Mobile Subjectivities
Positioning the Nonunitary Self in Critical Feminist and Postmodern Research

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Most scholarly work is written from the perspective of the author being a unitary subject occupying a sole, rational, and unified position. This article argues that scholarship may be enhanced by the author adopting multiple subject positions as a methodological framework. Such an adoption is advantageous in working against the romance of the notion of a single truth while also maintaining teleological values congruent with critical and feminist agendas. This article outlines the conceptual development of this methodological framework, the rationale for its development, an explication of the concept of multiple subjectivity, and an exemplar of its application within nursing research. **Key words:** *critical theory*, *discourse analysis*, *feminist theory*, *identity*, *methodology*, *postmodernism*, *research methods*, *subjectivity*

SUBJECTIVITY and identity are concepts of central importance to critical, feminist, and postmodern ontology and epistemology. However, most scholarly work is usually written from the perspective of the author being a unitary subject occupying a sole, rational, and unified position. The modernist notion of the unified rational author appears to be expected for credible scholarly work, and dominates other conceptions of subjectivity and identity even in articles arguing for different conceptions of subjectivity. This article reports the theoretical and methodological framework that was developed by a doctoral student and her supervisor to encompass the notion of the author occupying multiple subject positions by building upon the integrated feminist/postmodern approach of Glass and Davis.[1]

BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

This methodology emanated from an ethnographic nursing doctoral study,[2] whereby significant attention was paid to the development of a methodology that would rigorously serve the purpose of answering the research question, and that would also ontologically fit with the world view of the doctoral student and her supervisor. After considerable philosophical delving and being inspired by Flax's comment that women are socialized into believing they "can't do theory,"[3] the student and her supervisor intentionally decided that critical, feminist, and postmodern insights would inform the ethnography. A utopian desire to create change and carry the vision of an improved existence was central to the study, and reflected the choice of critical social science as an ideologically oriented inquiry with an aim "to redress a situation in which

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a group is suffering as a result of the way their lives are arranged and to overturn these arrangements and to put into place another set in which people can relate and act in fuller more satisfying ways."[4(p29)] With the stated assumption of nurses and women being oppressed groups, critical social science provided the major theoretical impetus for the study. Critical social science disputes the scientific enlightenment assumption that there is a foundation of knowledge existing outside of human consciousness and that knowledge can be divorced from human values and norms.[5]

Critical and feminist intentions of emancipatory intent, critique, and reflexivity were central to the study.[6] However, equally compelling were postmodern perspectives that the doctoral student could not dismiss. The areas of conflict between the 3 perspectives have often been disregared and only the parts that easily coalesced highlighted and selected. The integration, blurring, or merging of critical and postmodern perspectives is evident in many contemporary research approaches,[6] inclusive of performance ethnography,[7] narrative engagement,[8] and ethnodrama.[9] However, in blending or integrating these 3 paradigms, fundamental issues and tensions between the approaches would have been ignored that emanated from the divergent philosophical assumptions embedded in these paradigms relating to such things as knowledge, truth, and centrality of subjects.

Drawing on the integrated feminist/postmodern approach of Glass and Davis[1] and after much consideration of the literature on subjectivity, the notion of writing the thesis from the authorial position of a mobile or nonunitary subject that fluidly included these 3 perspectives together with their areas of discord was considered and selected. This notion of multiple selves has been acknowledged by respected authors of methodology such as Denzin;[7] however, the concept has not been given research application. This method had the advantage of locating the researcher within the research, and of

highlighting the methodological disparities rather than attempting to ignore the areas where conflict existed. In many instances, the 3 theoretical positions displayed congruence, for example, the agenda of social transformation for both critical social science and feminism. In other areas, theoretical tensions were confronted and articulated in their disparities so that their very tensions and differences could provoke new thinking and new political practice.[10] Adoption of the position of an author with a mobile subjectivity facilitated movement between the paradigms, problematized the notion of distinct and fixed borders, and drew attention to the issues of ethnographic representation and truth.

Concerns with critical and feminist paradigms

Few research paradigms or methodologies escape some level of criticism, and acknowledging and explicating the limitations of any research methodology is important. Some criticisms of critical social science, feminism, and postmodern methodologies that informed the researcher's selection of multiple paradigms are now briefly outlined, not to denigrate their contribution but to highlight their potential limitations,. It has been argued that many of the limitations of singular paradigms could be strengthened with the adoption of multiple perspectives.[1,10,11] Judgements have been leveled at both critical theories and feminist research for adhering to modernist views of truth and progress, and also at Habermas' notional "ideal speech situation . . . a democratic form of public discussion . . . that is free of any threat of domination, manipulation or control."[12(p142)] Similarly, Whelehan noted the problems of consciousness raising in some feminist groups and asserted that "a democratic structureless group does not of course guarantee equitable discussion, and can just as easily allow the most vocal members to take over and create an unacknowledged internal hierarchy, where power relationships hold sway more

tenaciously for being denied."[13(p72)] While both critical and feminist research have been criticized individually for lack of acknowledgement of power relations, they have been critiqued for unintentionally perpetuating relations of domination.[14] Hooks[15] identified the further oppressive problem of critical theory and the potential negation of multiple oppressions of race and class when essentialist theorizing focused on gender alone. Fraser[16] detailed the domination and subordination of women inherent in *The Theory of Communicative Action* by Jurgen Habermas, utilizing the normatively achieved action context and the model of private/public relations. She advocated a framework of critical theory that foregrounds all subordination and domination, not just exclusively the evil of welfare state capitalism. In a similar criticism of critical theory, Fuller[17] and Boutain[18] contended that social identity is not static, and multiplicity and multicultural contexts should be further highlighted in critical research. Critical theory "reaffirms the primacy and transcendence of a scientific clarity that knows what is best for its subjects. Thus it . . . effects a reaffirmation of the culturally reductive and totalising practices that it seeks to contest."[17(p97)] Davis and Glass[19] advocated integrating critical theory with postmodern notions to give centrality to the individual, uncover individual uniqueness, and celebrate differences, thereby potentially avoiding monolithic theories that by their very inclusiveness can be disempowering to the already marginalized individual.

A further criticism of critical social science lies with its notion of enlightenment and frequent association with notions of self-estrangement theory and benevolent education to enlighten and liberate members from their false consciousness. This risks an unreflexive *us* and *them* position[20] and critical research being condescending, simplistic, and paternalistic, locating the researcher as the supreme liberator and participants as, perhaps, not as intelligent or enlightened as the researcher/liberator.[2] Paternalistic and authoritarian issues in critical research have been noted, including the co-option of the empowerment concept by health professionals as an intervention or treatment to induce compliance.[14] A further limitation of critical theory has been identified as a lack of clarity regarding human tendencies of relapse, fallibility, and failure to change, as well as a lack of information regarding the relationship of empowerment with motivation.[21]

The construction of empowerment in critical theory also has been challenged for the accorded extraordinary abilities or the overly optimistic views of the agent of empowerment, which can risk ignoring the particularly difficult context.[20] This potentially accords as overly simplistic the ability to empower in a highly complex and socially constructed environment. For this reason and others, the intent of the methodological development and ethnographic research was to create a context and space for nurses to be able to individually reflect and speak, and it was hoped that through this, further benefit would accrue. The process of gaining voice is not linear with a distinct point of arrival, but individuals move dialectically between positions and at times return to turmoil as well as, at other times, solidify and speak out.[22] Rather than viewing empowerment as a place or discrete goal to be achieved, according to Glass,[23] it can be viewed as a process of empowered states that are also neither necessarily linear nor static. Kincheloe and McLaren stated "no one is ever completely emancipated from the sociopolitical context that has produced him or her."[5(p282)] Critical theory must not promote fantasies of total redemption as human beings are enmeshed in a reality of enduring cultural traditions and often-unyielding personal identities that no critical theorist can ever wholly unravel.[24]

Problems of the postmodern perspective

Limitation and criticisms of postmodern theories have also been documented. While extreme postmodern notions are academically appealing, their apotheosis of fragments, dull nihilism, apathy, and inertia tendencies

may be construed as a luxury.[14] Contemporary feminist engagement is currently debated with postmodern and poststructural perspectives. Concerns are raised that preoccupation with discourse alone can obscure the lived realities of subordinate groups, with neglect of the social context and de-emphasis of economic and material relations of power.[25] Postmodern perspectives may erode moral grounding, undermine possibilities of emancipation and social transformation,[26,27] contest fundamental definitions threatening the feminist agenda, undermine notions of agency, and assume a more sophisticated position alongside antihumanist men.[13,26,27]

Postmodern intentions are usually not to improve, perfect, and offer alternate theories or solutions for a better world but to make modernist assumptions explicit and undermine foundational claims of modernity.[27] This issue is one with which some feminists are concerned, particularly the potential lack of teleological grounding and political intent.[26-28] Rather than a purely academic venture, there should be intent to strive for solutions and actions with practical force to create change. Normative ambivalence, lack of moral accountability, and an absence of obligation are criticisms of the extreme or sceptical postmodern view.[26] However, given these concerns, feminist and critical perspectives that do not adopt postmodern views may also be questioned, as previously discussed regarding the shared issues of authority, essentializing categories, and enlightenment.

Cheek[29] has argued that postmodern research approaches contribute to change in healthcare practices by providing the basis for conceptualizing practice in new or different ways. Cheek asserted, "if we are only interested in improving what is, it may well be that we will never explore what might be."[29(p10)] Arguments for the use of postmodern perspectives in conducting nursing research include creating the possibility of challenging existing power structures,[30,31] exploring the effects of knowledge and power by revealing the operation of power in constructing knowledge,[18,32] and participating in reconstructing alternative perspectives and a novel and moral direction for nursing knowledge and practice.[1,33]

For these reasons, critical social science, including feminism, was placed together with notions of postmodernity that highlighted individual, local, and pluralistic views, rather than a totalizing grand narrative that risked further subordination. While the philosophical and methodological position rejected much of modernity and tended toward a postmodern view, hope and desire for social change and improved equality was still maintained. The difficulty emanated from how to maintain theoretical consistency while not ignoring the conflicting disparities of the different paradigms. The realization that personal subjectivity or self held multiple subject positions and views assisted toward such an articulation.

Representing truth

The methodological development created some concern, as it was the critical intention of the study to ensure that space was created from which participants could speak. Reassured by Wolcott,[34] who advocated a fear of inconsistency and not getting it wrong can cause a *stiffening* of ethnographic writing, it was acknowledged that the researcher could not claim to author either nurses' individual truth or their collective truth but could attempt to *represent* their multiple voices. Examining the subjectivity of self also became problematic as it was acknowledged that subjectivity itself is both multiple and mobile. The final thesis[2] was therefore written from the authorial position of a nonunitary or mobile subjectivity.[35,36] By positioning the author with a mobile or nonunitary subject, an attempt was made to subvert the notion of depicting a real description of truth while simultaneously acknowledging the author and the topic as twin constructions inextricably enmeshed within the research but still having the burden of authorship.[37] Savage[11] also suggested, rather than providing a unified evermore refined version of reality, the use of multiple perspectives helps to elucidate

alternative interpretations that might otherwise escape consideration. Cheek noted that understanding representations of "nursing is enriched if it is informed by multiple viewing positions and even, at times, contradictory notions of reality."[38(p239)] The ethnography was constructed not as an objective description but located the author to roam freely in the research, to trouble constraining boundaries, to reflect the complexities, and to recognize and draw attention to the interpretive and partial views depicted in the text. The thesis therefore was openly acknowledged as being a self-created textual representation. The notion of a nonunitary subject or multiple subjectivities as utilized in the doctoral thesis is now further explicated.

Subjectivity and mobile subjectivities

Poststructuralist accounts refute the notion of a unitary rational subject and view the subject as constituted by multiple subjectivities or subject positions. Ferguson articulated this notion:

Mobile subjectivities are temporal, moving along axes of power . . . without fully residing in them. They are relational, produced through shifting yet enduring encounters and connections, never fully captured by them. They are ambiguous; messy and multiple, unstable but persevering . . . . They respect the local, tend toward the specific . . . [and] are politically difficult in their refusal to stick consistently to one stable identity claim; yet they are politically advantageous because they are less pressed to police their own boundaries.[36(p154)]

The notion of subjectivity being nonunitary has also been described by other feminist authors. Haraway[39] described subjectivity to be contradictory, partial, and strategic. Similarly, Buker[40] depicted the potential postmodern feminized self as flexible and fragmentary. Mouffe reconfigured "the individual . . . as constituted by an ensemble of 'subject positions', participating in a multiplicity of social relationships . . . [and] a plurality of collective identifications."[41(p85)] Trinh described, "'I' is, therefore, not a unified subject, a fixed identity, or that solid mass covered with layers of superficiality one has gradually to peel off before one can see its true face.

'I' is, itself, *infinite layers.*"[42(p94)] Marshall and Wetherell also stated that "there is no one 'true' representation of self and identity. At any given moment there will be varying possibilities for self construction. . . . Identities are actively negotiated and transformed in discourse and . . . language is the area where strategic construction and reconstruction of self occurs."[43(p125)]

SUBJECT POSITIONING

Davies and Harré asserted the notion of *position* "as an appropriate expression with which to talk about the discursive production of a diversity of selves."[44(p47)] *Positioning* is the vantage point a person sees the world from "in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned."[44(p46)] Furthermore, each person comprises a multiple selfhood that is discursively constituted and is "that aspect of self that is involved in the continuity of a multiplicity of selves."[44(p47)] Positioning occurs interactively and reflectively as a function of narratives employed in speaking and from a subjective history brought to each encounter.

Persons as speakers acquire beliefs about themselves which do not necessarily form a unified coherent whole. They shift from one to another way of thinking about themselves as the discourse shifts . . . . Each of these possible selves can be internally contradictory or contradictory with other possible selves located in different story lines . . . . The possibility of choice in a situation in which there are contradictory requirements provides people with the possibility of acting agentically . . . . [As we socially construct] the person as a unitary knowable identity, we tend to assume it is possible to have made a set of consistent choices located within only one discourse . . . . We struggle with the diversity of experience to produce a story of ourselves which is unitary and consistent. If we don't others demand it of us.[44(p59)]

Similarly Hollway,[45] integrating psychoanalytic and Foucauldian thought, developed a feminist emancipatory theory utilizing notions of consciousness raising, multiple

subjectivities, and discourse analysis. According to Hollway, people make a reasoned decision an *investment* in which discourses or *position* they will take up. However, this is not always conscious and people may be positioned in various discourses that are contradictory to each other at the same time. Bloom,[35] using a method similar to that used by Hollway,[45] utilized the term *nonunitary* subjectivity to explore narratives in her research and to analyze the different subject positions of both herself and her participants. Bloom identified the multiple subject positions of participants as respondents, professors, feminists, and managers, and her own multiple subject positions as researcher, student, and feminist. While she acknowledged her own multiple subject positions and the conflicts and issues of power that ensued, the text is written from the perspective of an author with a single stable unified subjectivity. Bloom builds upon the notions of Ferguson[36] in combining both feminist interpretive and postmodern practices. The feminist interpretation centralizes subjectivity and gives voice or valorizes the experience of women, while the postmodern interpretation examines the subject as a function of discourse.

Possibilities of polyvocality

Considering the literature on nonunitary subjectivities, there is a paucity of research or literature written with the author positioned as having a mobile subjectivity. Hertz[46] advocated for multiple voicing or polyvocality. However, this is in reference to research participants rather than the researcher or the author. Lincoln[47] asserted, "if we are not just a single person, but rather a multitude of possibilities . . . as ethnographers we could be about utilizing these multiple selves to create multiple texts."[47(p42)] Gergen and Gergen[48] also advocated for expanding the potential of qualitative methodology utilizing polyvocality to give expression to the multiplicity of both participants and the researcher.

There is a pervasive tendency for scholars . . . to presume coherence of self. Informed by the Enlightenment conceptions of the rational and morally informed mind, they place a premium on coherence, integration, and clarity of purpose. The ideal scholar should know where he or she stands . . . [and] may lay claim, for example, to being a 'Marxist', a 'masculinist, or a 'Gray Panther'. Yet . . . the conception of the singular or unified self is both intellectually and politically problematic.[48(p1037)]

Gergen[49] asserted that most people are seldom univocal but rather fundamentally multiplicitous. Having a view derives from social processes or social positioning as opposed to an interior origin. Polyvocality demonstrates a degree of similarity rather than repudiation of all that differ. Rather than establishing an unbreachable gap between self and other, "the revelation of one's counter-capacities renders one 'part of the other'. A space of vulnerability is created which invites the other in as a collaborator as opposed to an antagonist."[50(p60)] *Othering* and exclusionary practices within nursing are overtly evident, which mandates nurses commence thinking and participating in inclusionary engagement.[50]

RESEARCH APPLICATION

Positioning the author with a nonunitary or mobile subjectivity allowed for differing subjectivity, or subject positions, to be adopted, rather than presenting the thesis as a text that represented a unitary truth. The use of multiple perspectives helps to uncover alternative interpretations that otherwise may have escaped consideration.[11] Further subject positions could have been explored. However, for purposes of clarity and for the appropriateness of addressing the research topic, the positions adopted within the thesis were confined to critical, feminist, and postmodern perspectives. The positions were not categorically delineated but flowed between overlapped and conflicted, and, at times, resonated with each other as multiple discourses.

As a research strategy, positioning the author as having a mobile subjectivity interrupts the smooth claim to truth of the author while simultaneously also acknowledging

that the text is still but an interpretation (a representation) by the author. The researcher ultimately retains the power of redirection of the research.[48] Invoking the author with a nonunitary subjectivity is important to feminist research as it also acknowledges the subjectivity of the author, which would otherwise "deny the subjective experience of the researcher as woman."[51(p605)] Finally, presenting the data from the positions of a mobile subject permits the multiple voices of participants to be heard and valorizes women's experience while simultaneously interrogating the representation of discourse within the context and seeking alternate discourses, positions, and sites of resistance. Richardson[37] offered the idea of a crystalline view as combining

symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, . . . multidimensionalities and angles of approach . . . . [They] reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose . . . it provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically we know more and doubt what we know.[37(p934)]

Reinharz[52] advocated that we have many selves that we bring to the field of research. They include the research-based selves, the brought selves (historically, socially, and personally created), and the situationally based selves, each of which has a distinct voice. Furthermore, in order to be reflexive, we need to interrogate our multiple selves regarding the contradictions and paradoxes that form our lives. To highlight how the notion of mobile subjectivity may be applied, a small exemplar from the research that was conducted will now be given.

RESEARCH EXEMPLAR

Consistent with the theoretical framework of the thesis, subjectivity was viewed as partial, fluid, and nonunitary, such that participants freely moved between subject positions, frequently adopting numerous po-sitions but also, as individuals, not constrained to be equally informed by every subject position. Subject positions were discursively constituted vantage points that participants viewed the world from, and therefore were not limited to the 3 theoretical perspectives of the author. Participants frequently adopted conflicting subject positions. In their individual interviews, nurses sometimes identified and expressed concern that they held conflicting opinions. Other conflicts were evident only following data analysis. Data pertaining to one subject position also frequently displayed an overlap or consistency with other subject positions, thereby producing the webs of connection that ultimately supported, reinforced, and strengthened the preeminence and seeming naturalness of dominant views and discourses. This simultaneously provided space for participants' voices with little interpretation and provided possibility for the reader to interpret their view of the data. While the participant researcher as author fluidly held critical, feminist, and postmodern perspectives, the reflective field notes of the researcher were included by placing the researcher into subject positions as part of the data. The data were categorized under 9 different subject positions that the participants adopted together with associated subjugated or marginalized discourses. The subject positions were the junior novice, the detached unemotional individual, the pleaser, the exceptional and elite, the expert clinician, the strategist, the keeper of order and appearance, the personal improver and coach, and the emotional human.[2] Frequently, it was toward the end of interviews that participants moved to subjugated discourses within subject positions, which may have been indicative that while they often spoke in dominant discourse terms, their level of comfort in speaking increased during the interview. Data were fluidly discussed, utilizing the author's multiple perspectives drawing attention to the areas of not only continuity and congruence but also conflict and incongruence.

The following exemplar has been transcribed from the research thesis, and is

therefore written in the first person. It displays the fast and fluid movement of subject positions, which was noted by the participant researcher during one of her first shifts in the unit as evident in the entry from the reflective field notes. The nurse participant moves from the subject position of the "detached unemotional individual" to the subject position of the "emotional human." Some uncertainty with the participant researcher's own positionality is also apparent.

The unit is busy, noisy and cluttered. It is like a body factory. Vast numbers of beds are lined up in rows each containing a body surrounded by and tenuously attached to a vast assortment of machinery including the monitor which is the main activity center of each cubicle. The equipment is high tech but the old lino and dented walls tell tales of the age of the unit, which emanates contradictory messages of state of the art, yet public care. Tuin told me about the lady who she was caring for who had suffered severe trauma including a serious degloving injury. "She incurred a head injury getting out of a stationary taxi." Her tone was both cynical and mocking. I am confused. I know this is typical ICU talk as I have heard it before and it does not mean she does not care but from a researcher position it seems very stark. Tuin proceeded to the head of the bed and gently wiped the lady's face. Leaning her own face close to the lady's ear she carefully and slowly explained to the lady who she was and that she would be looking after her. Neither of us knew if this lady could hear. So why did Tuin adopt such a cynical position when she talked with me? I wonder what she expects of me or thinks I expect of her?

Differing subject positions were readily detected when overt contradictions were apparent in interviews with nurse participants. The following excerpts are both taken from the interview with a clinical nurse Jo. Jo commenced the interview adopting the subject position of "the pleaser." However, she possibly relaxed and moved subject positions as the interview progressed.

I think my current managers . . . have been responsible for like a very cohesive unit at the moment. I think that's got a lot to do with the type of manager we've got, and like you always feel like you've got backup and you can go and see them about anything. And they'll listen to you and you know they'll

be confidential about it . . . [Therefore] everyone feels quite safe and secure . . . [There's] a nice feel about the unit . . . It's not like you've got these people who are . . . sitting at the top of a ladder going, 'You will do this . . . You will do that' . . . They'll ask everyone how they feel as they go about situations and what we think.

The issue of support was of great concern to Jo who later in her interview changed her subject position to "the emotive human." Jo commenced permanent night duty to avoid a problem in her work unit.

Where I [previously worked], that was a really good unit . . . and everyone would discuss and have much more of an input than we do . . . [Consultants here] might be trying to run off down the hallway to get away from the questions that you have to ask. I've actually gone on to permanent night duty and that's one of the reasons why because I find one of the really stressful things is . . . you'll go home on a p.m. shift, come back in the morning and everything will have been changed with your patient with a different consultant. You come back on and think, "What was all the changing and chopping around on the last shift for" . . . and I find that really frustrating and confusing. Some of the consultants like drying patients out, some of them like them a bit wetter you know. All these lovely little things . . . I just got to the point where I couldn't handle dealing with [the medical staff] any more . . . . They didn't listen to what your opinion was. They could be very rude and very arrogant. Sometimes you get the inkling if you say 'black' they'll say 'white' just to go opposite to what you say. You just don't deal with them as much on nights. I was thinking that I wanted to leave . . . I saw [our manager] about it and I said, "the only other thing I can think of is going on to permanent nights for a while . . . because I'm not enjoying coming to work."

Jo was asked whether senior nursing staff attempted to deal with the issue of medical staff, and whether the manager suggested addressing the medical issues when she indicated it was a major reason for her request for permanent night duty. She responded:

No not really. I don't know, maybe no one else has broached that subject with him. I'm not sure if everyone else sees it the same way as I do. Like I know

that people get frustrated with [medical staff]. . . . You sort of complain about it but . . . I don't think [the manager] has a lot to do with the medical staff . . . I don't know how he deals with that or what their communication situation is like. And the [associate managers] . . . they're there on the rounds but they rarely will bring issues up. They'll generally leave it to you . . . I would like to see more medical staff respect, not just nurses but people more in general. . . . For instance, they just walk straight up and whip the bed sheets down [on patients]. [And I would like] a more collaborative approach to patient care. It's a matter of sitting down with firstly like senior medical staff and discussing the matter with them and actually letting them know there is a problem. It probably is more—a management situation—to be advocates for staff members in that regard . . . I don't think . . . it's really been brought up as an issue in our area. In other units . . . I worked in it was very pro-active in regard to . . . nurses getting treated well. It was sort of more a whole hospital thing.

According to postmodern thought, data should be left open to the interpretation of the reader. A critical approach, however, requires that research be teleological and aspire to transformation. While this research exemplar is only a component of the data, the multiple positions of participants and the tentative positionality of the participant researcher direct attention to the invisible seduction to complicity and ease for women and nurses to unintentionally participate in their own reinscription and subordination. Making space from which nurses and women can safely speak in nondominant discourse and of their experiences is important.

CONCLUSION

This methodology shares many commonalties with some affirmative feminist postmodern studies. However, by utilizing the notion of multiple subject positions, the theoretical framework was developed to be both congruent with the personal views of the researchers and the desire to describe and make space for nurses to speak of their experiences. The integration or connection of multiple theoretical positions provides for strengthening of modes of enquiry, progresses nursing knowledge from dogmatic adherence to traditional methodologies, and can reduce the limitations inherent in singular paradigms.[1,10,11] Three major theoretical perspectives—critical social science, feminism, and postmodernism—were fluidly combined, utilizing the notion of multiple subjectivities within an ethnographic nursing doctoral thesis. These perspectives were also problematized with respect to their borders rather than delineated concrete categories. Rather than depicting the author as a modernistic rational and unitary subject, postmodern notions of complexity, continuity yet discontinuity, fluidity, overlap, and the analogy of the refractory and reflective crystalline view were advantageous within the research. There is value in postmodernism in reflecting the complexity of realities in marginalization that enhances rather than constrains social change.[53] Postmodern insights acknowledge heterogeneity and diversity while illuminating complexities about power, language, desire, and experience. Utilizing the strategy of writing from the authorial position of occupying a mobile or nonunitary subjectivity can focus attention to the partial, interpretive, and intertextual nature of ethnographic representation. Furthermore, the concept of multiple or nonunitary subjectivity may open further possibilities for individual agency and transformative research in other research methodologies such as narrative inquiry.

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