

Date: Mon, 5 Jan 2004 13:49:20
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: Siamack Salari, Jon Beasley-Murray, Greg Rowland
Subject: MRS paper progress check

Just so as you know where we're at. I had hoped to circulate the first draft of the paper by now. I can't because I still need to input Jon and Siamack's sections. I'm hoping that once I've incorporated these by end of play today that I can circulate a kind of draft which shows how my conclusions fit back into what the 3 of you have written.

Friday is the absolute deadline; that is to say whatever I have got by midday Thursday I'm going to have to work into a final draft. We're about half way there now - I've done around 4000 words and Greg has supplied 3,000 so plenty to edit down - but timing is going to be very tight - please don't let your timings slip any further!

John G

Date: Thu, 8 Jan 2004 17:51:46
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: Siamack Salari, Jon Beasley-Murray, Greg Rowland
Subject: update end of play Thurs 8th

Hi there just to let you know where I'm up to. I have received both Greg and Jon's amends. And am in process of getting feedback from a number of sources.

The 2 major issues with the paper at present are length (which is around 10,000 words which is the upper limit), and making the intro/thesis a lot more forceful and clear up front - which is tonight's task. The minor issue is ensuring that Jon's textual reading of my moderating continues to be a broadside against moderators and group practice in general and not an example of having the wrong moderator on the wrong night!

I have committed to the MRS that I will mail them the final draft by lunchtime tomorrow with the disk in the post. I am working on it tonight until the job is done- once I've completed my paternal duties as cook and putting children to bed. This includes the formatting, credits plaudits etc and diagrams. You're welcome to call me on the mobile any time. I

thought I would circulate the final draft when I'm done which gives tomorrow morning for any final tweaks.

John G

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 03:26:23(GMT)
From: Jon Beasley-Murray <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Cc: Siamack Salari, Greg Rowland
Subject: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

OK, guys... Here's pretty much the final edit (I hope) of my bit. I have tried to cut it to the bone, and it's lean, mean, fighting machine of prose that's below 3,000 words (i.e. significantly shorter than before), albeit not much below.

This is in part because I've tried hard to ensure that you're not the fall guy, John, while making the fundamental points that I feel are important, and doing the close reading that I think is the heart of my contribution. I.e. this means keeping the passage you'd rather have cut!

But c'mon John, this is more than rock'n'roll... You're the Jerry Ramone of market research! You can let it fly, and we'll go down swell at the conference... The prize goes to the brave!

Me, I think that at the end of this, rather than criticizing you, the folks will see themselves also in this analysis. And that's what we're trying to get across, isn't it?

Still, if you want to change stuff, then give me a ring.

Take care

Jon

Jon Beasley-Murray

Latin American Studies
University of Manchester
jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 03:38:58
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: 'Jon Beasley-Murray' <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

Ahh you still there - its not rock and roll mate its a remix:
I'm just working on the opening paragraphs again so forgive
Captain Bombastic here but you interrupted me in full flow
here's a sample:

The remix is a modern phenomenon where a DJ or music producer evolves and re-engineers a piece of recorded music to create an entirely new or hybrid recording. In the dance clubs DJs compete and collaborate with one another using an array of record decks with samplers, and drum machines and FX units to create a live performance that relies more on dexterity, intuition, musicianship and serendipity than the ability to pick a suitable piece of vinyl from a vast back catalogue and drop it on the turntable with predictable results. This paper is about such a collaboration. In it you will discover how four analysts, only one a market researcher collaborated on a project to challenge a longstanding convention within market research: that the conduct, interpretation and final authority for the findings of group discussions lies entirely with the moderator.

I've amended everything else but your section so far. Just have to finish off the intro and go to bed - but will read it before I do so.

I'm on my mobile if you want to call without disrupting the household

John G

And talking of the Ramones perhaps we should all present in shades 8-)

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 03:43:39 (GMT)
From: Jon Beasley-Murray <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

I'm still here. Ring me when you've finished reading. I'll stay up.

> And talking of the Ramones perhaps we should all present in
> shades 8-)

Nah, only you will need the shades... :)

Take care

Jon

jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk
deepest, darkest levenshulme

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 03:58:03
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: 'Jon Beasley-Murray' <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

Ok I've done a speed read of your section - and opened up the scotch while I'm at it - its got to that point in the evening.

Something for you to have a think about. What we have overall is a range of responses: the ethnography flushing out the bullshit to an extent, the semiotics leading to a way of changing the overall code. What is bothering me is that in your section it appears that I am shown to be breaking all the conventions to little effect. Yup my mateyness didn't stop me crashing and burning in Group 3 but the same mateyness and the dodgy intro in group 4 whether or not it helped didn't hinder a reasonably riotous group where we got some quite useful stuff on the table not just about the warp and woof of binge drinking which the home office study did quite well but from the 2 older lads an almost elegiac account of their swansong from binge drinking and why it was all coming to an end which was just the sort of internal territory I felt had been absent from everything I'd read. So unless you violently disagree on this point can we accentuate the positive a little?

John G

PS we should be including this email exchange as a text
PPS no scrub that...

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:03:31 (GMT)
From: Jon Beasley-Murray <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

Ach, you see, I think you're wanting to be the lone hero
again...

Yes you did have an effect, but in combination with the
analyses from the three of us!!

In other words, I think the *whole point* is not to see the
focus groups as self-enclosed (and to worry about what went
well and what didn't *within* them), but to see them as part
of a process, into which we're all feeding.

More in a sec...
Take care
Jon

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:09:12
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: 'Jon Beasley-Murray' <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

So what you're saying is that a piece of critical realism
(ethnography) authenticates me, a piece of magic realism
(semiotics) charms, but a piece of structuralism leaves me
feeling deconstructed?

John G aka Woody (Toy Story reference just in case you hadn't
got it)

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:10:55 (GMT)
From: Jon Beasley-Murray <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

OK, some more...
I think (and I betcha that Siamack and Greg would agree, btw)
that one thing that's come out of this is that the focus on
our subjects' "internal territory" was misguided. (Though

like all misguided things, it had interesting and productive effects.)

I think we've also learned that my mode of analysis is much, much slower and more drawn out, more concerned with the detail. For good and for ill. That's why we guys don't work so fast. Our semiotician said he preferred the ethnography to the groups. I was (and still am) fascinated by them, more and more the more I read them. I think there's tons of stuff there, though (again) a semiotician's eyes glaze over.

I'd see what happened in the focus groups as a meeting point for a set of narratives (and we shouldn't privilege the "internal"; that's just getting "authenticity" in by the back door). We learned as much, if not more, from the points at which those narratives clashed or (more often) didn't meet and diverged, as we learned from when they resonated.

Your narrative (and that's the point of all this again, surely?) was just one among many--not an authoritative one, although a distinct one. Together, you, S, G, and I, our job now would be to put together an analysis based on the groups not as a "moment of truth" but as some kind of wild laboratory in which we set loose forces that none of the participants fully understood. (This is my point about resuscitating desire--your desires, their desires, or when either your desires or theirs were untempted, unraised.)

I think you're trying to reclaim the group itself, divorced again from content, as the privileged space.

I dunno about the critical realism or magic realism (not terms I'd use for S's and G's bits), but certainly what deconstruction does is to *decenter* the subject (you).

But, again, I thought that was the whole point of the exercise?

There are no lone heroes any more (and, btw, ethnographers and semioticians also want to be lone heroes... we could run their approaches through pretty much exactly the same processes). There's always more, a supplement (to use the technical term) that you will view as supplementary (unimportant, can be excised, not in the transcript, not in the paper), but it's *there* that we find the key to the whole system.

And once you've lost the centre, you can't reclaim it.

Seriously.
Take care

Jon

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:18:36 (GMT)
From: Jon Beasley-Murray <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

Oh, and a PS to a PS...

On Fri, 9 Jan 2004, John Griffiths wrote:

> PS we should be including this email exchange as a text

And of course it is a text. And it seems as though it's (again) supplementary. But in fact it's at these margins that the real issues are being thrashed out, if (as always) obliquely.

What I want to do is to retain at least a trace of those margins in the paper. And, yes, to unsettle the whole notion that we can "resolve" this binge drinking issue.

> PPS no scrub that...

Ah, but you didn't scrub it, did you? Again, you *added* something, that in fact underlined the importance of what you claimed to scrub. In the unsuccessful erasure, again we see something of importance, a site of anxiety retained in (this) the text...

Take care

Jon

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:23:54
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: 'Jon Beasley-Murray' <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

This is fascinating stuff - but I feel we're out of time in really capturing it. So far I have 2 meetings in 2 railway stations and you have one. We will get back to the part where we have to debrief the client, but it would be great to try and figure a way of saying this better in the presentation (20

mins?). Re the supplement yes of course (stone that the builders rejected et al) but of course the great thing about being a lone hero is that you can claim all the credit when you find the key and you don't catch anybody else looking at their watch if its taking a bit of time to find it.

:-)

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:26:12 (GMT)
From: Jon <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

On Fri, 9 Jan 2004, John Griffiths wrote:

> Ok I've done a speed read of your section - and opened up
the
> scotch while I'm at it - its got to that point in the
evening.

Sorry, I hope that little impressionistic swathe of
deconstruction hasn't silenced you altogether... I've opened
up the scotch as well!

> This is fascinating stuff - but I feel we're out of time in
> really capturing it.

Well, you see, I tried to give a sense of it all in the brief
but quite specific reading offered in my section. And to show
how that brief introduction opened up a way to read the rest
of the text, and to begin to understand the way that the focus
groups worked (their genre). In a nutshell, that's my
contribution!

> but it would be great to try and figure a way of
> saying this better in the presentation (20 mins?).

I think the way to say it is to lock on to a specific reading.
To say, to the assembled audience of market researchers, look,
this is stuff you don't think is important, but look again a
bit more closely and see where you can go.

> the great thing about being a lone hero is that you can
> claim all the credit when you find the key and you don't
> catch anybody else looking at their watch if its taking a bit
> of time to find it.

Hehe, if you mean me, I don't get no credit!

Anyhow, pragmatically it's about putting a text together that is eye-catching, interesting, informative, provocative, makes people think and re-think, and convince them not of any one way to do things, but of an array of potential ways forwards. To encourage them to undertake more experiments as you have. And you show, look, you can decentre your role, relativize the function of the moderator, and live to tell the tale! And what a tale...

Anyhow, that's my take on what's going on.

Take care

Jon

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:39:42
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: 'Jon Beasley-Murray' <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

Pragmatically its convincing a client with a pile of moulah and a mountain of vested interest that it is possible to change the way a whole generation behaves and that it won't hurt their share price if they do it. Now that's what I call an interesting job which is why I haven't been bored in 20 years...

BTW according to the rules of the genre - I'm supposed to find an answer whatever happens in the groups...

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:45:17(GMT)
From: Jon Beasley-Murray <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

Well, I was talking about the MRS paper. And I wasn't trying to impugn what you do!

Anyhow, if you'd rather leave my piece out (I sense you think it's not helpful, for all my attempts), then that's a possibility.

Take care

Jon

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 04:53:43
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: 'Jon Beasley-Murray' <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

No I was being facetious - the point is that in MR one routine takes on these vast tasks and does a pile of fieldwork in 2 and a half minutes to reach conclusions with metaphysical force.

Re the MRS paper I'm very pleased with the paper as it is going - I have already described it as a mugging from 3 directions so the poor quallies who are only used to dealing with one mugger at a time won't know what to do with themselves. Its provocative, its pretty well thought out and now I've had a bit of chance to canvas opinion it is a huge blind spot for market research in particular so they won't be sure what to do about it. One of the guys who works with Siamack suggested an alternative title for the paper Gorillas in the mist. Which means it just about hits the spot!

I'm just engaged in an exercise of damage limitation since the only way I can construre a market research conference (which by the way I haven't attended in 16 years) as some kind of Colisseum where heroic behaviour is expected.

John G

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 05:05:57 (GMT)
From: Jon Beasley-Murray <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

Oh, but one more thing... I *really* don't see it as a mugging, or think that that would be a bad misreading.

Indeed, as I'm suggesting, had we but world enough and time we would show how all *four* perspectives need supplementing. It just so happens that, yes, the focus is more on you and on your role as moderator. But I think that at the very least it's implicit that, certainly, Siamack and Greg see the value of focus groups in a new way. It's a bit different for me as, unlike them, I'm not coming from the commercial side of things. But I'm sure that one could imagine ways in which a literary critical approach is also under some kind of fire.

Indeed, perhaps *that's* what's happening in these emails, if not in the paper itself!

(On the other hand, the MRS folks'll be less interested in an academic getting a drubbing down, as they're not invested. But they are, literally and financially, invested in what the three of you guys do.)

Oh, and it's absolutely well thought out. And you perhaps do emerge as a hero, just an anti-hero... hence Joey Ramone! :) Nothing to fear from the Colisseum.

(Here's a better title, though: "Market Research from the Margins." I think in different ways we're investigating the power of the margins... be they ethnographic, semiotic, or literary; of course, reciprocally, we're seeing the interest of focus groups that are otherwise marginal to what the rest of the three of us do. It's all margin, no centre. Again...)

Take care

Jon

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 05:13:56
From: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
To: 'Jon Beasley-Murray' <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

Right then 9,800 words and draft 2 off the skids. I've added some sources an ethnical defence and some acknowledgements as well. And while you're paring I'll work on the single diagram which outlines the fieldwork we did which is a bit fiddly to explain verbally though I try.

John G

Date: Fri, 9 Jan 2004 07:07:55(GMT)
From: Jon Beasley-Murray <jon.beasley-murray@man.ac.uk>
To: John Griffiths <john.griffiths7@ntlworld.com>
Subject: RE: Sheena is a Punk Rocker...

OK, here's another edit. I've worked mainly on the first couple of paragraphs and the last third of the paper. I think I've managed to cut a fair bit, but haven't counted. In an earlier email to you I sent an edit (mrs_jonedit.doc?) that included parings down for the other sections, not all of which you've adopted, but I since deleted that document.

And one more point:

You drop the remix metaphor like a hot potato. I've tried to reinsert it occasionally, but feel you could work with it a little more in other sections of the paper.

Otherwise, it looks pretty good.

I'm off to bed.