Post Qualitative Research - Reality through the Antihierarchical Assemblage of non-Calculation

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Abstract

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Keywords

Post Qualitative, Research Methodology, Epistemology, Autonomy, Lived Theory

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Heteronomous Savants

This paper is about one of the cornerstones of academia; research methodology, and as such following on Heidegger, before peering into its fabric we must first ask (Arendt, 2019, p. 15), what does academia do, what is its purpose, and ultimately what is the core *raison d'être* of academia—Its reason of being, its essence.

Academia exists primarily to discern reality, to tell us how the world really functions. Academic praxis consists of two entwined strands, the discovery of knowledge and its unambiguous communication. Research methodology governs the act of discovering reality, it is the tool that instils robustness, yet it also follows a bifurcation that defines Western thought. The Cartesian dualism of body and mind, cognition and matter, the old split between the hard positivism of quantitative science against the soft reflective qualitative. This dualism is perceived as residing in the past, the two methodological paths now stand balanced, applied on the basis of "persuasiveness and utility" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). The most acceptable and productive method selected[1] in accordance to the question posed. Yet equality did not come without a cost for qualitative enquiry. Its validity had to be attained via the exclusion of elements that seemed less rigorous, those that resisted quantification. The first to urge towards the notion that the feeling field, seeking to understand the "meaning behind human action" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 248), would reach maturity by emulating its established counterpart, was mid-19th century proponent of utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106).

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[1] A selection process vulnerable to issues such as the tenuous interchangeability between method and epistemology (Bryman, 1984), or to the observation that the same subject is constituted differently according to the theoretical apparatus applied (Honan, Knobel, Baker, & Davies, 2000).

What Mill advocated, was a re-statement of the Cartesian dualism in terms of quality. A quantitative, disguised as qualitative, value system. If quality is to be valid it must be measurable, but not all quality carries equal value regardless of its proneness to quantification. The feeling originating in the mind, distinct and higher, than the sensory unmediated by cognition, feeling. One fit for humanity the other for swine (Mill, 1962, pp. 258–260). Cogito over matter again.

In the effort towards academic credibility, the humanities have largely adopted Mill's suggestions, drawing from methods established by different areas. Areas that answer to the material, the quantifiable, forging a "social science that feeds on metrics to establish 'what works'" (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 611). The framing of research, under specific methodological stratae, has been conducive to outputs which have "become overdetermined by the publishing industry, university research courses, and journals and books that detail very carefully what it is and how to do it" (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 75). One sees the self evaporate, under "structures of power that permeate research practices and priorities" (Gerrard, Rudolph, & Sriprakash, 2017, p. 389). One speaks with the voice of the academy, a voice burdened by its own authority and haunted by the illusion of impartiality. One writes under heteronomy, under particular "contexts that affect what and how we write, and who we become. Power relations are always present" (Richardson, 1997, p. 296). Research focus shifts from examining how reality works to "how does it work in a way that will satisfy university requirements?" (Honan & Bright, 2016, p. 738). Academic writing functions as a form of intellectual capital waiting to be exchanged[2], but also constitutes the main social reproduction mechanism of academia, keeping things as they have always been.

These observations resonate strongly within academic culture, in what Andrew J. Hoffman calls the lack of the *engaged* scholar. As academia is locked into the vicious circle of its own social reproduction, knowledge is not produced to be fed back directly into the community, but to be recycled within academia. A practice resembling the building of "bricks that are used […] by other brick-makers" (Hoffman, 2016, p. 78). Knowledge fragments isolated from social reality, conducive to the disconnect between academic and public consensus. This introvert nature of research makes the qualitative quest for reality, indirect. Reproducibility implies that the social functions as a laboratory, introducing a series of exclusions. Exclusion of the un-approved, of the researcher as an active agent, of what lies outside its perceived scope, but most importantly of what cannot be cognised or measured: emotion, affect. Another consideration is the conundrum of academic reality emerging, almost exclusively, via the textual engagement of developed arguments through canonical *established critical positions* (Whelan, 2015, pp. 133–135). The unfaltering hallow-ness of the latter ultimately transferred via induction to the former, occluding the fact that writing, (a technology in itself), seldomly functions independently of the academic setting[3]. There is an audience to be considered, the written output has to go through a publication venue, inextricably linking the value of the argument to that of the outlet. Research is never unhinged from calculation.

In short, both fields that academia tends to, suffer. Research is not independent of the mode under which it is produced, nor it is efficiently communicated to an audience outside

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[2] Nietzsche pointed to the same problematics, lamenting on an education geared not towards inquiry out of spiritual *pathos*, but towards knowledge accumulation as the answer to professional aspirations (Nietzsche, 2005, pp. 187–190).

[3] Whelan's position strongly echoes 1934s *The Author as a Producer* by Walter Benjamin. Benjamin argued that writing, desperately needful of an outlet, is inexorably dependent on the modes of production. Under that dependency the autonomy of the writer takes second place to publication (Benjamin, 1996, p. 768). A loss not only a result of the direct contact with production, making writing a literary technique—but also rooted in the fact that the work is addressed to an audience which largely determines the output of the writer—the audience as collaborators.

academia: "'Don't waste your intelligence on people,' one of my committee members said. The others nodded" (Richardson, 2002, p. 416).

Post Qualitative

Situating a non-methodology

Essentially this is the rubric that post qualitative seeks to cross. By tending to openness, by making pre-stating a method obsolete, and by considering the researcher as a social being.

The reader might be disappointed for this paper, nor any other paper, will not offer a description of the steps one takes under the post qualitative paradigm. One has no clear structure, no designated route, no prefixed chapter names in which research is to be organised, no fixed goal or hypothesis to prove, and yet one arrives at new knowledge, through a traceable path, communicated in a very clearly structured text. Research follows the Deleuzian concept of becoming, constant shifting and mutation: There is no is, only a series of ands, multiplicity. Post qualitative tends to context rather than method, belonging to a phase in the history of methodology that sees it "concerned with moral discourse, with the development of sacred textualities" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 3). The researcher emerges as a bricoleur, using anything accessible, alternating methods or designing new ones, whilst at the same time knowing that "(o)bjective reality can never be captured. We know a thing only through its representations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 5). A position reminiscent of the scriptor from Roland Barthes' 1967 *Death of the Author*.

> a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the AuthorGod) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (Barthes, 1987, p. 146)

The scriptor/academic is thus disrobed from the notion of being an authoritative conduit of truth, occupying a plane higher than the reader. The ultimate destination of the work becomes the outside of academia: "The space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination." (Barthes, 1987, p. 148)

Post-structural Totality

When research is approached as a holistic activity, one that does not privilege the quantifiable over the experienced, the post-structuralist paradigm features prominently[4]. A paradigm that removes privileged discourse, concedes that as universal truth denotes universal power, there cannot be a universal method, theory or knowledge (Richardson, 2002, p. 415). A multitude of interrelated power/truth/knowledge occurrences. A phenomenon is never examined as independent of the knowledge or culture that produce it (Sandu, 2011, p. 40). A view also underpinning the autonomist thought of Cornelius Castoriadis (1987), which regards reality as the interplay between individual agents acting on the society that produced them.

It was Elizabeth St. Pierre (2011), following her 1995 thesis and the realisation that "writing was, indeed, thinking" (2018, p. 605), that theorised these ideas into a methodology,

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[4] Do note that post-structuralism, does mean the exclusion of other methods, but it introduces suspicion, questioning, doubt. It does not reject but "simply opens them to critique" (Richardson, 2001, p. 35).

addressing the failure of qualitative methodology to accommodate for the "posts" (2019b, p. 2). Post qualitative is largely based on the Foucauldian examination of power relations, infused with Deleuze's multiplicity/becoming, under Derrida's critique of logocentrism[5], combined with his view of assuming an approach but not a method[6], towards inquiry.

The Text

One of the primary innovations introduced by post qualitative is the merging of the two strands that constitute academic praxis, (discovery and communication), into one medium—the written word. Rooted in the work of Laurel Richardson, writing is seen as a form of inquiry: "I write because I want to find out something. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it" (1994, p. 517). Reality reveals itself through the text. Richardson, referring to her texts as *alternative representations*, places emphasis on the affectivity of the textual format, as instrumental in shaping the context:

> The standard sociological article is the form in which sociologists have been expected to report their research. This format, however, is simply a literary technique and not the only legitimate carrier of social scientific knowledge. […] My purposes have been several: to examine how knowledge claims are constituted in scientific writing, to write more engaged sociology, and to reach diverse audiences. (2002, p. 414)

Centrality of Researcher

Another break that is introduced, is the centrality of the researcher. The data and the researcher are not unnaturally separated. The researcher is not a possible contamination, forced to assume a mask of impartiality, to exist removed and over the data, a methodological arbitrator of right and wrong.

To detach the researcher from the social locus, is to assume the role of the almighty Cartesian thinking subject, the one that knows best, a position of power over the data, interpreting what is by looking from the outside and disregarding the inside.

> From a unitary-transformative view, the notion of being will take precedence over that of knowledge in philosophical exploration. Being cannot be made a subject of objective inquiry; it is revealed to the individual by reflection on one's unique concrete existence within the context of life experiences. (Cumbie, 2001, p. 59)

Instead, the researcher is accepted as part of the social. To acknowledge the self is to acknowledge research that tends to affectivity. An exploration which requires not a "benevolent technically competent subject–object one-way relationship" but rather calls for a "responsible searching, transactional relationship whose meaningfulness demands conceptualization founded on a(n) […] existential awareness of self and the other" (Paterson & Zderad, 1976, p.

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[5] The textual field, central to Richardson's post qualitative approach to investigation, is very closely knit to Derrida's concept of arche-writing, a concept that emerged from the critique against the valorisation of the spoken word (Derrida, 1981b).

[6] Derrida maintained that as the positive sciences influenced philosophy, sets of methodological rules preconfigured the "direction of the mind. This ill-arranged formalism would in sum consist in imposing upon the presentation of truth a set of epigraphs that are either intolerable to truth or that truth should produce on its own" (Derrida, 1981a, p. 16).

3). Post qualitative takes from Foucault, valorising lived experience, and his reference to analysis as an autobiographical fragment: "Each time that I've tried to do theoretical work it has grown out of elements of my own experience: always in relation to processes which I saw unfolding around me" (Foucault, 1982, p. 35).

Similarly Elizabeth St Pierre had her own dissertation, frequently pierced by the mantra This story never begins but has always been, and I slip into it over and over again in different places, and it is as if I too have always been there" (St. Pierre cited in: St. Pierre, 2017, p. 690), reminding her that her life could not be torn apart from her texts.

To allow for the research to be undertaken by the whole being that is the researcher, as St Pierre reminds us, is to allow for thinking to take place instead of coding:

> I imagine a cacophony of ideas swirling as we think about our topics with all we can muster—with words from theorists, participants, conference audiences, friends and lovers, ghosts who haunt our studies, characters in fiction and film and dreams—and with our bodies and all the other bodies and the earth and all the things and objects in our lives—the entire assemblage that is a life thinking and, and, and.... All those data are set to work in our thinking, and we think, and we work our way somewhere in thinking. In the end, it is impossible to disentangle data, data collection, and data analysis. Those individuations no longer make sense. (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 622)

The researcher in post qualitative emerges as a liminal entity, an assemblage self. A life as theory, navigating the social and producing texts that make the cosmos[7] visible. Theory, self, the social and the text (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 604), form an entanglement which disrupts the "tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013, p. 24). In short, post qualitative creates a figurative field of complex reality in a text, which is interrogated by a reflexive feeling researcher, folded inwards, embracing "a disorientation where openness and unknowingness are part of the process" (Lather, 2017, p. 180).

Perilous Complexity

Placing itself as an open methodology, post qualitative finds itself in a contested position towards academia. There are no boxes to be ticked, no step by step process, no hypothesis, sometimes even no findings. One does not arrive at an accurate universal reality. As Fusco (2008) suggests, research outputs should not adhere to the word accurate—meaning correct in all details—but rather to the root Latin word *accuratus*, meaning done with care. Fusco echoes Heidegger's (1998, pp. 179–180) remark that reality cannot be limited to correctness. There is always a surplus aspect of reality that evades bodily perception. It is this academic shift from *aletheia,* (true reality as perceived by the whole being), to correctness, which lessens human existence.

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[7] The word cosmos (or kosmos for preciseness), a concept first introduced by Pythagoras, is carefully used and refers to the systemic nature of the universe. Reading from William K. Guthrie we can detect a line of reasoning, that bridges existence as such: "a)the world is a kosmos that untranslatable world which unites,[...] the notion of order, arrangement or structural perfection with that of beauty. (b) All nature is akin, therefore the soul of man is intimately related to the living and divine universe, (c) Like is known by like, that is, the better one knows something the more one is assimilated to it. Hence (d) to seek through philosophy for a better understanding of the structure of the divine kosmos is to realize and cultivate the divine element in oneself" (Guthrie, 1962, pp. 206–207). In that sightline, regarding the researcher as an assemblage, as the nexus where the social, lived experience, and theory meet, allows us to peer into the whole, via the specific.

This puts researchers in a frail position, fully exposed to the danger of uncertainty. A sentiment best voiced by Asilia Franklin-Phipps, contemplating on the struggle not to conform to one of the fixed research structures:

> When I speak to people about my dissertation work, they are confused. This might be because I am often confused about what it is I am doing and not doing. […] The people with the power to say, "no" or "not good enough" wonder if the project will come together, but I know it will, because it always does. […] The process that artists go through to move forward in spite of uncertainty, doubt, confusion, and fear are where I draw much of my inspiration to continue. (Franklin-Phipps, 2017, p. 20)

Post Qualitative as praxis

Perhaps the only way to validate post qualitative is empirical. There are theses successfully defended under the paradigm, papers written and accepted via peer review, researchers that come out with results. This section gives an overview of some of them.

Nikki Fairchild (2016) wrote her thesis based on her diary entries, in what she calls a *methodological umbra*. A shadow space that allowed her to break out of the "quantified and instrumentalised agenda" (2016, p. 16), and disrupt the subject-object relationship she felt trapped in. The thesis was written in an evolving manner; a form of real-time diary on the choices she had to make, referred to as "a living PHD" (Fairchild, 2017, p. 17). She broke away from rigid research questions and a research aim in favour of an exploratory generative approach. An approach fuelled by the theoretical concept of methods-as-affinity-groups, strongly emphasising the "human and nonhuman entanglements" (2017, p. 74).

Similarly, Tamara Cumming (2015a) used rhizoanalysis, to de-centre herself as the researcher: not self-reflecting but reflecting on the self. Aiming to bring out the intangible aspects that fall outside the scope of quantification. Finding the traditional triptych of transferability, credibility or dependability disconnected from "how things work," she resorted to the use of multiple methods as "a way of illuminating the research question through multiple ways of seeing, and through multiple voices. These 'ways,' 'seeings,' and 'voices' are those of myself as researcher, participants, and other elements combining in data assemblages" (Cumming, 2015b, p. 61). Focus falls on the separation of ethics from morality, considered as "relative and relevant to particular situations or relations" (Cumming, 2015b, p. 74). Cumming in particular gives a gripping overview of the challenge with critique, one that appears common to all engaged in post qualitative research, pointing to her own disconcertions: "I struggle with how, or indeed, whether, the quality of rhizoanalytic approaches can be judged" (Cumming, 2015a, p. 146).

Marg Sellers (2015), declined the use of headings and capitalisation, situated her thesis as always being "in the middle" and dismissed the notion of thesis structure, opting for connectable plateaus.

> If what I wrote was to be credible and make any sense, how I wrote mattered as well, the "what" and the "how" being inextricably entwined. Thus working with rhizome meant producing a rhizo assemblage rather than a conventional, linearly structured thesis, (Sellers, 2015, p. 7)

Sarah Bridges-Rhoads looks for patterns by using what she calls philosophical fieldnotes: "The notes generally happen like this: I leave the office. I go to the field. I write fieldnotes. I return to the office. I write more fieldnotes. I read. I write more fieldnotes. And

somehow in the midst of it all, I start to think differently" (2018, p. 646). In her work, she too abandons conventional structure and understanding, mirrored in her concern on how the title of the thesis can reflect what is announced and what its understanding will be after the text has run its course. The reader must be willing "to forgo answers in favor of becomings" (Bridges-Rhoads, 2011, p. 250). The thesis will not be fully understood, how could it? The text is never finite, it is always in the making.

To cite from theory or research participants becomes problematic in post-post spaces. The question on how to cite from an assemblage becomes an aporia. Bridges-Rhoads surmounted this obstacle by adapting a concept introduced by Carolyn Ellis (2004): *composite characters*. Dialogues between characters/concepts, that amalgamate the researcher, the theory and aspects of the personalities that were interviewed. Composite characters thus decentre the relations between characters and the author.

The format that Bridges-Rhoads uses is the format of a three-part progressive dinner, a structure that had to be theorised as it was being formed. First we have the section marked *Apéritif/digestif*, which is non-linear, and functions as a simultaneous theoretical building up and reflection of the text to come, (we are to note that frequent citations from different parts of the thesis pierce the text inviting a rather cyclical reading of it). Then we have Dinner Conversations where the dialogues between the characters take place, and finally Uninvited Guests as theoretical endnotes. The sections one would refer to as introduction or conclusion are used to offer us a story of the thesis. A diary of how it evolved.

Brian E. Kumm (2015), emphasizes the rift between affective enquiry and positivism, and the potential that schizoanalysis carries to arrive at something different: "method assemblage inheres potentials to disrupt the automaton practices of normative research" (p. 222). The methodology is akin to "proscriptions" rather than "prescriptions." A position that comes with a declaration that any understanding offered through the thesis "is but one articulation and should not be taken as the authoritative and definitive interpretation" (p. 223). Research "is an orientation to knowledge as lived. It fuses theory and practice together as a mode of lived-knowing in which we all participate in the creation of multiple realities" (p. 231). Kumm also uses a composite character, with which they go through a series of life events narrated in the thesis. A character that "was not a representation, however, but an intensification of the nonrepresentable […] Writing Philip [..] afforded a means to speak the unspeakable." (p. 195).

Eileen Honan (2007) one of the earliest to develop a *rhizo-textual* analytic method, with her thesis written in 2001, worked with a bricolage of data and utilised *memory stories*. The theme of multiplicity in Honan's work is evident, as she places her text in spaces both academic and personal, poetic and rational. Honan draws attention to Foucault, and the self being entwined to the work at hand (pp. 534–535). Thus emerges the uniqueness of each research project undertaken, making Honan ultimately reject Deleuze and Guattari, and claiming her individuality:

> these paths have taken me in directions that may not be taken by others. Indeed, such directions may not even be those considered by Deleuze and Guattari themselves. I do not subscribe to the slavish adherence to any particular method, or to any particular writer, and could therefore be identified as anti-Deleuzian. (Honan as quoted in: Honan, 2007, p. 532)

The bond between researcher and thesis emerges so strong that leads Honan to scorn validity or generalisability. As she exists so does her thesis.

Amanda French (2014) structures her thesis in eight chapters, which as usual in post qualitative, break out of the literature/methodology/findings/ analysis staple. They rather

function as supporting and progressing, not so much an argument, but a flow of thought. The biblical title "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known," is to function like a leitmotif or a Deleuzian refrain. What French valorises is the *data hotspots* or *glow data*, the emotionally charged moments that help her break through pre-constructed meaning. Closing up her thesis French reflects:

> I have not in any empirical sense made progress, moved on towards greater clarity, or gained a footing on more solid ground through my research. However, given my research approach, that was never going to be the point. That is not to say that nothing has changed; most importantly I have shifted (this is nothing if not a solipsistic (ad)venture). I have gained a deep appreciation of complexity, I respect subjectivity and diversity and I am moved to resist convention out of a profound suspicion that the status quo is invariably a manifestation of unequal power relations, especially whenever it appears as a given. I have, however, formulated a number of ideas and suppositions about my research […]. These ideas and suppositions add, I hope, to all the other ideas and suppositions currently circulating in the Academy about academic writing practices. (French, 2014, p. 274)

Common Ground

A common characteristic shared by all the theses presented herein, but most evident in French's work, is the fact that the biggest part of the theses is concerned with the methodology in itself and not its application. It seems that academia demands that post qualitative needs to be supported and invented anew each time it is used, exactly like qualitative research in its infancy.

All researchers share work that is grounded in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, making supple use of Deleuzian figurations to probe their subjects, and all tackle work that is steeped in complexity, not examining isolated phenomena, but an entanglement. What St. Pierre calls "the too strange and the too much" (2018, p. 607).

Most importantly and consistent with the theoretical framing of post qualitative, they all are involved in their respective research environments. They write about their colleagues, their family, their homes, their friends, their lives. They are parts of the world they are researching.

Post qualitative in praxis emerges as a post-structural paradigm, tending to chaos-complexity, a complexity reflected in the reported varying degrees of uneasiness with linear structures, and the standard thesis format. The human reflexivity of the researcher is centred. An entanglement that wishes to proceed without a method, one that also includes the element of the non-human. All this, done through a text that is written as an exploration, a diary, a note to the self. This abstractness of the text is what protects it from judgement, it makes it free. The ephemeral notes not meant to go through scrutiny become the place of discovery, they eclipse the main text: "The aside is the field" (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 605).

Theoretical Stems

A body of literature is beginning to form, documenting the application of Deleuzian figurations in research, the practice of "thinking with Deleuze" (Mazzei & McCoy, 2010), "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013), "desiring-machines relations" mapped by geophilosophy (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013), "reading intensively" (Masny, 2012), the

expansion of the Body without Organs to a Voice without Organs: "A voice that does not emanate from a singular subject but is produced in an enactment among research-data-participants-theory-analysis" (Mazzei, 2013, p. 732), the concept of haecceity (St. Pierre, 2017), "glow" data (MacLure, 2010), "listening to gut feelings" (Brown, 2019), and many more[8].

Elizabeth St. Pierre (1997), tackles ethics. A new form of inquiry demands a new set of ethics: "writing about my participants has become an ethical practice of poststructural inquiry" (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 404). Discarding consent forms as ineffective ritual, and considering data collection as a continuous process—part of her life—St. Pierre bases post qualitative ethics on the seven ethical points raised by Foucault in the 1972 preface to *Anti-Oedipus* (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, pp. xiii–xiv), with the addition of an eighth point: writing as inquiry. This opens up writing to a totally different set of ethics:

> This kind of writing is antihierarchical. It […] cannot follow an outline […], it has given up on intentions, it […] goes someplace the author did not know existed ahead of time. […] The author and the text write each other, and that fold in the research process can no longer be ignored in the new ethics of inquiry. (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 414)

Aghasaleh and St. Pierre (2014), offer a guide on structuring an inquiry proposal, in the form of a matrix, matching qualitative practises with their corresponding post qualitative analogies. Laurel Richardson (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 823) presents a framework, on how to evaluate an approach in which meaning and structure constantly overlap, centred around the following points:

1. Substantive contribution: to the understanding of social life and as true accounts of the real.
2. Aesthetic merit: analytical work that invites the reader to interpretively respond.
3. Reflexivity: the author opens to the reader, as both a producer and a product of the work.
4. Impact: affective work, generative of new questions and understandings that encourage further action.

Lather points to the fact that qualitative research methodology is in a transitional phase, beginning to engage the post-post, and is asked to answer "the question of how we ontologize what remains in the next generation of qualitative inquiry as we collectively imagine sustainable possible futures via new thought and present-based practices of everyday life" (Lather, 2017, p. 340). A question which St. Pierre picks up and gives post qualitative an ontological rooting in an "ontology of immanence" (St. Pierre, 2019a).

Implications

From its inception, post qualitative has placed itself as human-centred research. Severing ties with the colonial[9] gaze on the exotic "other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). It places

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[8] The reader might refer to the special issue of *Qualitative Inquiry,* on qualitative analysis after coding, edited by St. Pierre & Jackson (2014), or the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, edited by Lather and St. Pierre (2013).

[9] One turns to Mill again, who regarded colonialism as "benevolent despotism" and argued for the adoption of dual moral standards "between civilized nations and barbarians" (Mill, 1968, pp. 32–33).

itself as research moving away from the mentality of the trenches that encroached research[10] in World War II. It rather is a product of the desire for a new kind of knowledge, "(t)hose who had gone to war knew well that different cultures produce different knowledges and practices" (St. Pierre, 2014, pp. 6–7).

The Western theorising of what lay beyond it has always been problematic. Laden with power and an inability to acknowledge systems or societies that would function differently. Theory propagating a fabricated reality, replicating its own fixations on a different backdrop, thus establishing itself as universally true. Theory that is "useless as a tool to explain its object, can shed light upon its producers and adherents. It projects on to the screen of this distant Other our own impasses and practices" (Mladen Dolar in Grosrichard, 1998, p. xiv).

Turning to Gayatri Spivak and her seminal essay *Can The Subaltern Speak* (Spivak, 1994), we see this pattern of disavowal for the other, set on the very two people that form the post qualitative theoretical backbone: Foucault and Deleuze. Both laying claims to knowledge of the Other (Spivak, 1994, p. 66), and emerging as their voice. Spivak turns to the perceived transparency of the theorists. The masses, the oppressed, Foucault's prisoners, are able to speak only through the intellectual. A position that "valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, while being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual" (Spivak, 1994, p. 69). An intellectual seen as a pure relay, re-presenting something, that is ultimately beyond reach. The silence of the subaltern is thus maintained. Not a question of what Western theory "refuses to say," but most importantly what it "cannot say" (Spivak, 1994, p. 81).

In crude language, Spivak poses a very simple question: How can Western intellectuals, well-meaning[11] as they may be, know the suffering of the wretched of the earth, and worst how can they claim to be their conduits?

Spivak features heavily in post-qualitative writing, her latching on to the unspeakable, the silences, are exactly what post-qualitative strives to bring to the front. What negates the tension between the two, is precisely the centred researcher. As mentioned above, those engaged in post qualitative, work on their lives, their societal systems, they do not immerse themselves into an exotic and alien territory and try to explain it. They rather seek to explain the territory they already inhabit, what they have already experienced: "'What are you working on?' my colleagues ask. 'My life,' I answer." (Richardson, 2002, p. 421)

As such post qualitative does away with mediation. By operating on the plane of immanence it renders the complexity of the world somewhat more legible, it assembles voice in the form of a textual howl resonating from the inside of the world: "transforming the word into an action by rendering it incapable of being decomposed and incapable of disintegrating: language without articulation." (Deleuze, 1990, p. 89). Post qualitative removes itself from the transcendental which resides outside the world, or rather by denying the two-world logic of old (St. Pierre, 2019a, p. 7), it drags itself into transcendence, making it immanent; something one can experience.

Empty Ontological Seat of Power

What the core of post qualitative allows for, is the ability to assume a poststructuralist perspective, to concede that all is connected and in flux, and the best way to peer in this

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[10] David Kreps (2018, pp. 12–14), offers a link between WWII and positivism, in the person of John von Neumann, noted for his input in both the creation of the atom bomb and the infusion of business academia with the notion of academic rigour.

[11] Spivak, argues that the very criticism of colonialism by the West, has in its root the unrecognized "desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject" (Spivak, 1994, p. 66). In that vein, Deleuze and Foucault theorise on the other, not out of rationality but driven by the desire to be positioned as anti. The West reconstitutes itself via self-criticism.

complex system is to admit to not knowing. Not knowing what or how one is going to do research. In other words, to assume a position open to complexity, chaotic in itself like that which it seeks to illuminate. A work much akin to art that momentarily escapes comprehension, cocooning itself in its chaotic nature in order to render a concept sensory.

> It is as if the struggle against chaos does not take place without an affinity with the enemy, because another struggle develops and takes on more importance- the struggle against opinion, which claims to protect us from chaos itself. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 203)

This is precisely why the treatment of theory as canon, the potential misuse of post qualitative theoretical texts as proscriptive and not prescriptive, inherent as it is with the potentiality of the removal of the human agent from the locus of research, is destructive.

If driven by the need to exist inside and not outside of academia, the texts that theorise post qualitative, are left open to misreading, if they are read as generic canon, and not as specific descriptors of a single occurrence, post qualitative is left open to the potentiality of the removal of the human agent from the locus of research. It annuls itself as it announces itself.

The only nature post qualitative texts can assume, is as reports, chronicling how a particular project, unfolded in a particular situation. To be inside academia, might come at a cost of trying to turn no-method into method. Derrida, is often quoted by post qualitative theorists as stating that "Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one" (Derrida, 2008, p. 4), but what is frequently omitted is that Derrida follows up this statement noting that to re-appropriate and domesticate deconstruction as an academic methodology is futile, a non-question.

So, this becomes a case of either having to rebuilt methodology, from the ground up each time anew, or rely on theory as pre-made scaffolding. The former is concurrent with post qualitative thought. As each project demands the theorising of its own path, it produces "out of its own interiority, both its object and its method" (Derrida, 1981a, p. 47). The latter would be perverting the open core of post qualitative. Theory would be removed from the field of investigation and be vested with power, over the researcher and over the social. A regression to merely substituting the present power relations with new doppelgängers.

If phrases that are ground in concreteness are allowed to enter into our dictionary, such as "post qualitative is," not followed by "and also is," or "in other cases it can be," we limit it, we turn post-structuralism into post-modernity. We are reminded that the founding principle of poststructuralism is questioning, its main asset the ability to speak "doubt to power" (Hallgarten, 2011, p. 235). This doubt must spread to all directions, even the ones that support it. When theory becomes canonised the effect is that it obscures parts of reality.

There is a fine difference between being critical and criticism in itself. To examine a phenomenon and find it consistent with theory is a very different thing from examining a phenomenon for its adherence to theory. The first keeps the researcher centred, it valorises both research and theory—thinking with theory—as Jackson and Mazzei (2018) word it. The second de-centres the researcher, theory is at the seat of power: Thinking under theory.

Conclusion

This paper reflectively approaches one of the newest paradigms that have emerged in qualitative research, the post qualitative research paradigm. It traces the problematics that it was called to answer, namely that in the need for academic acceptance, qualitative research emulated quantitative methods to the point of trading empirical validity for academic. Following a reflexive overview of post qualitative methodology, the paper argues for caution.

Post qualitative is now at a tipping point. It has successfully entered academia and has enriched it with considerable output, yet at the same time the theoretical pieces that were used to usher it in the academy, are beginning to introduce closure and finality. The origin of post qualitative, the centrality of the researcher and the openness it professes via the removal of a prescribed method, demand not less but exceedingly more rigour. Rigour, that as is no longer dependant on method, is called to embody a different quality: Empirical rigour. The paper pursues an argument for consistency. As post qualitative denies a-priori externality and grounds itself on the interior, it offers the means for research to be conducted more rigorously on questions of that nature. It becomes more than the theory supporting it. The utilisation of post qualitative theory as a new constraint, as the measure of rigour or validity, rather than as an opening, is a regression that challenges that very interiority.

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