

NewMac 2013 Postgraduate Students Conference.

Abstracts and biographies.

Nora Benitt

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Justus Liebig University, Giessen
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Abstract title: Subjective ≠ invalid: Insights into a qualitative-explorative case study

Researchers of different fields of study have been debating advantages and disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative research designs for decades. However, many terms used in connection with research, such as objectivity, representativeness, validity and reliability, rather relate to quantitative than to qualitative research. Thus, what are quality criteria of qualitative research? In my paper, I would like to present insights into a qualitative-explorative case study, which was conducted within a blended-learning teacher education programme in Germany. Twelve student teachers have been observed and queried over a period of two years. The study focussed on their perceived professional development through engaging in action research, i.e. the critical and systematic investigation of their own teaching. Numerous studies have shown that action research greatly helps in-service teachers understand the connection between theoretical concepts and their daily teaching practice. However, the systematic integration of action research into pre-service language teacher education is a fairly innovative approach and has not yet been researched. The insights gained from the case study at hand are neither objective nor representative. Nonetheless, they can make a valid contribution to research as the findings are relevant for different fields of education and transferable to various contexts.

Short Bio: Nora is a third-year PhD student co-enrolled at Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany & Macquarie University, Sydney (*cotutelle*). She completed her Master's degree in 'Applied Modern Languages and Teaching English as a Foreign Language' (Languages: English, German and Spanish) in Giessen, Germany, in 2009. Since then, she has been working as a research assistant and lecturer in the department of 'Teaching English as a Foreign Language' at Justus Liebig University Giessen. Her research interests concern foreign language teacher education, especially professional development through action research.

Linda Boulton

PhD candidate in English - Creative Writing

University of Newcastle

Abstract title: Illness Narratives: The Carer Memoir

Illness narratives share the private experience of serious illness with fellow patients, their families, the wider community and healthcare professionals. The carer memoir presents the illness experience from the carer's perspective, a highly subjective and often emotionally fraught standpoint. Yet, in order to write the illness memoir, the author must assess potential material from an objective point of view. This paper reflects the interplay between the personal and the critical as I juxtapose an excerpt from my own illness memoir with scholarly research into the genre of illness narratives. I present my personal experience as my husband's carer and marry this with a discussion that addresses the relationship between carer and patient, the ethical dimension of writing about a sick loved one, and the importance of carer memoirs as an educational resource. I examine the psychological and cultural benefits of writing and reading illness narratives. A brief analysis of narrative form and language usage illustrates particular limitations and possibilities of the writing process. An investigation of the two strands, creative (subjective) and critical (objective), not only contributes to our understanding and knowledge of the genre of illness narratives but also highlights the power and value of these intensely personal stories.

Short Bio: I completed Open Foundation in 1999 and a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2006 majoring in English. In 2008 I gained Honours Class 1 in English Literature. I commenced PhD studies in February 2011. My research interest lies in narratives about illness, specifically carer memoirs. I am writing my own carer memoir and studying the literary techniques required to convey the illness experience.

Ferne Merrylees

PhD candidate in English - Writing

University of Newcastle

Abstract title: **Friend Me: the evolution of friendship and young adult science fiction predictions.**

Over time the concept of friendship has changed with scholars such as Aristotle, Montaigne and Deresiewicz defining it in relation to their historical time periods. With social media insinuating itself throughout our society and replacing more traditional communication channels, how we make, communicate and keep friends may be changing, creating a new kind of friendship. By comprehending the changing ideals of friendship through examining not only our past but also our future, speculated within science fiction, we can better understand the issues we are facing now.

Young adult science fiction offers us a subjective evaluation of the fears, hopes and anxieties older generations may have for today's adolescents in regards to this new technology and encourages us to question the direction we're heading in.

In my presentation I will examine the shared theme of friendship in the young adult science fiction novels "Feed" by M.T Anderson, "Scored" by Lauren McLaughlin and "The Unidentified" by Rae Mariz and how they speculate on the future role of friendship by portraying dystopian worlds where the relationships are flawed and dysfunctional, highlighting the shifting values of the modern day friendship.

Short Bio: Ferne Merrylees has upgraded from an MPhil in English, Creative Writing, to a PhD in English (Writing) at the University of Newcastle. Her critical focus is the role of social media in young adult science fiction.

Anton Piyarathne

PhD Candidate, Department of Anthropology,
Macquarie University

Abstract title: **Native subjectivity as a means for uncovering the “truth”**

In this paper I engage with the discussion on subjectivity and objectivity in the social sciences in general and in anthropology in particular. Early anthropological research in peripheral regions has been dominated by fieldworkers foreign to those regions. Over the last few decades that trend is changing with the emergence of local anthropologists. The emergence native ethnographers evoked discussion that juxtaposed subjectivity versus objectivity of ethnography. In this paper I argue that objectivity is a legitimate and potentially satisfactory goal for foreign researchers but not for local researchers as it may disturb their ability to see the ethnographic reality clearly. Local researchers, for whom the social realities are under investigation, are part and parcel of their embodied subjectivities. In the context of my own research in Sri Lanka this includes hotly contested issues that have emerged from a three-decade-old ethno-racial crisis. Building on my own experience of doing fieldwork with communities in my own country, I will discuss how my subjectivities played in the course of the research and affect my analysis and writing.

Short Bio: Anton Piyarathne is currently serving as Senior Lecturer in Sociology at The Open University of Sri Lanka (from 2001). He has won study awards, published numerous articles and works, and presented at least twenty-four research papers at national and international forums. The themes of his papers covered subjects such as ethnic relations, youth and politics, poverty, social mobility, and social identity.

Maria Luisa Saministrado

PhD Candidate in English

University of Newcastle

Abstract title: **Social Ostracism in Wharton's Fiction**

In Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, patriarchy's pervasive power in society is quiet. Its existence affects familial relations through influences on the heroine's decision making skills, acquired patterns and perspectives. The traditional gender role suggests that the heroine has internalized the patriarchal consciousness where conspicuous consumption, female commodification, crass materialism, and male dominance are a recurring phenomenon. Through the objective portrayal in the analysis of the narrative, this paper explores the causes of the heroine's ostracism from the society's upper crust and her subsequent downfall. It also shows that patriarchal constructs are deeply embedded in nineteenth century literature represented by Wharton's narrative.

Short Bio: Maria Luisa Saministrado is a second year PhD in English at the University of Newcastle. Her dissertation is titled *Female Victimhood and Suicide in the Naturalistic Novel*. Her current supervisors are Dr Brooke Collins-Gearing and Professor Hugh Craig. Before coming to Australia, 1982 to 2010 Maria taught English in the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs of Xavier University in the Philippines, where she was Chair of the Department and Director of English Communication Development Institute from 2007 to 2010.

Lasa Sun

PhD Candidate

Law School

Macquarie University

Abstract title: Draw a Line between Freedom of speech and Privacy of Public Figures

Freedom of speech is one of the most treasured rights of citizens of democratic nations around the world while Privacy is considered fundamental to our society. Where to draw the line between the people's right to speak and the individual's right to privacy becomes more and more vital in the information age, since new technologies in cyberspace such as Facebook, Twitter, Smartphone and You Tube offer individuals with much easier access to very powerful means of expression that enable them to reach wide audiences both nationally and internationally at relatively little expense. Here comes the difficult and controversial problem, are public figures entitled to the same degree of privacy as ordinary citizens? In an era where a simple Google search can reveal the minutiae of the life of anyone worth his weight in salt, it seems unrealistic to expect that public personalities can maintain their private space, even on matters related to their intimate personal life. However, before we can make a delicate balance between them, we need to take public interests, value of privacy and limits of free speech together into account to see which one should win on a discussion of case-by-case basis.

Short Bio: I am a PhD candidate at the Macquarie Law School as an international student under the Scholarship MQ-CSC (Macquarie University- China Scholarship Council). My research area is Constitutional Law. I did my Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) and Master of Laws (LL.M) from Zhejiang University of Technology (Hangzhou, China) and East China University of Political Science and Law (Shanghai, China) in 2007 and 2010, respectively. After that I was selected as one of four members in Shanghai to attend "Rule of Law" exchange program at U.S congress for one month. Before I came to Macquarie University for my PhD study, I worked as a Legal Specialist in Children's Hospital of Shanghai in 2010 and Lucheng Rural Cooperative Bank, Wenzhou, China in 2011.