An Arts-Informed Narrative Inquiry into the Lived Experience of Women

Casual Academics

by

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ABSTRACT

An arts-informed narrative inquiry into the lived experience of women casual academics

In this PhD dissertation I present an account of a person-centred, feminist research project that explores the lived experience of women casual academics in Australia. Casual academics comprise more than 60% of academics employed in Australia, most of whom are women. Yet very little is known about the lived experience of these women.

As I understand lived experience to be known and communicated through story and narrative, I employ a narrative epistemology as a foundation to this research project’s design and communication. In addition, I understand lived experience to be fully embodied, messy and contextually situated. I therefore employ a narrative inquiry to elicit the emotionally and cognitively lived experience of six women casual academics from three different universities in South East Queensland. I then re-present these stories in the form of proto-verbatim theatre. Proto-verbatim theatre is a contemporary form of performance which employs the words and stories of research participants within a highly theatricalised aesthetic. The form of the genre makes explicit the constructedness of the re-presentation and cognitively and emotionally engages an audience in the stories of Others. I employ this form as it is congruent with the fully embodied stories of the research participants and their doubly Othered status as women and casual academics.

Throughout this dissertation my voice is present in a first person narration in order to invite readers to hear my position within the research and to illuminate three of the main themes and aims with which I engage. First, I claim that no text is without an author; second I identify this research as a particular, contextually situated account of one research project; and third I critique traditional, masculine discourse that propagates a duplicitous neutrality of authorship.

Finally, in addition to elements of a traditional PhD dissertation, I present a drama script, photographs and links to video recordings of a proto-verbatim theatre production in order to ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’ or explain (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) the lived experience of women casual academics. I also deliberately refrain from drawing ‘trustworthy conclusion and actionable recommendations’ in this dissertation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012), as the women casual academics’ stories, and my understanding of them, are ‘in-the-making’ (Childers, Rhee, & Daza, 2013); and the form of my communication seeks congruence with its content.
KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS INFORMING THE STUDY

I identify below a brief description of terms used within this PhD dissertation for which readers from outside the Australian higher education system, or those unfamiliar with feminist theory, may need further clarification. A concise discussion is intended to equip you/the reader with an understanding of how the terms will be employed in the text that follows.

Key terms employed within the Australian higher education system:

**Casual academia**: denotes the casualisation of academic work and the nature of the casualised academic environment.

**Casual academic**: refers to academics who are employed on a casual employment contract. These employees are usually contracted for a full semester period of teaching and teaching-related responsibilities.

**Sessional staff**: most of the Australian Higher Education literature refers to casual academics as sessional staff. Therefore within this dissertation the term ‘sessional staff discourse’ will be used to signify the body of literature and debate surrounding casual academics.

Key terms related to feminist theory:

**Bicultural**: Defines individuals who utilise styles of discourse that can be described as both masculine and feminine.

**Feminine**: Refers to the social construction of the female gender. The characteristics of feminine comprehension and communication informed by social processes include a preoccupation with interrelationships, caring and nurturing.

**Feminism**: Indicates a collection of movements and ideologies aimed at promoting the social, political and economic equality of the sexes.

**Research participants**: I use the term ‘research participants’, or ‘participants’, to refer to the women casual academics who took part in this research project. The term is used to convey my person-centred commitment to distribute the power within the participant/researcher relationship. It also connotes the active participation with which the women casual academics engaged in the storying and restorying process of this project (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

**Voice**: In the context of this dissertation ‘voice’ refers to more than the sound produced by the vocal organs of a vertebrate; it represents the power to express one’s beliefs, values and emotions. Voice is also the articulation of one’s perspective and experience.

**Women**: Indicates persons belonging to the female sex; adult female persons. This study examines ‘women’ casual academics as a distinct group of academics defined by their sex. However, as there is a strong argument that most women become feminised through a gendered socialisation process, this study is informed by the notion that many women have a
tendency to adopt feminine cognition and communication in the development of their voice. Women casual academics will thus be given an opportunity to voice their lived experience of casual academia in content and form that best suits their cognition and communication. Consequently, a methodological approach, research methods and research dissemination process that accommodates feminine, non-feminine and bicultural thinking and communicating will be adopted in this study.

**Style employed:**

The style and format contained within this dissertation is in accordance with the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Edition), 2009.
DECLARATION

Declaration of Originality

I Gail Crimmins declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given in the bibliography.

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Thank you to my supervisors Drs. Bill Allen and Sue Simon for their wit, wisdom, imagination and friendship. Bill and Sue – I am truly grateful to you both for your intellect, creativity and humanity. Namaste.

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Thanks to my parents and Dave’s for the fun, hugs and love you gave Eadie and Will whilst I was busy reading, rehearsing and writing. Your love, patience and kindness were a support I/they could not have done without.

Thank you to my parents also for bringing me up to understand that the moon belongs to everyone, and that not to act/not to speak, is itself a political act.

To Dave, Eadie and William – the loves of my life – my deepest thanks to you for giving me the confidence and space to undertake this research project.

“And I’d choose you; in a hundred lifetimes, in a hundred worlds, in any version of reality, I’d find you and I’d choose you.”
(Kiersten White, 2013)
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PROLOGUE: MY PHD JOURNEY

Thank you for reading this short preface or prologue to an/my arts-informed narrative inquiry into the lived experience of women casual academics. It is designed to support you through the remaining document, a document that combines a journey of ideas with a personal research journey, where my knowing, and therefore my communication, evolves. My reason for including this short prologue is to introduce myself as I, as researcher, am central to this research project and communication; it was my identification of women casual academics’ lack of voice, and my design and communication of this research project that motivated and formed the basis of this dissertation. This short prologue is therefore designed to introduce myself as a main protagonist in the project/narrative that follows.

I also explain briefly the context of this/my research journey and the impact this context has had on the form, in particular, of the dissertation that follows.

I was born in Cardiff, South Wales, into a ‘proud-to-be-working-class’ family of four. My mum was a support nurse in an aged care facility (we called them old people’s homes then) and my father was a labourer in the building and heavy industries. My mum ‘worked nights’ so she could take us and collect us from school and ‘do tea’ (a colloquialism, I was later to discover, for preparing dinner). My dad worked when and where he could, often working ‘a doubler’ (which means working back to back shifts of 6am to 2pm, and 2pm to 10pm, of hard physical labour). The coal and steel industries which were the economic backbone of South Wales were being closed down and I grew up at a time of high unemployment, so you took whatever work you could, whenever you could get it. It was also a time of political activism and the feminist movement was in full swing; I remember my mum wearing a badge that read, ‘A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle’. We laughed. At school (a local comprehensive) I was an average student academically, but
enjoyed hanging out with friends, making mock ‘Wham’ videos, netball and Drama. When I was 14 years old my drama teacher – Ms Free – wrote on my report card that I had ‘an excellent flair for Drama’. This comment was life-changing as I had never before excelled, or rather, had never before been considered excellent, in anything.

I continued to enjoy and excel in Drama and went on to study it at university. I loved it. My undergraduate course offered a practical drama training and we performed, ‘showed’ and ‘shared’ our work regularly, but were only required to create two short written pieces of work throughout the three year program. I therefore became a confident and competent performer but found written communication uncomfortable and intimidating. I could communicate clearly and with ease in my colloquial South Wales dialect and through character in physical and vocal performance, but neither of these languages seemed to resemble ‘university writing’. Indeed, Professor Peter Thomson, a highly respected theatre scholar, wrote at the bottom of my first piece of writing: ‘Very good understandings of character and plot, but you tend to write wearing your Sunday best’. This was another comment that stayed/stays with me.

The reason I wrote ‘wearing my Sunday best’, I realise now, was that I thought that the only form of academic communication that was acceptable in academia was the formal, terse, objective and masculine form of traditional discourse I encountered when reading academic literature. I thus adopted a persona, with a middle-class accent/code of academic respectability and convention – complete with dress code – to write ‘academically’. I didn’t trust that I could write as myself and still be heard, understood or taken seriously. I distinguished, probably unconsciously, between the words and expressions I use/d in my daily life, and the communication I use/d on paper.
This discursive separation continued until fairly recently. Indeed I began writing this dissertation unsure of my ability to communicate my ideas, learning and research process in writing. Although I adopted a first person narrative and expressed my ideas in words, I tended to employ a semi-formal academic persona, and was always surprised when my supervisors commended my writing. I was, until relatively recently, still intimidated and daunted by writing. However, in the process of researching this dissertation I encountered the writings of Cixous (1986, 1998), Richardson (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001) and most recently Childers, Rhee, and Daza (2013), Loch (2014), and MacLure (2013), who advocated and demonstrated a freedom in writing, writing as a learning process or coming to know, as a creative process, and as self-expression. The literature with which I engaged prompted me to reconceptualise writing, and slowly, slowly, ‘de-discipline’ my writing (Richardson, 1997) in order to re-discipline it into a bicultural communication (Blankenship & Robson, 1995) that merges traditional discourse with feminine communication. I gradually changed out of ‘my Sunday best’ for more comfortable, less, (p)restrictive and less rigid lines/designs.

This dissertation thus reflects a development of ideas and a development of my engagement with and presentation of ideas. It reflects my growing confidence to use writing to express how I understand the ideas and discourses with which I engaged, at a particular point in time. To illustrate my journey I share an email I recently sent to Professor Peter Thomson, an ex-professor of mine, and friend:

Hello Peter,
I hope you are feeling well. All is well here.

I’m just completing my dissertation (am aiming to complete it within the next week or two). It’s been a great experience so far, much better than I was lead to believe it would be. It’s been a bit like marriage for me, much happier than the metaphors suggest.

I’ve been thinking of you a lot recently.
In particular, I think of you as I reflect on my writing and consider how I enjoy playing with different forms of written communication, and using Cixous and
Richardson and various feminist writers as inspiration/demonstration... I discuss this reflection in the final chapter of my dissertation. As I wrote it I was reminded of a comment you made on a rare piece of written assessment I presented to you. You wrote that I tended to write wearing my ‘Sunday best’!
You were right.

I adopted a middle-class, masculine persona, including my Sunday best, because I thought that that’s what academic writing had to be. It’s only now that I’m happy to be a little messier, more personal and less dressed in my writing.

I thought I’d mention that you are named in my dissertation – I reference your insight when I explain my journey to the writing I now present, from the writing I employed wearing my Sunday best:-)

I am sending you love Peter.
OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Within this PhD dissertation I engage with philosophical, political, theoretical and aesthetic ideas and communication in order to investigate and express the lived experience of women casual academics in Australia. In doing so I juxtapose traditional academic discourse with forms of communication more congruent with the feminist/narrative lens adopted for the study. In addition, throughout this dissertation my voice is present in order to invite readers/you to hear my position within the research. I use my voice and first person narration to acknowledge that no text is without an author (Lather, 1991) and that this text is a particular, contextually situated account of one/my research project. I therefore offer no generalisable statements or solutions; I instead present and reflect on what I determine to be relevant considerations in relation to addressing the problem of the voicelessness of women casual academics.

This document is one of several artefacts I have produced to explore and communicate an arts-informed narrative inquiry; the others being a research text of a drama script, a live verbatim theatre performance, a series of photographs and six YouTube videos of a performed drama. In this document/dissertation I introduce an identified research problem, a summary and rationale for how I address the problem. I also present a review of literature that is pertinent to the focus of the study, and establish the conceptual and methodological frameworks employed in the research process. Moreover I incorporate a research outcome in the form of a proto-verbatim drama text, and illustrations and annotations of a proto-verbatim theatre event.

I present below a concise overview of how this dissertation is structured by offering a brief synopsis of the focus of each chapter.
In Chapter 1 I identify the research problem of women casual academics’ lack of voice within the discourses around sessional staffing. I also establish the limitations of the traditional forms of academic communication through which academic research is disseminated. In response to this I outline the details of a research project that simultaneously aims to provide women with an opportunity to communicate their lived experience of casual academia and extend the forms of academic discourse that can be considered as genuine academic communication. The rationale, intended outcomes and significance of the research project are also made known. Therefore, in Chapter One I contextualise an area of research investigation and offer a rationale for a proposed research project.

Chapter 2 explores the existing literature around sessional staffing and reviews established scholarship pertaining to women’s cognition and communication. The relationship between the two discourses under review (sessional staffing and women’s ways of knowing and communicating) are also considered. I propose that due to the restrictions of masculine and discursive traditional academic communication, non-traditional academic and arts-informed communication is a more congruent and genuine form through which to publicly make known the experiences of women casual academics.

In Chapter 3 I establish why and how a narrative epistemological framework and feminist perspective are adopted for the identified project. In particular, I posit that narrative knowing is a primordial process and recent theorisations around narrative as an epistemological framework are simply reflective of the current zeitgeist of postmodernity, as opposed to the development of a new mode of knowing. I also suggest that a narrative epistemology can support both the principles and aims of feminist research, and in specific reference to this study, can provide women casual academics with a feminine language through which to communicate their lived experience.
Chapter 4 outlines the methodological framework and research methods adopted in the research project, and offers a rationale for their employment. Specifically, I argue that a narrative inquiry suits the elicitation of the rich and lived experience of women casual academics, creates unity between narrative content and form, and affords participants the opportunity to voice their experience of casualised academia. I also demonstrate that the inherent narrativity of experience and the potential aesthetic quality of stories unearthed through narrative inquiry lend themselves to artistic representation. In doing so, I offer a rationale for employing an arts-informed narrative inquiry for this study.

In order to trouble the traditional, masculine discourse of academia, Chapter 5 presents a verbatim drama script based on the stories and voices of women casual academics. In accordance with the advice offered by the pioneers of narrative inquiry Clandinin and Connelly, I ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’ or explain the findings of a narrative inquiry research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I re-present or ‘show’ the general preoccupations and specific idiosyncrasies of the research participants’ stories within a polyvocal verbatim drama script.

Chapter 6 develops a dialectical argument concerning the representation of Others as expressed by Linda Martin Alcoff (2006, 2009), Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak (1987, 1998) and Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982) and presents the synthesis that under certain conditions it is better to speak with (Alcoff, 2009) or nearby Others (Minh-ha, 1987), than to stay silent and allow dominant discourse and hegemony to remain unchallenged. I accept the position that if one is to speak on behalf of Others it should be done in such a way that disrupts the disingenuous innocence of representation (Guttorm, 2012; Richardson, 1997).

Within Chapter 7 I outline the political and philosophical considerations that impact on creating theatre as a research communication, and discuss the genre of verbatim drama. I explore the various forms and sub-genres of verbatim drama and present an argument for
employing a proto-verbatim drama (Duggan, 2013), a particular sub-genre of post-verbatim (Beck, 2013), when re-presenting the stories of women casual academics.

In Chapter 8 I expose the specific dramaturgical and theatrical decisions I made in transforming a drama into a piece of proto-verbatim theatre. In particular, I discuss the mise-en scene I created in order to aesthetically engage and ‘make strange’ (Waters, 2011) the lived experience of women casual academics to an academic audience. Additionally, I illustrate this chapter with YouTube videos of the proto-verbatim theatre performance and photographs of the proto-verbatim theatre performance created as a re-presentation of the lived experience of women casual academics.

Within Chapter 9 I recast the traditional conclusion into a short reflection or re-view of the main ideas and practices that inform/ed this research project. In particular, I reflect upon and re-view the three main questions with which I engage/d in this research project. I include in this chapter some responses to the verbatim theatre event provided by audience members and research participants.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION

CHAPTER 1: DISSERTATION INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an introduction to the research project by providing a brief overview of the research questions, the problem to be addressed, the aims and rationale of the project, and a brief discussion of its significance and intended outcomes. Its function is to offer a rationale and context for the detailed research investigation, and communication form that will follow.

The Research Questions

The three research questions I explored in this project are:

How do women casual academics describe their work experience?
What are the characteristics of person-centred research?
What considerations inform the development of a form of communication that is congruent with the lived experience of women casual academics?

The first question with which I engaged is: ‘How do women casual academics describe their work experience?’ Subsumed within this question were two areas of investigation. The first explores the actual descriptions, scenarios, relationships and associated emotions that women use to describe their lived experience of casual academic work. Thus, I investigated the substance of the experience of women casual academics. The second area of consideration is the form of communication through which women casual academics express their lived experience. That is, I was interested to know whether women casual academics communicate their experiences in written or oral form; whether they employ metaphoric or literal forms of communication; whether they create detailed descriptions of specific events with associated feelings, or present a more condensed narrative such as a time-line with bullet points of employment status. Finally, the research
question investigated whether women casual academics describe their experiences chronologically, or through an emotional or themed narrative.

The second research question I considered in this dissertation is, ‘What are the characteristics of person-centred research?’ As my main aim within this project was to expand the discourses around sessional staffing to include the narratives and voices of women casual academics, this study was focused on exploring how to support casual academics’ communication of their lived experience. A person-centred approach to engaging with the women casual academic participants was therefore central to an investigation concerned with creating opportunity for women to voice their experience.

Being person-centred in academic research requires identifying and respecting research participants wholly as unique individuals and social beings (Schmid, n.d.). This conceptualisation combines two seemingly paradoxical notions of the constituent elements of humankind. First, being person-centred means recognising individuals for their substantial selves, their individuality, their dignity and their independence. Concomitantly, persons are also acknowledged for their social selves, for the way that they have been supported in their development by social and cultural influence. That is, they are valued for their interdependence. Yet most academic research and communication processes inhabit a positivist and masculinist paradigm of researcher objectivity that distances the researcher from both research participants and readers (Sefcovic & Bifano, 2004) and that conflict with person-centredness. I therefore discuss how person-centred research might be practised and identify its characteristics in researching the lived experience of women casual academics.

The final research question I addressed is, ‘What considerations inform the development of a form of communication that is congruent with the lived experience of women casual academics?’ Traditional research communication fails to fully capture lived
experience, which is often understood and expressed narratively (Bakhtin, 1984, 1986; Bruner, 1986, 1990, 1996; Hardy, 1968) and imagistically (Fleckenstein, 1996; Langer, 1942, 1962) with its own rhythm and ‘logic of sense’ (Deleuze, 1990). My second research question therefore aimed to explore the ideas and practices that impact upon the creation of academic communication that authentically and ethically expresses women’s fully lived and unique experience. Considerations that engaged in this question include issues of representation as discussed by Alcoff, (2006, 2009); Spivak, (1987, 1998) and Minh-ha, (1982, 1989) the myth of neutral representation (Richardson, 1997), and the aesthetic potential of performed drama to re-present the ‘fully embodied’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) lives of women.

I predominantly explore the first question, ‘How do women casual academics describe their work experience?’ in Chapter 5 where I re-present the substance and form of the research participants’ communications. In particular, I re-present the women’s stories in a drama form where ‘the representation and generation of knowledge are sometimes inseparable’ (Cutcher, 2004, p.43) and where the essence of the women’s narratives is distilled and illuminated (Wake, 2013). In Chapter 8 I also describe and illustrate, with video footage and photographs, a proto-verbatim drama performance designed to express the lived experience of women casual academics and in Chapter 9 I explore the storied nature of the women participants’ communications.

I reflect on the characteristics of person-centred research in Chapter 4, where I consider both the planning and the practice of person-centred research by discussing how person-centred research is focused upon the research participants’ whole person-hoods and requires full disclosure of research processes and negotiated research decision making. In addition, I consider the person-hoods of readers/audience in Chapter 5 by allowing them an
opportunity to create their own understanding of the participants’ stories. I finally reflect upon the shared characteristics of feminist and person-centred research in Chapter 9.

I consider the question, ‘What informs the development of a research communication that is congruent with the lived experience of women casual academics?’ in Chapter 2 where I critique traditional research communication process; Chapter 6 where I discuss issues of representation and the problems of speaking for Others (Alcoff, 2006) and Chapter 8 in exploring scholarartistic re-presentation of qualitative research data. In Chapter 7 I also discuss the philosophical, ethical, aesthetic and practical considerations for creating a proto-verbatim drama compatible with person-centred and feminist research. Finally, in Chapter 9 I discuss the affective role of the researcher in creating scholarartistic research communication.

However, I offer above only a brief overview of where and how I mainly address or consider the three questions; in reality the questions are not always addressed or considered in isolation from one another as discrete ‘themes’ or items of inquiry. Consequently, I present the overlaps and interconnected relationship between the research questions. For instance, my person-centred engagement with research participants’ impacts on the way that they express their lived experience of casual academic work; and the nature of the participants’ communication informs my development of a form of communication that is congruent with their story or expressed communication. The questions and discussion they stimulate are therefore not compartmentalised. The form of this dissertation is instead fluid and non-teleological as I reject masculinist scholarship that poses discrete research questions leading to definitive conclusions or actionable recommendations. Instead I discuss the scholarship around these questions, and reflect ‘in’ and ‘on’ the action of my practice as a person-centred, feminist, arts-informed narrative inquirer. My research process and communication therefore attends to all three questions with some fluidity and cohesion in
order to discuss and address the problem of women casual academics’ lack of voice within the current discourses around sessional staffing.

The Research Problem

The problem I chose to explore in this PhD research project is the lack of voice of women casual academics within the discourses around sessional staffing. Hitherto, the discourses around sessional staffing have politically contextualised casual academics within arguments about the causes and consequences of academic casualisation (for example, May, Strachan, Broadbent, & Peetz, 2011; Percy, Scoufis, Parry, Goody, & Hicks, 2008; May, Strachan, Broadbent, & Peetz, 2011; Rea, 2012). Yet the experience of casual academics is not known (Coates, et al., 2009). In particular, the dominant discourses have depended upon large-scale surveys created by people outside of the casual academic experience and tend to describe causal relationships within teleological rhetorical structures (Brown, Goodman, & Yasukawa, 2010). Additionally, the etic accounts of sessional work have been generated by maintaining traditional researcher/participant power relationships that fail to individualise the research participant or offer an opportunity of ‘voice’ to casual academics. Finally, within the form and content of the academic discourse issues of sex and gender have ostensibly been ignored, whilst covertly connoting a masculine paradigm. Consequently, the fully lived experience of women casual academics has ‘yet to be voiced’ (Arnot & Reay, 2007) so remains unknown (Coates et al., 2009).

Current academic scholarship around ‘sessional staffing’ politically and financially contextualise an increase in sessional staffing with an increase in student enrolments and decreased public funding, increased student-staff ratios, and the general casualisation of employment across Australian workplaces. First, increases in student enrolment and decreases in public funding for higher education have been used to account for a rise in
sessional staffing. For instance, figures that reveal growth in student enrolment from 138,666 in 1985 to 1,192,657 in 2011 (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2010; Rea, 2012, p.9), are considered alongside statistics that expose a decline of 28% of public funding per student within higher education between 1995 and 2005, to account for the rapid increase in casual academic employment in Australia over the last 20 years (Rea, 2012). Second, increases in student-staff ratios for undergraduate teaching from 13:1 in 1986, to 21:1 in 2010 (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2010), are used to identify the growing demands within the work of casual academia, given that 80% of undergraduate teaching is undertaken by sessional staff (Percy et al., 2008). They are also used to appeal to academic administrators to increase staff-student ratios. Finally, casual employment figures in academia are compared with figures from other industries to reveal that in 2011 19% of all employed persons in Australia were employed on casual contracts, yet 60% of the Australian academic workforce was casually employed (May et al., 2011). This comparison is used as part of a political argument to pressure university administrators to increase the number of ongoing academic appointments in Australian universities. Whilst this contextualisation within the literature around sessional staffing creates a legitimate and necessary discourse, it concentrates on positivist ‘causal’ relationships between economic factors external to the casual academic, and the nature of their employment. In addition, it appears to be driven by a political telos, such as a call for increases in public funding for higher education, policy reform for academic employment, or caps on student-staff ratios. The discourses around sessional staffing are thus teleologically structured within which casual academics become objectified as unnamed numbers or percentages used in political context and contest. Consequently, within the scholarly contextualisation of contemporary academia, the lived experience of casual academics is not documented or acknowledged.
Scholarship that is more centrally focused on casual academics themselves appears to be dominated by their representation as a risk to the student learning experience, their embodiment of new market principles in academic administration, and their marginalised or peripheral status. First, a dominant theme in the scholarship around sessional staffing is a critique of the quality of teaching undertaken by casual academics. For instance, Brown et al., (2010), Percy and Beaumont (2008), Smith (2010) and Umbach (2007) purport that casual academics offer significantly less teaching quality than permanently employed academic staff, have a negative impact on student retention, and suggest that a high percentage of casual academics in an institution is a risk to all academics and high quality tertiary education. Yet, their argument is avowedly a critique of the casualisation of academic work. For instance, Smith asserts that his argument is ‘in no way meant to be critical of any particular staff... it is evident, however, that overuse of part-time faculty is a widespread systematic problem’ (Smith, 2010, p.112). Within this discourse casual academics are thus used as representative of a systemic strategy or ‘problem’. Additionally, the literary and political technique of using the work of a body of people to represent a critique of casualisation within academia serves to subjectify casual academics and perpetuate their anonymity. This technique of subjectification is employed again in the associated argument that advancements in academic casualisation represent new market principles (NMP) in academic administration. For instance Brown et al. (2010) draw a causal relationship between the deployment of NMP in academic administration with the fragmentation of academic work, the casualisation of academic labour and the marginalisation of casual academics. This polemic homogenises and victimises casual academics and once again creates direct causal relationships within an unproblematic and teleological logic; a logic that is epistemologically positivist. In addition, what is described as the experience of casual academics is framed by scholars outside of that experience, a
characteristic that is true of most of the discourse around casual academics’ peripheral status within academia (Pocock, Buchanan, & Campbell, 2004). This final theme of casual academic marginalisation is central to research presented by Fine, Graham, and Paxman (1992), Junor (2004), and Ryan and Bhattacharyya (2012), who draw on the findings of large-scale survey responses to conclude that casual academics experience increasing feelings of insecurity and marginalisation in their work. Whilst I welcome the focus on casual academics themselves and an exploration of their feelings and experience, I share Brown et al.’s concern that the use of large-scale surveys cannot capture casual academics’ experience (Brown et al., 2010). Surveys often create parameters that restrict what research participants are invited to discuss and establish a hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant. Surveys as a research tool can therefore privilege the preoccupations and status of the researcher, as well as serve to homogenise and typify survey respondents (Mills, 2000). Finally, quantitative research instruments employed to create typologies and general responses have been criticised for their ‘essentially masculine way of interpreting’ experience (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p. 40). Thus, current scholarship around sessional staffing appears to rely upon unequal power relations and traditionally academic (causal) discourse structures to represent casual academics. Consequently, casual academics appear objectified and subjectified whilst ‘very little [is] known about the experience of casual staff’ (Coates et al., 2009, p.10).

The final problem I identified with the existing representation of casual academics is that sex and gender have been ignored both within the form and content of the academic discourse. Even though the discourses surrounding sessional staffing occasionally reference the fact that most Australian casual academics are women (May et al., 2011), the quantitative research that informs sessional staff discourses universalises ‘sessional staff experience’ without any recognition of gender difference in experience. Indeed, the discourses generally
subsume the issue of gender into broader academic statistical inequality that fails to recognise the double marginalisation (Fanon, 1967) of the casual woman academic (compared to the tenured, male academic). Second, by ignoring the sex of the majority of casual academics the discourses fail to be person-centred. As Schmid advises, person-centred research takes into account that ‘persons exist as women and men not as neutrals’ (Schmid, n.d.). Finally, the form of the dominant academic discourse around sessional staffing employs objective language and linear, teleological structures with adversarial intent; a form of rhetoric described as masculinist. Blair, Brown, and Baxter (1994), Hawkins (1989), and Sefcovic and Bifano (2004) identify that language of impersonal scholarship creates hierarchy and division between the researcher, the subject of the research, and the reader; blurs the boundaries of masculine and positivist paradigms; and represents masculine bias whilst masquerading as objective reportage. Thus, the current literature on sessional staffing excludes the voice of women casual academics by universalising women and men’s experience and employing a masculinist discursive form that serves to reinforce teleological and positivist structures and paradigms. In resistance to the objectification, subjectification and homogenisation of ‘sessional staff’ and the masculine and positivist discursive form of the dominant academic discourses around sessional staffing, I planned to unearth and make known women’s experience of casual academia.

**The Aims of the Research**

My three main aims for this research project were: to expand the discourses around sessional staffing to include accounts of the lived experiences of women casual academics, to employ person-centred approaches to all aspects of this research, and to create a form of academic communication apposite for the expression of women’s lived experience.
My first and main aim for this research project was to extend the current discourses around sessional staffing to include the experience and voice of women casual academics. Australian women casual academics account for 57% of all casual academics (May et al., 2011; Rea, 2012), yet are absent, as authors and subjects, in the discourses around sessional staffing. Therefore, this research planned to expand the existing discourse to include accounts of the experience of some of the 38,190 Australian women casual academics. By undertaking a narrative inquiry into the lived experiences of women casual academics I strove to textually enfranchise women casual academics by making their stories and understanding of casual academia a significant preoccupation within academic scholarship, and the women research participants as the protagonists within a re-presentation of their experience. Their words, frames of reference and personally preferred means of communication therefore formed the basis of this research and research communication it generated. Finally, this project did not intend to contest the current representations of casual academia or their frames of reference. Instead I intended to place the unearthed stories of women casual academics alongside the existing literature in order to create a scholarly dialogic relationship, or dialectic.

In this research project I strove not to speak of or for women casual academics (Alcoff, 2006, 2009) but instead offered the women participants’ an opportunity to create their own story – in content and form – of casual academia, and to speak nearby them (Minh-ha, 1982). Through engaging in a narrative inquiry I offered six women casual academics the opportunity to express their experience of casual work through whatever means of communication they felt most suited them and their lived experience. I intended that by expressing their individual story in their preferred means of communication, women casual academics might develop their unique and authentic ‘voice’. My aim therefore was to add an authentic layer of textual communication, in content and form, to the existing academic
discourses around sessional staffing by re-presenting women’s voices and their particular insight/experience into the nature of academic work.

Further, I employed a person-centred approach to the elicitation and re-presentation of women casual academics’ voice. As the sociologist Basil Bernstein argued, focus should be given to how voice is produced, not merely the content or form of communication (Bernstein, 1990). In particular, he claimed that voice is heard or muted, elaborated on or diminished, depending on whether the text producer/researcher sanctions the elicitation of voice and how they organise and sequence any sanctioned communication. This understanding of how voice can be muted seems to describe the use of researcher power in traditional hierarchical research relationships. Within these relationships the researcher/text producer draws clear parameters around what and how participants can disclose their experience and decides what, if any, of the participants’ voice is included in their research communication. Traditional research relationships thus privilege the perspective and voice of the researcher. In contrast, this research project aimed to trouble the traditional researcher role by adopting a person-centred approach to all aspects of research, including my relationship with research participants. By engaging with research participants as human beings I sought to accept them with what Schmid describes as ‘a non purpose oriented openness’ (Schmid, n.d.). Thus I aimed to resist any expectations about what or how research participants may want to communicate their casual academic experience, or that they will want to communicate their lived experience at all. I was instead ‘present’ to the participants and fully accepting of the stories and experiences they shared. Therefore, the story of women’s casual academic experience I represented in performance and dissertation emerged from the participants’ stories, as opposed to being developed from a pre-organised schema or telos. Additionally, I did not exert my ‘researcher power’ through a narrative analysis process as analysis can reduce participant narratives to a series of themes or percentages. Instead the women’s stories were restoryed in
collaboration with the participants into a performed drama. By sharing the developing drama with participants for comment, extension or edit the women participants helped to develop an expression of their lived experience that was physical, vocal, cognitive and emotional; expressed in a form congruent with its content. The person-centred story gathering and restorying process allowed individual details of experience, and what participants identified as significant about their unique experience, to be illuminated. Thus, by engaging in respectful and collaborative relationships with research participants I did not presume to speak ‘of’ or ‘for’ them (Alcoff, 2006, 2009); but instead worked together in collaboration to create the story of their lived experience.

The final aim of this project was to develop a research communication that re-presents women’s lived experience of casual academia in a form congruent with the content and expression of the women’s stories and a person-centred approach to research communication. Traditional academic discourse is commonly terse and teleological (Hawkins, 1989) and is designed to create academic argument (Tannen, 2002). However, lives are experienced and understood tangentially, chronologically (through time) but not linearly (Deleuze, 1990). In addition, lived experience is not understood in terms of the establishment and support of a thesis, or indeed in adversarial relationship with a contrasting thesis. In short, traditional academic discourse is incongruent in form with lived experience and therefore ill-equipped to express it. Instead experience is physical, emotional and psychological, it is fully embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and significantly, it is both lived and remembered narratively (Bakhtin, 1984, 1986; Bruner, 1986, 1990, 1996; Hardy, 1968). Thus, I considered the most congruent form of communication through which to express lived experience to be a fully embodied narrative, replete with a capacity to express the physical, emotional and psychological experience of individuals. In addition, Deleuze claimed that the rhythm of life has its own ‘logic of sense’ (Deleuze, 2004) whilst Langer (1942, 1962) and Fleckenstein
(1996) revealed that experience and memory are understood imagistically. I aimed therefore to create a form of research communication that was congruent with the fully embodied, rhythmic, imagistic narratives of women casual academics.

The Reasons for this Research

This project was required to afford women casual academics an opportunity to develop their voice, to combat the oppression of voicelessness, and to help them achieve their career aspirations. I also undertook this project in order to include women casual academics’ voice in the scholarship around sessional staffing, and help to illuminate gendered disadvantage in academia.

The lack of voice of women casual academics in the existing discourses around sessional staffing is a problem because, as Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule argued, women who are denied a voice in public discourse, who rely ‘on what others told them about themselves to get any sense of self’ (Belenky et al., 1986, p.31) suffer the oppression of voicelessness. Within the dominant discourses around sessional staffing women casual academics have hitherto been spoken ‘of’ or ‘for’ (Alcoff, 2006, 2009). It is important, therefore, from a feminist perspective, that women are given the opportunity to present their lived experience and story of casual academia in order to develop their own voice and presence, and resist the oppression of voicelessness. Voice in this context refers to the expression in content and form of one’s beliefs, values, emotions and experience. In order to offer women casual academics the opportunity to share their story and develop the form and content of their understanding, six women academics were invited to share their story of casual academia in a communication form with which they felt most comfortable. Women casual academics’ development of voice and contribution to academic discourse is particularly important because, as May et al. (2011) identified, a lack of contribution towards
academic discourse is a barrier to gaining ongoing academic tenure. Therefore, given that
this is what most women casual academics aspire to (May et al., 2011; Rea, 2012), it is vital
for these women to develop a voice and presence in academic scholarship. In addition, a lack
of contribution by women casual academics to academic scholarship serves to perpetuate a
narrative of academia that privileges the already privileged male academic voice, fails to
make visible the gendered practice/disadvantages in academic workplaces (Rindfleish,
Sheridan, & Kjeldal, 2009; Strachan, Burgess, and Henderson, 2007), and prevents the
celebration of a multiplicity of stories and storytellers within academic organisations (Boje,
1995).

When academic discourse is generated and maintained by ‘established’, fully tenured
academics within a masculinist discursive form, the views and practices of established
academics and academia are privileged. This is especially true when the voice (in form and
content) of ‘Others’ is not included (Lea & Street, 1998). This appears to be the case within
the dominant discourses around sessional staffing where casual academics’ only contribution
is as anonymous respondents to pre-set research questions in large scale surveys established
from a privileged academic frame of reference. Consequently, academic scholarship around
sessional staffing perpetuates a discourse of academia that privileges the already privileged
academic voice. In contrast, this project adopted a person-centred approach to researching
casual academia by inviting women to create their own frames of reference and discourse
based on their uniquely lived experience of casual academic employment. I simply asked the
open-ended question, ‘When and in what circumstance did you become a casual academic?’
to invite the women participants to share their story in whatever form they felt most
comfortable and felt best suited their experience. Thus, each woman/participant was
privileged as protagonist and author in her own story of casual academia. This project was
required therefore so that women casual academics’ story, replete with individual focus, frame of reference and form, could be acknowledged.

Finally, the sex and gender of casual academics had been ignored within the form and content of the academic discourse issues around sessional staffing, so gendered practices in academic workplaces remain invisible. This discourse ignores the fact that 75% of the fractional full-time staff and the majority of staff on casual contracts and academics at Level A (associate lecturer/tutor) are women, while the senior ranks of Professor (Level E) and Associate Professor (Level D) remain male dominated (Carvalho & Machado, 2010; Dever et al., 2008; May et al., 2011). In response, Strachan et al. (2007) have identified that public discourse around women’s academic experience is increasingly urgent. They argue that more traditional vehicles for communication in academia, such as an annual conference on equity issues, have decreased since the 1980s and that there has been a public retraction in the past two decades from equal opportunity policies designed around specific targeted groups such as women. Strachan et al. therefore request a refocus on the specific equity issues women in academia face. Their request is supported by Rindfleish et al. (2009) who suggest that ‘more stories need to be heard in openly public spaces for there to be some recognition of the ongoing disadvantage women experience in academia’ (Rindfleish et al., 2009, p.487).

Finally, Rindfleish et al. call for a presentation of women academics’ stories in public places in order to resist the hegemony of privileged stories of academia (Rindfleish et al., 2009) and Boje established the importance of celebrating a multiplicity of stories and storytellers within academic organisations (Boje, 1995). This research project was therefore required for the story of women casual academics to become publicly known and acknowledged; for the unique experience as women casual academics, within an ‘incredibly hierarchical gendered institution’ (Hearn, 2001, p. 72) to be made visible; and for the gendered practices in academic workplaces to be illuminated.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION

The Significance and Innovation of the Research

The main aspects of this research project that were new and different from previous research around sessional staffing include a focus on the lived experience of women casual academics, a person-centred approach to research relationships and processes, and the development of a polyvocal, proto-verbatim drama as a form of academic communication.

The primary significance of this study lay in its aim to elicit and re-present the voice of women casual academics in order to extend the current discourses around sessional staffing. Hitherto, as established, the discourses in this area focus upon the causes and consequences of casualisation within the Australian tertiary education sector, within which casual academics’ only contribution has been as nameless respondents to pre-determined survey questions. In addition, women casual academics have been represented as part of a homogenised and genderless group of ‘sessional staff’ situated on the periphery of university life (Kimber, 2003). Women casual academics are thus nameless, voiceless, identity-less, sex/gender-less and seemingly marginalised both within academia and academic discourse. This research is distinctive in providing women an opportunity to make known their lived experience of casual academia so that they no longer suffer the oppression of having to rely on others to gain a sense of self (Belenky et al. 1986, p.31). The project’s value also lies in its potential to establish a dialogue between accounts of women casual academics’ experience with the current narrative of privileged academics. This dialogue supports the generation of a ‘multiplicity of stories and storytellers’ within academic organisations (Boje, 1995, p.1000). Therefore, this research project is significant as the first narrative inquiry designed to unearth the words and experience of ‘yet to be voiced’ women casual academics in Australian universities (Arnot & Reay, 2007). The process of publicly making visible and heard the experience of non-voiced peoples required that I adopt a person-centred approach whereby
the values, intentions and decisions of the voiceless/research participants are privileged throughout the entire research process.

The person-centred approach I adopted within this research project is a second aspect of research significance. Person-centred research is popular in some aspects of medical research and treatment such as social gerontology and psychotherapy (Dewing, 2002; Schmid, n.d.), yet I have not yet found any evidence that it has been employed within the discipline area of Higher Education, and is yet to be engaged in research around sessional staffing. Moreover, person-centred research is in direct contrast to the traditional and hierarchical research relationships adopted within the quantitative research that forms the basis of the current discourse around sessional staffing. Person-centred research instead conceives persons contributing to research outcomes not as subjects or objects but as equal partners in research; wherein ‘attention is given to the subjective and experiential realities of persons beings’ (Dewing, 2002, p.5). Person-centred research is also essentially ‘participatory’ as all research decisions are negotiated between researcher/s and research participants. It is also based on contextually situated relationships (Dewing, 2002), and resists the strong tendencies in individualistic and ‘hypercognitive culture’ to exclude the emotional, relational, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of well-being of research participants (Post, 1995 p. 35). Finally, whilst all people are equal, within person-centred research it is important to stress sex and gender-specific issues if engaging with people’s experience. Schmid reminds us that ‘persons exist as women and men not as neutrals’ (Schmid, n.d).

The four constituent elements of person-centred research: research partnerships; contextually situated decision making; valuing the emotional, relational, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of research participants; and the consideration of sex and gender, thus permeated all aspects of this research project. First, participants were invited to exercise their
agency in deciding if and how they wished to express their story/experience. They were also offered the opportunity to collaborate in restorying and re-presenting their stories of casual academia into a public performance. Second, the specific nature of research communication/restoryed drama was determined by the particularised expressions of communication that were shared by women casual academics during the storytelling phase of research. Thus, situated and emergent decision making informed the exact nature of the research and its congruent form of communication. Third, performed drama was employed as a medium of research communication as it has the capacity to equally include each of the research participants’ story in content and form, as well as an ability to include the women’s non-cognitive ways of knowing and fully embodied experience. Finally, this project was centred on the particularistic nature of the lived experiences of ‘women’ casual academics, not neutral persons or a homogenised and genderless ‘sessional staff’. This research project thus brought to the fore ‘sex and gender-specific issues’ within a person-centred research so that the ‘traditional predominant male perspective [was] balanced by ‘female’ perspectives and descriptions’ (Schmid, n.d.).

The final aspect of research significance is the form through which the lived experience and voice of women casual academics were made manifest. In this project I specifically employed a polyvocal, verbatim drama in order to support the person-centredness of project, offer an opportunity for dialogue with existing discourses around sessional staff, and create congruency between women’s lived experience and voice and the form of academic communication.

The current discourse around sessional staffing can be criticised for its hierarchical, elitist and exclusionary form of communication. In particular, Sefcovic and Bifano (2004) identified that the academic tradition of adopting scientistic language in a highly structured
and objective form serves to create an intellectual distance and hierarchy between researchers and the people they study, and the readers they write ‘to’. Additionally, through its use of teleological structures the existing scholarship inhabits a monologic form and modernist, ‘readerly’ intent (Barthes, 1970). As Barthes identified, ‘readerly’ texts are mono-perspectival and present a pre-determined ‘argument’ in a linear logic that prescribes to the reader only one specific reading of the text – that of the writer. Indeed, the current literature on sessional staffing presents causal relationships unproblematically in order to determine a political telos and homogenises research participants in a totalising ‘grand narrative’.

Lyotard (1984) describes grand-narratives as presenting an inner-connection between events in order to legitimatise existing power relations and traditions. In resistance to the monologic readerly grand narrative of sessional staff discourse, and therefore innovative within its field of scholarship, I employed a polyvocal and dialogical research communication with ‘writerly’ intent (Barthes, 1970). Polyphony, as described by Bakhtin (1984) is a form of communication that presents multiple voices, perspectives and positions of truth. Utilisation of a polyphonic communication is congruent with the person-centred approach of this research project as it can enable the re-presentation of everyperson/participant’s narratives. Each individual story, or “petits récits” (Lyotard, 1984), is juxtaposed with another in order to present multiple expressions of experience that are of equal value. I therefore did not privilege any one story or storyteller in the construction of a polyvocal, dialogical communication. In particular, by re-presenting women casual academics’ petits récits I made possible three dialogues. First, my re-presentation and juxtaposition of each of the participants’ stories reflected my dialogue with the originally presented stories/women’s interview data. Second the public re-presentation of the stories helped to create a dialogue between the women’s experience presented and an audience who engaged dialogically with the multiple meanings and forms of expression re-presented. Finally, I made manifest a
polyvocal account of women casual academic’s experience in order for it to engage in
dialogue with the existing literature pertaining to sessional staff. In addition, as Gould
(1996) and Etherington (2004) claimed, human life and agency cannot be ‘explained’ or
contained in written form. Experience, understood narratively, requires ‘interpretation’ not
explanation (Hendry, 2010); and interpretation requires communication methods that are
distinct from written argument. In this project I therefore presented an interpretation of
women’s casual academic experience in the form of verbatim drama. Developed in the 1960s
in the UK verbatim drama is predominantly employed to investigate and present the stories of
the marginalised and under-represented, and is concerned with the empowerment of its
contributors (Paget, 1987). The key to developing verbatim theatre is listening acutely to oral
or written stories offered by participants and re-presenting them with authenticity (Paget,
1987). In addition, as re-presentations are a translation or staging of shared stories
(Richardson, 1997) in order to make explicit the constructedness of the re-presentation I
employ proto-verbatim drama; a sub-genre of verbatim drama that illuminates the essence of
participants using visual image/metaphor, song and direct address in order to both cognitively
and emotionally engage an audience. Finally, the use of a dramatic form has the capacity to
engage an audience both cognitively and emotionally in the actions, words, perceptions,
images, gestures, and rhythms of women casual academics’ experience. The dramatic form
used thus included ‘the emotional, relational, aesthetic and spiritual aspects’ of research
participants as persons (Post 1995, p.3). Therefore, proto-verbatim drama was a congruent
and authentic form through which to re-present the ‘fully embodied’ lived experience of
individuals (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In conclusion, this research project is significant as the first narrative inquiry designed
to unearth the words and experience of ‘yet to be voiced’ women casual academics in
Australian universities (Arnot & Reay, 2007). Its distinctiveness lay also in its person-
centred research approach, making it the first person-centred research in the field of sessional staffing. Finally, a polyvocal, dialectical, proto-verbatim restorying offers a unique form of communication through which to express the lived experience of women casual academics.

**Outcomes I Designed to Achieve in this Research Project**

I designed this research project to produce two main outputs, a PhD dissertation and the public performance of a verbatim drama that cognitively and affectively engages an audience. Both of these outcomes focus upon the lived experience of women casual academics. As a direct result of these intended outputs I anticipated several related outcomes. In particular, this research project is designed to contribute to the empowerment and acknowledgement of women casual academics, add to higher education and sessional staff scholarship, contribute to qualitative research scholarship, and support the extension of what is considered legitimate communication of academic research.

I planned for this research project to empower women casual academics as tellers of their own experience, as contributors to scholarly discourse, and as part of a creatively liberating movement that diversifies the public narratives of academia. Heikkinen, Huttunen, and Syrjälä (2005) attested that effective research can make the participants believe in their own capabilities and skills. I therefore expected that by engaging in a person-centred research project, which invites the research participants to present their experience in a form of expression that suits them and their experience most, would help the women participants to feel empowered and confident authors of their own experience. Given space, time and encouragement the women participants are encouraged to remember forgotten or repressed ways of self-expression or find new ways through which to express their values, understandings and experience. This was certainly the case in a joint action research project undertaken by 10 women schoolteachers from different school levels. As Heikkinen et al. explained ‘one teacher said she had re-discovered the joy of writing. Another was happy to
have learnt to express even her negative feelings in her working community’ (Heikkinen et al., 2005, p.9). Second, as the stories of women casual academics in their own words and expressions were publicly re-presented it was expected that they would feel empowered by their contribution to academic discourse and their ability to provoke critical discussion. Indeed, it is also possible for other hitherto voiceless academics to feel vicariously empowered and encouraged to make their narrative known. The women casual academics might therefore feel creatively liberated by sharing their stories, that sit outside of traditional and privileged academic discourse, and contribute to the diversification and multiplication of stories and storytellers within their profession (Boje, 1995).

It is important to state here that I, as researcher, did not expect to ‘empower’ the research participants. Empowerment is a process that people need to undertake for themselves, and ‘the very institutional structures that put one group in a position to empower, also work to undermine the act of empowerment’ (Gruber & Tricket, cited in Anderson, 1996, p.76). That is, the act of helping to empower can lead to dependency on the person providing empowerment (Lennie, 2001). Therefore, I intended that through this project the participants might empower themselves through developing personal insights and communication, by recognising their contribution to academic discourses and the diversification of academic narratives. However, what this project did offer women casual academics is acknowledgement. The philosopher Thomas Nagal defined acknowledgement as ‘what happens to knowledge… when it is sanctioned, when it is made part of the public scene’ (cited in Weschler, 1990, p. 4). By making public the stories of women casual academics it was intended that their experience and insights would become part of the public consciousness, and their experience and voice be acknowledged. Therefore, as a result of this research project women casual academics might feel both (self) empowered and publicly acknowledged.
It was also intended that this research project would contribute to academic discourse around higher education and the authenticity of participant ‘voice’ within social justice and qualitative research scholarship. As has been stated, the experience of ‘sessional staff’ was not yet known (Coates et al., 2009), and the efficacy of the large scale survey instrument that is privileged in developing the scholarship around sessional staffing is critiqued (Brown et al., 2010; Pocock et al., 2004). I therefore designed this research project to make known the experiences of women casual academics through a narrative inquiry and for these findings to contribute to the scholarship around sessional staffing. Further, much has been written about the difficulty in capturing and re-presenting participant voice (Polkinghorne, 2007). The debate surrounding this difficulty is termed ‘the crises in representation’ (Smith, 2004) and it queries the assumption that any human subject inquiry can know or understand the life/voice of any Other (Alcoff, 2006, 2009). Consequently, it is considered to be impossible to innocently/neutrally represent the lives of Others (Guttorm, 2012). Therefore central discourses in qualitative research are concerned with minimising the gap between the lived experiences and the participants’ telling of their experience, the researcher’s communication of the participant’s story, and the practice of ethically exposing the re-teller’s role in translating and re-presenting stories of lived experience. I consider therefore that my reflections on the person-centred strategies I employed to unearth the lived experience of women casual academics can contribute to scholarship that explores ethical strategies to explicitly re-present ‘yet to be voiced’ (Arnot & Reay, 2007) stories. I intended that the discussion emanating from this research project would contribute to higher education and qualitative research scholarship.

The final outcome I designed for this project was an extension to what is considered legitimate communication of academic research. In the first instance, I employed a polyvocal, proto-verbatim drama as a form through which to express the lived experience of
women casual academics. This form of communication, though congruent with the person-centred nature of the project and synergistic with the polyvocal and dialogic stories of women casual academics, was a departure from traditional academic communication. Therefore, this dissertation constitutes a second form of research communication, a written document to accompany and discuss the rationale and process in which I engaged to unearth the stories of women casual academics, and the restorying process I undertook to re-present the women’s stories. This dissertation, though written in the first person, contains many of the features of a traditional dissertation. That is, within this work I present an introduction, discuss my research methodology and methods, (re)present research data and provide some considerations and reflections on the process and outcomes of the research process. I also employ academic citations from established scholars and scholarship in order to pay respect to the scholarship that informed the project’s conceptual and creative journey, and to add academic credibility to my research and writing. Consequently, this research is presented in what Blankenship and Robson (1995) refer to as a bicultural form of communication. That is, I use traditionally masculine features, such as the structural elements and citations in this dissertation. I additionally employ(ed) feminine communication qualities inherent within the performance of a polyvocal, dialogic verbatim drama, and the personal narration I employ in this dissertation, both of which explore and expose my personal ideas, values and emotions in relation to the project. In creating a bicultural communication I addressed Laurel Richardson’s request for the development of new forms through which to present academic scholarship; and not reject social scientific writing but rather to ‘enlarge the field through other representational forms’ (1997, p. 298).

The remaining discussion in this dissertation expands the ideas introduced within this chapter and offers a more detailed rationale for the substantive focus of the research project and the methodological process of investigation I employed. In Chapter 2 I review the
existing literature in the fields of sessional staff in higher education, the discursive form of traditional academic communication, and reflect on its incongruence to feminine ways of knowing and communicating.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction to a Review of Relevant Literature

The two preoccupations of casual academia and women’s voice coalesced within this research project which is designed to provide an opportunity for the emergence and representation of women casual academics’ voice. Though I engaged with both the scholarship around casual academia alongside the literature based on women’s voice, they generally reside as two separate discourse arenas. I therefore first discuss literature that informed the substantive focus of women’s experience of casual academia, I then review the scholarship around women’s/feminine ways of knowing and communicating and suggest how this discourse informed the methodological approach and communication style I adopted for this research project.

This chapter contextualises and explains the main theorists, ideas and texts that informed the substantive and methodological facets of this research project. I did not therefore write a dispassionate, detached and masculinely academic critique of existing literature within my field of study. Instead I simply engaged with the existing literature and ideas that appeared relevant to this research project.

The first section of this chapter explores the main preoccupations in the literature pertaining to women casual academics, and these include:

- The vertical segregation of women academics in Australian higher education;
- The problematisation of casual academics as a risk to the student learning experience;
• Academic casualisation as a representation of new market principles in academic administration;

• The marginalised status of casual academics; and

• The position of casual academics in workplace planning and future academic staffing strategy.

The second section discusses some of the literature that examines:

• Feminine ways of knowing;

• Feminine writing; and

• Conflict between traditional academic writing and feminine writing

The Main Preoccupations in the Literature Pertaining to Women Casual Academics

The vertical segregation of women academics.

I explored the scholarship related to the status of women academics within higher education in order to situate the experience of women casual academics within Australian universities in a wider political and social context. Whilst there is a plethora of research that explores the horizontal segregation that prevents women’s full engagement across all areas of academia (Carvalho & Machado, 2010; Dever et al., 2008; Dever, Morrison, Dalton, & Tayton, 2006; Hatchell & Aveling, 2008; Hearn, 2004), in this literature review I will explore scholarship related to the vertical segregation of women academics only. It is this literature that offered a context for the over-representation of women within casual academic work.

Research literature over the last 15 years, predominantly based on quantitative data, has identified a significant under-representation of women academics in senior roles within
higher education institutions. As Husu determined in ‘Gender discrimination in the Promised Land of gender equality’, an ‘under-representation of women in the academe is increasingly and globally recognised as a serious problem’ (2000, p.221). This ‘problem’ is also identifiable in research that exposes Australian female seepage from the academic career ‘pipeline’ at five critical points: between undergraduate enrolment and honours year; between honours year and postgraduate research degrees; between completion of doctoral studies and postdoctoral research; between lecturer and senior lecturer level; and between associate professor and professor level (White, 2004). Earlier findings by White (2001) previewed this thesis by showing that whilst women made up over half the academic staff in Australia in the year 2000, they only occupied a third of senior academic positions (White, 2001). In addition, according to Ward, female professors in Australia are a ‘rare species’ (2000). Thus, though the number of women in higher education has increased over the last 40 years, these increases have predominantly furnished lower academic staffing positions (Husu & Morley, 2000; Machado-Taylor, Carchalo, & White, 2008; White, 2001). Therefore, I found significant support in the literature for Hearn’s assertion that academia is an ‘incredibly hierarchical gendered institution’ (Hearn, 2001, p. 72).

More recent analysis of the vertical segregation of female academics in Australia revealed an over-representation of women within low levels of academic employment. The findings of May et al., presented in their 2011 conference paper, ‘The casual approach to university teaching: Time for a re-think?’ confirm this phenomenon. Through an analysis of publicly available employment statistics May et al. reveal that women are concentrated in the lower levels of the academic workforce (levels A–B) and are more likely to work part-time compared to men. In particular, 75% of the fractional full-time and the majority of academics at Level A (associate lecturer/tutor) are women, while the senior ranks of Professor (Level E) and Associate Professor (Level D) remain male dominated (May et al.,
2011, pp.310-311). These figures support the authors’ conclusion that an analysis of recent data reveals that females predominantly occupy low level and part-time academic positions and ‘are still substantially underrepresented in movement into senior academic positions’ (May et al., 2011, p.218).

In addition to the general gender stratification identified above, I found evidence that women academics are also more likely to be employed on casual or short-term contracts than their male counterparts. Indeed, Carvalho and Machado (2010) and Dever et al. (2008) reveal that at the end of a PhD women earn less and are more likely to be engaged in casual work than men. Furthermore, a significant study undertaken by May et al. (2011) examined new data from the universities superannuation fund Unisuper to identify that 57% of the 67,000 casual academics in Australia are female (2011, p.194). In particular, the age profile of casual teaching staff is considerably younger than the ongoing academic staff, with 52% of the casual academic cohort aged 35 years or younger. This suggests that women constitute almost two thirds of casual academic staff aged between 25-35 and 35-45 and that ‘these age categories correspond with prime child bearing and child rearing ages’ (May et al., 2011, p.193). Additionally, 50% of Level A appointments, an academic appointment level dominated by female academics, are casual, and up to 86% of these posts ‘are fixed term positions with high turnover’ (May et al., 2011, pp.193-5). Therefore, May establishes that women academics are more likely to be employed on casual or short-term and fixed term contracts and earn less than male academics.

To conclude, my exploration of scholarship that examined male and female representation in higher education revealed that male academics dominate senior academic positions whilst women academics dominate Level A appointments, and casual or short-term fixed contracts. This suggests that academia, despite the strong public policy focus on equal
employment opportunity in Australia for several decades (May et al., 2011), remains the hierarchically gendered institution that Hearn identified in 2004. Consequently, the scholarship that makes manifest the gendered, vertical stratification within HE substantiated the need to make known the stories of women casual academics in order to communicate the inequity between men and women casual academics’ experience.

**Casual academics are problematised as a risk to the student learning experience.**

My analysis of the scholarship of teaching and learning exposed that the quality of teaching and marking undertaken by casual academics, and their contribution to academic integrity and student retention, are problematised. An example of this discourse is located in Brown, Reich, and Stern’s (1993) description that casual academics are ‘likely to have low commitment [and] be largely untrained for the functions required of them (cited in Smith & Coombe, 2006, p. 50) and Leatherman’s concerns over the quality of tertiary teaching by casual academics (cited in Smith & Coombe, 2006). Finally, although Smith and Coombe (2006) do not identify any evidence that casual academics are deficient as markers in comparison to permanent academics they conclude that ‘there was every indication that if they [sessional staff] were deficient, it would be hard for universities to find out’ (2006, p. 65). They therefore imply that the quality of assessment marking undertaken by casual academics may be inferior to that offered by permanent academics, even though they admit there is no evidence to support their implication.

Umbach (2007) more explicitly claimed that casual teachers offer significantly less teaching quality than permanently employed academic staff. Umbach’s conclusions are drawn from a study of data related to the preparation and approaches to teaching of 132 permanent and casual/sessional American college and university teachers. His findings indicated that casual academics spend less time on teaching preparation and challenge
students significantly less than their more permanent peers. Further, Umbach identified that casual academics employ fewer active and collaborative techniques, spend less time interacting with students, and have lower academic expectations than their more permanent counterparts. He thus recommended that students:

who wish to have frequent interactions with their faculty, who want to learn in an active and collaborative classroom environment, and who seek to be challenged academically would be wise to consider the make-up of the faculty in their college choice set (Umbach, 2007, p.112).

Umbach’s recommendation functions as a warning to students against choosing courses of study that are facilitated by casual staff and indicate a sub-standard of teaching and learning is offered by casual academics.

I also found explicit problematisation of the work of casual academics, and their risk to academia, in a second American study that explores the impact of casual academics on student attrition rates. The study by Smith, in 2010, found that exposure to part-time and casual teachers has a negative impact on student retention and recommends that a strategy for engaging academics on more permanent employment contracts is the most efficient way to improve student learning and retention. Finally, this perspective that a high percentage of casual academics within faculty create a threat to the profession is supported by Brown et al. (2010), and Percy and Beaumont (2008). These scholars purport that a high percentage of casual staff is a risk to all academics and high quality tertiary education.

In contrast to the views hitherto presented, Ryan, Groen, McNeil, Nadolny and Bhattacharyya (2011) report no significant difference in course evaluations compiled by students taught by casual to permanent academics. Their research, which was conducted at a large Australian regional university, compared scores on official student course evaluations for similar courses taught by casual or sessional staff with academics with ongoing
appointments. The study’s findings serve as a contrast to the popular accusation of the negative impact of casualisation on teaching standards presented by the literature reviewed above, and reiterated by Hugo and Morriss (2010).

Significant to the discourse of casualised academia as a risk to the student learning experience, Brown et al. (2010), Percy and Beaumont (2008), Smith (2010), Smith and Coombe (2006), and Umbach (2007) each explicitly state that their research is aimed at critiquing the casualisation of academic work; not a critique of casual academics. In particular, Smith asserts that his study is ‘in no way meant to be critical of any particular staff... it is evident, however, that overuse of part-time faculty is a widespread systematic problem’ (2010, p.112). Thus, the problematisation of casual academics’ impact on the quality of learning opportunity of students is seen as a critique of the casualisation of academic work. This critique seems to be congruent with the discourse that academic casualisation represents the deployment of new market principles in academic administration – a discourse I discuss below.

**Academic casualisation represents processes of New Public Management in academic administration.**

The issue of New Public Management (NPM) in academic administration was first introduced by Marginson and Considine in their seminal book *The enterprise university: power, governance and reinvention in Australia* (2000). Through case study analysis of 17 of 36 large Australian doctoral universities between 1995 and 1997, the authors identified major changes in governance and organisational cultures in Australian universities. In particular, they noted that organisation change occurs as a result of both external forces and university complicity in the adoption of principles of NPM. Marginson and Considine thus considered casualised academic labour within the context of an accelerated decline in collegial forms of
university organisation and the adoption of a flexible approach to employment. Specifically, they critiqued casual academic’s peripheral engagement with the university within a wider context of declining faculty academic relations and agency. Their position was subsequently adopted by Fredman and Doughney (2011) and Brown et al. (2010).

Fredman and Doughney (2011), explore the impact of NPM on academics’ perceptions of their work. They specifically identify a relationship between the high levels of work dissatisfaction proffered by academics with corporatised managerial practice described as managerialist and neo-liberalist. Casualisation of labour, in this context, is seen as a result of the drive for ‘efficiency of the marketized position’ (2011, p.44) and ‘a focus on profit over educational standards’ (2011, p.55). Furthermore, Fredman and Doughney claimed that NPM serves to fragment academic labour. This latter conceptualisation is also considered by Macfarlane (2011) who identifies the adoption of NPM as a catalyst for the desegregation of academic work, which in turn accelerates the casualisation of academic labour. Finally, Fredman and Doughney stress that the casualisation of academic labour undermines collegial relationships.

Brown et al. in Academic casualisation in Australia (2010), concur that the responsibility for the ‘flexibilization of academic work’ and the increase in casual academic labour is firmly placed with managerial rationalisation and NPM. Brown et al. compare higher education to a flexibilized factory with many university managers heavily committed to neo-liberal ‘flexibilization’ strategies that commodify the labour of casual academics. Academic staff, they suggest, are divided between ‘the tenured core and the tenuous periphery’ (Brown et al., 2010, p.170; Kimber, 2003, p.44). What I found most significant in this study was that Brown et al. also identify academic labour to be highly gendered with a higher number of women situated on what they describe as the ‘periphery’ of casual
academic employment. I also found that Brown et al.’s stance is echoed by other research that claims that managerialism as an organisational culture determines the gendered experience of women academics (Carvalho & Machado, 2010; Hearn, 2001, 2004; Husu, 2001). Finally, White, Carvalho and Riordan (2011) identify that the rise of managerialism has more negative impact on women than men.

Therefore, in my review of literature by Marginson and Considine (2000), Fredman and Doughney (2011), and Brown et al. (2010) a direct relationship between the deployment of NPM in academic administration with the fragmentation of academic work, the casualisation of academic labour and a gendered division of labour in the academy is identified. The polemic of these authors thus further suggests that the adoption of NPM negatively impacts upon academic staff collegiality and creates academic division leading to the marginalisation of casual academics. I found this final consideration, the status of casual academics, to be of central interest to this research project and so consider it in more detail below. Of note is that this discourse, as discussed in Chapter 1, tends to present a causal or least a correlative relationship between economic factors external to the casual academic and the nature of their employment; it also appears to be prompted by a political telos, such as a request for policy reform for academic employment. This particular discourse around sessional staffing is therefore politically and teleologically focused and structured within which casual academics become objectified. In contrast, I sought to engage a person-centred research project in order to add a humanistic focus to the scholarship by making manifest the personally lived experience of casual academics.
Casual academics feel marginalised and situated on the periphery of academic life.

It appears to be well documented in the literature that casual academics feel positioned on the periphery of academic life and culture. This is reflected in the various labels given to these academics such as ‘invisible’ and ‘hired guns’ (Gappa & Leslie 1993), ‘disposable’ (Lazarsfeld-Jensen & Morgan, 2009), and ‘tenuous periphery’ (Kimber 2003). Further, my analysis of the research on casual academics that has been conducted over the last 20 years suggests that casual academics’ feelings of marginalisation have increased.

Bassett, as early as 1998, identified that while most casual academics find satisfaction in their teaching role, they feel ‘marginalised, exploited and expendable’ within the academy more generally (p.1). Bassett reported on a survey carried out at two Australian universities where casual academics were asked questions about their working conditions and aspirations. The results of which, compared to previous research cited in Bassett’s paper, highlighted a ‘growing dissatisfaction and disillusionment amongst casual academics about their status and opportunities within the higher education sector’ (1998, p.1).

An increased sense of marginalisation and dissatisfaction by casual academics is found also in a comparison of research on the perceptions of casual academics in Australia undertaken by Fine et al. (1992), Junor (2004) and Ryan (2012). The three research projects employed a similar survey instrument in order to explore the nature of casualised academia in Australia. The earliest study was carried out by Fine, Graham, and Paxman in 1991 (reported in 1992) and focused on a single university. The largest study was undertaken by Junor in 2004 and engaged casual academics from across five universities between 2000 and 2002. The final study, carried out by Ryan et al in 2012 and published in 2013, was designed to compare the results of Junor’s (2004) and Fine et al.’s (1992) studies with findings from a
single regional university. Ryan et al.’s comparison of survey responses over 20 years allowed for longitudinal comparisons to be made and provides evidence of casual academics’ increasing feelings of marginalisation. Each set of research data identified incremental reductions in performance feedback, awareness of entitlements and career advice, and opportunity to attend conferences and seminars. Over 20 years ago, Fine et al. concluded that casual academic employment was ‘characterized by uncertainty and insecurity’ (1992, p.51). Ten years later Junor’s larger study confirmed Fine’s conclusions. A decade later, Ryan’s findings demonstrate that in terms of casual academics’ feelings of uncertainty and insecurity little has changed in the past 20 years, except that more casual academics feel more vulnerable because of their greater reliance on casual work (S. Ryan, personal communication, July 31, 2012; Ryan et al., 2013). Interestingly, not only have casual academics become increasingly reliant on sessional employment but higher education has become increasingly reliant on casual staff. This issue of casual academics within workplace planning is the focus of the final discourse I review within the sessional staffing literature. However, before I discuss this particular discourse I wish to determine that a review of the scholarship focused upon the marginalisation of casual academics impacted on the development of this research project in two ways. First, as identified in Chapter 1, the scholarship around the perceptions and feelings of casual academics relies upon large-scale surveys. Whilst I appreciate the focus on casual academics’ experience I concur with Brown et al. that the use of large-scale surveys is not an appropriate method for capturing lived experience (Brown et al., 2010). Surveys often create parameters that restrict what research participants are invited to reveal, can establish a hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant, and privilege the preoccupations and status of the researcher (Mills, 2000). Second, the scholarship around casual academics is predominantly developed by academics outside of the casual academic experience, that is by people in tenured or privileged positions.
and as such the researchers may suffer a cognitive blindness to the central issues and experiences of the casual academics themselves. These two considerations therefore bolstered my commitment to engaging in person-centred research in order to invite casual academics to identify their experience, interests or concerns, without the focus or restriction of a survey or structured interview.

**The position of casual academics in workplace planning and future academic staffing strategy.**

Recent studies in academic human resource planning suggest that, due to the predicted retirement, migration and changing profession of the Australian academic workforce, almost 50% of the current academic staff will need to be replaced within the next five years (Hugo, 2008; Hugo & Morriss, 2010). In addition, a study on the motivations and career aspirations of current PhD students identifies that nearly half expect to work outside the tertiary sector; and of those that select higher education as a career, 40% expect to move abroad (Edwards, Bexley, & Richardson, 2011). This research supports Bradley’s assertion that the recruitment and retention of high quality academic staff is ‘the biggest issue confronting the sector over the next decade’ (Bradley et al., 2008, p.24).

It is within this context of an impending academic staffing crisis that Bexley, James and Arkoudis (2012), May et al. (2011), and Ryan and Bhattacharyya (2012) each suggest that offering ongoing employment to some of the 67,000 sessional academics could contribute to an academic staffing solution. In *The motivations, values and future plans of Australian academics*, Bexley et al. (2012) investigate the current attitudes of Australian academics towards academia as a career. The research discusses survey responses from 5,525 academics across 20 universities to reveal that 25% of respondents intend to move overseas, 20% intend to move out of Higher Education (HE), and 21% plan to retire within
the next five to 10 years. These findings are in close alignment with the conclusions drawn from a study of higher degree by research candidates (Edwards et al., 2011) and further support Hugo and Morriss’ 2010 prediction of an impending staffing crisis in Australian HE. Of particular significance to the literature on sessional staffing is the authors’ brief recommendation that Higher Education institutions should explore strategies for ‘shifting casual and short-term sessional and casual staff load to long-term and ongoing appointments’ (p.xv). In addition, May et al. report that 61% of Australia’s total academic workforce is employed on a casual basis, yet, though central to current workplace strategy casual academics ‘are often excluded from the discussion around workplace renewal’ (May et al., 2011, p.189). Furthermore, as a result of analysing data from the universities’ superannuation fund Unisuper and large-scale surveys on sessional staffing, May et al. create a strong argument for engaging casual academics in ongoing academic positions in order to avoid an academic staffing crisis. They do so by identifying that casual academics are now older, better qualified and more motivated to gain ongoing academic employment than they were 20 years ago. In particular, May et al. find that the majority of casual academics have been employed casually within the same HE institution for more than three years, are studying or have completed a higher degree by research (HDR), and are seeking full time ongoing academic employment (May et al., 2011). Finally, Ryan et al. (2011) in Sessional Employment and Quality in Universities: A Risky Business argue that casual academics offer learning opportunities to students that are of equal value to those offered by ongoing academics. They specifically suggest that in relation to teaching quality, casual academics can be considered as a viable cohort to be considered for ongoing academic roles, a position that supports recommendations by Bexley et al. (2012) and May et al. (2011).

However, Ryan and Bhattacharyya in Barriers to professional development among contingent academic employees: An Australian case study (2012) identify high levels of
casual academic satisfaction with teaching, but low levels of satisfaction with development and career opportunities. In particular, the authors identify that casual academics are ‘frequently excluded from the professional development opportunities that would allow them to form part of the solution to the shortages among tenured academics’ (2012, p.247). This argument aligns with a concern expressed over the preparedness of casual academics to adopt ongoing academic posts by Coates et al. (2009), who caution that it remains unclear whether ‘the current pool of casual staff would be sufficiently well prepared to take on a mainstream role’ (2009, p.30).

Therefore, my analysis of the discourse around sessional staffing and ongoing academic employment suggested that casual academics enjoy teaching, are committed to ongoing academic employment, and are a viable cohort to be considered for ongoing academic roles. However, I also found that casual academics are presently invisible within future HE staffing strategy and would require full inclusion in tertiary institutions’ professional development programs in order to be fully equipped to take on the complexity of a full academic role. This analysis suggests that casual academics need to engage in aspects of academic life beyond teaching and teaching-related responsibilities to be better prepared for the complexity of ongoing academic roles. Indeed, May et al. support this conclusion when they claim that casual academics need to become involved in academic scholarship in order to be considered for ongoing academic employment (2011). Consequently, in this research project I sought to fully engage women casual academics in creating scholarship based on the experience of their work in the hope that they become empowered contributors to scholarly discourse. Correspondingly, the process of contributing to scholarly discourse might support their academic professional development and help them in gaining the necessary skills required for ongoing employment.
Conclusions drawn from the scholarship around casual academia in Australian universities.

In a review of literature relating to casual academics in Australian HE I have briefly discussed: the vertical segregation of women academics; the problematisation of casual academics as a risk to the student learning experience; academic casualisation as a representation of New Public Management in academic administration; the marginalised status of casual academics; and casual academics’ role in workplace planning and future academic staffing strategy. My general analysis of the literature is that most of the scholarship is created by people outside of the casual academic experience, and founded on large scale surveys which tend to create hierarchical relationships between researcher and participant and homogenise casual academics. In addition, I identified casual academics as objectified and subjectified within a critique of the adoption of new market principles in academic management. Moreover, I found that the sex of the casual academics being discussed was ostensibly ignored both within the form and content of most of the academic discourse which tended to universalise ‘sessional staff experience’ through its lack of recognition of gender. Therefore, despite the ‘highly gendered’ nature of academic institutions (Hearn, 2001) the sessional staff discourse has hitherto not included accounts of the lived experience of women casual academics, or considered women’s experience as worthy of separate attention to men’s. My review of the existing literature thus supported a need for a research project designed to expand the current discourses around sessional staffing by offering women casual academics an opportunity to share their lived experience and providing an appropriate communication vehicle through which they may express their voice.
The way in which women casual academics wish to communicate their lived experience may reflect a feminine way of knowing and communicating. In the next section of this chapter I therefore explore the literature around a feminine way of knowing and communicating and its relationship with the literary traditions of academic writing. I offer a review of this literature as it informed the data/story gathering process I undertook in this research and the data/story communication process I employed.

**Literature that Explores Feminine Ways of Knowing and Communicating and its Relationship with the Literary Traditions of Academic Writing**

**Feminine ways of knowing.**

By way of contextualisation I feel it is important to draw a distinction between the notion of a woman’s way of knowing and feminine ways of knowing. My position, which is shared with Belenky et al. (1986); Gilligan (2008), and Simson (2005) is that women’s and men’s thinking do not fall neatly into two distinct epistemological camps, never the twain to meet. The claim that men and women have discrete and exclusive ways of knowing is both positivist and essentialist and can be used to justify and perpetuate sexual inequality. Therefore, I do not accept, or discuss, the concept of a woman’s epistemology. However I accept that due to the influence of cultural gender conditioning (Chodorow, 1976; Diamond, 1990; Harding, 1998; MacKinnon, 2006) women and men have a tendency to think in characteristic ways that are often distinctive from one another (Gilligan 2008; Simson, 2005). Yet these ways of knowing are not exclusive to one sex or another. For instance, women can also possess masculine cognitive traits and communicate in masculine discourse. Hence, this chapter considers the literature that empirically explores the dominant characteristics of feminine ways of knowing, not women’s ways of knowing.
Of note also is that I limit this review to empirical research and literature pertaining to a broad conceptualisation of feminine cognition; I therefore do not consider feminine ways of knowing in relation to specific genders, races, classes, ethnicities, ages, and sexual orientations. Although race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and class interpenetrate notions of specific aspects of feminine knowing, such an investigation is outside the limits of this research project. This review of literature focuses instead on a more generalised notion of feminine ways of knowing, though I aim to avoid generalisations.

The literature around how women ‘typically’ think and how it differs from male cognition has a long history that up until the mid-1980s was dominated by the theories of Aristotle, Kant, Rousseau and Freud. In particular, these philosophers and the literature they seeded established both a dichotomy and hierarchy between women’s and men’s thinking. It was generally presented that female thinking was personal, emotional and hysterical; whilst male cognition was more objective, logical and trustworthy (Lloyd, 1984). Indeed Genevieve Lloyd’s *The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western Philosophy* (1984) offers a chronology of various philosophers’ identification of reason, logic and action with men; and passivity, passion/hysteria, and lack of reason with women. My reading of Lloyd’s work revealed a valorisation of masculine reasoning and distrust of feminine motion. Furthermore, a long-standing tradition of discrediting feminine ways of knowing was continued by Lawrence Kohlberg in *The philosophy of moral development* (1981). In this work Kohlberg (in)famously posited that men have a propensity to reach higher stages of objective, moral reasoning and understanding of justice than women. However, this argument, and the heritage of denigrating women’s ways of knowing, was fundamentally critiqued in Carol Gilligan’s ‘In a Different Voice’ in 1982. In contrast to Kohlber’s thesis Gilligan established that feminine ways of thinking are no less rational than masculine cognition; it is simply that women tend to employ a different logic from men. In particular, Gilligan argued that
feminine logic incorporates a concern with care, relationships and context within a feminine process of moral judgement-making. Gilligan thus troubled Kohlberg’s argument by arguing that women are as capable as men of reaching ‘higher’ stages of reasoning and a sense of justice about moral dilemmas. Although she accepted that women tend to think differently from men Gilligan denied that the difference is inferior to male reasoning or that it precludes women from being able to engage in intellectual work (Simson, 2005). So influential is Gilligan’s text that Harvard University Press describes it as ‘the little book that started a revolution (Harvard University Press website, March 2014). The literature that is reviewed below is part testament to Gilligan’s legacy.

A second influential text that acknowledges feminine cognition is Women’s ways of knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind by Belenky et al. (1986). Within this work Belenky et al. document interviews with 135 women from a wide social demography about their understanding of knowledge, and their process of ‘coming to know’. Significantly, the text captured the epistemologies of a group of women from diverse backgrounds at a time when women, and specifically women from low socio economic or varied ethnic backgrounds, were not employed as participants in social science research. Also significant is that the text documents epistemological perspectives that are not hierarchically ordered or presented as stages of incremental development. This non-hierarchical structuring of difference reflects the authors’ full acceptance of women’s perspectives of knowledge and challenges masculinely structured classifications and taxonomies. Similarly to Gilligan’s findings about the central roles of care, connection and relationships within female cognition, Belenky et al. identified ‘connected knowing’ as a typically feminine perspective within an epistemological spectrum. That is, the authors found that women are less inclined than men to engage in ‘separate knowing’ or detached and impartial judgement. Feminine connected knowing is presented as seeking to understand
through identifying interconnectedness and considering multiple points of view. Finally, and important to my research project, Belenky et al. described women finding voice as representative of women reclaiming the power of both their minds and voices (Belenky et al., 1986). Correspondingly, women’s lack of voice is shown to be synonymous with oppression as women who were ‘silent’ within the study are said to rely ‘on what others told them about themselves to get any sense of self’ (1986, p.31). This conceptualisation seems to resonate with the lack of voice women casual academics are afforded in the literature, as I have identified above.

Subsequent to the two seminal texts discussed above, a plethora of studies and literature have developed Gilligan and Belenky et al.’s identification of a distinct and purposeful feminine cognition. A comprehensive review of this body of research is beyond the scope of this research project; however, I briefly analyse some literature based on empirical research in order to identify the focus and findings of scholarship around feminine cognition that impacts upon the methodology employed in this research.

Sheila Tobias (1990) explored the reasons why males have a greater propensity towards studying science than females. Tobias’ research concluded that science education is based on a competitive pedagogy which is at odds with a more cooperative and less competitive feminine learning style. Thus, a feminine, relational and cooperative cognition is seen to be in conflict with some competitive learning environments. In addition, Marcia Baringa’s research presented in Is There a “Female Style” in Science? (1993) exposed that even when women do pursue scientific careers they tend to avoid competition. They are therefore less likely than men to engage in ‘hot topic’ research where teams of scientists race or compete to solve problems. Consequently, female scientists are generally less successful within the field of science. Finally, a report commissioned by the UK Research Centre for
Women in Science Engineering and Technology (SET) and the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) published in 2013 identified similar findings to Baringa. Within the report Sarah Dickinson identifies that women PhD Chemistry students experience more bullying and discomfort with the culture of their research group in relation to working patterns, time and expectations and the level of competition between group members than male students. She also describes the culture as ‘macho’ (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2013, p.7) and suggests that the majority of women interviewed did not want to pursue a career in science, in contrast to male participants, as the women viewed science careers as too all-consuming, too solitary and not sufficiently collaborative. The report concludes that the chemistry PhD program is modelled on ‘masculine ways of thinking and doing’ (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2013, p.7). Richardson’s conclusions, that women chemists identify a lack of collaboration and ‘femininity’ within science, endorses Diane Halpern’s findings that women tend toward a more relational cognition than men (2012). In Sex differences in cognitive abilities (2012) Halpern cites many studies that have explored male and female processes of cognition to suggest that women tend to possess a feminine, context-dependent, relational cognition that is distinct from an objective and context-free masculine cognition. These findings are also congruent with the argument presented in A new psychology of women: Gender, culture and ethnicity (2010) by Hilary Lips. Lips uses neurobiological studies to demonstrate that male brains tend to divide cognitive tasks between hemispheres and so male thinking is likely to be localised and compartmentalised. She also shows that women’s brains tend to operate more malleably or holistically and process tasks between the hemispheres more frequently. Therefore, women’s brains support feminine context-dependent relationism. However, I feel it is important to note that Lips’ identification of differences in men and women’s brains is not intended to essentialise gender or suggest that brain structures and related processes of cognition are fixed. In contrast, as Marian Diamond showed in How the Brain Grows in
Response to Experience (1990) social influence can affect many biological functions including brain operation. Lips’ study simply advances the notion that women’s brains reveal a tendency towards interconnectedness and support the notion of a distinctly feminine way of knowing.

In conclusion, the scholarship with which I engaged, including work by Baringa (1993), Belenky et al. (1986), the Royal Society of Chemistry (2013), Gilligan (1982), Halpern (2012), Lips (2010) and Tobias (1990), offered empirical support for a distinct, though not inferior, feminine way of knowing. My brief analysis of the literature under review therefore identified that women share a propensity towards care (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982), cooperation (Baringa, 1993; Belenky et al., 1986; Tobias, 1990), and connected and context-rich knowing (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Halpern, 2012; Lips, 2010). In addition, feminine cognition tends to value a diversity of viewpoints and emotion (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). Furthermore, the development of the characteristics of feminine knowing are likely to have been supported by societal influence (Chodorow, 1976; Diamond, 1990; Harding, 1988; MacKinnon, 2006) and so are not essential or fixed female traits. Finally, feminine ways of knowing are distinct, though not inferior, to masculine cognition (Baringa, 1993; Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Halpern 2012; Simson, 2005; Tobias, 1990).

My short summary above presents a clear rationale for exploring the experiences of women casual academics as a distinct group. The current discourses around sessional staffing treat men and women casual academics as one homogenous cohort, yet my review of the research above explicitly identified that women have a tendency to think and interact differently from men. Therefore, there is value in researching women casual academics as a distinct from a homogenized ‘sessional staff’. Moreover, my review of scholarship indicated
that women share a tendency towards care, cooperation, connected and context-rich knowing, and value a diversity of viewpoints and emotion; I therefore understand the hierarchical and context-free researcher relationship of traditional research as incongruent to the way that women tend to know and engage. I was thus encouraged to adopt a person-centred approach to this research project in order to reduce the hierarchical researcher/participant relationship, and develop a caring and connected research relationship that suits the way in which women tend to engage and communicate.

**Recognising and celebrating feminine ways of knowing through feminine writing.**

As this research project was designed to provide women with an opportunity to express their experience of casual work in academia, I briefly analyse literature that explores the value of recognising feminine cognition, engage with scholarship around feminine communication, and identify how this discussion informed the research methodology, methods, and form of research communication, I employed in this project.

Simson’s *Feminine Thinking* (2005) considered the advantages of accepting and acclaiming feminine cognition. Whilst accepting, in characteristic feminine style, the criticisms of laying claim to feminine cognition, Simson identified that the benefit of celebrating and employing feminine ways of knowing outweigh any disadvantages. She maintained that making manifest feminine cognition generally affirms women by drawing attention to significant and worthy contributions that women (through caring, cooperative, emotional and relational processes of knowing) make to human reasoning and knowledge. In addition, Simson argued that making schools and work environments more receptive to and supportive of feminine ways of thinking can help to create a society within which more women can self-actualise to achieve their full potential.
In a similar vein Charles W. Mills (1988) argued that a significant advantage of acknowledging a feminine perspective, and considering the world from the stance of other disadvantaged groups, is an ability to recognise the limitations and speciousness of a detached and disinterested perspective. Mills further suggested that insights offered by feminine perspectives help to trouble the notion of a neutral, Universalist epistemology that operates in academia and other powerful institutions. He concluded that the exploration and employment of feminine ways of knowing help to both critique the notion of neutrality and possess the possibility of dismantling the white, male, dominant epistemology that masquerades as pervasive and disinterested.

Mills’ description of a feminine perspective as an alternative to the white, male, dominant epistemology of academia is akin to Bonnie Mitchell and Joe Feagin’s (1995) explication of cultures of subordinated groups or ‘cultures of resistance’. In America’s Racial-Ethnic Cultures: Opposition within a Mythical Melting Pot (1995), Mitchell and Feagin posited that subjugated groups can generate a ‘culture of resistance’ that represents ‘a coherent set of values, beliefs, and practices which mitigates the effects of oppression and reaffirms that which is distinct from the majority culture’ (1995, p. 68). Oppositional cultures, according to the authors, work to preserve the dignity and independence of marginalised peoples by providing an alternative construction of identity to that constructed of them by the dominant culture. In particular, they emphasised that through creating their own voice, art and music ‘an oppositional culture represents their idiosyncratic philosophical and political thinking as an alternative to the dominant culture’ (Mitchell & Feagin, 1995, p. 73). Finally, and of particular pertinence to this project, Mitchell and Feagin argued that the form and style of an oppositional culture’s communication both delineates that culture and simultaneously resists the dominant culture’s representations of them.
Mitchell and Feagin’s ideas pertaining to a culture of resistance resonate with me as they seem to draw together many of the ideas discussed within this literature review. For example, an examination of the empirical data on feminine ways of knowing identifies a coherent set of values and beliefs within feminine cognition. Furthermore, scholarship that explores the vertical segregation of female academics in Australian higher education and the marginalised status of casual academics suggests that women casual academics identify themselves as marginalised and subjugated (Fine, 1991; Juno, 2002; Ryan, 2013). Indeed, a more general review of the sessional staff discourses indicates that hitherto women have not been given the opportunity to express their experience of casual academia within their own terms of reference and context or been afforded research relationships that are congruent with their propensity for care, context and connectedness. Furthermore, within the Higher Education literature the academic culture of women has been circumscribed by the masculinity of surveys, analysis of findings and a masculine discursive form. However, largely outside of academia, there exists a feminine culture with a form of communication through which it defines itself and proclaims its difference from masculine culture. For example, there is some literature around feminine writing that suggests that feminine writing communicates a ‘coherent values, beliefs, and practices’ (Mitchell & Feagin, 1995, p. 68) which both asserts feminine identity and resists masculine communication forms. Therefore, I reviewed the scholarship around feminine styles of writing in order to consider how I could best support women casual academics to communicate their lived experience, and to become equipped with styles of communication through which I could congruently re-present their lived experience of casual academia.
Feminine writing.

The work of Hélène Cixous is generally considered as the most influential in the area of feminine writing. Cixous’ work crosses many discourse fields, and she is respected as an influential theorist, novelist and playwright. Cixous’ fundamental claim is that each woman has her own story to tell, and that women most clearly communicate their own story or experience by writing in the form of ‘I’ or through “écriture feminine” (women’s writing).

Cixous’ most influential works, that have been translated and I was therefore able to access, are the ‘essays’ Sortie and The Laugh of the Medusa, both published within a collection of essays co-authored with Catherine Clement called The Newly Born Woman (1986), and Without end, no, State of drawingness, no, rather: The Executioner’s taking off presented within a collection of essays entitled Stigmata: Escaping Texts (1998). I therefore offer a concise review of them below.

The significance of Sortie lay in both its critique of masculine communication structures and its vision for an alternative feminine expression. In this work Cixous described how the process of dichotomising values such as culture/nature, head/heart, master/slave, and speaking/writing relate to the dichotomisation of man/woman. In addition, she described the process of logocentrism, or the establishment of binary oppositions and hierarchy, as a masculine, hegemonic tool of female subjugation. Cixous further posited that throughout history women have been defined and restricted by a masculine gaze and discourse, but that we now have the choice to either perpetuate the passive female role determined by masculine communication structures, or to adopt strategies of resistance. She then proffered two separate approaches to troubling the process of dichotomisation and its underlying ideology. The first approach to troubling logocentrism is ‘deconstructive reading’ through which Cixous urges us to question the inevitability or naturalness of structural
hierarchies. The second is to create an oppositional feminine writing practice, l’écriture feminine. Therefore Cixous considers Derrida’s concept of logocentrism through a feminist lens and concludes that female liberation will only occur if both masculine concept and language structure are subverted. In other words, we must change our communication not just our thought if we are to subvert logocentrism and female subjugation.

Cixous’ concept of l’écriture feminine is further developed both conceptually and aesthetically within her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976). Within this work Cixous explained that to be effective feminine writing must resist the conventions of masculine discourse. In particular, she urged women writers to sweep away syntax and abandon the linearity and orderly characteristics associated with a masculine hegemonic-filled communication. Yet, what I find most significant in this work is Cixous’ fusion of poetic style with philosophical and feminist polemic. Through adopting the form or characteristics of écriture feminine, whilst offering a rationale for doing so, Cixous created a cohesion between form and content. Finally, *The Laugh of the Medusa* employs a circular form and sensual, metaphorically illustrated narrative and provides such academic insight and rigour that it is included in most contemporary analyses of rhetoric, literary criticism, and feminist theory.

Furthermore, in *Without end, no, State of drawingness, no, rather: The Executioner’s taking off* (1998) Cixous discussed the process of creating l’écriture feminine and extends its form to include writing and drawing. In particular, Cixous stressed the importance of the improvisational and iterative processes of writing/drawing as forms of feminine communication. She suggested that the process should involve sketching in order to create expression through ‘trial, that is to say, error. Error: progression’ (Cixous, 1998, p.26). Within her poetic prose Cixous encouraged us/women to employ feminine images and free-
associations in the writing process in order to reject the teleological structures of masculine writing. She also identified the importance of drawing as an improvisational feminine process that is encouraged in children but discouraged in adulthood. Finally, within this work Cixous advocated an improvisational approach to imagistic writing and drawing, or what she refers to as ‘twin adventures’ (Cixous, 1998, p. 21), as an alternative to the pre-planned teleology of masculine communication process and form. As an aside from the review proper, but in keeping with Cixous’ argumentation, I was energised by Cixous’ writing in these works as the flow and energy of her work seemed contagious and spoke affectively to my feminine cognition.

Rongxiang Chen further recognised the idiosyncratic nature of the form of feminine writing in *Highlighting Women’s Life—Analysis of Distinguishing Feature of Contemporary Feminine Prose* (2011). In particular, Chen examines the three main characteristics of feminine writing she believes enable women in a marginal culture to resist the logic of phallocentric discourse. The characteristics of feminine writing that Chen identifies include its concern with the social role of women, its focus on the experiences of women, and its preference for emotional and imaginative insight, intuition and synaesthesia. Thereby, following Cixous’ request for women to write their own story through écriture feminine, feminine writing substitutes the masculine focus and form of objective, external observation for engagement in feminine inner feeling and knowing. Therefore, for Chen it is the focus on inner experience that determines the emotional, intuitive and sensual form of feminine writing; it is not instigated by a political or adversarial act of opposition to male writing.

Finally, Susan Billingham in *Écriture au trans-féminine: Trish Salah’s Wanting* (2010) specifically considers the stylistic features of imagistic collage, ludic wordplay and intertextuality writing as distinguishing features of feminine writing. For Billingham it is the
use of image, wordplay and intertextuality, as an alternative form of communication to the denotation and linearity of masculine writing that gives feminine writing its distinctively non-teleological form and essence. Finally, for Billingham, when literary codes are broken new meanings can emerge. Therefore, feminine writing employs new forms in order to create new ideas about gender, as opposed to new ideas forging a new form.

To conclude, in line with the concept of a feminine cognition Cixous (1976, 1998) identified a feminine cognition and appealed for women to write themselves in a feminine form. In particular, she urged women to employ écriture feminine and advocated a departure from objective, dichotomist representations and linear teleological structures by promoting improvisational writing and drawing. Within her works Cixous both endorsed and employed the engagement of circular and poetic form, image-infused and sensual narrative, and a word-playfulness that has established her as a pioneer of women’s writing. In addition, Chen (2011) identifies the focus on inner female experience within feminine writing as determining its emotional, intuitive and sensual form; whilst Billingham (2010) suggests that it is this form that in turn engenders new ideas about women and gender. Therefore my brief analysis on the literature on feminine writing determines that l’écriture feminine is distinct from masculine writing, is focused on the inner-experience of women, expressed in a fluid form, and inspires new ideas and discourses from women, about women.

The understanding I gained from reading, and reflecting on work by Cixous, Chen and Billingham compelled me to engage in research methods that allow women casual academics to ‘write themselves’ (Cixous, 1976) and to adopt a research communication style that expresses the inner-experience of women casual academics in a non-linear and imagistic feminine form. It also invited me to consider the characteristics of traditional academic
writing in order to identify its form and function and how it might differ from feminine writing. These two foci will be discussed in more detail within Chapters 3, 6 and 8.

Conflict between traditional academic writing and feminine writing.

My understanding of the characteristics of literature around feminine cognition and writing, as presented above, appeared to conflict with my research aim of offering women casual academics the opportunity to voice their experience in order to contribute to the current discourse around sessional staff. In particular, there appeared to be a tension between feminine cognition and writing and the scientific language and adversarial qualities of traditional academic literature (Gilligan, 1982; Harding, 1988; Hawkins, 1989) within which sessional staff academic discourse resides. I therefore undertook a review scholarship that explored the qualities of traditional academic writing to consider this potential tension. I also considered the literature that explores how feminists can undertake academic research in order to extend traditionally structured academic discourse.

Edna Sefcovic and Diane Bifano in Creating a Rhetorical Home for Feminists in the “Master’s House” of the Academy: Toward a Gendered Taxonomy of Form and Content (2004) and Katherine Hawkins in Exposing masculine science: An alternative feminist approach to the study of women’s communication (1989), identified that most academic research is based on positivist scientific methods and values and is presented in linear discourse. In particular, Sefcovic and Bifano suggested that the academic tradition of adopting scientistic language in a highly structured and objective form serves to create an intellectual distance and hierarchy between researchers and the people, and the human experiences, they study. Such objective stance, tone and assumed hierarchy are described as masculine by Hawkins (1989). For Hawkins, an emphasis on a scientific model of research and adherence to strict rules of discursive protocols within academic journals represent both a
valorisation of masculine values and the scientific paradigm. This position is developed by Blair et al. who provocatively insist that academic journal publication standards both reinforce and blend masculine and scientific paradigms (1994). Additionally, Hawkins recognised that the form of impersonal, neutral scholarship connotes and upholds a masculine, positivist epistemological stance that renders the researcher invisible and the research therefore authoritative. She continued her polemic by critiquing the very notion of objectivity and neutrality within research. By citing Neuwirth that masculinist science is not neutral at all, Hawkins claimed that ‘experimental research is fundamentally masculinely biased’ (Hawkins, 1989, p. 51). Therefore, for Blair et al. (1994), Hawkins (1989), and Sefcovic and Bifano (2004), the process and language of impersonal scholarship creates hierarchy and division between the researchers, the subject of the research, and the reader; blurs the boundaries of masculine and positivist paradigms; and represents masculine bias masquerading as objective reportage.

In *Academic Discourses and Critical Consciousness* (1992) Patricia Bizzell employed the term ‘grapholect’ to describe the academic language of supposed neutrality. Borrowing E.D. Hirsch’s term, Bizzell defined grapholect as precise, concise, formal language, employed in a highly structured form in order to construct an objective and argumentative paradigm. She further described grapholect as a derivative from an upper-class code of communication of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Grapholect, according to Bizzell, ‘standardises’ and ‘normalises’ highly conservative elitist discourse structures (1992, pp.58-61). In further discussion about characteristics and function of grapholect in *Hybrid academic discourse: What, why, how* (1999), Bizzell claimed that the status granted to grapholect within academic journals suggests that only reason, separate from emotion, can produce knowledge. Specifically, she described grapholect’s persona as ‘male, and white, and economically privileged’ whose representation of knowledge is presented as a contest
(argument), not a dialogue (1999, p. 11). Finally, Bizzell concluded that the grapholect’s persona serves to preserve a gendered hegemony within academia. Bizzell’s conclusions resonate with Yvonne Day Merrill’s 1996 argument that language identified as ‘natural’, ‘real’ and ‘objective’ is actually constructed using rhetorical strategies associated with a masculine perspective. Thus, Bizzell contributes to discussion around the form of academic discourse by offering a specific term for the masculine language of academic communication, explicates grapholect’s separation from emotion, and highlights the agonistic/adversarial nature of grapholect/academic discourse.

To conclude, my brief consideration of the literature pertaining to traditional academic discourse reveals that a supposedly neutral academic style and scientific method masquerades as disinterested whilst preserving a gendered hegemony. Additionally, the formal structures of precise, concise language, devoid of subjectivity or emotion, are employed within an agonistic and competitive structure, in order to standardise and normalise argument over discussion, and thesis over reflection. With particular pertinence to this research project, I found that the precise and objective language of traditional academic communication serves to create a hierarchy within the research process (Hawkins, 1989; Sefcovic & Bifano, 2004) which is at odds with the collaborative, cooperative (Baringa, 1993; Belenky et al., 1986; Tobias, 1990), connected and context-rich understanding (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Halpern, 2012; Lips, 2010) that I hold as a feminine researcher. In addition, elitist, hierarchical, objective and adversarial forms of academic written discourse are incongruent with a feminine tendency to value a diversity of personal viewpoints (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). Finally, my analysis of this research suggests a conflict between the fluid, poetic, image-infused, emotional and sensual narrative form of women’s experience and writing (Billingham, 2010; Chen, 2011; Cixous, 1976, 1998) and the linear, teleological structure of conventional academic writing.
Therefore, a preoccupation with women’s experience, researched through collaboration and care-full process, expressed in a feminine form congruent with its content does not align with the scientific communication of traditional academic scholarship. This understanding led me to consider how I might fulfil my intention of expanding current discourses around sessional staff to include the lived experience of women casual academics if academic journals, the home of academic discourse, employ language and form that inhabit and propagate a masculine paradigm. A brief investigation of scholarship that explores feminist writing within the ‘master’s house of the academy’ (Campbell, 1998; Lorde, 1981; Sefcovic & Bifano 2004) provided some explanation and solutions.

Laurel Richardson’s *Skirting a pleated text: De-disciplining an academic life* (1997) is an innovative text that explores feminist writing in academia through a feminine style. In this classic work Richardson explained how she felt the need to ‘de-discipline’ her academic life in order to ‘write herself’ (Cixous, 1976). De-disciplining herself, for Richardson, meant breaking with the conventions of masculinely-structured research in order to embrace experimental and subjective scholarship. Richardson initially identified how the language and narrative of the social sciences requires the scholar to suppress their own voice in order to adopt the all-knowing and all-powerful voice of the academy. She further recognised an irony and duplicity of a supposed adoption of an objective voice/stance, as she claimed that the researcher is always present in the text, no matter how it might be otherwise perceived or disguised. Richardson’s solution to the irony and duplicity of masculine/neutral research is to experiment with the authorial voice and textual style of academic research. She therefore uses drama, narrative poetry, lyrical poetry, prose poems, comedy and autobiography in order to discuss narrative, voice, representation and the literary devices in science writing. Troubled by the ethical issues of doing research ‘on’ others, Richardson adopts an autobiographical lens in order to explore the forms of communication she herself employs. In
doing so Richardson creates an emotive and provocative narrative of academic suppression. By rejecting what she describes as science’s ‘omniscient voice from nowhere’ (1997, p.5) Richardson, like Cixous before her, finds new forms through which to present a personal feminist perspective on feminine writing. The result is a poetic, provocative, imagistic narrative of female voice and scholarship. Richardson’s seminal work, both in content and form, has had a significant impact on my conceptualisation and practise in this project and I will return to her theories and practise throughout discussions in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

In dialogue with Richardson’s work is the fact that feminist research in feminine form is rarely included in prestigious (A* and A) journal publications, as those in the academy ‘whose writing did not conform to a particular community’s standard were thought to exhibit some deficit which had to be remedied before they could be admitted to the community’ (Russell, 1991, p. 15). Moreover, Bach, Blair, Nothstine and Pym (1996) identified that ‘those who resist within the system of power can always be assigned to the ranks of marginality outside the “mainstream” dismissed as square pegs or cranks, or even invited to leave the community altogether’ (Bach et al., 1996, p.413). Hence, most feminine scholarship remains unpublished and fails to find a home within the academic discourses it seeks to dialogue with, extend, or even contest. In response to the feminist researcher’s dilemma of creating an authentic body of work that fails to penetrate the main academic discourses, many feminist researchers have opted to employ the conventions of masculine scholarship with a feminist content. Sefcovic and Bifano (2004) claimed that this ‘hybrid’ form of scholarship can be employed in order to achieve mainstream credibility for feminist scholarship. In particular, they suggested that feminist content/masculine form scholarship derives its authority through referencing impeccable sources and structuring arguments logically using traditional essay structures (Sefcovic & Bifano, 2004). In addition, they suggested that the authenticity of feminist-content/masculine-form scholarship often relies on
the researcher’s expressed feminist stance, collaborative qualitative research techniques, and focus on discussion, as opposed to argument. Furthermore, Sefcovic and Bifano (2004) identified that some feminists employ certain aspects of traditional academic scholarship in combination with the experimental form of feminine style where credibility may be sought by using well-respected sources, but the form employed may be a narrative or a drama; or objective language may be integrated with passages of first person narrative and illustration. For example, Becker’s seminal essay *Rhetorical Studies for a Contemporary World* (1971) employed an effective amalgamation of traditional academic discourse technique with first person authorial perspective. Such a juxtaposition of personal narrative with objective metadiscourse served to create a persuasive context for a traditional argument of theory-development (Sefcovic & Bifano, 2004). Further, as narrative and multi-perspectival dialogue are considered feminine modes of expression, Becker’s theoretical argument demonstrated the power of feminine style scholarship.

Therefore, my review of the scholarship around feminist writing within the academy identified two approaches I could have employed, as a feminist researcher, to engage in and serve to extend academic discourse. The first is the employment of traditional forms of scholarship with feminist content. The second is a hybrid scholarship that merges elements of masculine discourse such as metadiscourse and academic reference with the feminine forms of narrative and subjective process and perspective. Consequently, Blankenship and Robson’s (1995) discussion on bicultural communication significantly impacted upon this project and my approach to communicating the research process. I was inspired to employ the bicultural communication of merging traditionally masculine features such as the written form and some linear logic in dissertation with the feminine communication qualities inherent within the performance of a polyvocal, dialogic drama based on a collection of women’s
stories. The particular forms of the bicultural communication process I employed within this research project are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

**Conclusion to a Review of Literature**

I have considered the two preoccupations of casual academia, and feminine cognition and communication within this literature review because I intended to extend the current discourses around sessional staffing to include the stories/voice of women casual academics. Though juxtaposed within this chapter the foci of casual academia and feminine voice are usually situated in two separate discourse arenas. Yet, both discourses are/were central to this project as the literature on sessional staff/casualised academia informed the substantive nature of the study, whilst the scholarship around feminine cognition and communication informed the methodological approach of this research.

The main themes I identified within the literature pertaining to women casual academics include: the vertical segregation of female academics within Australian higher education; casual academics as a risk to the student learning experience; academic casualisation as a representation of new market principles in academic administration; the marginalisation of casual academics; and the absence of casual academics within workplace planning and future academic staffing strategy. I reviewed scholarship that directly related to each of these themes. The main insights I gleaned from the scholarship include that first, higher education is a hierarchically gendered institution (Hearn, 2004). Second, a problematisation of the work of casual academics is situated within a political critique of the casualisation of academia more broadly. Third, a direct relationship exists between the deployment of NPM in academic administration and the fragmentation of academic work, the casualisation of academic labour, and a gendered division of labour in the academy. Fourth, casual academics describe feelings of isolation and lack of engagement in collegial activities,
insecurity, poor working conditions, lack of resources and a sense of vulnerability. Finally, casual academics are identified as a feasible solution to predicted academic staff shortages. However, it is also considered that casual academics require full inclusion in tertiary institutions’ professional development programs if they are to become fully equipped for the complexity of a full academic role.

My reflection on the literature conceived that within the highly gendered and hierarchically structured institution of higher education, casual academics are problematised as representing New Public Management in academic administration, and typified as occupying a peripheral or invisible position within the current university infrastructure and in workplace planning and strategy. I also identified a gap within this scholarship in relation to the lived experience of women casual academics. In order to address this gap I therefore planned to offer women casual academics opportunity to voice/communicate their lived experience.

My analysis of the scholarship around feminine cognition and communication and its relationship with the literary traditions of academic writing identified empirical support for a distinctive feminine cognition. In particular, it revealed that women share a tendency to care, cooperate, and connect through context-rich knowing. Feminine cognition was also shown to hold high regard for a diversity of viewpoints. Furthermore, scholarship relating to the influence of society on the development of feminine knowing served to undermine the argument that an identification of feminine qualities either essentialise or makes permanent feminine traits. Finally, feminine cognition was shown to be distinct from, though not inferior to, masculine cognition.

I identified the advantages of accepting a feminine cognition as affirming women generally, providing strategies to end female subjugation, and helping to create a society
within which more women could achieve their full potential. In addition, I recognised that feminine cognition can help to trouble and dismantle a white, male-dominant epistemology that masquerades as objective. Finally, I found that cultures of resistance are developed by marginalised peoples in society who share certain commonalities of experience and are used to preserve the pride and independence of marginalised people. Therefore through considering the scholarship around casual academics as a marginalised group and the literature pertaining to a distinct feminine cognition together I identified that women casual academics might, given an opportunity of voice, constitute their own culture of resistance.

In my review of the scholarship around feminine communication women were called upon to write themselves/ourselves. In particular, Cixous (1976, 1998) invited us to develop l’écriture feminine in contrast to the objective, dichotomist representations and linear structures of masculine writing. She further encouraged us to employ an improvisational, non-teleological writing and drawing. The literature in this discourse both demonstrated and advocated a poetic writing form and imagistic and sensual narrative that disrupted linearity and denotation in favour of circular structure and metaphor. In addition, a focus on inner female experience within feminine writing was said to determine an emotional, intuitive and sensual form, which in turn stimulates innovative ideas about women and gender. Therefore, I found the literature on feminine writing determined, as distinct from disinterested masculine writing, energising and inspiring.

My considerations of the literature around women’s thinking and communicating led me to identify incongruence between the fluid and poetic form of feminine cognition and communication, and the formal qualities of traditional academic literature through which academic discourse exerts its presence/power. My deliberation of the literature revealed that a supposedly neutral academic style and scientific method masquerade as disinterested whilst
promoting a gendered hegemony. Additionally, I found that the formal structures of precise, concise language fail to accommodate subjectivity or emotion and that agonistic and competitive structure that prevents dialogue or feminine connectivity. Thus, my brief review of literature regarding traditional academic discourse confirmed that the linear, teleological structure of conventional academic writing is largely incongruent with the fluidity and poeticism of the imagistic narrative form of feminine writing. Moreover, the lived experience of women casual academics (which may be communicated by the women participants in a feminine communication style) might be more congruently communicated in a form of feminine academic discourse.

I found that feminine academic discourse has been represented as a de-disciplining of academic conventions and embraces experimental and subjective scholarship. In opposition to the suppression of the personal and female voice of traditional scholarship, feminine communication exposes the writer’s personal voice and experiments with alternative styles of research representation such as drama, narrative poetry and autobiography. Additionally, I discovered that feminine writing more generally is poetic, provocative, imagistic, emotional and subjective. Finally, the feminine scholarship I considered engaged all my senses and motivated me to consider how to produce feminist scholarship within masculine discourse communities.

In dialogue with the evocative qualities of feminist scholarship is the phenomenon that most feminine scholarship remains unpublished and feminist research therefore fails to extend or resist traditionally masculine discourse. I discovered that one response to the feminist researcher’s dilemma is to merge the conventions of masculine and feminist scholarship. A hybrid scholarship was shown to derive authority from referencing well-respected/established scholars and scholarship within logically developed arguments, whilst
simultaneously gaining authenticity through the use of personal, subjective experience and language. My reflection on this scholarship therefore illuminated that it is possible for a feminist researcher/me to engage in, and possibly extend, the discourses around women casual academic experience even though the dominant discourses are predominantly masculinely structured and biased. Informed by my review of this literature I adopted a hybrid scholarship of bicultural communication; one that merges elements of metadiscourse and academic reference with narrative and subjective process and perspective in this research project.

Therefore, my review of literature pertaining to casual academia in Australian Higher Education established a gap in the scholarship in relation to the lived experience of casual academics. In addition, the literature pertaining to feminine cognition and writing, and its relationship with traditional academic scholarship, revealed that female perspective and communication are distinct from traditional academic scholarship. Furthermore, I found that most academic discourses reside in traditional academic form. Therefore, I was motivated to employ a hybridised or bicultural form of scholarship, one that employs masculine discursive elements of metadiscourse and academic reference with feminine narrative and subjective perspective, in the process of creating a congruent form of communication through which to re-present the lived experience of women’s casual academics.
CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is designed to explain the conceptual framework I adopted in this research project. In particular, it establishes why and how I adopted a narrative epistemological framework and feminist perspective for this arts-informed narrative inquiry into the lived experience of women casual academics. As a narrative epistemology is considered a recent theoretical framework (Cleaver, 2010; Sikes & Gale, 2006) I present an overview of its definition, main proponents, characteristics, history, and philosophical and theoretical context. In particular, I establish that understanding the world narratively is a primordial human activity and that despite narrative knowing’s primal status, and catalytic influence on the development of language, there has been a relentless attempt to marginalise it theoretically through a privileging of alternative epistemological frameworks. I argue, therefore, that the recent declarations that narrative is an epistemological framework is reflective of the current zeitgeist of postmodernity, as opposed to the development of a new mode of knowing. Finally, I argue that a narrative epistemology supports both the principles and aims of feminist research and in specific reference to this study, provides women casual academics with a feminine language/voice through which to communicate their lived experience.

Definition of Narrative

Etymologically narrative is derived from the stem narrare which means ‘to tell, relate, recount, explain’, literally ‘to make acquainted with’, and gnarus or ‘knowing’, with its root gno meaning ‘to know’. To narrate then is to know and to recount one’s knowledge. In addition, according to Davis (2004) and Hendry (2010), gnarus comprises multiple ways
of knowing including *episteme*, pertaining to logical-rational thought, and *gnosis* and *poesis* knowledge relating to broader questions of meaning including spiritual and poetic knowing. Therefore, narrative is to know and relate logical-rational, spiritual and poetic knowledge. Within the etymological context the constituent processes of knowing and relating one’s knowing are neither bifurcated, dichotomised nor positioned hierarchically. Rather, narrative is considered holistically as both the story lived and told (Pertanker, 2005, p.2). As Bruner succinctly presented, ‘to narrate’ derives from both ‘telling’ (narrare) and ‘knowing in some particular way’ (gnarus); ‘the two tangled beyond sorting’ (2002, p. 27).

Since 1968 there seems to be a growing acceptance that narrative knowing, or coming to know through narrative, can occur in the moment of life experience, what Schon refers to as knowing-in-action (1983); or even before the lived experience within what Dreyfus defines as pre-reflective narrative (1991). This latter view is encapsulated by MacIntyre (2007) who simply claims that stories are lived before they are told. It may be thought then, that the practice of narrative knowing is characteristic of a post-modern preoccupation with the self as ‘unceasing in its becoming, ever open to the new experience’ (Sennett 1998, p.133). Yet in this chapter I argue that narrative cognition is a practice of the past and present; it is merely the theorising about the process that is relatively new. In particular, I will establish that to know narratively is a ‘primordial act… [employed] in the creation of the self, and of culture, and in all social and intellectual life’ (Gare 2007, p. 95). In addition, I will contend that an acceptance of such an epistemological position has been made possible by the zeitgeist of non-positivist conceptualisations with their rejection of absolute truths and certainties. However, before I consider the epistemological status of narrative, I’ll discuss the theories of Hardy (1968), Bakhtin (1984, 1986), and Bruner (1986, 1990, 1996) in order to provide an overview of the development of narrative knowing as a theorised practice, identify its main characteristics, and briefly establish its ontological permutations.
Context: Historical and Theoretical Context of Narrative Cognition

In this section of the dissertation I introduce an historical and theoretical context for the concept of narrative cognition. In particular, I introduce Professor of English Literature Barbara Hardy, literary and cultural theorist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, and psychologist and philosopher of education Jerome Bruner as the pioneering proponents of narrative knowing of the 20th century. I will demonstrate that Hardy, Bakhtin and Bruner identify narrative knowing as a primary act of being that is personally experienced though socially mediated.

Barbara Hardy, a Senior Fellow Professor of English Literature at the University of London, first established the argument that narrative is a primary act of the mind over 45 years ago. In her highly influential text, *Towards a poetics of fiction: an approach through narrative* (1968), Hardy contended that thinking narratively is a routine act of human consciousness that exists in a pre-aesthetic state. She specifically argued that we each dream, day-dream, remember, anticipate, hope, believe, plan, construct and learn through narrative. Furthermore, Hardy claimed that self-narration is an essential part of our living and knowing: ‘In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future’ (1968, p.5). For Hardy self-narration was vital for personal and social development as it offers an opportunity to conceptualise alternatives; as she poetically suggested, ‘it lends imagination to the otherwise’ (Hardy, 1968, p.6). Finally, Hardy claimed that narrative creates, maintains and transforms relationships as we come to know each other through both self-narration and inter-narrative telling. In summary, Hardy posited that narrative is a routine behaviour required for individuals to live and develop fully and for society to progress and transform. Thus, for Hardy, narrative cognition is
ontologically perspectival and incorporates how things have been perceived, are perceived, and how the future may be perceived.

Correspondingly, Mikhail Bakhtin, a leading literary and cultural theorist and philosopher, also understood narrative as a means of knowing and was likewise concerned with its role in social development and transformation (1984, 1986). However Bakhtin’s focus is distinctive from Hardy’s. Hardy identified that coming to know predominantly occurs through personal intramental narration, and failed to examine the presence or impact of the narrator’s past or previous understanding upon the narrative process. Neither did she discuss the narrator’s engagement in, or dialogue with, other characters or social influence in the process of narrative knowing. Hardy’s focus was squarely on the individual and their act of constructing personal understanding through narrative. In contrast, Bakhtin conceived narrative cognition only in a dialogic, inter-subjective and intermental form. For Bakhtin the moment of conceptualisation or coming to know occurs when we author our narrative through dialogue (Bakhtin, 1984). In other words the act of coming to know is activated through dialogue between our past and present and dialogue with other ‘texts’ and characters within a specific historical and cultural context. For Bakhtin, narrative is therefore always dialogical, and whether it occurs within or between authors it never takes place in a vacuum. He specifically argued that ‘every word smells of the context and contexts in which it has lived its intense social life’ (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 262). Thus, for Bakhtin all narrative and narrative knowing is relational and situated. A further Bakhtinian principle is that narrative knowing occurs through the interaction of multiple narratives and authors, a process he described as intertextual social dialogue (1986). Hence, Bakhtin conceived narrative understanding as a co-creation of understanding that is ‘fully grounded in a dialogic ontology in which the self is not substantive, but relational... this is an epistemology in which the external and internal being of the subject is inextricably related with those of others’
Therefore, for Bakhtin narrative cognition is dialogical, relational and historically situated (Bakhtin, 1984, 1986).

Though Hardy introduced narrative as a routine way of knowing and Bakhtin conceptualised its dialogical nature, it is Jerome Bruner, an eminent psychologist and philosopher of education, who has written most explicitly and extensively about narrative cognition. Moreover, Bruner established narrative knowing as a central tenet of cultural psychology, psychological anthropology as well as many related disciplines. He articulated his initial understanding of coming to know through narrative in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986), a text that has been cited by over 16,000 scholarly publications, making it one of the most seminal works of the 20th century. Within the text Bruner argued that there are two forms of cognition and knowledge, the paradigmatic and the narrative; that narrative captures an author’s intention, and that intentionality is ‘irreducible’ in the human mind; that all stories integrate characters, plights, consciousness and context; and that narratives are culturally specific and situated.

For Bruner, there are two forms of cognition, the paradigmatic and narrative. Paradigmatic knowing is based on the positivist assumption that there is a single truth and reality; a stance that does not tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty or multiple perspectives. Paradigmatic knowing is said to result in ‘a rigid principle or law, an abstraction or generalization that leads to a theory and/or information used to predict or control human behaviour or natural forces’ (Kramp, 2004. p.107). Finally, the language used to express paradigmatic is denotative, emphasising definition, abstraction, conceptual analysis, evidence and truth (Kramp, 2004). Narrative knowing, in contrast, attends to subjective and individual understanding and is based on the notion that individuals construct their subjective accounts of reality within a spectrum of perspectives. As Bruner claimed, ‘To understand well what
something “means” requires some awareness of alternative meanings that can be attached to
the matter under scrutiny, whether one agrees with them or not’ (Bruner, 1996, p. 13). The
narrative is not judged to be factually true or false; instead it is assessed according to
verisimilitude, the recognisability of it and appearance that something could be true. In
addition, narrative is couched in connotative language that expresses and reveals the authors
perception, goals, and experience. Consequently, paradigmatic knowing is said to be
concerned with ‘how we come to know the truth’ whilst narrative cognition is concerned with
‘how we come to endow experience with meaning’ (Rorty, as cited in Bruner, 1986, p.12).
Therefore, as Bruner (1986) cautioned, though paradigmatic and narrative modes of knowing
are complementary, they are neither reducible nor translatable to one another.

Once he drew a careful distinction between paradigmatic and narrative cognition,
Bruner traversed beyond Hardy’s claim of the routine nature of narrative knowing to argue
that there is a biological basis for a narrative conceptualisation of the world. Bruner describes
a ‘human readiness for narrative’, that is a ‘predisposition to organize experience into a
narrative form, into plot structures’ (1990, p.45). In the chapter Two Modes of Thought in
Actual Minds, Possible Worlds Bruner suggested that man has a primal tendency to interpret
all behaviour in terms of man’s intention. He claimed specifically that ‘one can make a
strong argument for the irreducible nature of the concept of intention’ (1986, p.17). Bruner
supported this radical argument by referencing psychological experiments that show how
humans automatically ascribe human characteristics, such as moving with intent to establish
relationships and connection or self-protection, to non-human figures and shapes. In the two
experiments discussed by Bruner the research participants consistently described the
movement of the shapes narratively by constructing plots in which larger rectangular ‘bullies’
 pursue smaller circles and triangles (1986, pp.17-19). Bruner consequently claimed that man
has a human orientation towards organising experience into narratives that incorporate
character, intentions and plight.

Bruner further developed his ideas concerning the constituent elements of narrative
within *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986), *Acts of Meaning* (1990) and *The Culture of
Education* (1996). In *Acts of Meaning* Bruner developed the idea of character consciousness
by arguing that narrative contains ‘human agents doing things on the basis of their beliefs and
desires, striving for goals, meeting obstacles which they best, or which best them’ (1990,
pp.42-43). The notion that obstacles prevent or delay characters from achieving their goals is
considered by Bruner to be the narrative’s ‘plot-line’. In particular, for Bruner the plot-line
within narrative cognition is always constructed around the thwarting of character
expectation, what he calls a breach from some canonical or expected state of affairs. Hence
through the process of narrative knowing the author will construct a story where a character’s
expectation, based upon a culturally defined sense of what is right/should be is either delayed
or denied. This suggests that Bruner, like Bakhtin, identified narrative cognition as culturally
situated/influenced, and in this regard dialogic. Additionally, Bruner made explicit the
constituent element of context or setting within narrative cognition. In *The Culture of
Education* (1996) he stated that ‘at a minimum a “story” (fictional or actual) involves an
Agent who Acts [character] to achieve a Goal [plot] in a recognisable setting [context] by use
of certain means [plot]’ (1996, p. 94). Finally, the narrative need not be based on factual
lived experience, instead Bruner described narrative as often ‘trafficking in human
possibilities rather than settled certainties’ (1986, p.26). Thus, a Brunerian construct of
narrative is concerned with what might be as well as what is, which presents narrative
cognition as ‘subjunctive’ and constructs a world that is ‘psychologically in process, and as
such contingent or subjunctive’ (1986, p.29). Hence, for Bruner, narrative knowing contains
culturally situated character/s, setting and a plot construction that is concerned with the possibilities of life.

Therefore a consideration of the main pioneers and characteristics of narrative cognition has revealed that ontologically, narrative knowing is understood as habitual, dialogical, culturally contextualised and subjunctive. In addition, the process of narrative is conceptualised as ongoing, relational and processual. This brief chronology of the development of narrative knowing in the 20th century is designed to act as a foundation on which I next build an investigation into the epistemological status of a narrative theoretical framework.

**Theoretical context of a narrative epistemology.**

I contend that the process of narrative knowing is elemental and has existed for as long as mankind, yet the theorisation of a narrative mode of knowing is relatively recent. This chapter therefore seeks to present a philosophical context of narrative epistemology in an attempt to understand the disjuncture between the pervasive practice of narrative as a way of knowing, and its historical lack of theorisation. In doing so I present the perspective that despite the primordial nature of narrative knowing, and its catalytic influence on the development of linguistic codes of communication, there has been a relentless attempt to marginalise it theoretically through the privileging of alternative epistemological frameworks. Since the time of Plato, through the age of the Enlightenment, via modern education syllabi and contemporary research policy, narrative as a way of knowing has been undermined by the privileging of other epistemological traditions. In addition, hitherto, narrative epistemology has been out of kilter with popular ontological and epistemological traditions. Consequently, it is only within the current zeitgeist of postmodernity that a narrative way of
knowing has been fully conceptualised, theorised, included into the discourses around epistemological frameworks, and used to inform contemporary research practice.

**The primacy of narrative as a mode of knowing.**

We construct an understanding of the world, ourselves and others primarily through narrative. This is a position supported by Gare who posits that to know narratively is a primordial act employed ‘in the creation of the self, and of culture, and in all social and intellectual life’ (2007, p. 95). It is further supported by Barthes who claimed that ‘narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives’ (1966, p.14). Moreover, as early as in 1942 and 1962 the philosopher Susanne Langer offered a radical argument for the primacy of narrative in meaning-making and its role in the development of linguistic codes of communication.

For Susanne Langer narrative knowing is a process of consciousness that precedes a linguistic code of communication. Langer contended that we initially construct a consciousness of non-discursive symbols or images that are akin to original experience. These symbols are then interpreted narratively; as Langer specifically argued that ‘The first thing we do with images is to envisage a story’ (1942, p.128). In this regard Langer’s position aligned with Bruner’s claim that the role of narrative discourse is to convert ‘unworded narratives into powerful and haunting stories’ (1986, p16). Both Bruner and Langer thus suggested that narratives are initially based in image. Yet for Langer, imagistic narrative both preceded and superseded a linguistic code of knowing (1942). She claimed that narrative image is closer to emotionally lived experience than linguistically coded narrative and that intramental imagistic narrative was the ‘catalyst’ that initiated the evolution of speech (1962, pp.41-42). That is, through a need to communicate one’s narrative
knowing/images wo/man transferred images into the linguistic signs of communication. In *Speculations on the Origins of Speech and Its Communicative Function* (1962) Langer claimed that without the foundation provided by intramental mental imagery, that fuses information and emotion, the need for linguistic expression and communication would not have occurred. Thus for Langer the primordial practice of narrative knowing played a central role in the evolution of communication.

Langer’s assertions concerning the primacy of narrative are supported by Susan Aylwin. In *Structure in Thought and Feeling* (1985), Aylwin contended that a continuous stream of mental imagery is an essential element of cognition and emotion. Building on the work of Langer, Aylwin claimed that humans construct knowledge through a succession of static visual frames or representations which are subsequently represented through verbal, visual, and enactive modes. In this regard Aylwin and Langer’s conceptualisation of narrative seems to correlate with Hardy’s 1968 focus of its individualised and intramental nature. However, it conflicts with Bakhtin’s contention that narratives are a part of a ‘larger chain of utterances/ tightly interwoven with one’s own word’ (1981, pp. 345-346) which centralises the linguistic nature of narrative knowing. Therefore, though Hardy, Langer, Aylwin and Bakhtin centralise the role of narrative in cognition they do not agree on its constituent elements.

Narrative cognition has therefore attracted and advanced various theoretical positions and foci ranging from Hardy’s (1968) concentration on the individual construction of understanding through narrative; Bakhtin’s (1984, 1986) concept of a dialogical, relational and historically situated narrative knowing; Bruner’s (1986, 1987, 1990,1991) notion of a human disposition towards a subjunctive narrative process that contains culturally situated character/s, setting and plot; and Langer’s thesis that imagistic narrative acted as the catalyst
for the development of linguistic/aural communication. Yet, the one unifying principle that is also foundational to each of the theories is the acceptance of narrative knowing as a primordial and enduring process of being. As Boas argued:

> there is no fundamental difference in the ways of thinking of primitive and civilized man... the view cannot be maintained that the present races of man stand on different stages of evolutionary series and that civilized man has attained a higher place in mental organization than primitive man (Boas, 1963, p.8).

In extension of Boas’ argument I propose that we do not have a different process of cognition from our ancestors, we know and have always come to know, narratively. Yet, we now theorise about how we know differently. That is, our ways of knowing have not evolved, but our epistemological frameworks have. I consider therefore it is an evolution of epistemological frameworks that accounts for the recent ‘narrative turn’ or interest in narrative as a way of knowing and communicating.

**The privileging of alternative epistemological frameworks.**

Despite the primal nature of narrative cognition, and its catalytic influence on the development of linguistic codes of communication, there seems to have been a relentless attempt to marginalise it theoretically through the privileging of alternative epistemological frameworks. In particular, imagistic and narrative knowing has been undermined theoretically from the 5th century BC through to the ‘modern’ education syllabi and research policy of the present time. Yet through the advent of a postmodern philosophical epoch the practice of narrative cognition has gained recognition and a narrative epistemology has started to become more fully conceptualised and validated.

A privileging of logic and discursive language along with a discrediting of narrative knowing can be traced from the 5th century BC. Eric Havelock, a classicist, argued that the ancient Greek philosopher Plato explicitly distrusted the concept of imagistic and narrative
cognition. Moreover, Havelock specifically claimed that Plato, and Platonism, attempted to substitute an imagistic way of knowing with a conceptual discourse (cited in Berman 1981, p.73). Plato’s antagonism towards imagistic narrative is further identified by Morris Berman, the science historian. Berman (1981) claimed that the belief system of western society at the time of Plato was based on Alchemy; which Plato described as both ‘dreamlike, symbolic, and imagistic’ and ‘stupid, incomprehensible, an obstacle to be rooted out’ (Berman, 1981, pp.105-106). According to Berman, Plato found alchemic ideas based on imagery and narrative to be ‘pathological and the arch enemy of intellect’ (1981, p.73). Correspondingly, Fleckenstein (1996) argued that Plato’s attack on an imagistic and narrative form of consciousness was part of his advancement of the agendas of rationalism (a theory that reason rather than experience is the foundation of certainty in knowledge), and empiricism (a belief that knowledge is based on observation). Plato’s position, in this context, can thus be understood as positivist. Positivism is a theoretical perspective that sits most comfortably within an objectivist epistemology. It understands knowledge as existing independently of the knower, history or cultural influence/context. In this vein positivism is the acceptance that knowledge is based on that which can be observed and verified objectively, and that truth claims can only be made through scientific testing. Positivism upholds that knowledge is factual and it is the role of science to establish facts/knowledge through empirical testing (Crotty, 1998, pp.26-27). Accordingly, Plato can be seen to separate imagistic/narrative knowing from rationalism and empiricism, discrediting the former in order to promote a positivist paradigm.

The positivist principles of rationalism and empiricism were also exalted within the Age of Enlightenment (also known as the enlightenment) and remained foundational principles within Modernism (modernism). The main aim of the enlightenment, a 17th and 18th century cultural movement of intellectuals, was to reform society by promoting truth
claims based on testable explanation and reason. Similar assertions have been made of modernism. Modernism, within the context of this chapter, refers to a philosophical epoch that has been described as extending from 1650-1950s, or the late nineteenth to early 20th century. Due to some debate around the periodisation of modernism it is perhaps best understood by its characteristics. Harvey (1980) describes modernism as positivistic and rationalistic, with a tendency towards a belief in ‘linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardisation of knowledge’ (1980, pp.8-9).

Imbued within the aim of the enlightenment and trajectory of modernist philosophy is the positivist epistemological notion that universal truth can be found or become known through objective observation or scientific inquiry. Yet scholars of the enlightenment and proponents of modernist philosophy not only exalted absolute truths and empiricist processes of understanding, they also discredited non-empirical processes and forms of knowledge. For Kant, the German philosopher, ‘The Enlightenment was mankind’s final coming of age, the emancipation of the human consciousness from an immature state of ignorance’ (in Porter, 2000, p.1). Kant thus valorised empirical reasoning whilst simultaneously infantilising non-empiricist processes of understanding such as narrative knowing. In addition, Hobbes, the English philosopher (1588 – 1679), relegated narrative alongside art and poetry as a mere form of innocent entertainment ‘to please and delight ourselves, and others, by playing with our words, for pleasure and ornament’ (1968, p.102). Finally, John Locke, the English philosopher and physicist (1632-1704) lambasted imagination as irrational and urged parents to ‘stifle and suppress’ any ‘fanciful vein’ in their children (Kearney, 1988, p.164).

Consequently, Owen (2011) argues the main reason for discrediting narrative and the use of imagination is the positivist contention that reason and rationality are required for the discovery of truth and human progress. Therefore scholars of the enlightenment and
protagonists of modern philosophy continued Plato’s quest to discredit narrative knowing in order to advance the philosophy and practice of rationality and reason.

The endorsed principles of rationalism and empiricism remain central tenets of the modern education system and its related syllabi and research agenda. This position is advanced by Hardy (1968) who identified antagonism within modern education systems between realism and conceptualised narrative. She claimed that educationalists construct syllabi based on an understanding that ‘the process of maturation involves a movement out of a fantasy-life into a vision of life “as it is”’ (p.5). Hardy’s claim specifically suggested that modern education syllabi identify imaginative narrative as immature. The marginalising of narrative as immature resonates with an earlier statement by Kant that infantilises non-empirically grounded knowledge. The argument for the de-privileging of imagination and imagistic narrative within education systems is also adopted by Fleckenstein (1996) who identified, through an increasingly language-based orientation; that language is favoured over image within modern education syllabi. Fleckenstein argued that the modern education system in primary education focuses on reading and writing as principal means of learning and communication. In addition, as children become more proficient in the mechanics of writing their reliance on drawing as a means of communicating their understanding of the world is discouraged. Consequently, modern education processes, particularly within formative educational experience, encourage us towards thinking linguistically which undermines our primordial predisposition towards imagistic narrative (Fleckenstein, 1996). Thus, through the privileging of written and linguistic communication, modern education syllabi infantilise and marginalise imagistic narrative and steer us towards linguistic knowing.

It has also been established that higher education research is steered, via research policy and funding, towards privileging positivist methodological orientations, practices and
voices, (Alexander, 2006; Ozga, 2000). Indeed, Alexander (2006), Ozga (2000) and Singh, McWilliam and Taylor (2001) all posit that such steerage simultaneously de-privileges ‘other’ research orientations, practices and voices (Alexander, 2006; Ozga, 2000). In particular, Janet Miller (2005) recognised that narrative research has been ‘dismissed’ as ‘soft’, ‘idiosyncratic’, ‘undertheorized’, ‘individualistic’, and even ‘narcissistic’ (p. 89). In contrast, scientific inquiry is characterised as hard, rational, and universal (Miller, 2005). Miller contended that this position, often adopted by education policy administrators, is predicated on the notion that scientific rationalism is superior to non-rationalist and non-empiricist traditions of inquiry. Hendry (2010) described such a position and policy as ‘methodological tyranny’ (p.73); an argument congruent with that of Paul Feyerabend (1978), the philosopher of science. Feyerabend suggested that the prevailing acceptance of the superiority of science has moved beyond science to become a general ‘article of faith’ (Feyerabend, 1978, p.74). Though he does not critique science as a mode of inquiry, Feyerabend does identify a danger of endorsing it as the only legitimate form of research. Further criticisms of the privileging of scientific inquiry, with inherent notions of positivism, over other forms of inquiry are made by Feuer, Towne, and Shavelson (2002). In particular, Feuer et al. claimed that by tying public funding to specific forms of research the American government has constituted the validity of certain forms of research, whilst invalidating those that are not funded. Through its research policy and funding strategy the American government has thus defined scientific research as the only legitimate form of inquiry (2002). In relation to the No Child Left Behind Act Feuer et al. claimed that government research policy exalts scientific evidence as the key driver in both education policy and practice, a position that ‘inches dangerously toward a prescription of methods and a rigid definition of research quality’ (2002, p. 4). By extension I argue that research methodologies are often related to particular types of research methods. Hence the elevation of science as a privileged
source of knowledge can serve to deny the legitimacy of other forms of inquiry and their related methodological positions. Therefore the perceived privilege of positivist paradigms and practices can serve to undermine alternative methodological orientations and pursuits.

Consequently, certain restrictions in policy and funding within modern education syllabi and research agendas, similar to Plato and the proponents of the enlightenment, can discredit learning and research practice related to non-positivist epistemological frameworks by elevating linguistic and scientific modes of knowing and inquiring.

A ripe environment for a ‘narrative turn’ in academia.

In the discussion above I have demonstrated that the practice of coming to know through narrative is both primal and enduring. I likewise established that the consistent promotion of scientific modes of knowledge acquisition and positivist theoretical frameworks have served to undermine a narrative epistemology and reorient us towards linguistic, empiricist and rational modes and theories of thought. Despite this, it appears that narrative as an epistemological framework is gaining considerable recognition (Cleaver, 2010; Jones, 1993; Sikes & Gale, 2006). My attention will now turn, therefore, to a consideration of factors that have contributed to the development and acceptance of narrative as a theoretical scaffold. I will propose that the work of Heiselberg and Bohr, the development and adoption of constructionist concepts and the protagonists of a postmodern philosophical era have each fostered a philosophical climate welcoming of a narrative epistemology. Yet it would be simplistic to suggest that these theories and protagonists automatically caused a scientific ‘paradigm shift’ (Kuhn, 1970). That is, it would be naive of me to contend that a critique of positivism automatically led to a complete break with modernism and an adoption of postmodernism. As Jameson argued,
radical breaks between philosophical periods do not generally involve complete changes of content but instead the restructuration of a certain number of elements already given: Features that in an earlier period or system were subordinate now become dominant and features that had been dominant again become secondary (Jameson 2009, p.123).

However, I do propose that the work of Heiselberg and Bohr paved the way for a general distrust of an espoused essential, universal, objective reality and the ability of science to excavate and standardise knowledge. It also introduced the possibility of subjective/cultural involvement in the knowing process which became a precursor for the development and acceptance of constructionism. In addition, I identify clear synergies between non-positivist epistemological frameworks and the advent of the post-modern principles of Derrida, Bakhtin, and Lyotard. Cumulatively these theories and theoreticians established a philosophical climate conducive to the germination of a narrative epistemology.

Positivists conceptualise knowledge as based on scientific fact that is objective, measurable and precise. However, the positivistic claim to objectivity, precision and certainty of scientific ‘fact’ has been substantially critiqued and arguably undermined by both Heiselberg and Bohr. The discovery by Heiselberg (1901-76) in the 1920s that an observed particle is altered when observed established the theory of ‘the uncertainty principle’ (Crotty, 1998). Further Bohr, likewise in the 1920s, critiqued the positivist stance of determining atoms through a framework of knowledge that exists outside of the atom. Bohr’s suggestion that one cannot take prevailing concepts and apply them uncritically to new matter suggested that rather than being objective the scientist was indeed subjective in their interpretation of phenomena. It could be argued then that the findings of Heiselberg and Bohr identify the positivist scientist as *actively constructing* scientific truth, as opposed to objectively verifying it. Therefore, the positivist claim to objective, essential and ahistorical/a-cultural truth is significantly undermined. Moreover, Heiselberg and Bohr’s ideas became the precursor to
the philosophical notion of a personal construction of knowledge (constructionism), in rejection of its binary opposition of objective observation of fact.

Constructionism as a theoretical framework considers knowledge to be subjectively constructed by the knower, who becomes the owner of the knowledge or ‘knowledgeable’. Within this philosophical construct knowledge is not independent, essential, fixed, superior/inferior or observed only through the senses. It is instead conceptualised by the knower in relation to the object to be understood. Crotty (1998) referred to the subject (the knower) and the object (the thing to be known) as partners in the generation of meaning (Crotty, 1998, p.9). Yet they are not the only partners in the meaning-making process as the specific historical and social/cultural milieu of the conception is also a third and important partner. Schwand (1994) maintained that it is the engagement of the social context in the meaning-making process that distinguishes constructionism from constructivism and frames the former as a social process (cited in Crotty, 1998, pp.37-38) and Willis (2007) stressed that the social construction of knowledge ‘can only be understood in context’ (Willis et al., 2007, p.54). Finally, constructionism, with its inherent concept of socially constructed reality, is closely aligned with the principles and proponents of postmodernism and an increased interest in narrative as a way of knowing and communicating.

Jacques Derrida (1930 –2004), a French post-modern philosopher, was a keen critic of the notion that an individual could remove themselves from the context in which they are living to adopt an objective stance. Derrida therefore advanced a process of engaging with phenomena called ‘deconstruction’ in order to expose the cultural influence on thought and speech patterns. Deconstruction is a process designed to trouble the notion that language can represent a reality that exists outside of the human mind. Further, through the development of critical approaches to ‘text’ such as deconstruction Derrida was posing a challenge to logo-
centricism. Logo-centricism is the notion that ‘the text is given authority, validity and legitimacy by virtue of its appeal to logic and rationality’ (Sikes & Gale, ‘Derrida and Deconstruction’, 2006, n.p.). Derrida conceptualised the ‘hierarchising’ of logic within discourse as part of a wider classification system. He posited that in modernism all phenomena, including processes of thought, are conceptualised in a structure of binary opposition where one phenomena is assumed to be prior to and superior to the other (Derrida, 1972, p.249). For example, within the western modes of thought identity precedes otherness and reality precedes imagination and so on (Owen, 2011, p.140). For Derrida, and many postmodernists, the dichotomisation of phenomena has an essentialising and exclusionary impact. Accordingly, Derrida’s concept and process of deconstruction can be considered as congruent with the postmodernism aim of troubling the process of dichotomisation and celebrating plurality, relativism and inclusion.

For the postmodernist Bakhtin, whose conceptualisations of a dialogic process of narrative knowing have been discussed earlier, truth is not only plural, relative and inclusive, but also relational. Truth and knowledge for Bakhtin are thus continually under construction through an ongoing, ‘unfinalizable’ dialogue. The Bakhtinian, postmodern notion of dialogism conceptualises communication as dynamic and collaborative, which contrasts with a modern conceptualisation of monologism, which it is considered as one-way communication that serves to answer, correct or silence (Bakhtin, 1984). In addition, Bakhtin advocated a process of communication and understanding based on polyphony. In a Bakhtinian context, polyphony is a process of communication, and by extension a process of knowledge creation, that embraces multiple voices, perspectives and positions of truth (Bakhtin, 1984). These concepts situate Bakhtin as a non-positivist where truth is co-constructed in an ongoing process. Thus, dialogism and polyphony reflect a philosophical
movement that conceptualises ways of knowing as multiple, ongoing and relational and advances the postmodern mission for the acceptance of a plurality of individual narratives.

The work of Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) a French postmodern philosopher, is characterised by a keen support of the individuation of people’s stories, and an opposition to the totalising nature of the universal ‘grand-narratives’ of modernism. Grand-narratives are what Lyotard (1984) described as ‘master-narratives’ that present an inner-connection between events and act as legitimatising tools to validate and propagate power relations and traditions. Lyotard proposed therefore for modernist grand-narratives to be replaced with petits récits, or more localised narratives (1984). He called for societal change through progressive politics grounded in the cohabitation of a wide range of diverse and locally legitimated stories. For Lyotard, multiple, individualised stories have the ability to focus on specific contexts, reflect the diversity of human experience and impact societal change. In particular, acknowledging a range of local narratives helps to celebrate difference and respects plurality. Thus, Lyotard argued that plural petits récits, which accommodate multiple theoretical standpoints, should replace grand all-encompassing theories.

Lyotard offered further insight into his understanding of narrative in his commissioned report on ‘knowledge in the most highly developed societies’ to Conseil des Universités of the government of Quebec (Lyotard, 1984: xxv). In his report Lyotard explicitly contrasted narrative cognition with scientific knowledge. In particular, he challenged the authority of science over narrative knowing by identifying that science requires narrative for its own legitimation. That is, Lyotard claimed that there has to be a story to explain why scientific knowledge is important. Additionally, he argued that despite its reliance upon it, science denies the legitimacy of narrative (1984: xxv). Consequently, Lyotard’s focus on the deconstruction and replacement of grand narratives with a plethora of
individuated and local stories, and his identification of the use of narrative to validate scientific knowledge, became part of a movement known as a ‘narrative turn’. This term, coined by Todorov in 1969, determined the growing popularity of critical examination, often via deconstruction, of the role of narrative in society. In these ways Lyotard’s appeal for diverse and local stories to become known, and his identification of the central role of narrative in science, can be seen to contribute to a surge in postmodern theorising about the political and social role of narrative.

I have thus identified that Heiselberg and Bohr critiqued the ability of science to excavate objective truths and introduced the concept of subjective involvement in the process of scientific inquiry. This latter concept has been adopted and developed by constructionists to posit that knowledge is formulated by the knower in relation to the phenomenon to be known and the cultural environment in which the interaction (the knowing) occurs. In addition, Derrida’s process of textual deconstruction dismantles the concept that language can represent an objective reality. Further, Bakhtin’s (1984) theories of dialogism and polyphony support the conceptualisation of a poly-construction of knowledge that is a relational and ongoing process of knowing. Finally, Lyotard argued that petits récits, which accommodate multiple theoretical standpoints, should replace grand, all-encompassing theories. In these ways the theories of Heiselberg, Bohr, Derrida, Bakhtin and Lyotard contribute to a postmodern project that recognises constructionist concepts of knowledge and promote a plurality of narrative experience. It is therefore within this culture that accepts epistemologically that we have no unbiased access to the events of our lives (Worth, 2004) that a narrative epistemology has found fertile ground for germination and recognition.
Narrative as an Epistemological Framework and Research Methodology

The era of postmodern philosophy, with its acceptance of epistemological and methodological diversity, thus provides fertile ground for the naissance of a narrative epistemology and the development of research methods based on narrative. I have previously argued that narrative knowing is a primordial process yet the theorisation of a narrative epistemology has been undermined by the valorisation of positivist theories of knowledge. I hereby suggest that narrative epistemology required a shift in philosophical stance, from modernism to postmodernism, to become fully theorised and supported. This position is supported by Jones (1993) who advocated the postmodern conviction that there is no neutral realm of understanding, there are only overlapping and individualised narratives that both present and represent reality. Consequently, Jones claimed that ‘narrative is not so much a literary form as an epistemological category’ as it traverses beyond modernity’s ‘bifurcation of objects and subjects, public and private, facts and values, reason and emotion’ (1993, p.8). Moreover, Cleaver (2010) explicitly purports that narrative epistemology grew from postmodernism’s broadening of epistemological and ontological perspectives and acceptance of different ways of construing reality. Finally, Sikes and Gale (2006) concurred that narrative epistemology is part of a movement that is considered ‘post’, or part of a research paradigm shift that has evolved post-science and post-positivism that advocates a deeper understanding of epistemological diversity and complexity that is required in order to strengthen research. Thus, though narrative knowing is enduring, a ‘narrative epistemology’ is a recent phenomenon. It is one of an eclectic range of theories of knowledge that are born out of and represent a postmodern philosophical climate; one result of which is an increase in the use of narrative as the basis of academic research.
Narrative-based academic research is a recent innovation that has grown exponentially in the last 20 years. Sikes and Gale suggested that the postmodernist preoccupation with multiple realities/stories has achieved wide influence which has resulted in narrative presentations receiving a degree of acceptability in academia (2006). This modest summation is amplified by theorists such as Barone (2000), Richardson (2000), and Silverman (1998) who each identified a surge of interest in narrative as the basis for scholarly research. In addition, Hyvärinen described narrative as a ‘blooming scholarly movement’ (2004, p.4), and Herman, Jahn, and Ryan identified an ‘explosion of interest in narrative’ and an exponential growth of narrative research in a wide range of disciplinary fields and contexts (2005, p.ix). Further, a perusal of the titles of internationally recognised journals such as *Image (&) Narrative* (est. 2009); *Journal of Narrative Theory, Language and Literature* (1971); *Narrative Inquiry* (est. 1997); as well as a plethora of journals that have commissioned Special Editions dedicated to narrative (detailed in http://narrative.georgetown.edu/wiki/index.php/Journals:_Special_Issues_Devoted_to_Narrative_Studies), provides evidence of a significant growth in the narrative-based scholarship. In addition, Hyvärinen, Mikkonen, and Mildorf, (2008) pointed to the basis of narrative in psychology/psychotherapy and anthropology as evidence of the recent rise in the use of narrative in academic research. Whereas Clandinin and Connelly (1994) and Sikes and Gale (2006) identified a significant increase in the number of narrative research projects within education studies, health-related disciplines and the social sciences in general. Therefore, the naissance of a narrative epistemology has developed concurrently with an exponential increase in narrative-based academic research across many disciplines. This explosion of interest and activity in narrative approaches to study simultaneously reflects, and produces, a broadening of epistemological frameworks and related research practice.
The prevalence of narrative knowing, academic acceptance of a narrative epistemology, and increases in narrative research, have supported the development of a more encompassing and richer methodological approach to academic research. Bamberg claimed that the enduring quality of narrative knowing has contributed considerably to the study of identities in a ‘broader and methodologically enriched way’ (2006, p.3). Additionally, Denzin (2000) purported that the practice of narrative-based research has impacted on the development of new theories, new research methods and new language constructs for talking about self and society. Furthermore, MacLure argued that the narrative turn ‘registers a new space for research and theorising across the disciplines’ (2003, p.4). Sikes and Gale (2006) concurred that narrative-based academic practices have destabilised epistemological frameworks and by doing so have created new space for working within the cracks of established research traditions. It is therefore within the newly formed crevices of theoretical thought/possibility that interdisciplinary research and practice are accommodated and disparate theoretical domains and epistemological concerns fuse. Thus, the recent acceptance of a narrative epistemology and narrative-based research has opened up opportunities for creative collaborations across and within disciplines and epistemological traditions. One such cohabitation is the fusion of a narrative framework with a feminist orientation.

Feminism and narrative epistemology.

A narrative epistemology and feminist lens create a cohesive conceptual framework through which to study and present the lives of women. Feminism is concerned with the condition of women within society and their relationship to power, whilst feminist research in particular is committed to changing the subordinate status of females in society by making manifest the lives and experience of women (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004). In particular, Nissen (2011) contends that feminist research encourages the marginalised to
discuss their lived experiences; and explicitly addresses the issue of finding a voice (Nissen, 2011). In addition, a distinguishing factor in feminist research is its acceptance of the pre-rational and extra-rational knowing of women (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Indeed, feminist research neither ignores nor essentialises women’s multiple ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986) which are said to include intuition (Merriam et al., 2007), a feminine ethic (Gilligan, 1982), imagistic knowing (Fleckenstein, 1996), and connected and context-rich knowing (Belenky et al. 1986; Gilligan 1982; Halpern, 2012; Lips, 2010).

Instead, within feminist research the female experience in its entirety becomes an arena of interest, investigation and dissemination. Finally, one of the main objectives of feminist research is to recognise and challenge the androcentrally bias within science and research (Harding, 1987). It does so by situating women as subject and object/participant in research and signalling an important expansion in what is considered researchable and what are considered legitimate research processes (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004). In the following discussion I will consider the synergies that exist between a narrative epistemology and the concerns of feminist research. I will specifically argue that the adoption of a narrative conceptual framework supports the aims and concerns of feminist research. In particular reference to this study, I suggest that a narrative conceptual framework is a suitable structure on which to build a feminist study of the experience of women casual academics.

Additionally, a narrative research project has the potential to illuminate women casual academics’ relationships to power within higher education, redress the androcentric bias of academic research by focusing on women’s experience of casual work, and provide an opportunity for women casual academics to conceptualise and recount their experience in a feminine story/voice.
Synergies that exist between a narrative epistemology and the concerns of feminist research.

In Chapter 2 a review of literature on women’s ways of knowing revealed that, as a result of distinct social experiences, women tend to think differently from men (Chodorow, 1976; Diamond, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Harding, 1988; MacKinnon, 2006). The literature discussed specifically determined that women share a propensity towards care (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982), cooperation (Baringa, 1993; Belenky et al., 1986; Tobias, 1990), and connected and context-rich knowing (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Halpern, 2012; Lips, 2010). Furthermore, I considered scholarship that argued that feminine cognition values a diversity of viewpoints and emotion (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). I also revealed literature that discussed women’s preference for a form of communication that is focused on their inner-experience (Chen, 2011), expressed in a fluid form (Cixous, 1976, 1998), that inspires new ideas and discourses from women, about women (Billingham, 2010).

In the following paragraphs, which reveal congruence between the concept of a narrative conceptual frame and women’s ways of knowing and communicating, I will argue that women’s experience and communication is also understood imagistically and narratively.

First, both narrative knowing and imagistic thinking share an irreducible narrative core. As identified earlier, ‘the first thing we do with images is to envisage a story’ (Langer, 1942, p.128). Additionally, it has been argued that imagery is considered a central part of women’s ways of knowing and communicating (Aylwin, 1985; Fleckenstein, 1996; Langer, 1962). Considered simultaneously these two tenets lead to the argument that the suppression of imagistic knowing and communicating can reduce women’s power of cognition and communication. Consequently, the suppression of imagistic/narrative knowing and communicating can be seen as form of female oppression and marginalisation (Pratt, 1994).
However, in contrast, narrative’s accommodation of image, as an immediate, subjective and less socially mediated form of cognition than language, has the potential to circumnavigate the limitations and coercive force of language and allow women to directly express their lived experience (Lerner, 1986). Thus, employing a narrative conceptual basis to a research project and offering women an opportunity to express their knowledge through imagery and narrative is conducive to engaging women’s communication/expressions of voice. Yet to reject the use of language completely has the potential to silence women within language-dominant societies (Fleckenstein, 1996). Therefore, I consider that the adoption of a narrative epistemology, with a fusion of image and language, as the foundation of a research project both supports the feminist objective to focus on women’s experience and challenges the androcentric privilege in science and research.

The supremacy of language over image can serve to marginalise female experience and communication. Annis Pratt (1994) suggested that contemporary western culture is dominated by language, not image. This domination both results from and propagates the myth of a Cartesian duality of body and mind where language is connected to mind, logic, masculinity and maturity (Lerner, 1986). In contrast, image is associated with body, feeling, femininity and infancy (Paivio, 1984). Consequently, the dominance and valorisation of language over image becomes for Pratt both part of a stratification process and an act of gender domination (1994). Fleckenstein (1996) recognised the dichotomising nature of language more generally. In particular, she suggested that linguistic representations identify difference in phenomena and create a classification on the basis of difference and opposition. From a feminist perspective this is dangerous because it essentialises and reduces all constituent elements of the world to static polarities (Fleckenstein, 1996, p.922). Additionally, Berger and Luckmann (1996) described language as ‘riddled’ by the dominant beliefs of a culture functioning as a ‘coercive force within a society’ (cited in Fleckenstein,
Finally, Lerner (1986) contended that the dominance of a phallogocentric linguistic code of communication can serve to separate women that adopt a discursive linguistic form of communication from women that employ analogous and imagistic codes of cognition and communication (1986, p.225). Fleckenstein (1996) explicated how this is played out in society. She argued that as members of any subordinate culture immerse themselves in the language of the dominant culture, they refrain from employing the communication codes of their own/original clan. By adopting dominant codes of communication members of subordinate clans thereby exclude themselves from participation in their own culture. Thus, in this way language imbued with hegemonic power, can be understood as a communication code that is used to categorise, separate and marginalise. Yet an imagistic form of communication offers an alternative to the stratification and oppression of a discursive language.

Intramental imagery and narrative have a direct relationship to emotion and experience, can circumvent culturally infiltrated language and offer women an alternative to the male bias and language of science and research. As early as 1942 Langer claimed that imagery provides a rich source of unmediated experiences as it is ‘spontaneous and quasi-automatic’ (1942, p.43). Paivio supported this assertion by claiming that intramental imagery responds directly to experience (1984). Correspondingly, in relation to the connection between imagery and narrative, Clandinin and Connelly claimed that ‘stories are the closest we can come to experience’ (1994, p.415). Furthermore, Langer (1942) endorsed the continuous and individualised nature of imagistic cognition as an authentic vision of experience that is ‘less controlled by the politicized forces of language’ (p.43). A second characteristic of imagery that makes it appealing as a form of cognition and communication is its relationship with emotion. For Aylwin (1985), Fleckenstein (1996), Langer (1942), and Paivio (1984), imagery is permeated with emotion. Therefore, the unmediated, emotional
and subjective nature of image and imagistic narrative means that they are rarely used to theorise or intellectualise. Instead, imagery is a continuous and almost automatic response to an individual’s experience. It is infused with emotion and subjectivity which resists the influence of a phallogocentric linguistic system heavy with hegemony (Lerner, 1986, p.225). Subsequently, imagistic narrative offers an opportunity for the communication of immediate and subjective lived experience and creates an opportunity for women to reframe codes of cognition and language.

The insights I present above suggest that the privileging of language over image can taxonomise and essentialise, propagate hegemony, and separate and marginalise women. Yet imagistic cognition and expression offer a direct understanding and communication of lived experience. Therefore, it is convincingly argued that imagery and imagistic narrative have the potential to circumnavigate the coercive force of language and provide women with the potential to recognise and describe their personally understood experience. Yet Fleckenstein (1996) warned against a complete rejection of language by suggesting that to be purposeful ‘images must have a linguistic life within the dominant conversation, or women just exchange one kind of silence for another’ (1996, p.924). That is, women run the risk of becoming further marginalised and silenced in a language-dominated society if they refuse to engage in linguistic codes of communication. Fleckenstein used this argument to persuade women to adopt a fusion of imagistic and language-based narrative as a means of expressing women’s experience. She promoted the use of language plump with metaphor as a poetic language to replace a turgid, theorised hegemonic text. In particular, Fleckenstein explicitly advocated the fusion of image and language within a narrative epistemology to make manifest the experiences of women (Fleckenstein, 1996). As a radical alternative to androcentric codes of communication Fleckenstein argued that ‘by transforming language imagistically, women hold the potential of feminizing the dominant culture, of reframing the
conversation’ (1996, p.924). Therefore, through its fusion of image and story a narrative epistemology directly advances the feminist quest to change the subordinate status of females in society by making manifest the lives and experience of women and extending the communication forms through which women can make known their experience. In addition, a narrative epistemology accepts, yet fails to essentialise, women’s fully lived experience, including their emotional experience. Thus, a research project that employs a narrative conceptual framework that focuses on women’s fully lived experience expressed in a feminine language can arguably challenge the androcentric privilege within science and research and reframe the conversation of academic research in both form and content. In particular, a feminist narrative epistemological and methodological framework employed in exploring the lived experience of women casual academics challenges the male privilege of science and research by reframing the conversation about the academy within the academy, in both form and content.

**A feminist narrative approach to engaging the experience of woman casual academics.**

A feminist narrative epistemological framework supports my intention in this research project to offer women casual academics an opportunity to communicate their experience, and to create a form of research communication that centralises and gives audience to the authentic voice of women casual academics. Casual academics are predominantly women who occupy a marginalised position within the university workforce ‘without job security, few of the benefits associated with on-going university employment and a tenuous and transient relationship with the university and faculty with/for whom they work’ (May et al., 2011, p.188). It is understood that in Australia casual academics account for 61% of the academic workforce (May et al., 2011), and have responsibility for 80% of undergraduate
teaching (Percy et al., 2008). In addition, statistics from the UK and Australia estimate that at the current rate of academic employment it will take a further 40 years for female academics to achieve parity with men in senior academic positions (Carvalho & Machado, 2010). Though these statistics and their related commentary identify a gendered distribution of labour in the academy, statistics fail to capture or represent experience (Mills, 2000). In addition, quantitative research instruments employed to create taxonomies are criticised by Stanley and Wise for their masculine approach to interpretation (1983, p.40). Consequently, research to date has not explored the lived experience of women casual academics through a framework that can fully engage with that experience (Brown et al., 2010; Coates et al., 2009). Yet a feminist narrative approach, with its direct access to experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Langer, 1942; Paivio, 1984) and feminine codes of poetic communication (Fleckenstein, 1996) allow me/the researcher to engage with the full experience of female research participants. Therefore, I believe that conversation/discourses around casual academics can be broadened and enriched through the inclusion of the petits récits of women casual academics, captured and presented in a feminine language/form.

**Conceptual Framework: Conclusions Drawn**

As narrative epistemology is considered to be a new theoretical framework, I offered an overview of its definition, main authors, characteristics, and philosophical and theoretical correlatives were presented. This discussion was aimed at contextualising and detailing the main principles and qualities of the narrative framework and feminist lens adopted for this research project.

I established a definition of narrative knowing as ‘to know and to recount one’s knowledge’ to lay the foundation for considering the main characteristics and proponents of narrative cognition. I presented Barbara Hardy as pioneering the notion of narrative as a
primary act of the mind, a routine act of human consciousness that exists in a pre-aesthetic state and ‘lends imagination to the otherwise’ (Hardy, 1968, p.6). I also discussed Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of narrative cognition as dialogical, relational and historically situated, and introduced Bruner as establishing a biological basis for a narrative knowing, something he described as a ‘human readiness for narrative’ that predisposes us to organise experience narratively in plot structures (1990, p.45). I also discussed Bruner’s identification of character, setting and plot as constituents of narrative cognition. Finally, I revealed that for Bruner narrative cognition was conceived as culturally contextualised, constructed through dialogue with others, and therefore relational and processual. I presented this discussion in order to legitimate narrative knowing as both a primary act of being and as a relational, dialogical process.

Within a theoretical contextualisation of narrative epistemology I presented that the process of narrative knowing is primordial and enduring, yet its theorisation is relatively recent. In particular, I suggested that, despite narrative knowing’s catalytic influence on the development of language, there has been a relentless attempt to marginalise it theoretically through the privileging of alternative epistemological frameworks. By exploring the writings of Plato and proponents of the enlightenment and modernism, I revealed how positivism and empiricism were upheld as superior to imagistic and narrative cognition. Additionally, I exposed the privilege that modern education syllabi and contemporary research policy afford linguistic and scientific orientations to research and cognition. This privileging consequently served to subjugate education and research practice related to non-positivist epistemological frameworks. I finally established that up until the advent of postmodernism a narrative epistemology had been incongruent to popular ontological and epistemological traditions.
Whilst considering how a theory of narrative has attracted recent and growing recognition, I considered that the work of Heiselberg and Bohr paved the way for a general distrust of an espoused essential, universal reality and the ability of science to excavate objective truth. I also determined that along with the post-modern principles of Derrida, Bakhtin and Lyotard the theories of Heiselberg and Bohr established a philosophical climate conducive to the germination of a narrative epistemology and research methods based on narrative. Cumulatively these developments encouraged a richer methodological approach to academic research which included a feminist narrative approach to inquiry.

By contending that narrative cognition and imagery share an irreducible narrative core and that imagery is considered a dominant feature of female narrative (both knowing and communicating) I suggested that the suppression of imagistic narration undermines female cognition and communication and that, in contrast, imagistic narrative knowing has the potential to circumvent the limitations and coercive force of discursive language (Lerner, 1986). Yet a rejection of linguistic codes of communication could silence women within a language-dominant society (Fleckenstein, 1996). I therefore advocated that a narrative epistemology that is focused on women’s experience possessed the potential to challenge the androcentric bias within science and research. In addition, Fleckenstein (1996) suggested that an imagistic form of communication, plump with metaphor, provides women with an opportunity to create a feminine language and accordingly reframe language codes. Finally, and in particular reference to this research project, I determined that a feminist narrative theoretical framework into the lived experience of women casual academics, framed in a feminine language, has the potential to challenge the androcentric bias within science and research and reframe the conversation of academic research in both form and content.
I therefore adopted a feminist narrative conceptual framework for this research as narrative knowing is both a primordial act of consciousness and a relational and dialogic process. Further, a narrative conceptual framework is accepted as a legitimate epistemology congruent with the current philosophical epoch of postmodernism and conducive to the germination of narratively based research methods. Finally, a feminist narrative epistemology both accommodates and advances the feminist preoccupation with women’s fully lived imagistic experience and communication. In particular, through its fusion of image and story a narrative epistemology can directly advance the feminist quest to change the subordinate status of women in society by making manifest their lives and experience and extending the communication forms through which women can make known their experience. I therefore employed a feminist narrative conceptual framework and narrative methodology in this project to inquire into and illuminate the lived experience of women casual academics.
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter I outline the methodological framework and research methods I adopted for this research project, and offer a rationale for their employment. In particular, I discuss how a narrative inquiry is suited to the elicitation of the rich and lived experience of women casual academics, creates unity between narrative content and form, and affords participants the opportunity to voice their fully embodied, contextualised and messy experience. I also demonstrate how the inherent narrativity of experience and potentially aesthetic quality of the stories unearthed through narrative inquiry lend themselves to artistic representation. Consequently, I determine that arts-informed research works complementarily with narrative inquiry to enhance our understanding of lived experience through alternative representational forms of academic inquiry.

With specific reference to this project, in this chapter I demonstrate how and why I chose drama to re-create and re-present, in content and form, the fully embodied and rich experience of women casual academics. I also discuss why I employed a small scale case study, populated through purposive sampling, to contribute to a deeper understanding of the experience of women casual academics, and to validate and illuminate their lived experience. My belief that women casual academics can understand and express their own fully lived experience better than anyone else, and that researcher power should be employed for emancipatory purposes, are shown to impact all the decisions I made during the story gathering processes. Indeed, these beliefs also informed my decision to reject narrative analysis or explanation in favour of narrative interpretation. In particular, I determine that the
principles of verbatim theatre employed to restory casual academics’ narratives privilege the actual words and expressions of research participants over researcher analysis or explanation.

Finally, I consider the criteria or more fittingly the ‘qualitative touchstones’ (Lea, 2014) by which I request this person-centred arts-informed research project to be considered. This discussion centres on the use of person-centred research processes that privilege and individualise women casual academics’ experience and communication, create verisimilitude within restoryed narrative, and stimulate audience engagement and evocation. These qualitative touchstones illustrate my conviction that arts-informed narrative inquiry positions research participants as protagonists within the re-presentation of their experience, and engage an audience cognitively and emotionally in the re-presentation of lived experience. In this chapter I also discuss the ethical considerations with which I engaged in this person-centred arts-informed narrative inquiry and consider the importance of respecting participant anonymity, confidentiality and trust through open communication and negotiation; fully attending to and accepting participant testimony; and maintaining researcher transparency and trustworthiness.

In summary, in this chapter I explicate the methodological framework, research methods, qualitative touchstones and ethical considerations I adopted in this research. I demonstrate their congruence with each other, and how they advanced the research objective of eliciting and communicating the stories/voice of women casual academics.

**Methodological Framework**

The methodology that I employed in this project is an arts-informed narrative inquiry. Although narrative inquiry and arts-informed research practices are integrated within the
intended methodological framework, in this chapter I will define both approaches and their associated concepts separately. This is because each practice has a distinctive set of principles and conventions that I used at different stages in the research process. For instance, for the purpose of gathering full and rich stories I employed a narrative inquiry, then, I used arts-informed practice to restory the gathered stories. It is only within the final stage of the research design, when I created a verbatim drama performance based on women casual academics’ stories, that I fully integrate the principles and practices of narrative and art.

**Narrative inquiry.**

Narrative inquiry is a research methodology aimed at unearthing and re-presenting the stories that people construct to understand and communicate their lived experience. It is a methodology that seeks to capture how people express first-hand understanding of experience. Narrative inquiry is fully congruent with a narrative epistemology, which as detailed in Chapter 3, accepts narrative as a ‘primordial act’ (Gare, 2007, p. 95) that people employ to come to an understanding of their experience and to share that understanding. Narrative is considered to be vital for personal and social development (Hardy, 1968) and is understood to have played a central role in the evolution of communication (Langer, 1942, 1962). Furthermore, humankind has always understood lived experience narratively, as Barthes claimed, ‘narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives’ (1966, p.14). Since the advent of a postmodern philosophical epoch, which recognises epistemologically that we have no unbiased access to the events of our lives (Worth, 2004), a narrative epistemology has become more fully accepted as a
conceptual framework on which to build academic research (Cleaver, 2010; Jones, 1993; Sikes & Gale, 2006). In addition, the naissance of a narrative epistemology in academia has encouraged the development of research methods based on narrative, such as narrative inquiry (Barone, 2000; Herman et al., 2005; Hyvärinen, 2004; Sikes & Gale, 2006; Silverman, 1998). I thus identified narrative inquiry as fully congruent with the narrative conceptual framework adopted for this project and considered it as an appropriate method for unearthing and making known the lived experience of women casual academics.

Narrative inquiry examines ‘the way humans experience the world through the stories they tell’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.1). In particular, the main aim of narrative inquiry is the elicitation and re-presentation of participants’ ‘thick descriptions’ of their lived experience (Geertz, 1973), in a process that provides an opportunity of voice to the fully embodied experience of research participants (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Additionally, as Küpers suggested, each story shared through the process of narrative inquiry conveys not only an understanding of one or more subject matter, ‘but also knowledge about the teller, her background and the common situation. In this way stories communicate always something of and about the embodied context in which the narration is taking place’ (Küpers, 2005, p.121). Etherington (2004) further identified that narrative inquiry seeks to preserve the integrity (including the messiness, richness and texture) of each story by using the storytellers’ actual words to re-present their lived experience. Therefore, narrative inquiry is designed to unearth a plethora of information such as participants’ tacit, implicit and emotional experience and the social context in which the experience takes place. In addition, and in alignment with Deleuze’s argument that we express ourselves through images and sensations with their inherent ‘logic of sense’, as opposed to logic of reason (2004), stories unearthed through a narrative inquiry often follow their own internal logic and rhythm. That is, the stories we tell
regularly conflate the linearity and teleology of causal logic and reason. Consequently, narrative inquiry accommodates the chaos of felt/lived experience with its internal ‘logic of sense’ (Deleuze, 2004). I therefore adopted a narrative inquiry for unearthing the lived experience of women casual academics as it suits the elicitation of the rich and lived experience of research participants, creates unity between content and form, and affords participants the opportunity to voice or make known their fully embodied, contextualised and messy experience.

The affordance of voice offered by narrative inquiry specifically supports my intention in this project which was to provide an opportunity to women casual academics to express their lived experience. This opportunity is particularly important as I have established (in Chapter 2) that women casual academics feel situated on the periphery of academic life with little agency (Bassett, 1998; Brown et al., 2010; Fine et al., 1992; Junor, 2004; Ryan et al., 2013). Yet Davis and Skilton-Sylvester recognises the emancipatory role of narrative inquiry that acts as a medium for those ‘‘at the bottom” to speak alongside their more recognized, and published, colleagues’ (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004, p. 389). Bell concurred that narrative inquiry functions democratically by offering ‘opportunity for marginalized groups to participate in knowledge construction in the academy’ (2002, p.209). Additionally, Boje (1995) suggested that the presentation of stories from marginalised groups within large organisations can be creatively liberating as they expose and celebrate a multiplicity of stories and storytellers. In addition to the democratising exposure of knowledge and voice by marginalised peoples, narrative inquiry also supports equality in collaborative research relationships that can be reciprocally educative and emancipatory (Connelly Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin, Murphy, Huber & Murray-Orr, 2009). This characteristic of mutually respectful and beneficial research relationships within narrative
inquiry aligned with the person-centred approach adopted for this research project. Furthermore, narrative inquiry suited this feminist research project as it is a popular research methodology within feminist scholarship. This is because it is concerned with the lived experience of women, designed to ‘touch base with the variety of real life stories women provide about themselves’ (Lugones & Spelman, 1983, p.21). Therefore, I adopted a narrative inquiry as it aligned with the feminist narrative epistemological framework I employed in this research project, it supports the project’s intention of democratically extending the current discourses around casual academia to include the lived experience of women casual academics, and is congruent with the person-centred and feminist approach I adopt in this research project.

**Arts-informed inquiry.**

The inherent narrativity of experience and aesthetic quality of stories are congruent with artistic representation. As Sikes and Gale identified, stories have the ability to stimulate us aesthetically and ‘open our senses’ (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch.2). Bruner (1986, 1990, 1996), and Geertz (1973) likewise claimed that the thick descriptions of character, emotion, context and action of narrative stimulate interpretive response and emotional reaction from the reader/viewer. In particular, Barone and Eisner (1997) identified that narratives possess aesthetic and evocative qualities such as ‘the presence of expressive, contextualised, and vernacular forms of language; the creation of a virtual reality; the presence of the author’s personal signature; and a degree of ambiguity’ (Barone & Eisner, 1997, pp. 73-78). In this respect stories share an aesthetic and evocative quality that Richardson suggested transfers seamlessly to creative representation (Richardson, 2000). Furthermore, the employment of aesthetic and literary forms of expression within narrative research serves to re-present
experience and develop a ‘re-creation of lived experience’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 931). That is, stories that are re-presented within artistic forms can both present and evoke fully embodied experience. This is a position that was first identified by Dewey in 1934 when he claimed that art ‘does something different from leading to an experience. It constitutes one’ (cited in de Mello, 2007, p.207). Therefore, given the aesthetic and evocative qualities and affordances of narrative, an integral aspect of the methodology, I adopted an arts-informed approach to the re-presentation of women casual stories collated through a narrative inquiry as an integral aspect of this project’s methodology.

Arts-informed research is a form of qualitative research in the social sciences that is informed by but not based in the arts. The main aim of arts-informed research is to enhance our understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) representational forms of inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2008). In practice, arts-informed approaches to research merge the methodical and rigorous processes of social science inquiry with the artistic and imaginative form and qualities of the arts (Cole & Knowles, 2008). Harmonious with this feminist project, arts-informed inquiry works towards reaching audiences, emotionally and cognitively, within and beyond the academy (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch.2). It achieves this by employing forms of research representation that resist the masculine form of traditional academic discourse and creating forms of communication that are accessible and aesthetic. The specific form that a piece of arts-informed research takes depends largely upon the artistic skill and experience of the researcher and the substantive focus and aim of the investigation (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). This is essentially because there is no one accepted definition of, or approach to, arts-informed inquiry (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). Yet, there are recognised conventions and considerations within the research methodology which include many of the following elements:
the use of expressive and vernacular language;
the promotion of empathy or engagement with the audience;
the presence of an aesthetic form or forms in data collection and/or analysis and/or representation;
integrity in the relationship between the research topic and its form;
the opportunity to explore multiple perspectives; and
reflexivity and the personal signature or presence of the researcher.

A consideration of these conventions in relation to this particular project suggests there is congruence between the feminist concern for giving an opportunity of voice to marginalised women, and the use of women’s vernacular. First, if it is to be accepted that women have a tendency towards a particular/feminine cognition and communication style, as discussed in Chapter 2, then there is integrity in a feminist project that employs the actual words and expression of women participants. Second, as Bird (2011) suggests, feminism values different forms and expression of knowledge such as emotional knowledge; and arts-informed research incorporates a concern for emotion and empathy which is compatible with a feminist preoccupation with fully embodied or extra-rational knowing. Thus, the incorporation of emotion and empathy in feminist research closely align with the aesthetic and form of arts-informed research. Third, Silverman (2000) claimed that qualitative research should access what people do and not only what they say, and Merleau-Ponty stresses the ‘full embodiment of all experience’ (1962, p. 453). Indeed the corporeality of experience can be maintained within performed drama which has a significant capacity to capture and re-present what people do and say. Thus, the identified corporeal elements of experience and qualitative study are compatible with arts-informed research. Finally, arts-informed research goes beyond creating a description or analysis of experience, to conveying or stimulating it. As Alexander (2003,p.3) claimed, ‘artists not only describe what they experience; they create virtual experiences in language, space, time or sound so that others
can grasp what they perceive directly, through encountering a new work of art’ (cited in Ewing & Hughes, 2008, p. 514). Hence, an arts-informed research enables me to create congruence between narrative content and form. Therefore, I adopted an arts-informed methodology for this project as it allows me the opportunity/challenge to develop a drama that re-creates and re-presents in content and form the fully embodied and rich experience of women casual academics.

**Scope of inquiry.**

I engaged with six women casual academics as participants in this arts-informed narrative inquiry. I deliberatly selected a small number of participants to share their experiences as within a person-centred narrative inquiry I was required to engage in a caring relationship with each participant and the quality of our relationship was considered more important than the number of narratives collected (Holley & Colyar, 2009). Additionally, as Jones suggested, what might be lost in not using a ‘method with the potential for larger numbers of subjects such as producing large data sets, is more than compensated for by the method’s capacity for deep and meaningful case studies’ (Jones, 2004, p.41). The participants were selected from three different Australian universities, as using more than one recruitment helped me to preserve participant anonymity. Through a purposeful sample, which I discuss in more detail below, the six women casual academics engaged in this research project were contracted on sessional academic contracts in Australian universities. The participants were selected as they reflect/represent the dominant cohort of casual academics in Australian universities as described by May et al. (2011), yet their experience remains largely unknown (Coates et al., 2009). In addition, the six women participants were engaged in casual teaching across three universities based in South East Queensland so that I
was able to engage in regular face to face communication with them and nurture the
development of caring person-centred research relationships. Aspects of the six participants’
stories were merged or interwoven into a series of vignettes and performed in a verbatim
drama presented as part of this doctoral study. I adopted the technique of interweaving
participant narratives as Clandinin and Connelly (1990), and Holley and Colyar (2009)
suggest it supports participant anonymity whilst allowing me/the researcher to retain and re-
present, in form and content, large sections of participant stories. This design was informed
by my intention in this project to capture and re-present the story of women’s experiences of
casual academic work through engaging a person-centred approach to developing caring
research relationships.

**Case Study.**

An instrumental case study was selected for this arts-informed narrative inquiry as
case studies offer ‘insight into an issue where the case is of secondary interest, plays a
supportive role and facilitates our understanding of something else’ (Stake, 2000, p.237). In
addition, intense focus on a single case study can lead to a deeper understanding of the
research issue (Stake, 2000). Finally, Jones argued that case studies are rich with potential to
validate and illuminate participants’ lives (2004). I therefore employed a case study to
contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences of women casual academics within
Australian universities and validate and illuminate participants’ experience of casual
academia. I therefore based this study on the case study of six women casual academics in
universities within South East Queensland, Australia.

This rationale for employing an arts-informed narrative methodology with a case
study of six women casual academics was designed to offer a broad contextualisation of my
approach to this research project. The following sections are designed to provide a more detailed explanation of the research methods I employed.

**Research Methods**

**Purposive sampling.**

I employed snowballing sampling in this research project as it supports the research of information-rich cases, when engaging in an in-depth study (Morgan, 2008; Patton, 1990). Snowball sampling involves asking well-situated people for recommendations about potential participants (Patton, 1990). By asking a number of people who they would recommend to talk with, the snowball becomes bigger as more names of information-rich informants are gathered. I recruited the six women casual academics by asking well-situated people to identify information-rich participants. For this particular study Ms Karen Whelan, Manager Learning and Teaching Development at Queensland University of Technology and Ms Kylie Readman, Director of The Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching (C-SALT), University of the Sunshine Coast made recommendations to support the recruitment of a purposive sample of participants. These women work with women casual academics and so were well-positioned to recommend potential participants. I also recruited participants through personal connections as this project did not seek to create a generalisable outcome that would be better achieved through random sampling. The large-scale surveys that have informed the existing discourse around sessional staffing have already created generalised outcomes pertaining to the lives of casual academics. In contrast, this project was concerned with engaging the particularities of petits récits (or more localised narratives) of women casual academics. The detail and intimacy required to unearth the authentic ‘petits récits’ of women casual academics therefore necessitated a person-centred approach to all
aspects of the research design, including the participant recruitment process. I therefore recruited a purposeful sample and established caring research relationships with participants who were part of a specific participant group – women casual academics from across three universities in South East Queensland. I therefore adopted a snowball recruitment practice as a legitimate and efficient process for effectively engaging a specific participant group in this research project. To conclude, as this project was focused upon making known the lived experience of women casual academics, without drawing any comparison or generalisation, purposive sampling was employed as a trustworthy approach to participant recruitment.

**Story gathering processes.**

Within this project research participants were offered the opportunity to convey their story or lived experience through whichever media or medium they chose. I offered participants a choice of communication medium through which to share their stories as it supports both a multiple text approach to data gathering and a person-centred approach to research. The decision to offer participants’ choice is informed by Keats’ (2009) argument that in narrative research participants should be given a number of communication options through which to present their experience or understanding; the proposition recognising that women participants may prefer to use forms of communication that accommodate metaphor, context, emotion, poetry and drawing (Chen, 2011; Cixous, 1976, 1998); and Deleuze’s conviction that we express ourselves through images and sensations (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch. 1).

In general, narrative methods focus primarily on single-text data to understand participant experience. However, Keats maintained that this approach limits the recording and understanding of complex experience. In particular, she suggested that when a researcher
is seeking to understand complexity, ‘multiple texts are an important option for recording and interpreting meaning’ (2009, p.182). Further, Keats contended that participants may have a preference for one form of narrative expression over another, and it benefits participants to have an opportunity to use all types of communication in the context of a study (2009, p.193). In addition, as I adopted a person-centred approach to this research, giving participants a choice in the research processes supports the ethic of negotiation that underpins person-centred research. Consequently, the data-gathering process I used needed to allow each participant/person to tell her story through a medium or series of media with which she felt most comfortable and confident. Finally, it is argued that experience and understanding is often felt or understood imagistically, impressionistically and sensually (Deleuze, 2004; Fleckenstein, 1996; Langer, 1942, 1962). Yet the traditional convention of presenting experience through a structured oral or written testimonial might have restricted participants from conveying their imagistic, impressionistic and sensually felt experience. Thus, by offering the women participants’ choice in their communication I intended that they would find that the freedom to convey their experience, replete with its own logic and rhythm, allowed them to express the complexity and richness of their lived experience. Therefore, participants were offered the opportunity to express their experience of casual academia through a form or forms of communication that most comfortably suited them and the rhythm of their story/experience.

Interestingly, even though I offered the participants an opportunity to share their experience of working as women casual academics through drawings, song, poetry, letter or journal writing, interview or email correspondence, all six women casual academics opted to tell their story through an initial interview, with some email and interview communication thereafter. They therefore did not choose to employ artistic forms of communication means
or a communication form that is generally considered to be expressive. This may reflect, Sefcovic and Bifano’s (2004) identification that many women academics become acculturated into masculine and traditional forms of communication within the academy. Additionally, their preference for interview may have been influenced by their experience of research as academics. As the participants were familiar with interviews as a process for qualitative data collection they may have felt most comfortable using this communication format when sharing their personal stories for research.

In accordance with the feminist and person-centred nature of this research project I adopted a narrative interviewing approach which consisted of unstructured interviews.

**Narrative interviewing.**

Narrative interviewing, according to Gubrium and Holstein (2002), is a postmodern approach to story-gathering as it developed as both an alternative to and a critique on what Atkinson and Silverman have referred to as the ‘interview society’(1997). In the interview society Atkinson and Silverman identified that the parameters of formal and structured interviews create interview bias by restricting the responses that participants can select, whilst deceptively disguising the process as a neutral method of data collection that can produce trustworthy and accurate results. Conversely, narrative interviewing resists the restrictions and inherent bias of structured and formal interviews by creating what Fontana and Frey described as ‘negotiated texts’ (2005). In particular, negotiated texts are created by demolishing the hierarchical relationship established between interviewer and ‘interviewee’ established within structured interviewing processes. Therefore I adopted a narrative interview process with participants as it is a process that replaces the limitations and biases of
structured interviews. By employing unstructured interviews I ceded ‘control’ of the interview scene to the interviewee and assumed the role of active listener (Jones, 2004).

**Unstructured interviews.**

I employed unstructured interviews as they privilege the storyteller/participant by focussing fully on the emphasis and direction of their story. By completely adhering to the participant and her story I helped to reconfigure the hitherto hierarchical relationship (within the interview society) between myself and the participants so that I became a participant in the development of negotiated texts (Jones, 2004). Moreover, in a newly configured relationship I gave my authority to the storyteller, whom I acknowledged ‘as the one who knows and tells’ (Kramp, 2004, p.111). This approach suited the person-centred research approach I adopted for this study as person-centred research is described as research where ‘attention is given to the subjective and experiential realities of persons being’ within a contextually situated caring nature of relationships (Dewing, 2002, p.5). Additionally, person-centred research tends to resist the propensity of individualistic and ‘hypercognitive culture’ to exclude the emotional, relational, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of well-being of research participants (Post 1995 p. 35). Finally, Schmid recommends that whilst all people are equal, within person-centred research ‘persons exist as women and men not as neutrals’ (Schmid, n.d.). Thus, I employed unstructured interviewing in order to privilege the participants’ narrative and support a person-centred research process. I used unstructured interviewing also as it aligned with a collaborative feminist approach to research. As Graham maintained that ‘the use of semi-structured interviews has become the principal means by which feminists have sought to achieve the active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data about their lives’ (cited in Punch 2009, p. 374). Finally, for Elbaz the
unstructured interview allows the participant the opportunity of ‘voice’ (cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), which is especially important when working with marginalised participants who are ‘yet to be voiced’ (Arnot & Reay, 2007). As I identified in Chapters 1 and 2 women casual academics lack a voice in the main discourses of higher education and generally feel marginalised (Bassett, 1998; Kimber, 2003). I therefore employed unstructured interviews within a narrative interview framework in order to privilege the participants’ story, create a more equal researcher/participant relationship, and to create harmony with my person-centred approach within this project.

Before engaging in the interviews I asked the women casual academics where and when they would like to meet to share their stories. Three women selected a public cafe, two women selected to meet in a public space within a university, and one participant chose for their interview to be carried out in my university office space. It is important in person-centred research for participants to select the location where interviews will take place so that they felt consulted in all research-related decisions and as comfortable and safe as possible (O’Neill, 2003). Most women participants in my study chose to engage in unstructured interviews in public environments which suggest that the women feel safer meeting someone unknown to them in a public space. In addition, the women participants may have felt that they could better control the length and nature of the interview process in a neutral and public environment than in a private space, or one that I, as researcher, had imposed. According to McCosker, Barnard and Gerber (2001) the use of public spaces that are easily accessible to the participant also helps to ensure the psychological and physical sense of safety of research participants. Indeed, all initial interviews in this project lasted between 50 and 120 minutes; with most interviews lasting more than 90 minutes. As the participants were invited to control the length of the interviews the time that the women spent talking to me seems to
indicate that they did feel safe and comfortable in the interview space, and were happy to share their stories.

According the principles of person-centred researcher I entered each interview without a preconceived agenda, detailed questions or topics to be covered within the interview. Instead, I began each interview with the same general question, ‘When and in what circumstance did you become a casual academic?’ as it was not ‘leading’ or suggested a priori. This was deliberate as I did not want to restrict the participants’ stories; rather I wanted to encourage them to develop responses in line with their own experience and interests. By using an open-ended prompt I aimed to support participants to direct the interview to issues and stories within their frame of reference and language. In addition, the open-ended nature of my opening prompt/question allowed the participant to dominate the aural space of the interview with each woman speaking for over 90% of the interview time. I deliberately restricted most of my communication to eye contact, encouraging nods, and non-lexical sounds and utterances such as ‘ah’, ‘yes’, ‘mm’, employed simply to communicate my interest and engagement in their stories. Only occasionally did I offer a reflective statement, in order to check that I understood the participants’ intended meaning. Yet I avoided asking participants to explain or analyse their responses/stories for fear that this might interrupt their insight and journey into ‘uncharted territory’ (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch.4). Conversely, I accepted all that the women shared with me. This approach was based on psychologist Carl Rogers’ (1951) seminal research in listening where he established that active listening involved focus, attention and comprehension and recommended that the receiver respond in some way, in order to create a dialogue. In addition, Eunson (2005) establishes that active listening is a communication skill that requires attention and some ‘verbal response to help the speaker articulate his or her thoughts’ (Eunson, 2005, p.223).
In each of the interviews the participant maintained their storytelling until they offered a statement of closure, which indicated that they did not want to share anything more at that stage. These ‘closures’ were generally indicated by a concluding statement such as, ‘I think that’s it’, ‘that’s about it’ and ‘is there anything else you’d like to know?’ I encouraged the participants to direct the structure and length of their telling/stories as it supported the person-centred approach I adopted for this project and allowed them to organise and control their own story’s ‘meaning’. Indeed, it is understood that an ability to choose how to tell one’s story allows participants the opportunity to avoid or close down any discussion with which they do not wish to engage (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Rosenthal, 2003). Moreover, participants that control their disclosure, and in particular take control of the agenda, structure and language within an interview, can feel liberated or empowered by the experience (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Furthermore, there are psychological benefits to participants being invited to discuss their stories of lived experience on their own terms; the primary one being that it allows them to make sense of their experience (Gee, 1985). Thus, I facilitated unstructured interviews for this project in order to invite participants to organise and control what and how they share their experience in order to frame its meaning and to feel empowered by the process of making sense of their experience. I feel, therefore, that the respect, space and control of communication I offered the women in this study, by engaging in unstructured interviews as the primary method of data collection, allowed the participants to share their story on and in their own terms. This was evidenced in the length of time participants spent sharing their stories within the unstructured interviews and in two email responses I received after the initial interview, both specifically expressing their gratitude to me for giving them the space and opportunity to share their experience.
In addition to initial unstructured interviews I also invited each participant to maintain communication with me by inviting them to send me stories, poems, songs, drawings or images that they thought might represent their experience as a woman casual academic. I also invited them to share stories with me through email or to request a second face to face communication/unstructured interview. Subsequently, three of the women emailed me fairly regular updates, ranging from once a month to once every two or three months, with stories of their recent work experience; two engaged in a second face to face conversation with me within six months of the first interview; and one woman maintained contact only occasionally across a twelve month period by responding to my invitations to read and comment on the developing script that I was writing. The ongoing nature of the engagement with the research process, and with me as researcher, and the level and detail of the personal stories that the women shared, indicated that they did indeed feel safe and possibly empowered by engaging in the research process and in this regard I felt I achieved the aim of person-centred research.

The narratives from the personal emails and face to face communications were added to the six original interview transcriptions and were collectively understood to represent the research data. As Frank (1995) identified, research participants who share personal stories of lived experience, in addition to making sense of their experience, want the researcher ‘to bear witness’ to their testimony. Accordingly, my responsibility to the participant was not restricted to creating a trusting and respectful person-centred environment for participants to share and make sense of their experience; my responsibility was to bear witness to their stories.
**Transcribing/annotating stories of lived experience.**

In order to bear witness (Frank, 1995) to the women casual academics’ stories I employed a transcription process that was designed to notate the women’s words and paralinguistic communication, in order to capture their emotions and intentions. In particular, I engaged with and described the women’s use of tone, pitch, pace, volume, and use of pause, in addition to the actual words and phrases they employed. For example I noted:

‘That’s when I started drinking’ (medium pace, high pitched, a smirk or glint in her voice). Pause (1-2 seconds). ‘It is’ (high pitch, voice smiles, slight laugh, convincing tone). ‘But some systems are like that aren’t they, when you’re essentially powerless’ (slower, with more serious tone, lower pitch).

This form of transcription/notation was based on Gee’s (1985, 1991) concept that paralinguistics and story structures employed in oral communication provide clues to the storyteller’s understanding of their story and its intended meaning. Indeed, Gee’s position is supported by Frank (1995) who determined that a narrative’s structure guides its meaning, and Thomas and Pollio (2002) who identified that the language used in an interview account is central to making the interviewee’s experience known. Indeed, Mehraban in 1971 established that only 7% of meaning in communication is located in the actual words employed whilst vocal intonation accounted for a further 40% of meaning (cited in Eunson, 2005). Furthermore Eunson (2005) establishes that the meaning of words is modified substantially by the paralinguistics employed and that they give very clear indications of the speaker’s intention. I therefore transcribed and annotated the women participants’ communications in a form that attempted to capture the women’s meaning and intention through annotating their words with their paralinguistic communications. This is because I felt that if I were to bear witness to the women’s stories, I would need to try to fully understand and capture the meaning with which they were imbued. Although it was very
time-consuming to transcribe and annotate the participants’ words and paralinguistics I think the process gave me a richer understanding of the women’s experiences and corresponding emotions and heightened my responsibility to re-present them with care. I therefore engaged in an intense active listening process of transcribing and annotating the audio recordings in order to pay very close attention to the women’s intended meaning of their stories. As a consequence of engaging in a holistic active listening transcription and annotation process I felt better prepared to undertake the restorying process, where I would engage my understanding of their experience in the development of a verbatim drama script.

**Story gathering processes: underlying principles.**

To conclude, research participants were offered an opportunity to convey their story/stories through their preferred medium of communication. Though they were offered an option to express their narratives in whatever media or medium they chose, each participant chose to engage in an interview. I therefore employed unstructured questions to allow participants to share their thoughts, insights and emotional experience. Further, I avoided asking participants to explain or analyse their responses/stories for fear that this might interrupt their insight and journey into ‘unchartered territory’ (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch.4). Finally, I transcribed the women’s words and paralinguistics in order to capture the intent and meaning of their words. These practices relate to two central principles that underpin this study. The first is that women know their own story better than anyone else, and should be the ones to tell or show it. In particular, and in contrast to the writing ‘about’ sessional staff and ‘on’ sessionals that exists in the existing academic literature, I believe/d women casual academics know their experiences and can express their personal, fully lived experience of casual academia better than anyone else. Second, the person-centred nature of
the research project required me to distribute power between myself and the research participants (Mills, 2000) by offering choice and negotiating the research process (Mills, 2000). Consequently I believe/d, according to my person-centred and feminist approach to this research, that my researcher power should be employed for emancipatory purposes. That is, researcher power should be distributed and used as a ‘power to’ offer women an opportunity to voice their experience; as opposed to employing a ‘power over’ the research participants by imposing structures around what and how they can communicate the stories of their experience (Blankenship & Robson, 1995).

Data-analysis/restorying narratives.

At this point in a traditional thesis there is usually a subsection that explains the ‘data analysis’ process that is engaged in the research project. However, in this research project I avoided the use of a subtitle and focus of objective engagement of ‘data analyses’ for three reasons. First, I did not reduce the fully lived and messy experiences and stories of women casual academics to data that is analysed through theming/coding and memo-ing. I think the current discourses on sessional staff have done this sufficiently. Second, I understood the classification processes of analysis as a masculine approach to ‘handling data’ that conflict with feminist research (Stanley & Wise, 1983). Finally, and underpinning many of the research decisions I undertook, is an understanding that analysis of data is only appropriate in response to certain kinds of questions and inquiry (Hendry, 2010). I found it inappropriate to impose the masculine and modern methods of science, such as order and explanation, onto the messiness, richness and individuality of human experience. As Gould (1996) and Etherington (2004) have claimed, human life and agency cannot be ‘explained’. I therefore accept Hendry’s conclusion that human experience and narrative require ‘interpretation’, not
explanation (Hendry, 2010); and interpretation requires methods that are distinct from analysis. Consequently, the approach I adopt to ‘handling the data’ in this research project is a narrative interpretation or a re-storying of the stories gathered through a narrative inquiry.

**Restorying narratives.**

I adopted a restorying approach to interpreting the narratives presented by women casual academics in this project in order to capture, in content and form, the experiences and communications of women casual academics. In particular, I employed the principles and conventions of verbatim theatre as the re-storying/interpretation process. I selected verbatim as it privileges participant action, emotion and insight within a specific cultural space and time; allows significant amounts of the actual communications, verbatim, to be re-presented within the public performance of the research; and can accommodate a collaborative re-storying process where participants negotiate the constituent elements of the final narrative that is publicly communicated. The process is also congruent with the person-centred research approach I adopted in this project as the researcher works with participants who contribute to research findings not as subjects or objects but as equal partners in research; wherein ‘attention is given to the subjective and experiential realities of persons beings’ (Dewing, 2002, p.5).

**Restorying participants’ narratives into a verbatim drama.**

Verbatim theatre is a documentary genre of theatre whose texts ‘evolve’ as they develop from harnessed narratives unearthed by a researcher/dramaturg. This process is a departure, and in contrast, from the process of constructing drama texts out of pre-existing theory or perspective. Hammond and Steward (2008) stress that verbatim theatre is particularised not
so much by its form, but by its technique. Its process involves the incorporation of words and testimonies of real people, as spoken in private interview or public record, into drama. Developed in the 1960s in the UK, verbatim theatre is predominantly employed to investigate and present the stories of the marginalised and under-represented, and is concerned with the empowerment of its contributors (Paget, 1987). The key to developing verbatim theatre is listening acutely to stories offered and representing them with authenticity (Paget, 1987). As Caroline Wake stresses, ‘verbatim theatre attempts to… capture and reproduce voices: to give voice to people who might otherwise go voiceless or to give listening ears to voices that often go unheard’ (Wake, 2010). I selected the principles and conventions of verbatim theatre as the narrative restorying process for this project as they centralise the testimony and individual voice of participants, with characterisation and plot-line emerging through testimonial rather than through preconceived conceptualisations of the researcher. The restorying process I adopted thus privileges participants’ expressions of experience. In addition, verbatim theatre’s ability to present the stories of marginalised and under-represented voices is congruent with the overall aim of this research project which is to offer ‘yet to be voiced’ (Arnot & Reay, 2007) women casual academics the opportunity to present their story. Finally, I employed drama as a form of academic research communication as it serves to resist the masculine restrictions of traditional academic discourse (Richardson, 1990). In particular, verbatim drama as a research communication has the capacity to re-present women’s lived experience of casual academia in a form that is congruent with the content and expression of their narrative. Traditional academic discourse is commonly terse and teleological (Hawkins, 1989) and is designed to create academic argument (Tannen, 2002). However, as discussed in Chapter 1, lives are experienced and understood tangentially, chronologically (through time) but not linearly, physically, emotionally and psychologically.
Lives are thus described as experienced with full embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Therefore, traditional, logical, argumentative academic writing is incongruent with lived experience, and the re-presentation of that lived experience. In contrast, drama is a dynamic, corporeal and vocal form of research communication that has the capacity to re-present fully embodied experience, replete with an ability to express the physical, emotional and psychological experience of individuals. I therefore used drama in general and verbatim drama in particular, as a collaborative process for re-storying and re-presenting the actual words, actions and expression of women’s narratives of casual academia. I will offer a more detailed deliberation of the Deluzian and Guattaran (1987) narrative restorying process I undertook in the creation of a verbatim performance in Chapters 6, 8 and 9 and in particular will discuss some of the philosophical, political and emotional processes involved in performing research.

Therefore, the research methods I selected for this research project include the recruitment of participants through personal connections in order to support the person-centred and feminist stance adopted for this research project where generalisable outcomes are not sought but where access to a particular subset of people is required (Patton, 1990). I offered participants a choice of media through which to convey their story/experience so that they could employ a form or forms of communication that best suited them and their story/experience. Further, in unstructured interviews I, as researcher, ceded control within a person-centred research relationship. I adopted an approach that privileged participants’ stories, created a more equal researcher/participant relationship, and encouraged women casual academics to voice their fully embodied experience. Finally, I used a verbatim theatre approach to narrative interpretation in this research project, as the principles and conventions of verbatim theatre centralise the words and expressions of research participants within a
public re-presentation of their experience. I selected these methods as they were congruent with each other, supported the research aims of offering women casual academics the opportunity to voice their lived experience, and created a form of research re-presentation that centralises and provides an audience for the lived experience of women casual academics. Finally, my choice of research methods was informed by my understanding that women casual academics know their experience and can express it better than anyone else, and that researcher power should be distributed and employed for emancipatory purposes. Therefore, within the context of this project, I used research strategies that were designed to allow women casual academics to develop their voice in order to extend the current discourses around sessional staffing.

**Research Rigour and Ethical Considerations**

**Issues of rigour.**

There is agreement in the literature that narrative inquiry should not be judged by the same criteria as the more traditional, particularly quantitative, approaches to research (Barone, 1992; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kramp, 2004; Polkinghorne, 2007). Specifically, Leavy contends that ‘there is no “one-size-fits-all” model of evaluation’ (Leavy, 2009, p. 16) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) claimed that ‘like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability and generalisability’ (p. 7). I considered the question, therefore, if not validity, reliability or generalisability, then to what end should I apply academic and ethical rigour in this research project? My engagement with the literature suggested that there are almost as many diverse criteria for assessment and rigour in narrative inquiry as there are forms of narrative inquiry. For Barone ‘accessibility, compellingness and moral persuasiveness will serve as criteria for
judging the professional worth of educational stories’ (Barone, 1992, p. 21). For Kramp, a rigorous engagement with and being attuned to participants’ ‘thoughts, feelings, ideas, examples and situation’ (Kramp, 2004, p.113) is considered essential for narrative inquiry. Finally, for Connelly and Clandinin rigour should apply to ‘apparentness, verisimilitude and transferability’ as well as ‘adequacy and plausibility’ (1990, pp.7-8). Important to my decision making was that ‘each inquirer must search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply to his or her work’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.7). In addition, I concur with Bochner’s (2000) assessment that criteria can constrict creativity and possibility; ‘Sometimes I feel that criteria are the very means we ourselves created to contain our desire for freedom and experience, a way of limiting our own possibilities and stifling our creative energy.’ (2000, p. 267). Correspondingly, Watson (2012) considers that rather than slavishly adhering to a rubric, narrative researchers should be attentive to narrators and ‘sensitive to nuance’ in stories (p. 463). Finally, Lea (2014) suggests that arts-informed researchers should create qualitative touchstones ‘appropriate to the evaluation of the conditions of performed or performative research’ (Sinclair & Belliveau, 2014, p. 4). I therefore attended to research practices that were designed to support ethical inquiry and creativity; that would increase creativity and possibility rather than constrict it. I identify below the three qualitative touchstones (Lea, 2014) that I applied to this research, and against which I invite consideration.

Two central principles about arts-informed narrative research projects influenced my identification and development of appropriate qualitative touchstones for this particular research project. The first was my belief that arts-informed narrative inquiry can position narrative participants as protagonists within the re-presentation of their lived experience. Particular to this research project I worked collaboratively with women casual academics to
ensure that each of their experiences and preferred forms of communication became the principal focus of the research decisions and process undertaken. Through collaboration, this project privileged and individualised the research participants’ experience and communication within this project. My second understanding is that arts-informed narrative inquiry, and drama performance in particular, had the capacity to journey beyond information dissemination, or a ‘telling’ of participant narrative. Indeed, arts-informed research could evoke audience experience through its ability to create research communication/performance that resemble their understanding of experience and resonate with them (Dewey 1934, cited in de Mello, 2007, p.207). The three qualitative touchstones that I therefore adopted, and towards which the rigour in this research practice was applied, were the privileging and individualising of women casual academic experience and communication, the verisimilitude of research findings, and audience engagement and evocation.

Privileging and individualising of women casual academics’ experience and communication.

I have discussed already many of the imperatives and practices I undertook to privilege individual women’s casual academic experience and communication. These include providing women casual academics with the opportunity to present their story in a form with which they feel most comfortable; selecting practices from verbatim theatre to allow the actual words and forms of expression employed by women casual academics to be conveyed to an audience; and encouraging women casual academics to offer suggestions as to how their experience and stories should be presented to an audience. Yet verbatim drama and theatre, whilst privileging the actual communications and words of participants, also merge or interweave participant stories in a bid to protect participant anonymity. Yet such
interweaving of experience and testimony potentially subsumes the particularities of the participants’ lived experience. Moreover, merging stories and forging causal links within a narrative runs the risk of presenting participant experience as homogenous, normalised and therefore part of a grand narrative. As Lyotard argued, grand narratives swamp the individual nature of experience (1984) and Taylor and Wallace (1996, p.1) suggested that the narrative inquirer who collapses individual stories into composite characters and narratives needs to be mindful to ‘represent others without reducing them to objects’. This highlighted an imperative for me to attend to the particularities of participant petits récits, in a bid to resist generalisation, normalisation and subjectification of subject experience. Therefore, the principle of privileging individual women casual academic experience and communication required sensitivity and consideration to the structural form that the re-presentation of women’s narrative takes, not just its content.

Sikes and Gale (2006, ch. 2) recognise that most drama plots follow a modernist, linear, time ordered sequence, with a beginning, middle and an end. These plot structures involve an introduction of one or two central characters and their context, followed by the revelation or development of a conflict that is ultimately resolved. However, I identified linearity, chronological time sequencing, denouement and the focus of one or two main characters as incongruent to this research project where epistemologically and ontologically the world and notions of truth are considered to be subjectively and narratively constructed, and where absolute resolutions are rarely conceived (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch. 2). I therefore designed a form of drama that accommodates, and privileges, six different voices unmerged into a single perspective, and not subordinated or constrained to the voice of the author (Robinson, 2011). Consequently, in contrast to creating a homogenous and a single objective modernist world held together by my voice, the re-presentation of six women sessional
narratives, based on a feminist narrative epistemology, exhibited a plurality of narratives each with its own perspective of experience. The construction of such a multi-vocal drama reconfigured my role of playwright as ‘fundamentally changed, because the author can no longer monopolise the “power to mean”’ (Robinson, 2011), though I am still the principal re-storyer. Negotiated restorying required a distribution of power between me and the participants. Thus, the criterion of ‘privileging and individualising women casual academic experience and communication’ followed Dostoevsky’s ‘dialogical principle’ of drama development (Bakhtin, 1984). A dialogically structured drama is designed to resist the ‘monologism’ or homophony characteristic of traditional and modern writing and thought (Robinson, 2011) as it accommodates the presence of multiple characters, perspectives and voices, as they relate to and interact with each other. Further, dialogical plot lines do not logically or causally develop; rather they unfold according to a dialectical juxtaposition of various characters’ experience and perspective (Bakhtin, 1984; Robinson, 2011). Hence, I used a dialogical dramatic structure populated with participant dialogue, as per the conventions of verbatim drama, to create a polyvocal drama that did not subordinate the complexity of reality to the ideology of me/the researcher. In particular, I used a dialogical form of verbatim drama to privilege and individualise women casual academics experience and communication. I therefore request that this project and its two forms of communication (this dissertation and six YouTube videos that are referenced within this text) be considered against the qualitative touchstones of ‘privileging and individualising women casual academic experience and communication’.
Verisimilitude.

The second qualitative touchstone I consider appropriate for this research project is the identification of verisimilitude within the research findings. Several overlapping definitions of verisimilitude have been offered as criteria for texts produced through narrative inquiry. Schwandt (2007) identified three of the most popular interpretations. First, a text can be described as exhibiting the qualities of verisimilitude when it has the ‘appearance’ of truth or reality. Second, verisimilitude has been used to describe the evocative power of a textual portrayal where the style of writing draws readers into the experience of participants in such a way that those experiences can be felt. Finally, it has been employed to define the extent to which a text conforms to the conventions of its genre. Though I did not engage a general interpretation of understanding – verisimilitude as the ‘appearance’ of truth or reality – I did engage Polkinghorne’s interpretation of verisimilitude. Polkinghorne differentiated notions of ‘truth’ and ‘fact’ by emphasising that the ‘truths’ or verisimilitude engaged by narrative researchers are ‘narrative truths’ not ‘historical truths’ (2007, p. 479). Therefore as I understand that it impossible to know or neutrally represent the lives of another (Jones, 1993; Worth, 2004) I fully exposed the ‘constructedness’ or ‘staging’ of my re-presentation in my verbatim drama re-presentation (Richardson, 1997). Thus, in this respect I created a narrative truth. I therefore do not ask for my narrative inquiry to be considered against a ‘factual’ account of the experiences of women casual academics. I instead created the appearance and resonance of ‘truth’ and recognisability, and it is against this qualitative touchstone I wish this project to be assessed.

Several processes or characteristics have been identified as necessary for achieving narrative verisimilitude or the appearance and resonance of ‘truth’ and recognisability.
Webster and Mertova (2007) claimed that ‘truthfulness’ and trustworthiness in narrative inquiry ‘lies in the confirmation by the participants of their reported stories of experience’ (2007, p. 99). I therefore employed interim storying, a process where participants comment on, delete or develop a draft version of the verbatim drama, in order to reach consensus between myself and the participants about the truthfulness of the narrative being restoryed. By including participant perspectives and suggestions in the restoryed drama I gained their ‘confirmation’ that their stories are re-presented truthfully. A second characteristic of verisimilitude for Webster and Mertova is that the restoryed narrative resonates with the reader or viewer. Resonance is said to occur when the reader is reminded about their own experience in some way and they consider the narrative to be ‘plausible’ in the sense that what they read is ‘realistic’ (2007, p.99). I created ‘resonance’ by attending fully to and re-presenting in detail the participants’ fully embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), imagistic (Fleckenstein, 1996), messy (Etherington, 2004) experiences.

However, I faced some challenges in aiming to achieve verisimilitude that relate particularly to eliciting ‘truthful’ experience and stories from research participants. Polkinghorne (2007) considered these challenges in detail in his 2007 paper, ‘Validity issues in narrative research’. The first challenge I faced is the disjuncture between actual experience and a storied description of it (Polkinghorne, 2007). Polkinghorne claimed that there are three main contributors to this disjuncture. First, that language has limited capacity to convey ‘the complexity and depth of experienced meaning’ (2007, p.480); second, that participants may not be fully aware or open to the layers of meaning within their experience; and third, the participants’ resistance to revealing the entirety of their felt experience, because of a social desirability to reveal a sanitised story that presents themselves positively (Polkinghorne, 2007, pp. 479-481). I addressed barriers to narrative verisimilitude by
encouraging participants to employ communication media that accommodates metaphorical and analogical expressions, and which they felt suited them and their stories most. Second, to foster participant reflection on their experience in order to support greater participant insight and awareness of their experience, I followed Polkinghorne’s advice to allow sufficient time for participants to explore their felt meanings (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 481) and Seidman’s (1991) recommendation that participants be interviewed on several occasions over a protracted period of time. I therefore engaged with participants over 12 months and invited multiple opportunities for communication. My practice was thus designed to support participant confidence and trust and provide time for participants to reflect and deepen their responses in order to achieve narrative verisimilitude within the story gathering stage of the research process. In particular, I developed a trusting relationship with research participants by fully disclosing all aspects of the research process and communicating with them several times over a 12 month period. Additionally, I encouraged participation by leaving several months in between my open ended storytelling/communication invitations/prompts. Finally, I attended fully and encouragingly to each aspect of their story/experience. These features of my story gathering practice were used to capture the detail of participants’ lived experiences in a bid to achieve narrative verisimilitude.

**Audience engagement and evocation.**

The final qualitative touchstone against which I invite assessment is my ability to aesthetically and cognitively engage an audience. Arts-informed research, in harmony with the aim of feminist research, attempts to engage audiences’ emotional and cognitive response. I engaged this touchstone by employing drama as a form of research representation that is generally considered both accessible and aesthetic (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch. 2). But a more
specific consideration of the aesthetic quality of performed narrative relates to its ability to ‘open our senses’ (which contrasted with its anaesthetic qualities, wherein our senses are dulled). Audience engagement is considered by Sikes and Gale as a legitimate criterion to apply to arts-informed education research (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch. 2) and Richardson (2000) likewise emphasised the importance of ‘engagement’ and ‘evocation’ in narrative research. In particular, Richardson advocated that the reader/viewer’s involvement in the aesthetic should compel their emotional involvement. Finally, Sparkes (2001) also endorses the legitimacy of assessing narrative in terms of how it can evoke emotions. However, concepts like ‘engagement’ and ‘aesthetic’ can be esoteric. I therefore briefly outline below the characteristics of a restoryed narrative to which I applied my academic and creative rigour, and against which I invite assessment. A more detailed account of my approach to dramatising and theatricalising the participants’ stories is offered in Chapter 8.

Sikes and Gale’s described evocation as an ability to ‘invite interpretive responses and to elicit reactions from the reader’ (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch. 2). They further emphasised that narrative space is required for an audience to engage in narrative and respond emotionally or cognitively to the work. This notion that there needs to be space, or lack of obvious ideological direction within the narrative for audience or readers to engage in the text, is supported by Bruner. For Bruner, narrative space was understood as ‘undetermination’ or a tendency to be elliptical metaphorical (Bruner, 1991). The gaps within the elliptical openness of narrative invite audiences and readers to create their own meaning. For Richard Gerrig, if we are to be immersed in a story it has to take us from the threshold of one experience to another and this requires liminal qualities (1993). In particular, Gerrig discussed how a good story is able to transport the reader into the narrative world by providing small spaces into which the reader can ‘use their own experiences of the world to bridge the gaps in the text’
Finally, for Sikes and Gale the ‘liminality’ of a text also represents a certain openness and indeterminacy that propels the reader beyond the limits of the thoughts and understanding that they had before encountering narrative (Sikes & Gale, 2006, ch. 2). I thus developed a liminal quality or ‘undertermination’ within the restoryed drama by developing a dialogical polyvocal drama and refused the dominance of one main voice or narrative. My approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 of this dissertation. In addition, when attempting to create reader/audience evocation Richardson urged against the use of ‘old, worn-out metaphors’ (2000: 935) that exist within traditional academic writing. Conversely, she suggested that evocation is stimulated by the employment of innovative form and aesthetic (2003). Therefore I applied rigour and focus towards achieving an engaging and evocative narrative by creating an original yet appropriate artistic form and style of representation. In particular, I used proto-verbatim theatre as a unique form of research narrative re-presentation which engages reader/audience engagement and evocation.

In conclusion, there are a plethora of criteria that can be applied to arts-informed research and narrative inquiries, yet slavishly conforming to criteria can limit creativity and possibility (Bochner, 2000; Watson, 2012). I therefore identified three qualitative touchstones (Lea, 2014) to which I attended in this research project. These were ‘the privileging and individualising of women casual academic experience and communication’; the ‘verisimilitude of the research findings’ and ‘the evocation of the performed narrative’. It is these qualitative touchstones against which I invite research participants and audience/readers to assess my communication (my dissertation and verbatim drama). In addition to identifying qualitative touchstones towards which they will apply their academic and creative rigour, scholarly researchers are required to also identify the ethical
considerations they engaged in order to protect the integrity and safety of both the researcher and participants.

**Ethical Concerns Specific to an Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry**

The main ethical processes I employed within this research project include negotiated anonymity and confidentiality, giving full attention to and believing participants’ stories, and maintaining researcher transparency throughout the entire research process. I attended to participant anonymity and confidentiality processes within a narrative research by merging certain aspects of participant narratives and working across three participant recruitment bases. However I understood that researchers who make assumptions about participant anonymity and confidentiality act ‘paternalistically and might either deny participants’ autonomy or depriving participants of a “voice”’ (Giordano, O’Reilly, Taylor, & Dogra, 2007 p.265). Indeed, both of these potential outcomes conflicted with my main aim of this person-centred and feminist study which is to offer women casual academics an opportunity to voice their lived experience of casual academic work. Therefore, within the project I negotiated all aspects of the research process. In particular, I negotiated if and how participants wanted to protect their identities within a sustained negotiation process and disclosed all risks involved. I engaged in ongoing discussion and negotiation to maintain ‘a collaborative relationship’ where both I and the participants had ‘voice’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.4).

Second I ‘played the believing game’ in data-gathering processes (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) by listening attentively to the participants’ stories without engaging any preconceived notions of what I was likely to hear. In addition I accepted fully the participants’ testimonies. In addition to giving full attention to, and believing, participants’ stories, I also made my person-centred approach to the research process explicit to the
research participants. In particular, I discussed my aims and research approaches with them in detail. It was also ethically important to me that I re-present all six women participants’ stories in a polyvocal verbatim drama in order to ensure that the individuation of each participant’s petits récits had an opportunity to be seen and heard. Finally, I created interim drafts of the drama and shared them with participants as part of an ethical process endorsed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Interim storying allowed me to develop what Webster and Mertova described as ‘research trustworthiness’ through gaining ‘confirmation by the participants of their reported stories of experience’ (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.99).

Therefore, in this research project I attended to participant anonymity and confidentiality through open communication and negotiation; I openly accepted participants’ testimonies; and was open and transparent with participants about my aims and research processes. I address the particular processes of data restorying and theatricalising in Chapters 8 and 9.

Methodological Framework and Research Method: Conclusions Drawn

Within this chapter I explained that I adopted a narrative inquiry in this project in order to elicit the complex, messy and fully embodied experience of women casual academics. I also explained that adopting an arts-informed re-presentation of narratives helps to evoke audience interest and emotion and to create narrative liminality or a space for audiences to engage their interpretation of the narrative.

I also discussed the emancipatory role of narrative as a medium through which marginalised people can contribute to the knowledge construction of the academy, and creatively expose the multiplicity of stories and storytellers within academia. I communicated how my employment of a polyvocal dramatic form, which dialectically
represents multiple characters and perspectives, supports the re-presentation of multiple petits récits I suggested, in particular, that a polyvocal drama resists the use of academic discourse that subjugates, homogenises, or normalises the particularity of individual experience. In specific reference to this research project I posited that women casual academics are experts in their understanding and conveyance of their personal experience, and demonstrated how all research methods and resources including my role were employed to validate and illuminate that experience.

In conclusion, I presented how the aim of the research project, to expand the current discourses around sessional staffing to include the lived experience of women casual academics, has driven all planned research processes. In particular, I demonstrated a commitment to developing a research process based on person-centredness and a presentation method that privileges the voice of women casual academics and engages an audience both emotionally and cognitively in the casual academic experience. Above all else, in this chapter I have communicated the congruence I intended to achieve within this project:

congruence between my research aim and methodology; methodology and research methods; methods and research relationships; and congruence between the form and content of research. All the research decisions I made therefore stemmed from, and therefore aligned with, the aim of offering women casual academics an opportunity to voice their experience, and to create a form of research representation that centralises and disseminates their experience.

In the following chapter, I create an alternative form of academic communication that is used to both trouble the masculinist discourse of traditional academic and is employed to voice the experience of women casual academics in a form of research that is congruent with, and centralises, their experience.
Chapter Five Part One

In a traditional research dissertation this section of writing – the section that follows a description of the research methods – would commonly be called *research findings*. It would, as the description indicates, present a selection of analysis of research data. Research results are usually presented as tables, diagrams, graphs, or formal academic written text presented in the third person (Evans, Gruba, & Zobel, 2011). Additionally, they are generally accompanied with a written explanation of what the researcher had identified as meaningful or significant about the data collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Evans et al., 2011). This explanation is ordinarily based on deductive or inductive logic, establishes one or more correlations, and makes recommendations for further research or application. Yet despite how research outcomes are framed or explained it can be argued that they are simply a *narrative* of one or more person’s interpretation of research data (Boje, 2001; Polkinghorne, 2007). Indeed, as Lyotard (1984) suggested, scientists tell stories about their data and use the story to sell their theory. In addition, regardless of the epistemological and conceptual foundation that underpins a piece of research, research results or outcomes, invariably represent ‘an account’ of how the researcher understands or focuses the research (Hendry, 2010). Consequently, whether the research is considered conventional or reformist (Polkinghorne, 2007), scientific or humanistic (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), positivist or neopositivist (Lather, 1991), when it is *written up* research results constitute one research account or narrative. Thus, a more fitting title for this section of a thesis, the section that follows an explanation of how data will be collected, is *a research narrative*. Therefore this
and the next two chapters will present this project’s research narrative. The playscript that follows in Part Two of this Chapter, constitutes a central element of the research text.

Furthermore, in a traditional PhD thesis the research results chapter, or a research narrative, typically includes a selection of numbers or percentages, case study responses, ethnographic field notes, or extracts from interview, or what I refer to as ‘data carvings’. The meaning or significance of these data carvings to the research narrative is usually anchored by a juxtaposition of the researcher’s explanation of the data selection process, a description and rationale of the process of analysis undertaken, and an account of what they have determined the carvings to represent (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Evans et al., 2011). Yet such typical ‘research results’ (that explicate what was selected for review, why it was selected, how it was measured or analysed, and what the carvings illustrate) seem to support the development of a linear, teleological, (mono)logic narrative which leaves little room for differing interpretations or perspectives. Correspondingly, a narrative anchored by logical explanation and interpretation lends itself to a neat and axiomatic conclusion of cause, effect, application and recommendation. Most traditional research results therefore present a post-research cohesive account where argument and conclusion are firmly secured by the researcher’s ‘air tight’ (mono)logic narrative frame. The researcher within this traditional discourse is thereby positioned as expert in the narrative and the reader is invited to ‘know’ the one, true account of the research within a positivist and paternalistic research relationship.

Resituating all research results as narrative, as opposed to characterising narrative as a particular style or form of research communication, compels me to radically reconfigure the content and form of the research narrative I employ in this dissertation. It also highlights the need for me to ensure that the narrative I communicate adopts an epistemological position
and supports research relationships that align with the aims and philosophical foundation of this project. In order to achieve this I will present a number of research narrative structures and reflect on their appropriateness for this project. In doing so I will also consider Barthes’ theory of writerliness (1970) and Boje’s (2001) distinction between story and narrative to inform and communicate the research narrative I adopt.

The most common ‘results’ structure in qualitative research is a narrative that presents a rationale for a selection, analysis and ‘reading’ of research data alongside or even prior to a presentation of research data (Evans et al., 2011). If I were to employ this structure I would run the risk of privileging one (my) account of the data carvings over any other account. I would also fall into the trap/tradition of recommending or even ‘authorising’ a preferred reading of a research narrative, and in doing so discourage the reader from openly engaging in the data through their unique lens. Moreover, were I to engage in such traditional discourse or narrative framing I would potentially inflict longer term and wider-spread damage on research and research relationships than merely coercing readers of this thesis into a narrative interpretation based on one/my perspective. Narrative framing, through unequivocal monologic representation of data carvings anchored by the researcher’s interpretation of the meaning it represents, restricts research readers from gaining their own, multiple, and diverse perspectives on research data, and prevents them from acquiring individual insight. By adopting this practice I would potentially reinforce the hegemonic message that the role of the reader is to assimilate and accept the one narrative account provided. Consequently, such traditional discourse buttresses a positivist epistemology where there is one answer or truth to be gleaned from research data, and where readers are expected to maintain a status of passive consumer of research; a vessel to be filled with ‘knowledge’. Thus, if I were to present traditional ‘research results’ or adopt traditional
narrative framing techniques I could further entrench my dominance and privilege – as researcher – in the research relationship between me and the readers of the research. Therefore, I identify that narrative framing can help to maintain positivist epistemological notions of truth and propagate a paternalistic and hierarchical researcher/reader relationship, both of which run counter to the main aims of this narrative-based, person-centred research.

In particular, this research specifically aims to expand the discourses around sessional staffing. This expansion includes not merely the content of the discourse but also the form through which academic communication is made. As I established earlier, in this research project I intended to create a dialogic narrative, or more particularly a scholarly dialogic relationship or dialectic with the existing discourse around casual academia. This intention requires me to construct an alternative narrative form that can sit alongside traditional discourse to create a dialogue or dialectic with previously established narratives of women casual academics. Therefore, traditional teleological and monological narrative form is incongruent with my aim of expanding discursive forms of academic communication.

Second, I aimed to employ person-centred approaches to all aspects of research. Person-centred research is in direct contrast to the traditional and hierarchical research relationships adopted and propagated within traditional research narrative framing. Indeed, in person-centred research participants contribute to research findings not as subjects or objects of research but as partners in research (Dewing, 2002). Furthermore, person-centred research is essentially participatory. By the same notion of respect for all research partners, the practice of negotiation between researcher and research participants within person-centred research should extend to all partners in the construction of the research narrative. Consequently, if, as is understood within a narrative epistemology, readers of research
construct their own understanding of text (Bruner, 1986) the persons that read research are co-constructors of the narrative. They, as participants in the creation and understanding of narrative, should be able to negotiate their own reading of the research outcomes. However, it is difficult to negotiate one’s own narrative interpretation if the text presented is closed or firmly anchored by the researcher’s analysis and interpretation of research data. Thus, research that aims to be participatory and person-centred should be as free as possible from narrative anchoring in order to resist a (mono)logic account of analysis and significance. In short, if I were to construct the research findings or research narrative in a traditional discursive form I would not support participatory, person-centred research relationships and would potentially undermine the second main aim of the project.

Finally, the third intention of this project was to develop a research communication that re-presents women’s lived experience of casual academia in a form that is congruent with the content and expression of their narrative. Yet, traditional academic discourse, including research narrative framing, is understood to be terse and teleological (Hawkins, 1989) and designed to create a clear and cohesive thesis (Tannen, 2002). Such a narrative structure confounds the unfolding, emerging and often cyclical or paradoxical composition of women’s lived experience (Etherington, 2004). It also fails to accommodate the physical, emotional and psychological, fully embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) nature of lived experience. Furthermore, I have argued that lives are experienced and understood uniquely, narratively and imagistically (Aylwin, 1985; Fleckenstein, 1996; Langer, 1942). Consequently, an account of research participants’ experience requires a fluid narrative form that is imagistic with a capacity to accommodate diverse narratives and narrative interpretations. Therefore, traditional research narrative framing and teleological structures that provide a singular and mono(logic) account of research are incompatible with the evolving, ‘messy’ (Etherington,
2004), fully embodied and imagistic nature of experience. They are thus ill-equipped to contain or express it. If I am to fulfill the aim of creating a compatible form of communication that can serve to encapsulate and convey the lived experience of women casual academics I am obliged to reject traditional teleological research result structures, to ‘de-discipline’ my communication (Richardson, 1997), and reject mono(logic) narrative discourse replete with narrative anchoring..

An alternative narrative structure to a traditional research narrative or ‘research results’ communication is an exposition of all research data without edit, framing or organisation.

It is possible, were I to provide all research data fully – without edit, review or frame – that I could create an opportunity for multiple, diverse and individuated narrative readings. By communicating in this way I could perhaps also establish a non-hierarchical, democratic, person-centred research relationship between me (the researcher) and research readers. Additionally, I could potentially create a dialogic and uncensored research communication within which sits a pluralist epistemology that presents truth and knowledge as situated, negotiated and personally constructed. In short, a research narrative that presents unframed and unabridged research data has the capability to subvert the traditional role of research results/research narrative with its inherent positivist epistemology and hierarchical research relationships. In particular, non-data framing could de-privilege the role of the researcher as narrator by inviting a dialogic interaction between researcher, research narrative and reader and in doing so democratise the researcher/reader relationship. Furthermore, an unedited and disunited account of women casual academics’ experiences could express a polyphonic account of participants’ lived experience (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) and consequently create a
dialogue or dialectic with the traditional discourse that currently exists in the scholarship of higher education in general and casual academia in particular. Finally, as the women participants’ experiences are likely to be understood and captured narratively (Bruner, 1986, 1990, 1996; Hardy, 1968) exposition of uncensored, un-ordered and un-edited ‘data’ narratives could express in content and form the women’s narratively lived experience. Thus an unframed and uncensored account of all the research outcomes has the potential to present a polyphonic narrative that expresses the fully lived experience of casual academia and invite readers to engage with the narrative in a democratic, person-centred relationship. Therefore, a presentation of an unedited and explanation/interpretation-free account of the research findings could support the main aims of this research project.

However, the presentation of all research data can be both impractical and unethical. For example, in this project I have unearthed over 10 hours of interview material and tens of pages of email correspondence from women participants who volunteered to communicate their experience of casual academia. To disseminate all this ‘data’ would be practically difficult, could preclude most research ‘readers’ from fully engaging in the material and has the capacity to expose the identity of research participants. In particular, potentially exposing the identities of the research participants – particularly given the precariousness of their employment situation (May et al., 2011) and their expressed need to conform to existing structures in order to remain employable (Ryan et al., 2011) – significantly undermines the person-centred ethic of this project. Furthermore, one of the aims of creating an alternative academic discourse is to make accessible and find an audience for the lived experience of women casual academics; this too would be undermined by producing large volumes of text without context or organisation. Thus, although an unedited ‘reveal’ of all research data may create a polyphonic, dialogic (Bakhtin, 1984) narrative, support the development of
democratic research relationships, elicit multiple and diverse narrative interpretations, and encompass in content and form the lived experience of women casual academics, it is ethically and logistically problematic. Indeed, an exposure of all confidential interview transcripts and email correspondence could do far more harm to the research participants than any good created by an exposure of women casual academics’ lived experience.

A second dilemma, in relation to presenting all research data in an open, unedited, unframed research narrative with the aim of eliciting plural and diverse research readings and democratic person-centred research relationships, is that the aim itself is flawed. In reality, research data has already been ‘carved’, or at least filtered, by the epistemological, ideological and methodological choices the researcher has made before data has been collected. Additionally, hierarchical research relationships have been established prior to the presentation of a research narrative. For instance, in the very act of identifying an area for investigation and designing a research project the researcher has begun to ‘frame’ a research narrative. From a constructionist and narrative epistemological perspective the very conceptualisation of a research problem occurs when the researcher’s lens (or theoretical perspective and related epistemology) penetrates or intentionally engages with the phenomenon. Thus, the researcher’s perspective, epistemology and intentionality ‘frames’ what is selected for research. Therefore, in the very act of identifying a phenomenon as a curiosity or something worthy of investigation, the researcher has begun to frame or carve the area of investigation according to their epistemology and theoretical orientation. To argue otherwise is to identify the research phenomenon as separate from the lens through which it is perceived or problematised. This conceptualisation that a researcher adopts a ‘view from nowhere’ (Nagal, 1986), or has a completely neutral account of objective reality, reflects the tradition of positivist research. But a positivist understanding of research is in direct contrast
to the philosophical conceptualisation of this research project where I consciously adopt a ‘view from somewhere’ (Alexander, 2006). As discussed in detail in Chapter 3 I intentionally reject the research presentation framework of positivist research in favour of an epistemology based on narrative knowing. Narrative knowing, in contrast to positive notions of truth, attends to subjective and individual understanding, and is based on the notion that individuals construct their subjective accounts of reality within a spectrum of perspectives. I therefore accept that some data carving and framing has already taken place in my very act of choosing an area of investigation and in adopting a methodology that seeks to engage women casual academics’ stories. I have already therefore carved the focus on women casual academics’ lived experience and consequently part-framed a research narrative.

Correspondingly, as research readers, you have not been involved in the selection of the curiosity or phenomenon to be researched. Neither have you negotiated the methodology or research methods employed within the investigation. Finally, hitherto you have been denied any decision-making power in terms of the content or narrative form of this research communication. To some degree then, our research relationship is already separated and stratified. Therefore, the best that I, as a person-centred researcher, can hope to achieve in the research narrative section of a thesis is to limit the power differential that currently exists between us/researcher and reader. I cannot now create an equal and fully participatory research relationship with you. However, I can prevent the research relationship from becoming further divided and unequal by creating opportunities for you to engage in a polyphonic data narrative which has only been edited in order to protect the anonymity of the research participants and to reduce the large volume of data presented in order to make it more accessible. Therefore, the data I present will not be anchored by a/my commentary or
explanation; it will instead be presented as an invitation for you/the reader to create your own interpretation and understanding.

Notwithstanding the narrative framing and unequal research relationship that currently exists between us, or the unethical and impractical problems associated with a completely unedited and full account of the research data, I am obliged to reject a mono(logic) narrative communication supported by traditional discourse and data anchoring. Indeed, mine is not a lone voice expressing a concern that qualitative researchers in general, and narrative researchers in particular, tend to conduct and disseminate their research like positivist researchers where one valid and authorised account or interpretation is offered to research readers. For instance, Richardson (1997) identified that many researchers engaging in qualitative research expend too much energy on their exposition of data ‘analysis’ in order to validate the captured experience and to evidence that they have drawn valid meaning. Further, Hendry notes that researchers who focus on establishing and verifying ‘the truth telling of informants’ within narrative research undermine their opportunity to express lived experience (2010, p.75). Consequently, both Hendry (2010) and Richardson (1997) argue that qualitative and narrative research does not need to be anchored or legitimised by analysis, interpretation or verification; it instead requires a fully present engagement with experience and research re-presentation. This final stance is supported further by Cahnmann-Taylor, (2007) with particular reference to arts-informed narrative research. In particular, Cahnmann-Taylor posits that there are still more arts-based narrative researchers writing about their research and legitimating it through a contextualisation of the criteria against which it could or should be assessed, than those providing examples of what arts-informed narrative research actually looks like. She therefore calls for more examples of literary, visual and performing arts narrative research instead of narrative research laden with
justification and explanation. Yet there remain few examples of researchers who have accepted this invitation. Notable examples include Ruth Beher, the Cuban-American anthropologist and writer, who integrates her personal experience of place and culture in her anthropological studies, and employs lengthy sections of poetry, fiction, memoir and letter writing as examples of literary narrative research. In addition, Linden Wilkinson and Katherine Lyall-Watson each presented full play scripts in their Masters’ dissertations to communicate and re-present their research findings. In this work I therefore respond to Cahnmann-Taylor’s (2007) appeal to narrative researchers to offer an example of literary, visual and performing arts narrative research by exhibiting a full play script, without the anchorage of stage directions, in order to re-present or show my research without interpretation of analysis.

My final reason for rejecting the traditional dissemination of research data, which is anchored by explanation of analysis and significance, is Boje’s (2001) support for the re-presentation of people’s stories of work experiences in a pre or antenarrative form, and Barthes’ (1970) argument that closed or readerly texts are monologic, bounded and peddle in hegemony. Boje (2001) highlights that stories can illuminate organisational cultures and claims that they provide opportunities to everyone within an organisation to communicate their workplace experience (1995, 2001). However, he criticises the presentation of workers’ stories as narratives that he identifies as coupled with ‘retrospective’ explanation that lead to texts that are ‘bounded’ and ‘determined’ (Boje, 2001). In particular, Boje distinguishes between story and narrative and suggests that stories have traditionally been viewed as inferior to narrative even though they are merely a different form of communication. For instance Boje claims that stories are pre or ‘antenarrative’ structures (2001) which tend to be non-linear, polyphonic, fragmented, incoherent and less ‘plotted’ and teleological than
narratives. For Boje, stories emerge in organisations and if they are to clearly represent the feelings and experiences of people at their time of telling, they should be re-presented without analysis or the creation of a unified and neat narrative form. Indeed for Boje, workplace stories should resist narrative cohesion. He therefore criticises narrative analysis as narrative ‘dressed as theory’ (Boje, 2001, p.2) and endorses the presentation of the ‘antenarrative’, or the story without the dressing of identification and commentary of what the researcher found significant. Finally, Boje recommends a presentation of fragments of stories, ‘bits that are told here and there’ as there is no whole story to be codified or reified (2001, p.5). Boje’s argument aligns with Polkinghorne’s (1988) position that in traditional narrative analysis the lived experience of the storyteller is reduced to a readable and ‘proper’ narrative. It also supports the argument I have presented above that the anchoring of narrative through analysis, explanation of process and identification of significance, limits the opportunity to create an alternative or dialectic discourse of casual academia, undermines the opportunity for person-centred research relationships and constructs an overly theorised and constructed form that is not fully congruent with the fragmentary, messy and often paradoxical substance and form of women’s lived experience.

In the same way that Boje distinguished between story and narrative, applauding the former for its ability to create a polyvocal account, and critiquing the latter for its tendency to ‘bound’ and ‘determine’ reader engagement, so Barthes (1970) differentiates between ‘readerly’ and ‘writerly’ texts. In S/Z (1970) Barthes sets up in opposition ‘le lisable’ and ‘le scriptible’, or readerly and writerly text. Readerly texts are understood as assimilating and propagating ‘ideological conservatism’ and are inscribed with a unified and closed account of the phenomenon being described (Johnson, 1987, p.26), which is similar to Boje’s notion that post narratives are ‘bounded’ and ‘determined’ (Boje, 2001). Additionally, Barthes identifies
readerly texts as monologic and hegemonic as they offer one particular, authorised, reading of a text. Conversely, writerly texts resist the conservative assimilation and hegemony of traditional discourse (Johnson, 1987). Indeed, the writerly text, for Barthes – like Boje’s antenarrative (2001) – is discontinuous, ‘untotizable’ and inconclusive. Writerly text as the term implies offers a plurality of voices and perspectives that allows the reader of the text to write its meaning. Thus Boje specifically endorses the re-presentation of pre-narrative or antenarrative stories of people’s work experiences as a means to highlight workplace cultures whilst Barthes (1970) applauds the re-presentation of polyvocal, unbounded texts that invite readers to write their own meaning of the text.

Therefore the research narrative I will employ in this dissertation is designed not merely as an antithesis to traditional discourse structures and research relationships, or a protest against and rejection of coherent and determined monologic narrative, it stands for something. The narrative form I will adopt accepts that some narrative framing has already taken place, by virtue of my selection of a research focus and methodology. Yet I aim, by presenting fragments of women casual academics’ stories, ‘bits that are told here and there’ (Boje, 2001, p.5), without the dressing or anchoring of explanation and identification of researcher’s significance, to invite you the reader to ‘write’ (Barthes, 1970) the text according to your own reading and understanding. The research narrative aims to respect your person- hood by re-presenting the lived experience of women casual academics that can sit alongside the current discourses of casual academia. Thus, I present below a play-script that contains fragments of stories described by women casual academics, without analysis or commentary.
Chapter 5 Part 2: A Research Narrative in the Form of a Drama: A Verbatim Drama Based on the Lived Experience of Woman Casual Academics

Characters:

Anna: woman in her early 30s, a married sessional academic with a PhD

Lyn: woman in her late 40s, a married sessional academic with one child

Rainee: woman in her mid-50s, a married sessional academic

Sharon: woman in her early 50s, a single parent with two children

Tasha: a Greek figure, a commentator on the action

Please note that pseudonyms are employed for people and institutions throughout the play.

Context: The current context is a university setting in 2014. Dress code, images and iconography reflect this time frame. The dress codes and iconography should locate the action in the mid 2010s to anchor the narrative historically.
Prologue.

Set in a lecture theatre, traditional lecture theatre lighting, lecturer/researcher (Gail) at the computer.

Gail: The research I would like to share with you today is in an arts-informed narrative inquiry into the lived experience of women casual academics.

Arts-informed research is an approach to qualitative research in the social sciences that is informed by but not based in the arts. Its main aim is to enhance our understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) representational forms of inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2008). In practice, arts-informed research merges the methodical and rigorous processes of social science inquiry with the artistic and imaginative form and qualities of the arts.

The particular form of arts-informed inquiry that you’ll see today is a verbatim drama, where the text presented employs the words and communication of research participants – verbatim. The focus of the drama is the lived experience of women casual academics.

In order to create the drama I engaged with six women casual academics (also known as sessional staff) from across three universities in Australia and asked them an open-ended question: ‘When and in what circumstance did you become a casual academic?’

End of Prologue
Scene 1.

Sharon: I’m a single mum, I came here because I fell in love with an Australian man and he wound up basically abusing me – it took me years to get out of the relationship. He strangled me, I almost died and I’m the least likely candidate for that. So I wound up learning to teach at uni to sustain my life to make me the bread winner, as a single mother...

I’m really proud of what I’ve done, in a foreign country. It was just so synchronistic that I was doing my Masters when they needed people to teach an undergraduate course that was linked to my study. It had me written all over it so when Steve McKeith came to town to write the course and get it organised I begged with him to tutor into it.

Anna: In 2000 I started demonstrating – and tutoring about 2002, 2003. Then in doing my PhD I picked up more tutoring. I love teaching, I love working with the students. It’s always really rewarding to see them get what we’re teaching, get the concepts we’re trying to get across, to actually see them understand and know what to do with it is really, really rewarding. I’d always wanted to be an academic. But... this year may be my last semester, not necessarily by choice... but as a response to finances. You’ve got to follow the money.

Rainee: I started in 2002. I was working in a studio as a graphic designer and there was an industry association being formed. Some people from the uni came to where I was working and asked if I was interested in joining it cos I was well established in the industry.

So I was interested, yeah, I started coming to these meetings and getting to know – because the meetings took place at the uni as well – and while here I met a program director and he mentioned that he needed somebody for one of the courses he was developing. I thought yeah, I can do that ‘cos almost 20 years ago I’d taught a similar course at TAFE. So it was a natural... I was really happy to get back into teaching again.

Lyn: Twenty years ago I was working full time as a Senior Public Servant and my daughter just got diagnosed with a brain tumour (pause). So I just kept working, but after a year of so it just wasn’t possible and I just wasn’t emotionally in a... in a space where I could work full time. My daughter was nearly four at the time. So... most of that time was spent at the hospital and... and life just gets busy with appointments. And then I knew a friend who worked at the uni and she said, “Well, why don’t you work as a tutor? We’d love to have somebody like you as a tutor.” So I did that and I quite enjoyed it.
Sharon: And I wasn’t at the meeting but Karen told me about a meeting she was at where one of the senior people in the department said, “Oh, you know casual tutors they only do it ’cos they can’t get a job anywhere else.”

Anna: and I’m sure that that’s a feeling amongst some, not others, but some would ask…

Rainee: “you know, why would you be a casual tutor”?

Lyn: yet there’s this wealth of experience

All: we’ve done jobs that most academics have only read about and will never do in their whole lives.

Lyn: I was a founding member of the criminal justice commission…

I used to set up new public building designs and managed huge million dollar projects and here’s some you know wanky little associate professor, specially the males, treating me like some old woman who they have to sort of ‘suffer’.

Sharon: I was an established artist and art director; I lived a full and creative life…

Rainee: I was a full time graphic designer with a large client base

Anna: and now I have my doctorate and I always wanted to be academic

Rainee: But I took on sessional teaching because I absolutely love teaching. I started off teaching one day a week and the rest of the time, the other four days a week I was working in the industry. It’s just that I got, I got really – I really loved the teaching and there were other courses that I found that I could teach, so I wanted to apply for them.

My kids had left home then and I didn’t have – I would not have done that, taken the jump until my kids had left because of the insecurity, that’s what really worried me because I had a very secure job and then to give that up.

Lyn: So I started off with one or two core subjects, but now I teach 2nd year, 3rd year and at Masters Level and I mark Masters level papers and I do it well.

Sharon: And I found that I absolutely loved the teaching. I’m an educator and feel strongly about the subject matter. I just was awarded an excellence in teaching award so yeah, I’m very proud of it all. I’ve been a sessional for 13 years and I get as many tutorials as I can and I do them well and I get enough work to create a living as a single mother.

Lyn: And I grew to love teaching.

Anna: I so love the teaching element of it – the interaction with the students
Lyn: the interaction, taking a student, especially I think in a first year course because you’re working so much with beginners at the learning and social level of university, working with people that you can see before your eyes transformed from scared little bunnies to people who are confident to go on – to go on...

Sharon: to help the students find just their place, their identity and own it is really exciting.

Anna: It’s not the processes of the teaching that’s the draw, for me. It’s the experience of watching students find something special in whatever it is you’re teaching them.

Rainee: It’s an honour being in front of the students. I bring life experience to my teaching.

Lyn: and even though sometimes you’re delivering somebody else’s material you’re doing it through your own framework and with a creativity… to make it more interesting… and with the language and with the images that you use and the examples, they’re you. They’re an expression of the way that you understand and the way that you see things.

Lyn: It’s a privilege. It’s amazing, I’ve been doing it for 20 years and I still get excited before every class.

All: every class (Lyn)
every bunch of students (Lyn and Anna)
every time (Lyn, Anna and Sharon)
That is the real joy of it. (Lyn, Anna, Sharon and Rainee)

All: It’s rewarding, you’re engaged, you’re excited, and you just really like the teaching.

Sharon: Oh, that shot in the arm. That rush, it’s addictive. It’s that engaging with the students, it’s that moment when they get something or I don’t know, it’s fun to be the star of the show, being up front. I don’t know, it’s just really… So that’s when I took the leap and I just quit my other job.

Lyn: It’s for the students, it’s not about me.

Anna: I like being at the uni. I like that student energy. I really like young people. There’s that age group, that early 20s. They are just – it is the most profound time of your life. Everything is just so interesting. So I really like being in that space.

Rainee: Most of the time it is the best job in world – and we have this opportunity to add quality to people’s lives.
Lyn: And then one of the senior people in the department says, “Oh, you know casual tutors they only do it ’cos they can’t get a job anywhere else.”

End of Scene 1
Scene 2.

Rainee: I still enjoy the teaching, but there’s this contradiction.

Anna: There’s this drown or drought, the busyness and life-ness of semester and then there’s this long wait in between semesters.

Sharon: I found that the worst thing about it – especially when I started doing sessional work as my main gig – was the insecurity and the gap between semesters.

Lyn: I find that wait really awful and that uncertainty, like you just don’t know, you can’t plan. Luckily I had already bought a house so I didn’t have to worry about... because you can’t get a loan... all of those financial things are a problem.

Anna: I don’t know what’s happening; I don’t know what’s going to happen. I don’t know what’s going to happen... and it’s almost three months or two and a half months.

Tasha: Come on skinny love just last the year,  
    Pour a little salt we were never here,  
    My mymy, my mymy, my-my my-my...  
    Staring at the sink of blood and crushed veneer.

    Tell my love to wreck it all,  
    Cut out all the ropes and let me fall,  
    My mymy, my mymy, my-my my-my...  
    Right in the moment this order’s tall.

Tasha and Cast:

    And I told you to be patient,  
    And I need to be patient  
    And I told you to be fine,  
    And I need to be fine  
    And I told you to be balanced,  
    And I need to be balanced  
    And I told you to be kind,  
    And I need to be kind  
    And in the morning I’ll be with you,  
    In the morning I’ll be waiting  
    But it will be a different kind,  
    But it will be a different kind  
    Cos I’ll be holding all the tickets,  
    Cos you’ll be holding the tickets  
    And you’ll be owning all the fines.  
    And I’ll be owning all the fines

Rainee: you start, well I start to get a bit not actually stressed but I suppose it is stressed, but it’s something I suppose over the years I’ve learned to control. Because you let the stress overtake you and you can’t function properly. But it’s just always there in the back of your mind around where’s the money coming from after this?

Lyn: You wait.
All: Life on hold.

Anna: The semester breaks, the anxiouslyness and frustrations... so long.

Lyn: But worrying about the future and certainty... using brain cells to worry about the future is so unproductive. It’s unfair. Every time it enters my head I’ve had to reprogram my brain and say that university is lucky to have me. That’s how I cope with the “not knowing” part of the job – those huge feelings... of uncertainty.

Sharon: I need to positive self-talk because since I suffered the domestic violence, I know I now have what is known as a victim mentality. I don’t know if you know anything about the cycle of abuse in marriage but after it happens to you, you become programmed to think that it your fault that you… get hit, that you get strangled, that you get something thrown at you. You believe you deserve it because you made it happen, so because it happened to me, I sometimes find similar thoughts going through my mind regarding sessional work... It may sound something like this: Well, I’m not really as good as the others; well it’s my own fault because I didn’t get that Master’s degree right out of university. Or I copped out and had an arts degree instead of something that I could really use in society. So that victim mentality rears its ugly head once semester’s over... And, you know, you’ve worked so hard and you’re exhausted, so negative thoughts can settle in.

Lyn: So you’d have more security if you worked in McDonalds.

Tasha: Who will love you?
Who will fight?
And who will fall far behind?

End of Scene 2
**Scene 3.**

Sharon: So there’s this beauty and benefit in being a sessional but it comes with the uncertainty and, in my case, a knock to my self-esteem. But the biggest problem with casual work is financial.

Lyn: That’s the thing... it’s always... it’s just always there at the forefront of your mind, always thinking about where’s the money coming from? The not knowing affects your whole life. My life’s on hold... and yet I’ve been doing this for about 20 years now.

Anna: When the car breaks down, I have to save for months before I can get it fixed. I catch buses and hang around campus for hours waiting for a bus home.

Lyn: My dishwasher broke on my 50th birthday and I’m now 52 and....

Sharon: If something breaks, you don’t replace it.

Rainee: We’re now in a position in our fifties where we don’t have enough, we can’t see how we can have enough for retirement – but we’ve got to. My husband’s got to work really, really hard and channel as much as possible into trying to recoup our losses. So while he now has a good income... there’s only a pretty modest percentage of it that can be used for living, now – living now.

Anna: and even though we may be working in a professional capacity and we’re working long hours, actually the average salary is really low.

Lyn: I haven’t had to pay tax for almost 20 years... Since working as a casual academic I’ve never earned enough to actually pay tax. And what’s the tax threshold? ... about $16,000 or $18,000, but that’s only in the last 12 months.

Anna: I’ve never earned more than $10,000 a year as a sessional, never.

Rainee: I go to an accountant at tax time because we are desperately trying to find ways to save on tax and the accountant would say, ‘How do you eat?’ It was a simple equation; we kept going to the bank and... extending our mortgage.

Sharon: I have a personal superannuation policy that at the moment would pay out $2500 and I’m 54. So I’ve got no hope unless I get a job and work at least 15 years fulltime I’m not going to have anything other than enough super to maybe have a credit card, certainly not to be able to say that I could secure myself for retirement. And seeing emails that come around about Uni Super and stuff coming on campus to give you advice, and I think there’s no point me going until I have a job.

Anna: What can they advise me to do when all I can say is ‘well, in semester one I have no work’? ‘I won't have an income as far as I know in semester one,
unless someone asks me to tutor which I’ll find out probably at the end of January’. So I can’t plan holidays, I can’t plan anything.

Rainee: And that’s where the guilt starts to come in where I think that’s really unfair on my family and perhaps I should be looking for work outside of academia, forget about the teaching, forget about the knowledge and skills from the PhD because that’s useless out in the community, nobody wants to know about that. Again that’s only useful in academia.

Sharon: And I’m always desperate for my next pay cheque, to add that to those huge feelings of uncertainty... So what happens is that I take on an enormous amount of teaching hours and it’s usually anywhere... the least I teach is like 16 hours face to face... which if it was just teaching is a piece of cake, I’d love it, but it’s not just teaching, it’s the prepping, the marking, emailing. ...

Sharon: Yes, you’ve got to strategise. For me it’s around week 10 or 11 of a semester when you get very cognisant that there’s only three weeks left. I may get a couple of extra weeks’ pay if I put my timesheets in at the right time – so you hold off putting in timesheets for marking and the extra OA hours and all that stuff... to stretch your income between semesters.

Rainee: I always do my taxes at the very end because you know how you get a big tax return, so that carries you through the summer, well most of it anyway, so that’s my strategy. It’s like a forced savings plan.

Rainee: The thing I do like strategically is I try to teach as many courses as possible because that first tutorial is worth more money. So if I can get a few more first tutorials then I get more money, but what happens is that then I have to prepare and what I’ve done over the years too is I’ve tried to take on one new course every semester.

Lyn: Well, usually I try to work it out so that I’m at uni four days a week. So that way I have at least one marking day. Sometimes it works out that I’m there three days a week. Last semester, first semester, I had three days a week, but two of those days, one was a 12 hour day and one was a 13 hour day. So it was – and you have those breaks in between, but you are there the whole – but it worked out because then I had days on either side, Monday and Friday to do all the prep and all of that stuff and I could do it in a more calm way.

Rainee: But then there’s the marking. A lot of marking comes in at the same time and there are these periods of intensity then…

Sharon: week five’s very intensive, that’s a really intense time. And around week eight and nine that’s when they all come in again. So during the semester I work seven days a week always, like the entire semester there’s never – I schedule myself so that I work early in the morning.
CHAPTER 5: AN INTRODUCTION TO A RESEARCH NARRATIVE

Sharon: So I will get up anywhere from 3:30 and then I will work for a few hours and then take a break for breakfast. So I have a good work schedule... it's almost like having two days in one.

Lyn: And I work weekends as well – Oh yeah, you have to. You don’t ever take a day off during the semester.

Rainee: And even though I’m putting in all these hours there’s a lot of guilt around the fact that I don’t contribute enough at home… financially

Sharon: this might sound silly – I almost see what I do as a form of community service and all of my adult life, until I was in the second year of my undergraduate degree, I would have done 10 to 15 hours a week of community service of one kind or I had to stop that if I was going to actually finish my degree. Now out the other end and being the teacher, I feel like I’ve regained that commitment that I’ve made as teenager to give to my community. While it’s not obvious to others, because I get a pay-packet – I tracked my semester, my hours last semester, and I got paid for – what did I get, nine hours a week. There was not a week during the semester that I did less than 50 hours; that was the minimum.

Lyn: I do lots and lots of one-on-one with students who were absolutely struggling with an advanced course they shouldn’t have been enrolled into... But we all know that there’s a focus on making profit, and that comes first, and students are allowed to enrol into some courses when we know they’re not prepared. We know that they haven’t done courses that should be prerequisites. That puts an extra burden on us.... as a sessional you’ve got to figure it out alone how can I not let these students that are struggling fall victim to a system that’s let them come into this course that they are not prepared for.

Rainee: I get up – my alarm goes off at quarter past four in the morning... because my husband works away. His alarm goes off at quarter past four so I stay in sync with him. I like to be part of his day. I get up then and the first thing I do after a cup of tea is turn on the computer and spend an hour or so replying to all of the emails from students overnight, I spend at least an hour doing emails. Then I spend time looking at the course material and...

Anna: I don’t get enough work during the year to justify staying here. This year I’ve got two hours a week in semester one and five hours a week in semester two. That’s not substantial enough pay to justify staying. Thank god my husband works. If he wasn’t working this wouldn’t be an option. We’ve had certainly moments where we’ve thought we can’t do this, because even when my partner works, until this year his work wasn’t sustaining us. We are borrowing money and going backwards. We now have a mortgage double what we had when I started my PhD... and s that was in 2007
That was on anticipation that I would get a job, and I still haven’t, but to try and recoup some of that debt and make the shortfall he now works out west and I see him once a month. So it does, it affects your whole…

All: it affects your whole…life.

Anna: Life on hold.

**End of Scene 3**
**Scene 4.**

Rainee: Delta Dawn, what’s that flower you have on? Could it be a faded rose from days gone by? And did I hear you say he was a-meetin’ you here today To take you to his mansion in the sky-eye?

Anna: This is what I would do because I always wanted to ensure that – because of the whole insecurity thing – that I would make an appointment to see the head of school, just to see – is there anything coming up? Am I doing the right thing? Is there anything where I could be doing better that would get me more of a permanent job or contract or whatever? I did this every year, every year.

So I would make an appointment with him and then it would get closer, and it would be like three weeks in advance because he couldn’t see me before that. So then you get close to the appointment... and then it would be always cancelled or rescheduled. So you would get the feeling like oh yeah something else has come up. I’ve been kind of ... replaced. Like I wasn’t important enough because it’s just a waste of his time. I did this every year, every year.

Rainee: Well you know you’re on the outside – to the point, the fulltime academic staff were having a Christmas get together where they’d brought in things for lunch and that. One of the secretaries said, ‘oh come in. There’s nobody here, come in and join us’. I went in and it was like freeze. It was like ‘excuse me, you’re a sessional’, nobody said it, but it was so obvious. It was just awful. I didn’t limp from the room. I just looked at them and thought...

Sharon: And I’d been working with this sessional for about 5 or 6 years, we taught together into the same unit. And then one year she didn’t come back. And I thought, ‘I wonder where Kerry is’, so I asked the unit coordinator and she said, ‘Oh, she died. She had breast cancer and she died.’ And nobody thought to tell me.

Sharon: But I don’t think we’re deliberately left out, I think we’re just forgotten about.

**End of Scene 4**
Scene 5.

Lyn: It’s a bit like being in a hospital, you know. I became very aware when I was in hospital with Sarah – because you’re there a lot in a cancer ward. You don’t complain a lot, because you’re just that little bit frightened that the staff may treat you and your child not so well. So you sort of meander through.

If anything, you’re trying to please, placate and be favoured.

That’s probably when I started drinking a lot. It is. But a lot of systems are like that when you’re essentially powerless, aren’t they?

Rainee: So I’d developed some really close friendships within my area and then along comes the beginning of the semester and we’re not told what hours are even available until maybe two weeks before the semester starts. And when you know it’s kind of like a frantic grab I suppose

Sharon: you are in competition with these people that you are really close to.

All: And I hate it

Rainee: And it can cause some really bad feelings... but there’s nothing you can do, you can’t speak up

Sharon: I know it’s hard on full time staff also – you know they can’t always plan when they’re going to work either and they’ve got other pressures... but as a fulltime academic you have a different position in the university in terms of being able to speak up. If you’ve got secure tenure then you can speak up for yourself and not be fearful that next semester there’ll be no work

Rainee: That’s a fear I have, I don’t know if it’s real but it’s intimidating.

Lyn: That’s a burden that we carry, if we speak up for our rights there’s the fear that somebody’s going to say ‘too much trouble, stop offering that person work’.

Sharon: So from a... as a woman working in sessional academia, I’m very aware that this is not a power position in any way. That my job is not to cause problems for anybody. If I’m responsible, absolutely reliable, always turn up, mark properly, teach properly, don’t have student complaints, I will keep getting work – and I do.

Rainee: It was brought home to me this semester – there’s a colleague that has been tutoring in two of the big core subjects with me for some years. He can be quite pedantic. He got quite pedantic with the unit coordinator, who just hasn’t used him this semester. So there’s no recourse for him. He can’t complain. He can’t talk to her. He can’t – she – he’s just been … blocked out. So I’m very aware of that...
So you need to be really nice... you can’t have an opinion that they don’t like. You have to listen attentively and engage in their opinions on things, so that you’re not coming in with anything that might… you can’t contradict them. So much of my security is determined by the whim of the coordinator.

Lyn: There’s this sessional that I used to be very, very close to and because of this thing that happened, it’s hard to explain without going into detail, but there was a rift caused between us because of this course coordinator and it blew our relationship. Basically, if I was seen talking to her, like this other sessional who I used to be really close to... I would be sabotaging my job had I continued my relationship with her, which... I felt terrible. I’ve never gotten over it, and neither has she… how hurtful is that, that I would choose my job over a friendship?

Lyn: I don’t know... it’s such an energy drain and it’s... frightening. Often it’s very frightening.

Anna: The middle of last year I was talking to another academic in the discipline – and I’m quite close to this person as I’d tutored with him before – and he said to me that the discipline leader told him that I was off limits... They weren’t going to be giving me the teaching hours. I was off limits. Why I was off limits I don’t know... so there are these silent conversations that tutors are not part of, just directly impacted by. I was shocked.

End of Scene 5
Epilogue.

Anna: This is the complex part of being sessional... even though you feel, and you do know, we’re not simple people... we’re well-educated people; we know we’re being exploited. We know we’re ignored or forgotten about. Yet I’ve always said I feel like it’s a privilege every time I walk on to the campus that I’m allowed to be here, and that’s a real contradiction. That confuses me.

Sharon: There’s always a feeling of insecurity, that doesn’t go away but mostly the benefits, the joys of teaching outweigh that and buoy you on to keep going.

Lyn: So I’d be sitting up in the hospital marking papers. It was a very good thing for me to do because it was pleasurable. It sort of stretched me a bit and I could fit it in. I could still be there for my son.

And then Sarah died when she was a week off turning 12, and I did a few other things. I tried to go back to work fulltime and I joined a consulting firm and earned very good money. But I didn’t really like it and I liked teaching – so came back to it.

Sharon: When I first started as sessional work in 2002 I had a different relationship with it... I was more optimistic about it.

Rainee: I had a great career path ahead of me. Over 20 years ago I was well paid. I had a full time salaried position, yeah, highly respected. I do feel that I was misled because I was – coaxed into – I was sort of courted into the idea of doing an honours degree and going on to do a masters or a PhD in the really true belief that there was going to be a position at the end of it, that there was a growing need for people in that area, and that’s not true. I now know that wasn’t true.

Sharon: But there’s always that possibility that it could happen, but it just hasn’t for me – and I’ve been here for 13 years.

End of Epilogue
CHAPTER 6: A RESEARCH NARRATIVE: THE ETHICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEATRICAL CONSIDERATIONS INVOLVED IN RESTORYING WOMEN CASUAL ACADEMICS’ EXPERIENCE INTO A VERBATIM DRAMA

In the previous chapter to this, Chapter 5, I offered a justification for separating this project’s research data from any discussion of how it was selected, interpreted and will be communicated. I also presented a relatively large set of narrative data, in order to invite you to engage your own interpretation of the data and to provide a platform for the creation of multiple (dialogic) data narratives.

Prior to this, in Chapters 1 and 2 I presented an argument for creating dialectic between traditional academic discourse (in the form of a PhD dissertation) and a representation of the research participant’s narratives in the form of a verbatim drama. Dialectical discourses offer perspectives and positions in the plural and defy the monologic, linear content and structure of traditional scholarship that can lead to polarities of position, dichotomies and hierarchies of knowledge. As Minh-ha (1989) suggested, dialecticism is required to prevent ‘stance from freezing into a dogma (in which patterns of dominance and submission remain unchanged), the strategy of mere reversal needs to be displaced further, that is to say, neither simply renounced nor accepted as an end in itself’ (Minh-ha, 1989, p.40).

In particular, within this chapter I will explore in some detail the problem of representation or speaking for others. I will present the dialectical arguments concerning the representation of Others developed by Linda Martin Alcoff, Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak and Trinh T. Minh-ha and will accept the synthesis that under certain conditions it is better to speak with (Alcoff, 2009) or nearby Others (Minh-ha, 1982), than to stay silent and allow the
dominant discourse and hegemony to remain unchallenged. I will also adopt their recommendation that if one is to speak on behalf of Others it should be done in such a way that disrupts the disingenuous innocence of representation (Guttorm, 2012). Finally, the chapter deliberately introduces dialectical positions on the issue of representing Others and identifies some synthesis where situated and partial solutions to philosophical and political dilemmas are articulated. Please accept though that these solutions are not set up in opposition or considered ‘better’ than other solutions or approaches; they merely represent my personal response to the yet to be voiced experience of women casual academics.

Within the following chapter I will outline the political and philosophical considerations that impact on the decision to create a piece of theatre as a research communication, and discuss in detail verbatim drama. I will explore the various forms and sub-genres of verbatim drama and present an argument for employing a proto-verbatim drama (Duggan, 2013); a sub-genre of post-verbatim (Beck, 2013) in re-presenting the stories of women casual academics. In Chapter 8 I will discuss the process of re-presentation, or speaking with Others with which I engaged in this research project. In particular, I will detail how I employed specific theatrical conventions in developing a proto-verbatim in order to sit nearby research participants (Minh-ha, 1982) and dialogue with women casual academics. I will also demonstrate, with a selection of annotated documented images (both moving and still), how the development of a proto-verbatim drama sits within a scholartistic framework to highlight the lived experience of women casual academics. I will finally explicate how the development of a mise en scene represents my voice/situation (Alcoff, 2006) within the dialogue between myself as researcher/artist and research participants/women casual academics.
Thesis – The Problem of Speaking For

My approach to restorying the experiences of women casual academics into a verbatim drama is informed by the ethical considerations and political ramifications involved in re-presenting someone else’s story. While ethical concerns dominate the current discourse on the making and presenting of others’ experiences in verbatim theatre, Geraldine Harris (2009) suggests that even when we ostensibly discuss the ethics of ‘theatrical witnessing’ in verbatim, we actually talk about the politics of voice (2009). My consideration of ethics and politics in this project are heightened because of the minority status occupied by the women whose stories and voices I select to re-present. This discussion is presented as part of a person-centred approach to being open to you as a partner in the meaning making of this research project, and invites you to ponder the issues with which I engaged when re-presenting Other women’s stories. I will thus detail below the ethical and political dilemma I faced in speaking for women casual academics and outline the decisions I made in response.

First, the restorying process, or the re-presentation of Other people’s stories, requires the restoryer to be sensitive to the societal status of the Other they aim to re-present. The capitalisation of O in Other is both deliberate and significant to this discussion. An online dictionary definition of other is ‘persons or thing that is different or distinct from one already mentioned or known about’ or ‘a person or group of people as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself’ (https://www.google.com.au/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8&q=define+other). However, in this thesis I will employ a situated discourse and vocabulary because although dictionaries offer general meanings of words to ensure all speakers of a given language will understand one another, I recognise that ‘the use of words in live speech communication is always individual and contextual in nature’
(Bakhtin, 1986, p.105). Thus language is complex and, as Bakhtin suggests, specific language meaning is situated and culture/discipline specific. That is, language meaning is situated and dependent on context (Gee, 1990). Therefore, in the academic discourses of feminism, postmodernism and post-structuralism the word ‘other’ can have a political meaning, and ‘Other’ – with an upper case O – connotes persons who are defined by their difference to the norm. In particular, Others are generally considered as inferior to a societal or cultural norm. Consequently, in a male dominated society de Beauvoir (1949) identified that ‘a man represents both the positive and the neutral, as indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria’ (cited in McCann & Kim, 2003, p.33). The woman in male dominated society is thus considered as Other or a minority group. Such dichotomisation and Othering extends to the cultural stratifications based on most human characteristics including age, race, sexual orientation, financial status. Therefore a restoryer re-presenting the lives or stories of Other persons needs to be aware of the cultural affiliations and associated power differentials, or ‘situations’ (Alcoff, 2006) of the person or persons they are speaking for. By de Beauvoir’s logic the people whose stories I aim to re-present in this research project are Othered by virtue of their sex. Yet casual academics more generally conceptualise themselves to be on the periphery of academic life (Bassett, 1998; Brown et al., 2010). Indeed, this is how they are also conceptualised by other members of the academic community, as is reflected in the various labels given to casual academics such as ‘invisible’ and ‘hired guns’ (Gappa & Leslie, 1993); ‘disposable’ (Lazarsfeld-Jensen & Morgan, 2009); and ‘tenuous periphery’ (Kimber 2003). Thus, the women in this study can be considered to be doubly-Othered (Fanon, 1967); relegated to minority status because of their sex and doubly Othered due to their lack of place or cultural status within the academic community.
within which they work. Therefore, the way in which I re-story women casual academics’ experience is highly sensitive to their doubly-Othered status.

In practice, being aware that the people I re-present in this project are doubly Othered compels me to care-fully deliberate the political and ethical issues involved in speaking for Others. Indeed I have been challenged to question whether I even have the licence to re-present or speak for Others. This questioning was prompted predominantly by the dialectic discourse offered by the feminist philosopher Linda Martin Alcoff (2006, 2009), and supported by contributions to the debate by prominent critical theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987, 1998) and the polemics and art-works generated by the postmodern anthropologist and artist, Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982, 1989).

In her essay, ‘The problem of speaking for others’ Alcoff identifies that

While the prerogative of speaking for others remains unquestioned in the citadels of colonial administration... in the academy it elicits a growing unease. There is a strong, albeit contested, current within feminism which holds that speaking for others – even for other women – is arrogant, vain, unethical, and politically illegitimate (2009, p.117).

This general observation is subsequently followed by a detailed debate where Alcoff posits informed arguments both against and in support of the practice of speaking for Others. Initially, she presents an argument against the practice of speaking for women, specifically advocating against speaking for Other women of a different race, culture, sexuality, or position of power. In doing so she cites Joyce Trebilcot’s declaration that Other wimmin deserve the dignity of their own voice (Alcoff, 2009). Indeed, Trebilcot in her original argument argues that speaking for Other women can potentially serve to group and homogenise them, subsume their differences, and deny them a voice of their own (Trebilcot, 1988). Trebilcot thus makes a firm commitment to only speak for herself in order to allow
Other *wimmin* the dignity of their own insights and communication (1988). Similarly, Alcoff offered three specific premises why academic women in particular should not speak for Others. First, in a similar vein to postmodern anthropologists, she proposes that where we speak from – in terms of our social location and identity – affects the focus and interpretation of what we identify and speak of; and that none of us have the ability to transcend our location (2006). Alcoff’s first premise then is that our location is epistemically idiosyncratic (to us) and prevents us from fully knowing or being able to neutrally re-present any Other person or culture. Second, she posits that the practice of privileged persons speaking on behalf of less privileged persons can increase or reinforce the oppression of the less privileged group. By illustration, Alcoff discusses the protests made against Anne Cameron’s speaking for Native women (Cameron’s term). Even though few questioned Cameron’s emancipatory intention, the effects of her re-presentation were harmful to native authors because Cameron’s account of Native women’s lives, rather than accounts by the Native women themselves, was told. It was Cameron’s perspective that was engaged with, not necessarily the perspective of the women she re-presented. Further, it was Cameron’s books that were bought by people interested in the lives of Native women and so it was she who financially profited from the re-presentation of Others, not the Others whose lives she sought to describe. Finally, Alcoff argues that persons from dominant or privileged groups who speak for Others are further edified in the process of authenticating or authorising Others. That is, the speaker or re-presentative is seen as bestowing legitimacy and credibility on the subject or marginalised persons and in doing so is given, or adopts, a legitimate and credible status (Alcoff, 2006, 2009).

Indeed, academic feminists are not the only discourse community to acknowledge the dangers of speaking for Others. There is similar debate about whether it is ethically and
politically responsible to speak for Others in the field of anthropology generally and postmodern anthropology in particular. For instance, Trinh T. Minh-ha describes anthropology as ‘mainly a conversation of “us” with “us” about “them”’, of the white man with the white man about the primitive-nature man... in which “them” is silenced. “Them” always stands on the other side of the hill, naked and speechless... “them” is only admitted among “us”, the discussing subjects, when accompanied or introduced by an “us”’ (Minh-ha, 1989, pp.65-67). Further to a concern that speaking for Others in anthropological research potentially reinforces the western dichotomisation of native primitivism versus sophistication and heightens power differences across cultures, Minh-ha more radically argues that the objective and neutral study of the other is impossible, as all others can only ever be considered in relation to the self. In a vein similar to Alcoff’s first premise presented above, Minh-ha argues that when we attempt to describe or speak for others we merely reveal ourselves and our individual political and cultural standpoint (1989). Similarly, McLeod’s suggests that ‘narratives, therefore, say as much about the narrator, as they do about the events they describe’ (McLeod, 1997). Correspondingly, the argument against speaking for Others is also developed within post-structuralist discourse communities.

Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak, one of the most influential figures in contemporary post-structuralist critical theory, contributes to the contention by supporting Lyotard’s stance that it is ethically irresponsible to investigate, and present, a different cultural base on the so-called universal concepts and frameworks adopted by white western researchers. In her seminal text, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1998) Spivak argues that western academic thinking is produced in order to support western interests and that research is consistently and fundamentally colonial, in defining the ‘other’, the ‘over there’ subject as the object of study and as something that knowledge should be extracted from and brought back ‘here’ (Spivak,
1998). She also supports the claims of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze that speaking for the disenfranchised can paradoxically silence them. Spivak’s specific polemic, though, focuses against the western re-presentation of the subaltern. A subaltern is defined as a junior officer in the British army, but the term connotes subordinates or inferiors more generally and Spivak evokes both definitions/understandings in her essay. Even more specifically, Spivak critiques the universal claims of some western feminists to speak for all women regardless of cultural differences. She cautions against the universal claims of western feminism, and emphasises instead how the specific maternal conditions, histories and struggles of the Third World women are often overlooked by western feminism (1998, p.150). In addition, Spivak states that a subaltern female cannot be heard or read in the male-centred terms of traditional discourse so that even when the subaltern makes an effort to speak, she is not able to be heard. In particular, Spivak claims that Third World feminine communication is not heard or recognised within dominant political systems and discourses of representation. Consequently, according to Spivak, unless the western intellectuals begin to take the aesthetic dimension of political representation into account, they will continue to silence the voice of subaltern women, as subaltern women tend to use aestheticism in their communication (Spivak, 1998). Thus, Spivak exposes the limited and potentially harmful effects of speaking for disempowered groups generally and specifically determines that there has been a failure on the part of non-Third World feminists and listeners to engage in the aesthetic forms of subaltern women’s communication.

Therefore, Alcoff, Minh-ha and Spivak problematise the process of speaking for Others by identifying how one’s location is epistemically peculiar and salient and so we can never fully know or accurately re-present any Other person or culture. That is, representations of Others are as much a representation of oneself, as it is anyone else.
Further, the practice of persons in hierarchically privileged persons speaking on behalf of less privileged persons can reinforce or strengthen existing systems of de/privilege that operate by silencing the yet to be voiced (Arnot & Reay, 2007) and serve to edify the already privileged through the process of authenticating or authorising Others. Specifically, speaking for Others in anthropological research potentially reinforces the structural dichotomisation of native versus occupier which heightens power differences across cultures. It is therefore considered ethically reckless to represent different cultural bases on the constructions of universal (that is white, western and male) concepts and discursive frameworks adopted by western researchers.

**Interlude: Reason for the Dialectical Structure of the Discussion around Speaking for Others**

Yet the ethically and politically bound discussion around speaking for Others is not one-sided; it is instead dialectical. That is, the thesis ‘not to speak for Others’ is in dialogue with arguments that offer some support for speaking for Others. The three central protagonists in the dialectical discourse, Alcoff, Minh-ha and Spivak, each contribute perspectives to both ‘sides’ of the debate. In fact they purposefully engage in dialectical discussion in order to disrupt the masculine, monologic and teleological argumentation of traditional academic discourse. As Minh-ha acknowledges in *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality* and Feminism, dialecticism is required to prevent one-sided premises ‘from freezing into a dogma’ (1989, p.40). Thus, dialecticism is required to trouble the monological nature of traditional academic discourse and to undermine argumentation that establishes incontrovertible grand narratives.
Antithesis – The Problem of Staying Silent

I am ethically challenged by arguments within feminist, postmodern, post-structuralist discourse communities to question whether it is *ever* ethically legitimate to speak for or represent Others. Yet the answer is not straightforward because by adopting the stance that I should only speak for myself I face the equally complex question of whether it is a misuse of my responsibility, as an articulate and informed woman, if I choose *not* to speak for Other women who may not yet feel able to speak for themselves. Indeed, Alcoff (2006, 2009) dialectically posits that simply adopting a distanced intellectual position and *not* speaking for others might actually communicate complicity with existing power relations. She instead challenges us to question whether silence represents an abdication of our political duty to speak out against oppression. Moreover, Alcoff answers her own rhetorical question by identifying that choosing not to speak for Others without voice is a misuse of privilege (2009, p.23). In fact, she urges women academics in particular to use our privilege to expose and undermine the practices of hegemonic communication that maintain the voicelessness of certain individuals and groups by speaking for women that are presently without voice. Alcoff claims that although we cannot maintain a neutral voice we may at least all claim the right and legitimacy to speak (2009). Finally, Alcoff argues that simply taking a distanced intellectual position of not speaking for others might *contribute to*, rather than challenge, existing power relations.

Spivak also contributes to a dialectical argument in favour of speaking for Other women by suggesting women ought to adopt a *strategic essentialism* (1987), or form of temporary solidarity amongst women for the purpose of social action. Thus, although Spivak articulates serious concern that non-subaltern women ignore the perspectives and aesthetic communication forms when they speak for subaltern women, she also dialectically posits
that, in some instances, we as feminists should unite and temporarily adopt an essentialist position in order to present as a unified voice. While acknowledging that strong differences may exist between us as different groups of feminist women and that amongst ourselves we engage in continuous debates, according to Spivak it is sometimes advantageous for us to temporarily ‘essentialise’ and present ourselves (1987). In particular, she claims that feminist women must work together to publicise the feminisation of poverty – the ways in which employment practices, wages and social policies ensure that in many societies women make up the majority of poor adults (1987). Correspondingly, Spivak argues that women feminists ought to battle collectively against the poverty of many women by highlighting the gendered nature of economic inequality and adopting a strategic essentialism. In certain circumstances, or for certain causes then, Spivak advocates speaking for Other women. An argument for adopting strategic essentialism is proposed by Charlotte Wu (2013) who suggests that ‘despite the attraction of moving beyond gender dichotomies…to annihilate sexual difference before achieving equality between the sexes would be inexpedient and politically premature’ (Wu, 2013, p. 41). She continues that it is ‘disingenuous to argue the finer points of a theoretical gender-free utopia when real suffering continues to exist unimpeded’ (Wu, 2013, p. 41). Wu finally invites women to engage in ‘intellectual solidarity’ in order to ‘lessen genuine oppression... as part of a collective effort rather than a competing claim’ (Wu, 2013, p. 46).

Whist accepting that academic scholarship informs and affects my research decision making, I am also influenced by my feminine propensity towards an ethic of care and connectivity (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 2008). As was established in Chapter 2, traditional scholarship is often based on masculine logic, devoid of emotion and values (Bizzell, 1999; Blankenship & Robson, 1995). In addition, through an academic socialisation
process ‘we learn to “receive knowledge” by focusing outward, relying on the wisdom of our predecessors to preview our own experience and expectations. ‘Review the literature; see what others have said; “stand on the shoulders of the giants,” we are told’ (Bochner, 1997, p. 424). In other words, we are socialised in academia to turn our focus to the validity of others’ research and to ignore our compulsion or emotive learning towards research interests/approaches. We are taught to ignore how we feel and attend to what is established. However, this project is a feminist/feminine project, and as established previously, feminine logic and ethics embrace emotions and female values and ethics (Belenky et al., 1986; Chodorow, 1976; Gilligan, 1982). Therefore, in addition to the academic and logical arguments articulated by Alcoff (2006, 2009), Spivak (1987) and Wu (2013) presented above; I wish to add that I feel (emotionally) strongly about the responsibility that comes with the status of privilege or advantage. In this project I therefore employ both academic argumentation replete with reason, objectivity and rigor, and my subjective emotion and ethic of care and connectivity to inform my decision about whether I re-present the experience of Others. Indeed, as this is feminist research, I deliberately defy the ‘potentially deadening’ tradition of approaching research dispassionately (Black & O’Dea, in press) and refuse to dismiss personal emotions that inform my heart (Palmer, 2009). In doing so I therefore unashamedly emotionally lean towards re-presenting the experiences of women casual academics as I perceive their lack of voice to be an injustice and I would not be at peace with myself if I sat idly by or ‘turned a blind eye/ear’ to the story of women casual academics. Ethically I believe there to be a symbiotic relationship between privilege and responsibility. Thus, with the privilege of being able to identify women casual academics as ‘not yet voiced’ (Arnot & Reay, 2007) and having the resources to elicit and re-present their stories, I feel a responsibility to not stay silent. I concur with Susan Sontag when she suggested that we
cannot play ignorant when we identify injustice, and that ‘no one after a certain age has the right to this kind of innocence, to this degree of ignorance or amnesia’ (2003, p.114). I am concerned that my inaction and lack of re-presentation could reflect an ignorance of, or even complicity with, the existing structures which maintain the voicelessness of women casual academics. My identifying social injustice and staying silent troubles me ethically and politically. Finally, I am persuaded not to stay silent by the reasoning of German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer who suggested that ‘Not to speak, is to speak. Not to act is to act’ (1963). Yet, the specific questions of for whom and how we should speak requires further consideration before I exercise what Alcoff describes as my right and legitimacy to speak (2009).

**Synthesis**

When discussing the need for dialectal discussion, as opposed to linear, teleological and monologic argumentation, Minh-ha suggests that ‘the strategy of mere reversal needs to be displaced further, that is to say, neither simply renounced nor accepted as an end in itself’ (1989, p, 40). Thus, dialecticism and non-masculine discourse, needs to provide more than the simple acceptance or rejection of opposing premises; it ought to inform nuanced and textured understanding of the issues involved in the substantive content of a discourse arena and support some synthesis. Syntheses, in this regard, are the understandings that occur as a result of dialogue between seemingly opposing premises within dialectical argumentation. Within this particular context there is some synthesis – or at least some confluence – in relation to the conditions under which speaking for Others may do more good than harm.

Whilst I have hitherto discussed only antithetical positions concerning the re-presentation of Others, there are two main characteristics of re-presentation that may be
employed to limit the potential for harm in speaking for Others whilst refusing to be
complicit in existing hierarchies by staying silent. These include restricting re-presentation to
people or groups with whom one shares a group identity, especially an identity based on the
social situations of colour, race and sex (Alcoff, 2006); and adopting a speaking with (Alcoff,
2009) or a sitting nearby (Minh-ha, 1982) relationship with Other by making transparent our
position/translation within the re-presentation process and discursive product. I will discuss
each of these conditions below.

I, as a woman academic, thus attempted to limit any potential harm, or restrict the
problem of speaking for Others, by limiting the divide between myself/selves and the Others
for whom I speak. Thus I chose to illuminate the experiences of women whose lives are not
radically distinct from my own so that some of the ethical dilemma involved in re-presenting
Others was fractured and dissipated. Indeed, this stance, that it is acceptable to speak for
Others with whom we share certain human characteristics or cultural
affiliations/circumstances, is promoted by Alcoff (2006). Yet the process of defining
ourselves and our social location – or identifying with whom I share commonalities of
experience and understanding – is not straightforward. Indeed the practice of categorising
social location and identity is both highly complex and contested because it is difficult to
identify and demarcate clear-cut boundaries between groups of individuals or pure human
identities.

**Speaking for those with whom we identify**

It is difficult to define the term ‘identity’ let alone reach consensus of how persons
and social identities are categorised in deciding who has the right to speak for whom. The
complexity of how persons and groups are identified is perhaps a contested discourse because
it has been defined and discussed by many different disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology in discipline-specific ways of knowing and communicating. But at its simplest, psychologists most commonly use the term ‘identity’ to describe personal identity, or the characteristics that make a person unique; whilst sociologists generally use the term to describe social identity, or the collection of group memberships that define the individual. Personal identity suggests a subjective perspective, which, as Danielewicz succinctly states, is ‘our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are’ (2001, p.10). This definition implies a self-recognition of what constitutes one’s beliefs, perspectives and practices. Yet Lasky (2005) asserts that personal identity is also about how we present our qualities and how they are perceived by others. This conception extends personal identity to encompass elements of self-understanding and external interpretation or categorisation. Thus, the divide between personal and social identity is not sharply defined. The lack of distinction between self and social identity is further compounded by the notion that we each have multiple and often complex identities (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2004). For example, I was born in Wales but live and am acculturated into an Australian culture with an Australian husband and children; I was born into a working-class family, but integrated and for all intents and purposes engage in a middle-class lifestyle/culture; I work in academia, but am engaged on a fixed term contract only. Which location can I speak of – my past or current? Gee suggests that in any given situation we tend to call on our current, our ‘situated identity’ (2005, p.99), informed by elements of our past. Therefore self and social identities are situated, complex and inter-related and identities are informed by past and current locations. Finally, most postmodern authors agree that identity formation is a dynamic and ongoing process; it is continually shifting and evolving (Alcoff, 2006). Thus, a definition of identity remains elusive.
Olsen, however, provides some useful comments in trying to address the nature of identity when she describes it as a label that encompasses a ‘collection of influences and effects from immediate contexts, prior constructs of self/selves, social positioning, and meaning systems (each itself an ever-changing construct)’ that become intertwined and negotiated within given contexts and human relationships at specific times (Olsen, 2008, p.15). This is a particularly helpful attempt at synthesising the multi-faceted characteristics of identity composition, providing as it does a view of identity that is both (ongoing) process and (categorised) outcome (Winfield, 2011). Olsen’s definition also suggests that our group identities may be constructed or constituted by ever-evolving influences, belief systems and actions. Additionally, Winfield, (2011) considers the term ‘identity’ to encompass abstract notions of self-reflection and emotion in navigating our life journeys and determines that the way that we think, act and feel affects every part of our existence and behaviour and in turn creates both our personal and group identities. Thus, through engaging with some literature on what constitutes identity it has become clear that my self-identity is permeated by and formed through my previous and current life circumstances and influences, my in/actions, beliefs, thoughts and feelings, is largely determined by situation or context, and is ever-evolving and emerging. It may thus prove difficult for me to establish a cohesive or stable self or group identity that can be used to determine an ethical prerogative to speak for Others with whom I share a social location and identity.

Yet, in Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self (2006), Alcoff argues that the social identities of race, ethnicity and gender function as principal characteristics in influencing identity formation as they constitute interpretative horizons. She posits that race, ethnicity, and gender are the situations from which we come to know, understand, and reason about the world. Thus, for Alcoff the situations of race, ethnicity, and gender strongly affect
our interaction and experience with the world, and consequently help shape our epistemologies. In particular, Alcoff emphasises how race and gender are *embodied and visible* to the world and that not only do our bodies affect our experience of the world but they, as marked by race and gender, also enter into the experience of others as persons engage with each other as gendered and raced beings (2006). Thus Alcoff suggests that the two main determinants of both self and group identities are marked by the embodied experience of race and gender. Therefore, whilst acknowledging that individuals participate in multiple and hybrid identities Alcoff illuminates the importance of visible identities upon individual experience. Falling short of fully attributing a person’s self and group identity to the visible and embodied situations of race, ethnicity, and gender, Alcoff stresses that ‘none of these claims suggest that those with the same identity will have the same set of experiences, or that the same experience will always yield the same understanding, but it is absurd to deny the importance of experience or identity’ (2006, p.24). Indeed, Alcoff firmly identifies race and gender as steering our social location and claims that while collective identities are socially constructed, they are nevertheless real and gain cohesion through shared social location and common experience. Finally, de Beauvoir (1949, in McCann & Kim, 2003), Cixous and Clement (1986) and Kristeva (1986) each claimed that a woman’s sex determined her *positionality* and marginalisation within the symbolic order of western society, and Minh-ha identifies race and colour as the key determinants of lived experience. Hence, even if my personal and group identities are situated, emerging and unstable (Olsen, 2008) they can be considered as *principally* impacted by my colour, race and gender (Alcoff, 2006). Therefore, by this logic, if I am to accept the responsibility of my privileged position to re-present the words/worlds of Others I ought to limit my re-presentation to Others with whom I share a gender, race and ethnicity as these visible and embodied traits are *situations* from which we
come to know, understand, and reason about the world. Finally, I believe that a consideration of the lived and material realities of research participants and researchers is important in making research decisions more generally. Yet, postmodernists have been accused of ignoring social realities and materialities of identities that live in the real world. In addition, Alcoff supports Spivak’s position when she claims that a certain degree of essentialism is justified in order to make political claims (Alcoff, 2009). Thus, the lived and material situations of race, ethnicity and gender are central to a consideration of who one may speak for, and so I will restrict my re-presentation for women with whom I share a race and ethnicity.

Second, an ethical and politically expedient approach to re-presenting the words/worlds of Others with whom we share the situation of colour and sex involves highlighting the authorship or staging of the re-presentation. This approach specifically involves making explicit the fact that the re-presentation is not neutral or dispassionate but is ‘grounded in both the social location and the social biography of the observer’ (Mann & Kelly, 1997, p. 392). Thus, in order to demonstrate the fact that the re-presentation of women casual academics lives that I created were a a translation of Others’ experience, I made manifest the constructed nature of the discourse. As Richardson identified, ‘when we write social science, we are using our authority and privilege to tell about the people we study. No matter how we stage the text, we – as authors – are doing the staging. As we speak about the people we study, we also speak for them. As we inscribe their lives, we bestow meaning and promulgate values’ (Richardson, 1990, p. 12). Yet an explicit manifestation of authorship is in stark contrast – and deliberate opposition – to traditional research and academic discourse which draws its authority from adopting the objective stance of the view from nowhere (Richardson, 1997). Such objectification and traditional discursive practice removes the
narrator from the text (Richardson 1990) and it is argued that such objective representation employs a cleaned up quotation that serves to silence participants’ voices (Standing 1998). Instead, in order to create an ethically and politically sensitive approach to re-presenting the experience of Others required of me a form of representation that disrupted the traditional discursive practices of the academy (Bertram, 1998; Lather, 1991), created distance between the data and the world, and celebrated the interpreted status of data (Lather, 1991). In particular, Bertram (1998) urged us (feminist authors) to adopt writing practices that attempt to avoid what she terms the ‘authority effect’ by placing ourselves within our texts, making our positions explicit, and shedding the illusion of the authoritative view from nowhere (Haraway, 1991; Richardson, 1997).

Whilst discussing why and how to place ourselves in a research text Fine et al. (2002) recommend that we, as authors, look for opportunities for Others’ voices and writers’ translations to interact: a space and interaction they called the self-other hyphen (usually abbreviated to the hyphen). The hyphen, in Fine’s conceptualisation, is the space between research and research participant, a space where the relationship between the researcher and participant can be explored and communicated; and if accommodated, a space where the objectification of the participant is not possible. In locating or creating the hyphen – the space between the researcher and participant wherein dialogue can occur – the writer can more honestly and explicitly jointly construct the research data narrative. Thus, in order to decentre my authority whilst centralise the voices of the women casual academics I intended to illuminate, I spoke in the space – the hyphen – between myself and the women’s stories of lived experience.
Yet by working in the space between participants and my personal interpretation (of Other experience) did not merely illuminate the constructed nature of re-presentation, it also afforded me (as researcher) a greater opportunity for relationship building between self and Other, enhanced opportunities for creativity, highlighted the research participants’ voice, and troubled the argumentative and dichotomising nature of traditional research communication.

Working in the space between myself/researcher and Other in the hyphen that both separates and merges personal identities with our inventions of Others (Fine, 2002) supported the development of closer and more transparent research relationship. Whilst Lather (1991) recognised that nothing short of full participant/researcher collaboration will prevent some level of participant objectification (1991, p.150), I used non-traditional forms of research communication as an opportunity to explicate and draw closer the relationship between myself/researcher and participant (Lather, 1991). Thus, within a creative engagement with data/voice there is opportunity for us as researchers to dialogue with the participant’s communication of experience, offer their interpretation of that experience and ‘reduce the divide between self and Other’ (Minh-ha, 1989, pp.79-116). Indeed, for Minh-ha separation and stratification between self and Other does not exist unless it is exercised or created through traditional hierarchical research relationships.

Through many of her films and writings Minh-ha explores how separation is in opposition to interaction and dialogue and maintains that it is a separation of researcher and the researched that sustains systems of repression and hierarchy. Indeed, Minh-ha offers a critique of academic feminists who acknowledge ‘difference’ but continue to exclude Third World women from their discussion, dialogue or re-presentation (1986). She also identifies the separation of researcher and research participant as representing a clear dividing line
between ‘I and not I’, ‘between us here and them over there’ (1990). Subsequently, and in contrast to creating a division between herself/her researcher role and those she re-presents, Minh-ha creates films and art works that deliberately omit an authorial voice or contain any conflict. She chooses instead to present herself and Others as ‘difference’ sitting side by side without hierarchy or conflict (1982). In particular, difference for Minh-ha should not be used as a basis for separatism or conflict; rather, she claims it should be used as a tool of creativity to expose and question repression (1982). By re-presenting Others in ethnographic studies in the form of post-modern film Minh-ha demonstrates that she does not speak about, but ‘speaks nearby’ Others (1982). Thus, she does not refrain from re-presenting people and environments that are Other than her own; she instead explicitly re-presents/stages (Richardson, 1990) them by using a montage of fleeting images without authorial commentary. For instance in Reassemblage, 1982, she presented images from Senegal but deliberately failed to include the conventional verbal narration that usually accompanies ethnographic footage. As an alternative she employed only music and silence. In this way she refused to make the film ‘about’ a ‘culture’ that can be categorised or framed and easily understood. Where the viewer expects an omniscient, scientific voice to explain or translate the moving images of places and people in order to overlay a meaning, Minh-ha refuses to tell the viewer what know about the visual footage, refuses to give expert opinion on the images, and ‘denies the hopeful observer the opportunity to record, categorize, and save anOther culture’ (http://voices.cla.umn.edu/artistpages/trinhT.php). In an interview Minh-ha discussed that she would offer no clear-cut voice feeding the audience an answer, or even an explanation of what transpires onscreen, ‘the audience is refused the chance to settle’ (http://tcuwomensnetwork.wordpress.com/2009/11/). Additionally, this approach to representation denies the audience a protagonists or central, linear narrative. She replaces the
conventions of traditional drama (characterisation, a central preoccupation, conflict leading to resolution) with a conversation between herself and the Others she sits near-by (1982). She thus deliberately displaces the traditional androcentric focus and form of ethnographic research. As a feminist, Minh-ha aims to create a relationship with those she re-presents and asserts that women should find their relationships and modes of communication rather than duplicate traditional communication channels of men. Using females as the central focus of many of her films she employs female-focused storytelling, non-linear and multiple stories and encourages multiple tellings and understandings. In particular, Minh-ha creates a montage of many people and places by overlaying moving images with music and silence. In addition, re-presenting Other people and places in stylised (non-realistic and non-traditional) form reveals the constructed nature of representation. Moreover, in *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989) Minh-ha juxtaposed newsreel and archival footage taken of Vietnam and the Vietnamese with five contemporary Vietnamese women in order to reveal both staged and ‘real’ interviews. In doing so she exposed the politics of interviews and the lack of neutrality in re-presenting Others. *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* thus ‘challenges the viewer to consider the fictions inherent in representation generally and documentary techniques more specifically (Minh-ha, 1989). Thus, by replacing commentary and explanation with music and silence, by replacing protagonist and place with multiple people and place, by replacing the seeming innocence of representing of Others with a highly constructed and stylised re-presentation of peoples and places, and by displacing the male representative with multiple female re-presentations, Minh-ha aims to connect with those with whom she speaks. In particular, through creative cinematography, she creates a collegiality, a sitting ‘nearby’ (1982) the locations and people with whom she interacts whilst exposing the duplicity of traditional ethnographic representation.
Working in the space between participants and personal interpretation (of Other experience) also creates, and created for me, an opportunity for new, creative and ephemeral research conceptualisations to surface. Deleuze and Guattari, eminent post structuralist philosophers and collaborators, refer to the creations that emerge through interaction or dialogue as ‘assemblages’ (1987). Moreover, they argue that assemblages are porous and ‘rhizomatic’ (1987) and as such they consistently and inevitably create opportunities for the fertilisation and multiplication of new creations. Deleuze and Guattari use the term rhizomatic to describe how data, representation, and interpretation have multiple and non-hierarchical entry and exit points for the engagement and emergence of new understandings and creations. In A Thousand Plateaus (1987) Deleuze and Guattari use the analogy of ‘the orchid and the wasp’ to describe interaction between all elements in research communication as a process of exchange and mutation. In particular, they suggest that any interaction inevitably creates something new, and that ‘the new’ created will likewise be rhizomatic with multiple entry and exit points to support a further process of exchange and multiplication of new rhizomes (ideas, images, understandings). Thus, all interactions create new mutations and possibilities – reoccurring – and all rhizomes are without ‘beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo’ (1987, p.25). By this understanding, the spaces in the middle between the data and the researcher, and between the communicated data (or data narrative) and reader/audience are considered to be spaces for new creations to emerge and ‘off-shoot’ (1987).

Several contemporary researchers have artfully employed Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualisation of the space ‘between’ others’ voice/experience and their interpretations, to create new and interesting data narratives, or as Loch (2014) describes them, ‘data scapes’ (Loch, 2014). First, Sarah Loch, a recent PhD graduate whose work explores Deleuze and
Guattari’s writing, describes how she uses the space between students’ communications of their future aspirations and her relationship with their communication, to create poetic re-creations of the research data. In doing so Loch determines that her poetic re-creations are developed as a result of an amalgamation and fusion of the research participants’ experience with her own voice (Loch, 2014). She also expresses how she is inspired to approach her data ‘by another point’ in order to embrace ‘the power of open creativity’ that the in-between-ness offers (Williams, 2005, p. 19). Finally, Loch notes how Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the ‘smooth space’ between collected data and her engagement with it encourages experimentation with voice that troubles conventional research methodologies. In particular, Loch uses the space within ‘the hyphen’ (Fine, 1992) to create poetic ‘prismatic representations’ of others’ experience (Loch, 2014).

A second example of how the rhizomatic nature of the space between others’ voice and researcher can be used to illuminate the highly constructed nature of re-presenting others’ stories, whilst opening opportunity for creative off-shoots, is the work of education academic and musician Stewart Riddle (2014). Like Loch (2014), Riddle’s creative restorying of data is prompted by Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘invitation to experiment’ (Lorraine, 1999, p. x) to ‘take some risks making free use’ of research data (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 493). He too uses the hyphen or interaction between research data and his interpretation of it to develop new creative works and rhizomes. Riddle’s particular medium of communication ‘in the middle, between things’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25) is song and music. Riddle cites Wynton Marsalis (2005) to suggest that jazz cannot be played alone, that it must be played together ‘or it just doesn’t swing’ (Riddle, 2014). Consequently, Riddle (2014) interacts with interview data collected from school pupils (participants in his doctoral research) to create rhizomatic storylines in the form of song lyrics. In addition, Riddle
(2014), in common with Loch (2014), identifies himself (as researcher) to be *part* of his storylines (Sermijn et al., 2008) and fully acknowledges that he is embedded in his data narrative (Loch, 2014). In particular, he combines Small’s concept of ‘musicking’ (1989) as a socially constructed act, rather than the more traditional notion of music as an abstract object, with how Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain music in terms of a plane of immanence, of ‘virtuality and possibility’ to re-organise others’ voices into co-constructed lyrics and new creations.

Finally, Bronwyn Davies, an independent scholar based in Sydney, Australia, and a Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne, also identifies the space between the voices and locations of Others and her engagement with them, ‘the interbeing, intermezzo’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.25) to be a space for creative re-presentation. In one recent project, the focus of Davies’ research project (*Life in Kings Cross: a play of voices*, 2009) were the people and places of the Kings Cross area of Sydney. In particular, Davies uses the landscape, voices, buildings and bus stops of Kings Cross and her relationality to the landscape to develop a radio play as a creative and overtly constructed data narrative. She employs the space between her researcher/self and the re-presented/Other (place and people) to find new ways of communicating. In writing the radio play Davies consciously explores and communicates the emotions she experiences in engaging with the place and people of Kings Cross. Her re-presentation/play thus becomes an explicitly emotional co-construction of the people and environment she seeks to illuminate. In addition, Davies works in a vein that is reminiscent of Minh-ha’s intention to create a dialogue between herself and the Others she re-presents (Minh-ha, 1982). Furthermore, Davies cites Cixous to explain the creative connection between researcher and Other that can be harnessed in working within the hyphen (Fine, 1992). She explicates that ‘once we are no longer fixed on capturing the essence of
self and other in their isolation, we [become] open to the unknown, ... we are opened up to the beauty of moments of insight into the being of the other (Cixous et al, 1997). Davies is thus explicit about the creative ‘emergence’ of co-constructed data that occurs through working in the hyphen (Fine, 1992). Further, she identifies the opportunities for creative alliance and the fertilisation of new conceptualisations and artefacts afforded researchers who employ non-traditional restorying approaches. She claims that the explicitly constructed nature of the medium of drama accommodated her vision of the research project ‘not as a realist report of a place that might be said to pre-exist the writing, or to exist independent of my experience and experiment with it’ (Davies, 2011, p.34). The play or the data narrative comes into being through the inter-action between the data and the researcher’s engagement with it. Moreover, for Davies, an overtly researcher-engaged and researcher-constructed data narrative invites a reader to listen to the possible meanings to the sounds of the words, their rhythms, their poetry, and to engage with the new sensations and emotions of the sounds and images re-presented, without limiting their engagement to a literal meaning. Finally, in favour of creative forms of re-presentation of Others’ spaces Davies considers drama, in particular, as a medium of research communication that allows for an emotive and overtly staged form of data narrative that can confound linearity and singularity of perspective (Davies, 2011, p.39). Indeed, Davies considers that drama replaces linearity and singularity with a multiplication of perspective and storyline. In particular, Davies uses Dylan Thomas’ Under Milk Wood (1954) as an inspirational model for her play about Kings Cross, a play with a ‘plurality of centres’ and multiple voices that make up a ‘tangle of points of view, [and a] coexistence of moments’ (Deleuze, 2005, p. 67, cited in Davies, 2011, p. 40). Thus, in writing the play, Davies does not set out to represent individuals, preferring to work with a tangle of voice and place from minute, observed details to illuminate and expand the social
realities of that place. Therefore, Davies’ process of restorying wherein she engages her emotions and creative self in a data re-telling suggests that the highly constructed innovations that emerge from the translations of Others’ voices and locations can be creative, emergent and multi-voiced. She maintains that as a researcher/writer she is not separable from the locations and people she re-presents; rather she shares a coexistence with the plurality of places and people with which she engages to create drama/data narrative. Such notions of ‘co-existence’ enabled me to acknowledge my role in shaping the re-presentations of women casual academics’ narratives and liberated me to make explicitly aesthetic theatrical decisions in the restorying process. My acknowledged sharing of the narrative creation aligned with my ethical impulse to centralise the words of the women casual academics and alleviate the fear I had that re-shaping Others’ words would be an abuse of my researcher power. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 9: Re-view.

Correspondingly, Loch (2014), Riddle (2014), and Davies (2011) each draw attention to their artistic translations of research participant experience by frolicking in the provocative space that exists between Others’ experience and researcher understanding of that experience. In doing so, the researcher/artists create new ideas, artefacts and rhizomes; each with the possibility of multiplication and mutation for new emergences. Through the media of poetry, song and drama they develop creative artefacts to re-present others’ stories, voices and places. Thus contemporary academics and artists identify the opportunity for creative engagement with data and data communication when re-presenting the words and worlds of others. They also demonstrate that it is possible to artfully engage oneself as researcher in the co-construction of data scapes (Loch, 2014) through various creative media.
In addition, working artistically in the space between Other and self/becoming selves, and making the constructed nature of voice and research re-presentation visible, can also help to illuminate the substantive focus of the research. Indeed, the use of creative forms of re-presentation that have been developed by researcher/poet Sarah Loch, researcher/musician Stewart Riddle, researcher/dramatist Bronywn Davies, and researcher/filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha are used specifically to highlight participants’ voices within the text. They do this by making the familiar (a research narrative) appear strange, and evoking reader/audience curiosity and emotion. In particular, Shklovsky (1965) contends that the role of artistic forms of re-presentation is to make the familiar unfamiliar, thus requiring that the reader attend more carefully to both the form and the content of the communication. He argues that because we are used to engaging in research data/discussion in the form of prose, we stop perceiving both the content and form of traditional narratives. Shklovsky specifically suggests that ‘the object perceived thus in the manner of prose perception, fades and does not leave even a first impression; ultimately even the essence of what it was, is forgotten’ (Shklovsky, 1965. p.11). This notion that traditional research communication dulls the reader’s senses and engagement with research discourse, is reinforced by Neilsen (2002) who claims that the role of artistic re-presentations is to make the ordinary extraordinary, and to draw attention to the research. Loch concurs and claims that when the researcher’s story and creative virtuosity are intertwined in the data narrative, the telling and details of the story are elevated (Loch, 2014). Thus, creative, non-traditional data narratives invite readers/audiences to pay focused attention to the content and form of the communication and engage closely with the story and the voices being re-presented.

Therefore, artistic constructions of research communication can intertwine participant and researcher voice, and scholarship and art, to create an evocative and compelling research
narrative that re-engages research audiences and trouble the disingenuous ‘innocence’ of traditional data narratives (Guttorm, 2012).

In addition, the interplay between participants’ experience and researcher/artists’ interpretation and creative flair serves to intertwine traditional academic processes with the qualities and practices of the arts to trouble the dichotomy between scholarship and art. As a consequence, arts-infused research offers an alternative to the positivist traditions of modern scholarship, including seemingly objective, monologic, teleological traditional academic discourse.

First, artistic translations of academic research can serve to destabilise the dominance of the researcher in research relationships (Neilsen, 2002) and challenge the omniscience of the authorial voice ‘by avoiding a stark privileging and separation of the researcher’s voice from the researching experience’ (Loch 2014).

Second, merging creative and artistic ways of knowing and practising with the methods of traditional scholarship creates a scholarship of art and an art of scholarship that blurs the boundaries and therefore the stratification of both. As a result, a scholarship of art and an art of scholarship, or scholartistry (Nielsen, 2000) challenges the dichotomisation of scientific research and creativity/art. Scholartistry is a term coined by Lorri Nielsen to describe the mutually informing, mutually beneficial and equivalent relationship between academic scholarship and artistic processes and forms (Nielsen, 2000, 2002). It is understood as a hybrid practice that combines languages used in the literary, visual, and/or performing arts with scholarly practices of education researchers and other social scientists (Nielsen, 2000, 2002). Nielsen (2005) identifies that the three main aims of scholartistry are ‘to make academic writing an area where virtuosity and clarity are valued; to make educational
research an area where the arts are legitimate inquiry, and to infuse scholarship with the spirit of creative connection’ (cited in Cahnmann., 2006). However, a reading of Nielsen’s ‘scholarship’ on the merging of arts and scholarship indicates that scholartistry can achieve more than these three important and noble aims. Perhaps more radically, scholartistry can be used to destabilise traditional academic discourse or at least create an opportunity for a dialogue between traditional scholarship and artistic re-presentations. This is one of the reasons I employed a bicultarl form of communication, in order to create a dialogue between existing discourses around sessional staffing and the yet to be voiced (Arnot & Reay, 2007) voices of women casual academics.

Scholartistry (also known as scholARTistry) both represents and advocates for the equivalence of the arts and traditional scholarship. As the economist Jane Jacobs (2000) suggests, all languages have rules, academic or artistic; both employ, ‘somewhat reliable patterns of pronunciation... creative self-organization doesn’t imply disorder’ (pp. 137-138). Creative expression and artistic processes employ rigorous methods of practice that differ from, but are not lesser than traditional scholarship. Indeed, artists are concerned with communication, connecting viewers/readers/audiences with the subject and form of their endeavours. In contrast, Martin (2004) expresses some concern that the esotericism and aerial distance in scholarship can lead to ‘exclusivity, hierarchical distance, and abstruse theory and language’ that keeps readers removed from research and the problems of the everyday world (cited in Nielsen, 2002). Thus the language of the arts can make research narratives accessible, meaningful and create a connection between all research parties where both scholarly practice and the arts are valued and valuable. It is the blending of art with scholarship that brings immediacy and recognition to both academic and artistic endeavour.
However, a blurring of categories violates the fundamental practice and structure of the academy, based as it has been on a division of disciplinarily and associated ways of knowing, being and communicating. As Palmer (1998) identified, academic research has thrived in the structures of separation. In addition, Nielsen lamented that there is an expectation for scholars in the academy to have a point of reference, a marker or a point to make. Without this, Nielsen believes we might have to face complexity, contradiction, or an impermanence of ideas. She finally posits that scholars feel more secure, accustomed as we are to disciplinary strictures, knowing what to stand for, and what to stand against, knowing what and who to cite to add credibility to the construction of a data narrative. Yet, as Minh-ha (1982, 1989), Loch (2014), Riddle (2014) and Davies (2011) have demonstrated, scholartistry blurs divisions and separation to create new assemblages and trouble theistic adherence to borders and boundaries, to distinctions between science and art (Nielsen, 2002).

Scholartistry, or the blurring of boundary between art and scholarship and the employment of both, reflects – or indeed propels – an ontological shift from a conceptualisation of truth as objective and singular, to a constructivist understanding of perspectival, multiple truths that co-exist, rhizomatically emerge and mutate and embrace narrative, fully embodied, artistic and cognitive modes of understanding. Scholartistry thus reflects the elusiveness of an absolute truth by blurring modes of knowing and representing knowledge. The shift in educational inquiry, marked by alternative forms of representation including the literary arts, is thus a shift as much ontological as it is epistemological (Nielsen, 2002). ‘Artists perceive patterns in new ways, find sensuous openings into new understandings, fresh concepts, wild possibilities. Artists help us subvert the ordinary and see the extraordinary’ (Neilsen, 1998, p. 274) whilst scholartists bring artistry of their imaginative powers in the literary and visual arts into research inquiry and academic
discourse. Therefore in an age where hierarchies are becoming rhizomatic webs and networks, a blurring of genres is occurring in most disciplines, and disciplinary practices themselves are blurring. Scholartistry is being used to create a scholarship of art and an art of scholarship which creates opportunities for researcher/artists to re-present Others’ voices with explicit reference to the constructed nature of their re-presentations and in doing so a shift of the ontology of knowledge to an ontology of knowing.

In this chapter I have revealed the current dialectical argument relating to the ethical, political, philosophical and theoretical considerations involved in re-presenting Others. I gave an overview of both dialectical positions on speaking for Others and drew a synthesis that speaking with women casual academics – as opposed to speaking for them (Alcoff, 2009) requires speaking in ‘the hyphen’ (Fine & Weiss, 1992) or the space between self/selves and Other. It also requires a highly constructed discursive or re-presentational form that draws attention to the obvious staging (Richardson, 1990) of Others’ words and worlds. I discussed in detail the way in which speaking in the hyphen (Fine & Weiss, 1992) offers opportunities for artistic and creative re-presentations that fuse scholarship and artistry to create scholartistry (Nielsen, 1998, 2002). It was suggested also that scholartistry offers a synthesis to the dichotomous and dialectical traditions of art and academic scholarship.

Of particular focus, within this chapter, was the exploration of the problem of representation or speaking for others. I discussed Linda Martin Alcoff, Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak and Trinh T. Minh-ha’s dialectical arguments concerning the representation of Others and accepted and endorsed the synthesis of the dialectical argument that under certain conditions it is better to speak with (Alcoff, 2009) or nearby Others (Minh-ha, 1982), than to stay silent and leave the dominant discourse and hegemony untested or challenged. I also
adopted their recommendations that if one is to speak on behalf of Others it should be done in such a way that exposes and disrupts the false innocence of representation (Guttorm, 2012).

Finally, within the chapter I introduced the position that feminist/feminine academic research can accommodate the researcher’s emotions, values and ethics of care and connectivity (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 2008). This discussion was part of a broader argument that dialectical argumentation is inclusive of pluralist perspectives and conceptualisations and allows for some synthesis where situated and partial solutions to philosophical and political dilemmas are articulated. The solutions I identify (to the problem of speaking for Others) were thus presented as situated, personal, imbued with my emotions in complement with an engagement with ‘the literature’ on the issue of representation. Thus, I suggested that scholartistry (Nielsen, 2002), a fusion of artistry and scholarship affords the researcher/artist a space to work in the hyphen (Fine & Weiss, 1992) to explicitly stage the data narrative (Richardson, 1990) and unsettle the traditions of academic discourse that reflect a modernist ontology.

In the following chapter I will outline the process of re-presentation with which I engaged in this research project. In particular, I will detail how I constructed/communicated my understanding of six women casual academics’ stories through the development of a proto-verbatim. I will also demonstrate, with a selection of annotated documented images (both moving and still), how the development of a proto-verbatim drama sits within a scholartistic framework to highlight the lived experience of women casual academics. I will finally explicate how the creation of a mise en scene represents my voice/situation (Alcoff, 2006) within a dialogue between myself as researcher/artist and research participants/women casual academics.
CHAPTER 7: PROTO-VERBATIM DRAMA CAN AESTHETICALLY ENGAGE AN AUDIENCE IN VOICES NOT YET HEARD

As established in the previous chapter the ethics of representing the voices of Others through qualitative research have been critiqued on the grounds of the privileging or silencing that can occur: when speaking for people from different locations or situations from oneself (Alcoff, 2006, 2009); when participant voices are mediated using universal (white western) frameworks (Minh-ha, 1982, 1989; Spivak, 1987, 1998); and when the representations are innocently communicated (Guttorm, 2012; Minh-ha, 1982, 1989). Two strategies that can be employed to address this critique are to speak with or nearby Others (Alcoff, 2009; Minh-ha, 1982, 1989) with whom one shares a similar situation (Alcoff, 2006, 2009), and to make explicit the constructedness of the re-presentations (Richardson, 1997). I consequently resolved to employ the first strategy – to speak nearby those with whom I share a location – and committed to restorying the experiences of women casual academics scholartistically into a verbatim drama that makes manifest the staging of the re-presentation.

Central to this chapter is Mazzei and Jackson’s (2009) advice to feminist researchers to democratise the research process by fully exposing the decision making that is undertaken when re-presenting the voices of Others. Within this chapter I therefore intend to make transparent the specific political and artistic considerations with which I engaged to adopt a proto-verbatim drama (Duggan, 2013) as a form of research communication for this project. In particular, I will offer an overview of the lineage, and the main aims of characteristics of verbatim drama, and discuss the wide variety of aesthetic translations of the genre. Further, I will critique verbatim theatre that attempts to create a mimetic performance aesthetic and demonstrate, in contrast, that a theatricalised verbatim – which explicitly stages the re-
presentation of Others’ voices – can aesthetically and ethically engage an audience in voices not yet heard. I will additionally consider the characteristics of political, feminist and women’s theatre to identify how they, and in particular the theory and practice of Bertolt Brecht, inform a proto-verbatim theatre aesthetic. I will finally review the specific characteristics of proto-verbatim theatre, as a specific form of post-verbatim theatre, to demonstrate how it is a congruent form of research communication through which to communicate the lived experience of women casual academics. The chapter following this, Chapter 8, will subsequently explicate how I employed proto-verbatim theatre as a form of research communication within a traditional university research conference.

A brief overview of theatre forms that can be employed to re-present the words and worlds of Others/research participants

Before I present a detailed rationale for employing the specific sub-genre of verbatim drama as the means by which I re-presented the stories of women casual academics, it is worth noting that there are other forms of theatre and drama that can be employed in arts-informed research. The three most popular forms of which, not including verbatim drama, are performance ethnography, playback theatre, and forum theatre. I offer a brief overview of each of these dramatic genre in order to explain why I rejected them as a form of research communication for this particular project.

Performance ethnography, as the name implies, is a form of performance drama that represents what a researcher discovers through ethnographic participant-observation fieldwork (Ritzer, 2007). It is designed to provide an aesthetic and dynamic rendering of Others and their cultural experience (Ritzer, 2007).
The main reason that I chose not to employ performance ethnography was that this project did not intend to scientifically describe women casual academics and their ‘cultures’ or cultural settings. In contrast, I explicitly chose not to homogenise the women participants as ‘sessional staff’ or to focus the research around my observation of the women in an academic cultural context. This research instead was based on person-centredness where the women participants were considered as individuals, not part of a cultural group or community. In addition, it was based on a narrative epistemology and methodology, where the participants’ personal narratives were privileged over my observation or analysis of them. Thus, performance ethnography, with its focus on culture/s and the observation of the ethnographer, did not align with the aims of this person-centred narrative research project.

Playback theatre, a form of improvisational theatre, is also regularly employed in arts-informed research. Within playback theatre audience members are invited to re-tell stories from their lives and watch them as they are re-presented by actors. The genre aims to share the stories of people/s who have little or no voice in their society. Playback theatre therefore offers an environment and opportunity to acknowledge Others’ stories and to embed them into the cultural memory of a society (Sanders, 2008). In addition, playback theatre is overtly political and attempts to disrupt societal oppression and marginalisation through its exposure of oppression in the everyday stories of a community. Consequently, it is generally employed within critical research or research that employs critical theory as a methodological foundation. Playback theatre is similar to forum theatre, a genre which is discussed below, as it privileges collectively over individuality and is aimed at generating collective political action (Fox, 1994).
Proto-Verbatim Drama Can Aesthetically Engage An Audience in Voices Not Yet Heard

Whilst playback theatre is a vibrant and potent form of applied theatre, like ethnographic performance and forum theatre, it does not suit the person-centred, individuated, narrative focus of this research project, and is incongruent with the elicitation and re-presentation of women casual academics’ ‘petits récits’ (Lyotard, 1984).

Finally, forum theatre is a dramatic genre designed to teach people how to change their world (Boal, 2002). In the process of the drama, which usually consists of short improvised scenes, scenarios of everyday oppression or injustice are performed. Actors or audience members, known as spect-actors, are then invited to stop the performance in order to suggest different actions for the actors to undertake in an attempt to change the scenario from one of oppression to one of resistance and persona/social emancipation (Boal, 2002). In particular, forum theatre is often presented to a relatively homogeneous community of spect-actors (Powell, & Serriere, 2013) and its goal is collective political agitation by creating disequilibrium which prepares the way for action (Boal, 2002). Forum theatre, like playback theatre, is often employed in critical research projects (Powell & Serriere, 2013).

The main reason I reject forum theatre as a mode of research communication for this arts-informed narrative inquiry is that it is incongruent with the person-centred focus of the project. This project engaged, as established in Chapter 1, with research participants as human beings and therefore adopted what Schmid describes as ‘a non purpose oriented openness’ (Schmid, n.d.). That is, I aimed to resist any expectations about what or how research participants would want to communicate their casual academic experience and fully accepted the stories and experiences they shared. I also, wherever possible, attempted to minimise my ‘researcher power’ by refusing to analyse or thematically categorise the women’s stories and experiences. Yet forum theatre would, in contrast to my aim and
approach, impose a purpose orientation to the elicitation of stories as it aims to identify forms of ‘oppression’ in the stories participants share. In addition, working with forum theatre would not have allowed me to be fully accepting of the stories the women shared as I would have been compelled to identify, and create interventions to disrupt, examples of social injustice/s in the women’s stories.

The person-centred foundation for this research instead required a communication approach and performance genre that offered an opportunity for a polyphony of words and experiences of women casual academics to be re-presented and acknowledged. In addition, person-centred research does not attempt to expose or ‘resolve’ a perceived social injustice inherent in the women’s stories; or stimulate collective political action. A person-centred narrative inquiry therefore required that I employ a form of research communication that instead privileged the words and experiences of the participants, without classification, judgment or political intent. Consequently, I will describe below why I considered verbatim theatre as the most appropriate form of communication to re-present the individual, idiosyncratic stories and voices of women casual academics.

The Development, Nomenclature and Characteristics of Verbatim Theatre

Verbatim drama is generally defined as a form of documentary drama whose texts develop from narratives unearthed by a researcher/dramatist. This process contrasts with the traditional practice of constructing drama texts out of the pre-existing ideas, perspectives or theories of the playwright. The term ‘verbatim drama’ was first employed by Derek Paget in 1987 in a paper for *New Theatre Quarterly* in which he attempted to identify methodologies in documentary theatre, and more specifically categorise the scripting of text from everyday people’s conversation and perspective (Paget, 1987). Paget used the term ‘verbatim’ to
describe the genre of drama that was pioneered by regional British dramatists in the 1960s and ’70s such as John Cheeseman, Chris Honer, Rony Robinson, David Thacker and Ron Rose (Paget, 1987). In addition, he used the term to classify the work of theatre practitioners who were heavily influenced by the British radio ballads of the 1950s, British documentary films of the 1930s and 1940s, and the European plays of Brecht and Piscator. Moreover, verbatim was used to describe a genre of drama that aimed to give a public voice to individuals and communities (Paget, 1987). Indeed, early verbatim dramas specifically aimed to give voice to regional communities in the United Kingdom suffering from financial hardship caused by the closure of the factories and heavy industry which had been the ‘livelihood and lifeblood of regional communities’ (Andersen & Wilkinson, 2007). Another feature of early verbatim drama was that it provided a platform for the silent or marginalised working-class people within communities and sought to authentically capture and feedback the life stories and oral history of a local community (Paget, 1987). Out of the early verbatim production process grew the fundamental procedure of combining traditional working-class storytelling with the then new technologies of audio-recording, in order to make a performance script out of the words of the original storytellers (Brown, 2010). Therefore, from the outset, the relationship between documentary narrative, theatre, and community identity, self-esteem and empowerment was established (Gibson, 2011).

The term ‘verbatim’ is most widely used in the United Kingdom and Australia (Andersen & Wilkinson, 2007; Brown, 2010; Heddon, 2008) whilst in the United States this form of theatre is more usually called ‘documentary theater’ (Claycomb, 2003, p. 96). In particular, the term relates to the use (the capture and re-presentation) of spoken testimony whereas ‘documentary’ encompasses other found sources, such as newspaper articles, diaries,
court transcripts and letters. Indeed, Carol Martin describes documentary theatre as being created from a body of archived material that can include ‘interviews, documents, hearings, records, video, film, photographs, etc.’ (Martin, 2006, p.9). Even so, the terms ‘documentary’ and ‘verbatim’ drama are often used interchangeably. In this thesis however I follow Andersen and Wilkinson’s lead in privileging the term ‘verbatim’ when describing the drama/theatre piece that I created based on the lived experience of women casual academics. This is because my drama was predominantly developed from interview transcripts and not from other found documents. In addition, the term ‘verbatim’ and its association with first-hand subjective accounts aligns more closely with the preoccupation of person-centred and feminist subjectivity of women’s experience; whereas documentary theatre is connoted with an objective, clinical approach to reporting the past. Finally, I will use the term ‘verbatim’ to describe the drama I created as I seek to demonstrate the constructedness of the representation of Others’ words/research narrative, and verbatim theatre accommodates anti-naturalistic performance motifs that are suited to a demonstration or ‘staging’ of experience (Richardson, 1997). Indeed ‘verbatim’ has been described as ‘a portmanteau term, incorporating a stylistically rich and varied product that owes its origins to spoken text but does not always perform these words literally as they are spoken’ (Andersen & Wilkinson, 2007, p.154). Thus, I commit to employing the processes and nomenclature of verbatim drama as it is a ‘form of theatre which places interviews with people at the heart of its process’ (Heddon, 2008, p.127) and privileges the re-presentation of the stories of marginalised and under-represented people and seeks to empower its contributors (Paget, 1987). Additionally, verbatim drama is aesthetically and stylistically rich (Andersen & Wilkinson, 2007) and can therefore serve to aesthetically engage an audience, both emotionally and cognitively, with the lived experience of women casual academics.
Despite many shared characteristics the verbatim genre incorporates a wide range of theatrical forms and artistic and political intent. As the playwright and dramaturg David Lane identifies, creating a clear and consistent definition of verbatim theatre is problematic: ‘Like many genres of drama, an umbrella term cannot do justice to the idiosyncrasies of the many plays held beneath it’ (Lane, 2010, p.65). Indeed, the Australian verbatim dramatist Alana Valentine describes verbatim as ‘one of the most malleable, diverse and surprising forms of contemporary theatre’ (Valentine, n.d.), while Suzanne Little echoes Caroline Wake’s suggestion that verbatim drama offers a wide spectrum of theatrical approaches (Little, n.d.; Wake, 2010a). Specifically, Little claims that at one end of the verbatim spectrum sit ‘hyper-aestheticised productions that exploit and manipulate source material in the interests of spectacle, aesthetic appeal and audience engagement’, whilst at the other are highly ‘ethical’ productions where practitioners inadvertently drain the drama from theatrical representation in attempting to preserve a perceived ‘truth’ (Little, n.d., n.p.). For instance the acclaimed British dramatist David Hare combines interview material with invented scenes and employs ‘remembered’ speech rather than recorded testimony in the development of what has been described as a fabricated ‘aestheticised’ verbatim drama (Hammond & Steward, 2008). Yet scholarartists Hilary Halba and Stuart Young create ‘highly ethical’ verbatim drama out of the oral testimonies of ‘real’ people without changing any of the order or context of the stories/interviews with the aim to faithfully re-presenting ‘the truth’ (Little, n.d.).

In one realm of the verbatim spectrum, Max Stafford-Clark as theatre director and Hare as playwright, admit to deliberately shaping verbatim material, to ‘find the story within the story’ for the verbatim play The Permanent Way (Hammond & Steward, 2008, p.58).
Indeed in relation to *The Permanent Way* (2005) which re-presents the accounts of a series of British rail accidents that occurred in the UK in the 1990s, Hare explains that he organised verbatim accounts in order to lead the audience in a certain way through the material (Hare in Hammond & Steward, 2008). He further elaborates that if a documentary play fails to contain a theatrical metaphor or a clear perspective on the story, ‘then it’s incredibly boring. It’s a total misunderstanding of documentary theatre to think that it’s all about just presenting a load of facts on stage’ (cited in Hammond & Steward, 2008, p.59). In addition, Hare determines that crafting a verbatim drama is an art, and that whilst the ‘driftwood’ of a narrative is there to be found, it must still be carved and painted ‘to make art’ and like any drama it seeks to represent and to persuade (Hare, 2005). Thus, for Hare and Stafford-Clark, the production of a verbatim play involves the creative and artistic manipulation of verbatim material in order to create coherent and engaging theatre.

In contrast, theatre practitioners such as Alecky Blythe, and Hilary Halba and Stuart Young adopt more rigorous approaches to unearthing and reproducing the source material for verbatim drama making in an attempt to aim to create drama that is ‘true’ to the experiences of those it represents (Little, n.d.). In addition to audio recording (and occasionally video-recording) all interviews undertaken with contributors, playwright and director Alecky Blythe use original audio testimony/transcripts, also known as ‘recorded delivery’, in the presentations of her verbatim dramas. She does so in an attempt to prevent actors from aestheticising contributor’s testimony with ‘heightened’ performances (Hammond & Steward 2010). Blythe’s technique involves actors wearing headphones throughout the performance through which they receive the digital recording of the interview of the person they are representing. Within the live theatre performance the actors’ listen to the interviewees and
recite along the audio script aiming to re-create the speech patterns and words with absolute precision. The recreation includes reproducing contributors’ coughs, stumbles and any hesitations (Hammond & Steward 2010). In doing so, the actor attempts to mimic and therefore re-present the original paralinguistic delivery of the testimony, replete with umms and ahs. Additionally, the interviewee’s accent, pitch, pace, and tone is recreated in performance, in an attempt to faithfully reproduce speech patterns (Little, n.d.). Thus, rather than the actor interpreting or dramatically re-presenting the interviewee they literally attempt to reproduce the ‘real’ person through replicating their words, breaths, and speech mannerisms and ‘voiceprint’ (Hammond & Steward 2008). Moreover, the actors in Blythe’s ‘recorded delivery’ verbatim performance technique also work to replicate the physical score of the person/character they are re-presenting. By studying and copying the physical posture, movements and mannerisms of the interviewees the actors in Blythe’s productions also attempt to reproduce, with fidelity, the body-print of contributors. This process of listening and repeating, and watching and re-presenting requires a high level of actors’ focus so ‘with so much going on in their heads, this leaves almost no time to consider how they will deliver the character’ (Hammond & Steward 2010, p. 81). Blythe believes that such an anti-theatrical performance aesthetic creates performances that are ‘unselfconscious and free’, prevents actors’ interpretation from replacing the original contributors’ voice and body, and privileges what is perceived to be the real experience of contributors. Blythe claims that she does not deny that actors are highly skilled at interpreting their lines, ‘but the way the real person said them will always be more interesting’ (Hammond & Steward 2010, p.81).

Finally, Blythe strives to make her productions become more naturalistic by engaging smaller projects with fewer characters, type casting so that the actors physically resemble the contributors they play (Wake, 2013). Little (n.d.) describes Blythe’s verbatim craft-work as
the creation of representations and replications, through the vessel of the actor of a real
person on stage, that reflects Blythe’s aim of representing the Other as accurately and
truthfully as possible.

In alignment with Blythe’s intentions, Hilary Halba and Stuart Young, collaborative
scholartists working in the University of Otago, New Zealand, seek to truthfully represent
others by maintaining the fidelity of the ‘original’ or ‘authentic source’ (Gibson, 2011). For
their 2009 verbatim drama (performed throughout 2009-2011) Halba and Young (in Gibson,
2010) elicited stories of child and family abuse from victims of abuse and care workers who
engage with the victims and perpetrators of family abuse. The focus of the drama was
particularly relevant to New Zealand audiences as the country has one of the highest
instances of child abuse in the world with respect to its population as a nation (Little, n.d.).
Halba and Young created a verbatim theatre called *Hush* as part of a University supported
research project, and as such followed strict ethically approved research practices. The
process for data/story gathering therefore was significantly different to the research process
undertaken by Hare and his actors for *The Permanent Way*. In particular, Young, Halba and
their team of actor researchers obtained ethical approval and participant consent and video
and audio-recorded the testimonies of a number people involved with family abuse, before
carefully shaping the testimonies into a drama. Within the restorying process they took care
to keep large sections of testimony together to create cohesive and well-delineated characters,
and did not add any new or fictional material to the play. In performance Blythe’s method of
‘recorded delivery’ was employed with actors wearing visible MP3 players in order to listen
to and repeat the original audio recordings/testimonies (Little, n.d.). They also replicated as
closely as possible the tone, pitch, pace and volume of the contributors’/participants’ vocal
communications and, again in keeping with Blythe’s ‘recorded delivery’ aesthetic and aim to truthfully represent the voices and experience of research participants, the actors in *Hush* repeated the original physicality of the interviewees/research participants. Therefore, Halba and Young attend to truthfulness or a ‘faithful adherence to actuality and reality’ (Fisher, 2011, p. 112) in an ethical attempt to allow the Other to speak in their own words and through their own physical and vocal nuance.

**Criticism of the fictionalisation of Others’ testimonies.**

The extent of testimonial manipulation and aesthetic intervention undertaken in the construction of *The Permanent Way* (2003) is critiqued by theatre historian and scholar Derek Paget (2009), who describes the play as ‘quasi-verbatim’ (cited in Forsyth & Megson, 2009). Paget’s disparaging description is based on the fact that the interviews which were used as source material for the play were not recorded. Instead, actors employed in the original production, who were not trained interviewers, talked with contributors about their experiences and remembrances and later distilled elements of the interviews into re-enactments of the interactions in the rehearsal room. Once the actors re-presented their remembered and distilled interactions Hare would decide which narratives to include in the written script (Paget, 2009, cited in Forsyth & Megson, 2009). In addition, Hare is said to have referred to the actors as ‘hunter gatherers’ (Forsyth & Megson, 2009, p.230), rather than researchers as they were sent to hunt for specific ‘dramatic’ testimonials that could fulfil or conform to the play’s metaphor they sought to create. Hare’s approach to unearthing material for verbatim drama could therefore be considered to reside on the ‘fictional’ side of the spectrum of verbatim drama where playwrights ‘exploit and manipulate source material in the interests of spectacle, aesthetic appeal and audience engagement’ (Little, n.d.). A second
limitation to the development of verbatim drama through testimonial manipulation and aesthetic intervention is that it has the potential to further Other the already marginalised contributors/research participants. By ignoring stories of lived experience not considered ‘dramatic’ or coherent to the story that is being shaped, contributors are being silenced. In particular, Wake (2013) suggests that when a playwright omits someone’s story from a play altogether, it ‘results in a sort of double silencing, whereby an artist solicits a story from a silenced subject only to silence them once again (Wake, 2013). Further, taking a contributor’s testimony out of context and amalgamating it with fictionalised dramatic material can submerge the original testimony into the realm of fiction where an audience cannot know which aspect of the dramatic text is stated testimony and which is fabricated. Finally, when the interviews and stories of contributors are ignored, edited and merged with fiction, without consultation and negotiation, ‘the silenced and traumatised are silenced and traumatised again... and the rhetoric of the social and political efficacy of verbatim theatre becomes empty’ (Gibson, 2011, p.12). Such a lack of negotiation and consultation within a restorying process that is concerned with aestheticism and drama over the reproduction of experience through story has led to Heddon labelling some verbatim as the ‘… theatre of solicitation or appropriation’ (2008, p.128). Therefore, verbatim drama that privileges artistic and narrative coherence over contributor negotiation and faithful re-presentation of oral testimony is considered ‘quasi-verbatim’ (Paget, 2009, cited in Forsyth & Megson, 2009), fictional (Little, n.d.), and harmful to contributors who become doubly-silenced (Little, n.d.1; Wake, 2013) and whose stories become solicited and appropriated (Heddon, 2008). I therefore intended, in this project, to only employ the words and stories that have been provided to me by the women casual academic participants in order to avoid further silencing the doubly-Othered participants (Fanon, 1967), to prevent causing confusion about which
words/stories were the women’s and which were fabricated by me/the restoryer, and to evade accusation of appropriation.

**The limitations of muted theatricality and mimetic performance.**

Whilst a physical and aural reproduction of Others’ words and actions may reflect an ethical attempt to re-presentation, and certainly privileges the vocal and physical print of research participants, the technique’s theatrical value is limited to instances where ‘the interviewee is interesting, dynamic and expressive’ (Little, n.d.). That is, if the participant is interesting, engaged and expressive then ‘it is likely that the actor representing her or him on stage will appear that way too, and contribute to the creation of an engaging performance’ (Little, n.d.). In addition, a very withdrawn interviewee may inspire sympathy or curiosity. Yet interviewees that are neither curious nor engaging create non-dramatic source material and the performance aesthetic and audience engagement may indeed suffer. Thus, in choosing to take a hard stance on non-interference, the practitioners may deny themselves the ability to use the theatrical form to its full potential to engage audiences and in turn arguably do a disservice to the interviewee (Little, n.d.). In addition, reproducing the voice print and physicality of contributors or research participants lends itself to a performance aesthetic based on mimesis, a style of performance employed particularly within the drama genres of realism and naturalism. Mimetic acting aims to deny or submerge the constructedness of the theatre event by privileging the life-likeness and verisimilitude of the characters and action. In fact, the mimetic performance aesthetic of realism and naturalism is generally criticised for being disingenuous as it is predicated on and promotes false notions of a dramatist’s ‘objectivity’ and an ability to create a faithful rendering of Others’ existence without any bias or interpretation on the part of the dramatics/director/actor. Indeed, realism and naturalism
that promote mimetic performance have been condemned for upholding a ‘deluded objectivity’ and outdated ontology (Erikson, 2009). Correspondingly, the British theatre critic Sierz argues that a mimetic performance in conjunction with naturalistic dramatic content/causal dramatic structures (where A leads to B, which leads to C), normalises and reinforces an unequal established social order and extols a Newtonian epistemology of inescapable and unalterable causality. In particular, Sierz suggests that all actions that are represented naturalistically on stage reflect the politically reckless notion that those actions are natural and lead to necessary and predictable reactions (Sierz, 2000). Finally, Gibson (2011) suggests that attempts to truthfully reproduce and represent Others, representations ‘that have as their base a notion of fidelity to some original or authentic source’ (2011, p.2). are naive and hegemonic as they deny the constructed nature of verbatim narrative and ultimately reinforce the power relationship between the contributor and the re-teller. Therefore verbatim dramatists and directors that attempt a mimetic reconstruction of Others seem to disingenuously proclaim an ‘innocence’ of representation (Guttorm, 2012) by implying a lack of mediation or interpretation in the restorying or re-presentation process, and suggesting that what the audience sees and listens to really happened in the way the play presents. Moreover, a mimetic aesthetic connotes that the dramatic events represented unfold predictably and inevitably; and by doing so uphold a naive and reckless hegemony (Gibson, 2011; Sierz, 2000).

**The importance of alignment between philosophical positions, political objective and theatrical ‘style’**.

Awareness that theatrical conventions communicate philosophical and political positions behove playwrights and directors to create a theatrical aesthetic that is congruent with the aims of their theatrical project. In particular relation to verbatim theatre, Gibson,
along with the theatre/performance studies scholars Julie Salverson in Canada (2001), Amanda Stuart Fisher (2011) and Deidre Heddon (2008) in the United Kingdom, is keen to ‘disturb the view that verbatim arena can act as a democratic ‘truth’ forum in which the ‘truth’ can at last be told’ (Gibson, 2011, p.2). In so doing, these scholars do not critique the political potential of verbatim in raising issues that may otherwise stay unvoiced/unknown; they instead unsettle verbatim ‘truth’ claims predominantly because they do not believe that verbatim drama can unproblematically or objectively speak for Others. In an argument reminiscent of Alcoff (2006, 2009), Minh-ha (1982, 1989) and Spivak (1987, 1998) Gibson specifically posits that in the construction of a verbatim drama there are always ‘many layers of removal and interpretation from the original source material’ (Gibson, 2011, p.5). In seeing themselves as the guardians of ‘truth’ in the public sphere, some verbatim practitioners overlook their bias in the creation of their work and ignore the impossibility of locating and exposing the ‘one truth in the fictive domain of the theatre’ (Gibson, 2011, p.5). In other words, theatre artists who claim and aim to truthfully represent Others’ stories fail to identify the personal constructedness of their theatrical renderings, and conceive (and perpetuate the notion that) truth as an objective phenomenon to be found and represented. Thus, the particular style of verbatim employed to expose the stories of Others has ontological implications. Theatre artists who seek to represent someone’s story realistically, using mimesis to capture the voice and body print of the ‘real’ person, promote a positive epistemological stance and a naturalistic/fatalistic political perspective. Consequently, and perhaps axiomatically, theatre aesthetic is neither philosophically nor politically neutral. Consequently, Squiers (2012) suggests the theatre practitioners need to employ theatrical aesthetics/theatrical styles that are in alignment with their ontological and political positions and the specific aims of their theatrical project. Indeed, the recent launch of a new
professional organisation called Performance Philosophy, established in the United Kingdom in 2012, is testament to a growing awareness of the interrelationship between philosophy and performance. Furthermore, the development of almost a dozen monographs or edited collections that have been published on the topic of theatre and philosophy within the past decade support Laura Cull’s assertion that there has been ‘a philosophical turn’ in the international field of theatre and performance research (Cull, 2012). In addition to the long-standing awareness of the political im/potency of mimetic theatre there is now a growing consciousness of the role of theatrical aesthetic on engaging an audience both politically and philosophically. Cognisant of the interrelationship between theatrical aesthetic, politics and philosophy I therefore discuss the philosophical and political positions of the various aesthetics employed in recent verbatim theatrical productions. The following considerations informed the dramaturgical decisions I made in aiming to create congruence with a narrative epistemological framework and feminist stance.

**Contemporary verbatim theatre.**

Verbatim drama inhabits a spectrum between reality and fiction (Hammond & Steward, 2008) and in contrast to the ‘hyperreal’ (Beck, 2013) productions by Blythe and Halba and Young, who aim for truthful reproductions of lived experience, many contemporary theatre artists create highly aestheticised verbatim (Wake, 2013) which seeks to mediate ‘the essence’ instead of the actuality of contributor experience (Beck, 2013). These latter artists and scholarartists frolic in the space between the participant or contributor and their understanding of the story, in ‘the hyphen’ (Fine & Weiss, 1992), and deliberately reveal the mechanics of their theatrical staging of Others’ stories. Such theatre practitioners blend source material with drama-documentary and employ dance or song to interpret and
express spoken testimony and make explicit the playwrights’ authorship of the drama (Gibson, 2011). The theatre historian and dramaturg David Lane (2010) describes a number of contemporary verbatim productions as examples of works that sit in the realm of ‘aestheticised’ verbatim (Little, n.d.) and that explicitly make manifest and exploit theatrical devices to create engaging and evocative verbatim performances. Lane’s description includes Tanika Gupta’s hybrid theatre documentary Gladiator Games (2005) – part verbatim, part dramatic reconstruction – which is designed to expose the systematic failings in allowing Zahid Mubarek, a young Asian man, to share a cell with a mentally ill and racist white offender. Mubarek was bludgeoned to death by his cellmate as he slept. The part drama reconstruction (of the physical attack that led to Mubarek’s death) within Gladiator Games served to ‘heighten’ the terror and pain caused to the victim of the incident/criminal justice policy. In addition, the experience of families flooded out in the wettest summer in British history in 2007 were captured in Look left look right site specific show called The Caravan (2008). Within the show eight audience members at a time were squeezed into a small caravan for 40 mins to listen to excerpts of interviews from flood victims played by an ensemble cast. The claustrophobic condition of the theatre space was deliberately designed to ‘magnify’ and ‘illuminate’ to the audience the experiences of the drama contributors. Furthermore, Jonathon Holmes’ promenade theatrical installation called Katrina (2009, cited in Lane, 2010) used interview, text, music and film to document the experience of the citizens of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Music of a funeral procession was used in the theatre piece to reflect and ‘amplify’ the emotion experienced by the residents of New Orleans, whilst filmic elements helped to create the ruined physical environment within which the human testimony of contributors sat. Iraq’s Besieged City (2007) was a promenade verbatim play that ‘led its audience around the theatre space bombarding them
with blinking lights, piercing explosions and a warehouse stocked full of anti-contamination suits’ (Lane, 2010, p.23) in a bid to ‘re-create’ the physical disorientation of contributors’ experience. Additionally, dance company DV8 created a verbatim performance that contained a collage of written and spoken statements and an amalgamation of interpretive dance with spoken text in their production of To be straight with you (2008). The dance sequences and selection of written statements extracted from oral interviews were specifically employed to communicate the ‘intensity’ of the contributor’s emotional response to living in fear of homophobic attack. Finally, the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) production of Black Watch (2007) integrated interviews with former soldiers from the Black Watch regiment about their experiences in Iraq with dramatised versions of their stories and dance pieces in order to offer insight into the views, opinions and feelings of soldiers who had fought in Iraq. One of the most powerful scenes in the verbatim drama presents the soldiers responding to letters from family and close friends in sign language, trying to convey their pain in forms other than words and unable to communicate with each other or express their inner turmoil in a play that merges the personal with the political that captures living history (Beck, 2013). Beck further suggests that the overt theatricality of Black Watch serves to ‘make their stories more intelligible to an audience’ (Beck, 2013, p.131) with the physical score managing ‘to bring to the surface... what soldiers feel but do not say, experiences that cannot be articulated in words’ (Beck, 2013, p.142).

Because of its departure from the constraints of a mimetic word-for-word account of verbatim testimony, in favour of ‘mediating the essence’ of the stories through highly aestheticised and overtly constructed dramatic action, Beck describes Black Watch as a ‘post-verbatim’ play. Anderson (cited in Beck, 2013) agrees that highly theatricalised verbatim
drama which reacts against the theatrical limitations of mimesis and privileges aesthetic communication is distinct from traditional verbatim so is better described as the sub-genre of ‘post-verbatim’ (Beck, 2013). Philosophically, the sub-genre of post-verbatim theatre reflects a notion that truth and experience are personally and transiently constructed and that a telling of Others’ experience is inevitably a re-telling, an interpreted and authored version of the stories of Others. Correspondingly, post-verbatim privileges audience experience and the essence of people’s experience over mimetic realism (Wake, 2013), and overtly undermines the notion that mimesis can represent an honest or transparent or ‘innocent’ exposure of truth (Guttorm, 2012). Thus, post-verbatim’s capturing and communicating of an essence of Others’ experience is considered a more faithful translation than theatrical mimesis and mechanical reproduction, (Anderson, in Beck, 2013). In practice, post-verbatim theatre aims to heighten, illuminate, amplify, recreate and capture the essence of the internally and externally lived experience of verbatim contributors, in order to ‘make their stories more intelligible to an audience’ (Beck, 2013, p.131) and ‘bring to the surface for the audience’s consideration what ... cannot be articulated in words’ (Beck 2013, p.142).

Consequently, following a brief discussion and analysis of recently theatricalised verbatim drama, it appears that post-verbatim drama as a sub-genre of verbatim drama is an appropriate form to employ in this research project as it can help me achieve the main aim of this project which is to ‘illuminate’ the lived experience of women casual academics by aesthetically engaging an audience in yet to be known stories. Yet, before I explain the specific form of post-verbatim genre I employed, I will first discuss the aims and aesthetics of political, feminist and women’s theatre in order to consider how they too informed the particular style of verbatim I adopted in this project.
The aims and conventions of political and feminist/women’s theatre.

The founder of the Scottish popular theatre company 7:84, John McGrath, argued ‘the theatre can never “cause” a social change, but it can act politically to articulate pressure towards one, help people celebrate their strengths and maybe build their self-confidence… above all, it can be the way people find their voice and their collective determination’ (McGrath 1981, p. xxvii). Most verbatim theatre therefore can be described as politically motivated (Heddon, 2008) as it intends to ‘give voice to the voiceless’ in society (Heddon, 2008, p.128), ‘faceness’ to the faceless (Wake, 2013), and ‘to give listening ears to the voices that often go unheard’ (Wake, 2010b, p.3). Furthermore, Gibson notes that a significant role of verbatim theatre is politico-social change and that most recent practitioners in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia have ‘robust political reasons’ for re-working verbatim (Gibson, 2011, p.4). Similarly, I aim to gain an audience for the stories of women casual academics, women whose stories are ‘yet to be voiced’ (Arnot & Reay, 2007). This project, therefore, like most verbatim drama projects, is politically motivated. Consequently, paramount to this project is Wendy Hesford’s argument that ‘one of the standards against which political theatre is judged is whether a performance shakes audiences out of complacency’ (Hesford 2005, p. 104-105). Indeed, for Hesford mimetic performances that merely elicit a sense of identification and empathetic alignment with character undermines the opportunity for audiences to be politically shaken or motivated towards political thought, discussion or action. Again, for Sontag, the arousal of sympathy reflects and reinforces an audience’s impotence, and fails to incite political consciousness-raising or motivate political action (Sontag, cited in Hesford 2005). Consequently, although there are many different strands of political theatre, most twentieth and 21st century political theatre avoids the hegemony of realistic and naturalistic drama aesthetic or mimetic reproductions of events or
characters in order to shake and awaken audiences into political awareness or action (Sierz, 2000). It appears therefore that if I wish to shake an audience out of complacency I ought not to use a mimetic performance aesthetic or causal dramatic structure as these two conventions tend to re-establish and reinforce existing political relations.

In addition, I consider the lived experience of women casual academics from a feminist lens, and will therefore consider the political potency and potential fit of the language and conventions of women’s and feminist theatre, to the particular verbatim aesthetic I create for this project. As discussed in Chapter 2 Cixous (1976) suggests that women embody a different physical and psychological landscape and thus employ a uniquely feminine language; and that we, as women, should not adopt a masculine communication that keeps women subjugated, but instead ‘write ourselves’, in a language that is intelligible to us/women. Cixous’ emphasis on cultural difference and ‘feminine language’ echoes the arguments of other influential French theorists like Julia Kristeva (1986) and Luce Irigaray (1985) and urges me to employ a feminine theatrical language within the restorying process of this project. I will therefore peruse the literature on feminist and women’s theatre to be informed about the form and function of women’s theatrical language.

Like political theatre, the concept of ‘feminist theatre’ is difficult to contain within one definition as the term ‘feminism’ embodies a variety of political perspectives that relate to theatre in many different ways. However, generally speaking, ‘feminists involved in the creation or analysis of theatre usually wish to enact, embody or inspire some kind of political, personal or cultural change via the public platform of theatre’ (Tarker, n.d.). In particular, feminist theatre identifies that western theatre is dominated by a white, male ideology and in reaction tends to reject the focus of a single male protagonist, who represents a fixed and
singular identity which is said to perpetuate ‘a masculine perspective of the world at the expense of the feminine’ (Tarker, n.d.). In contrast, feminist theatre tends to employ an episodic dramatic structure in an attempt to subvert the Aristotelian aesthetic of privileging a single protagonist, a linear and teleological plot complete with resolution. Most feminist theatre therefore features an ensemble of women and juxtaposes, within non-linear dramatic episodes, various women’s experience. The aim of such a structure is to dramatise the feminist notion that the collective experience is more important than individual experience. Moreover, feminist drama, like the feminist anthropologist studies of Minh-ha (1982, 1989), generally avoids the representation of interpersonal conflict leading to climax and easy resolution favouring instead a juxtaposition of characters and their stories. Through juxtaposition of characters and their stories a variety of women’s positions and experience are expressed and a series of perspectives sit alongside each other to create dialectic and reject the dichotomisation of stances which connotes a right and wrong, a truth and a falsehood. Such characteristics of non-linear, non-teleological plot structures, multiple protagonists, privileging the exposition of multiple women’s perspectives and voices, and dialectical narratives are just some of the main elements that comprise the feminist drama. Furthermore, in performance, feminist theatre is characterised by ensemble-based acting and a presentational – Brechtian-influenced – aesthetic where songs, images or tableaux are employed to break up the linearity of the narrative, undermine mimesis and illuminate the social and political social relations represented in the narrative and characterisation. In fact, most feminist theatrical conventions that feminist theatre employs were developed and employed by the political theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht in an attempt to create a dialectical, didactic theatre which could lead to political action.
Brechtian theatre and its influence on political, feminist and women’s theatre.

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was one of the most influential practitioners of political theatre. His main contribution was in identifying a didactic role for theatre, and in creating a theatrical aesthetic that encouraged audiences to adopt a critical perspective in order to recognise and take political action against social injustice (Dawson, n.d.). Brecht created his didactic or instructional theatre by rejecting the dramatic genre of Naturalism and the representation of bourgeois realism on stage which he believed served to reinforce a view of society as the inevitable product of evolution and history, and therefore incapable of change (Dawson, n.d.). Indeed, in line with Marxist politics Brecht believed that social reality is not inevitable but one of constructed bourgeois privilege and proletariat disadvantage. Consequently, Brecht’s theatre aimed to provide its audience with a view of bourgeois reality as unnatural, dehumanising and constructed through creating a *verfremdungseffekt*.

Verfremdungseffekt is a theatrical effect designed to alienate or ‘defamiliarise’ the audience from mimetic reproductions of social realism in order to reveal the constructedness of theatre (Brecht, 1964, p. 144; Mumford, 2009).

The genre of theatre Brecht developed, as a contrast to Naturalism, is generally called Epic Theatre. Epic theatre is an avowedly political genre that aimed to immerse an audience in materialist politics where the audience would be cognitively and politically awoken to the constructed inequality of society within capitalistic structures.

Although there are many ideas and techniques that constitute Epic theatre I will focus only on the episodic structures of Brecht’s drama, the use of presentational acting as a *verfremdungseffekt* (or defamiliarisation effect), and the exposure of stage machinery; as
these characteristics of Brecht’s work had a significant influence on the aesthetic of verbatim, feminist and women’s theatre, and correspondingly, on the verbatim theatre I created as a form of communication to re-present the lived experience of women casual academics.

Brecht’s plays were predominantly episodic in structure, written as a seemingly disconnected montage of scenes presented in a non-naturalistic, non-chronological sequence (Innes, 2001). His structural design of episodic narratives aimed to convey the constructed nature of social reality and systems and prevented an audience from merely identifying with character and their circumstance (Mumford, 2009). In addition, Brecht sub-divided each unit of action into episodes which he rearranged a-sequentially (Mumford, 2009) and gave each episode a title that he projected on screens above the stage, forcing the audience contemplate the titles that announced the action to take place before the scene began. Such scene titles were used in order to discourage the audience from engaging ‘suspense-fully’ in the drama and to instead encourage some rational contemplation about the meaning of the titles which in turn would activate political consciousness (Thomson & Sachs, 1994). The episodic structure of Brecht’s plays was therefore aimed to create a dialectical theatre where causal structures were made manifest and presented as capable of change.

Brecht also developed an acting style to support the overall verfremdungseffekt of Epic Drama. Brecht encouraged a demonstrative acting method that enabled the actor to present the character from a number of perspectives. In particular, the actors were to break the fourth wall – which is an imaginary wall separating the audience from the action on the stage – by speaking directly to and addressing the audience (Zarilli, 1995). Additionally, Brecht encouraged a political representation of action as opposed to a representation of the emotional life of the character by directing his actors to construct a gestus or physical gesture
or tableaux to physically demonstrate and draw attention to the social relations/inequalities inherent within the action of the drama. The gestus, sometimes referred to as a social gest, used a combination of physical gesture and facial expression to expose the main social relations and politics of the scene (Zarrilli, 1995). Direct address and gestus were dramaturgical elements that Brecht also employed to expose the constructedness of the theatre environment and invite audiences to consider the political world of the characters on stage. Finally, Brecht incorporated songs into most of his productions, as a means to comment on or develop the political narrative (Mumford, 2009). The use of song often functioned as a Greek chorus that foreshadows or foretells the action that will ensue; this technique was employed to prevent the audience from engaging ‘suspense-fully’ in the action at the cost of critical engagement (Mumford, 2009). However, Brecht also encouraged his actors to ‘portray living people’ (Brecht, 1964, p.272) and consequently did not renounce emotion per se; ‘least of all the sense of justice, and righteous anger’ which he hoped to reinforce in them (Brecht, 1964, p.272).

Finally, Brecht generally left the stage bare in his productions as a means of preventing the audience from experiencing a detailed illusion of a recognisable social reality. He wanted to draw attention away from set and staging and on to the social relations exposed in the gestus and the corresponding drama. Brecht also exposed a production’s stage machinery by opening up the physical staging to reveal the wings and the lighting grid above; such exposition of stage and stage hands was designed for the audience to be reminded of the mechanics and construction of the theatre (Innes, 2001). This, as discussed earlier, was part of Brecht’s use of verfremdungseffekt designed to reveal the constructedness of theatre/society (Brecht 1964, p. 144; Mumford, 2009).
Thus, the episodic play structure, the performance technique and the exposition of stage machinery demonstrates Brecht’s holistic approach to creating an anti-illusionary didactic theatre. He revolutionised the role and aesthetic of 20th century theatre and in doing so significantly informed most political theatre of the last 50 years, including verbatim drama. Indeed, in Political Playwriting: The Art of Thinking in Public (2011) Steve Waters credits Brecht with the development of an awareness of the importance of theatrical form and production in political and feminist theatre. In particular, Waters suggests that Brecht taught us that political theatre must be ‘more than the representation of politics’ if it is to penetrate the audience’s head as well as their heart. He argues that Brecht’s radical engagement with dramatic form and theatre production are Brecht’s lasting legacy and that ‘no political dramaturgy can afford to by-pass Brecht’s contribution to theatre... and the desire to make strange the everyday’ (Waters, 2011, p.141).

In particular, Brecht’s theatrical techniques are commonly understood as a useful source of dramaturgy and theatrical convention in feminist and women’s theatre. In particular, feminist theatre has a stated political aim of altering the socio-economic and social disadvantage of women’s lives as the main focus of theatre and cultural enterprise; whereas women’s theatre is theatre made by women about women, with the aim of creating artistic and aesthetic work based on the lives of women but not solely focused on societal restructure. Patti Gillespie argued that the primary aim of feminist theatre is ‘action, not art’ (Gillespie in Goodman, 1993, p. 32), and that it is characterised by women taking ownership of the means of production. That is, women in feminist theatre adopt the traditionally masculine roles of writer, director and technician in an attempt to subvert traditional theatre enterprise where historically women have been denied power in the theatre apparatus (Diamond, 1998). The feminist theatre collective thus becomes a microcosm of an alternative societal structure
In this study I shall briefly explore both feminist and women’s theatre as they can both potentially inform how I develop an appropriate communication form and theatrical aesthetic for re-presenting women casual academics’ voices.

Five significant articles, in particular, emphasise the relationship between Brechtian and feminist/women’s theatre. Karen Laughlin detailed the influence of Brecht’s theories on American feminist theatre of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in *Brechtian Theory and the American Feminist Theatre* (1990); Patricia Schroeder, offered a feminist critique against theatrical realism and endorses the use of Epic conventions in the development of a feminist aesthetic in *The Feminist Possibilities of Dramatic Realism* (1996); Janelle Reinelt discussed how feminist and women’s theatre groups in the UK adopted and adapted Brechtian theatre conventions in pursuing the presentation of theatre from a woman’s standpoint in *Rethinking Brecht: Deconstruction, Feminism, and the Politics of Form* (2009); and Elin Diamond described how Brecht’s concepts of gestus and verfremdungseffekt were crucial to the political aims of feminist theatre in *Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism* (1988) and *Unmasking Mimesis* (1998). Each of these publications demonstrated how feminist and women’s theatre have predominately adopted Brechtian theatre techniques in general and the use of episodic, a-sequential narrative structures – each with a scene title; an exposition of stage machinery such as lighting, film projectors and screens; and the employment of gestus, song and representational action/acting that incorporates direct address, in particular. They each also demonstrate how these aforementioned Brechtian conventions are used to focus an audience’s attention onto the perspectives and social situations of the women characters.

Notwithstanding the well-documented alignment between the aesthetic and aims of Brechtian and feminist/women’s theatre, there is also a development of or departure from the
Brechtian aesthetic in most feminist/women’s theatre since the late 1980s; where Brechtian theatrical conventions have been adapted and manipulated to suit a contemporary, female political and cultural context. As Reinelt (2009) posited, early feminist theatre groups such as Spare Rib, Women’s Voice and Monstrous Regiment employed Brechtian elements as integral to their dramatisation of complex feminist issues and sexual inequality within the work of early feminist theatre was ‘enhanced by using Brechtian techniques’ (1990, p.161).

Yet, Goodman (1993) identified that in addition to employing Brechtian elements of production and performance, women’s and feminist theatre since the 1980s tended to focus on stories of women’s lives from women’s perspectives. They also privileged women characters and actors in reaction against traditional political dramas where the drama revolves around one, usually male, protagonist. This focus is yet another departure from Epic theatre. In particular, feminist/women theatre companies often take control of the means of theatre production by writing; producing and performing in dramas about women, or about issues from women’s perspective, as a female collective (Reinelt, 1989). Significantly, the performance aesthetic they create also extends Brechtian conventions by including subjective and emotional experience. As Reinelt, observed, from a woman’s perspective the personal is political, and as such the personal needs to be re-presented. Feminist and women’s theatre therefore dramatise women’s personal and emotional life, not just the physical representation of social gestus of social injustice (Reinelt, 2009). Feminist and women’s theatre thereby dismantle the division between private and public concerns and in doing so create a new dramaturgy to reflect women’s ways of knowing and being in society. As Wendy Brown argued, women identify truth and experience as subjectively and often emotionally constructed. The theatrical exposure of women’s truth and experience therefore needs a theatrical form that accommodates and expresses women’s emotion (Brown, 1995). Finally,
Brown suggested that ‘since women’s subordination is partly achieved through the construction and positioning of us as private – sexual, familial, emotional... then the voicing of women’s experience acquires an inherently confessional cast’ (Brown, 1995, p.42).

Therefore contemporary feminist and women’s theatre tends to synthesise the conventions of Epic theatre with the collaborative, confessional and emotionally expressive dramatisation of multiple women’s/women characters’ personal and social experience and perspective. These features seem to be in direct alignment with the main aims of this project which are to expand the discourses around sessional staffing to include accounts of the lived experiences of women casual academics. If the women experience the world emotionally, then an emotionally expressive form is required. The second aim is to employ person-centred approaches to all aspects of research, and as Schmid recommends that whilst all people are equal, within person-centred research it is important to stress sex and gender-specific issues if engaging with people’s experience. He reminds us that ‘Persons exist as women and men not as neutrals’ (Schmid, n.d). Therefore this research needs to be communicated in a form that engages and expresses the participants’ sex and communication preferences. Finally, this project aims to create a form of academic communication apposite for the expression of women’s lived experience. If women communicate collaboratively, ‘confessionally’ and emotionally then these features need to be employed in the research communication form. I commit therefore to adopting a post-verbatim feminist aesthetic in order to expand the current discourses around sessional staffing by illuminating the lived experience of women casual academics.

In order to illustrate the practice of the hybridisation of Epic and emotionally charged performance in women’s theatre I will discuss the collaborative, confessional and emotionally expressive drama of a contemporary women’s theatre company, The Paper
Birds. In particular, I will explore how The Paper Birds create and re-present highly acclaimed verbatim dramas in order to assess if their particular verbatim style (known as *proto-verbatim*) is a congruent means through which I can re-present the lived experience of women casual academics. The Paper Birds formed in 2003 with the stated intent ‘to create and share devised work that is important; work that is culturally, socially and politically observational and conversationally urgent... from a female perspective... to prioritise stories of women’ (http://www.thepaperbirds.com). The company deliberatively employ a hybridised theatre aesthetic which ‘shifts and reinvents itself... to address and evoke discussion, thought and emotion when and where it is most needed’ (http://www.thepaperbirds.com). Finally, The Paper Birds hope to ‘touch and engage their audiences both intellectually and emotionally’ remains relevant within the theatrical climate (http://www.thepaperbirds.com). This theatre company is therefore typical of women’s theatre as it pays as much attention to the development of art – through which to express women’s voices – as it does the political content of the drama. Of most significance is the fact that the company is involved in the development of a verbatim theatre that engages in socially pertinent issues from a female perspective. As such their work has considerable potential to inform me and my project about the possibilities and current practices of female focused verbatim drama. For this reason I will briefly review their verbatim productions and assess the efficacy of their particular aesthetic to this/my project.

A brief analysis of their recent verbatim productions, described below, demonstrates that The Paper Birds manage to evoke emotion and political awareness by merging Epic theatre conventions with an emotionally charged aesthetic. In their latest production *Broke* (2014) they re-present real life stories of poverty and debt in the UK. The play is based on the everyday realities of poverty, as described in interviews the company conducted across
the UK in 2014. The production creates an evocative aesthetic by merging physical theatre, original music, verbatim testimony and direct address to re-present the interviewees’ experience. *Broke* thus merges elements of Epic theatre with the women’s theatre focus on women’s emotional experience.

An earlier production devised by The Paper Birds, *On the One Hand* (2013), is built on extensive research and interviews conducted with a cross section of women across the North of England. The play re-presents intertwined stories of six women of different ages and at different stages of their lives to expose the physical, emotional and psychological impact of ageing on women’s lives. It is said to interrogate ‘the inevitable journey that women’s minds and bodies undertake from birth to death’ (http://www.thepaperbirds.com). In production, in April 2012 as part of Transform Festival, 10 women over the age of 60 presented *On the One Hand* to tell an audience about their lives and journeys.

The 2011 The Paper Birds’ production *Thirsty* weaves together real stories, emotional memories and alcohol-induced confessions, collected from a ‘drunken hotline’ and an online questionnaire. *Thirsty* fuses live music, verbatim text and physical communication to re-present and explore the stories and social repercussions of women who use or are physically and emotionally reliant on alcohol. The Paper Birds describe the play as ‘a dynamic theatrical exploration delving beyond statistics, facts and figures’ in order to explore the voice of women who drink (http://www.thepaperbirds.com).

Finally, *Others* is a verbatim drama that is based on a six-month exchange of letters and emails with a prisoner, a celebrity and an Iranian artist. Within the piece The Paper Birds ‘offer a visual and political exploration of “Other” women, deconstructing the stories and voices of women from the East and West, from different sides of the television screen and
different sides of the law’ (Duggan, 2013). Through the use of direct address, at times a confessional and emotionally charged direct address, to the audience through the fourth wall, The Paper Birds enact the Brechtian intention to overcome audience passivity/anonymity. Indeed, rather than the comfort of a passive observation of the Others re-presented the audience is challenged to consider their response-ability to the Others whose stories they are witnessing. Through their dramaturgy, The Paper Birds seem to conform to women’s theatre which employs and extends many of the anti-theatrical elements of Brechtian theatre (Puchner, 2002), whilst employing both traditional and aestheticised post-verbatim theatrical conventions. Such an amalgamation of Epic and post-verbatim aesthetics seems to achieve an emotional yet critical audience engagement that could serve to awaken and engage an audience in the ‘voices that often go unheard’ (Wake, 2010b, p. 3). I will therefore discuss Others in more detail in order to consider how I employed its specific dramaturgy in this research project to support my intention to illuminate the lived experience of women casual academics.

As the audience enter the auditorium in order to watch Others three women actors are already on stage and a male musician is sat behind a keyboard to the side of the stage. This in itself is ‘defamiliarising’ or causes a verfremdungseffekt, as in most traditional theatre the stage action does not commence until everyone is seated, and only then once the house-lights are lowered. Yet in Others, the stage is lit, as are the house lights, and one of the women on-stage indicates to the audience where they should sit in order to fill the empty rows at the front. This opening breaks the ‘rules’ of traditional dramatic theatre by employing Brecht’s convention of breaking the fourth wall. The audience is therefore, as the theatre critic Beth Daley notes, made to feel uncomfortable (Daley, 2011). Once the audience is all seated the women actors sit and start to directly address them. Jemma, one of the actors, introduces
herself and asks the audience to participate in a project where they are to send in photographs, stories and letters to help the company, the women on stage, develop a new drama. This meta-theatrical device exposes the constructedness of theatre and reveals to the audience how the production they are watching has been explicitly constructed through using photographs to represent the stories of three women. This invitation to participate in the making of theatre further exposes ‘the fabric of a theatre production’ and helps to create a contemporary political verbatim theatre aesthetic that implicates the audience in the action (Duggan, 2013, p.152). Thus, this new verbatim aesthetic which fuses verbatim texts with overt theatricality within a Brechtian frame engages the audience as ‘ethical witnesses’; active, implicated witnesses to the individual stories of the women represented (Duggan, 2013, p.152). As Peggy Phelan established in 2004, ethical witnessing is activated when the production aesthetic explicitly promotes awareness in the viewer/audience that they are watching a piece of theatre and are made aware of the ethical-political implications of their witnessing (Phelan, 2004). Techniques that create ethical witnessing implicate the audience in the action and leave them asking, ‘Was I an audience member or a participant? Were those three women on stage playing themselves or were they acting a part?’ (Daley, 2011). Such anti-theatrical (Puchner, 2002) devices also appear to be honest and ethical in exposing the constructedness of the re-presentation process.

As a result of a synthesis of Brechtian convention with emotionally evocative performance conventions, The Paper Birds create a particular form of verbatim drama that Duggan calls ‘proto-verbatim’ (Duggan, 2013, p. 149). Although proto-verbatim is a form of post-verbatim – a form of explicitly aestheticised verbatim theatre – Duggan describes proto-verbatim as a sub-verbatim genre that makes use of ‘real words’ that have been gathered from those being represented without making any claim of exact truthfulness (Duggan, 2013). The
explicit exposure of the constructedness of the theatre event, through the use of post-Brechtian conventions, increases the work’s authenticity ‘at the level of the witnessing the “real stories” of the women they are representing. The authenticity at work here is not some sense of “truth”; rather it is precisely concerned with the relationship between the theatricality of the event and the supposed reality of the spoken text’ (Duggan, 2013, p.150).

That is, although real words and testimonies inform the content of a proto-verbatim production, the employment of Epic conventions make explicit to the audience that they are watching a constructed translation of the real words. Indeed, this is more transparent, and therefore more authentic and ethical, than a production that hides its constructedness. Indeed, rather than attending to ‘factual veracity’ Others reveals how the work was created and its staging makes explicit the fact that the theatre event is a translation of Others’ testimonies (Duggan, 2013). Consequently, the authentic composition of Epic theatrical convention with an evocative and emotional exposure of the inner-essence of the ‘Other’ women’s words and experience, works to ensure that this ‘message’ is related out beyond the stage and is part of an aesthetic that ‘activates’ the spectator and urges them to think and act. Thus, the proto-verbatim aesthetic of an amalgamation of Brechtian and dramatic elements can awaken an audience cognitively/politically and emotionally, compelling them to think, feel and act. It can serve as a form of academic communication because it employs rigorous research processes and principles. Moreover, it is person-centred as it is fully honest, open and ethically transparent in its ‘staging’ (Richardson, 1997) of the research narrative. It does not fictionalise or fabricate scenes or characters, instead it re-presents the stories participants have shared to communicate their untold lived experience. Finally, it is aesthetically engaging and can illuminate the lived experience of women who are Othered in a form that does not attempt to explain it. As Gould (1996) and Etherington (2004) claim, human life
and agency cannot be ‘explained’ or contained in written form. Experience, understood narratively, requires ‘interpretation’ not explanation (Hendry, 2010); and interpretation requires communication methods that are distinct from written argument. A proto-verbatim therefore can be used to communicate the restoryer’s interpretation of the lives of research participants. For these reasons I adopt a proto-verbatim form of theatre to express my understanding of the lived experience of the women research participants in this study and to, in particular, illuminate the lived experience of women casual academics.

**Conclusion.**

I identified at the beginning of this chapter that its main aim was to follow Mazzei and Jackson’s (2009) advice to feminist researchers to democratise the research process by fully exposing all the research decisions that are made in projects that intend to re-present the voices of Others. Following this advice I therefore presented the specific political and artistic considerations that informed my decision to employ a proto-verbatim drama (Duggan, 2013) as a form of research communication to re-present the lived experience of women casual academics.

In particular, I provided a brief history of verbatim drama and identified its main aims and characteristics. Within this discussion I distinguished between verbatim drama and documentary drama, and committed to employ the processes and nomenclature of verbatim drama. I did so as verbatim drama is a form of communication that centralises the words of Others, and provides a stylistically rich form through which to aesthetically engage an audience with a re-presentation of the lived experience of the marginalised and unvoiced. I also offered a critique of verbatim drama that fictionalises (by improvising scenes and fabricating characters and scenarios) the stories of Others, because fictionalised accounts of
verbatim testimony serve to doubly-silence participants whose words are replaced with the playwrights’ (Little, n.d.; Wake, 2013). It can also cause confusion as to which words/stories belong/ed to the participant, and which are/were fabricated by the playwright. I decided, therefore, that in the drama I create, to only use the words that were told to me by participants to re-present their experience.

Additionally, I critiqued verbatim theatre that attempts to create a mimetic performance aesthetic. I argued that whilst a physical and aural reproduction of Others’ words and actions serves to privilege the voice and physical print of research participants, it only interests an audience if the participants are engaging. In addition, I argued that mimetic acting can submerge the constructedness of the theatre event, suggest that a dramatist has a capacity for ‘objectivity’ and an ability to create a faithful rendering of Others’ existence without bias or interpretation. Finally, I posited that theatre artists, who represent anOther’s story realistically using mimesis to capture the voice and body print of the ‘real’ person being represented, propagate a positive epistemological stance and a naturalistic/fatalistic political perspective.

In contrast, I argued that a theatricalised verbatim, a sub-genre known as post-verbatim, that explicitly exposes the constructedness of Others’ voices, can both aesthetically and ethically engage an audience in voices not yet heard. By detailing some contemporary proto-verbatim dramas I sought to expose how ‘highly aestheticised verbatim’ (Wake, 2013) can mediate ‘the essence’ instead of the actuality of contributors’ experience and consequently ‘make their stories more intelligible to an audience’ (Beck, 2013, p.131). I posited that in practice, post-verbatim theatre heightens, illuminates, amplifies, recreates, and captures the essence of the internally and externally lived experience of verbatim contributors.
(Beck, 2013) whilst ethically making transparent the playwright’s construction of Others’ testimonies. I thus identified post-verbatim to be a congruent medium of communication through which to express the lived experience of women casual academics as it can both privilege the voice of research participants and engage an audience both emotionally and cognitively in the participant experience. I therefore committed to adopting a post-verbatim approach to restorying and re-presenting the lived experience of women casual academics.

I also considered the characteristics of political, feminist and women’s theatre to identify how they, and in particular the theory and practice of Bertolt Brecht, inform the proto-verbatim theatre aesthetic I have developed when restorying the lived experience of the women participants of this study. I established that feminist theatre is generally committed to inspiring political action or personal or cultural change, and tends to incorporate many of the conventions of Epic theatre such as the use of episodic narrative structure, presentational acting as a verfremdungseffekt (or defamiliarisation effect), and the exposure of stage machinery to strip away any illusion of realism. However, women’s theatre and feminist drama post 1980 tended to synthesis Brechtian Epic theatre conventions with an emotionally expressive and confessional dramatisation of multiple women’s personal experience and perspective. This development reflected the feminist awareness that the personal is political. I therefore employed post-verbatim drama to capture the personal perspectives of women and employ emotionally expressive and confessional dramatisation in order to express the personal stories of the women participants; details of which I will share in Chapter 8.

I finally illustrated the hybridisation of Epic and emotionally charged dramatic performance in women’s theatre by discussing the verbatim dramas created by the contemporary women’s theatre company, The Paper Birds. In particular, I explored how The
Paper Birds create and re-present a particular verbatim aesthetic called proto-verbatim (Duggan, 2013) in order to expose the constructed process of their verbatim theatre and engage audiences as ethical witnesses to the drama (Duggan, 2013). ‘Witnessing’, as Peggy Phelan (2004) noted, is activated when the production aesthetic explicitly promotes awareness in the viewer/audience that they are watching a piece of theatre and are made aware of the ethical-political implications of their witnessing (Phelan, 2004).

I therefore adopted a proto-verbatim aesthetic in the re-presentation of the stories of women casual academic as it does not fabricate scenes or characters, but instead re-presents the participants’ words and stories. It is also aesthetically engaging and can illuminate the lived experience of women who are Othered in a form that expresses and illuminates without trying to explain. Finally, it can be used to communicate the restoryer’s interpretation of the lives of research participants as an open and transparent translation of the words and worlds of research participants. For these reasons I adopted a proto-verbatim form of theatre to express my understanding of the lived experience of the women research participants in this study and to, in particular, illuminate the lived experience of women casual academics.
CHAPTER 8: CREATING PROTO-VERBATIM THEATRE

My intention in this project has been to extend the current discourses around sessional staffing to include a re-presentation of the lived experience of women casual academics in a form of communication that is congruent with the content of the participants’ experience. I therefore selected to employ a form of verbatim drama as a research communication as it is a communication form that centralises the words of Others, and provides a stylistically and aesthetically rich form through which to engage an audience with the stories of the ‘yet to be voiced’ (Arnot & Reay, 2007). Additionally, in alignment with women’s propensity towards care (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982), cooperation (Baringa, 1993; Belenky et al., 1986; Tobias, 1990), connected and context-rich knowing (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Halpern, 2012; Lips, 2010) and emotion (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982) I intended for the communication form to employ écriture feminine, or a mode of expression that reflects a woman’s way of knowing and communicating (Cixous, 1986, 1998). I therefore sought to communicate the lived experience of the women participants in both a feminine form and content. Lastly, as it is impossible to neutrally or objectively represent the voices or stories of Others (Alcoff, 2006, 2009; Minh-ha, 1982, 1989; Richardson, 2007; Spivak, 1987, 1998), I determined to reveal the constructedness of my re-telling of the stories of women casual academics within a proto-verbatim drama, a sub-genre of verbatim drama that is ‘highly aestheticised’ (Wake, 2013) and does not pretend to adopt a neutral or innocent role in the representative data narrative. In practice, the proto-verbatim theatre I created aimed to heighten and illuminate what I understood as the essence of the internally and externally lived experience of the women casual academics who shared their stories.

This chapter details the specific process I undertook in restorying the experience of women casual academics into a proto-verbatim performance. In particular, I discuss how and
why I identified and used aspects of the participants’ communications that ‘glowed’ or resonated with me (MacLure, 2013); the data that created an intense affect (Ringrose & Renold, 2014), within a feminist data restorying process. Finally, this chapter explicates and illustrates the specific dramaturgical and theatrical decisions I made in realising the proto-verbatim drama as a piece of theatre. In particular, I discuss the mise en scene I created (including decisions pertaining to the venue, staging, costuming, visual and sound effects, and direction) through which I both aesthetically engaged and ‘made the everyday strange’ (Waters, 2011) to the audience. Within the discussion I seek to demonstrate the scholartistry (Neilsen, 2002) I employed, as I concur with Anderson that ‘if the research is important enough to engage the audience it will justify the time making the piece effective theatre as well as good research’ (Anderson, 2007, p.87).

More generally this chapter discusses the restorying and theatricalising process I undertook in attempting to balance the conflicting demands of centralising the words and experience of women casual academics, with the aesthetic aims of proto-verbatim theatre, and the ethical impulse to expose the constructedness of data re-presentation.

**Restorying the Data**

As I introduced in Chapter 2 and explicated in Chapter 5, as a feminist narrative researcher I consciously refuse to engage in a traditional/masculine narrative analysis process of coding data. I agree with Jackson and St. Pierre’s argument that coding is ‘quite a positivist approach to analysis’ and its popularity as a data organising process is perhaps because it is taught in ‘classes and textbooks [and] is teachable’ (cited in Ringrose & Renold, 2014, p. 772). Indeed, Mazzei and Jackson (2011) also suggest that it is ‘difficult to teach someone how to think with theory (analysis)’ and perhaps that is why thinking and practicing
with theory it is not more widely employed or encouraged (Mazzei & Jackson, cited in Ringrose & Renold, 2014). I think, however, that thinking and practising outside of teachable, textbook process fulfils the feminist research agenda to ‘push the epistemological and methodological envelope’ in order to challenge the ‘epistemological boundaries, and/or transforming the analytical frameworks, of the discipline of political science’ (Ackelsberg, 2005, p. 321). Working outside of established academic processes also allows us/feminist researchers to attend to the political and social responsibility that comes with the privilege of working in the academy (Ackelsberg, 2005). Additionally, by working with data with theory, and not through codes and classifications, I support and extend the feminist practice of working creatively and ‘inventively’ with and about data (Lury & Wakeford, 2012). Moreover, working creatively with data allowed me to attend to the ‘affect’ the data had on me and encouraged my ‘subjectivity’ to permeate the research process at every stage from the research questions I wrote, my research design, my data-gathering process, and the forms of communication I employed to express my research (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). Furthermore, by working affectively with the data I denied what Maggie MacLure (2013) describes as the distanced and dispassionate relationship between researcher and data that can occur when we engage in data coding. It finally prevents participants’ differences from being subsumed through the neat categorisation of generalisation of human experience that occurs in data coding (MacLure, 2013). In particular, MacLure suggests that ‘coding’ can neglect individuality, undermine texture, and ignore the affective nature of lived experience and narrative data (MacLure, 2013). She instead proposes that we adopt an ‘affective’ approach to working with data by engaging with data whose intensities fascinate and exhilarate us and create in us a sense of ‘wonder’. MacLure’s theories contribute significantly to a growing awareness of the ‘affective’ in the social sciences and support what has been termed the
‘affective turn’ (Clough & Halley, 2007) more generally. My next section of writing illustrates the ways in which I engaged with feminist theory and dramaturgy to contribute to the affective turn in social science research and demonstrates my affective process of restorying the lived experience of women casual academics. Additionally, as Richards (2011) and Riessman (1993) observe, because stories originate from diverse disciplines there is no one unifying method of analysing or interpreting them. I therefore explicate how I employed a mixture of established and improvised/promiscuous (Childers et al., 2013) strategies in restorying the women’s stories into an engaging and cohesive narrative that illuminates the lived experience of women casual academics.

In order to balance the often paradoxical demands of centralising the words/worlds of the women participants, to make manifest the constructed nature of story re-presentation and to aesthetically engage an audience in a re-presentation of the stories of women casual academics I merged two approaches to restorying. I initially used Gee’s (2005) holistic process of excavating and re-presenting large sections of participant stories as units, in order to preserve their words and intended meaning of the words within their original context and centralise the women’s stories. In particular, this process allowed me to keep large sections or chunks of the participant’s stories together, and to re-present them as story units. I used Gee’s holistic process of creating story units or episodes in order to maintain the integrity of the situated and contextualised meanings contained within told stories (Lieblich, 2006). The approach to re-presenting data as story-units was also consistent with the narrative epistemology I adopted for this project. A narrative epistemology accepts that lived experience is known and made knowable through the stories we tell ourselves and share with others, and in all cases stories are situated and contextually dependant (Bakhtin, 1984). In addition, as Frank (1995) noted the structure of stories communicates its meaning, so if in
this project I failed to maintain some contextualisation and structure of the original storytelling I would have potentially disrupted or depleted the intended meaning of the stories of which I was to bear witness. I finally adopted a holistic approach to restorying data into story units in order to maintain and re-present large sections or chunks of story/interview data in the drama ‘verbatim’ as I wanted the participants’ stories to be the focus of this research project. The meaning of the women’s lived experience and stories contained in the words, phrases and structures of their communication were therefore placed at the centre of the research communication/data narrative.

Once I had gathered what I considered to be the main petits récits within each of the women’s communications, and annotated them by using Gee’s (1985, 2005) annotation system designed to capture the women’s intentions as well as their words, I identified the main preoccupations with which the women engaged. I identified these by noticing a repetition of certain ideas or experiences and through selecting moments or fragments of stories that seemed most significant or meaningful to the participants, because they had shared these fragments with heightened emotion (indicated by an intensity of paralinguistic quality in the women’s verbal delivery). It was the women’s central preoccupations and fragments of story, about which the women seemed most emotional and animated, that I selected as the basis for the proto-verbatim drama. The main story units that were emotionally expressed or repeatedly communicated included: how and why the women began to work as casual academics; their love of engaging with and teaching students; their peripheral status within the university setting; the insecurity of casual academic employment; their financial status and fears for retirement; the perceived power of course or unit coordinators; feelings of facelessness/voicelessness; and the contradiction of emotions they associate with casual academic work. These were preoccupations that appeared in most, if
not all, the six participants’ stories and as such I placed them into their own episodes or scenes. I thus intended for each scene to highlight one central element of the participants’ experiences of casual teaching in academia; and aimed that together the juxtaposed episodes or scenes would form a larger more cohesive story of women casual academics’ experience. These scenes were called:

Prologue: An arts-informed narrative inquiry

Scene 1: Why would you be a casual tutor?

Scene 2: And then there’s this long wait in between semesters

Scene 3: But the biggest problem with casual work is financial

Scene 4: Delta Dawn, what’s that flower you have on?

Scene 5: There’s nothing you can do, you can’t speak up

Epilogue: This is the complex part of being sessional... we’re not simple people... we’re well-educated people

I was also influenced by Gee’s (1985, 2005) holistic approach to restorying participant data/stories during the second stage of the restorying process: populating the drama scenes with fully contextualised participant’s petits récits. In particular, I placed each of the participant’s fully detailed ‘petits récits’ or small stories next to corresponding or related stories that the women had shared through interview, email or conversation into one of the main scene categories/scenes established above. Initially the petits récits were included arbitrarily. That is, I simply copied and pasted ‘petits récits’ under a related scene title without concern for scene or character development or cohesion within the scene. Once I fully populated each scene with details of lived experience – the feelings they experienced, and the situations they had lived – I began to consider the relationship between the individual
petits récits within each scene. I worked on one scene at a time and found that some of the small stories, or mini-stories within the women’s fuller story, seemed to create a logical order of telling, others seemed very similar or even repetitious, and some seemed to offer a summary of the others’ experience. I ordered and reordered the individual episodes or small stories within each scene so that a dialogue between the women’s experience could emerge. I also collapsed some stories and amalgamated characterisations in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants; however the scenes still contained far too much data or ‘drama footage’ for a clear and accessible data narrative. Consequently, I needed to undertake an edit and amalgamate further some of the petits récits.

The edit and restorying stage of the project was the most time and heart-consuming task I undertook in this project.

Pause.

I will repeat that line to communicate my effect and ‘affect’.

The edit and restorying stage of the project was the most time and heart-consuming task I undertook in this project.

At this stage in the restorying process I had over nine hours of ‘data’ compiled into six scenes, and knew that to create an accessible and engaging drama, in order ‘to give listening ears to the voices that often go unheard’ (Wake, 2010b, p.3), I would have to reduce the data to approximately 40 – 45 minutes of theatre. This process troubled me. I was acutely aware that the participants’ shared stories related to their lived experience that reflected their person-hood; and I was committed to maintaining the person-centred ethic of equality and consideration for participants’ person-hoods in this project. I therefore shared Janet
Richards’ feelings when she felt as though she would ‘trespass with muddy feet into the hearts of her participants’ were she to deconstruct the lived experience/stories of participants into usable or unusable categories of data (Richards, 2011, p.11). I also shared Richards’ conviction that participants’ stories are their truths, and therefore do not need explanation or interpretation. Yet I was committed to making these women’s stories known, and to extending the current discourses around sessional staffing to include the lived experience of women casual academics. In order to achieve this aim I knew I would have to create a research narrative that was accessible and engaging, and therefore communicated succinctly and with focus; a form that would require significant edit and perhaps some re-organisation. I was also ethically required to further amalgamate some of the stories and storytellers into composite characters and storylines in order to protect the anonymity of the participants and the institutions in which they work. Anonymity in this context refers to an attempt to conceal the identity of the research participants in order to reduce the likelihood of recognition by others (Grinyer, 2009). I thus accepted the need, through negotiation with the participants, to merge characters and stories and began the process of editing, amalgamating and organising the women participants’ petits récits in order to create a research narrative with which people could engage fully.

During the time and heart consuming process of editing ‘down’ the scenes, that is reducing the data to create an impactful data narrative, I was buttressed in my resolve to create an accessible and engaging research narrative that would capture the essence of the participants’ stories and illuminate their lived experience by Salmon’s understanding that ‘whatever the content, stories demand the consequential linking of events and ideas’ (Salmon in Riessman, 2008, p.786). Additionally, I took heart from Frank’s understanding that ‘the researcher’s role is to interpret the stories in order to present an understanding that the
storytellers may not be able to give voice to themselves’ (1995, p. 4). Finally, I had committed to re-presenting the participants’ stories with explicit staging in order to reveal the constructedness of the data/narrative re-presentation and this would require working to create something ‘in between’ myself as researcher, and the data (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Loch, 2014). In preparation for the edit process I engaged in some research around data synthesis and the restorying process only to find that Riessman (2008) was probably right when she suggested that there are as many strategies for analysing and representing stories as there are stories/narrative data. I therefore resolved to use four of the main conceptualisations that underpin this project to develop a project-specific restorying approach. I thus based my restorying approach on the notion that women tend to experience the world fully-embodied with a feminine logic and ethic of care which includes emotion, and connectivity (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Halpern, 2012; Lips, 2010), and communicate their lived experience through imagistic stories (Fleckenstein, 1996; Langer, 1942, 1962). Second, I was influenced by my understanding that in order to extend the discourses around sessional staffing to include the lived experience of women I would need to create a dialectical form of communication that incorporates, in content and form, the lived experience of women casual academics replete with a fully embodied re-presentation of the women’s stories. Third, I scaffolded a restorying approach on my insight that the researcher is always present in the data and in order to be ethical and transparent about the researcher’s role in the creation of a data narrative the constructedness of the re-presentation must be made known (Richardson, 1997). Finally, my understanding that proto-verbatim drama could be used to express and illuminate the fully embodied experience of women casual academics, aesthetically engage an audience in their lived experience, and make manifest the staging of the re-presentation, also helped to influenced the restorying process I created for this project. Therefore, by
focusing on the main ideas that underpin this research project I committed to employing a feminist, narrative and dramaturgical approach to re-storying the participants’ stories, rather than a ‘masculine’ approach of identifying, classifying and analysing the main themes of qualitative inquiry data. I thus accepted that considerable edits and data reorganisation would need to be made, for practical, ethical and dramatic reasons, and that for the creation of a new content and form of data narrative, to complement and create dialectic with existing academic discourses, I undertook a feminist dramaturgical re-storying approach.

In undertaking a particular feminist dramaturgical approach to restorying the lived experience of women casual academics I balanced two positions. First, I was mindful of Paget’s understanding that verbatim was not sociological research and that the theatre aspects are important in verbatim (Paget, 1987). That is, that my role as a dramatist was to evoke and engage an audience aesthetically in the stories of the women participants. Yet this was balanced by an acceptance of Bullough and Pinnegar’s (2001) warning that whilst there is much to be gained from intertwining the self into an inquiry they caution against tipping the research too deep into the self and creating a ‘confessional’ (Richards, 2011). Therefore, in my approach I started with the women’s stories and explicitly reframed and staged them in accordance with the logic and aesthetic with which I understood them. I did not add to the stories with my own words, but did shape the women’s words into a story that made sense and seemed to resonate with me; the re-presentation became ‘the hyphen’ (Fine & Weiss, 1992), or the story between the data and my understanding it. I considered my role as drama-shaper and accepted the impossibility of innocent representation without interpretation.

Therefore, although I used the women’s actual words and stories as the base of the dramaturgical restorying, my role, as restoryer/dramatist in a feminist research project,
liberated from the conventions and methods of traditional scholarly analytical research. My approach to the second phase of restorying was therefore highly influenced by Childers, Rhee and Daza’s idea of the ‘promiscuity of contemporary feminist research’ (2013) and MacLure’s (2013) conceptualisation of the ‘wonder of data’. I will briefly discuss these two conceptualisations and demonstrate how they informed my drama-shaping process.

First, it has long been established that feminist researchers do not ascribe to traditional/masculine structures that uphold the current patriarchal systems of organisation and power, and therefore do not follow the research methodologies or practices that emanate from, and seek to maintain, patriarchy. Many feminist researchers thus deliberately disrupt or reject masculine research processes that reflect a masculine way of knowing, organising and communicating. Many others, rather than react against and reject, simply create an ‘écriture feminine’ (Cixous, 1976) by expressing feminine or feminist ways of practicing research as a representation of their propensity to think and communicate with a feminine ethic of care, connectivity and emotion (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). In addition, congruent with the promiscuity of feminist research is the ‘disobedience’ of arts-informed inquiry. As Ewing and Cole (2014) identify, disobedience is vital to creative work, and is essential when challenging ‘conventional or traditional ways of doing, analysing, representing and reporting research’ in scholartistry (Ewing & Cole, 2014, p.1). Thus, feminist methodologies, and arts-informed inquiry, have liberated us from a male-dominated epistemology and we, as feminist scholarartists, frolic in alternative ways of working. Consequently, feminist research is often considered to be ‘outside-in the academy’ contentiously working within the constraints of the teaching machine but producing scholarship as critique of the universities and disciplines that paradoxically provide homes and support for the work’ (Spivak, 1993, cited in Childers et al., 2013, p.510). It is considered, for these reasons that ‘feminist researchers often create and
play with promiscuous feminist methodologies... [which] are always in-the-making and already ahead of what we think they are’ (Childers et al., 2013, p.507). In other words, the promiscuous nature of feminist theatre in practice is usually ahead of a corresponding label or theory. Instead it is considered to be a messy practice of inquiry that transgresses imposed boundaries or assumptions about what counts as research and feminism ‘as methodologies-in-practice cannot be neatly defined or expected to stay in place on a grid or continuum graphic’ (Lather, 2006). Additionally, because human beings continuously imagine and create new ideas, concepts and related ways of working invariably ‘extend ontological and epistemological engagements’ (Spivak, 2012, p. 121). Consequently, feminist methodology-in-practice is typically ahead of a classification or explanation and exists ‘in-the-making’ (Childers et al., 2013). I therefore do not have a label to apply to the approach to restorying with which I engaged in the second phase of transforming women’s stories into verbatim drama. Instead of labelling it I will try to capture the promiscuous, in-the-making method (Childers et al., 2013) I employed.

Second, Margaret MacLure’s writings and musings on ‘the wonder of data’ (2013) resonated with me aesthetically, emotionally and cognitively and impacted significantly on how I undertook the second phase of restorying data into drama. In her article The wonder of data (2013) MacLure considers the ‘productive capacity for wonder that resides and radiates in data, or rather in the entangled relation of data-and-researcher’ (MacLure, 2013, p.228). That is, MacLure recognises and makes explicit the fact that some data resonates with researchers and how the data is understood or experienced by the researcher creates new data, an amalgamation of the data and how it is understood; the new data is created in the space between researcher and participant data. In particular, MacLure invites us to engage with data in a way that is as a counterpart to the masculine logocentric approach to data interpretation,
classification, and representation. She identifies the potential of data, ‘perhaps a comment in an interview, a fragment of a field note, an anecdote, an object, or a strange facial expression... to grasp us’ (MacLure, 2013, p.228). Finally, MacLure establishes that the moments of wonderment that a researcher experiences in and with data confound the methodical, mechanical search for meanings, codes, or themes. They instead create a kind of glow or fascination for the researcher that can provoke further thought and engagement (2013). Conceptualising wonder as residing in our bodies as well as minds MacLure identifies that we may feel an affect in our gut or in the quickening of our heartbeat, and though we may recognise its impact we may not be able to describe why some data emotionally engages us. She also describes wonder as relational; it exists between people or a person and an object, image, or fragment of text (MacLure, 2013). In this regard the wonder of data can be described as an assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) as our wonderment of the data does not pre-exist our interaction with the data (MacLure, 2013). Finally, MacLure recognises that ‘in our feminist research we don’t necessarily set out to collect wonder-ful data, rather it announces itself to us’ (2013, p. 230-231) as we engage with data.

In response to my aim to centralise the women participants’ stories within the research project, and in an attempt to make my role as restoryer explicit and to engage feminist research principles, I used two main approaches to creating a drama out of women casual academics’ petits récits. First, as I mentioned above, I created six scenes, each representing the main preoccupations the women had discussed and populated each scene with related petits récits. Next, I looked for and highlighted any words or images that were repeated or which had been communicated with high emotional intensity. These I considered to be central to the women’s stories as they seemed to be important to the women themselves.
I subsequently copied the highlighted phrases, stories, metaphors and images and pasted them into a second draft of each scene. I then had a second, shorter, draft of each of the six scenes. This first approach was very rational, logical and methodical and allowed me to identify and centralise the participant’s main experiences and preoccupations of casualised academia as the basis for the drama.

Within the next stage of restorying I merged Gee’s (2005) holistic methodical process of restorying participants’ stories into a short drama with an improvisational or ‘promiscuously feminist’ (Childers et al., 2013) approach to restorying fragments of petits récits that seemed to glow (MacLure, 2013). I thus both borrowed and improvised to create a yet to be labelled ‘in-the-making’ (Childers et al., 2013) approach to restorying the experience of women casual academics’ experience into a verbatim drama. This approach both acknowledged and centralised the stories and person-hood of the participants and gave me, as a scholar-artist, the opportunity to work with data that created wonder and affected me. In practice I re-read the ‘data’ or women’s petits récits collected in the first draft of each scene and rather than adopting a masculine logic and structural method of data coding I employed the feminine and affective approach (Childers et al., 2013) of looking for data jewels or data that shone to me; I sought out data that made me feel a strong emotion or excited me, data that seemed to ‘glow’ (MacLure, 2013). I then selected the glowing, wonder-ful fragments of data and copied them into the second drafts of each scene alongside the specific stories participants had repeated or animated paralinguistically during their telling. This was a creative and emotional process based on identifying and re-presenting the data ‘hot spots’ (MacLure, 2013). It employed Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘intensities’ that can occur during research encounters (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012), and Ringrose and Renold’s notion of the ‘affective intensities’ that resonate in the researcher as
they encounter data that glows (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). It thus undertook a feminist approach to restorying data into drama that acknowledged and paid homage to my affective and aesthetic feminine way of knowing, and assisted me in the process of creating an écriture feminine (Cixous, 1976, 1998). In practice I therefore used data that was central to the women’s experience, as evidenced by its repeated appearance and animation of communication, with data that shone or made me wonder as the basis for the shape of each episode of drama. Much of the data that shone or sang to me were extracts of personal story and biography that were peculiar to an individual participant. They were the small and very personal stories about the loss of a child at the age of 13, a repeatedly aborted meeting with a Head of School, a colleague’s unexpected death and no-one in the university telling the woman’s casual colleagues, the casual academic that was told she was ‘off-limits’ and therefore would not be receiving any future casual teaching, and the story of domestic violence and the need for casual work to sustain a family. These stories were not stories that were repeated by the participants, or even the most animated in their telling. In fact the delivery of these stories in interviews was usually slow, low in tone, with eyes averted. These stories were usually idiosyncratic and defied classification or coding. Yet, they affected me (MacLure, 2013), and were the women participants’ truths, so deserved re-presentation. Indeed, including these stories supports Bochner’s (2000) invitation to re-present ‘abundant, concrete detail; concern not only for the commonplace, even trivial routines of everyday life, but also for the flesh and blood emotions of people coping with life’s contingencies; not only facts but also feelings (Bochner, 2000, p. 270). Finally, by using my senses in identifying small stories for re-presentation, and not only my analytical mind, I sought to imbue the restorying process with what Dwight Conquergood described as
‘energy imagination, and courage… in order not to subsume the sweet, terrible wholeness of life’ (1985, p.10).

Therefore, I created the drama re-presentation by merging Gee’s (2005) holistic approach to restorying substantial ‘chunks’ of interview data, usually the oft-repeated and animated stories, with the highly idiosyncratic fragments of experience or story that glowed to me, and thus developed an ‘in-the-making’, promiscuous (Childers et al., 2013) restorying process to re-present the ‘sweet, terrible wholeness of life’ (Conquergood, 1985, p.10).

Once I had a first draft of six verbatim drama scenes I shared them with each of the participants who were invited to comment on, and veto the inclusion of any text or petits récits, in the performance/script. Interestingly, only two of the women asked for some lines to be removed from the drama text. One of the participants (participant A) asked for one phrase to be removed as she felt ‘this is highly identifiable to me’. However, the phrase that she wished to be removed with was not one that she herself had used in her communication with me; it had been used by a different participant from a separate university. Once I had explained this to participant A, and offered to remove the phrase, she was happy to keep the phrase in the script. I found this interaction very interesting as the phrase and context in which it was delivered obviously resonated with participant A to the extent that she felt she had personally delivered it. I was actually pleased by the email exchange because it indicated that the script was life-like and identifiable. The second occasion when a participant asked for one line to be removed occurred after the scenes had been filmed, edited, uploaded, and ready to publish on YouTube. I sent the women participants links to the unpublished videos/scenes in order to ensure they were happy to give me permission to make them public. At this stage one woman asked for a particular work responsibility/role to be removed from
the film as she too felt it may identify her and her story. I was happy to oblige and did so immediately. In addition, the process of sending scripts with stage directions continued throughout the whole process of restorying the data into a drama as edits (usually cuts) continued throughout the rehearsal period. This was due in large to the fact that as soon as we, myself and the actors, introduced gesture, facial expression and action to the scene, many words became redundant; the action replaced the need for some verbal communication. I negotiated with participants in relation to what aspect of their experience would be shared, and how it would be presented, as I felt that this was an essential aspect of engaging in person-centred research. It was important to me that the participants felt that the representations created in the drama closely reflected their experience, and highlighted their feelings, values and stories. Indeed Janet Gibson argues that negotiation with participants is a sign of authenticity, and suggests that ‘the value a verbatim team or writer places on negotiating a relationship with the community being written about, seeking their input into the result and acknowledging that you don’t write their story without some kind of interrelationship’ is a criteria for verbatim success (Valentine, n.d.). I was sensitised to the ongoing nature of the restorying process through rehearsal and performance as Gibson stresses the importance of negotiating with participants in relation to ‘how their stories will be theatrically represented’ because within the process of rehearsing and sharing work ‘dramaturgical editing continues to take place’ (Gibson, 2011, p.9). Finally, she argues that failing to maintain negotiations with contributors or participants through the rehearsal and performance process ‘underscores the hand of an authorial presence making choices about and for the subjects’ (Gibson, 2011); a process that disregards the person-hoods of the original storytellers. I finally invited the women to come to see the performance of the drama, and two attended. Both sent me an email response afterwards; one commented:
Gail – it was simply amazing. Hearing my story – and the story of thousands of other sessionals – through the voices of your wonderful actors was so moving... It made me think of how court jesters and political cartoons have been used in the past to deliver difficult messages. Presenting what we have always been far too frightened to express ourselves through drama is pure genius. A thousand thank yous!

In addition, a second participant wrote, ‘Your play was true to my experience and more... It used my words to say even more than words can say. Thank you for telling my story’.

Receiving these emails and many more from other women casual academics who watched the performance suggested that I had indeed captured the essence of the women’s stories and effectively illuminated their experience. The only feedback I received that would impact on re-staging of the work suggested I had not fully expressed women casual academics’ sense of agency. One of the participants said on seeing the YouTube videos the women’s sense of choice had not been expressed clearly enough. As the women’s choice or agency had not been centrally expressed in the interview or communications it had not been centralised in my drama re-presentation. However, another of the women participants said she felt empowered by watching the production as it made her realise how resilient she is. However, responding to participant feedback was central to the person-centred focus of this research project and so feedback subsequent to the performance would certainly impact on any future productions of the drama. Correspondingly, Makeham argues that ‘It is imperative, both in ethical and practical terms that storytellers are confident their personal experiences will not be exploited, distorted or disparaged in the process of being theatricalised’ (Makeham, 1998, p. 170).

**Theatricalising Restoryed Data into a Proto-Verbatim Performance**

As I explained in Chapter 7, in this project I aimed to dramatise the stories of women casual academics into a proto-verbatim theatre event in order to give ‘listening ears’ to the stories of women casual academics (Wake, 2010b, p.3) in a materially physical, fully embodied form (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Correspondingly, I will next describe and illustrate
how we, myself and the actors, created a piece of theatre out of the restoryed drama/experience of women casual academics. However, before I do so I will briefly draw a distinction between drama and theatre, and identify a rationale for working with actors in co-creating live performance. First, as Fortier suggests that, unlike drama, theatre is not words on a page, ‘theatre is performance... and entails not only words but space, actors, audience and the complex relations among these elements (Fortier, 2002, pp.4-5). Indeed, he further explains that:

Drama comes from the Greek verb ‘to do’ whilst ‘theatre’ comes from the Greek verb ‘to see’... Theatre, therefore involves both doing and seeing, practice and contemplation. Moreover, the word ‘theory’ comes from the same root as ‘theatre’. Theatre and theory are both contemplative pursuits, although theatre has a practical and sensuous side which contemplation should not be allowed to overwhelm (Fortier, 2002, pp. 5-6).

Second, the creation of theatre, as opposed to writing a drama, is a dynamic and collaborative process of re-translation that requires a ‘letting’ go of any control that you as researcher/dramatist feel you may have had over the restorying process. It requires an acknowledgement that the actor/s with whom you work will transform the researched and scripted Other into a performed Other. As Denzin argues that ‘the performance text is the single, most powerful tool for researchers ‘to recover meanings of lived experience’’ (1997, p. 95). Yet the process of re-presenting Others’ stories into a drama that is performed by ‘other’ actors (other here signifying that the actors are other than the participants) introduces a layer of ethical and political complexity beyond the consideration with which I engaged in Chapter 6. That is, not only is an arts-informed researcher who re-presents lived experience in performance compelled to consider her/his role in speaking of, for, or with Others, and determine how they will make manifest their authorship or translation of Others’ stories within the re-presentation or performance; but they also have to decide how they will engage
with the actors who re-present or characterise the research participants and their stories.

Thus, whilst Dening argues that a dramatist’s interpretation is a transformation of the Other and that the transformational nature of re-presentations should be made manifest (Dening, 1996), the collaborative nature of creating performance (Stetson, 2001; Wilkinson, 2015) requires the scholarartist to consider the role of the actor in transforming the scripted character into a performed Other.

For me, the philosophical and methodological foundations from which this research project was built, helped to shape my practice of working with others re-presenting Others. In this research project I employed a narrative epistemology and a person-centred approach to eliciting and re-presenting the lived experience of women casual academics. I accept/ed that we come to know and communicate our experience and knowledge narratively, and sought to re-present the lived experience of women casual academics through a re-presentation of the women’s polyphonic (Bakhtin, 1984), fully-embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) ‘petits récits’ (Lyotard, 1984). Moreover, as I identified in Chapter 4, I specifically aimed to acknowledge the participants’ stories by presenting them as recognisable and resonant for the audience and sought to create ‘listening ears’ (Wake, 2010b) for the stories of women causal academics. In order to achieve both resonance and audience engagement I chose to work with compassionate, skilled, and intelligent women actors whose artistry collaborated was employed to translate the narrative written text/script into a compelling, resonant, aesthetic event. Thus, the person-centredness of my approach to this research project, allied with my understanding that as a researcher/playwright I can never know the experience of the Other from whom I have elicited and translated a story, extended therefore into the rehearsal process. I identified each actor as a person with her own interpretation and understanding of the Other participant they were to re-present, and accepted that the resonance with which
each actor engaged with the research participants’ stories were going to be translated through the actors’ bodies and voices. As Lea identified, the playwright, director, designers and actors all leave their mark on the performed drama and even if a director or playwright take most responsibility for shaping of dramatic elements into a cohesive narrative, performance making is a collective process, textured process (Lea, 2010). Furthermore, Wilkinson (2015) acknowledges the benefits of having others re-present restoryed narratives offers; in particular, she identifies that actors re-presenting re-presented narrative and experience ‘offers an opportunity for performance to generate multiple truths’ (Wilkinson, 2015, p.19). She claims that actors will find a truth or series of truths in the text/script that resonates with them, and so in turn they will add a further layer to the researcher/playwright’s translation of the character. Correspondingly, the actor’s performance adds a new lens or layer of understanding and translation to the re-presentation. Indeed, for researcher/playwrights to create highly aesthetic and resonating performances, and ‘share the essence of the data in an artistic way’ (Beare & Belliveau 2008, p. 151) we need to surround ourselves with creative artists to help realise this aim. For instance, Irwin urges us to seek out creative friends who can inspire our work (Irwin, 2008).

Yet, as I acknowledge, above and again in Chapter 9: Re-view, I experienced an internal and emotional tension when restorying the women’s stories into a 45 minute dram. I was anxious that the researcher/dramatist lens I adopted during the restorying process would distort the data and the women’s voices within the drama script. Although, by the time I started to work with the actors with the script I had received assurances from the women participants that they were happy with the drama script and identified that it encapsulated their stories, I did experience some internal tension when the women actors re-created new readings and
renderings of the data narrative and women characters. I felt that there was an inherent tension between offering an opportunity of voice to Other women, and engaging in a collective process of making that voice manifest. I understood the tension on one level theoretically and accepted that the rehearsal process was a period of ‘transition’ for narrative inquirers, a transition from being ‘fully involved’ with our participants (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.81) to stepping back in order to see our own stories in the inquiry, and for the researcher/dramatist, the transition requires a second step back in order to see and accept, and embrace the actors’ own stories in the inquiry, ‘rehydrat[ing] the written word through embodied techniques’ (Madison & Hamera, 2006. P.404).

After the initial emotional wrench of dissecting and editing down the original data narrative to a play-text, the second stage of passing it on to actors to translate the script into performance was relatively easy I was working with a cast very trusted and experienced women actors, two of whom I had worked with before, and two new Professional actors, one of whom serendipitously who had worked as a casual academic for many years. My absolute confidence and trust in the integrity, compassion and skill of these women (Sharon Grimley, Anna MacMahon, Rainee Skinner and Natasha Tidey) ensured that the final transition of ‘letting go’ of my translation of the participants’ stories was as easy as possible (Clandinin & Connelly (2000, p.81). It was with full confidence in the sensitivity and performance skill of the actors that I accepted ‘performance as a research methodology’ and recognised that ‘meanings are co-created, and that authority and knowledge shifts between participants’ (Wilkinson, 2015, p.36).

Therefore, my acceptance of narrative as a way of knowing and communicating and my person-centred approach to all persons engaged in the research eased my journey into a collaborative drama re-presentation process where the stories of six women casual academics were ‘reinterpreted and re-presented by many players in its journey from the written text to its main stage… as all the players in the creative enterprise
impact on and respond to the connections, the relationships, the art within the work’ (Wilkinson, 27th March 2015, personal communication).

Now that I have established the co-constructed nature of theatricalising a drama text I will discuss some of the aesthetic decisions that were made in transforming a verbatim drama text into a proto-verbatim theatre event. In the following description I illustrate, in particular, the dramaturgical decisions I made to *theatralise* the verbatim text created to illuminate the lived experience of women casual academics. I will demonstrate how I employed conventions from Brechtian, feminist and women’s theatre to both aesthetically and cognitively engage an audience in the theatre piece. I will focus specifically on some of the dramaturgical decisions I made in order to estrange the audience from the action in a bid to make the audience aware that it is watching a piece of live theatre, a theatrical *reconstruction* of Others’ stories. I also aim to demonstrate how I employed Brechtian metatheatrical techniques to cast the audience as witnesses (Phelan, 2004). Finally, I will demonstrate how I create a theatrically compelling performance by emotionally engaging the audience within a proto-verbatim aesthetic. Proto-verbatim theatre, as a form of women’s theatre, juxtaposes highly theatricalised presentational performance aesthetic with an emphasis on stylisation alongside representational performance conventions associated with naturalism. It therefore undermines what had hitherto been seen as a ‘tension between representational and presentational theatre’ (Denzin, 1997, p.11). Indeed, proto-verbatim embraces the notion that political theatre need not be devoid of theatricality, emotional or aesthetic appeal ‘in order to fulfil the considerable potential that arts-informed research has to powerfully connect with audiences’ (Anderson, 2007). In addition, Anderson argues that arts-informed research ‘must take account of the aesthetic demands of theatre’ if it is to create social change (2007, p.89),
and Thompson (2009) identified a significant shift in political and applied theatre practice from the ‘effective to the affective’. In particular, he suggested that contemporary applied theatre creates an ‘intimate correlation between the political and the aesthetic’ (Thompson, 2009, p. 3) and that theatre that is ‘affective’ has longer lasting impact on audiences (Thompson, 2009). Finally, Lea (2013) cited in Sinclair and Belliveau (2014) establishes the notion that as scholartists we are gifted with ‘gems of data’ with which we have the responsibility to engage an audience ethically and aesthetically. Thus, in the discussion below I explicate how I, along with the creative support of a cast, created proto-verbatim theatre in order to ethically, cognitively and emotionally engage an audience in the lived experience of women casual academics.

The following discussion will be illustrated using photographs and YouTube videos of the performed proto-verbatim theatre. These visual and aural illustrations are employed in response to Saldaña’s criticism that arts-informed communications often lacks an ability to capture performed research data through visually illustrative means (Saldaña, 2010). Saldaña specifically notes that as performed research is a verbal medium ‘it is critical that we provide as much illustrative documentation to inform the readership of what this genre looks like’ (2010, p.7). This notion had been introduced previously by Cahnmann-Taylor (2007) who urged scholartists to demonstrate and illustrate their practice, and Lenfant’s encouragement to for research to ‘move off the shelves’ (Lefant, 2003, p. 869). In particular, Saldaña (2010) requests arts-informed researchers to offer pictorial guidance about staging, composition and other director/actor communication methods (Saldaña, 2010) to inform and support future arts based and arts-informed researchers. Therefore the photographs and YouTube videos I present below are employed to address Saldaña’s lament that ‘it’s one thing to read about a production, but it’s quite another to read the entire dramatic text itself’ (Saldaña, 2010, p.8)
and his request that we make our work available and downloadable through a website or a public site such as YouTube. Whilst he accepts that a mediated recording is but a replication and shadow of the event itself, a proposition echoed by Cutcher (2014), Saldaña considers the ‘accessible documentation of potentially exciting work that has the ability to reach hundreds if not thousands of like-minded colleagues’ (2010, p.8). I also employed the recordings in order to demonstrate how I gave voice and physicality to the words of participants (Pelias, 2009).

**Details of the Theatre Event**

I chose to present the live performance of the proto-verbatim drama based on the lived experience of women casual academics within a university research conference program; an environment populated with casual academics, academics with ongoing employment, heads of university schools and faculties, and university senior management. Denzin identifies this type of audience for arts informed research as a ‘professional gathering of scholars’ (1997, pp.101-102). I chose this context and audience for the performance for a number of reasons. First, I felt, along with Rindfleish et al. that a re-presentation of women academics’ stories in public places can be used to resist the hegemony of privileged stories of academia (Rindfleish et al., 2009). In addition, presenting in a large performance venue addressed Rindfleish’ (2009) request for more stories to be heard in openly public spaces that recognise the ongoing disadvantage women experience in academia. Third, a re-presentation of the experience of women casual academics within a public research conference in front of a ‘professional gathering of scholars’ further supported the celebration of a multiplicity of stories and storytellers within organisations (Boje, 1995). Thus the context and venue chosen for the re-presentation of the experience of women casual academics allowed their story to become publicly known and acknowledged. Additionally, and in alignment with Boje’s aims for
countering dominant organisational stories, I presented the work within a large public university space so that the dominant and official narratives that universities, via internal and external public communications, were brought into dialectical relationship with the lived experience of the women casual academics, and for these women to have an opportunity for their story to be heard (Boje, 1995). Further, Valentine identifies that bringing communities of interest into the theatre, to allow the participants/contributors ‘that essential human right of being able to see themselves and their community conjured to the stage and thereby reflect on both the strengths and injustices of your world’ (Valentine, n.d.) is essential to ethical verbatim practice. Finally, she argues that verbatim theatre compels researchers/dramatists to ‘give back’ to the community from which they have drawn stories, ‘to become in a very real way a continuing part of the life and narrative of the community represented’ (Valentine, n.d.). I therefore presented a verbatim theatre piece in front of a ‘community of interest’/a ‘professional gathering of scholars’ (Denzin, 1997, pp.101-102; Valentine, n.d.) in order to re-present the lived experience of women casual academics in dialectical relation to the male-focused, dominant narratives and discursive forms of the juxtaposing research presentations. I additionally considered a university research conference apposite for the re-presentation of the women’s lived experience as it provided me with an opportunity to give back to the casual academic community and they could see their community represented, as well as offering an opportunity to publicly identify the ongoing disadvantage women experience in academia.

Within the verbatim performance itself I incorporated the conventions and aims of proto-verbatim theatre and will therefore offer an overview of how I achieved this and explicate one or two key dramaturgical elements I, in conjunction with the cast employed in each scene. This explanation will be accompanied by photographs and YouTube videos in
order to addresses Cahnmann-Taylor’s (2007) and Saldaña’s (2010) requests to see examples of what arts-informed narrative research actually looks and sounds like.

For this project I created six short scenes/dramatic episodes, incorporating participants’ oft-repeated petits récits or small stories, along with the idiosyncratic stories of survival, loss, victimisation, and joy of teaching. The episodic structure was informed by Brecht’s (and subsequently women and feminist theatres’) use of discrete scenes as a means to communicate a possibility of change. In particular, I devised each episode to incorporate each participant’s small stories replete with values, emotions, and individual experience and perspective in order to capture the ‘fully embodied’ experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) of women casual academics. This design was intended to feature a chorus or multiplicity of characters in a multi-vocal drama that subverted ‘the dominant hegemony of univocal forms of patriarchal theatre’ (Lyons & Lyons, 1994, p.57) and create a polyvocal dialogical performance (Bakhtin, 1984). Finally, the use of an episodic structure featuring six women’s stories strove to fulfil theatre’s capacity to tell multiple stories from multiple points of view in order to decentre the authority of one privileged view or narrative (Fortier, 2002). I therefore placed the four actors side by side centre stage to tell the stories of six women casual academics so that no one character was privileged over another. The following photograph (Figure 1: Every woman has a story) illustrates the equal positioning and privilege each character was afforded in the scripting and direction. Finally, and similarly to Deavere Smith’s Twilight: Los Angeles (1992, in Lyons & Lyons, 1994) I structured the scenes with a juxtaposition of the participants’ petits récits in short monologues so that no one story allowed the space to dominate or create what Lyotard referred to as a ‘master narrative’ (Lyotard, 1984).
The costuming I employed was not intended to characterise the women characters but was aimed at creating the current historical epoch; the context in which the original stories were shared. This was deliberate as Laughlin explains costuming in Brechtian/political theatre should be historically representative in order to expose the drama/action as historically situated and ‘not fixed and universally human (Laughlin, 1990, p. 152). Additionally, each woman wore a red silk scarf around their neck in order to both represent a connection and unification between the women characters and highlight the staged or constructed nature of the re-presentation. The scarves were also used to symbolise how senior academics’ demeaning views of casual academics can cause women casual academics harm. When rehearsing the scene one of the female actors suggested that she use her scarf to show how the character she represents feels ‘gagged’ and unable to protest against the demeaning comments that she hears about her and other casual academics. Therefore, on the line, ‘oh
you know sessional staff, they only do it because they can’t get a job doing anything else’, the actors used their scarves to externalise the internal pain inflicted by demeaning and disparaging comments. This is illustrated in the following image:

![Image of actors with scarves]

*Figure 22: They only do it because they can’t get a job doing anything else*

This symbolisation reflected mine and the actros’ interpretation of one of the women’s petits récits, and reflected the Brechtian inspired nature of proto-verbatim which aims ‘not so much to express reality as to signify it’ (Barthes, 1972, cited in Fortier, 2002, p.22). Finally the women wore scarves as blindfolds to symbolise or ‘signify’ how short-term teaching contracts made it difficult for women casual academics to plan or even visualise/see the future. The following image captures the waiting and ‘not knowingness’ that women casual academics experience:
In addition to the re-presentational and historicising costuming I employed stark and representational staging, assisted by the direct address with which the actor presented their character’s small stories, in order to reinforce the ‘staged’ nature of the theatre event (Richardson, 2007). That is, I wanted the audience to remain aware that they were watching live theatre; they were witnessing a re-presentation of women casual academics’ lived experience. Indeed, the staging and use of direct address were designed to create defamiliarisation or audience estrangement. As Chiari suggests,

The alienation device presents the familiar world in an estranging or defamiliarizing manner to make the audience see the things which they have not noticed beforehand without any emotional identification. It prevents the audience from evaluating things in a habitual manner by opening a fresh perspective on aspects of life so that the audience can avoid overfamiliarity with the things (Chiari, 1971, p.164).
Therefore, the overall aesthetic I created sought to historically contextualise the women participants’ stories and express them in a polyvocal, episodic and symbolic performance. I outline below some of the specific theatrical techniques I employed to create a critically estranging, aesthetically evocative, and emotionally appealing proto-verbatim drama. In order to do so I briefly discuss each scene in the chronological order in which it was presented. Yet before I do that, I wish to present a caveat. Cutcher (2014) identifies, in defence of artistic re-presentations, that ‘despite its linear qualities, academic language can prevent democratic access to knowledge – by its nature, it often requires its own translative act’ (Cutcher, 2014, p. 70). However, I consider artistic re-presentations to also be ‘coded’, and as such they too can be inaccessible to audiences who are not familiar with the conventions and implications of certain artistic genre or aesthetic convention. I was mindful therefore, in the theatrical decision-making that I undertook, and that I describe below, to employ codes of communication that were as generally accessible as possible. As one of the main reasons for employing drama as a form of research communication was to defy the narrowly coded discourse of traditional academia, it was important that I didn’t mystify the data narrative with an inaccessible or obscure aesthetic. My aim was to illuminate the research participants’ stories and to offer the audience insight into the women’s experiences, not make opaque or inaccessible or create art for art’s sake.

**Prologue: An arts-informed narrative inquiry**

I introduced the proto-verbatim theatre performance with a prologue to explicitly demonstrate the staged re-presentational nature of the research. I stood behind a lectern and discussed the basic aims and practices of arts-informed narrative inquiry in order to contextualise the particular drama the audience was about to ‘witness’ (Phelan, 2004). The five minute introduction was a meta-theatrical gesture employed to ‘foreground the drama’s
construction process’ in a similar fashion to the actors introduction in The Paper Birds’ proto-verbatim theatre production of *Others* (Duggan, 2013). It was a theatrical rejection of data representation as innocent and served to expose the mediated nature of the narrative in verbatim theatre. Whilst I verbally addressed the audience, as if in a traditional research presentation, I projected the title of the scene in large white letters on a black background onto the back wall of the stage. This was designed to reinforce both the episodic structure of the play and highlighted the main idea that was being explored in the scene. Projecting scene titles onto the stage is a Brechtian convention that many feminist theatre companies employ in an attempt to reinforce the didactic purpose of their theatre and dissipate emotional identification and suspense (Laughlin, 1990).

**Scene 1: When and in what circumstance did you become a casual academic?**

The first scene opened with a harsh white spotlight on the first speaker’s face and torso. There was no attempt made to conceal the mechanics of the lights as the lighting operator and floor spots were placed in full view of the audience. The lighting and the starkness of light were employed in order to focus the audience’s attention on the theatrical construction of the performance. As each actor began to talk to the audience so a light would be shone on that actor. As mentioned above the women/actors delivered juxtaposing monologues to the audience in an attempt to create ‘multiple mutually authorising voices’ where no one dominant protagonist or narrative was privileged (Claycomb 2003, p.97). I employed this technique as it corresponded with the techniques and aims of feminist and political theatre where an interruption to the hierarchy of a coherent, explanatory narrative is designed to democratising power. It also allowed me ‘to reveal a hidden truth, to give voice to silenced voices, or to explore what has been kept hidden’ (Claycomb, 2003, p.99). For a
Scene 2: And then there’s this long wait in between semesters.

Throughout Scene 2 I filled the back wall with a large photograph of the four women actors sat on black seats wearing red scarves as blindfolds. I designed the image to capture the long wait women casual academic endure between semesters and to express their inability to plan or see a future. The image was therefore presented to reinforce the gestus of the scene. Gestus, as discussed in Chapter 7, is understood as a physical representation of social gestus of social injustice (Reinelt, 2009). The gestus is illustrated in Figure 3: I can’t plan.

In addition to the image of women wearing scarves as blindfolds, I interrupted the delivery of the women’s short monologues with the sound effect of a train approaching. The sound effect was designed to exploit the ‘auditory possibilities of theatre to suggest … rather than stating it explicitly: to show, not tell’ (Lea, 2014, p.27). The sound effect therefore created a theatrical metaphor that re-established the constructed nature of the re-presentation whilst simultaneously developing the women’s narrative. In response to the sound the women stood, hopefully and expectantly, only to hear it pass without stopping. The train was symbolic of ongoing employment opportunities as each woman participant had expressed an interest or aim for ongoing teaching employment which had never been realised. The train thus symbolised the passing hope of women casual academics and my interpretation of their stories. Also in this scene I introduced a singer, representing a Greek theatre choral figure, to comment on the action, heighten the theatricality of the performance, and aesthetically engage the audience. I selected the song Skinny Love (Vernon, 2007) to be performed over the scene as it employed some specific phrases the women participants had used in their
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Interviews. Some of the phrases included, ‘I need to be patient’ and ‘I need to be calm’ and the song aligned with one of the participant’s interviews where she said, ‘I need to be positive self-talk’. The performed song thus became a metaphor for the self-talk that the women casual academics provide themselves with during ‘the long wait in between semesters’. The actor representing the singer sang with beauty and significant skill to both exteriorise the women characters self-talk and emotion, to captivate the audience, and to engage them aesthetically. This latter objective applies to most theatre, as Schumacher suggested:

Theatre which has true integrity and the highest artistic standards... theatre that does not try to be a replica of real life; it is theatre that embraces the possibilities of its form and showcases the craftsmanship of its artists. The heightened experience that theatre provides writers have managed to balance the demands of their subject matter with theatre’s demand for entertainment (Schumaker, 1998, p.335).

Please view the scene at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46UySViATSG

Scene 3: But the biggest problem with casual work is financial.

The title of Scene 3 was taken from a line in an interview which seemed to encapsulate a sentiment shared by all the women casual academics with whom I engaged. For this scene I theatricalised a visual metaphor between the many unpaid hours that women casual academics’ work (preparing for teaching, marking and answering email) and unpaid domestic work. The metaphor became the scene’s gestus. As the actors directly delivered their lines to the audience they continuously and frantically put washing on and off a clothes line held by the Greek chorus figure and one of the other actors. I felt that the relentless nature of the unpaid work casual women academics undertake was more truthfully and explicitly demonstrated through a non-naturalistic visual metaphor than through realistic theatre conventions. As the theatre artist, and casual academic Guillermo Verdecchia suggests, theatre artists have a responsibility to the truth, ‘but not necessarily to the
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literal, surface details of the truth’ (Verdecchia, 2006, p. 335). Truth, as Verdecchia understands it, does not attempt to present an illusion of reality through mimetism; rather truth is found in the absence of mimetism through a heightened theatricalised experience (Verdecchia, 2006). The following image illustrates the theatricalised essence of the women’s relentless and under/unpaid work experience; the gestus of the scene:

Figure 4: A relentless and under/unpaid work experience

The use of a visual metaphor also reflected the feminine imagistic way of knowing that myself, and the all-female cast who worked on creating physical and visual gestus, used to represent our understanding of the main idea within each scene (Fleckenstein, 1996; Langer, 1942, 1962), and highlighted the constructedness of research re-presentation. Indeed, Greg Dening notes that rather than mimetically representing any Other in verbatim drama, an arts-informed dramatist should make explicit their interpreted nature of the Other’s experience (Dening, 1996). In particular, Dening suggests that a dramatist’s interpretation is
a transformation of the Other and that the transformational nature of re-presentations should be made manifest (Dening, 1996). I therefore re-presented the experience of women casual academics through visual metaphor in order to make explicit the constructed and interpreted nature of my re-presentation. Please view Scene 3 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIlwif-cNsI

**Scene 4: Delta Dawn, what’s that flower you have on?**

I presented the title for Scene 4 on a large screen behind the action in order to introduce that the central motif/idea of the scene was that casual academics feel on the periphery of university life, ignored, jilted and left waiting. The title also introduced a song that is sung within the scene. During the first part of the scene, one of the actors describes how she has arranged to meet her Head of School “just to see… is there anything that would get me more of a permanent job or contract or whatever?” whilst the other actors dress her in a wedding dress, veil and pass her flowers. In doing so I re-presented the meeting between the casual academic and her male Head of School as analogous to a bride meeting her groom; as both prepare with expectation and hope, to meet a man that may offer security and commitment. I directed the first phase of the scene with high energy and excitement, smiles and laughter to express the woman’s joy and expectation. I reinforced the optimism by displaying a large photograph as a backdrop to the scene *(Figure 5: I would make an appointment to see the Head of School)* which entirely covered the back wall of the stage.
However, as the actor/character tells the audience that the meeting with her Head of School is cancelled, or postponed, “every year… every year” she becomes sad and life-less as if all her hope and expectation is lost. In order to reinforce the loss of optimism I transition from the first image (Figure 5: I would make an appointment to see the Head of School) to a second image (Figure 6: I think we’re just forgotten about).
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Figure 65: I think we’re just forgotten about

I employ the images transition as the following lyrics are sung by another of the actors:

Delta Dawn what’s that flower you’ve got on
Could it be a faded rose from days gone by?
And did I hear you say he was a’meeting you here today
To take you to his castle in the sky-eye
(Collins & Harvey, 1973)

I thereby used the photographs and song to heighten the feelings of loss and dejection the woman casual academic seems to experience at having the meeting cancelled, and to theatricalise ‘the essence’ of the scene (Wake, 2013). I specifically employed visual images in this way as they are a direct medium of communication. As Barone and Eisner (1997) suggested, visual images ‘make it possible to formulate meanings that elude linguistic description... synchronic features make it possible to grasp relationships that diachronic media such as language find difficult to portray’ (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 90). In addition,
the images employed helped to reinforce the gestus of the scene (Zarilli, 1995) and
imagistically communicated the narrative in a feminine form of knowing and communicating
(Fleckenstein, 1996; Langer, 1942, 1962). Please view the scene at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBrIndD4Uus

Scene 5: There’s nothing you can do, you can’t speak up.

I also exploited the aesthetic power of photographs to express the women casual
academics’ lack of voice within the university within Scene 5. Throughout most of the scene
one character stands motionless with her hands covering her mouth, representing her inability
to speak out publicly about her feelings of voicelessness. I therefore illuminated the main
preoccupation of the scene by once again presenting a large photograph covering the entire
back of the stage. Figure 7: You can’t speak up, was thus presented as the gestus and
backdrop to the stage action.
I introduced this image and the non-naturalistic drama to invite the audience to look at the dramatic action with a critical lens, or with estranged eyes (Chiari, 1971, p.164). Squiers also suggests that the use of non-naturalistic acting can be used to stimulate critical detachment and critical thinking in the audience by presenting the theatrical world in a strange way (Squiers, 2012, p.43). Finally, I directed the scene so that the character featured above lets out a loudly and unexpected scream.
The pitch and volume of the scream were much higher and louder than the rest of the oral
delivery within the drama and so the highly theatricalised moment of action was designed to
shock the audience out of any complacency or comfort they may have been experiencing.
They were thus invited to think about why the woman would scream and to consider her pain.
The scream was designed also to ‘make the performance memorable… through moments of
dramatic and theatrical awe’ (Saldaña, 2011, p.122). There were several moments of
theatrical surprise designed to re-awaken the audience from a comfortable rhythm of
narrative. The action is best illustrated in the following YouTube video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNWzLxGZrGE

**Epilogue: This is the complex part of being sessional... we’re not simple people... we’re well-educated people.**

Despite the focus on the anti-naturalistic performance aesthetic I discussed above, many aspects of the performances were also designed to develop empathetic characterisation and the arousal of empathy in the audience. This was particularly the case in the epilogue. Empathy is generally understood as the ability to emotionally engage with another; a process that is designed to stimulate more care and understanding for another/each other. It is also understood to comprise two central concepts: identification and imagination. Phillips (2003) describes identification as an ability to perceive another human being and connect with them, and imagination as the mechanism by which our perception of this other becomes our reality. Indeed, for O’Toole performed research has the potential to place ‘participants – actors and audience... into others’ shoes [and] empathise with the subjects of the drama’ (O’Toole, 2003, p.2) and Mienczakowski, Smith, & Morgan (2002) suggested that ‘performed data has an empathetic power and dimension often lacking in standard qualitative research narratives’ (Mienczakowski et al., 2002, p.34). Furthermore, for Eisner (2008) empathetic character representation and performance requires artistry in research that ‘puts a premium on evocation’ (Eisner, 2008, p. 91). I therefore directed the women to show their felt emotion through their paralinguistics, facial expression, posture and gesture. In particular, I asked one actor to show a sense of sadness and loss when she delivered the line:

So I’d be sitting up in the hospital marking papers. It was a very good thing for me to do because it was pleasurable. It sort of stretched me a bit and I could fit it in. I could still be there for my daughter. And then Sarah died when she was a week off
turning 14.

Later in the scene, I directed the actor show so that the line, “When I first started as sessional work in 2002 I had a different relationship with it... I was more optimistic about it”, was delivered with vocal and facial expressions of sadness and deep regret. I thus wanted the audience to engage both empathetically and critically with the stories of women casual academics, to be both engaged in and estranged by the action, song and images of proto-verbatim theatre.

The directorial decisions are illustrated in the following YouTube video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxOOPRz8cOI

In the development of the theatre event I spent a great deal of time trying to ensure that I worked scholartistically with the stories of women casual academics, as I agree with Anderson that ‘if it is important enough to engage the audience it will justify the time making the piece effective theatre as well as good research’ (Anderson, 2007, p.87). It was for this reason that many hours were spent rehearsing and trying out visual and sound effects to ensure that we, myself and the actors, co-constructed and bore witness to the stories of women casual academics with creatively and connoisseurship (Eisner, 2008).

**Conclusion to the chapter.**

In this chapter I have explained how I restoryed the experience of women casual academics into a piece of proto-verbatim theatre. I specifically discussed how I restoryed the women participants’ stories of casual academia into story units which maintained participants’ small stories as complete and contextualised story units. I did so in order to maintain the structure and therefore the intended meaning of their petits récits. I also shared
my ‘in-the-making’ (Childres et al., 2013) feminist process of restorying data into drama by taking data that ‘glowed’ to me (MacLure, 2013) and re-presented it within a verbatim drama. I finally explained, and illustrated, some of the specific dramaturgical and theatrical decisions I made in creating a piece of proto-verbatim theatre in order to aesthetically and cognitively engage a ‘community of interest’ (Valentine, n.d.) in the lived experience of women casual academics.

One of the least expected experiences I encountered during the restorying process was the emotional responsibility I felt in trying to bear witness to the stories of women casual academics. ‘To bear witness’ meant that I could not merely produce yet another report or dissertation as ‘another shelf-dust gathering exercise’ (Mienczakowski et al., 1994, p.9). In contrast, it required me to engage an audience in the women’s stories of hope, loss, survival, and love of teaching through image, sound and fully embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) re-presentation. It also required that I made transparent my role in the shaping of the re-presentation. During this process I agonised over having to select/de-select aspects of the women’s small stories to re-present them into a form that would emotionally, cognitively and aesthetically engage an audience. I found such a restorying and ‘staging’ of participants was time and emotion consuming. Yet the participants’ stories were ‘important enough to engage the audience’ and I felt I owed it to the women to make ‘effective theatre as well as good research’ (Anderson, 2007, p.87). Consequently, although the process of editing, dramatising and theatricalising the participants’ stories consumed me the process seemed to give me a richer understanding and appreciation of the lived experience of women casual academics and heightened my responsibility to bear witness to their stories with care and scholartistry. I hope that this is the narrative that is clear within this chapter.
I introduce what I understand, at this point in time, about engaging in a person-centred, arts-informed narrative inquiry into the lived experience of women casual academics by sharing two short stories. I encapsulate my understanding in stories as this entire project is predicated on the notion that we both come to know, and share what we know, through story-telling and narrative. As Connelly and Clandinin presented, people ‘lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2), and Gee explained, ‘one of the primary ways – probably the primary way – human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form’ (Gee, 1985, p. 11).

The author and critic Alberto Manguel (1997) embarked on a project about the history of reading. After writing several essays, he asked himself, ‘What could bring all these bits of lore, however rich and quaint, into any but the most arbitrary coexistence?’ And suddenly it struck me: I was the cognitive link… I soon understood that the I working through the text was not I, Alberto Manguel, but the author who had collected his wares for public display and was now arguing their worth and relevance. Strictly from the point of view of craft, what mattered was that the I on the page gave the reader a place from which to start, or a chair in which to sit, or (to change metaphors) the I played a B flat to which the readers could tune their instruments.... Brazenly idiosyncratic, I freed the book to be A History of Reading, not The History of Reading (Manguel, 1997 as cited in Neilsen, 2002, p. 16)

Neilsen shared Manguel’s story, in a conference on scholarartistic practice in education research, in order to reflect a philosophical shift from knowledge to knowing. That is, a shift from The to A, from presenting The Answer and The Way, to being open to and sharing many possible answers (Neilsen, 2002). Manguel’s story reflects a postmodern epistemology within which there are no single answers and firm conclusions to be drawn. Instead there are juxtaposing perspectives and petits récits, each worthy of consideration; each offering a reader/viewer ‘a chair in which to sit’ for a while, to appreciate the view.
The second short story I share is about how the Professor of Drama at the University of Exeter, Professor Chris McCullough, explained the theoretical and aesthetic development of theatre movements or genres. He explained a complex idea with a simple metaphor that has stayed with me for well over 20 years. McCullough described the development of innovations in theatre conventions or aesthetics with the term ‘new bottles for new wine’. In particular, he suggested that new performance styles and theatre conventions emerge in response to changes in the aim and content of new drama; and new drama emerges to reflect changes in political and cultural experience. Finally, political and cultural experience change to reflect, and simultaneously impact, philosophical shifts. In short, new philosophical, ideological, political and social ideas require, and shape, new forms of expression, or ‘new bottles for new wine’. McCullough’s metaphor seems relevant to academic research too, where the form and structure of a research communication should bend, stretch or rupture in response to the shape of its content and philosophical core. Indeed, I conceptualise that new forms and structures reflect a growth or blossoming, as ‘every seed destroys its container, or else there would be no fruition’ (Scott-Maxwell, 1979).

Correspondingly a dimension of this dissertation is a critique which seeks to trouble the restrictive masculinity of linear, rational and teleological argumentation and the modernist, monologic, positivist epistemology it inhabits (and by which it is shaped). It would thus be incongruent for me to now include a definitive or ‘trustworthy conclusion and actionable recommendations’ in this chapter, as a ‘foil to the introduction’, and create a work that reflects ‘an encapsulated whole’ (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Therefore, in line with Blumenreich who suggests that postmodern narratives ‘resist the conventional “resolution” of standard narratives that stabilise meaning and implicitly favour a single interpretation’ (2004, p.79), I do not attempt to write a complete, neatly tied up, monovocal, dispassionate
conclusion. I do not create ‘The Answer and The Way’ (Manguel, as cited in Neilsen, 2002) for this arts-informed narrative inquiry. Instead, I use this chapter to re-view (as opposed to review, assess, appraise, or examine) the ideas and practices with which I engage/d in this project. In particular, I re-view ideas and practices that either still puzzle or excite me, the ideas that shape/d my research and scholartistic practice and compel/led me to read more, think more, and engage more in this research. I thus adopt a feminist focus and form to this chapter; a content and form that reflect a postmodern approach to research. In particular, I ‘promiscuously’ (Childers et al., 2013), break the cardinal rule of academic writing by introducing some new ideas or reflections into this dissertation’s final chapter. This is because as I re-view the three main questions that formed the basis of this research, I apply a newer/current lens (a re-lens), and this re-lens re-frames the views I have described in Chapters 1 to 8. I could of course instead go back over each previously written chapter and change/re-describe the view/s reflected there in order to create a neatly coherent, logical, argumentative structure; one where all the arguments fully align with the reflections identified in this chapter. But I think that process would belie the messy, layered and iterative nature of this re-search project, where understanding emerges and increases through a layering of re-reading and reflection. My re-search is ‘in- the-making’ (Childers et al., 2013), emerging through searching and searching again for understanding/s. This chapter therefore contains part present reflection and part past reflections, as it describes what I did, what I came to understand and what I currently come to know – on re-viewing past ideas or practices. I shall reflect this re-view process by using both present and past tenses to illuminate my iterative process of seeing again what I have already seen or done.

Therefore, in this final chapter I present my current/latest reflections on the discoveries and understandings of my PhD process. In doing so I stretch and slightly nudge
open the structure/stricture of the traditional PhD dissertation by seeing again or re-viewing some of the main ideas that still puzzle or excite me in relation to the three main questions I ask/ed in this project:

‘How do women casual academics describe their work experience?’

‘What are the characteristics of person-centred research?’

‘What considerations inform the development of a form of communication that is congruent with the lived experience of women casual academics?'

**Reflecting on how Women Casual Academics Describe Their Work Experience**

The women casual academics who participated in this study tended to describe their work experience in stories that incorporate analogies and metaphors and employ an ante-narrative focus and structure. This observation may at first seem unsurprising as I previously discuss/ed my acceptance of a narrative epistemology in detail in Chapter 3. Indeed, I cite/d many scholars and arguments to support the notion that we come to know and express our understanding through narrative. I quote/d Gare to advocate that narrative is a ‘primordial act… [employed] in the creation of the self, and of culture, and in all social and intellectual life’ (Gare, 2007, p. 95). I also present/ed Hardy’s contention that thinking narratively is a routine act of human consciousness and that for Bakhtin narrative is dialogical, relational and situated. In addition I cite/d Bruner’s description of a ‘human readiness for narrative’, and our ‘predisposition to organize experience into a narrative form, into plot structures’ (1991, p.45) to further endorse this view. I finally illustrate/d my acceptance of narrative as a primordial and enduring process of knowing with a quotation from Barthes that ‘narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives’ (1966, p.14).
Yet, my re-view of how women casual academics describe their work experience identifies that the women casual academics who shared their experience with me used stories, not narrative, to express their lived experience and that there appears to be a significant difference between the two forms of communication. This difference (between stories and narratives) was explicated by Boje (2001) who claimed that narratives are ‘retrospective’ accounts coupled with explanations that bind and determine the meaning of the narrative/account (Boje, 2001). In contrast, Boje argued that stories possess a pre or ‘antenarrative’ structure (2001) and tend to be non-linear and less ‘plotted’ or teleological than narratives. As I explained in Chapter 5, for Boje, stories represent the feelings and experiences of people at their time of telling, and so fail to create a unified and cohesive form or meaning. Instead stories are usually presented in fragments, ‘bits that are told here and there’, as there is no ‘whole’ story (2001, p.5). Therefore the main difference between narrative and story is the organisation of the content and the temporal relationship of the teller to the experience being communicated. That is, it appears that stories are in-the-making (Childers et al., 2013), express lived experience as it is lived, exclude theorisation or focus on what the experience means, and lack a coherence that is added to a story through a post-edit, post-experience evaluation of the experience. Significantly, the women participants in this study described their lived experience as in-the-making (Childers et al., 2013) stories by using the present tense in their storytelling:

I love teaching, I love working with the students…

I’m an educator and feel strongly about the subject matter

Well, why don’t you work as a tutor? We’d love to have somebody like you as a tutor…

Oh, that shot in the arm. That rush, it’s addictive....
In addition, the women present/ed their lived experience of casual academic work in short snippets of story, ‘bits that are told here and there’ (Boje, 2001, p.5), or with what Gee describes as ‘dysfluence’ caused by the storyteller’s interiority and inward focus on their story (Gee, 1991). Many of the women’s sentences or ideas trail/ed off or trail/ed off but are/were picked up again in later communication. In this way the fragmented structure of the women’s communication seems to reflect a lack of completion and a lack of theorisation or post-experience reflection, both of which are characteristic of antenarratives storytelling form. Examples include:

I still enjoy the teaching, but there’s this contradiction…

I find the wait really awful and that uncertainty, like you just don’t know, you can’t plan…

I don’t know what’s happening… I don’t know what’s going to happen. I don’t know what’s going to happen...and it’s almost three months or two and a half months.

The semester breaks, the anxiousness and frustrations... so long

my life’s on hold… I have to save for months before I can get it fixed. I catch buses and hang around campus for hours waiting for a bus home

Moreover, the women in this study tend/ed to employ poetic descriptions by using analogies and metaphors in their stories, rather than using a literal form of communication. Poetic descriptions are again characteristic of storytelling. These features are evident in the following excerpts:

So I have a good work schedule... it’s almost like having two days in one

There’s this drown or drought, the busyness and life-ness of semester and then there’s this long wait in between semesters
this might sound silly – I almost see what I do as a form of community service....

Finally, the participants create/d detailed descriptions of specific stories, or petits récits, to describe their experience of casual academic work, examples include:

I get up… my alarm goes off at quarter past four in the morning... because my husband works away. His alarm goes off at quarter past four so I stay in sync with him. I like to be part of his day

The middle of last year I was talking to another academic in the discipline, and I’m quite close to this person as I’d tutored with him before, and he said to me that the discipline leader told him that I was off limits... They weren’t going to be giving me the teaching hours. I was off limits

So I will get up anywhere from 3:30 and then I will work for a few hours and then take a break for breakfast....

I am/was particularly struck by the detailed nature of the way in which the women participants in this project communicate/d their lived experience of casual academic work. It is this detail that communicates an idiosyncrasy and individualised person-hood/womanhood of experience that glows/glowed to me (MacLure, 2013); and it is the colour/detail of the stories that help/ed me visualise the women’s lives and empathise more easily with them. These women participants’ share/d stories of their experience, in fragments of petits récits, with vivid description and poeticism.

I do not offer the reflections above as the answer to a question with which I engage/d in this project; ‘How do women casual academics describe their work experience?’ As I only discuss/ed the communications of six women casual academics from three different universities in South East Queensland I do/did not presume to draw any generalisable or firm conclusions from a small and specific case study group. In addition, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, neither do/did I aim to create firm conclusions in this dissertation; I instead
simply re-view some of the ideas and practices with which I engage/d in this project. Yet through my re-considering or re-viewing the way in which the women participants describe/d their experience I am compelled to re-consider the narrative epistemology I employ/ed in this project. Although I still accept that we come to know and express what we know through narrative (for all the reasons I expressed in Chapter 3), it now appears possible to accept that knowing and communicating through narrative is a second stage in the epistemological (or coming to know and be known) process. The first phase of coming to know may indeed be a pre-reflective, pre-theorising, and pre-organising phase based on the process of creating and sharing stories; as indeed the women in this study communicate/d their understanding. The second phase may then be a narrative phase where stories are organised to mean something beyond the story itself. Though I cannot/could not draw any firm conclusions I identify/have identified that in this very small case study the women participants communicate/d their experience in an ‘in-the-making’ form (Childers et al., 2013). They employed the communication form of a pre or antenarratives by sharing idiosyncratic petits récits, in fragments of story, told in the present tense, containing analogy and metaphoric language. It is possible that retrospectively the women may come to know their experience as narrative, but all I understand at this moment of my re-view, is that at the moment of their telling the women casual academics in this study describe/d their experience in stories.

**Reflecting on the Characteristics of Person-Centred Research**

In re-viewing the characteristics of person-centred research I am/was struck by the relationship between person-centred and feminist research. In addition to engaging in negotiated decision making throughout person-centred research, that is already well-documented in Chapter 8 of this dissertation, a second significant characteristic of the person-centred research project in which I engage/d is peculiar to research projects such as this one,
person-centred research that is focused on women participants and carried out by a woman researcher. I consider/ed such women-focused projects as both person-centred and feminist research. However, I have not (yet) found any reference to a relationship between feminist and person-centred research in any published material, so am putting myself (and my understanding) out on a theoretical limb in the following discussion. But, in re-viewing this person-centred project in relation to the sex of the participants and researcher, and the lived experience of women casual academics as its focus, I understand a symbiotic relationship between person-centred and feminist research.

As I discuss/ed in Chapter 1, Schmid determined that person-centred research takes into account that ‘persons exist as women and men, not as neutrals’ (Schmid, n.d.). Correspondingly, in this research project I focus/ed on the experience of women casual academics and position/ed their womanhoods as a central characteristic of their personhoods. In doing so, I automatically ‘trouble/d’ traditional research practices that employ a masculine subject/object of inquiry (Somers, 1994) and androcentric lens (Harding, 1987). Therefore, being person-centred and taking into account the female sex of the participants can, as I understand it, lend themselves to feminist research practice.

In particular, as Somers explained in her seminal paper, *The Narrative Construction of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach* (1994), traditional 20th century research did not reveal the gendered, racial, or class-specific nature of the ‘general’ social being/research participant. It instead assumed that the social being was white, male and middle-class, as this was the ‘general’ character of the researcher undertaking the research. Correspondingly, in traditional research, white, middle-class males were presented as functional social beings, and all Others were described as deviant, as all Others were seen in relation to the functional
social being. In response there was a move by feminist researchers to ‘propose and envision a theoretical alternative that transforms those very devalued traits of (female or racial) otherness into a newly esteemed ideal of selfhood and normatized social action’ (Somers, 1994, p. 609). Somers specifically identified Carol Gilligan as a leading example of a feminist researcher whose work subverted notions of Otherness, by rejecting Kohlberg’s (1981) masculine criteria for assessing moral stages of development. As Somers explained:

Gilligan’s response was to refuse the terms of the debate altogether. She thus did not develop yet another explanation for why women are “deviant”. Instead, she turned the question on its head by asking what was wrong with the theory – a theory whose central premises defines 50% of social beings as “abnormal”. Gilligan translated this question into research by subjecting the abstraction of universal and discrete agency to comparative research into female behavior evaluated on its own term. The new research revealed women to be more “concrete” in their thinking and more attuned to “fairness” while men acted on “abstract reasoning” and “rules of justice”. These research findings transformed female otherness into variation and difference – but difference now freed from the normative de-valuation previously accorded to it. In so doing, Gilligan contributed not only to a new recognition but to a theoretical and political celebration of the very female identity that prevailing theories had denigrated (Somers, 1994, pp. 609-610).

Thus, Gilligan placed women and their terms of reference at the centre of the research. Indeed, paradoxically humbled and supported by Gilligan’s work, in this project I too investigate/d women casual academics as women, not as neutrals but women in and on their own terms. In addition, I too am a woman researcher and do/did not masquerade as neutrally indifferent to the research participants or process. Consequently, as the focus of the research is/was on women casual academics, and the researcher is/was also female, this investigation has/d the potential to be both person-centred and feminist. For instance, some of the main aims of feminist research are to recognise and challenge the androcentric bias in research/society by situating women as central subject and object/participant in research projects, and to expand what and who is considered researchable (Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber et al., 2004).
Furthermore, both forms of research (person-centred and feminist) value negotiated, participatory research practices that focus on the experience of the participant. For example, two influential feminist scholars Skeggs (1994) and Lather (1991), and the person-centred scholar Dewing (2002), each stress the importance of building trusting relationships, based upon informed consent and negotiation, in creating research ‘partnerships’. In addition, both approaches to research reject the notion of researcher objectivity which undermines full disclosure and transparency and serves to distance the researcher from the research participant/s and reader/s (MacLure, 2013; Sefcovic & Bifano, 2004; Stenhouse, 2013). Moreover, feminist and person-centred approaches to research reject the use of ‘researcher power’, exercised through data analysis, by privileging interpretivist approaches that favour the perspective of the participant/s (Dewing, 2002; MacLure, 2013). Finally, both forms of research resist the strong tendency ‘in individualistic and “hypercognitive” culture’ (Post, 1995 p. 35) to exclude the emotional, relational, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of well-being of research participants (Lury & Wakeford, 2012; MacLure, 2013). Correspondingly, feminist and person-centred approaches to research value the fully embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) nature and perspective of research participants and explore participants’ lived experience within their own frames of reference (Somers, 1994; Stenhouse, 2013). Therefore, I consider research that focuses on the female sex of participants and researcher/s; employs an ethic of negotiation to all aspects of research; acknowledges the presence of the researcher in the research; and employs interpretivist approaches to data that considers participants’ emotional, relational, aesthetic and spiritual beings, to be central characteristics of both feminist and person-centred research.
Reflecting on the Ideas (and Practice) that Inform a Re-presentation of the Lived Experience of Women Casual Academics

One of my main aims in this project is/was to make known the lived experience of women casual academics, and I came to understand early on in this project that to do so I (would) need/ed to create a communication form that illuminates/illumination the women’s lived experience. I also understand/understood that a congruent form in which to re-present the lived experience of women casual academics would need/needed to accommodate fully embodied, imagistic knowing of the women participants. I will not re-visit these ideas or their associated considerations in detail in this final chapter, as they are well-established earlier in the dissertation. I will instead summarise them briefly as they offer context to the newer/current reflections I offer in re-viewing my scholarly and emotional process of re-presenting the lived experience of women casual academics.

As established in Chapters 1 and 2, tradition academic scholarship, which incorporates scientific language and teleological structure, is incongruent with the idiosyncratic, dynamic, emotionally and imagistically lived experience of women. This is/was borne out in this project where women casual academics communicate/d their idiosyncratic experience in fragmented, detailed, and poetic petits récits. Therefore one of the central considerations in re-presenting the lived experience of women casual academics is/was that the form employed needs/needed to be congruent with both the storied nature and the individual experience of all participants’ experience. A polyphonic form is/was thus required to allow several individual stories, or petits récits, to be placed alongside each other, in equal value with one another, without ‘protagonistic’ privilege. Additionally, re-presentation of experience is/was informed by what is understood as the fully embodied, imagistic and dynamic nature of experience. Thus, lived experience needs/needed to be re-
presented in a form that has capacity to incorporate ‘the emotional, relational, aesthetic and spiritual aspects’ (Post, 1995, p3), imagistic (Fleckenstein, 1996) and messy (Etherington, 2004) dynamism of how life is lived and understood. Finally, Gould (1996) and Etherington (2004) observed that life cannot be explained in written communication, and Hendry (2010) suggested that experience requires interpretation not explanation, and that interpretation requires communication methods that are distinct from written argument. Thus, traditional, written forms of written academic that explain experience, fail to express or illuminate it. Consequently, it is/was important to me to consider using media other than traditional written discourse for re-presenting the emotional, aesthetic, fragmented and poetic stories of women casual academics in this study. Therefore, a significant factor that impacts/impacted on the form through the lived experience of women casual academics can be re-presented is/was the development of a non-discursive/traditionally scholarly ‘bottle’ for the new wine of the women casual academics’ stories.

In particular, I am/was also influenced in my approach to re-presenting the stories of women casual academics by the potential of artistic communication to express lived experience and engage others in that experience. In particular, I am/was also struck by the capacity of artistic re-presentation to ‘express’, rather than ‘tell’, lived experience. As Dewey (1934) explained, art ‘does something different from leading to an experience. It constitutes one’ (cited in de Mello, 2007, p.207). This is supported by Barone (2000) who argued that art allows narrative inquirers to create opportunities for experience to be known and engaged vicariously. Additionally, Lincoln and Denzin (1994) identified that arts-informed communication is suited to a contemporary, perspectival, post-modern epistemology that is currently constricted by traditional, positivist forms of academic communication. Using story as a metaphor for academic discourse, they claim that ‘the Old Story will no longer do and
we know that it is inadequate’ (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 584). They also suggested that new paradigms can no longer be contained within or confined to ‘the restrictions of the past discourse’ (p. 584). I am/was therefore informed in re-presenting the lived experience of women casual academics by the capacity of artistic communication to express fully lived experience, to create vicarious and congruent experience for audiences/readers, and to present – and not contain – the new story of women participants’ lived experience.

A third important consideration in re-presenting the stories of women casual academics is/was the emotional investment it takes/took to centralise the communication of Others whilst ethically making transparent my/researcher position in the re-presentation. My aim in this project to make known (or bear witness) to the lived experience of women casual academic is/was motivated by their doubly Othered (Fanon, 1967) status. Women casual academics are Othered by nature of their sex (de Beauvoir, 1949 in McCann & Kim, 2003) and in relation to their peripheral status, and lack of voice and presence in university (Bassett, 1998; Brown et al., 2010; Kimber, 2003). Consequently, I do/did not want to Other them further by speaking of or for them (Alcoff, 2006, 2009). Yet at the same time I am/was aware that it is impossible to know another (Alcoff, 2006; Richardson, 1997), or neutrally re-present anOther (Richardson, 1997). Consequently, re-presenting Others is a translation or re-telling (Loch, 2014). I therefore identify/identified that the most significant challenge in the restorying process, and indeed in the entire project, is/was to find a balance between centralising the stories and voices of women casual academics whilst explicitly exposing the constructed nature of its/my re-presentation. The emotional toll of this challenge is accepted by Josselson who claimed that researchers should carry out narrative research ‘in anguish’ as ‘we balance the vulnerability of the participants with the need to retain the personal nature of the narrative for it to be of value to others’ (Josselson, 1996, p. 70). Correspondingly, as
discussed in Chapter 8, I share/d Janet Richards’ feelings when she felt as though she would ‘trespass with muddy feet into the hearts of her participants’ (Richards, 2011, p.11) as she/we work with the words/worlds of Others. Indeed, my experience of trying to provide a platform for Others’ stories to be heard, whilst exposing my hand in the re-telling, is/was both time and heart consuming. The challenge of balancing two ethical demands is/was the most significant factor I experience/d in re-presenting the lived experience of women casual academics.

Without prescribing how to best balance the voice of the participants and researcher in creating an ethical data narrative, I personally find/found the notion of working ‘in between’ myself, as researcher, and the data (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Loch, 2014), as working in ‘the hyphen’ (Fine & Weiss, 2002), a liberating conceptualisation. I use/d this conceptualisation to develop a hybridised approach to the re-storying process; a form that merges/merged the women participants’ stories with my engagement of them. In particular, I employ/ed a re-storying process which both allows/allowed me to capture participants’ words and paralinguistics, and MacLure’s (2013) approach of selecting data for re-presentation that resonates/resonated with me. The hybridised, improvised, and arguably ‘promiscuous’ restorying approach (Childers et al., 2013) allows/allowed me to centralise the words and imbedded paralinguistic meaning of the participants’ stories, whilst simultaneously engaging me and my emotional connection to the stories, in the re-presentation. What I learn/ed from the restorying process is/was that feminist research is affective (Lury & Wakeford, 2012) and that feminist scholars and scholarship legitimise affective research engagement. I feel/felt overwhelmingly validated and vindicated by reading the insights of Lury and Wakeford, (2012), MacLure (2013) and Richardson (2007) who give/gave permission to feel as well as to cognitively reflect within this research. In particular, I accept/ed Wilkinson’s (2014)
insight that a researcher’s anxiety can create a ‘readiness to listen, to question’ and engage the researcher in a craft that is ‘distinguished between the presentation of research as reported text and research reinterpreted for performance’ (Wilkinson, 2014, p. 91). That is, by accepting and attending to my emotional involvement in the restorying project I become/became more engaged in the re-presentation project. In this project feminist notions of the researcher’s personal involvement in the research project therefore significantly inform/ed the process of re-presenting the lived experience of women casual academics.

These final two considerations, that the researcher’s personal involvement in the research project significantly informs/ed the process of re-presenting the lived experience of Others, and that new forms of communication are/were needed to express and reflect the current acceptance of a narrative epistemology and feminist, person-centred approaches to research, is/was of central significance to this whole project. Indeed, I recognise/have recognised that traditional discourse inhabits and reflects a masculine, androcentric paradigm and hegemony. In particular, I critique/d grapholect (Bizzell, 1992) or the precise, concise, formal and highly structured language that is privileged in academia; language that ‘standardises’ and ‘normalises’ highly conservative, elitist discourse structures by adopting a persona described as ‘male, and white, and economically privileged’ (Bizzell, 1992, pp.58-61). In addition, I critique/d the adversarial qualities of academic argumentation that serve to dichotomise knowledge and reinforce a positivist and modern paradigm (Anderson, 2012). In contrast, I also recognise/d the focus on inner experience that determines the emotional, intuitive and sensual form of feminine writing; a form not instigated by a political or adversarial act of opposition to masculine writing. The feminine form of écriture feminine (Cixous, 1976, 1998) exists according to a feminine preoccupations and process, not relative
to masculine frameworks or practice, and as such accommodates a diversity of personal viewpoints and practices (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan 1982). Finally, I identify/identified the fluid, poetic, image-infused, emotional and sensual narrative form of women’s experience and writing (Billingham, 2010; Chen, 2011; Cixous, 1976, 1998) and this informs/ed the creation of an imagistic proto-verbatim theatre piece as one form of communication through which to express the lived experience of women casual academics. Yet, perhaps more radically, the fluid amalgamations of masculine with feminine forms of communication also inform/informed the development of this biculturally constructed bicultural dissertation (Blankenship & Robson, 1995).

Bicultural communication is a hybrid form of discourse that manoeuvres between feminine/affective communication and masculine/logical argumentation. The feminine aspects of communication include the use of first person narration where ideas, personal experience and emotions are offered but not prescribed as definitive arguments; whilst masculine logic employs established scholarship to validate and ‘legitimise’ logical and offer rational research approaches and discussion. Indeed, in this project I aim/ed not to contest the current representations of casual academics, or its modernist and masculinist frames of reference; I instead seek/sought to place the hitherto unearthed stories of women casual academics alongside the existing literature in order to create a scholarly and scholartistic (Nielsen, 2002) dialogic relationship or dialectic. In my endeavour to do this and to bear witness to the lived experience of women casual academics I am/was cognisant of two dialectical positions. One position, that urges/urged me to reject traditional androcentric scholarly discourse, is supported by Professor Catherine MacKinnon (1989) in her observation that ‘it is difficult for women to stage a revolution using the tools of the oppressor – especially his words’ (Cited in Somers, 1994, p.610). This position, that feminist
researchers need to create alternative forms of communication to reflect their alternative research aims, focus, epistemologies and methodologies, is supported by Audre Lorde who warned that ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’ (1981). The second, and potentially paradoxical, position is that without the platform of scholarship and its audience, we (feminist researchers), become further unvoiced. In particular, Fleckenstein (1996) warned women academics against completely rejecting scholarship as a mode of communication, as if we rely on images and feminine codes alone ‘women just exchange one kind of silence for another’ (1996, p.924). She thus encouraged women/me to use words and images, to use masculine and feminine forms of communication in order to be heard and acknowledged. Bicultural communication therefore corresponds with Childers et al.’s (2013) aim for feminist research to ‘be legible but pushing the edges of scholarship’ (Childers et al., 2013, p. 517). Indeed, as Richardson (1997) urged, by adopting a bicultural mode of communication I ‘de-discipline’ academic conventions, stretch the form of academic communication, and skirt around its borders, by incorporating experimental and subjective scholarship. I attempt/ed to follow a process endorsed by Suzanne Gannon, who describes her work as zig-zagging ‘between categories, that produce knowledge in the gaps between analysis and creativity, reason and emotion, intellectual and aesthetic, mind and body, academic and everyday’ (Gannon, 2005, p.629).

My engagement, therefore, to the problem of the lack of voice of women casual academics in the scholarship of sessional staffing is/was to identify that the problem is wider than the lack of voice of women casual academics. The problem is that the traditional academic scholarship silences feminine and feminist voice more generally. In response I blur/red the conventions of both écriture feminine and traditional scholarship in order to reflect, in content and form, and to make known, the lived experience of women casual

academics. I offer/ed an alternative by writing in-between scholarship and écriture feminine, between myself and the women casual academics I seek/sought to re-present.

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I cannot fully evaluate the extent to which I achieved scholaristic (Nielsen, 2002) research outputs, or écriture feminine in my re-presentation, in content and form, of the lived experience of women casual academics. I do feel though, that currently, in the now of this ‘in-the-making’ dissertation (Childers et al., 2013) that the words of the research participants, and many of those that communicated their response to the proto-verbatim drama based on the lived experience of women casual academics I re-presented, validate the time and heart consuming process with which I engage/d in this arts-informed narrative inquiry:

Brave, revealing and all true. Presenting your research the way you did today was so powerful. I felt sad and remembered all the ways I used to pull a living together. I also reflected on my role in employing sessionals over several years… I wanted you to know it was brilliant and it will change things far more than writing a paper.

I especially liked the use of the spotlight on each actor’s face.

All is I can say is I applaud your bravery in presenting something so dramatic and honest.

Congratulations, such a wonderful presentation today, and thank you for sharing your work, I’m so glad I got to see it. The performance was thoroughly captivating, and the content so resonant; I came close to tears and I know… who was sitting beside me, was physically shaking at the end. Powerful work.

Thank you. Every element of the drama was so profound, and so professionally done. It was a treat to experience it and live it through the actors’ words… It talked to me on so many emotional levels… thank goodness it was dark as I had tears rolling down my face.
Be proud – what you have achieved, and the ways, possibly that you may never fully know, that your work will heighten awareness, influence change and shift mindsets is inspiring. Not many PhDs have the reach.

You are an absolute force to be reckoned with! The brilliance of the play and your project is that you have given voice to an entire populace that has been muted. It is truly revolutionary Gail… nothing prepared me for the emotion that the actual performance provoked – not just within me – but all the women who sat at my table. We all spoke afterwards and agreed that we felt as though you’d gotten the dialogue directly from us.

I complete this work, as seems fitting, with the words of one of the courageous and inspiring research participants:

Gail – it was simply amazing. Hearing my story – and the story of thousands of other sessionals… It made me think of how court jesters and political cartoons have been used in the past to deliver difficult messages. Presenting what we have always been far too frightened to express ourselves….


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