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18. Daring to be different: a dialogue on the problems of getting qualitative research published

Robert Smith
Alistair R. Anderson

Qualitative methodologies continue to proliferate in social sciences such as sociology and anthropology. Yet, despite this uptake they currently exist on the margins of entrepreneurship research. Indeed, Rae (2001) criticised entrepreneurship researchers for failing to make fuller use of sophisticated qualitative methodologies in researching at the frontiers of entrepreneurship. This chapter argues that there are valid structural and career orientated reasons why this is so. We argue that qualitative researchers often have to 'dare to be different'. Writing up qualitative research is difficult because a judgement call has to be made whether to tailor the research towards a standard journal article or whether to allow the research to dictate the style and presentation of the finished article. 'Daring to be different' may be a valued entrepreneurial trait and hence should be one that was appreciated by journal editors or reviewers in the field – alas, it is rarely so. Academic careers and reputations are built upon the reputation of achieving repeated publication in respected journals and by adhering to the conformity of accepted disciplinary peer conventions. Consequentially, this chapter documents the development of a research and publication strategy of one of its authors, suggesting some alternative publication strategies. Furthermore, it is an *Impressionistic tale* in the style of VanMaanen (1988), written in a dialogic, conversational style with a colleague.

INTRODUCTION

Introducing the chapter *(As narrated by Robert Smith)*

I consider this brief section necessary because it introduces the problem to be discussed, namely how to market qualitative research that is visibly and qualitatively different from the "conventions" of logico-deductive empiricalism. As such, it lies at the heart of the spirit of this handbook - namely, researching at the frontiers of entrepreneurship using qualitative methodologies. The aim is to clarify the focus of the chapter, i.e. to articulate the problems faced by me, as a junior researcher, in achieving publication in academic outlets, of work steeped in the qualitative methodologies of social constructivism and semiotics.

In keeping with the title of this chapter, it should be stressed that its style and format is different from what one would normally expect to encounter. This is no scholarly mimesis, relying on the familiar crutches of literary review, followed by the setting of research questions, methodology, analysis and conclusions. It is not the aim of the chapter to be different, nor to justify its difference. Notwithstanding this, writing outside the box is even scarier than thinking outside the box, because thoughts and spoken words can be ephemeral, but the written word is not. This is perhaps apt, as achieving publication is a continuing creative process of ontogenesis.

We hope other doctoral students and experienced scholars find this chapter useful because it makes a number of challenges to mainstream research practices and protocols. It should also be helpful because it documents and examines the learning processes, which I underwent during my doctoral programme. Hence, the chapter should be read in the spirit of enquiry in which it was written. What is most striking is that both anonymous reviewers, my supervisor (and mentor) Professor Alistair R Anderson and both editors patently entered into this spirit, whilst acknowledging that they had refrained from applying their normal reviewing methods in critiquing earlier drafts. This enabled a genuine dialogue to develop. For this I thank them. In addition, on reading the first draft one of the editors commented that Alistair and I had articulated many valid points, which they had thought but had never dared to write.

In this chapter, I present my voice as "the voice of enquiry" seeking answers to several questions. The opening question is – *"Why do we see so little semiotic research in Entrepreneurship Journals"?* This is important because perhaps the answer lies in that semiotics shares and indeed exemplifies some of the problems of a qualitative approach. I am interested in values, morality and other socio-subjective elements of the entrepreneurial process that are difficult to research empirically. This dialogic commentary seeks answers why, if qualitative methodologies are extensively used in the social sciences such as anthropology and sociology, are they not used more frequently in the field of entrepreneurship research? Notwithstanding this uptake elsewhere, qualitative research currently exists on the margins of entrepreneurship research. This led to Rae (2001) criticising entrepreneurship researchers for failing to make fuller use of qualitative methodologies in researching at the frontiers of entrepreneurship. Why is this so? As shall be demonstrated, there are sound academic reasons. The second question to be answered is two-fold, namely *"Is it worth trying to publish such research, and what are the benefits"*?

In the next section my supervisor and mentor introduces the problems as he perceives them, namely (1) that qualitative methods are held in some suspicion in certain academic circles; and that (2) the problematic nature of entrepreneurship and ways of explaining it. In the following two sections, in response to Alistair, I justify the use of a more impressionistic approach and explain why I chose to write this chapter as an impressionistic tale of the field in the manner of VanMaannen (1988). Thereafter I provide a critique of the academic cultures of modesty and perfection. This is followed by sections - on being qualitatively different, discussing the craft of learning to write qualitatively; and on daring to write differently, which explains why qualitative writing is different from other forms of academic writing. Thereafter, I continue the discussion on the generic problems of getting published per se. Later sections concentrate upon strategies for making the most of one's differences; and 'how to' section - setting out further traditional and alternative strategies for getting published. The penultimate section deals with developing the vital skill of learning to be self-critical. The final section proper sets out the argument for the necessity of compiling a research – publication strategy. The chapter ends with a concluding dialogue by Alistair R Anderson.

Introducing the problem *(As narrated by Alistair R Anderson)*

I find that there is a dual problem. First, that qualitative work is held in some suspicion by certain circles. It lacks the apparent scientific basis of positivism. It moves outside

the well- established realm of hypotheses testing. Because positivism has provided all the advances in hard science since the Enlightenment, qualitative approaches may be seen as drifting back to the metaphysics of supposition. Journal editors want to be confident that what they publish will withstand academic scrutiny, so there may be an understandable reluctance to risk publishing anything that might be construed as too subjective, too interpretative and hence lacking in verifiable objectivity. Of course, those of us who recognize that human beings are subjective creatures also know that humanity does not respond according to any universal laws. As qualitative researchers, we see our task as trying to understand what is going on, and to provide some explanation of what and why this happens. Consequently we need to have editors and reviewers who share our epistemological and ontological view of the world and the processes that happen within it. But we also need to be constantly aware of the issue and address critical issues.

Consider, for example, how many qualitative papers purport to use grounded theory. Yet, few actually do, because in practice, it is difficult to operationalise usefully. However, it is a quasi-scientific methodology and appears to objectify the analysis the research process. What is worse is that many researchers believe that grounded theory is based the social constructivist paradigm whereas it is in reality based in the critical realist paradigm! Compare grounded theory with ethnographic work and narrative, where we are convinced by the seeming accuracy of naturalism; where we recognise the processes described, in this way we come to *believe* the story. Consequentially, we are open to be persuaded by the analysis, but this analysis may well be developed from flights of imagination and intuition (as can the entrepreneurial act). Again compare this with the statistical analysis of positivism, rarely is this questioned, but do we ever know who really completes the questionnaires? Do we really know how accurate these ticks are? Yet these data "facts" appear so much more rigorous than the "feelings" we try to describe in social constructionism.

The second problem lies in the nature of entrepreneurship and ways of explaining it. These aspects cross cut each other and, I think, lie at the root of our work. Entrepreneurship is a practice, it is *doing*. Only academics, and perhaps politicians, try to shift it from an action form into any sort of objectification. So when we talk about entrepreneurship we attempt to freeze it, capture aspects by looking only at one side of an unfolding process. This may be the wrong way to go about it, but what else can we do? However, entrepreneurship is creative. It is about creating futures, from a whole range of possible futures. It needs imagination to form ideas and even more imagination to turn these into new realities. Thus, entrepreneurship is an economic art form. In turning to how to tell (and attempt to understand) entrepreneurship, perhaps we might try to emulate the conventions of the art world. Painters try to capture reality in two dimensions on canvas; we try to capture social constructions of entrepreneurship in the single dimension of the written word. Just as a good picture should invoke emotions about its content, surely our efforts in print should also excite the imaginations. The words should reach out to tell the story and incite the imagination to soar to complete the picture. If we are right, and not on a flight of fancy ourselves, what we should be doing in our written down work is to engage the reader. We should do this by capturing attention, by telling the story. But that is only the beginning - we need to engage attention and imagination, forcing the reader to think about our words. I don't think it matters too much whether they agree or disagree with our analysis. Even if they disagree they have engaged and developed their own ideas to refute ours. The pool of

our collective understanding is richer for this. It is to the matter of engaging that Robert now turns.

JUSTIFYING A DIFFERENT MORE IMPRESSIONISTIC APPROACH
(As narrated by Robert Smith)

The narrative tone of this chapter is intentionally anecdotal, conversational and mentorial. This is very relevant, bearing in mind the advice of Wolcott (1990:69) who succinctly noted that we tend to remember "*material presented through anecdotes and personal asides*". This chapter is also written in a dialogical format, which deviates from traditional academic style. There are precedents for this – see for example, Atherton and Elsmore (2004) and Hoskings and Hjorth (2004). This chapter did not begin its existence with the intention of being different but genuinely evolved as a dialogue between the different viewpoints between Alistair and I. However, I took refuge in the assertion of Gartner (2001) that entrepreneurship, as a phenomenon, is inherently about "*being different*". We are also grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers who suggested that we concentrate on the dialogic aspect of the paper, even at the risk of making the chapter deviate even further from the norm. However, it is necessary at this stage to explain why it is an impressionistic tale of the field.

An impressionist's tale of the field.

I consider this chapter to be an impressionist tale of the field because it describes the ontological process and the development of a qualitative research style that 'dared to be different' and as such required to adopt a writing style that is consistent with the difference of the material. As academics, in a research community we are all to a greater or lesser degree in the same field - the field of publication. It is apt that John VanMaanen (1988) named one of his categories of tales from the field, as being "*Impressionistic Tales*" in recognition of the creative and poetic dimensions of ethnographic writing. VanMaanen drew his inspiration from art historians, which is fitting because the practice of entrepreneurship can be viewed as an art form, for example, Anderson and Jack (1997) argue so. According to VanMaanen (1988:102) such tales present '*the doing of the fieldwork, rather than the doer or the done*'. It is the doing of the research that most of us find stimulating. All too often the writing up is a chore. There is no getting away from the fact that qualitative research is definitely characterised by 'doing' as appreciated by Silverman (2000). Writing in his characteristic and hypnotic style VanMaanen stresses that impressionist writings try to keep both subject and object in constant view with the epistemological aim of 'braiding' the 'knower' to the 'known'. The notion of narrator and story becoming as one is appealing but difficult to achieve outside the framework of face-to-face communication. This does not excuse one from trying to fuse daring, or different research with scholarly writing? It is a dilemma which must be faced.

Furthermore, VanMaanen (1988:101-103) artfully describes impressionist tales as being startling, striking stories in which words, metaphors, phrases, and imagery are crafted to reconstruct past events into a vibrant, dramatic form, in which the author reflectively participates in the rendition of a rolling narrative. For VanMaanen such stories draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow them to practically, see, hear and feel the action. Another refreshingly marvellous and appealing factor of

such tales is that they do not masquerade as anything but stories (VanMaanen, 1988:108). Exaggeration, embellishment, and creativity are thus permitted to avoid tedium as long as it drives the story forward. Indeed, VanMaanen (1988:117) argues that well-told tales must be elaborated and embellished. According to VanMaanen (1988:110) such tales work better when orated and can appear stilted in print. Also, they permit us to say things, which we would otherwise not have been permitted to broach in conventional academic writing. Instead, they are judged in story terms on interest/attraction, on coherence, and on fidelity/truth value? Impressionist tales are often informal or irreverent, and very pragmatic because one is permitted to skip in and out of impressionist style into academic and reflective modes of address. It is clearly a useful tool in the qualitative researchers epistemological tool kit, but would you dare try this out - or any other unusual qualitative methodology for that matter? Perhaps not, unless like me, one has an understanding supervisor and liberally minded sympathetic editors. This is a pity because in many respects, a certain genre of entrepreneurial narrative and qualitative research methodology are best told as impressionistic tales. When narrated, or orated, properly with passion they are powerful, inspirational stories, which certainly leave an impression upon the audience. What follows is an attempt to write differently by me, a young [2] researcher in the field of entrepreneurship engaged on a grail-like quest to achieve the heady, elixir of publication and of course to make a modest contribution to existing knowledge in the field. Moreover, in attempting to conduct research, which is different and to articulate oneself differently, in taking one's work between, I found that I had to overcome the academic cultures of modesty and perfectionism. In reading the following critique I would like readers to consider whether I am justified in thinking along these lines.

A critique of the academic culture of modesty and perfection

Initially, when learning the craft of academic writing, I came to the conclusion that there appears to exist in the academic research community an endemic culture of modesty and a desire for perfection. In my impatience to become published, I found this both galling and frustrating, particularly since management textbooks contain the sagacious advice that perfectionism is anti-entrepreneurial. However, as I later came to realise there are valid structural and career orientated reasons why this is so. Whereas *'daring to different'* may be a valued entrepreneurial trait, it is perhaps not a trait appreciated by some Journal editors or Reviewers. Indeed, academic careers and reputations are built upon the basis of achieving repeated publication in respected journals. In other words, by adhering to conformity and accepted disciplinary peer conventions. This dictates that academic papers conform to a general length, format and layout. As such they are a peculiar 'social construction', which may conspire to limit the creativity of authors, as it seriously restricts the amount of research variables and type of material that we can include in our research agenda. Yet, the best academic arguments are often those, which are complex but couched in simplicity. Alistair's supervisor, the late Mike Scott, put this very sensibly when reproaching him for some verbosity. "*Any fool can make the simple complex, but it takes a clever man or woman to render the complex simpler*".

In addition, time constraints, associated with other personal and academic activities and the part-time nature of my studies, limited the amount of time available to me for actual research. Also, the need to research tidy, achievable projects as well as meet

conference deadlines and preferred styles limited my creativity as a researcher. Combine this with the humanistic instinct to conform and of not to appear different in any way and one can begin to understand the scale of the problem. I found that all these factors initially conspired against me to produce innovative research with an entrepreneurial bent. I railed against papers that in my opinion were technically efficient, yet uninspiring albeit that they echoed the prevailing mood of the field. Thus I perhaps consciously (or sub-consciously) set out to write differently. I wanted to publish in top-flight journals but was put off by what I considered to be the lengthy 'gestation' period from first draft to publication of some top-flight journals. From personal experience this can be well in excess of twelve months. It is hardly surprising that the attrition rate is considerable. The academic axiom of 'publish or perish' springs to mind! Yet, qualitative research by its very nature often exceeds the constraints of academic journals.

The problem is exacerbated when one's research interests are clearly delineated as being 'qualitative' and no other alternative 'quantitative' methodologies are suitable, as was the case with me. Should I be apologetic, or should I embrace the opportunity as a challenge (in true entrepreneurial style). Personally, the former course of action was never an option, but the latter was. Unfortunately, as is the theme of this book, qualitative research in entrepreneurship is often rejected by mainstream journals for a variety of reasons. This problem is compounded if one is interested in subjective criteria such as values, morality and legitimacy that lie at the centre of entrepreneurial action, as I am. As academics we are trained to cleanse our work of all notions of subjectivity. Adopting a 'moralist stance' can be viewed as being suspect. It is often easier to metaphorically 'sit on the fence' because although we are happy exhorting students to 'think outside the box' we are less able to do so ourselves when it involves writing up outside the box. After all it can be dangerous to one's career, particularly to a young researcher beginning a career in academia. It is a dilemma that is often not fully confronted / or head on? I unknowingly accepted the challenge upon entering into a verbal agreement to submit a chapter to this compilation. At the time of taking up the challenge, I now acknowledge that I was impatient to become published and was literally brimming over with exciting ideas which I found difficult to articulate (and still do).

Another problem that I, like many academics have to overcome when discussing my research with others, is to avoid the pitfalls of being considered too self-referential. It does not come easy to cite ones own work (echoes of Narcissus). Nevertheless, disseminating ones work often requires one to blatantly blow one's own trumpet, although decency and self-deprecation prevent one from ever being comfortable with it. Also, there is an innate fear of writing 'how to articles' such as this one because of the fear of setting oneself up for a fall. This fear of hubris is not confined to the entrepreneur. Consequentially, during the doctoral process (June 1999 to September 2004) and the writing up of this chapter (June 2003 to September 2004) I have come to appreciate the virtues of modesty and perfectionism. There are advantages and disadvantages of daring to be different and Table 1 below sets out the pros and cons. The most important aspect of the learning process is that I had fun on the way.

Table 18.1   *Advantages & disadvantages of daring to be different*

ADVANTAGES
• It allows one freedom to create, to be playful, and to be expressive. I liken it to an artist learning a craft. One tries various combinations of qualitative methodologies and then sits back and judges if it has worked. Often they do not. You must learn to experiment, because qualitative methodologies (unlike quantitative) are not linear equations to be followed rigorously. They do not guarantee you a result. • It engenders one's work with a sense of fun. The entrepreneurial process is embedded in the spirit of fun and should be researched in the same vein. • Research becomes more interesting because you become attached to it - often over attached. It allows one to form an illusion that you are in control of one's academic destiny because you are freed of the obligations to conform. But with this privilege comes the pitfalls and perils discussed below

DISADVANTAGES
• You place yourself in the invidious position of the artist whereby you become your own self-critic, which can be counter productive and counter creative. You do not want to let go of your work. Yet, work that is not 'put to work' is not work, it is a private indulgence. Whether you like it or not as an artist you must test the market and there is no alternative but to target journals. The patronage of an intellectual readership requires to be cultivated. • The line between imaginative, creative work and idiosyncratic dogma is a very thin one indeed. But I feel that madness and sanity are negotiable subjective human frameworks. You take a risk when you act or write differently. • There is a danger that in being different, you become insular. Even different work requires to be marketed to establish a dialogue with others. • It requires one to be self-confident because 'going against the grain' runs contrary to human nature. Yet, I do not see myself in that light, I can only hope that others agree with me and that my work resonates with them, and if it does I feel vindicated. There is a real danger of being type cast as an eccentric or other assigned roles. Thus, I may be viewed by others as being an impressionist, a deconstructionist, a rebel, a maverick when those are not the qualities I seek to emphasise. We should be free to alternate between methodologies. Having been type cast as anti establishment there is often no turning back. Being different is thus a personal choice. To use an old trading idiomatic expression. *'One has to set one's stall out'* If people like what they see they may become customers. • There is a danger that one starts to believe one's own ideological rhetoric. It is vital to become involved in the more conventional research projects of others to keep one focused and down to earth.

On being qualitatively different! *(As Narrated By Robert Smith)*

Whilst learning to write qualitatively, I came to the conclusion that practising qualitative methodologies mirrors the entrepreneurial process as they imbue social research with an air of excitement and spirit of risk taking, in which rhetoric and narrative devices replace quantitative logic to a certain extent. But this comes with a price because there is nothing worse than a story, which fails to captivate an audience. Also, in both practices, one must invest so much of one's time and energy in the process, with no concrete guarantee of return. It may seem strange to commence with a conclusion, but not to me. Story time permits it too. Bear in mind that Wolcott (1990:55) argues that '*qualitative research helps others understand themselves by seeing things through our perspective'*. The perspective in qualitative methodology must therefore be carried in a narrative framework. Irrespective of how exciting a piece

of research was to carry out, writing up is an integral part of the qualitative research process. Indeed, the iterative process, between data and analysis may even be what provides the qualitative edge to research.

The allegory of art does not end with VanMaanen, for Lomask (1987) has likened academic writing to being a '*craft*', which requires to be learned in a similar vein to the "*Biographer's craft*". Indeed, the writing should emerge from the research and be tinged with the atmosphere in which the field research was conducted. It should posses what Becker (1986:56) refers to as a "*physical embodiment*". Good qualitative writing should have a presence, but like the art of entrepreneuring it is best learned by doing. This encompasses learning by experience and from failures. I had to school myself to learn how to let go of my work. I still have a feeling of trepidation when sending work to a publisher or editor, for bold undertakings do not come without an element of risk or danger. Qualitative writing is no longer such a pioneering field and indeed, qualitative methodologies have become well established. For example they no longer require to be written in an apologetic, justificatory style, replete with extensive and explanatory methodology sections. However, extensive and explanatory methodology sections document the stringency of qualitative research and offer proof that we do not do haphazard work as positivist are prone to believe

ON DARING TO WRITE DIFFERENTLY AND GETTING PUBLISHED!

Qualitative writing is different and we should not be embarrassed to acknowledge its difference. Wolcott (1990:34-35) articulates one of the major problems of conducting qualitative research is that

> 'it generates an immense amount of data, quotes, vignettes, observations and insights that must be 'canned' (got rid of) not written. Perhaps, articulating themes, nuances and essences is all one can hope for'.

Wolcott also advocates keeping writing simple and encourages writers to write in the past tense as it kills off actions as they occur framing one's writing in a timeless style. Perhaps this is why entrepreneurial narrative is often written in the present tense where the action colours the dialogue? According to Wolcott qualitative methodologies wed us to prose. In addition, Wolcott develops this theme by stressing that in qualitative research, writing makes or breaks the study and that poor writing can dull the dialogue. Wolcott advises us to write solid pieces that stand the test of time, as opposed to capturing the mood of the moment. For Wolcott good writing enhances what is being written about. Thus articulating qualitative research may entail making use of the pictorial elements of visual representation; hence semiotics should be a constant companion to the qualitative researcher because we should make more use of pictures and images in explaining our work.

I am interested in such complex issues as entrepreneurial narrative, entrepreneurial drama, entrepreneurial identity and identifying alternative constructions of the entrepreneur and consequentially embrace social constructionism and semiotics. I am also fascinated with the notion of criminal entrepreneurship. This has to a certain extent forced my hand as in the push / pull theories of entrepreneurship. I had to 'dare to be

different' as both my research interests and workload conspired against me achieving publication. I was constantly aware that I was researching at the margins of entrepreneurship research using qualitative methodologies. I was also acutely aware that disciplinary purists may even consider that what I research and write is not entrepreneurship research *per-se.* Anyway, writing differently is probably the easy part. It is getting published that is the difficulty. However, Wolcott (1990:87) was right to council that the qualitative research act is not completed until our work is completed and accessible to others – however this may be achieved. The following sections discuss my progress as a '*rite de passage'*, documenting the false starts, enlightening the problems and the solutions.

Getting published (or more significantly - not getting published) is a major dilemma facing experienced and novice researchers alike. During my doctoral process, this was a factor, which increasingly occupied my thoughts. I felt a significant (self-imposed) pressure to publish. This is not a process unique to me because as de Sola Pool (1983) stresses, young academics are encouraged to publish as much as possible in their first five to six years. Thus, whether we like it or not, publishing is the lifeblood of academic careers and failure to achieve in this respect can blight and destroy promising careers in academia. It is interesting that the decision of where or whether to publish centres around the thorny issues of tenure and promotion (Sweeney 2004). Tenure and promotion revolve around publishing 'scholarly work' in top-flight peer reviewed journals. Indeed, scholarly publications count significantly toward salary and job security (Varian 1997). Quality and quantity both count. Academics who fail to publish are definitely marginalized in their professional networks. We are frequently told this by our tutors and at doctoral consortiums. I consider myself fortunate because not all supervisors permit their research students the degree of freedom that I have been given to write, to make mistakes and learn from them. Freedom to express, but also freedom to fail! I enjoy writing and reading. I like writing short stories, writing in the style of Dickens, in the style of Tolkien, or tragedies. Good writing requires practice. I write best to music playing in the background. Yet none of this is apparent in a completed article.

Writing up can be a time consuming, stressful activity, which pervades the research process. This pressure can actually have a detrimental effect upon the creativity of the researcher and can in turn affect the quality of the writing. The personal and institutional pressure to conduct and write up research can be intense. Writing ability and the integrity of research are important but ultimately I will be measured by the bottom line – the number and quality of my publications. It is the academics equivalent of the gunslinger's notches on the barrel of his gun, or the fighter pilots' killing tally and as such is a particularly masculine ritual. Likewise, quantity is often associated and erroneously conflated with prowess and ability. I argue that this can lead to research being designed and carried out expressly for the purpose of writing a reputation enhancing journal article or to attend a specific conference. More important but less easily researched topics are often ignored and sidelined. It is a narrative or dialogue which impinges upon the personal conversations of many academics but is silent in academic journals.

It is surprising, but there may be sound structural reasons why getting qualitative research published is difficult, given the incisive suggestion of Wolcott (1990) who notes that a major problem of qualitative methodologies is that they are difficult to conclude. Indeed, he advocates against trying to do so. This structural defect actually

makes it difficult to write up such research for quality journals, because the journal article by its very nature drives one towards providing conclusions and implications. In qualitative studies, it is sometimes the actual research that is interesting, *per se* not the conclusion. It is also common mistake to conclude a qualitative study with a flourish. Yet good writing style demands a flourish. Similarly, Wolcott (1990) advocates that one should avoid summarising. An alternative strategy is to invoke reflection and posit ones judgements. Such reflectivity pervades qualitative writing, because they often read like an unfinished tale, and indeed they are. They are part of a continuing learning process in which the author engages in trying to achieve 'Verstehen': a full understanding and appreciation of the phenomenon. In writing apparently different papers I find myself engaging in a continuing dialogue with myself. When I read the consecutive papers, sequentially a rather different picture emerges. I find that I have (as perhaps other qualitative researchers do) left unanswered questions and themes, in a preceding paper and subconsciously answer them in the next. It does not always make tidy reading, but in tidying up qualitative work, it can lose some of its power, vitality and charm. So how does one make the most of one's differences? Does one tone them down or accentuate them? It is a personal choice.

MAKING THE MOST OF ONE'S DIFFERENCES.

I first became aware that I may, perhaps, be qualitatively different when I conducted action-based research into the entrepreneurial narrative and presented an award winning paper at the 2002 Babson–Kaufman Research Conference. The paper was entitled "*Inspirational Tales: Propagating the entrepreneurial narrative amongst children*" (Smith 2002) and was based upon action research in the form of a children's story book entitled "*Ernie the entrepreneur'* [3]. The paper achieved publication but the seminal narrative from which it sprang did not. It would be wrong of me to say that I was prouder of my innovative children's story than I was of the prestigious award, but one can get very attached to one's first piece of creative writing. Yet in vain I searched for a publisher. After two rejections from publishers of children's books, I gave up. Imagine my shock and surprise when the next paper I wrote jointly with Eleanor Hamilton (Hamilton and Smith 2003) from Lancaster University entitled "The Entrepreneuse" also won a best paper award. The feeling of euphoria was immense. It would be easy to be conceited. I had to suffer the mock '*golden boy'* taunts of my peers. But everybody knows the fate of those who submit to hubris and believe in invincibility. The myths of Iciris and Midas are there to remind us, lest we forget.

I continued with my frenetic pace of researching and writing. I find that writing papers drove my doctoral research forward. I became interested in semiotic aspects of entrepreneurial identity and researched visual images of entrepreneurs and images associated with entrepreneurship. I gathered semiotic data from books, magazines, newspapers and the television. This led to gathering sufficient data to write two conference papers. I presented the first paper entitled "*Entrepreneurial identity and bad boy iconology*" (Smith 2003b) at a research seminar at Strathclyde university in April, 2003. At that seminar, I was commended / applauded by my peer group for presenting research that was uniquely different. A professor whom I had never met before advised me never to attempt to conform myself to academic convention and to continue researching in the maverick vein I had obviously adopted. Heady stuff, indeed.

Alistair and I jointly presented the second paper entitled "*Conforming non-conformists: semiotic manifestations of an entrepreneurial identity*" (Smith & Anderson 2003) at the Babson-Kaufman Research Conference, 2003 which examined selected images associated with entrepreneurial identity. It too was well received by a small audience. However, the problem with such research is that it was our perception that editors of journals and publishers are often unwilling to print photographs and images because of technical and financial constraints. This may deter research into such issues. It was clear to us that an alternative venue for achieving dissemination of the research had to be formulated that would allow us to write conventional journal articles whilst enabling readers to access the images at will. This led to us giving serious consideration to the important issues of getting unusual qualitative research published, or if not at least alternatively disseminated in one's academic community. Alistair and I obviously had to consider establishing alternative avenues of dissemination. But how? It is to this question that I now turn.

ESTABLISHING ALTERNATIVE AVENUES OF DISSEMINATION

In this section, I tender some observations, albeit in a tentative manner, for I find telling others 'how to' to be a difficult task to accomplish with grace. I will focus on some issues that I consider important in getting qualitative research published and will address the disseminating of research by traditional methods and also discuss alternative forms of writing up the findings e.g. layers and voices, genres and stances, narratives and stories. In doing so, I obviously had to consider making the most of traditional methods of dissemination because only a fool would expend their efforts in shaping an alternative strategy if the existing one sufficed.

Making the most of traditional methods of dissemination

I started by considering the traditional methods of dissemination available to me. These included conference papers, targeting top-flight journals, targeting lesser ranked journals with a smaller turn around time; targeting journals outside one's academic field; targeting calls for book chapters; targeting publishers to publish interesting research in book format; and finally self-publishing (both on the internet and amateur press). As can be seen the proactive word in this section is targeting. It is worth considering the merits and pitfalls of these in turn, because it is all too easy to take them for granted. Table 2 below sets out traditional methods of disseminating research.

Table 18.2   *Traditional methods of disseminating research*

Conference papers	Play a major part in driving entrepreneurship research forward, being fun to write and present, but can vary considerably in the quality of the research. These were a major part of my eventual strategy because they often evolve into journal articles and book chapters. I like them because they are usually published in a folder presented to participants and thus acts as a concrete sign of achievement. Although it is a basic method of disseminating research it allowed me freedom to develop my writing and presentation skills whilst learning to work to a deadline. I liked it because I achieved a sense of closure and was able to quickly build up elements of my C.V - a point often forgotten. According to Wolcott (1990:89) they contribute towards academic credibility and visibility.

Top flight journals	It is an understandable tendency to target one's work towards quality journals, but as I have found this can prove to be a soul destroying, frustrating learning curve. It is a high risk/high gain strategy. Competition is fierce and time scales can be frustrating. One submits one's work in the hope that it resonates with the anonymous reviewers. I liken it metaphorically to sending one's child into the wilderness in the hope that it will end in a fairy tale format. I am perhaps being unkind but it is also like the childhood activity of sending messages in a bottle out to sea. One launches them full of hope and quickly forgets about them. I am a social being and thrive on positive feedback. I do not want it in sixth months time, nor in a years time. I am like a child I want everything now. I know that this is being unrealistic but am I alone? By the time I receive feedback I have moved on. It is possible to achieve publication, providing the research topic and methodology are progressive and the resulting paper is well written (especially if it mirrors the aims of the journal) but acceptance can be slow. One of the frustrations is that one writes creatively and then agonises ponderously and torturously over one's creation, line by line. In polishing, one can be destroying that which made special – its spontaneity. Scholarly writing has its place but is a skill in its own right. Varian (1997) also cites the cost of publishing journals resulting in editors encouraging short articles to capture the attention span of the readers. This entails stripping it of unnecessary prose the very mechanism that brings qualitative work to life. Varian argues that all publications are not equal and that competition to publish in top-ranked journals is often intense with the process often taking twelve months to two years. Laband and Piette (1994) argue that citation counts are often used as a measure of the impact of articles and journals making publishing in top flight journals a necessity.
Lesser ranked journals	I found that targeting lesser-rated journals is a more realistic strategy especially if one is using a lesser-known qualitative methodology such as social constructivism and semiotics. Such journals can take more risks and welcome well-written research that dares to be different.
Alternative journals	Targeting alternative journals is an excellent strategy because it increases the size of one's target audience and has the added benefit of making one work hard to ensure that one is communicating one's knowledge at a suitable level. Research occurring at the margins of entrepreneurship may contain material that makes it of mainstream interest to other disciplines. In my case I have targeted Criminology journals because I can tailor my work towards them. It also keeps my other writing fresh.
On-Line Journals	Sweeney (2004) asks "Should you publish in electronic journals?" arguing that the rapid growth of information and communication technology since the early 1990s has greatly influenced the accessibility of information on a global level playing a critical role in restructuring the mechanisms by which specialized academic knowledge is validated, distributed, and made available to consumers. Sweeney (2004) and Dixon (1997) argue that the pressure to publish can be marginally alleviated by easy and straightforward electronic submission and refereeing of papers. Such electronic journals have rapid turn around times and offer speed of dissemination. Yet electronic journals have yet to be fully accepted as legitimate publication outlets (Kling and Covi, 1995). Varian argues that best paper prizes are an attractive method to overcome young authors' reluctance to publish in electronic journals.
Book Chapters	Alistair and I have made a deliberate choice to target the book market. It has the benefit of being a relatively frequent opportunity. I like the spirit of excitement which they engender and also the spirit of competitiveness. These combine to imbue our writing with a tone of excitement. I like the fact they are scheduled for publication and this enables me to work to set guidelines, time scales and have the benefit of editorial advice and direction. I like the security of gaining an acceptance which guarantees me a publication two years hence. The eclecticism engendered by creative writing and artful editing ensures that they are exciting projects to be involved in. I have found them invaluable in gaining writing experience and building a network of writers whom I am happy writing with.
The Book Market	I find the book market to be a bit more risky a strategy. Perhaps this view will change when I have established a reputation or can collaborate with an author who has. I consider it to be a very viable, but time consuming strategy, which permits one the luxury of avoiding the pitfalls of writing for journals. One can be more expressive and

In order of merit Alistair and I chose to target the book chapters market, conference papers and lesser-known journals. I do not advocate turning one's back on the quality journals because conference papers are sometimes only reviewed as abstracts whereas the respected journals imbue one's writing with a sense of gravitas. Like good investors Alistair and I also sent off papers to top-flight journals. Their respectability of output is appealing to me and is in direct relationship to the prestige of the publication. It was the book chapter market which paid off for me / us with seven acceptances in a two-year period. Notwithstanding this, I still pondered why work submitted to top-flight journals did not pay dividends. I thought that perhaps my work was just too different for the reviewers. I have also had to come to the realisation that perhaps my time has not come for my writing to be accepted by a serious journal. As a research community, we are good at writing, but not very good at talking, or writing about writing. I now turn to developing alternative methods of dissemination.

Developing alternative methods of dissemination

Again, I tender some observations, and discuss some alternative methods of dissemination available to me. The most obvious of these was self-publishing. This method is often frowned upon in academic circles by old school academics as being academically lax and unprofessional. Indeed, it is a strategy fraught with danger. It can leave you open to derision from other respected academics, whom have had to earn their reputations the hard way. There are two methods, conventional printing and by desktop, or by self-publishing on the inter-net. With the advent of PC's, word processing, scanners etc desktop publishing has lost much of its earlier amateur stigma. Self-publishing of any sort can be viewed as being undesirable, eccentric and has the stigma associated with the vanity press and leaves one open to the charges of being self-conceited, self-aggrandising and a self-publicist. For this reason, vanity style publishing is rare in academic circles because many academics have the ability and social cachet to develop their own outlets / publishing contacts. Yet, I find it strangely appealing. Am I alone? It has all the drama of being a labour of love. Perhaps in the future I will be brave enough to try it – but not yet.

   I find it disappointing that this attitude exists because self-publishing is a channel used by local historians and amateur ethnographers alike. In my humble opinion, it is an underused and perfectly viable method of disseminating research that cannot be truncated to fit journal articles. A forty to fifty page booklet or pamphlet, particularly if it embodies photographs and other images can be produced and disseminated reasonably cheaply. It may take the form of teaching material before being reworked into an academic article. It can be very effective if your academic audience is relatively small or if your non-academic audience exceeds the former. Such amateur publications can even be sold at local outlets (to defray costs) and distributed to local libraries. It can allow you to tone down academic style to that which is necessary only to compliment the research. It lets research speak for itself and permits the author to control content and style [4]. In the short term I rejected this strategy, although I may dabble in it in the future.

I seriously considered self-publishing on the internet and consider it to be an underused academic tool. It has the added advantage of allowing one to post several connected studies into a complimentary anthology of studies. A growing number of researchers use the strategy of creating their own web pages where they report on ongoing research and working papers prior to seeking publication in Journals. The disadvantages are that it is time consuming and may damage their longer-term desirability as publications in different format. I have been impressed by some very good websites e.g. the one on semiotics by Daniel Chandler of the University of Wales. However, I recognise their drawbacks. For a start they can be relatively expensive to post and maintain. They do not target – they maintain a presence awaiting to be accessed by anyone. Their strengths are that you as an author can control and amend content as arguments develop and crystallise. You can post pictures and drawings providing you addresses copyright issues. You can count the number of hits, thereby assessing your following / readership. An added advantage is that you can post ongoing work for others to read as it develops. Also, there is no frustrating delay from writing to publication. It is certainly a strategy (albeit a risky one) that can pay dividends because one can reach a wider audience. Yet, I too rejected this as a strategy because I feared that I would be damaging my chances of achieving future publication of the material in a quality journal. Notwithstanding this, the work of Daniel Chandler (1994) eventually achieved publication in book form in 2001. Another factor in the decision to reject this strategy is that I do not have sufficient enough time and in addition I am a technophobe.

The most frequent generic criticism of all these self-publishing methods is that such work is not peer-reviewed. For it to become an academically viable strategy it would be necessary to have the work edited by another party and peer-reviewed by other leading academics in the field as well as subjected to some sort of 'blind reviewing'. I find the possibility of publishing my email address and encouraging respondents to comment upon the material to be strangely appealing and could foresee establishing a meaningful dialogue as a distinct advantage. To return to the issue of conference papers – if I cannot develop them into journal articles and book chapters, I will give serious consideration to posting them on the inter-net or at the very least disseminated via alternative forms of writing up.

Alternative forms of writing up.

I also considered some alternative forms of writing up qualitative research as being worthy of consideration including organising a symposium or seminar; writing a magazine column; and the most radical decision of all - not to write up. I will discuss these in turn, in Table 3 below.

Table 18.3   *Alternative methods of disseminating research*

Symposiums and seminars	I like presenting my work at symposia and seminars. I like the structure of a maximum of a fifteen minute presentation time. It enables me to articulate my work succinctly and allows me to empty it of academic references. It chrysalises my arguments and renders my work more understandable to non-academic or marginally interested audiences. In academic contexts it allows me to dispense with formality and discuss the important issues underlying my research. These are time consuming to organise and manage but are well worthwhile. I appreciate the ability they provide me to practice

	presentational styles and techniques and to perform.
Magazine columns	I gave consideration to publishing my work as an editor of a magazine or professional journal. I like this idea because again it would enable me to spread the message of the research, again emptied of academic parlance and style. To date I have not found a serious venue prepared to take me on. I therefore self rejected this avenue.
Non-publishing	I find the assertion of Wolcott (1990:88-89) that one should give serious consideration to **not publishing** - strangely appealing as a viable strategy, especially for studies of limited appeal. Not all work must be published, but all work must be written up. Disseminating your work may entail merely making copies of it available on request. At the very least one should consider sending drafts to members of one's peer group to see if the work resonates with them.

To return to the introduction and in particular the assertion of VanMaanen (1988) that one can become as one with one's stories. In seminars and in symposia this can and does happen. It is my favourite dissemination methodology. It is a natural venue in which I can tentatively express my findings in a semi-structured manner. I can experiment with the different layers of meaning, with different genres and even in different voices, genres and styles. I obtain the benefit of almost instantaneous feedback. I am forced to learn how to perform academically and lean towards the dramatic and expressive and to learn the art of injecting oratory passion into my stories within stories. If I "pull it off" the effect can be electrifying. Chance and risk go hand in hand. Of course it can bomb too! However, I find that the minute I utter those magic words "*I will now tell you a story*", or I produce a book and begin to read, or even invite the audience to form a circle around me – something primeval and strangely magical happens! As a storyteller I become as one, braided with my story. It beats the buzz of achieving a publication by a long stretch, but it is alas ephemeral. However, its most important facet is that it brings my research to life, in a memorable way. It helps one forget for a moment the nagging doubts of self criticality.

On the need to be self-critical!

After much reflection and in collectively reviewing my lack of progress in achieving a finished article which I considered worthy of sending to the publisher of a top-flight journal, Alistair and I came to the conclusions that my writing contained specific generic faults. The papers discussed invariably suffered from the same generic problems. For instance:

1. Being qualitative, novel and often prone to being subjective;
2. Their use of semiotics – which require explanation and justification;
3. Adopting a social constructivist stance;
4. Being wedded to prose and stylistic writing – hence their inherent excitement;
5. Perhaps even being idiosyncratic (in that writings contain much of my foibles);
6. They were 'busy' and perhaps attempted too much.

The latter point is interesting as the writings definitely mirror the characters of their authors. I would also have been wise to heed the advice of Wolcott (1990) to beware of tangential interests as I spread myself too thinly on many occasions. Frustratingly, as papers they were exciting to write, discuss and present. I found the collective effect worked well - a synthesis of seductive words and pictorial images. In all, in the interest of academic research, I have disseminated about 20 copies of each complete with images. However, when one separates the words from its illustrative images they simply lack the dimension of the completed article. In my opinion, qualitative writing works best, like the qualitative methods embedded within them when the correct balance is struck and they work at a taken-for-granted level. When this authorial harmony with writing is achieved there is no need to explain the methods for the techniques, if adequately mastered do it all for you. The finished result is a pleasure to read. I would by far have preferred to publish one of my / our papers by way of illustration than to write about them. Writing about creating them is a vexing self-doubting destructive process. But if I were truly self-critical the inability to achieve publication may lie closer to home than is comfortable for to accept. Perhaps, my work to date has been developmental in nature or even poor? I am grateful for the comments of an anonymous reviewer who suggested that it was unfair to assert that papers which might dare to be different are unlikely to receive a fair hearing from mainstream, high end journals, because of other factors such as the possibility that it is perhaps poor work. This forced me to acknowledge that I had in fact been self-policing my work and that the divide was as much of my making as that of editors and publishers. Whilst perceptual influences are critical in such valuation and perhaps there are high degrees of subjectivity, defensiveness and the desire to protect my work played a significant part in where I decided to publish.

Another problem with qualitative writing is that it benefits from the maturity that comes with allowing it time to embed it within itself. Allowing time for it to mature, time to consider whether it still pleased me, time to play, time to tinker with it, amend it, time to procrastinate, to rewrite it and so forth. This causes another set of problems in that it is so easy to run out of time and it goes stale. As a result of critical self-analysis it was apparent that what I lacked was a competent research publication strategy.

Compiling a research-publication strategy *(As Narrated by Robert Smith)*

I have found to my cost that to avoid all the pitfalls of literary stagnation, it is essential to compile a research-publication strategy. What I had failed to do was to make time to plan creatively, to build in time after a conference to rewrite when the material and responses were fresh and to send away my work for a more critical peer review process. It is a process that is best documented, particularly if one, like me, is absentminded or worse still, driven by intellectual curiosity towards new work. This is the curse of being a qualitative researcher. If this vital process is not in place then it is easy to allow promising work to 'drift' whilst also running the risk of it becoming tired and dated. I did not always make my work "work" for me. It must be released to the outside world. The actual research and the writing are the most exciting aspects. However, creative minds have an inherent flaw of generating ideas, which if left unbridled, or not effectively managed, means that as an avid researcher I had moved onto other projects prior to finalising the previous one. It is a trap into which I, and many fall. Granted un-disseminated research may eventually consolidate into quality publications later in

one's academic career but trusting to luck, serendipity or providence are not serious publication strategies. I now have a growing number of conference papers waiting to be rewritten as journal articles when I finish my PhD. I cannot turn the clock back, but wish I had considered this sooner.

Developing an integrated research-publication strategy is similar to any portfolio project. It is an investment in time and in one's future. One may metaphorically strike 'pay dirt' by high-risk strategies, but spreading the risks is always a more viable strategy. Targeting a variety of venues avoids the pitfalls of academic stagnation. With this in mind, I made the decision to target book chapters, lesser-known journals and if all else failed to self-publish. An integrated research-publication strategy is an essential mentoring tool in matching the expertise and experience of the supervisor with the enthusiasm and high work rate of the doctoral student. This is specifically true of academia in Britain, where very few PhD dissertations are ever published in their original format. If you are lucky, you may be able to publish an edited version as a book. Different academic disciplines have better track records than others. For instance, sociological and anthropological works are more readily marketable than entrepreneurship – where the track record is poorer.

There are a few exceptions to this rule in the entrepreneurship field. For example Dibben (2000) and Rae (2001). In Sweden a higher percentage of PhD dissertations are made public by recourse to publishing them. A prime example is Hjorth (2001). Also, compendiums of research are encouraged, for example '*Images of entrepreneurship & Small Businesses*" by Johannisson & Landström (2001) (eds) brings together the work of twelve entrepreneurship doctoral students. This is a strategy worthy of encouraging. It permits the development of 'schools' or 'stables' of promising researchers. Seeing your work in print as a book can be immensely satisfying and has the added benefit of permitting qualitative studies to be disseminated in full. Having a presence is essential if you desire to be cited by others, but bear in mind the advice of Wolcott (1990:84-85) that qualitative research is disseminated in a closed system with writers of such research also being its buyers and that this makes the market commercially non-viable. This more than any other factor makes it essential to consider alternative forms of writing up and of marketing your qualitative research elsewhere.

One of the most surprising aspects about the disappointing uptake of qualitative methodologies in the entrepreneurship research field is that there is a definite spirit of / and celebration of difference. For example the Swedish ESBRI seminars with their grounded themes, positively encourage diversity, difference and the dramatic. These are propagated via their seminal '*Movements in Entrepreneurship'* book series.

At one point Alistair and I also seriously considered submitting my /our work to journals by compromising and either making them entirely text dependent or describing one or two of the pictorial facets contained in the original to capture some of the aura of the original. Thankfully we resisted this most obvious of solutions as it was our vision that readers of academic journals could click on a pre-coded web address to view individual images in a similar manner to a web address [5]. This led to further discussion and we initially decided to set up a gallery of images annexed to the Robert Gordon University Web site. This led to a time consuming round of discussions and permissions to be sought. In the end the technical requirements dulled our enthusiasm (as well as pressure of work). Being innovative is easier to talk about than accomplish. More time elapsed. In the interim period, I had committed Alistair and I to submitting

the abstract for this book chapter, based solely upon our honest intentions to progress the project.

An alternative thought we had whilst attending yet another conference was to down load the images onto a CD disc to accompany each copy of the journal / book chapters. This is standard practice outside entrepreneurship circles. Ideas were kicked about like a proverbial football. The acceptance of this chapter forced our hand. It did not help that both Alistair and I are "dyed in the wool" technophobes. We prefer the feel of paper and the permanence of the printed word in a completed book. Thus web pages, CD Roms and inter-net 'Google' image searches do not come naturally to us. Even mastering the IT of Power Point systems taxed us considerably. We were to find that technical problems beset us. Like all good impressionistic tales, it is beneficial to include an element of the confessional in it to. It is easier to write about being innovative than to actually do it. In the interim period, I did achieve sufficient publications to satiate my impatience. Also, I changed, in that I became less impatient and dare I say perhaps more conventional. Alistair and I are still exploring new avenues of making our work more accessible to our peers. I would prefer to try and publish my work in a respected journal before setting up a stand-alone web site. If that fails I will try and publish my qualitative research as a monograph or even book. What caused this drastic turn around? Maturity perhaps? Or perhaps I have just changed? I admit to being influenced by the perseverance of Bill Gartner, who in Gartner (2004:245-254) who tells his story of how his much cited article "*Who is the entrepreneur is the wrong question*" (Gartner 1988) very nearly did not achieve publication. Gartner stresses that it took him a four year period, numerous rejections from an equally numerous number of different journals, actual confrontations with reviewers and editors plus a plethora of rewrites before he eventually achieved publication. It is a wonderful story but then Bill Gartner dared to be different.

CONCLUSION

Some concluding thoughts *(As narrated by Robert Smith)*

I trust that the contents of this chapter have demonstrated in some small way *"Why we see so little semiotic research in Entrepreneurship Journals"?* In seeking to answer the second two part question of whether it is *"worth trying to publish such research"* and *"what are the benefits"* it is necessary to adopt a personal stance and declare that I personally have come to believe that it is, hence my determination to find a suitable method of writing up such research to permit my work to be published in a top-flight journal. The benefits are self-evident but are often only achieved as part of a longer term strategy.

To relate the contents of this chapter to the serious issues, and laudable aims, to which this handbook seeks to address, it is now necessary to 'braid' together what we have learned together. Firstly - the writing style chosen for this chapter is obviously a symbolic form to literally and figuratively denote difference. I do not suggest for a moment that we have to develop a bohemian style, grow our hair long, read poetry, take up painting and obscure hobbies. Nonetheless, these suggestions although posited in jest will improve your writing. However, writing must retain passion and be allowed to express difference. It is how entrepreneurs brand themselves and we should learn from our subjects. Nor is it enough to mimic sociological and anthropological methods of

using qualitative research, despite the assertion of Casson (2000) that anthropology possesses an affinity with the romantic. We, that is you and I, must develop our own styles and conventions of difference with which we are happy as a discipline. Only then will the uptake of qualitative methods increase, as confidence levels improve. The only advice I can give is to follow your heart, articulate your ideas, write from the heart with passion, be creative but realistic. Pursue a career but remain true to yourself for integrity comes from within, be daring but pragmatic, and even consider developing your own methodology. Only then will 'daring to be different become a valued disciplinary trait. Also, develop a dissemination strategy and work hard at it.

Nevertheless, we cannot do it all on our own. As a discipline we need to organise and form writing schools, we need to set aside time to mentor, to tutor to share and read our works with each other. If a daring publisher trailed an issue of "*Qualitative Writings on Entreprenaria*" [6] it would be surprising how many would answer the call for papers. This daring handbook on qualitative research is a welcome beginning. Until then conduct research that stretches your imagination, that pushes out the boundaries for entrepreneurship perhaps has no boundaries, pursue any avenue of dissemination available to you, go to seminars, tell your stories and publish on the inter-net. Make your impression, as I hope to make mine. As I have found, researching at the frontiers of entrepreneurship using qualitative methodologies positions me firmly on the edge of the discipline, it also entails writing on the edge. It can be exhilarating at times. But I am always aware that I can also fall over the edge. Being different is a precarious privilege, as is being an entrepreneur. In a chapter such as this, there can often be no conclusion.

A reflective reply grounded in experience *(As narrated by Alistair R Anderson)*

Well, this chapter certainly fulfils the promise of its title and I like the theme a lot. It engendered a spirit of genuine discussion and caused me to reflect upon my own experiences. The idea for the paper was presented to me almost as a *'fait accompli'* when Robert enthusiastically responded to the call for papers. I had reservations, because how different can one be in academia? Different work like this has to overcome the fear of setting one self up. We discussed many ideas for the chapter, but many times it appeared as though it would not materialise. Robert wrote the first draft and presented it to me almost as it appears now. My first response on reading it was to reply to each section in the manner of a dialogue, but I dismissed this as pretentious, after all, who am I to present an "expert" discourse on somebody else's work. Whilst the chapter was different, I realised that it nevertheless required to be reviewed as a potential publication so I started by responding in the reflective spirit of the paper. Here are some of my thoughts.

It is helpful because what Robert has done is too 'tell' us a story' about his views and experiences concerning research and publishing. This allows us to relate to this, in our own terms. This is surely a classic element in recounting narrative and a worthy objective. Such stories do need to be assertive, but to have real and lasting value they need to combine this with some careful reflection. Being different is a wonderful quality, but it also requires to be tempered by experience. In writing up experiences of difference, one has to make the distinctions between what one finds and objective realities. The two can become blurred. It is difficult to get into a conversation with a reader, because of the nature of writing. It is, after all, a one sided rendition and there is

a danger that in building up an atmosphere one slides into discoursing and dogma. Thus one needs to try to maintain an open ended conversational style; this is no mean feat and perhaps helps explain why we stick to convention. In such a chapter, maintaining a friendly exchange is essential because it presents experiences and views in a user friendly way, as well as inviting a reflective response. This is doubly difficult because as researchers when we find out things we tend to present our findings as if they were facts, when they may be better narrated as readings of experiences. Narrating research in terms of these research experiences requires a different writing style and perspective. Reflective writing avoids some of the necessity of stating facts. Moreover, writing about qualitative research is difficult because it covers such potentially enormous field. Given that our experience relates to researching narrative and social constructivist fields, what Robert narrates is especially true of such work. But might it be argued to be less true of more general qualitative work?

However, having said all that about reflection, there is little value in merely perpetuating a "stream of consciousness" approach. Whilst this might be interesting, it does not make for a good book chapter. Reflective writing and impressionistic tales of the field have to braid our experiences as researchers with our reflections as individuals - turning them into a well grounded narrative. We also need to avoid a diatribe against the establishment. What one must seek to do is what Robert has tried to do - to open minds not close them. Was it a story that was worth telling? Did it engage you? You need to decide?

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NOTES

1   Professor Alistair R Anderson is well published veteran of the field, having written numerous journal articles and presented a considerable number of conference papers. In comparison, doctoral student Robert Smith has written and presented a few conference papers, but has only a few journal articles to his credit.

2   Although young in terms of scholarship, the author is not young in years. Note how impressionistic tales allow one to exaggerate and embellish, or if one is unkind to deceive.

3   The paper itself won the "*The Raymond Family Business Institute*" best paper award and was published in the book – Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research (2002). However, the desire to publish the story itself remains. Initially it was proposed that it would be posted on the inter-net. This led to further time

consuming discussions and the eventual abandonment of the project. After all a children's storybook is a book – not a flashy web page. Authorial pride brooks no compromise.

4   This novel methodology is currently being developed by the author for a historically orientated socio-economic study into subsistence entrepreneurship in a Scottish fishing community for presentation at a future rural entrepreneurship conference This method of dissemination was chosen since the research incorporates photographic images. It is being written up as an ethnographic social commentary (with an anthropological bias) that will hopefully appeal to a wider audience.

5   Initially it had been our intention in this chapter to track attempts to achieve publication of the three articles mentioned above and the compromises that we had to make to accommodate conformity. However, it soon became apparent that this was not feasible given the lengthy waiting time in getting published in some quality scholarly journals.

6   As in to do with all things entrepreneurial.