, for instance in the service of the state as a form of civil service (Wagner, 2006; Mitcham, 2009). Engineers and the state remain mutually dependent on one another, in the same way as other professions, with engineers contributing to the solution of a range of state problems. At the same time the state exercises a symbolic power over the engineering education system, which secures the legitimacy and exclusivity of the engineering profession (Harrits & Olesen, 2012).

Concurrently with the industrialisation of the Western world, a genuine professionalisation took place linking engineering identity closely to a technical paradigm coined by an optimistic confidence in the internal forces of progression and industrial development (Wisnioski, 2009). The twin desires of mastering and exploiting nature and its resources for civilisation's purposes were traditionally part of engineering identity per se, and technical development was considered a means to this purpose (Jamison, 1997; Wagner, 2006).

After the Second World War, it became increasingly clear that technological development brought about a range of risks to society. Not only had advanced technology been a direct means for atrocities, as was the case with military technology and technical developments for efficient extermination, technological development also began to show a backlash in terms of long-term exacerbation of natural and human living conditions. During the twentieth century environmental and social consequences of modern industry and its technological constituents received negative attention and concern and caused severe harm to the image of engineering. 'One of the main prejudices about engineers—and a serious obstacle for young people taking up the engineering profession—is that engineers pave the world with asphalt, create pollution, and generally wreck the environment' (Henriksen, 2006: 44).

The formation of ethical codices pertaining to engineering proliferated, emphasising the ethical obligation of going beyond the serving of state interests; an engineer should serve general society and mankind. Today, serving a greater societal good is to a large extent considered part of the engineer's professional identity (Ambler, 2009; Mitcham, 2009; Wisnioski, 2009).

The ideal notion of an engineer's professional role is intricately linked to the role attributed to technology in society. In addition to technology's two-edged nature of supporting, but sometimes also potentially harming, human activity, technology also influences human thinking

and communication (Baillie, 2006). Furthermore, technology can be construed as a social and political phenomenon, which means that technology professionals play social and political roles as part of their everyday work (Kleinman, 2005).

The high potential influence of engineering professionals on society's development emphasises the role of the engineering education system in the provision of engineering graduates who are fully ready to take on this large professional responsibility. As the starting point of my investigation I decided to be explicit about the emphasis I put on societal challenges and professional responsibility in the desired professional identity formation of engineering students. I borrowed the term 'hybrid imagination' from Jamison (Hård & Jamison, 2005; Jamison, 2012, 2013) to describe the ideal engineering identity.

Hybridity intertextually relates to various things. First, it is used in ethnography to refer to the dynamic mixing and development of cultures initially conceived of as distinct and separate in postcolonial contexts. Within biology, the term means cross-breeding, which is a mixing of previously incommensurable species. Finally, Jamison utilises the term in opposition to the Greek notion of hubris that describes an overconfident, blinding arrogance that has been connoted to much technological development driven by the urge to transcend nature's limitations. As a corrective to such an over-optimistic, unreflected hubris, hybris seeks to encompass self-reflection, contextual and cultural concern with the scientific-technological skills and understanding resulting in a more holistic and change-oriented professional engineering identity.

Cross-disciplinarity plays an important role in this vision of professional engineering, influenced as it is by the understanding of the new conditions and implications of knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994; Nowotny et al., 2001). Not only is technology seen to permeate ever wider areas of our everyday lives, it also penetrates the boundaries of more and more previously separate disciplines of knowledge production. The so-called life sciences are an example of an entirely new disciplinary field that has developed as a hybrid, mixing engineering with medicine, biology, psychology and sometimes even ethics. Such a mixing of disciplinary fields is now seen to be a defining characteristic of knowledge production in contemporary society. However, the technological ubiquity and the aspirations related to the role of technology towards societal challenges and sustainability make cross-disciplinarity particularly pertinent for engineers. Engineers are technological experts with a huge potential power to influence society (Ambler, 2009), so

engineering practice cannot be considered engineers' own business entirely. It matters to us all how they practise their profession, how they approach, define and solve problems. For the world to understand and take a part in how technology affects societal development, the role of the engineer is vital as a field of investigation.

Methodology and meta-theory

Conducting empirical research involves a reflected use of methods. The fact that I dealt with a distinction between what engineering 'is' – or is considered to be – and what it 'should' be, made normativity play an important role in my research design. Whereas the first aspect is descriptive, the latter implies a whole lot of exploring and explaining, which called forth a mixed methods approach.

A clear normative element was an underlying presupposition. Early on in my project, I realised that I could not uphold any possible ideal of approaching an objective position; the viewpoint that some directions for the professional identity formation of engineering students are more desired than others contributed to occasioning my PhD project. I decided to take a normative starting point and articulate my ideal notion of a responsible, professional engineering identity based on Jamison's 'hybrid imagination' (Hård & Jamison, 2005; Jamison, 2012, 2013). The traditional methodological divide between a quantitative and a qualitative camp focusing on exact measures of recurring regularities and on in-depth understanding of individual phenomena and meaning-making processes, respectively, had to be transcended. This necessitated a specific attention to clarity and coherence in the way of collecting, analysing and interpreting data. Thoroughness in my efforts to understand and explain the empirical findings and their wider implications was also pivotal (Henkel, 2000; Schwandt, 2000; Schrøder et al., 2003; Bhaskar, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Furthermore, my methodological position posits a world view in which the two types of data about the field of research make sense together.

There is much more detail to the picture, but roughly speaking, the quan-qual dualism has been upheld by the interpretivists, who favour in-depth investigation, and the empiricists, whose intention is to 'prove' the laws and systems of society in the picture of natural science. This epistemological dualism is based on an ontological dispute; the two end positions in the continuum from empiricism to interpretivism simply disagree both on how to understand human interaction and on how to procure valid knowledge about the human societies. Whereas

empiricists insist that the ideal researcher is an objective observer making exact documentation in search of regularities, the interpretivists claim that no such thing is possible; the researcher affects his object and excludes himself from the potential knowledge in taking an alternative perspective by selecting one, and researcher and researched co-construct knowledge.

To provide a corrective to both interpretivism and empiricism I choose as the philosophical tenet of my study's scientific foundation a combination of critical realism (Archer, 1995; Danermark et al., 2002; Bhaskar, 2008) and discursive realism (Schrøder et al., 2003). The ontological assumption was that a social reality exists independently of our knowledge of it (Schwandt, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002; Schrøder et al., 2003; Bhaskar, 2008). However, reality and its social phenomena are not unequivocal, tangible entities that can be measured by the researcher directly. According to a critical realist position, the nature of social science studies involves an epistemological constructivism. The discursive emphasis of my meta-theoretical standpoint takes the consequence of this epistemological relativism and realises that the object of science is discursively constructed: '[…] our only access to knowledge about […] reality goes through language and other sign systems' (Schrøder et al., 2003: 45). Regardless of our methods of approaching the world, I believe that we can only understand and theorise about it through the use of language and other symbolic sign systems. Therefore, the field of social research consists of discourses – here widely understood as social practice involving use of language or symbolic signs. This is the epistemological basis of the project. In addition, I construed the critical term as a normative obligation in line with the world views of action research or critical theory (Fairclough, 2003; Schrøder et al., 2003). Being critical did not to me involve any particular political stance or message. Rather, I considered my normative approach to engineering's societal obligation a critical position.

My data collection took place by means of surveys with closed-ended as well as open-ended questions. I analysed the data by means of quantitative as well as qualitative techniques. The quantitative measures allowed for findings of the 'how many first year engineering students agree to viewpoint this or that' and 'what other quantifiable characteristics do they have in common', whereas the qualitative methods of analysis identified some internal dilemmas and oppositions in the engineering student discourse. For instance an expressed technological fascination was found to coexist with some guilt among the engineering students because of the conception that technological

development bears the blame for a range of societal ills that endanger sustainability.

Methodologically, my study of engineering students' understandings and preconceptions of their future professional identity and societal role is marked by its interdisciplinary nature, with few established theoretical or methodical paradigms, reflecting the hybrid nature of the challenges at stake (Jamison, 1997; Jamison, 2001; Williams, 2003).

Most researchers agree that any research project involving empirical data collection should base its methodical steps and techniques on theoretically informed understanding of these methods, their workings, implications and underlying assumptions, in short on methodology. However, I find that use of theory requires similar considerations. In my case, particularly, the scanning of competing theoretical frameworks against which to approach and understand my research question forms some kind of method in itself, which merits epistemological and ontological argumentation. As Layder states, theory can be considered a pattern of '[…] concepts, propositions, and "world-views" ' (1993: 15). I believe such assumed world views need to be laid out in the open in order to inform the readers and qualify their assessment of the research. The next sections give an overview of the fields I crossed in my search for a theoretical foundation for my PhD project.

Education for sustainable development

Societal challenges and sustainability (here construed as an umbrella term that includes economic, social and environmental aspects, along with the engineering-specific challenges related to the role of technology in society) are key points in my research and in my motivation to study engineering education. When a PhD course on sustainability was offered by one of the researchers in the collaboration I was affiliated with, it became an invitation for me to start my theoretical journey by investigating the field of education for sustainable development.

The field seemed to have a large focus on desired learning outcomes (Haase, 2014b), which was fruitful to me in order to develop my notion of an ideal professional engineering identity. It was also insightful to my project to gain from this field a nuanced understanding of the concept of sustainability, the definitional debate about it and the cultural differences in what is meant by it. For instance I learned that the American use of the term sustainability corresponded mainly to environmental sustainability, which in other contexts is considered to encompass only a fraction of the meaning of the term.

A large focus of the field of education for sustainable development was aimed at identifying institutional directions and desired development of the education system, which seemed rather distant from the students' pursuit of a legitimate role in the professional community from a bottom-up perspective. Furthermore, the vast majority of literature within this field did not have an engineering-specific approach (Haase, 2014b).

Engineering educational research – Engineering's own theoretical base

To substantiate and position my research I needed to acquaint myself with the theoretical field that most directly focuses on educating engineers, namely engineering education research. This is a rather new and immature field where much debate has revolved around whether and how to include in the curriculum subjects which give engineering students an understanding of the wider societal implications and contexts of engineering practice. The tendency in the field has moved toward an acceptance of the necessity of such contextual understanding as an integrated part of the engineering curriculum. Now, the discussion within engineering education research focuses more on the delineation of specific subjects and competencies that should be included (a question about disciplinary priorities and boundary definitions) and how this can most fruitfully be realised (questions about didactics, pedagogical strategies and learning theory) (Haase, 2014b). Learning theory – particularly the branch of it focusing on learning as something that takes place in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Reid et al., 2008) – seems to resonate well with Danish engineering education institutions' focus on engineering as a practising profession. Therefore with regards to the PhD, I encountered an expectation that learning theory would be fundamental to the project, and I probably disappointed those who had hoped to find in my work the ammunition in support of an argument that could prove a specific approach to learning the most adequate method to teach engineering students these engineering-contextual perspectives. However, this was not the primary focus of my study, and my time frame did not allow for any solid conclusions about causal effects of didactical or pedagogical frameworks spanning an entire engineering education of up to five years.

Finally, factions within the field of engineering education are concerned with the consequences for the engineering identity of widening the engineering field (Haase, 2014b). The tendency here is to depict

engineering as a collection of occupations that are increasingly dissipated. It is feared that the engineering profession will degrade or dissolve into paraprofessional fields or communities without a common ground or value-base (Williams, 2003). Whilst this argument has resonance with my focus, I also felt it lacked a theoretical foundation for understanding the concept of professional identity and the professional identity formation processes.

High enough for inclusion in the higher education field?

The minor role of professional education (including engineering education) and professional identity formation in higher education literature (Trede et al., 2012) took me by surprise. Many occupations are subject to debate regarding the legitimation of their professional status (Abbott, 1988), as signposted by the term 'semi-professions', used for instance to assign an inferior status to social work as an 'incomplete' profession (Etzioni, 1969).

In the Danish context professional further education formally holds the status of higher education. Engineering education, to be more explicit, has been organised in a two-tier system within the higher education system in many nations, including Denmark. Danish engineering education is provided as either an academic master level education, corresponding to five years of full-time studies at a university, or as a vocational education offered both by universities and university colleges, lasting three and a half years including an internship of approximately six months and leading to a professional bachelor's degree.

Historically, engineers from the vocationally oriented system formed the majority of the Danish engineering workforce, of which a large part is now approaching retirement age. A higher share of newly educated engineers consists of academically rounded engineers, implying a demographic shift in the total engineering workforce, with the proportions of students enrolling in academic and vocational engineering programmes being almost equal in recent years.

Both types of educational systems have come under pressure. Universities increasingly need to focus on employability and the needs of the market, whereas an academisation has taken place within the university colleges and engineering colleges, in some cases resulting in mergers with universities. With the last education policy reform the two systems, previously under the jurisdiction of two different ministries, were subsumed within the same ministry, and their systems for quality assurance, employment and education accreditation have been aligned

(Christensen and Ernø-Kjølhede, 2011; FIVU, 2013). However, it seems that engineering education has only to a marginal extent been included in the theoretical landscape of the higher education community. The fact that engineering is traditionally a high status occupation makes this seeming neglect from higher education academia additionally peculiar.

Engineering as a failed profession? Visiting a sociology of the professions

Next, I turned to a sociology of the professions for fruitful theory for my project. I found this theoretical field to be very heterogeneous. The question of how to define a profession has become a classical nexus of the field along with the defence and attack on the definitional project itself. Some theorists are proponents of focusing on professionalisation processes rather than passing a professional/non-professional verdict over the status of a specific occupation (Haase, 2014a). However, any 'professionalisation project' (Larson, 2013 [1977]) must involve the search for and articulation of notions of professional attributes expressed as ideals of that profession. Alternatively, the professionalisation process may be described as a development of functionally differentiated, specialised fields of labour contributing to societal sustainment. However, processes of de-professionalisation occur coextensively with and in counter-movement to professionalisation. De-professionalisation refers to the redeployment of the professionalisation process and is a general denomination for a range of tendencies that challenge professionals and their role in society. Currently, external as well as internal pressure is put on the professions, constituting loss of power, prestige and work control to others (Leicht & Fennell, 2001; Scanlon, 2011; Schinkel & Noordegraaf, 2011: 89–90). This includes increased routinisation of tasks that – sometimes by means of technological devices – become less demanding and cease to involve professional competencies (Abbott, 1988) to the point of proletarianisation.

Furthermore, economic and managerial changes during the last decades have also eroded professional autonomy (Leicht & Fennell, 2001). Evetts (2011) finds that engineers have difficulty sustaining occupational control of their work and their discretionary decision-making powers. Additionally, the large-scale societal challenges of sustainability, internationalisation and globalisation (Williams, 2003; Baillie, 2006; Petroski, 2008; Sheppard et al., 2009; Wisnioski, 2009; Evetts, 2011; Jamison, 2012) complicate professional engineering work and contribute to its de-professionalisation.

Consideration of the characteristics outlined by the proponents of definitional criteria for professional status gives an indication of the direction of professionalisation processes and makes possible an assessment of the state of the professional project of engineering. In spite of its oft-mentioned status among the 'full' professions, engineering seems not to merit comparison with medicine or law when it comes to fulfilling the criteria most often listed as professional traits (Haase, 2014a). This causes Brante (2011: 8, 1988: 125) to refer to engineering as a 'failed profession'. Engineering in Denmark is not characterised as an archetypal profession when measured by the most common profession attributes (Haase, 2014a).

First and foremost, engineering may have a close relation to both scientific knowledge and to the knowledge form referred to as tacit knowledge, particularly emphasised for its importance in discretionary, professional judgement, but engineering knowledge is not particularly homogeneous, since the field is divided into a multitude of branches each with its own specialised field of knowledge.

Secondly, considering the societal impact of technology, engineers have not accordingly been successful in their professionalisation project. They have neither succeeded in safeguarding their jurisdiction and exclusivity nor been granted particularly enviable power and privilege in the market and bureaucratic contexts. Danish engineers do not have any formal licensing, and their professional association is weak compared to other forces of the labour market. Engineers stand out from most professions when judged by their occupational orientation and are considered more subordinate to market forces than other professions. The role of economic profit is therefore less marginalised in their professional practice, yet their capability to control their professional market is limited because of the subordination to industrial development, considerations of accounting and business profit. Hence, economic profit becomes an important motive for engineers (Larson, 2013 [1977]: 29).

Dealing with risks is inherent to professional practice, which continually threatens the engineering image. Latent risks are present in engineering decision-making and include for instance the risk of miscalculations causing a bridge to collapse, the risk of misjudging the consequences of an intervention, the risk of discovering adverse effects of a seemingly harmless chemical used in industrial production, the risk of contributing to local recession and unemployment of certain groups (Layton, 1986; Beck, 1997; Bertilsson, 1999). Hence, professional dilemmas between the diverse orientations within which the engineers may feel imbricated seem increasingly relevant.

The image of engineering is therefore contradictory: on the one hand, the profession is acknowledged for its importance and influence in society; on the other hand, a negative, prejudicial conception of the engineer still prevails. Working conditions, work practices and work place context are all changing. Routinisation and transcendence of boundaries both challenge professions and contribute to a destabilisation of the professional identities. Elite status and exclusivity are no longer a matter of course for professionals (Scanlon, 2011). Professional jurisdiction must be resettled, which involves a threat to professional legitimacy. The process of de-professionalisation implies uncertainty about the future direction(s) of the engineering profession and the conception of an engineering identity.

Instead of pursuing an assessment of whether or not engineering fulfils the criteria for being a profession or not, I find it more useful given my research objective to identify the ideal conceptions of an engineering 'professionalism', understood as a set of occupational values related to legitimate engineering practice and acceptance in its professional field. I adopted the theoretical notion of professionalism drawn mainly from Freidson's (2001) identification of a distinct professional rationale, the third logic, coextensive with neither a bureaucratic nor a market-oriented logic. He uses the term 'free market' as a non-existent ideal type, opposed to the somewhat more blurred ideal type of a bureaucracy controlled by managers aiming at policy implementation as opposed to economic gain. Ideally, the professions' role as mediators between market and bureaucracies involves fiduciary responsibilities. Professionals are expected to follow a seemingly self-sacrificing logic in the service of others; an almost altruistic motive.

This logic ideally should supersede the role of economic profit as a motivator of professions (Parsons, 1939; Freidson, 2001; Larson, 2013 [1977]), and can be considered an ideology of professionalism underlying professional decision-making and practice. In practice, however, a range of motives might be expected to coexist among professionals, causing increased complexity and ambiguity (Bertilsson, 1999). In the way I have used Freidson's concept, I have focused on the normative dimension or – as Evetts terms it – professionalism as 'occupational value' (2010).

To me this positive, normative ideal of the professions as a community with a particular role in sustaining societal development runs parallel with Jamison's engineering-specific ideals that I have articulated above. This focus on the moral obligation and responsibility of the professionals can be traced back to Parsons (1939, 1952), who focused on the

function of the professions and considered them a societal good contributing to continuous development, social order and cohesion. More critical approaches emphasise that professions actively influence the shaping of culture, structure, institutions and discourses as well as the execution of power in ways that are not always transparent or accessible for laymen (Abbott, 1988; Laursen, 2004; Larson, 2013 [1977]). Without discounting the potentially negative role of professionals in society I decided to focus on the positive descriptions that I construe as an ideal conception of how engineering professionals 'should' be because I intended to identify the aspired professional identity of coming engineers. Moreover, these normative ideals are largely formulated in awareness of the risks of a negatively enacted professional practice. The research question of my project could thus be reformulated as an investigation of the existence, nature and extent of nascent professional values among engineering students in Denmark.

A journey (hopefully) finds its direction – My theoretical contribution

As outlined above, the absence of pre-existing theory that would encompass the multifaceted issues of my research question made me traverse various fields for possibly fruitful territory concerning the expected societal role and professional identity construal of future engineers. I gained insights into many theoretical perspectives and hope to have contributed a little myself. I have an aspiration that my work will contribute to theory development henceforth, in an area where it was previously lacking. The marriage I arranged between Jamison's engineering-specific hybrid imagination and Freidson's third logic appears to be a happy one. By applying this and other sociological perspectives in the analyses I made of my empirical data I was able to identify a range of identity conflicts in the engineering students' construal of their professional identity. There were conflicting values in relation to business/commercial interests, on the one hand, and the intention to do societal good, on the other. There was a conflict between the emphasis of engineering work as an individual, rationality-driven way of thinking and doing and the highly prioritised collective approach to engineering. And finally, I found an affective identity conflict in the engineering students' appraisal of specialised knowledge development, whereby the highly specialised engineer was connoted as a boring, lonely 'nerd' whom students dissociated themselves from (Haase, 2014a).

Based on the survey answers made by engineering students within their first year of studies, my findings suggest that engineering education research may have overrated the risk of a fragmented engineering identity. Despite the fear of a vanishing common value-base of professional identity within a widening engineering field, formulated within engineering education research, I do find common value-orientations reappearing among students from across the 100+ different engineering disciplines that are taught in Denmark.

(Engineering) education for sustainability and hybrid imagination as an engineering-specific ideal professionalism emphasises the democratic, participatory, self-critical, reflexive, experience-based processes involved in learning. This involves an ideal understanding of the learning process that breaks with traditional transfer thinking. Higher education institutions cannot transmit certain curricula or knowledge 'packages' into the heads of their students. A hypodermic needle metaphor for transferral must, from this point of view, be rejected. Engineering pedagogy requires a much more student-oriented engagement with internal self-development processes, as they occur in specific contexts and collective interrelations. When learning, as a consequence of the participatory metaphor, is depicted as a matter of 'becoming', the focus on 'content' elides, as indicated in Barnett (2009) and Sfard (1998). A decentralisation of learning opens up the question of how to maintain control of the learning process, to which proponents of participatory learning would claim that control over learning was never in the hands of the educational institutions. However, it matters how engineering education systems address their task of providing engineers capable of administering their potential professional power. The institutionalisation of teaching for educative purposes does involve intentions about what learners' desired outcome should be. The mere listing of what we hope our future engineers are able to accomplish is an exercise of exclusion, whereby some skills are deemed desirable, others discarded. The fact that society needs engineers of a certain kind involves a contingent, normative aspect, and this complex interrelation of participatory ideals and ideal intentions would benefit from a more explicit handling both theoretically and in the practice of engineering educators.

Therefore I argue that engineering education systems need to balance their inherent intentionality with the demand for a design of the social infrastructure that facilitates student participation in order to fulfil their societal role of providing qualified engineers who are both technical experts and empowered scientific citizens.

Over and above the de-professionalisation metaphor, we might consider engineering as an and-both hyphenated profession, retaining its classic ideals and ordinary dilemmas of balancing competing profession-internal and -external demands with a technology-specific depth or even additional disciplinary approach. However, the professional role and its dilemmas are largely avoided among engineering students in my study. I have pointed to the necessity of facing such dilemmas and internalising them in an engineering professionalism, as both Freidson (2001) and Jamison (Hård & Jamison, 2005; Jamison, 2013) would suggest.

In my PhD I have taken the first steps towards discursively constructing ways of addressing professional values and responsible engineering identities in the service of society in a manner that embraces and confronts normative positions in the engineering education field.

An ongoing pursuit to take root in academia as a theoretical connector

On completion of my PhD thesis I have received a great deal of interest from people involved in engineering education and from people engaged in sustainable development. This has been really rewarding. For instance I have been asked to present my findings and call for debate among engineering students as well as engineering education faculty. In this way I have contributed to the ongoing processes of developing the engineering education system. However, none of the potential influence my research may accomplish in a practical or system perspective seems to register in the academic field. From a narrow perspective of how to gain a position in this field, my success is measured by the extent to which my claim of a new course of connectivity gains recognition and legitimisation.

Rather than adding cumulatively to one strand of theory, I have selected particular theoretical threads at the expense of others. No 'founding fathers' of the field can authenticate these decisions, because there is no foundation laid out below me. Instead, I have had to justify why I chose not to use the pre-existing frame of reference common to each theoretical framework and institutional culture (thus bolstering the theories that their respective representatives had introduced to me). This means that I have had to develop more independence and self-reflexivity about my theoretical stance than I would have had to otherwise. But it also appears that by retaining a distance from the field of engineering education that I have been studying I excluded

myself from a position in this field. Moreover, by studying it in the first place I have alienated myself somewhat from the social sciences. My meta-theoretical ambition to transcend dualistic disputes between quantitative and qualitative methodologies seems to provoke similar ambiguous reactions. Although I have received good feedback on my general research design, I have also encountered proponents of quantitative/qualitative methods who on finding their favourite approach deemphasised in my project, imply that I have debased myself by adhering to anything other than the 'right' approach.

The specialised knowledge I lay claim to has an immanent interdisciplinary nature where each theoretical field is used to reframe and contextualise the next. The various theories I draw on provide new perspectives and layers in the total picture. However, I persistently come up against the prejudice that interdisciplinarity has precluded profound expertise in any one theory.

As a peripheral practitioner in the academic field, it appears I have made myself vulnerable. Where do I fit in? Where do I go to look for legitimisation of my theoretical position in academia? How do I establish and uphold a legitimate position of my own? Have I stepped out of line too much to belong?

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10

Keeping the Lights On: A Play in Two Acts

Mari Cruice

Act one

[A small office in the English department of a modern secondary school. There are five black leather swivel chairs, five desks in varying states of order, and two desktop computers. Wall-to-wall shelving groans with collections of novels, plays and poems. In one corner there is a small fridge, on top of which there is a kettle and an eclectic collection of mugs.

SAM and MEGAN are two English teachers. They both completed their Doctorates in Education ('EdD') just over two years ago and now teach in the English department.]

MEGAN [*looking nervously into a mug to check whether it's clean, then pouring in water from a kettle*]: I bumped into one of our EdD tutors today.
SAM [*sitting at a computer, typing quickly*]: What, at Kingston Uni?
MEGAN: Yeah, Victoria. I haven't seen her for ages.
[*MEGAN sits down at her desk, but turns her chair to face SAM.*]
SAM [*swivelling in her chair to face Megan*]: Me neither. How is she?
MEGAN [*smiling and nodding*]: Really well. Still crazy busy, still teaching teachers. It was one of those intense, chance meetings on a wet and windy morning that somehow seems to have been predestined.
SAM: Blimey, that's a bit Shakespearean for a Thursday morning in suburbia. What did she say, 'hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor?' [Shakespeare, 1998: 774].
MEGAN: No, she asked me if I want to write a chapter for a book she is planning.
SAM: There you go, that's pretty much the modern equivalent: 'All hail to thee, thou shalt be published hereafter.'
MEGAN: I don't know about that, 'I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent.'
SAM: Well, I can be your Lady Macbeth and goad you into action. What's the book about?
MEGAN: It's about theory in practitioner inquiry and how practitioners interact with it.

SAM: Ha! We don't; unless we're in the middle of a course. We're too busy laminating plenary cards and marking with three different coloured pens to think theoretically.

MEGAN: Sad but true. You know, after I spoke to Victoria, I dug out some of the pieces of writing I did when I was working on my Doctorate.

SAM: And . . .

MEGAN: And I realised that when I started to read theorists: Stephen Ball [1990. 1994, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008] . . . Foucault [1977, 1980a, 1980b, 1984] for instance, I was so excited to have found their work. It was like discovering amazing photographers who had travelled to all the places I'd been, but somehow they'd managed to capture everything with so much more artistry and flair than I ever could.

SAM: I'm glad your first reaction was excitement. I remember feeling cross that we hadn't been exposed to their ideas before. I'd spent over ten years teaching before . . . How can I extend your metaphor? . . . Before things started to come into focus. Anyway, I've got to run. [*She stands up*].

MEGAN: Oh don't go yet. Wait till the end of break. I haven't had a properly intellectual conversation for at least eighteen months.

[*She stands up to get a biscuit from on top of the fridge.*]

Biscuit?

SAM [*takes a chocolate digestive from the packet and sits down again*]: Ta.

[*There is a long pause*].

MEGAN [*dunking her biscuit thoughtfully in her tea*]: You know . . . Speaking of focus . . . The reason Foucault could take better pictures than either of us was because he had the capacity to zoom in and out of history. His knowledge was so sweeping and deep that he could pan over great swathes of time, then focus with clarity on more modern events that we, with our relative ignorance, can only see fuzzily [*taking a soggy biscuit out of the mug*].

SAM: Yes, I do remember that clarity [*examining her perfect biscuit*], that mental sharpness that I felt when I looked out of the ivory tower, seeing through the eyes of giants. But now we've descended back into the fray, and my vision is blurring because tomorrow I've got five lessons to teach, two of which are being observed by the powers that be and if I don't get 'Outstanding' for both . . . [*biting the biscuit*].

MEGAN: What? You'll feel that your identity as an Excellent Teacher will be threatened?

SAM: It's more than that these days, isn't it! My livelihood will be threatened [*stuffing the remaining bit of biscuit into her mouth*]. Now, you may have time to ponder the niceties of educational research, but I've got photocopying to do.

MEGAN: Blimey, what's happened to you?

SAM: Nothing's happened to me. It's just that reading Ball and Foucault are not going to help me convince the Senior Leader that I am ticking all of the latest set of boxes. And while *I* might not have changed, the system we are working in has shifted enormously, in case you haven't noticed. It's suddenly much easier

to lose your job. Look around you, there are ghosts everywhere. Colleagues who have been fired, teachers who have euthanised their careers after 'substandard' lesson observations. They are haunting every staffroom I know of.

MEGAN: Yes, and if we'd collectively paid more attention to Ball, we may not have ended up with so much misery in our midst [*taking her iPad from her desk*]. Look, this was a passage from Ball that I cut and pasted into my notes. He wrote it over *ten years ago* and it seems frighteningly prescient:

[. . .]there are pressures on individuals, formalized by appraisals, annual reviews and data bases, to make their contribution to the performativity of the unit. In this, there is a real possibility that authentic social relations are replaced by judgemental relations wherein persons are valued for their productivity alone. Their value as a person is eradicated. This contributes to a general 'emptying out' of social relationships, which are left 'flat' and 'deficient in affect' [Lash and Urry, 1994: 15]. Again, performance has no room for caring.

[Ball, 2003: 220]

SAM: That is exactly what's happening. Staff don't feel cared for as people with lives and identities beyond the workplace. They are increasingly feeling like they are employed as a means to an end, the 'end' being the achievement of an 'Outstanding' inspection grade. And if at any point their practice is perceived to be at risk of not meeting the inspectorate's criteria for Outstanding, their jobs are at risk. Never mind that the criteria constantly shift, or that the consistency of the observers' judgements is hugely variable. No, we're not in a conversation, we're in a competition, and it doesn't matter that the rules of the game are unfair. We must compete or we'll be out of a job.

MEGAN: But *you*'re not going to get fired, because you have read Stephen Ball [1997] and you're going to create a 'fabrication' for the very purpose of being observed. At least you understand the unwritten rules.

SAM: Yes, I haven't forgotten what I learned, but Management got wise to that game didn't they? They understood that all-singing, all-dancing lessons were being produced performatively; for the purposes of inspections or observations. So now what happens is, they ask the students whether the lesson that is being observed is 'representative' of lessons in general. Which means we can no longer fabricate. That's why we're all working sixty-hour weeks. There is nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

MEGAN: There we go, you're referencing Foucault.

SAM: Ah yes, the panopticon [Foucault, 1980b: 147]. The ubiquitous, hierarchical surveillance system.

MEGAN: Exactly. All that theory is deeply relevant. That's why I felt so energised when I discovered it. Brilliant thinkers were illuminating our experiences, describing them with an uncanny accuracy, making sense of our collective fear and compliance.

SAM: You're right. Back to the beautifully focused pictures. There is so much collective wisdom out there, but since finishing my studies, it's hard to stay in touch with it all. For a start, I no longer have library access, no Athens password, no keys to the ivory tower . . . We learn to think theoretically, to have our lives illuminated by brilliance and then, at the end of a Master's course or a doctoral programme, the lights are switched off.

MEGAN: Well, you could go and work in a university?

SAM: But then we're right back at square one in terms of knowledge transfer. Professional doctorates are supposed to . . .

MEGAN: Supposed to what?

SAM: Well, they are supposed to bridge a gap aren't they? We are practitioners, but we've been schooled in theory. We should be crossing the moat every day, but since finishing my studies, it's hard not to feel that the drawbridge has been pulled up again and I am locked outside the tower.

MEGAN: And you resent that?

SAM: I don't know. Maybe I was being too idealistic, thinking that I would be able to share my theoretical knowledge more widely within the school. I imagined setting up a research group, having fruitful discussions about pedagogy . . .

MEGAN: But?

SAM: But look around you. The dominant political group doesn't like intellectualism in education. University education departments are being closed down all over the country. The dominant group values craft over theory and compliance over autonomy. It probably serves me right! Ball would say that I'm a product of my time, a neo-liberal subject; my studies were just a calculated act; an investment in my neo-liberal, economic self [Ball, 2003]. Maybe my dark heart was after personal rewards, and I'm annoyed that I seem to have grossly miscalculated.

MEGAN: Yeah but you know . . . You can only articulate that because you have done so much reading. And your heart isn't only dark. You're from a huge family of teachers and both your grandfathers worked down the mines; emancipation through education is in your blood. I know you well enough to understand that you didn't do all that studying just to get a promotion.

SAM: True. And that's another key theory we've both internalised. What did Perry [1970] say about the road to academic maturity? That we go from viewing the truth in absolute terms and move towards a commitment to relativism. We develop the ability to recognise multiple, coexisting, conflicting versions of the truth.

MEGAN: Exactly, and that includes recognising multiple, conflicting, versions of ourselves. We may be white, middle class subjects, so saturated in neo-liberal discourses that we inevitably try to climb our way up some self-actualising but oh so greasy pole, just to survive; whilst at the same time, we are Celtic women, committed to social justice, accepting low-paid work in leaky, overcrowded buildings because we are passionate about the subject of English, a subject which has been particularly hard-hit by the inspectorate's narrow focus, on 'pace' and 'progress'.

SAM: There's a great line by Scheurich [1997: 1] which I know by heart: 'I have wavered and mis-stepped, I have gone backward after I have gone forward; I have drifted sideways along a new imaginary, forgetting from where I once thought I had started. I have fabricated personae and unities . . . ' That's how I feel, that nothing is simple or linear.

MEGAN: You said it. You know it by heart. All this theory has become a part of who you are. You view the world differently because you spent five long years studying, learning to look through different lenses, recognising complexity . . .

SAM: You're right, but you are one of the very few people I can talk to about what I am seeing. Am I going to bring up the problems of performativity or discuss the niceties of postmodern theory in a middle-management meeting? There is no scope for those kinds of ideas there, we mainly talk about numbers: which student is working at which level; which staff member is at risk of not getting the highest score in an observation, should an inspector call . . .

MEGAN: And at those meetings, we are mainly silent.

SAM: I know. We don't want to engage in the discourse of data because we know that so much data is flawed but we don't feel we can resist it. Didn't you write your thesis on assessment?

MEGAN: Yeah, it was a detailed exploration of assessment practices in secondary English classrooms in England and Wales. And I found so many numbers are invalid or unreliable or just patently made up. Teachers are being pressured into demonstrating that students have made progress up a linear trajectory, so they make up numbers. One teacher I interviewed was asked by her head teacher to change her data *five times*, because the progress in maths didn't match progress in English, and because boys were not doing as well as girls! And they don't want students making too much progress either, because that would cause problems down the line for the next teacher who has to show that ALL students are uniformly travelling along their predestined routes to their 'expected' levels.

SAM: It's enough to drive you bonkers. I look around and everyone is whispering that the emperor has no clothes; that the data is dodgy, but no one is saying it out loud. There is a huge culture of fear in education today. Everyone feels more expendable and dissent really is a sackable offence, so we all mutter and dissemble and fill in the boxes with numbers that we know, deep down, are damagingly reductive at best and at worst, untrue.

MEGAN: Well one of my favourite readings of Hamlet is that he was ground down by the pressure to dissemble. Most people read the 'to be or not to be' speech as a monologue about suicide. Hamlet is asking whether or not to end his life, but, early on in the play, he turns on his mother and says: 'Seems, madam? Nay it *is*. I know not "seems"' [Shakespeare, 1998: 295]. So Rubenfeld [2008] argues that the famous soliloquy could be asking: 'to be or to seem?' Hamlet is wracked by the inauthenticity of the interactions that he sees around him, with so many subjects in the rotten state of Denmark pretending. But Hamlet doesn't want to 'act', in either sense of the word, he just wants to 'be', but given the self-seeking corruption of those in power, merely being is a difficult task.

[*The two friends sit in silence as the room darkens. The atmosphere is heavy, they have expressed what they so often repress and their words hang in the air as a hint of red light seeps onto the stage. There is pregnant pause. The tension is broken suddenly by a very loud, comic honking sound, which comes from Megan's phone.*]

[*SAM laughs at the ridiculous noise*].

MEGAN [*Smiling respectfully as she reads the message on her phone*]: Ah, another pithy tweet on education policy from Michael Rosen [@MichaelRosenYes].

SAM: Do you find time for all that Twitter stuff?

MEGAN: Absolutely! I think you'd enjoy it too, it's a place where people are actually speaking out and describing their experiences of school. There are lots of very powerful blogs out there as well, and teachers are increasingly finding ways of developing real, meaningful communities of practice through digital networks.

SAM: More theory.

MEGAN: What?

SAM: Wenger's Communities of Practice [Wenger, 1998]! You know, having said that I've returned to the fray and can't find time for academics any more, that's not quite true. The one thing that I do find time for is my writing group and I know that all the background reading we did on the EdD reinforced for me how important membership of that group is.

MEGAN: Is this the group of teachers that you meet up with on Saturdays to write with?

SAM: Yeah, we meet in museums or parks and we write together and talk about school and writing and how to teach writing. It's a grass roots movement and the most powerful professional development I've ever had. And it's growing. There are now loads of groups of teachers, meeting all over England and Wales to write and to share. Have a look at our website: www.nwp.org.uk.

MEGAN: That sounds cool.

SAM: Yes, it helps to keep me sane because it feels real. There's never any talk of grades or levels. We do evaluate each other's writing, but it's very different from the assessment practices that we have to use in school.

MEGAN: Hmmmm, well at the heart of any evaluation is a value . . .

SAM: Exactly, and first and foremost we are able to *value* each other as people with stories to tell, interesting observations to make and feelings to express. When we write and listen to each other's writing we understand that on some mornings, some of us manage to articulate beautifully whatever it is we have in mind. On other mornings, some of us can't find words or ideas, we just end up with scribbles on the page.

MEGAN: English teachers well before us have known about this and articulated it with passion. David Holbrook, who wrote *English for Meaning* in the 1970s said [*again referring to her iPad*]:

When we stand in front of a class of children – we do not know what is going to happen. Will it be any good? Will the end-products make sense when we read them through next morning? Will there be anything there at the end of the hour that wasn't there at the beginning? Will there be something with order and meaning

in the pupils' souls at the end rather than mere blots and scrawled paper? Will they beat us? Or refresh us? These are moments of 'life'. They have to be lived through, and God alone knows what the outcome will be. Every creative act, and every lesson, is a 'surrender to creative fate'. The other terminology – 'control' and 'competence' – avoids the complexities by implying that we can deal explicitly with entities. This is to falsify. We can only make these capacities seem more accessible and controllable if we implicitly reduce them thus to mechanistic and functional dimensions by our terminology.

[Holbrook, 1979: 40]

SAM: I know. We've been talking about this for years, the way in which English teaching has flat-lined, shifting in focus from the messiness and difficulty of meaning-making to the relatively facile but eminently more visible task of inserting linguistic devices in texts. But if we don't overtly demonstrate that every single child has made 'better than expected' progress in every twenty minute slot, we are judged to be Requiring Improvement and are at risk of entering the particular circle of hell that some of our colleagues are in: more judgements and more intense observations.

MEGAN: All the pressures of the panopticon, because progress is interpreted as linear, visible and measurable.

SAM: But progress in English is erratic and complex!

MEGAN [*Sighs deeply*]: I've been reading Eisner again [*finds the book and flicks to page 110, which contains a scrap of pink Post-it*]. He says 'some objectives one cannot articulate, some goals one does not achieve by the end of the academic year, some insights are not measurable, some ends are not known until after the fact' [Eisner, 1985: 110].

SAM: Exactly, not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.

MEGAN: Thank you Albert Einstein! [*Still reading Eisner wistfully and lovingly*]: Here, you'll like this bit because Eisner's articulating the approach that you use in your writing groups. He says that rather than think in terms of narrow objectives, which can be checked at the end of the lesson, we need to think of an expressive objective which is evocative rather than prescriptive: 'In the expressive context the teacher hopes to provide a situation in which meanings become personalized and in which children produce products both theoretical and qualitative that are as diverse as themselves' [Eisner, 1985: 55].

SAM: Yes, that's what we try to do when we write on Saturday mornings. We create stimulating situations, we organise trips to the South Bank or to the Museum of Childhood or Regent's Park and everybody engages with the stimulus in very different ways and produces wildly different texts as a result. Difficult to do this in classroom situations because . . .

MEGAN: Because we are all told to standardise, to share schemes of work, to narrow down the possibilities so that we can compare one child's work with another's and objectively level their work.

SAM: But we end up levelling out any difference . . .

MEGAN: There are other ways of marking, though. Eisner's covered this ground already. He said 'the evaluative task in this situation is not one of applying a common standard to the products produced, but one of reflecting upon what has been produced in order to reveal its uniqueness and significance' [Eisner, 1985: 55].

SAM: More wisdom. At least we've been exposed to these other ways of thinking and knowing, we've had the chance to spend time in the massive libraries of the universities and deepen our pedagogic knowledge so we can critically engage with the latest trend, not just swallow it whole.

MEGAN: But we are swallowing it aren't we? You're running off to photocopy something for a lesson in which you are going to demonstrate that a significant number of your students have made better-than-expected progress in a very short amount of time. Let me guess, you've probably planned something overtly measurable for a younger year group, like telling them to use 'A FOREST' when writing something persuasive. You'll get them to show that they can use [*counting on her fingers to emphasise the point*]. Alliteration, Fact, Opinion, Rhetorical questions, Emotive language, Statistics and Triplets; and the observer – who is not a specialist English practitioner – will be impressed when all these techniques start appearing in the students' work. There will be Clear and Demonstrable Evidence of Progress and all will be well in the world. Whether or not the kids have any authentic opinions about the subject matter they are attempting to be persuasive about will be irrelevant. Better to have all students showing they can alliterate and use groups of three than to engage fully with messy moral questions that may be discussed for well over twenty minutes without all, or indeed any, students being able to show concrete evidence of progress.

SAM: OK, OK, I see what you are saying and my conscience is groaning, but what should I do instead?

MEGAN: Well, you could start by sharing some of Eisner's theories with your observer. Explain the difference between an objective as it is commonly understood in the current discourse and an expressive objective. Tell him that even though you know that lessons in which discrete objectives are taught can be powerful and necessary, that this particular lesson is not one of them. Go on to set up a rich situation, give the students an exciting stimulus to get them thinking and, instead of the bitty ten minute slots they are so often given, where the first chunk of the lesson is dedicated to establishing success criteria and the last part is given over to checking whether those criteria have been met, ask them to write for forty whole minutes! And state that while you cannot pre-specify what every child will learn at the outset, you can give the students space to reflect, and to capture what they have learned at the end. The question shifts from 'did Johnny learn x?' to 'what did Johnny learn?'

SAM: Yes, I could do that. After too many years of silent fuming, it could be hugely empowering. What did Foucault say? 'It's not a matter of emancipating truth from

every system of power . . . but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time' [Foucault, 1984: 74].

MEGAN: Exactly, power is discursive rather than coercive, power is a 'regime of truth' so we might as well start trying to shift the discourse.

SAM: That just seems like such an enormous task.

MEGAN: Yes, but you're not trying to do it on your own. Think about your Community of Practice. And think about all those authors we read and loved: Michael Apple [2004], Nel Noddings [2003, 2007a, 2007b], bell hooks [1994], David Holbrook [1979], Eisner [1985, 2004], Elliott [1996], Jeffcoate [1992] . . . All trying in their different ways to counter what Weber [1930] said was 'the disenchantment of the world' through the 'increasing scale, scope, and power of the formal means-ends rationalities of . . . bureaucracy' [Jenkins, 2000: 12].

SAM: But Weber was writing over a hundred years ago and, as far as I can tell, things have become progressively worse. Look at all the technologies we now have for weighing and measuring, all the spreadsheets and Excel formulae, all designed to chart our relentless, post-Enlightenment, post-enchantment march towards progress. And to be honest, as far as I can tell, most teachers (me included) are just falling into line, saluting Ofsted [*Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills*] when they come and goose-stepping towards retirement, senior management or a nervous breakdown, whichever comes first.

MEGAN [*Starting to laugh*]: Sorry, I've now got an image of the entire staff goose-stepping.

SAM [*Not sharing Megan's amusement*] OK, that's an unhelpful image. But then so is the image that highly influential journalists and politicians are painting of people working in education, labelling them 'The Blob' [Gove, 2013].

MEGAN: Well, that's a perfect example of what Ball calls the 'discourse of derision' [Ball, 1990: 22]. If they mock teachers, call us moaners, dismiss any criticism of reform as emanating from the desire to protect vested interests, they are halfway to victory before we've even armed ourselves for battle.

SAM: But discussion about pedagogy shouldn't be an ideological battleground. It should be a grown-up debate between people who actually know what they are talking about, where everyone acknowledges that there are diverse approaches to learning and teaching. And, as all the literature on tolerance tells us, we can't be genuinely tolerant unless we take a considerable amount of time to understand other mentalities. We can't tolerate and respect something if we don't understand it, that's just indifference or ignorance.

Turner-Bisset [1999] listed types of knowledge that contribute towards teacher professionalism. The first one was obvious and I don't suppose – despite what the anti-blob brigade would have people think – that many teachers would dispute the idea that top of the list is subject knowledge. If you don't know your subject, of course, you can't teach it well, and kids usually find out pretty quickly if you know your stuff or not.

MEGAN: What else is on the list?

SAM: Well, the second one is syntactic subject knowledge.

MEGAN: Which means knowledge of how to get your subject across, like knowing that kids never spell 'definitely' incorrectly when you tell them it's got 'init' in it?

SAM: That's it! The kind of knowledge that you build up as your career goes on, hundreds of ways of making a subject more accessible, memorable, meaningful . . . Then there's knowledge of the syllabus, knowledge of your students, self-knowledge and so on. If you're ever feeling insecure about your professionalism, you should use her list to remind yourself just how much you know.

MEGAN: And how will reflecting on the extent of my professional knowledge help me to combat the anti-blob brigade and shift the discourse?

SAM: I was getting to that, because the last type of knowledge necessary for teacher professionalism is knowledge of the wider political environment.

MEGAN: Yeah, I have another image in my head now, I think it's from Fullan [1993: 5]. He said that 'productive educational change at its core, is not the capacity to implement the latest policy, but rather the ability to survive the vicissitudes of planned and unplanned change while growing and developing'.

SAM: But, as you so cruelly pointed out, I am just implementing the latest policy, occupying a place I didn't want to occupy, being someone I didn't want to be. I read Elliott and Kushner's [2007] critique of educational reform which lamented the fact that teachers in the UK have been encouraged to view pedagogy as the construction of rationally ordered learning environments. He said that such a system leaves little space for the 'personal' and that it neglects the complexity of classroom life.

MEGAN: I know it, you know it, but what are we going to *do* about it?

SAM: Well, the very least we can do is be honest in our own classrooms, take our discretionary space and engage with the complexities that working with hundreds of unique individuals inevitably brings. We can plan lessons using expressive objectives and 'come out' as pedagogically educated. We can risk non-compliance – and we can write!

MEGAN: Ha ha, you have indeed been the spur to prick the sides of my intent. I am going to write that chapter for Victoria! I am going to explore all the ideas we've been talking about: the joy of engaging with theory, the meaning and energy we find when theories perfectly label and describe our lives; and the capability we have to engage in what we feel is best practice in the face of reductive, dominant political discourses and (why not?) do our own sense-making, develop theories of our own.

SAM: And *I'm* going to do a free writing workshop without putting an objective on the board.

[*Bell rings.*]

SAM: Ah, I go and it is done, the bell invites me.

MEGAN: Fear not, it is a knell that summons you to pedagogical heaven.

SAM: And *Ofsted* hell.

Lights off

Act two

[*Back in the English office on a Tuesday evening, Sam is hunched over a huge pile of exercise books that she is marking.*]

SAM: Damn, damn, damn.

MEGAN [*Enters*]: What's up?

SAM: I've run out of pink pens so I can't write my 'Even Better Ifs' on these poems.

MEGAN [*Laughs*]: I thought I'd walked in on a major crisis.

SAM: This is a major crisis, my marking is being scrutinised tomorrow.

MEGAN: Well, just write: 'even better if you'd written your "Even Better Ifs" '.

SAM: 'Even Better If' not everything always has to be marked so formulaically; 'Even Better If' I can just appreciate and respond positively to the creations of the students.

[*MEGAN Empties her bag which contains seven books, all with Post-its sticking out of them. She puts the books on her desk*].

SAM [*Looking suspiciously at Megan's pile of reading material*]: You've been reading again, haven't you?

MEGAN: [*Standing up and parodying the format of group therapy*]: Yes, my name is Megan, I am an intellectual.

SAM [*Laughing*]: Yeah, you need help.

MEGAN: Well you're the one in crisis.

SAM: Only because my pen's run out.

MEGAN: No, you're more deeply discombobulated than that.

SAM: Yes, I'm exasperated because I am expected to comment on knowledge building in English as if it were knowledge building in science. There is a tacit assumption that every piece of writing that I encounter can be graded hierarchically; that the 'Even Better Ifs' are uncontentious. But as Peter Elbow said over forty years ago '. . . writing is a black box: it is making marks on paper and then waiting to see what happens when other people come along and stare at those marks . . . The reactions to a set of words are only partly a function of the words; they are also a function of the mood, temperament, and background of the reader' [Elbow, 1973: 133].

MEGAN: So, for both you and your students, 'Even Better If' you weren't in such a bad mood.

SAM [*Glancing at her watch, it is twenty to five*]: Sorry. I'm knackered. I've got to finish this pile of books and my A-Level marking tonight. I think my own kids are going to go hungry.

MEGAN [*Pulls out a shiny, hardback book. It is* Knowledge and Knowers: Towards a Realist Sociology of Education [Maton, 2014]].: Perhaps this will help.

SAM: What, theory as therapy?

MEGAN: Well yes, if you want to put it like that: Theory as sense-making, theory as clarity, theory as a tool which helps us to see where our emergent identities are at loggerheads with wider political trends.

SAM [*Slumping down on the leather chair and putting her feet up on another chair, as if she were on a psychotherapist's couch*]: Go on then Doctor, what's your diagnosis? Am I beyond help? [*Sneezes*]

MEGAN [*Offering a box of tissues, as a therapist might*]: Tissue?

SAM: Thanks.

MEGAN: Well, I think that this book by Karl Maton, hot off the press, might help. He's written a chapter called 'Canons, knowers and progress in the arts and humanities' [Maton, 2014: 86–106]. First of all, he articulates exactly what you've just said. Science has a hierarchical knowledge structure whereas the humanities has a horizontal knowledge structure.

SAM: Yeah we discussed this on the EdD. I think Bernstein said that science develops by integrating previous knowledge and the arts add segments horizontally [Bernstein, 2000]. I always remember the image of physics being like a shiny high-rise skyscraper and English being like a collection of huts on a dusty plain. That imagery seems to encapsulate the relative status of the disciplines too.

MEGAN: Do I detect a tone of self-pity creeping in?

SAM: Not at all, I'd rather live on a dusty plain building my own hut than feel stuck in an elevator in a high-rise. But aren't we digressing? [*In a mocking, melodramatic tone, putting her hand to her forehead*]: We don't have much time . . .

MEGAN: Well, I don't think we are digressing, but I can cut to the chase if you're keen to get to the shop to buy more pens. Maton theorises not just knowledge structures, but knower structures [Maton, 2014: 93].

SAM [*Groans*].

MEGAN: Stick with the programme. Look, here's Maton's diagram from page 93:

[*MEGAN shows SAM the diagram which has a line from left to right which represents a continuum from 'horizontal knower structures' to 'hierarchical knower structures'; it is intersected at its midpoint by a vertical line which runs from top (labelled 'hierarchical knowledge structures') to bottom (labelled 'horizontal knowledge structures'). Four quadrants are named: 'Elite' (a coincidence of hierarchical knowledge structures and hierarchical knower structures); 'Knower' (hierarchical knower structures and horizontal knowledge structures); 'Relativist' (horizontal knower structures and horizontal knowledge structures); 'Knowledge' (hierarchical knowledge structures and horizontal knower structures)*].

SAM [*Trying to focus on the diagram, but struggling to concentrate*]: I'm having a 'so what' moment. How is this going to help me?

MEGAN: So, you are exasperated a good deal of the time, because, as you've already said, you imagine the subject of English, which you spend most of your waking hours teaching, as part of a horizontal knowledge structure.

SAM: Right.

MEGAN: But the people who are devising the Whole-school Marking Policy don't necessarily share your view of the subject and have simply put English in the 'knowledge' segment of the diagram. That is, English is a body of knowledge that can be accessed by all (hence the horizontal knower structure) and that is

hierarchically organised (hence the requirement for all marking to contribute to databases which track students' linear movement up a ladder of progress).

SAM: I'm with you so far.

MEGAN: And you're starting to see the relevance?

SAM [*Uncertain*]: Hmmm.

MEGAN: You, on the other hand, would put English, or aspects of it, in the 'Relativist' box. You are arguing, with Bernstein, that English has weak 'verticality' and that in an English class, we're not always explicitly building on what has gone before, we are often adding segments horizontally.

SAM: Yes, hence some of my frustration with the ubiquitous 'Even Better Ifs' which assume the premise that we can always know where learners are on a hierarchy. Peter Elbow, much cited in my writing group, said that 'The striking thing about learning to write is that people have been trying to teach it for as long as they've tried to teach mathematics yet no one has succeeded in making this kind of orderly, hierarchical progression that works' [1973: 135].

MEGAN: Exactly [*putting on her therapist's voice*]: I feel we're making progress in our session today. But there's more to the picture than just knowledge. Remember when we had our discussion a few weeks ago and we were talking about theory as a lens which brings everything into focus? Well, let's see if the final bit of Maton's model will help you see things even more clearly.

SAM: Go on. I've got five more minutes for my theory as therapy session, then I am going to the school shop to buy more pens.

MEGAN: Ok. Maton contends that it's not just knowledge that we need to theorise; we need to combine a theory of types of knowledge with a sense of how *knowers* are understood. He has four main categories. The born gaze, which means knowers are born with natural talent or even genius. Then, moving down the hierarchy, the social gaze, which means that knowers gain legitimacy by virtue of their social class, gender or race. Then the cultivated gaze where knowers can be inculcated into knowledge through prolonged exposure. Then, relatively weak, is the trained gaze, which is generally applied to disciplines with hierarchical knowledge structures.

SAM: So . . .

MEGAN: So what?

SAM: No, I've moved beyond 'so what'. I'm thinking! [*reasonably long pause*]: So what you are saying is that I need to be aware of the way in which I imagine knowledge and knowers and then contrast them to the ways in which significant others (colleagues, senior management, politicians) are imagining them. Someone, and I'm not going to mention any names, may think that progress in English is moving up a hierarchical body of canonical knowledge and that only a few, highly talented people are born with the capacity to master the discipline. This elite conception of the subject sits well with assessment practices which construct learners as following on a trajectory based on their early childhood baseline scores (or 'natural talent'). People who view English in this way may

also seek to weed out those who are just not going to 'make the grade'. After all, why waste your time studying English literature if you're never going to 'get it'?

In direct contrast, other people – again, I'm not going to personalise this – conceive of English as consisting of horizontal knowledge and they imagine that all knowers can be inculcated into the aspects of the field that interest them most [*starts to smile*].

MEGAN: Exactly, and if you take the time to find out other people's perspectives and to recognise your own position, you will be able to see more clearly the causes of your irritation and, ideally, to discuss, in an informed dialogue, the relative merits of conceiving of English in a certain way. You might even be able to devise an appropriate assessment policy.

SAM: Can I borrow the Maton book? I think I might share that diagram with my line-manager.

MEGAN: Ah, a breakthrough [*hands over the book*]: Are you rushing off to the school shop before it closes?

SAM: No, I'm not going to do the 'Even Better Ifs' in pink, I'm going to mark in pencil and write: 'have you thought about . . . ?' or, 'I personally enjoyed . . . ' I'm going to reflect on what my students have written which reveals its uniqueness and significance.

[*SAM has a half smile on her face. She appears less frustrated, more engaged with the prospect of the work that she needs to complete. Her task seems more purposeful and she is energised by the small slice of autonomy that she has granted herself. MEGAN starts packing a bag and reaching for her coat*.]

SAM [*Looking at her watch*]: Where are *you* going?

MEGAN: I'm off home to write the last bit of my play script on theory and practice for Victoria.

SAM: Cool, what are you going to say?

MEGAN: Well, it's an epilogue, last words on the importance of theory for teachers.

SAM [*Smiles*]: Theory as therapy! I must admit, Doctor, I am feeling a bit better.

MEGAN: That's why I've been reading again. It keeps me sane, helps me make *sense*. I've just read Stephen Covey's *The Speed of Trust* [Covey, 2006]. He describes a fisherman who uses a certain type of lens to enable him to see fish in the water more clearly. In his book, he urges us to look through the lens of trust, to see how it impacts all aspects of our lives.

SAM: Trust goggles!

MEGAN: Yeah, he says that organisations in which people don't trust each other pay a huge 'trust tax' [Covey, 2006: 17]. I think, in a similar way, that if we undervalue theory in education we'll end up paying a huge 'misunderstanding tax' because what theory does is help us to understand that we are sometimes having conversations with people who are not seeing the world as we see it. Unless we engage in some deeper thinking, we are not going to be conversing

or building understanding – *theorising* – we are going to be, at best, turn-taking, at worst, mud-slinging.

SAM: So what are you recommending in your epilogue?

MEGAN: Firstly, an openness to theory.

SAM [*Laughing*]: You'll be trying to get everyone to 'borrow the book'.

MEGAN: Yes, I think teachers should be borrowing books. Books like Tobias and Duffy's investigation, which tries to facilitate a grown-up dialogue between constructivist theorists and proponents of direct instruction [Tobias & Duffy, 2009]. I think that we should all be accessing university libraries as a matter of course. I think that the idea of a profession in which all members are qualified at Master's level is a fine one, and it should be put firmly back on the agenda. It might cost time and money in the short term, but it would reduce the 'misunderstanding tax' that we are all paying as a result of knowledge being created but not transferred, or because people are working alongside colleagues or bosses who are seeing the world through such radically different lenses that misunderstandings and misery are rife.

SAM: You're hoping that theory is going to do some very heavy lifting?

MEGAN: Perhaps. Theory combined with trust.

SAM: You know, if you liked what Covey wrote on trust [Covey, 2006], you should read Martin Buber [Buber, 1970]. If you're trying to persuade people that we need to move from suspicion towards trust, he's your man. You said that if we're not careful, we're going to be reduced to turn-taking or mud-slinging. Buber says that if we want dialogue, we have to have trust. He says that trust depends upon meeting the other with an openness and respect, treating the other as 'thou' not merely 'it'. He is an authority on being not seeming, and he urges us to resist characterising the truth of the other as mere ideology.

MEGAN: We're back where we started, thinking about how we avoid treating people as a means to an end, or an 'it'. We're back to Hamlet's desire to be and not to seem. Back to Ball's warning that within the education system teachers' 'value as a person' is eradicated [Ball, 2003: 220]. Back to the ideal of informed discussions about pedagogy.

SAM: Exactly. But Buber also helps us to see the possibility of direct relationships in which one person openly meets another [Buber, 1970]. We can't do this if we haven't made the effort to understand the other's position. Really, if you read no other philosopher this year, or indeed ever, read Buber, he offers a perfect antidote to anyone sick of spin.

MEGAN: Can I borrow the book?

SAM [*Stands up a chair and, wobbling, reaches up to the top shelf of the office to find her much thumbed copy of Buber's* Between Man and Man *(2002)*]: My dear, you can *always* borrow the book.

MEGAN: Thanks so much [*looks respectfully at the book which has a faded Post-it on p.22, Megan opens the book to the marked page and reads*]: 'There is genuine dialogue – no matter whether spoken or silent – where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular

being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them' [Buber, 2002: 22].

[*The two friends glance at each other; contained in a brief moment of eye contact is an acknowledgement of their deep relationship. They have taken the time to open up to one another, to see each other as Thou.*]

MEGAN: See you tomorrow.

SAM: And tomorrow.

MEGAN: And tomorrow!

[*The women hug, MEGAN leaves. SAM, smiling, returns to her desk and takes up her pencil to begin her marking.*]

Lights stay on

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