

*Theory workshop topics, abstracts and presenters
Griffith University, 13-15 May 2016*

**PLENARY SESSION – FRIDAY EVENING
Professor Parlo Singh and Dr Stephen Heimans**

The aim of the opening session for the Griffith University hosted AARE theory workshops is to explore the relation between theory and research methods in educational research. We propose that the relations between education, schooling and research have never been more fraught, more subject to external evaluation, and consequently, more critical to understand and discuss. There are several converging factors that contribute to this situation. In Australia, schooling continues to fail to deliver fully on its promises to people living in poverty. As a result, the hope that education (and research) offers is, for many, a thwarted, cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011). Concurrently, education and research, in their institutionalised forms (in schools and universities), are enmeshed into the public-privatising of neo-liberalising governance practices. In this public-privatising melange, there is a focus on schools and universities to perform, or more accurately, to display how well they are doing, in terms of measures, data and metrics. Governance of research and schooling through data-driven accountability measures is shaping and reforming schooling, teaching, learning and research in market-driven directions. Further to this, and relatedly, there is a growing disillusionment with the promises and (lack of) impact of critical and qualitative scholarship to enact the change that is urgently required. As Bruno Latour has said, critique has run well and truly out of steam. We urgently need theoretical, methodological and ‘on the ground’ examples of ‘what is next’, post the critical, not to dismiss it, but, rather, as a way, ironically, of attempting to fulfil whatever ambitions the critical held.

In the opening address we ground our theory-method discussion in a series of design-based research studies working with teachers and school leaders in high poverty schooling contexts to make a difference in educational outcomes. We explore the diverse possibilities of moving beyond traditional notions of theory as a lens through which to collect, analyse and report on data.

The opening session then leads to an overview of the workshops to be conducted over the weekend, with three minute presentations by each of the workshop leaders. The workshops deal with troubling the theory-method nexus in educational research, and explore:

1. dynamics of power in knowledge construction and representation involving Aboriginal people in research (Karen Martin);
2. the epistemological, political and ethical debates in ethnographic research (Liz Mackinlay);
3. epistemic points and methodological implications of Southern Theory (Keita Takayama)
4. modalities of using theory in educational sociology (Rob Hattam);
5. questioning the ‘taken-for-granted’ aspects of qualitative research methodologies (Stew Riddle); and
6. the relation between epistemology and ontology via experiential collaborative research activities (Mindy Blaise).

WORKSHOPS – SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

Getting excited and getting real: The roles of theory, methodology and knowledge in closing gaps in Aboriginal research

Associate Professor Karen Martin, Griffith University

It's no secret that research is not regarded highly by Aboriginal peoples who remain the researched and not the researchers. That's because research is not neutral and nor are the theories that inform each and every project. Although understanding the role of ethics in research that involves Aboriginal peoples has been given sufficient attention, the focus is more likely to be given to the use of culturally sensitive methods to identify and reduce the power differentials between researcher and research. However, the roles of theories, forms of knowledge construction and representation have not been given much attention. Research is not neutral – researchers are not neutral – theories are not neutral. This seminar explores and interrogates this triad and its implications for research with Aboriginal peoples and the dynamics of power in knowledge construction and representation. The goal is to get excited about research that involves Aboriginal peoples, through getting real in understanding the roles of theory in research and to close the gap in methodology and related components such as design, conduct and dissemination.

Ethnography: Researching and writing social worlds

Associate Professor Liz Mackinlay, The University of Queensland

'Ethnography attempts to understand another life world using the self – as much of it as possible – as the instrument of knowing', writes Ortner (1995, p. 173). With a variety of meanings and applications, ethnography continues to play a dynamic role in the ever-changing landscape of social science research. Ethnographers typically spend extended periods of time watching and participating in everyday contexts or 'the field', listening and talking, asking questions and interacting with others, and collecting artefacts in order to understand a particular kind of lived experience as performed and told by people themselves. In this workshop, we will discuss what it is that ethnographers actually do in terms of field methods and techniques, the kinds of data ethnographers usually collect and the types of analytic approaches adopted to make sense of lived social worlds. We will also explore ethnographic field methods and techniques and approaches to writing ethnography as well as the epistemological, political and ethical debates about them. Issues to be discussed will include: the politics of representation; power, ethics, and fieldwork; critical, feminist, anti/de/colonial and Indigenous methodological approaches to ethnography.

Reference: Ortner, S. (1995). Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37(1), 173-193.

Doing ‘Southern Theory’ in education research: Possibilities and challenges

Associate Professor Keita Takayama, University of New England

Raewyn Connell’s (2007) *Southern Theory* has been one of the key texts driving the recent ‘Southern turn’ in social science. Connell’s work has been taken up enthusiastically by many scholars trying to rethink, provincialize and then globalize the metropolitan/Euro-centric disciplinary knowledges, while at the same time generating considerable debates wherein the limits of her work are identified and discussed further. This workshop will build on Connell’s work on Southern Theory as well as other cognate literature to explore the key epistemic points and methodological implications for educational research. The workshop will begin with a critical assessment of the particular location of Australian education scholarship in relation to the global economy of academic knowledge, as a way to highlight the special relevance of Southern Theory for Australian education scholarship.

‘Using’ theory in educational sociology research

Associate Professor Rob Hattam, University of South Australia

In this workshop, we’ll consider two modalities of ‘using’ ‘theory’ in educational sociology research. From the outset, the session proposes that ‘theory’ might be understood as our best accumulated accounts for how things got to be this way and hence offers explanatory diagnoses of the times, as well as hopeful lines of flight for theory, policy and practice. The first modality affirms the demand to be reading widely in the social science and humanities and especially to be attentive to social theory that is ‘untimely’, empirical, and concerned with the (post)modernity. Examples could include Lazarrato’s *Signs and machines*, Brown’s book on *Undoing the demos*, and Massumi’s *Politics of affect*. The second modality offers an attempt to foreground some themes that are carried by ‘theory’ that haunt contemporary educational research. This section will conclude with an attempt to summarise some the stories that critical educational researchers can tell through their research.

Putting postqualitative research methodologies to work in education research

Dr Stew Riddle, University of Southern Queensland

In a special issue of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (Volume 26, Issue 6), Patti Lather and Bettie St. Pierre ask us to consider ‘whether we have become so attached to our creation – qualitative research – that we have come to think it is real. Have we forgotten that we made it up? Could we just leave it behind and do/live something else?’ (2013, p. 631). This workshop takes up the challenge to do/live something else in education research through unsettling the ‘taken-for-granted’ in qualitative inquiry, including: the construction of research problems, data collection and analysis, along with the very ideas of data, research and education. In this workshop some key propositions of postqualitative inquiry will be considered, as well as particular examples of how it is possible to put ‘post’ methodologies to work in messy and entangled engagements that produce something different for our inquiries.

Producing new inventive methodologies
Professor Mindy Blaise, Victoria University

The aim of this workshop is to methodologically put into practice some of the theories emerging with the recent ontological and epistemological turns (i.e., ‘the turn to the material’, ‘the affective turn’, ‘the material-semiotic turn’) occurring in educational studies. Participants will explore the relationship between ontological underpinnings, epistemologies, and the production of qualitative research methodologies by focusing on two major questions:

- 1) What are the connections between ontology and epistemology in this research, and what methodological consequences and strategies does this relationship produce?
- 2) In what ways might the role of the researcher transform in relation to choices of ontology/epistemology, and how is this enacted in the research process in relation to the research participants, and in relation to the way we choose to enunciate research?

An experiential collaborative research activity will form the basis of the workshop and will provide opportunities to think with and through ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that are brought about by different worldviews.

PRESENTERS’ BIONOTES

Parlo Singh is a Professor of Education who has been engaged in empirical research in high poverty schooling contexts for over twenty years. Her latest research project funded by the Australian Research Council Discovery (2016-2018): DP160102784 is titled *Learning for Teaching in Disadvantaged Schools*. Parlo Singh has received numerous awards for excellence in tertiary teaching including the Australian College of Educators, National Fellow Award; and a Carrick Australian University Teaching Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning (HDR supervision/training). Some recent publications include:

- Glasswell, K., Singh, P., McNaughton, S. (2016). Partners in Design: Co-Inquiry for Quality Teaching in Disadvantaged Schools. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp.20-30.
- Singh, P. (2015). Pedagogic Governance: Theorising with/after Bernstein. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2015.1081052>
- Singh, P. (2014): Performativity and pedagogising knowledge: globalising educational policy formation, dissemination and enactment, *Journal of Education Policy*. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2014.961968>

Stephen Heimans is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow working on data- theory-methodological innovations in school, education department, university, equity-oriented partnerships. Some of his latest publications include:

- Heimans, S. (2016). Fieldwork in philosophy, emancipation and researcher dis-position: a post-qualitative research exemplar. *Qualitative Research Journal*.
- Heimans, S. (2015). Taking a ‘material turn’ in education policy research? In Clarke, M., Gulson, K. N. & Petersen, E. B. (Eds.), *Education Policy and Contemporary Theory: Implications for Research*: London, Routledge.
- Heimans, S., Singh, P., & Glasswell, K. (2015). Doing Education Policy Enactment Research in a Minor Key. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*.
- Singh, P., Heimans, S. and Glasswell, K. (2014). Policy Enactment, Context and Performativity: Ontological Politics and Researching Australian National Partnership Policies. *Journal of Education Policy*.

Associate Professor **Karen Martin** is a Noonuccal woman from Minjerripah (North Stradbroke Island, SE Queensland) and also has Bidjara ancestry (central Queensland). She is a qualified early childhood educator. Her doctoral studies focused on the role of research with Aboriginal people and how Aboriginal people have regulated Outsiders over time to the present. This work earned Karen the James Cook University Medal (2007), the AARE Dissertation Award (2008) and the NAIDOC Scholar of the Year (2008). The resultant book, *Please knock before you enter: Aboriginal regulation of Outsiders and the implications for research and researchers* is a best seller and used as a set text in many postgraduate programs in Australian universities. She is highly sought as a keynote speaker at national and international conferences. Associate Professor Martin has more than 20 years' experience lecturing in Aboriginal Australian Studies, Aboriginal education and early childhood education. This occurred in tandem with roles in policy development, program delivery; research and curriculum development in Aboriginal education and specifically Aboriginal early childhood education at the State, National and International levels. She was appointed as Academic Advisor to the former Indigenous Clearinghouse Board (AIHW); is a member of the National Indigenous Knowledge and Research Network (NIRKAN) and has been a member of the Steering Committee: Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (DSS) since 2003 and Deputy Chair since 2010. Associate Professor Martin is currently employed in the School of Education and Professional Studies (Griffith University), and is Deputy Chair of Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee; member of the GU: Indigenous Research Network and leader of the Aboriginal Education – Research (GEIR: GU). She recently completed a National Teaching Fellowship (OLT) called 'The role of Aboriginal Knowledges in higher education in the 21st Century'.

Elizabeth Mackinlay is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of Queensland where she teaches Arts Education, Indigenous Education, and Gender Studies. Liz completed her PhD in Ethnomusicology in 1998 and continues her work with Aboriginal women at Burrulula in the Northern Territory of Australia. She also completed a PhD in Education at the University of Queensland in 2003 and has a primary education degree from Charles Darwin University. Liz has been practicing ethnography for many years and has published many chapters and articles in the fields of ethnomusicology, Indigenous education, music and arts education, and feminist studies which draw upon this approach. Her most recent work explores decolonial options in ethnographic methods and takes an autoethnographic and creative approach to research and writing.

Keita Takayama is an associate professor of sociology of education and comparative education in School of Education, University of New England. Keita's scholarship has focused on globalization and education policy and globalization of educational knowledge with a particular focus on Asia. He is a recipient of Fulbright Fellowship (2003-6) and the Comparative and International Education Society's George Bereday Award (2011).

Robert Hattam is an Associate Professor in the School of Education, UniSA. His research focuses on teachers' work, educational leadership, critical and reconciliation pedagogies, refugees and school reform. His research program includes: (i) school-based studies that engage with teachers as they attempt to redesign pedagogical practices in response to their own existential classroom challenges and provocations for more justice; (ii) cultural studies in hopeful sites of public pedagogy of new social movements and especially socially-engaged Buddhism and 'reconciliation' broadly defined; and (iii) philosophical investigations into friendship, forgiveness, hospitality and conviviality. He has published in a range of international journals including *Sociology*, *Pedagogy*, *Culture and Society*, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *British Educational Research Journal*, *Social Identities*, *Critical Studies in Education*, and *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. He has been involved in book projects with others that include: *Schooling for a fair go*, *Teachers' work in a globalising economy*, *Dropping out, drifting off, being excluded: Becoming somebody without school*, *Connecting lives and learning*, and *Pedagogies for reconciliation*. He also has published a book entitled *Awakening-struggle: Towards a Buddhist critical theory*.

Dr **Stewart Riddle** is a Senior Lecturer and the School Coordinator (Research and Research Training) in the School of Teacher Education and Early Childhood at the University of Southern Queensland. His research interests include looking at intersections of literacies learning, music and the lives of young people,

alternative perspectives and equity in education, as well as postqualitative inquiry and music-based research practices.

Mindy Blaise is Professor of Early Childhood and Director, Research, in the College of Education, Victoria University and brings postfoundational perspectives (feminism, posthumanism, new materialism) to her work. She is a founding member and principal researcher of the Common World Childhoods Research Collective (www.commonworlds.net). She is currently producing new inventing methodologies through her *Walking with the more-than-human* residency that she is conducting with WalkingLab <http://walkinglab.org/author/mb/>