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THE CREATIVITY ISSUE

PICTURE FRONT COVER: Seymour (Cookie)

Table of Contents

Editorial, Hilary Paniagua	3	
Portfolio Through Letters, Yash Gunga	4	
“Discursive constructions of IBD in South Asian women”, Angela Ford	6	
Dr interrupted, a poem by Jessie Allen	7	
Isolation, a poem by Blessing Chinganga	8	
Creative piece, Lucille Kelsall-Knight,.....	9	
You started as a simple, Sairah Miriam.....	10	
Long term post-traumatic growth in the aftermath of domestic violence, Nadine Denny.....	11	
Abusive Men: A Small Attempt at Social Change, Tarnveer K Bhogal.....	12	
The Season of Change, Fiona Clements.....	13	
The Covid Thesis Year, 2020! Janet Cash.....	14	
Adjusting the Lens on Change during Acceptance and Commitment Therapy based Pain Management, Suzanne Roberts.....	15	
The Voyage of M18, Tracy Lapworth.....	16	
‘Behind the scenes’: Grandmothers as silent heroes in the neonatal intensive care unit. Hilary Lumsden....	17	
Knowing Differently - My Experience of Collecting Story Artefacts as Data for Health Research, Jacob Enemona.....	18	
All aboard! by Janet Mortimore.....	20	
Doctoral Journey	by Ambreen Alam and Muhammad Zubair.....	21
The need for narrative in clinical education, Dr David Matheson.....	23	
Rendering the invisible visible, Anita Z Goldschmied.....	32	
Epilogue, From Cookies (Patricia A. Newell) to Creative Futures, Dr Dean-David Holyoake.....	33	

EDITORIAL

Hilary Paniagua
Editor-in-Chief

The 21st century has proved to be a challenging period however it can still be a dynamic and exciting time for research particularly where it is creative. For many years science disciplines have allied themselves only to a conception of knowledge that advocates procedural approaches and values associated with hard facts and replicability. Such thinking also presumes there is a fixed nature of subject matter that is independent of anyone's particular prejudices and advocates propositions that are only supported and reinforced by empirical evidence. This traditional research thinking can no doubt be creatively devised but at the same time in its practice its aim can be to avoid creativity. In contrast there is now a transformative movement within research that embraces subjectivity and a belief that research can also be valued creatively through the lens of artistic practice. Such creative thinking about research is particularly useful at the start of a project, when all things are possible however it can also be used at every significant stage of the research process as well as in everyday research activities. This edition illustrates exactly this creative endeavour from its front cover through to its content of poems, limericks, pictures and posters, all of which have been created by Wolverhampton University's research students and staff. If you have any reservations as to what is before you in this edition maybe I can leave you with the views of a JHSCI colleague?

“I have never worked in research, but I realise now how much work is involved and how students move through their doctoral journey. I think these are really nice reflections. It has been wonderful to take some time out of a busy day to just sit and read these”

Portfolio Through Letters

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My portfolio unfolds through a series of letters. But why letters, you ask? Well, it is difficult to envisage a return to those days when handwriting and hand-written letters seemed so pivotal in the exchange of messages especially between people separated by time and place. I remember those days well when letters written by me on blue paper marked 'air mail' reached their destination at least a week after posting. I imagined my sister running to the front door at the sound of the postman's cycle bell. She would then sit in the kitchen and read out my letter to the whole family, giving them news about my days in England. I imagined my mother listening intently whilst chopping vegetables and interrupting with questions about my plans to visit home. I imagined everyone wanting to take their turn at handling the letter afterwards.

Every day I would check my letter box for a reply, certain in the knowledge that very soon there will be an airmail addressed to me complete with the scent of home, the scent of Mauritius. The 1970s have now faded into a distant past, and hand-written letters sent and received lie in the darkness of a treasure chest, a time capsule.

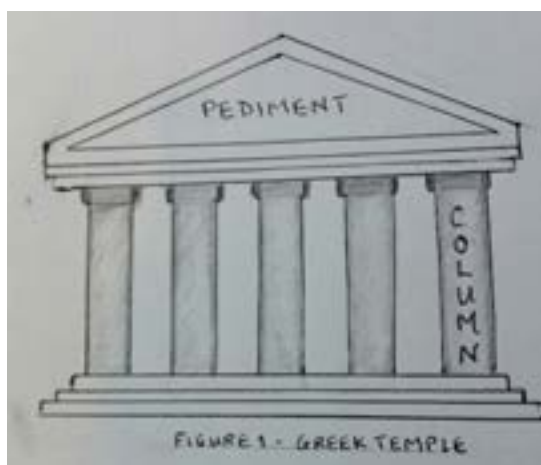
Letter-writing, referred to as 'epistolary intent', is an intention to communicate by letter with someone who 'is not there', motivated by the expectation of a response (Stanley, 2015). The letter, some would argue (Milne, 2010), also communicates many aspects of the letter writer's personal characteristics. The recipient can sense traces of the writer such as their touch on the paper and their licking of the stamp. Similar intangible effects such as the aura or living hand of the writer is believed to radiate from their writing (Phillips, 2010). The more tangible attributes relate to the material aspects of the letter, that it can be read and re-read, passed on to others, destroyed or saved and kept. It can also be bought or sold or sought out by researchers or by those interested in its historical significance.

Despite these noteworthy characteristics, the letter is unlikely to continue to exist as a serious form of everyday communication. Epistolary seems destined to be fulfilled by other means. Everything is or will be typed or texted or twittered or emailed or attached to an email. Emotions will be expressed by means of emoticons and personalised signoffs. But despite its heralded demise, letter-writing has been used as a form of narrative therapy in counselling psychology (Mosher and Danoff-Burg, 2006; and Hoffman, 2008) and more recently Pithouse-Morgan et al., (2012) used letter-writing as a collaborative auto-ethnographic research method. They argued that letter-writing used in qualitative research generates self-reflexive data, the analysis of which enables participants to re-examine their own identities as well as their lived experiences.

Whilst I am drawn to the notion of letter writing as a reflexive auto-ethnographic research method, I am even more seduced by the nostalgia of those less tangible effects of letters particularly those written with affection: the thrill of receiving such a letter delivered by post, my name lighting up the envelope; the palpable sense of urgency and anticipation that it creates in me; the need to find a quiet corner removed from the rest of the world where I can open the letter in such a way that it speaks to no-one but me; the first words, Dear or My Dear, or My Darling, words that give me a deep sense of pleasure and make me believe that I exist or that I matter; sentences that carry me instantly to the letter writer or to places in my imagination; the freedom to choose to share its contents; and the desire to treasure it and keep it somewhere safe along with other precious letters.

Because of these not so scholarly reasons, I signpost my portfolio by means of letters I have written, letters I am writing and letters I should have written. The letters provide what Maxwell and Kupczyk-Romanczuk (2009, p.140) identify as the linking theme, the 'over-arching pediment

(roof)' of the Greek temple holding together a row of columns, each symbolising a separate piece of work (please see Figure 1 below).



The columns and the pediment represent a coherent and connecting model for the portfolio,

although I concede that reality is not necessarily orderly, coherent and simple. Instead it can be fragmented and chaotic with discontinuities (Heylighen, 2018), even more so in a Post-Covid-19 world, a world in which a hand-written letter has the capacity to disrupt and deliver something unintended and sinister. On account of this, you the reader may refuse to accept anything sent on paper, at least until the danger of Covid-19 has passed and confidence in the magic of letters is restored.

Composed not with pen and paper but with sincerity, my first letter grows restless at the starting block. So, if you are sitting comfortably, allow me to begin.

My Dear ...

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“Discursive constructions of IBD in South Asian women”

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As a trainee Counselling psychologist, I identify with the discipline’s endeavour to address oppression and promote social justice. My research on the experience of Inflammatory Bowel Disease in South Asian Women moved me to such direction. Interviewing these women highlighted to me the many forms of oppression that one may experience in our society. Immersing myself in the interviews with my participants, I noticed myself asking: what does it feel to live with IBD? What does it feel to live with IBD as a woman within a culture, where women’s value is highly determined by the level and nature of care she can provide as a mother, a daughter, a daughter-in-law and a spouse?

I was thrilled when local artists gave shape and form to these questions in a collaborative Art’s Council funded exhibition “Living in silence” which was created from my research data. This display showcased artist’s interpretations into artefacts including fashion, sculpture, animation, live poetry, and photography. The art destigmatised the condition of IBD in the community and raised awareness of the significant psychological distress felt by participants. As one artist said she could see how the patient is feeling and “visualise the emotions, see the beauty in something traumatic”. Foucault famously said *“What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is only related to objects, and not to individuals, or to life (Foucault, 1984, p.350).* This is an example of art relating to a life with IBD:

Delving deeper into my research data, I felt increasingly drawn into exploring the different levels of power associated with sociocultural characteristics that we all inherit from our context. I wondered about how the women thought and talked about IBD and how this influenced their views about themselves and perceptions of others. This led me to Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and his argument that power is based on knowledge that in turn reproduces. I then asked some more questions: what power is held within the women’s sociocultural discourses about femininity and womanhood, what knowledge do these discourses reproduce and with what effects? These are the questions that I am hoping to answer with my research and as a Counselling Psychologist contribute to a movement that challenges oppressive discourses.



Dr interrupted

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The following poem entitled “Dr Interrupted” is an expression of my anxieties about how drastically my life has changed as I pursue my Doctorate in Health and Wellbeing.

Dr interrupted

*We had made majestic plans, you and I
Who knew like leaves they too would wither and die?
A glimpse, a stare, look at us in our prime
But what a sight we have now become!*

*We can pick up the pieces, you say
Things will get better if you stay
But let me go and be free
Leave me to blow away in the wind, just me!*

*Most times I long for days gone by
So clear it was to see the reasons why
Now I fear to get caught in a gust
This is the new norm, you say, you must adjust!*

*Wasted, worn and wafted around
I search for rest that can never be found
Though it brightens my sky
To know tomorrow will soon come by.*

*But it is today that I wallow and woe
I long to do so much more
Remember how we clung to hopes of bloom?
Summer was here, but left us too soon.*



Poet's rationale

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that for the last seven months, as a researcher I have had to conceptualise, write and develop my data collection methodology in a creative and unique manner. Local, national and international quarantine measures have required a large scale adaptation to embrace alternative methodological approaches (Taster, 2020). Indeed, this unchartered moral territory has required a new energy to explore alternative solutions to data collection such as the analysis of personal diaries and reflections of participants to replace direct observation, poetry as self-narrative and use of online platforms (Torrentira, 2020).

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Isolation

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ISOLATION

Has it ended or has it begun,
I wait for dawn to come.
Listening for birds that once sung
As the sun rose to in full form
To brighten and renew my joy in this silence
There is little to bring smiles to my face
I must remain hidden from the sun's brilliance
My presence is now a burden and a curse

Staying away as told
In longing and cold
To protect the world
From my breathe
Bringing life and death

A fortnight taken from my life
Fourteen days that will not be given back
By a scourge I might not survive
A darkening of days for winter's sake

Staying away as told
To hide from the fold
I have simply stood where I once lived
And now even that has seized

The surge has brought the wind,
The endless rain has come indoors
To the graves freshly dug by the fiend
A crowning of thorns on flowers freshly picked by hand
A scene watched from within,
A nightmare epilogue to a beautiful dream.

Creative piece

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Creativity and participant anonymity was a strong feature of my doctoral thesis (which I have recently submitted) and as such I developed a composite character couple to merge the participants' stories and re-story them, as this enabled a reduction in the risk of the participant's identities and those of their families being exposed. Gutkind and Fletcher (2008) explain that in performances that are adapted from real or fictional narratives, a composite character is often created, which is a character based on more than one individual from a story. Once the composite characters were developed I wanted to utilise their story further, therefore I wrote a children's book as I believe that it is important for all people to see their own reflection in mainstream media. When children with same-sex parents attend healthcare settings, there are no children's picture books that can be used as a tool to ease their fears by reflecting same-sex parents (including dual heritage) and adopted children within a hospital setting.

The book was written to address that gap and to create a status quo so that children can see their family constellation and identity reflected outside of the family itself. The book is one of positivity and inclusion and the ethnicities and genders depicted within the book are representative of the participants within my study. The professionals shown within the book are purposely gendered to challenge gender-stereotyping within professions. The book is based upon a same-sex parented adoptive family being part of the normative and what children and their parents should expect when accessing healthcare. The aim of the children's picture book is that it can be used as an educational tool to showcase diverse families to people of all ages and it can also be used by children who have same-sex parents that are attending healthcare settings to allow them to visualise themselves and to be represented. The near culmination of my doctoral journey has seen the book accepted for publication.

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You started as a simple
Sairah Miriam Shah, PhD in Education
University of Wolverhampton

A poem reflecting my thinking of the PhD journey so far. After just 18 months since starting this journey, the research study has become unruly and at times, heartbreaking. It's been a transformative process of nurturing the research idea and the fighting the imposter syndrome that is embedded within this process. I am perplexed at how my idea becomes my teacher and I, a student of it.

You started as a simple, small idea in my head,
Now, you take over my every waking moment,
You keep growing and make me question who *I* am,
I am stirred and interrupted, for what seems like an eternity,
Stay with me, you give me purpose,
Stay with me, I see myself in you,
Stay with me, you give me permission to speak my truth, through you.

Long term post-traumatic growth in the aftermath of domestic violence

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University of Wolverhampton

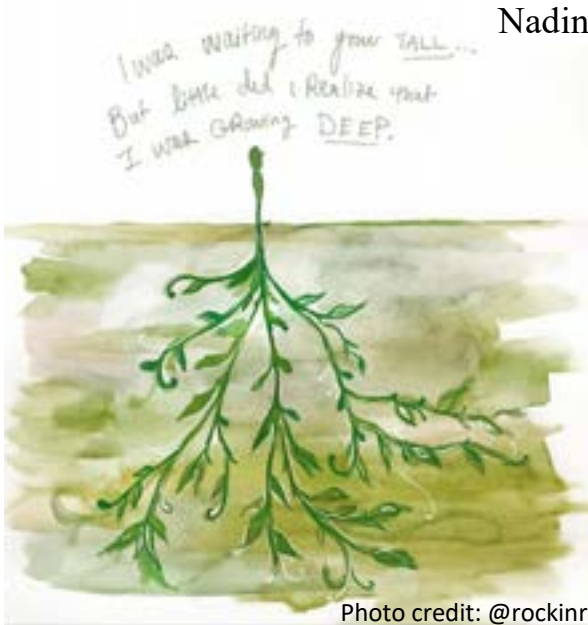


Photo credit: @rockinruksi

“Stay home, stay safe” but what if home isn’t a safe place? COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing measures have led to more time in the home or in the same space as an abuser, increasing the risk for abuse and creating a new COVID-19 crisis. Individuals subjected to violence may be unable to reach out for help due to limited social contact, or they may not be able to seek support services or access a refuge. It’s crucial we find new ways of supporting victims during this difficult time. During November 2020 I am raising money for ‘Refuge’ a charity which supports individuals experiencing domestic violence to ensure some help is there for those in need.

I am in my second year studying the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at the University of Wolverhampton. I am currently finalising my research proposal for my thesis which will explore post-traumatic growth in those who have experienced domestic violence. The negative consequences of domestic violence have been well documented, and they can be far reaching, impacting significantly on the long-term health and emotional wellbeing of those affected (McGarry et al., 2011). However, a dearth of research suggests that exposure to trauma also has the potential to catalyse a host of positive changes such as improvements in personal, interpersonal and spiritual functioning, often referred to as posttraumatic growth (Steffans & Andrykowski,

2015; Draucker, 2001; McCann & Pearlman, 1990). Studies reveal that individuals can experience growth despite enduring highly stressful environments (Linley & Joseph, 2004). I aim to carry out a longitudinal mixed method design using questionnaires and virtual interviews with individuals who have accessed support from two charities following domestic violence. This is to explore individuals’ perceptions of their recovery process and adaptation in the aftermath of domestic violence.



Personally, I have never experienced domestic abuse. One in 4 women and one in 10 men experience IPV, and violence can take various forms: it can be physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological.² People of all races, cultures, genders, sexual orientations, socioeconomic classes, and religions experience IPV.



Photo credit: @rockinruksi

Abusive Men: A Small Attempt at Social Change
Tarnveer K Bhogal Counselling Psychology Doctoral Student
University of Wolverhampton

Abusive Men: A Small Attempt at Social Change

Why do some men abuse?
Some say it's the power they don't like to lose,
I'm not so sure,
Others say it's because they are insecure,
Whatever the reason why,
I think we ought to try,
And work together as a whole,
Because it's not just theirs to own,
Let's try to support the men,
Rather than thinking about the why, what, where and when,
Let's work together,
To support them better,
To have the right places,
Where they don't need to show their fake friendly faces,
Where they feel free of the judgement,
And can work on making the adjustment,
Needed to be non-abusive, non-abrasive,
Non-seductive and non-offensive,
Healthy men.

The Season of Change

Fiona Clements Professional Doctoral Student
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I took this photo as it represents my favourite season, Autumn; symbolising the return of cosy jumpers, pumpkin spiced lattes and the wonderful colours of the leaves, as they change colour and fall. My shoes represent that I am entering into a journey of change with my Doctoral research.

Summer is over, the leaves have changed, and it is apparent that COVID-19 is not going anytime soon. As such, I have had to adapt my research into cyber-victimization experiences for adults with intellectual disabilities. This means moving my planned recruitment from advocacy centres to online. Also, moving from the data collection in the form of face to face to online interviews using the participant's preferred online platform. Whilst, I am comfortable with online research, I am aware that there are several challenges for disability populations reflected in the digital inequalities in access and use of information and communication technologies (Chadwick et al., 2019).

Yet, I am also mindful that Autumn leaves represent hope; where change can also bring opportunity. For example, online research has the benefits of reducing barriers for research participation including financial and geographical barriers (Sabeti, 2020). Therefore, from another perspective, I can promote inclusivity by opening the research to a wider geographical area, the entire UK (Alhaboby et al., 2017). With the leaves in my photo vaguely akin to the UK shoreline, and with all the different colours, I am reminded of all the inclusivity which the online platforms can provide.



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The Covid Thesis Year, 2020!
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Experiences of Business Students during Online Lockdown Learning

As the year 2020 first started,
I felt rather poised, almost heartened
To contemplate studies,
Along with my buddies,
With the plans I had already charted.

However, the universe shifted
And took back the thoughts I'd been gifted,
So, my very first plot
That I thought I had got
Was brusquely and hastily lifted!

With the global pandemic on full beams,
I tried hard to navigate Zoom/Teams,
Recording my sessions
To provide students' lessons
I received an epiphany, it seems.

It was after my own presentation
I took part in a great conversation
With my grader, called John,
Who said 'add Covid on'
That's caused my renewed celebration!

So, thanks very much, 2020 -
You did not beat me, but you helped me,
My stakeholder questions
Based on John's suggestions
Include Covid-19 aplenty.

Adjusting the Lens on Change during Acceptance and Commitment Therapy based Pain Management

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University of Wolverhampton (Professional Doctorate in Health and Well-Being)
Dr Debra Cureton, Professor Megan Lawton and Dr Sarah Sherwin

“Autumn leaves don't fall, they fly.
They take their time and wander on
this their only chance to soar.”
– Delia Owens



During autumn there is a process of shedding to bring about the new where growth and change is experienced. Akin to this, much research supports the efficacy of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) based Pain Management Programmes (PMP), however, this is based on analyses of pre-post changes in pre-defined outcome measures (Vowles, Wetherell and Sorrell, 2009; McCracken and Gutiérrez-Martínez, 2011; McCracken, Sato and Taylor, 2013). But how do individuals themselves give meaning to and experience change?

The present study explores this using Auto-Driven Photo-Elicitation (ADPE) whereby nine participants enrolled on a six-week digital PMP were invited to take a weekly photograph of a meaningful change to discuss during photo-elicitation interviews at week two, four and six. This method has gained popularity within health research and reports benefits by empowering participants to discuss and reflect upon what is individually meaningful, portray what may be difficult to express in words and explore everyday life that may be taken for granted or overlooked (Balmer, Griffiths and Dunn, 2015). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcripts and preliminary themes created. Findings support the use of ADPE as an engaging and valuable method for helping individuals with persistent pain conceptualise and articulate their pain management journey.

Alongside my participants I have used photography to capture and reflect upon my own research journey (Figure 1).

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The Voyage of M18

Tracy Lapworth

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Your course reflects passage through the sea, the ebbs and flows, ripples and waves

September 2018 ,A starting point ;gazing out in the calm blue waters, sun glinting on ripples mirroring the jewels of promise, reflecting the riches to come

Riding the waves of life, love and study, keeping afloat in your own personal boat

Yet the clearest summer sky can change and then comes the rain

Ripples of anxiety and strife, rocking the boat, mirroring student life

Fishing for riches of study and practice success, angling for a catch and reward

Sometimes coming up empty, the crushing defeat of failure and casting out again in the hopes of resubmission moving forward

Then came the tsunami, the crescendo of COVID, your boat is capsized, unexpected, brutal,

Unprecedented, unforgiving and unrelenting, a tidal wave of fear and death,

Leaving destruction in its wake

Forcing you to make choices in the flow, which way do you go

Which channel do you follow, agonies abound, and the conflicts in life create indecision and strife
But you survived, you're alive, changed, enriched, you have clambered back on board

You will all eventually get your reward; reach an oasis of calm, gently rocking in the waves

Gather up, prepare, get ready for the next adventure and caper

Mentors and tutors have been guiding you to shore, away from the rocks, a beam of light illuminated your plight

We helped you navigate your way through choppy waters, the beam shining bright, perils are ignored, the path is made clear and free from harm

Go forward, share lessons learnt, wisdom gained, in practice strive for change , support and transform

We have taught you to be a lighthouse in someone else's storm

‘Behind the scenes’: Grandmothers as silent heroes in the neonatal intensive care unit.

Hilary Lumsden Professional Doctoral Student
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In my attempt to interview grandmothers who had sick grandchildren in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), I visited two NICU in the West Midlands at grandparents’ visiting times in the hope of recruiting participants for my study. In my naiveté, I assumed that there would be an abundance of grandmothers visiting their sick grandchildren on a regular basis. What I discovered instead, was that there were no grandmothers visiting either in the afternoon, evening or at weekend visiting times. These are two poems I wrote whilst I sat for many hours waiting for any grandmother to visit her grandchild.

Poems for the grandmothers who were not there.

The first day of spring

A lovely day
The first of spring
Let’s sit and wait
What will the day bring?

A lovely day
Everyone is out
Let’s sit and wait
I am full of doubt.

A lovely day
No grandmothers came
I sat and sat
What a terrible shame.

All too busy

I came again to see
If anyone wanted to speak to me
No nannies are here
All busy at home
With grandchildren two and three

Another fruitless visit today because unlike me
No nannies are here
All busy at home
Washing up
And cooking the tea.

Knowing Differently My Experience of Collecting Story Artefacts as Data for Health Research

Jacob Enemona Professional Doctoral Student in Health
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I have been collecting data from the study participants (millennials) on what the millennial generation apparent self-care looks like as part of my doctoral research. Until recently, I was ignorant of the possibility of the use of art based methods for health research (Norris 2020; Boydell *et al* 2016).



Fig 1. Theme board from one of the research participants using non-personal collages.

As I collected and reflected on the story artefacts, I began to appreciate the richness of this method. This made me to feel that qualitative studies help to access rich data that is normally unavailable or unacceptable for quantitative research (Bast *et al* 2013; Cross and Holyoake, 2017; Townsend *et al*, 2006). I am now in love with the use of art-based methods in doing health and wellbeing research. This is however a new experience for me as my previous research was laboratory based and driven by positivist considerations. I had always believed that a phenomenon must be about cause and effect and thus objectively measured. That for me was being “scientific”. But there is so much to explore and know about the meanings of apparent self-care than the restrictions of scientism would allow (Crawford 2017; Alexander *et al* 2014).

The use of both textual and graphic data to construct meanings of the social reality of people will help creativity and the unpacking of many interesting concepts in health and wellbeing. I have been reflexing a lot and feel that scientism had imprisoned me seriously in the past and gave me no space to explore social phenomena interpretively (Jiang 2018; Baron, 2019).

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All aboard!

Janet Mortimore Professional Doctoral Student
University of Wolverhampton

All aboard!

My creative approach to researching organisational culture
Had been to interview deep and wide across the NHS Trust in which I work.
Previous organisational culture research appeared to focus on leaders and managers
Whereas I wanted to dive into what was really going on.
I'd thought things were going swimmingly.
Had interviewed participants
Captured autoethnographic vignettes
And conducted document analysis.
I was well into the depths of thesis-ageddon,
Or so I thought.
For then we hit Covid-19:
All hands on deck!
Seemingly overnight everything changed.
Days boiled down to childcare, home-school, work, work, work, eat, sleep, repeat.
Not much time or energy for writing... or thinking, for that matter.
Dipping my toes in for fifteen minutes here and then had to be enough.
But, slowly, slowly, we navigated through and life returned to some level of normality,
Sailing on open waters. Thinking and writing-
This time I would reflect on how Covid-19 had impacted organisational culture too.
Until... quick! We've gotta get this project implemented before the second wave!
So, it was childcare, work, work, work, eat, sleep, repeat again.
At least the kids were back at school- what a safety net!
Now the work has been done and brain space has returned
But they're predicting stormy waters ahead.
All aboard! We're in this together.¹

by Janet Mortimore²

¹ This statement reflects Joanne Martin's integration perspective of organisational culture (Martin, J. (1992) Cultures in Organizations, New York: Oxford University Press).

² Made in Northern Ireland, just like SS Titanic.

Doctoral Journey

Ambreen Alam and Muhammad Zubair, EdD 4th Year
Professional Doctorate Students, University of Wolverhampton

Doctoral process is a long and isolated degree
Still, we wanted to enter this course before our teaching could reach to its silver jubilee
We knew our professional practice and professional ideology has friction
Our positionality needed a new insight, became our mission

The very mental itch that has been bothering us at work
Following school's policy, DfE guideline and Ofsted framework
Often put us into thoughts and forced into looking for reasoning
Always tried to search for sound answers however very weakening

First phenomenon, why do we divide students into ability grouping
We view this practice and considered it, quite educationally, polluting
Registering ourselves for a doctoral degree and delve into this phenomenon
We thought policymakers need to borrow researchers' perceptions and related epiphenomenon

The other phenomenon under investigation
Is about the school leaders and upon them all the allegations
Whether it is instructional leadership, transformational style or other leaders' traits
We develop interest in exploring true leader's practice and debate

Ah! that first module really shifted our belief
The doctoral process was a challenge! and it was not such a relief
What is positionality, ontology and epistemology, did you say?
It was only Cresswell, Brayman and Silverman, who stopped us going stray

Eventually, started to like the philosophical thinking process
Even though failed in first assignment but learnt how to access
The wider resources, the valuable discourse with our module tutors
Those long doctoral sessions in Wolverhampton University was an investment for future

The EdD WhatsApp group appeared to be such a buddy
The complexity of assessments diminished, and we learnt how to study
Delving into literature for module two, was an assignment
our perceptions began to receive alterations, and thoughts oozed out of old confinement

It, didn't end here, before entering into the thesis stages
Module three was designed to record students' understanding using distinct gauges
Use of artifacts, reflection and dialogue with other community of practice
This assignment certainly aligned effectively, great were assessment tactics

The three years' worth of work is gradually making us a research native
We have learnt to innovate the existing phenomenon without being imitative
Critical analysis, evaluation and art of understanding methodology
Let us bet you; you will never find a creative course that may outmode your epistemology

Eye opening is the shift in our philosophy and identity
We grew confident that our research will bring professional serenity
Our views and beliefs have improved, rebuilt, reshaped and have got new features
We were fortunate, that our university has such great teachers

Don't mistake us, not only the perceptions and views
The whole thinking pattern has reshuffled but some queries remain in queue
Evident is drastic innovation in academic writing and critical thinking
Little had we ever imagined that our queries will begin shrinking.

The need for narrative in clinical education

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Mr Alex Foss, Consultant Ophthalmologist, Nottingham University Hospitals

Abstract

This article aims to discuss the need for clinical education to embrace the use of narrative. It discusses the split – most evident in Anglophone countries – between the arts and the sciences, before discussing what can and cannot be known from the scientific method, and what can and cannot be known from narrative approaches. It concludes that narrative is the natural way to teach and learn and has the advantage that it can explore hypothetical situations in safety as well as both to learn and to convey values and attitudes while the hypothetico-deductive method can say what does happen but can shed no light on what should happen.

Introduction

Eva (2014) reminds us how Lasagna's (1964) revision of the Hippocratic Oath tells us that 'there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.' (Lasagna, 1964: p11) In the course of this article, we consider how science and the arts were once wedded, before splitting in a manner which, most evidently in Anglophone countries, rendered them almost as strangers to each other. We move on to discuss in detail the need for narrative in clinical education and how this can be beneficial to teachers, learners, and patients and their relatives by permitting an exploration of 'emplotment' and hence hypothetical situations with full cognisance of all the actors and the impact of the scenario upon each and this in all its diverse manifestations.

Science and the arts

For a Renaissance scientist, there could never be any question of a division between the arts and the emergent sciences. Whether da Vinci, Harvey, Paracelsus or any of their contemporaries, the simple need to communicate their findings not only to their peers but more especially to their patrons meant that they had not only to be scientific in the sense of their explorations but also artists both in the sense of the graphic depiction of their work and in the verbal descriptions. An outstanding example of such versatility is Girolamo Cardano, physician by trade, but who produced in the course of the 16th century highly

influential texts on 'medicine, astrology, natural philosophy, mathematics, and morals ... [and on] devices for raising sunken ships and stopping chimneys from smoking' (Grafton, 2002: pxii) and whose *Book of my Life* (Cardano, 2002) gives an insight into how minds such as his worked.

It is in some senses ironical that the scientific descendants of these Renaissance minds might well find them somewhat unnecessarily verbose, elaborate and even obscure. The Renaissance man, and to a large extent woman, lived the ideal of the generalist who could reliably move in and out of diverse circles and engage in meaningful discussion across the full range of human experience and contemporary knowledge.

Even as late as the Long Eighteenth Century could we find such eminent figures as Dr Samuel Johnson – a doctor of letters and not medicine as physicians had not yet gained a pre-eminence over the title (Hamilton, 1981; Strathern, 2005) – whose 1773 edition of his dictionary (first published in 1755) had an entry for the word science which he pointed out was derived from the Latin word *scientia* meaning knowledge (Johnson, 1773/1828). He then lists the meanings of the word science in his times as follows (Lyons, 2001).

1. Knowledge
2. Certainty grounded on demonstration
3. Art attained by precepts, built on principles.
4. Any art or species of knowledge
5. One of the seven liberal arts, grammar, rhetorick, logick, arithmetick, musick, geometry, astronomy

These liberal arts were close to the Medieval Trivium and Quadrivium which every aspiring Medieval physician who attended university [although most did not] would have studied prior to undertaking his [and almost never her] medical studies in a higher faculty. That the medical student would be Master of Arts prior to studying medicine was no coincidence as the Trivium and Quadrivium were deemed essential for the proper understanding of any learning in a higher faculty, whether this be Medicine, Law or Theology. The Arts were the gateway to further study and only by demonstrating a basis in them could be aspiring university-trained physician proceed further (Matheson, 1999).

It is notable that Dr Johnson includes both what we would now recognise as science and the liberal arts under the same heading. The split came much later with the term scientists coined in 1834 in contrast to artists as students of the material world (Whewell, 1834) and by 1977, the fourth edition of the Penguin Dictionary of Science has only physics, biophysics, astronomy, chemistry, biochemistry, molecular biology, and mathematics and computing listed under science.

The split was underlined quite dramatically in the first examinations for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) in 1858 whose Part One examined the 'subjects of a general education' (Compton, 1968: p267), but sought quite openly to recruit 'top Oxford or Cambridge honours graduates' (p267), and hence focussed on Latin and Greek as taught in those universities. The result, unsurprisingly, was the domination of Oxbridge graduates among those who passed and the nearly total exclusion of graduates from Scotland's five universities for whom the split between the arts and the sciences only came much later and whose knowledge of Latin and Greek was more functional than the models of parsing beloved in the two [out of then four] English universities (Bell and Grant, 1977). Despite this, as Midgeley (2009) reminds us, '

Blake and Coleridge could discuss scientific problems with Faraday and Davy, ... Darwin could write about Kant very sensibly ... [and] TH Huxley wrote a book on Hume (Midgeley, 2009: p27).

Nonetheless, the stance taken by the ICS showed that the trend was moving away from the polymath.

While Scotland continued its love of generalism, with school pupils intending for university being prepared across a range of both science and arts subjects, in England [and hence in the British Empire at large] early specialisation became the norm and eventually children as young as 14 were able to effectively drop virtually all sciences [or virtually all arts] and to funnel their studies until, without having yet left school, they were left with three, or exceptionally four, subjects which would only very rarely cross the arts/science divide.

The situation in England was made worse by a rapid growth in anti-intellectualism, as demonstrated in Hughes [1877] Tom Brown's Schooldays where the eponymous Tom states that

I want to be A1 at cricket and football, and all the other games, and to make my hands keep my head against any fellow, lout or gentleman ... I want to carry away just as much Latin and Greek as will take me through Oxford respectably (Hughes, 1857/1963: p282).

As science moved from being a pursuit primarily of gentlemen of leisure [as were Lord Cavendish and the Honourable Robert Boyle, to name but two] and technology and engineering developed and became a major driving force for the British Empire, an ethic developed and thrived that opposed to anything that resembled physical labour (Gikandi, 1996). Latin and Greek were effectively useless in themselves and hence respectable for this very reason, while engineering and science had use but demanded, or at least implied, physical labour, however refined, and were thus to be disparaged as worthy only of the lower orders. Science and engineering were directly related to jobs; Latin and Greek were not. To make matters worse, science and engineering resembled jobs that one might prepare for by means of an apprenticeship and, in reality, were [and remain] subjects favoured at university by students from working class backgrounds. Even the massive growth of engineering in the UK

during and after the Industrial Revolution could do nothing to change the Weltanschauung of the ruling classes. Even the accomplishments of engineers as great as Brunel were powerless in the face of this thinly veiled class discrimination.

Thus, we never see in UK history any phenomenon comparable to the prestigious Grandes Ecoles such as Napoleon established in France to train in the first instance civil engineers [as in case of the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées].

The Second World War, otherwise a uniting force across many domains of UK society, exacerbated the division between the arts and the sciences with a shroud of mystery, necessary no doubt for the war effort, surrounding the ‘boffins’ and ‘backroom boys’ [i.e. scientists and engineers] upon whom the nation’s hopes were pinned but who were depicted as not only inevitably male and balding but also as totally incomprehensible to the general public, a situation aided by some of the less accessible public information films which assumed a level of nutritional knowledge well beyond that of even a well-educated public. It was thus in parody of the incomprehensible scientist that ‘Professor’ Stanley Unwin, a comedian in variety theatre and radio [and later television], found fame and fortune by literally talking incomprehensible gibberish. For example:

*Now, like all real life experience stories,
this also begins once a polly tito, and
Happiness Stan, whose life evolved the
ephemeral colour dreamy most, and his
deep joy in this being the multicolour of the
moon. Oh yes. His home a victoriana
charibold, the four-wheel folloped ft-ft-ft
out the back. Now, as eve on his deep
approach, his eye on the moon. Alltime
sometime deept joy of a full moon
scintyladen dangly in the heavenly bode.
But now only half! So, gathering all behind
him the hintermost, he ploddy-ploddy
forward into the deep complicadent
fundermold of the forry to sort this one out!*

Against this backdrop CP Snow delivered his 1959 Rede Lecture on the two cultures which are the arts and the sciences.

The two cultures

Snow pointed out that the sciences and the humanities come from different cultures and even reflected differing social classes with the greatest scientists often being of working class origin; and particularly so for those working in the applied sciences such as engineering (Snow, 1959). What he voiced was the reality in UK society and ‘a special instance of the lack of scientific literacy in society’ as a whole (Grayling, 2009: p27).

Snow’s lecture drew attention to these two cultures, and it was really for those trained in the humanities to take the sciences more seriously. He argued that, for example, the Second Law of Thermodynamics should be a cultural icon along with the works of Shakespeare (Midgely, 2009) in response to which Flanders and Swann rose to the challenge and, in First and Second Law, did a song celebrating the Second Law in a manner which was both entertaining and scientifically accurate.

*Heat is work and work's a curse
And all the heat in the Universe
Is gonna coool down 'cos it can't increase
Then there'll be no more work and there'll be
perfect peace
Really?
Yeah – that's entropy, man!*

At the time of Two Cultures lecture, school selection according to some measure of ability at age 11 via the 11+ Examination [12 in Scotland via the Qualifier] was almost universal across the United Kingdom and, at least as far as those destined to be the rulers of the future, the pinnacle of achievement was to graduate in the Classics from Oxford or Cambridge as it was from this group that much of government and especially the higher echelons of the Civil Service were drawn (Bell and Grant, 1977).

The same two cultures argument as employed by Snow can be applied to the cultures in and around clinical education where there is, for example, an uncomfortable juxtaposition of the scientific, where the patient and his/her condition are ‘objectified’ and one might even say dehumanised – though this may be the only way not to be

paralysed by empathy with a sufferer's pain – and the narrative, where the patient and their condition are a story, replete with characters, drama, suspense and some sort of hoped for – or feared – and then actual, dénouement. In the narrative, it is feelings and perceptions that come to the fore. The patient and their condition are central, but they are there as actors within the drama, subjective and potentially irrational but key to the proceedings.

The problem is one of how to introduce such narrative into medicine and a possible door is through increasing the understanding of the role that the arts in general and literature in particular can play in increasing the clinician's understanding of what the patient is really going through and hence why they make the decisions that they do.

Evans (2003) argues that incorporation of literature into clinical education supports four 'goods':

1. An education (as opposed to training)
2. Ethics and communication skills
3. The development of personal values
4. A sense of wonder at embodied human nature

Unfortunately, Evans fails to make the case that the humanities are essential for any of these activities. There seems to be the recognition that it is in some way good for a clinician to know something of the humanities, but it is not clear what this should be.

Part of the problem surrounds the idea of truth as embodied in the arts and in the sciences. Both cultures aim to understand the 'truth' but do so by different means. The question is whether these two approaches can be resolved.

The scientific approach

The basis of the scientific method is 'objectivity' which is often defined as things being true independently of the observer. However, a moment's reflection shows that this cannot be the case. If no human has ever observed something, then no human can know about it. The statement should read 'independent of the choice of

observer', in itself a rather tall order and more of an ideal than an everyday reality.

Coupled with objectivity, there is empiricism. The empirical approach grounds all knowledge in sensory experiences (Hume, 1777/1977). The problem which philosophers have wrestled with through the ages is to discern the basis upon which this might be justified. Descartes, in his *Mediations* (Descartes, 1637/2007), put the sceptic's case that senses could not be relied on due to two problems. The first was the problem of illusions and the second is how to distinguish dream from reality.

The justification for this grounding is ultimately pragmatic. The argument runs that if an animal's senses gave unreliable evidence about the real world, such as interpreting the presence of a lion as a rather unusual daffodil, then that animal would be, in Darwin's terms, less 'fit'. In fact, people generally have such confidence in their senses that scientists usually publish without checking that others see the same image down the microscope.

The issue with illusions is interesting. Illusions are detected on the basis of triangulation, when two different lines of evidence give rise to two different conclusions. Again, we tend to know when our senses are most and when least reliable. One often quoted example is the issue of colour constancy which breaks down under extreme conditions of lighting or which falter under the weaknesses of human colour perception – an example of which pertains to one of the present writers who long possessed what he thought was a black coat, only for it to be revealed as being very dark blue when compared to a garment which was indeed black. An example of the breakdown of colour constancy occurs when red surface is illuminated by red light and so will appear white [or grey if the frequencies do not quite match]. Colour appearances are at their most reliable when viewed with sunlight at mid-day with a clear sky, conditions that most closely resemble the conditions under which our vision evolved, and very much unreliable when seen under the limited frequencies available with fluorescent tube lights. As Hume (1777/1977) himself pointed out, sensory data must, on occasion, be interpreted rationally.

This idea leads to the notion of an ‘objectivity’ defined as when the same opinion is offered, independent of the choice of observer. This works well [though not infallibly so] when it comes to primary sense data but could, in principle, be applied to any question.

Opinions on the colour of a flower will usually be accepted as objective, but not on such issues as who should be the next prime minister. Clearly, the opinion on the latter would be highly dependent upon the choice of the ‘observer’ and we can predict which opinions are those that can be considered ‘objective’ and which are not. Thus, the term is usually reserved to primary sense data and the hallmark of such is that the system has no memory although this is not quite true, as one can have ‘after-images’ but they are transient and fade. However, to return to the visual system, the perception of the colour red is not affected by what colours have been previously seen, even though vision itself is entirely subjective and potentially individual to the viewer. By contrast, one's opinion of a politician can be permanently affected by preceding events such as the Iraq war or Brexit.

The hypothetico-deductive model and the sciences

The scientific method is often equated to the hypothetico-deductive process. This process is a key component of science, but it is just a component. The triumph of the hypothetico-deductive method is that it solves the logical basis of universal statements and of induction. The issue has always been as to how one can take the step from ‘all the swans that I have seen are white’ to the universal statement ‘all swans are white’. The straight answer is that one cannot (unless whiteness is part of the definition itself of a swan). The hypothetico-deductive method makes the observations that one can never prove a universal statement and never disprove a singular statement (Popper, 1959). No matter how many white swans one has seen, this does not prove that all swans are white. Conversely, one cannot prove that a black swan does not exist simply on the basis that you have not seen one as you cannot prove that you have inspected all swans. The scientific method works by postulating what may not occur and these are termed scientific laws. One then tries to

disprove this by looking for forbidden events. The dichotomy in science is not true/false but consistent/false. Scientific laws are not in themselves provable, but they are consistent and open to being falsified.

However, these laws, such as the Law of Conservation of Energy, do not explain what is actually occurring. Rather, they predict what will be observed, given appropriate conditions.

Good science is based on determining mechanism. Mechanism can never be directly proved and is only inferred or ‘constructed’ on the basis of the following reasoning. What one observes is events and if one wishes to prove that events A and B are linked then one needs to demonstrate four things:

1. If A then B.
2. If not B, then not A
3. Cause A to happen and B happens
4. Prevent B happening and A does not happen.

These principles surface in many guises and under different names within sciences such as Koch's postulates in microbiology.

The limitations of the scientific method

The four steps that are required to demonstrate causality put severe constraints on the sort of events that can be investigated. In particular, they must be frequent, reversible or at least reproducible. The scientific method cannot be applied to rare and irreversible events which are just the conditions that apply to many of the most interesting events which involve humans such as 9/11 or World War II.

Humans clearly have memory and ethics alone make it unacceptable to even consider re-creating the same conditions to see if the same events recur – even if the formidable practical problems could be overcome. Thus, there is a need for a different approach for this type of problem.

Narrative and the humanities

People have been telling stories since the dawn of time and it is one of the major ways by which we

learn. Great literature has two key features: plot and characterisation (Booker, 2004). The first feature of a good story is 'emplotment' whereby a string of events are connected (Ricoeur, 1981). Heidegger postulated that narratives serve a 'presencing' function (Heidegger, 1971: p44) whereby events past or future, real or imaginary are 'presenced'. It is easy to see how mirror neurones (Iacoboni and Dapretto, 2006) could be hypothesized to be a neural substrate for such a process.

Emplotment can be equated to mechanisms and so represent the potential for deep learning. Schank argues that knowledge consists of stories and what we recall are plots (Schank, 1990) though a good storyteller reinvents the details to make the story 'come alive' or presenced'. These stories come from five sources:

1. Official
2. Invented (adapted)
3. First-hand (experiential)
4. Second-hand
5. Culturally common

These stories result in the formation of what Schank calls 'scripts'; i.e. a set of expectations of what will happen in well-defined situations, and the aim of storytelling is to change other people's behaviour. In addition to script formation, the other key issue is indexing to allow recall of appropriate stories at the appropriate time. Indexing is done on the basis of facts or features in the story.

In his view, intelligence then is the number and complexity of these scripts and of the indexing. This makes the hallmarks of intelligence to be observation and association and leads to the question of what are the features that lead to association.

Narratives are how we learn and communicate. We live in social groups and it is a great advantage if an individual can understand what another is thinking. The mere concept that another individual has a mind as well as ourselves is called 'Theory of mind' (de Waal, 2006) and it is postulated, and the evidence is being gathered, that this works by

imagining how we would feel if we were in somebody else's shoes. This leads to the other hallmark of great literature – good characterisation, which allows the reader to feel as the character feels, think as they think and even act – in their mind – as they act. This is why literature and poetry are sometimes described as moral activities (Eagleton, 2007).

It should be noted what narrative cannot do. While it can be used to speculate, it cannot prove mechanisms. Attempts to use narrative or discourse in this way has (a) formed the basis of the post-modernist approach, (b) has been highly influential and (c) is mostly of extremely poor quality (Gross and Levitt, 1998; Sokal and Bricmont, 1998) and is not a suitable alternative to the hypothetico-deductive method in situations where the latter can be applied, given that learning can have two distinct meanings. One is acquiring information from a teacher and narrative is good for 'passing it on'. However, it does need to be distinguished from the other which is discovering and from situations when a scientist discovers information from the real world. Here, narrative fails (Sokal and Bricmont, 1998).

Narrative medicine

Within medicine, there is increasing recognition of the importance of the narrative approach (Charon, 2006). In the 20th century, the scientific approach resulted in doctors treating patients increasingly like experimental subjects, culminating in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study Scandal, whereby 600 syphilis sufferers were denied treatment to see the natural history of the disease (this study also had distinct racial overtones as all the subjects were of African-American descent) (Heller, 1972). Such objectification, under the name of science, by concentrating on the frequent and the reproducible, ignores the unique and the personal. In contrast, narrative medicine gives insight into how individual patients make sense of their life and that by listening to them that one conveys respect and that, in itself, can carry therapeutic benefit.

This approach requires 'close reading' and this is a skill that requires development as well as the

ability to listen. It also requires personal insight on the part of the clinician and an awareness not only of how s/he thinks but also of how patients may perceive them and their profession (Groopman, 2007).

The second issue is that the sciences can shed light on what does happen but not on what should happen [to equate these two is termed ‘the naturalistic fallacy’]. Accordingly, one would expect a narrative approach to be particularly valuable as it can engage with ought as well as does and all the while distinguish between the two (Jones, 1999). This exploration of hypotheticals and alternatives is what leads to the notion that good literature and poetry can be defined as being moral (Eagleton, 2007) meaning that it can affect behaviour. Miller puts it more strongly ‘Without story telling there is no theory of ethics. Narrative examples, stories ... are indispensable to thinking about ethics’ (Miller, 1987: p3). Narratives also show how far people will go in search of truth or results. They add the human aspect to human endeavour and maintain the human aspect in human suffering.

Narrative and education

A popular paradigm for learning is experiential learning theory (ELT) as proposed by Kolb (A Kolb and Kolb, 2005) along with the learning style inventory (DA Kolb, 1976) and the umpteen variations on this theme. Kolb’s theory proposes that learning is a four-stage process that occurs in sequence of concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualisation (AC) and active experimentation (AE).

These stages are highly reminiscent of the hypothetico-deductive model of the scientific process of experiment, observation, hypothesis and prediction with a one-to-one mapping between the two models. This suggests that Kolb fell for a variant of the psychological fallacy that how we should think is how we do think! A systematic review of learning styles was highly critical of the whole field and in particular labelled the idea of the learning cycle as ‘may be seriously flawed’ (Coffield et al., 2004: p14). Even more suspect are attempts to map stages of the cycle to parts of the brain (Zull, 2002).

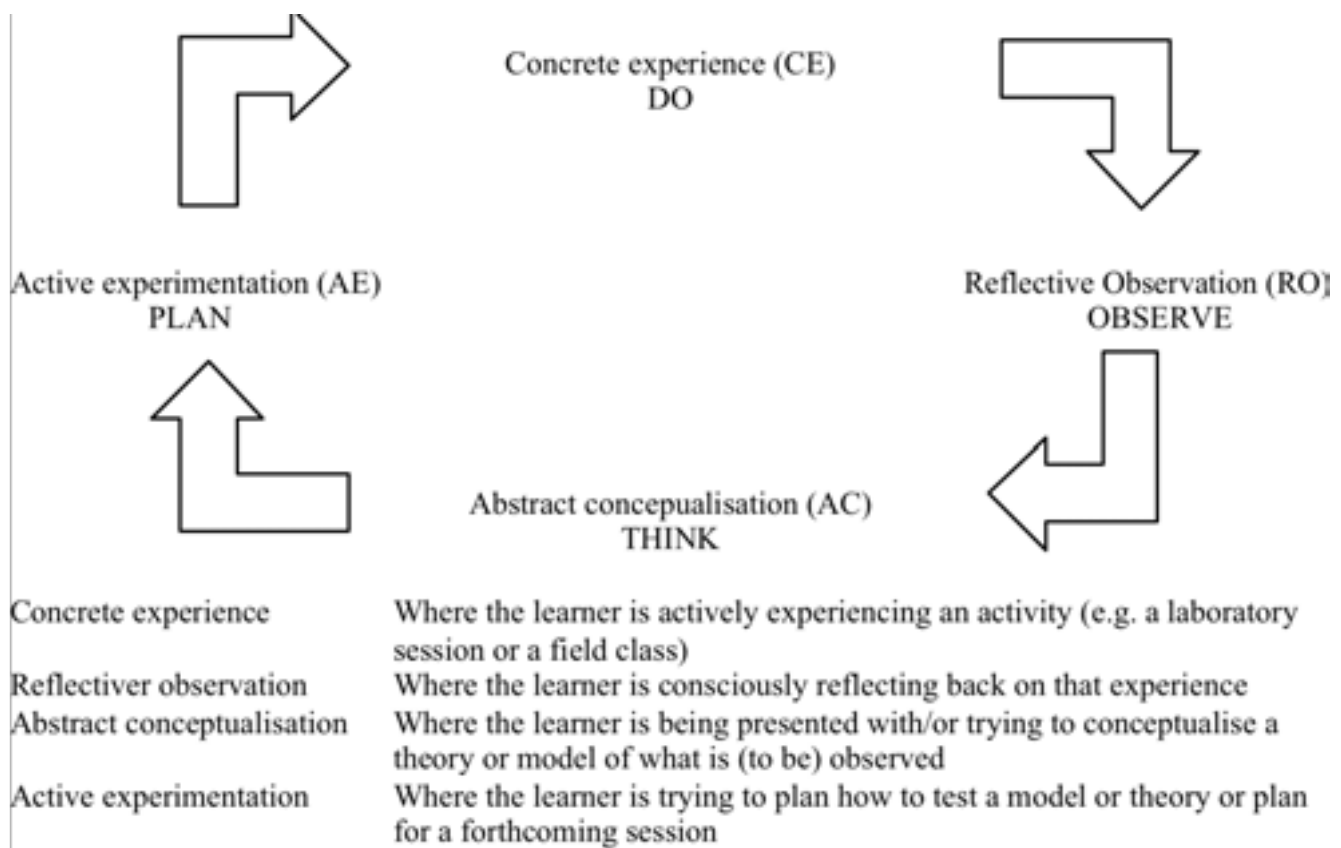


Figure 1: The Kolb Learning Cycle

By contrast, Klein, in his research on how people make decisions (naturalistic decision making), found stories to be the best way to access this information and that stories were the medium by which experience was shared in the workplace (Klein, 1998). Work by Pennington and Hastie showed that jurors made sense of legal evidence by assembling it into stories so as to generate understanding and to facilitate recall. They also showed that the first story that the jurors constructed carried the greatest influence (Pennington and Hastie, 1993). Their findings are intuitively plausible. It is well known that we are all instinctively distrustful of a story that changes. It leads to the conclusion, in teaching, that getting the story right first time is of particular importance and this places a particular demand on the teacher that they have the necessary subject knowledge.

Conclusion

The hypothetico-deductive method has proved supremely triumphal for the acquisition of knowledge and the Kolb learning cycle is one example of the attempt to import the same method into education. However, this method was only fully understood until the 20th Century and is certainly not the natural method by which humans have acquired higher knowledge. Although we all start to acquire knowledge by interaction with the world – a process called play – this is a time-consuming method and, as soon as we can begin to use language, play is largely supplanted by the narrative approach, even when that leads to play! The narrative is the natural way to teach and learn. It has the further advantage in that the narrative can explore hypothetical situations in safety and is a particularly useful way both to learn and to convey values and attitudes over ethical issues. The hypothetico-deductive method can say what does happen but can shed no light on what should happen.

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RENDERING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

FOLLOW THE **ACTORS** TO TRACE THE **NETWORKS** THAT CREATE HIDDEN DIS/ABILITIES


THEORISTS

"The moderns are quite right to want reality, language, society and being all at once. They are wrong only in believing that these sets are forever contradictory. Instead of always analyzing the trajectory of quasi-objects by separating these resources, can we not write as if they ought to be in continuous connection with one another?" (1943 p80)




Latour

"The symbolic is what puts an end to this disjunctive code and to separated terms. It is the utopia that puts an end to the topologies of the soul and the body, man and nature, the real and the non-real, birth and death. In the symbolic operation, the two terms lose their reality. The reality principle is never anything other than the imaginary of the other term." (1943 p133)



Baudrillard

How could the definition of hidden, mental disabilities be transformed? What are the specificities of hidden disabilities? How are they constructed? What type of agencies play a role and how do they influence the experience? How do we decide which reality is preferable?



Jack

CONTEXT



Who's talking?

Get away!

One, two, three...

PROBLEM

YOU need a cure. Music is tolerated and unwanted chat is tuned out. One pill at a time.



It's NOT YOU. They need a sign. No music and one person to speak at a time. Barriers down.



Oh man, it's only discourse!

MEDICALISE THE SOCIALS

SOCIALISE THE MEDICS

VOTE



DATA & METHOD

I am just a boy. I love walking.



Who's talking?

Get away!

One, two, three...



I am again, hum, just a boy? Anyway, I love cabaret.



Please, have a seat.

Thank you.



IMPACT

HIDDEN, MENTAL DIS/ABILITIES HAVE NEVER BEEN A STABLE, ORDERED AND FIXED REALITY, BUT THEY ARE REPEATEDLY **PERFORMED, DISSOLVED AND REPRODUCED** IN THE COMPLEX INTERACTIONS OF MULTIPLE HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN ACTORS WITHIN WEBS OF CONNECTIONS. NETWORKS TEMPORARILY STABILISE, AND LABELS HELP CREATE THE IMPRESSION THAT HIDDEN DIS/ABILITIES ARE SET, PERMANENT AND DEFINITE STATES.

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EPILOGUE
From Cookies (Patricia A. Newell) to Creative Futures
Dr Dean-David Holyoake
Developmental Editor

From: Jack
Sent: 20 November 2020 10:12
To: JoSCHI
Subject: next edition

Hello

I attached the creativity edition.....and boy o boy I haven't been able to take my hand out of this cookie jar. Have a look please and let me know any amendments needed

Thanks

Jack

From: Christine
Sent: 20 November 2020 11:30
To: JoSCHI
Subject: RE: next edition

I loved the last one Dr Rosen, would it be possible to add a bit of explanation around it for the reader?
BW
C

From: Dr Rosen
Sent: 20 November 2020 15:37
To: JoSCHI
Subject: RE: next edition

I was purposefully playing poetics to leave with the 'creative' line What's just happened? ... to disrupt the audience and encourage them to make up their own mind – but happy to be advised if we think I've overdone it ahern!

dr rosen

From: Christine
Subject: RE: next edition
Date: 20 November 2020 at 16:00:52 GMT
To: JoSCHI@wlv.ac.uk

Maybe say that at the end? Something clever as a message?
C

Episode 41: Sitting with Snakes in Long Grass

I was asked: 'aren't you too young to be writing your memoirs?' I replied 'yes, I'm writing an ethnography. I think you should be well dead before you write an autobiography.'

'I knocked on Dr Rosen's door and I heard something slide from under the desk. I was about to enter a world of Shakespearian tragedy in which there are very few mother figures, but plenty of fools. I should know.'

About Jilly II

“So what are your thoughts about self-harming behaviour Dean,” Dr Rosen pointed to the empty chair in front of the desk and it took me an age to realise I was being instructed without words to place my arse in it. So I did, gob smacked. Perhaps I should say something smart and clever like: ‘Deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behaviour but rather conferred upon these forms by the audience which witness them,’ but I didn’t.

“Errr, I’m not sure Dr Rosen,” I replied.

“Hmrrrrrr, we seem to have a lot of young people in the unit at the moment who are doing this self-harming thing,” he said.

“Well I’ve only come up to give you these,” I said pointing to the brown envelope containing treatment cards and reports.

“I went on a course about para-suicide once and that was fascinating,” Dr Rosen continued.

Then I had a thought. What if all my life was about emulating patterns decreed by bigger more powerful things. I mean, here I was sitting in Dr Rosen’s office being lectured to as though a self-harming child myself. We weren’t in any type of debate, there was no co-authoring, only display. The fact that in the months to come I’d probably be over the moon when this junta of psychiatry praised my efforts and, metaphorically speaking at least, held out a doctoral dictatorial hand of membership.

I’d probably readily clasp it keen to manifest as self-infest. Scaly hands like Dr Rosen’s always know best, even when they are a fist. Let’s face it, years of tradition, traceably groomed genealogy and precise pedigree must mean something. Just look at the Royal Family, Oxbridge universities, Ascot, Das Boot Race and the Proms.

“So we need to put a stop to it as soon as we can Dean, it’s very worrying. If we must, we’ll play hard ball.”

“Shall I leave these here?” I said placing the envelope on the rock.

“Yes, yes, that will do for now,” hissed Dr Rosen and I was waved out of the chair and into the corridor like an unpleasant smell. What the hell had just happened?

Taken from:

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