

How to Deliver an Unwelcome Message Without Being Shot

Content Analysis in Support of Critical Theory Research

Roger Clarke

Xamax Consultancy Pty Ltd, Canberra
Visiting Professor, U.N.S.W., A.N.U.

<http://www.rogerclarke.com/SOS/CACT.html>, .ppt}

Bled eConference – 20 June 2017

A Personal Problem

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(just ask the author)
was rejected by the reviewers

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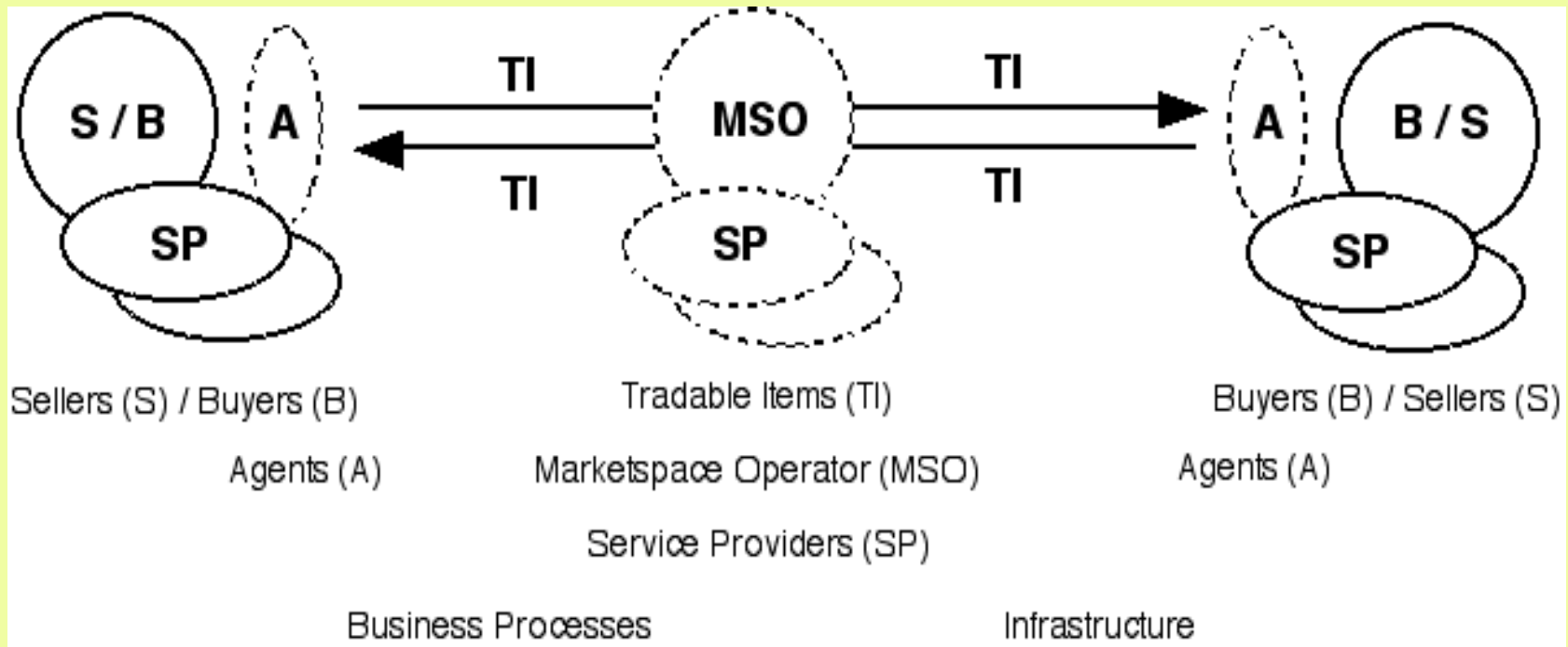
The Apparent Reasons

- Lack of robustness of the research method
- Dismay about the fact that the paper subjected Special Issue papers to criticism

The Research

- Applied 'Researcher Perspective' Theory (Clarke 2016, in the Bled Proceedings)
- Assessed the papers in a Special Issue: 'Personal Data Markets', EM 25,2 (Jun 2015)
- Concluded that the papers:
 - considered only one side of the market
 - were strongly committed to the corporate (data-buyer's) perspective

Personal Data Markets Participants / Stakeholders



PLUS:
Data Subjects,
whose data is traded

The Meta-Questions

- What guidance is available in relation to secondary research whose raw data is published academic papers?
- What particular approaches need to be adopted when the theory-lens through which the observation is being performed arises from critical theory research?
- What guidance exists for expressing the outcomes of research of this nature?

The Research Objective

Enhance the publishability of the research, by taking the following steps:

- Ground the content analysis technique more firmly in the research methods literature
- Demonstrate the appropriateness of constructive criticism of published works
- Improve the expression of the results

Somewhat Relevant Techniques – 1 of 3

Qualitative Research Techniques

Ethnography, Grounded Theory, Phenomenology

Sources

- Natural Settings (Field Research)
- Contrived Settings (Laboratory Experiments)
- Mixed Settings (e.g. interviews conducted in the subject's workplace)

Forms

- Text
- Speech
- Natural Non-Verbal (Behaviour)
- Non-Verbal, Non-Textual (Questionnaire Responses)

Somewhat Relevant Techniques – 2 of 3 Informal Literature Reviews

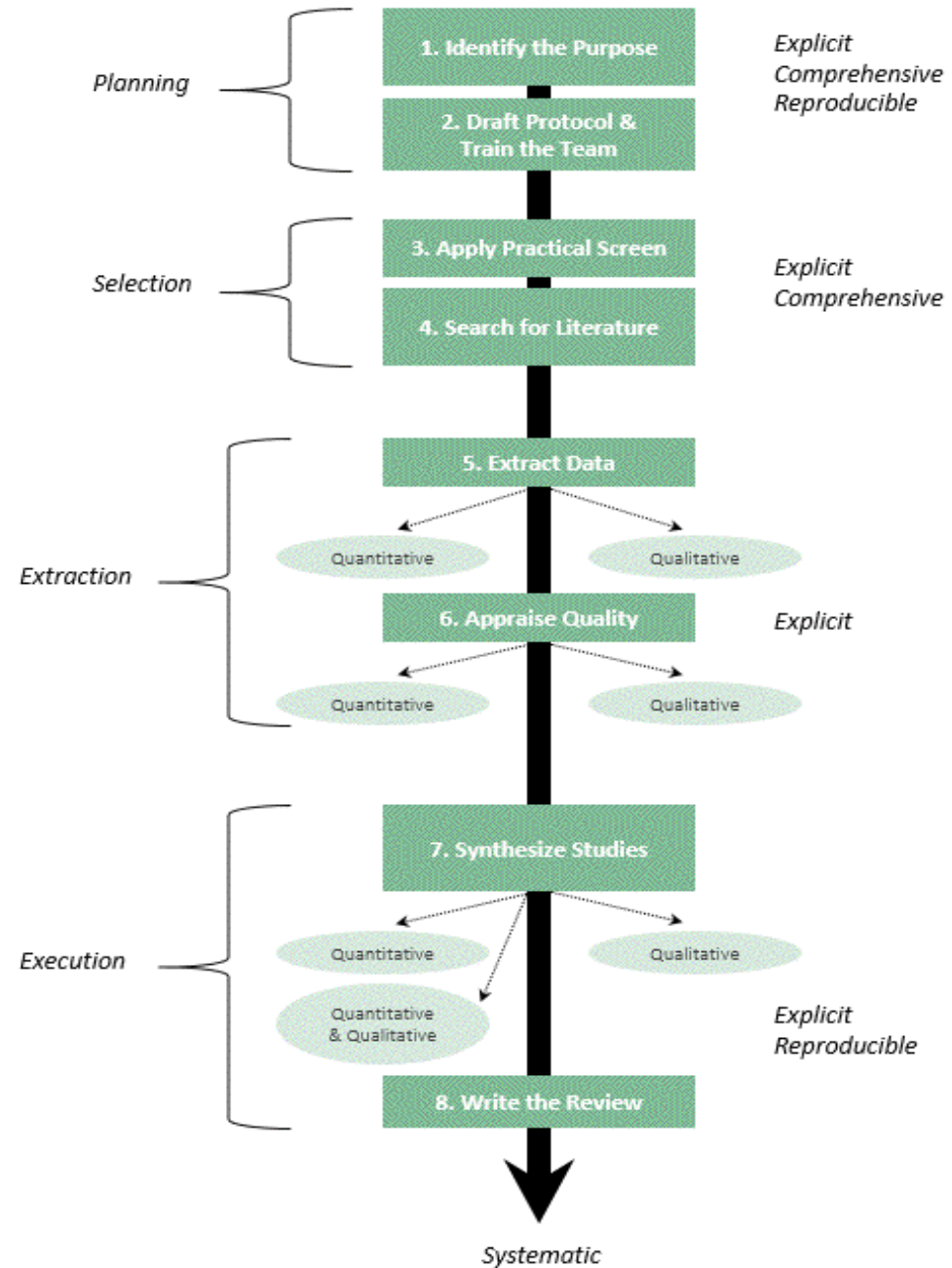
"Traditional literature reviews ... commonly focus on the range and diversity of primary research **using a selective, opportunistic and discursive approach** to identifying and interpreting relevant literature"

(Oakley 2003, p.23)

Somewhat Relevant Techniques 3 of 3

Systematic Literature Reviews

Okoli & Schabram 2010



A More Relevant Technique

Content Analysis

"The interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns"

- Conventional Content Analysis / **Emergent Coding**
- Directed Content Analysis / *A Priori Coding*
- Summative Content Analysis
- (Computational Content Analysis – Debortoli et al. 2016)

Criticism is vital to Scientific Progress

- A theory is scientific if it deals in statements that are empirically falsifiable
- Progress depends on attempts to demonstrate falsity of theoretical statements (Popper 1963)
- But 'normal science' is conducted within a 'paradigm' and subject to conventions
- 'Paradigm shifts' are resisted, and only occur after substantial 'anomaly accumulation' (Kuhn 1962)

And the IS Discipline is Wary of Criticism

- "In contrast to specific and critical reviews of individual papers, tell the reader what patterns you are seeing in the literature".
'Do not fall into the trap of being overly critical"
(Webster & Watson 2002)
- "Papers should be in apposition rather than in opposition"
[i.e. position things side by side or close together]
(Straub 2009)

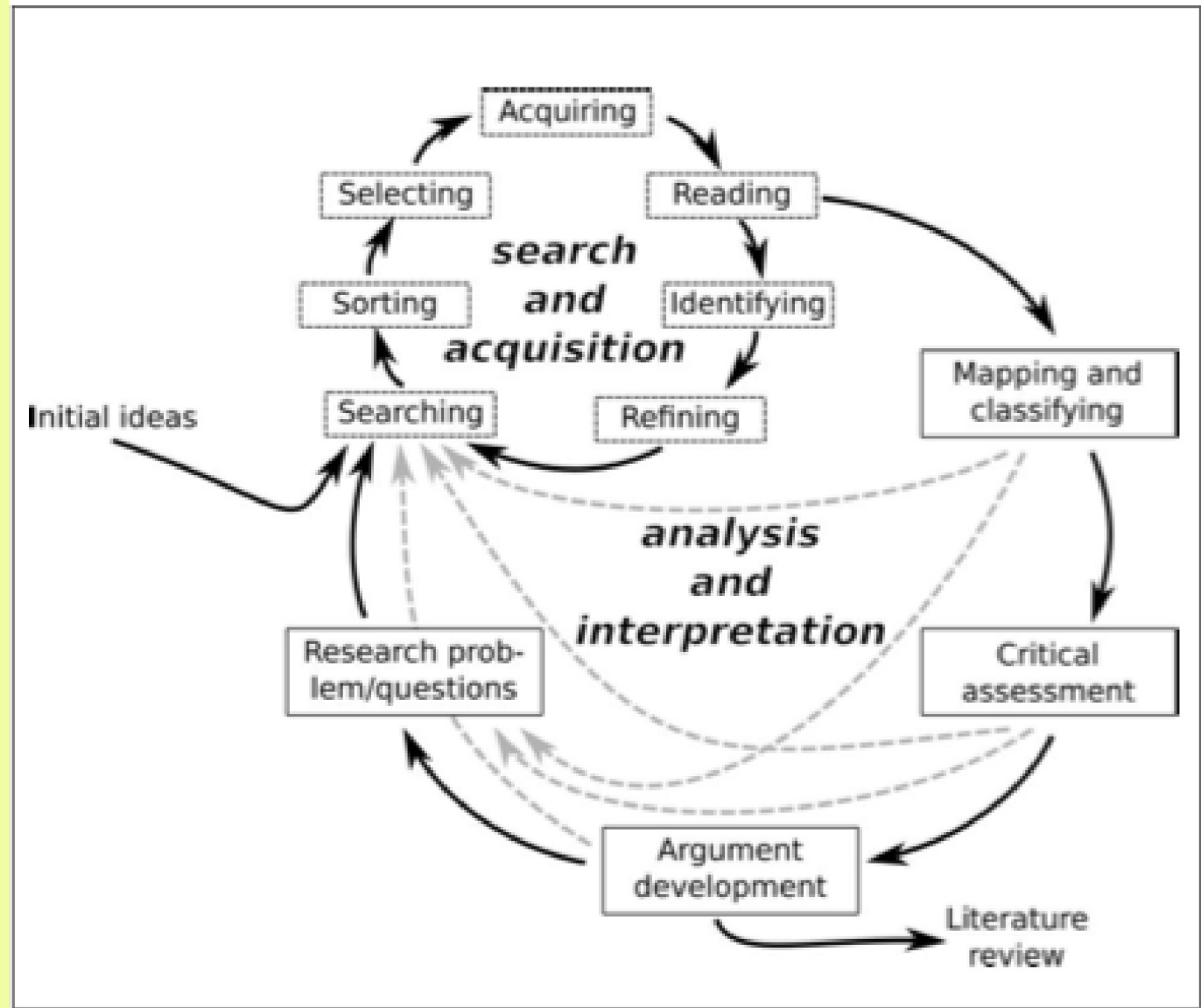
Schools of Thought or Approaches to Research

- Positivism
 - Interpretivism
 - Design Science
- An odd bedfellow:
Critical Research / Critical Theory Research

Key Elements of Critical Research

- Critique of Power Relationships
- Transformation / Instrumentalism with the needs of society in focus
- Insight / Depth of Study
- Reflexivity / Self-Questioning

Hermeneutic Approach for Conducting Literature Reviews



Critical Discourse Analysis

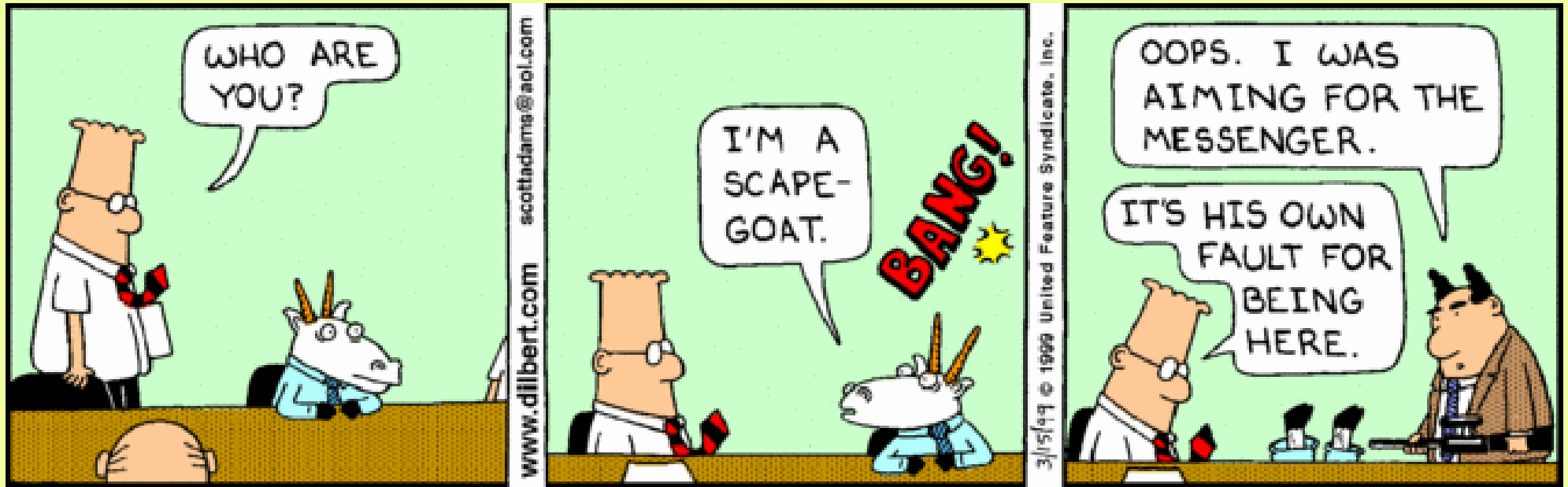
- IS is subject to 'Ideological Hegemony'
- Ideological Hegemony refers to dominant thought patterns and worldviews, engrained in a discipline and beyond scrutiny, concerning:
 - framing of research topics and questions
 - choices of theories and research methods
- So assess power relationships between actors, and evaluate comprehensibility, truthfulness, legitimacy and sincerity

Implications for the Research Project

- Make clear that 'researcher perspective' theory is a product of critical theory research
- Be specific about the method's use of repetitive loops and introspective questioning
- Distinguish preliminary 'orientational reading' from subsequent, deep 'analytical reading'
- Depict as directed content analysis using *a priori* coding, and provide (relevant) quantification
- Be specific about how coding reliability is achieved
- Stress the issue of 'legitimacy', and show that the papers do not represent all stakeholder perspectives
- Assume that 'hegemonic participation' is unconscious

Critical Content Analysis Themes

- A Personal Problem
- The Research Objective
- Content Analysis
- The Role of Criticism in Research
- Critical Theory
- A Solution



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