Chapter 2
The Global Under-Theorisation of the Viva

For me, words have a charge.
I find myself incapable of
escaping the bite of the word,
the vertigo of a question mark.
Franz Fanon

Abstract The viva has been globally under-theorised. To support this argument, in the first part of this chapter UK research on doctoral and professional postgraduate vivas is critiqued. The author makes two points: firstly, while research into the professional viva suggests some theorisation, it fails to evaluate these theories critically through competing theories. Research into the academic doctoral viva is by way of contrast more clearly lacking in theorisation. Secondly, it is argued that the methodological approach adopted in the research on the academic doctoral viva has been predominantly based upon interviews, questionnaires and the analysis of policy documents in higher education institutions.

The viva has been globally under-theorised. To support this argument, in the first part of this chapter I critique UK research on doctoral and professional postgraduate vivas. I make two points: firstly, while research into the professional viva suggests some theorisation, it fails to evaluate these theories critically through competing theories. Research into the academic doctoral viva is by way of contrast more clearly lacking in theorisation. Secondly, I argue that the methodological approach adopted in the research on the academic doctoral viva has been predominantly based upon interviews, questionnaires and the analysis of policy documents in higher education institutions. As such there has been a lack of insight derived from qualitative, ethnographic research focusing on what is actually going on in the viva. By contrast the methodological approach for research into the professional viva has been more ethnographic and less policy driven. The final part of the chapter explores the global landscape and the kind of research on the viva that exists in

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Fanon in communication with Francis Jeanson, the editor of his book *Black Skins White Masks.*

North America and in non-English-speaking countries where the tradition of the viva is different in higher education.

Inspired by Goffman's (1974) conception of *frame analysis*, research into the doctoral viva and professional viva can be conceptualised as two research frames that describe and account for the 'organisation of experience' (p13). A frame indicates the 'sense of what is going on' (p10) in the activity, understood in terms of the 'meanings' given by researchers to the activity under consideration. To use an analogy, the frame is a snapshot that puts spatial, temporal and conceptual boundaries around an activity. Accordingly, a frame in my usage refers to the researcher's definition and assignment of meaning to the viva. The researcher's frame makes reference to another frame, namely the one that includes the meanings assigned to the activity by participants themselves, such as the examiners' meeting beforehand supported by examiners' reports, the student's writing of the dissertation and their tutorial support and research training, or frames associated with student understandings of the consequences of the viva. The focus of this chapter is upon the frame of meanings given to the viva by researchers; and it is to be expected that a certain level of disagreement will exist between researchers, in terms of their theoretical and methodological approaches.

The Goffman-inspired 'frame' has its parallels. Lakatos (1970) talked of research programs that directed the endeavours of researchers and Bourdieu (1996) developed a concept of fields to account for the social production and reproduction of different institutionalised activities. Common to all these approaches is the focus on the social production and assignment of meaning to activities, such that participants share a conceptual 'frame of reference'. These writers anticipate my concept of social practice, which I develop in the following chapters in order to understand what is going on in the viva itself from the perspective of the participants (frames). Even though frames (fields, research programs and social practices) rest upon and at the same time constitute sets of norms, this should not obscure the manner in which they can be disputed and contested by different participants enacting new narrative moves. As such the norms can be 'put in play', so to speak, and become emergent rather than what might appear to be given.

The Professional Viva

As the name implies, the professional viva can be found in higher education among aspiring architects and doctors, and in aesthetic subjects for artists and dancers. In Chap. 5, I will have cause to return to consider professional doctorates, such as the EdD (education), DBA (business) and EngD (engineering). I will restrict my focus in this section to medical vivas because they clearly highlight a number of issues that contrast with those found in the frame for the academic doctoral viva. Overviews of vivas in postgraduate medical examination (Davis and Karunathilake 2005; Memon et al. 2010) identify inter-examiner reliability as central concerns, along with what might be called confidence in communication.

As an example of research on medical vivas I have selected the work of Roberts et al. (2000). They developed a socio-linguistic and ethnographic frame to investigate a sample of 24 vivas taken by qualified doctors wishing to gain entry to the Royal College of General Practitioners. Separate written exams were also taken as part of the examination. They additionally undertook 14 interviews of candidates with ethnic backgrounds after the event, and used 11 training videotapes of vivas.

This research was theoretically underpinned by reference to Goffman's (1981) work on the joint construction of interaction by participants and Gumperz's (1982) work on discourse strategies. Their more general view was that the viva revealed the construction of knowledge and its legitimation drew upon Kvale's (1993) theoretical constructivism. The point is that their research made it possible to theorise and reflect upon the 'sense of what is happening' in terms of the socio-cultural background of the participants.

Secondly, their research frame was ethnographic, where the moves and the strategies of all the participants were explored. The predictability of the examiners' moves—through questions—was increased because examiners used a checklist of topics from which the students received questions. The training videos were used to supplement the data collected through observation. The checklist, videos and observation increased the level of transparency for non-participants.

In this research frame the researchers recommended that examiners be given special 'sensitising' training about issues related to examining candidates from non-English-speaking countries. However, this was hardly policy advice grounded in a detailed discussion of different policy options, their implementation and the question of the validity of the viva.

Lastly, even though research exists on experiences of the medical viva in countries such as the USA (see Chap. 1), Roberts et al. (2000) made no mention of it in this frame.

In summary, the frame for research into the professional viva is strong on its theoretical grounding and methodological approach, but relatively weak in terms of policy-based implications and the role of international comparisons.

The Academic Doctoral Viva

The frame for research into the academic viva in the UK draws upon two groups of doctoral viva: those in the social sciences and those in the natural sciences. Examples of research in this frame are particularly evident in the early 2000s (Delamont et al. 1998, 2000; Hartley and Fox 2002; Hartley and Jory 2000; Morley et al. 2002; Murray 2003; Park 2003; Wallace and Marsh 2001). I have selected two examples for discussion because they highlight the main issues and approaches evident in this research frame.

The first example is Jackson and Tinkler's research on the viva. They draw upon the same data set in several publications: a sample of 20 UK universities were questioned on their policy with respect to the viva and, secondly, questionnaires

were sent to 54 external examiners, 46 internal examiners, 42 supervisors and 88 candidates. The candidates had already taken their viva. The questionnaires looked at how examiners were selected, the viva procedure, perceptions of the viva and its purpose. While the authors were interested in what took place in the viva, the title of their paper 'Back to Basics: A Consideration of the Purposes of the Ph.D. Viva' (2001) indicated a greater interest in 'why'.

They found that the policy documents indicated that the site for decision making on the candidate was generally the dissertation and report made by examiners prior to the viva. The viva was important in borderline cases. In 40% of institutions the candidate could not be failed on the basis of performance in the viva. Examiners voiced the view that the viva provided candidates with the opportunity to 'discuss and develop ideas with an expert in the field … an opportunity to receive guidance on the publication of their dissertation' (Jackson and Tinkler 2001: 360). Other arguments given were that the viva allowed authenticity to be checked and that the candidate could defend his or her dissertation. A small percentage mentioned that the viva tested oral skills, and only 6% of respondents considered the viva totally redundant. Candidates agreed with the view that the viva checked what they knew and added that in some cases it subjected them 'to the most unnecessary form of misery and humiliation possible' (2001: 362).

They also noted that the viva could discourage even successful candidates from pursuing an academic career. This has been cause for debate in the frame (Hartley and Fox 2002; Wallace and Marsh 2001), although there has been no agreement that the behaviour of the examiners is the key independent variable. However, the quality of the dissertation has been raised as a factor, as well as the role of the supervisor.

With respect to methodology in the research frame, a number of things must be noted. One data source was policy documents, and it was not always clear whether the directives contained in the policy had been implemented, either successfully or otherwise. Secondly, like much of the research in this frame, the researchers made use of questionnaires, often sent to respondents in the post and not administered face-to-face as interviews. The important thing about these questionnaires is that they were administered after the event. It is not possible to confirm whether the answers given reflected the actual conduct of the viva. Put simply, the data was post facto.

With respect to the theoretical underpinnings of their research frame, the authors are largely silent. In their chapter, Jackson and Tinkler (2000) referred to the same data set and argued that the viva functioned as a gatekeeper mechanism to the academic community, supporting and demarcating its boundaries. In discussing the role of the gatekeeper the reader might have expected a theoretical discussion with reference to functionalism and social integration into communities (Bourdieu 1996; Delamont et al. 2000). As no such discussion is forthcoming, the reader can only conclude that it remains an unexplored possibility.

In another piece of published research, Tinkler and Jackson (2000: 171–172, 174) commented upon the perceived and stipulated independence of examiners, as they sought to ensure fair examinations and the generation of common academic

standards between institutions. The reader might have expected a theory accounting for the interaction of examiners and how this influenced both their opinions and behaviour as examiners. Once again, no such theory is provided.

To summarise, Tinkler and Jackson's frame is strong on the policy implications of their research, and some limited remarks on international practice are evident. However, the frame remains under-theorised and a question mark can be placed on the soundness of the empirical findings because informants were questioned after the viva and not observed. Put simply, there might be a significant lacuna in the data they collected on the viva.

Jackson and Tinkler (2001: 365) conclude one of their papers with the following:

> Questionnaire data provides a useful framework for this exploration, but more qualitative research is required to further explore and explain the findings.

This is echoed in much of the research in the frame for the academic viva. Hartley and Jory (2000) note that questionnaire data tends to lack the rich description and feel for respondents gained from more qualitative data. Murray (2003: 147) suggests that too little is known of 'how important the student's performance on the day is to the outcome'. The general view is that more observation of the actual viva is necessary, and that this will be difficult to achieve as long as research access to the viva is limited.

However, a few researchers are an exception in the research into the academic doctoral viva. Trafford and Leshem (2002b) adopted an ethnographic approach, rather than one that was interview or policy based. They gathered data on 25 doctoral vivas across several disciplines, including 12 education vivas and 5 vivas in the bio-sciences or applied sciences. They were present as examiners, supervisors or as the independent chair. They noted the questions asked and grouped them in clusters, which were identified in the different vivas. They claimed that their research was 'ethnographic as it sought to understand and then explain the realities that a small number of people experienced within a special setting' (p38).

While their research might have had the trappings of ethnographic research—with observation and participant observation as the main source of data and a focus on interaction rituals—the fact that they limited their data to the questions asked, without noting the answers from respondents, means that it is scarcely capable of fully explaining what took place. The interactional and feedback loops, as well as conversation analysis details are ignored. There are therefore significant limitations to the methodology supporting their research frame. Moving beyond their research, Chen (2012) in her own doctoral dissertation has collected detailed observational data of doctoral students' experiences of the public defence in Canadian universities. She thus sidestepped the weakness of Trafford and Leshem. Having said this, she still has no data on the more private discussions of examiners and members of doctoral committees as they evaluate whether the dissertation is to be passed or failed. Moreover, as I shall argue in later chapters, the viva is characterised by other language games besides the interrogative language game of questions and answers, for example the report, greeting and evaluative language games.

Trafford and Leshem (2002b) found that the strongest candidates had received more of the following kinds of questions: defending 'doctorateness', contributing to knowledge, critique of research concepts and establishing conceptual links. These were questions coded as high in innovation and development of research and high in scholarship and interpretation. The failed candidates had received fewer of these kinds of questions, and more questions on resolving research problems, content of the dissertation, and structure of the dissertation, with the implication being that they had not covered them.

Trafford and Leshem's findings reveal how the viva can be viewed as a type of 'communication event', to use Murray's term (2003), where preparing for the questions can reduce the candidate's level of anxiety with respect to uncertainty and unpredictability.

One concept used on several occasions by Trafford and Leshem (2002a) was 'doctorateness'. They were interested in what 'examiners consider to be critical to doctorateness'. Examiners in their pre-viva reports stated the extent to which the dissertation met the criteria for doctorateness, understood as the scholarly level of the dissertation, the transparency of its arguments and the complexity of the topics chosen by the candidate.

Trafford and Leshem sought evidence of these items in the questions asked by examiners in the actual viva: 'Our reasoning was that "if the characteristics were present then they confirmed doctorateness"' (2002b: 39). I interpret this to mean that doctorateness was a theoretical construct proposed by the researchers on the basis of the evidence of these kinds of questions in the viva. To use assessment terminology, the researchers were looking for construct validity in their findings, with the assumption that this construct was also what the examiners were looking for. Doctorateness was one of the four types of questions they found: (A) formal aspects of the dissertation, (B) theoretical perspectives including literature-related questions, (C) the practice of research, and (D) demonstrating doctorateness.

In seeking to theorise further the concept of doctorateness it can be asked whether it is to do with cognitive reasoning. Is it also to do with domain-specific knowledge? I shall return to these concerns later in the book (Chaps. 6 and 8) when I consider what might be meant by an assessment construct.

Trafford in a personal communication (5 March 2004), wrote the following:

> We coined the word 'doctorateness' to account for those features that are associated with the process of undertaking and achieving doctoral level research. Since Government publications refer to 'graduateness' as the characteristic of graduate studies, we felt entitled to use a similar noun to account for studies at the doctoral level.

He also noted that Murray (2003: 78) used the term 'doctorateness' to denote the invitation to students to consider 'explicitly, where in their dissertation they had engaged, explicitly with doctoral criteria'.[1]

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[1]Murray (2003: 78) adds: 'Facets of "doctorateness" include research design, presentation, coherent argument, quality of writing, a kind of three-way "fit" of design, outcomes and conclusions and initial and final contextualization'.
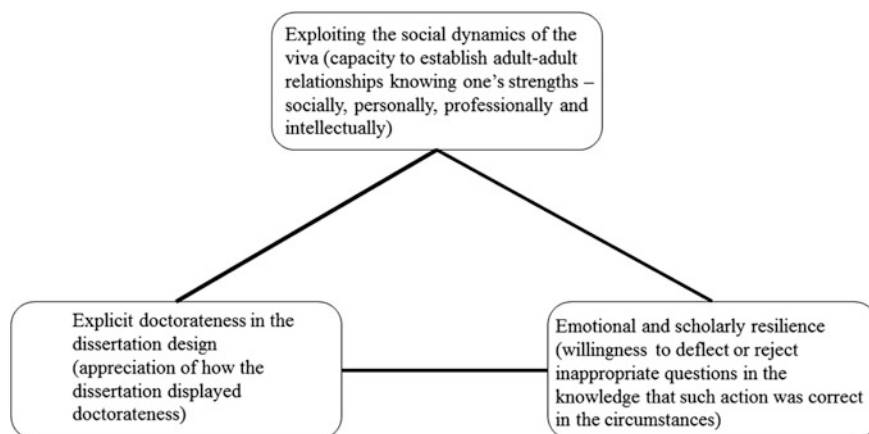
Fig. 2.1 Synergy in the viva. *Source* Adapted from Trafford and Leshem (2002a)

From these two comments by Trafford and Murray respectively, the reader might suppose that doctorateness has something to do with the activity of undertaking and achieving the doctoral degree and with the formal, stated criteria in different degree regulations. However, it must be noted that such reflections do not constitute a theorisation of the social interactions taking place in the viva. However, in a less substantial piece of research, based upon exploring a single viva, Trafford and Leshem (2002a) provide such a theoretical conceptualisation. They identified a synergy between social dynamics, explicit doctorateness and emotional/scholarly resilience. Figure 2.1 depicts this.

In the same personal communication referred to above Trafford said that synergy meant:

> The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The notion assists researchers to attribute characteristics of interdependency between parts of an organisation, and then to analyse how they relate one to another.

This definition is used by Trafford and Leshem to explain how the different strategies of interaction adopted by participants—for example, to be an active rather than passive candidate—influence the outcome. This theorisation draws upon the work of systems theory as formulated by Emery (1969). However, it is by no means certain that systems theory is the only or most appropriate way of theorising the viva. The authors do not consider alternative theories; nor that the viva is not always driven towards achieving 'a quasi-stationary equilibrium' (Emery and Trist 1969: 282) or the greatest possible 'performativity' (Lyotard 1986). With performativity in mind postmodern theorists of organisations, such as Boje (2001), understand organised social interaction, and hence the viva, as always broken, fragmented and working towards a holistic self-conception through narratives, but never achieving it. I will develop a narrative approach to understanding the viva in the next chapter. As regards incompleteness, I referred to the work of Rømer (2003)

in Chap. 1 in the discussion of assessment as the ever-present potential for new moves to be taken by participants.

In sum, while Trafford and Leshem have begun to theorise the academic viva, their work has yet to develop a theory that takes account of more recent developments in systems theory (e.g. those inspired by Luhmann, such as Qvortrup 2003) and other kinds of theory.

Comparing the Research Frames for the Professional Viva and the Academic Doctoral Viva

The research frame for the professional viva (strong in theory and methodology, weaker in policy and international comparisons) can be contrasted with the research frame for the academic doctoral viva (strong on policy, weak on theory and international comparisons and possessing a questionable understanding of how the viva actually takes place). Table 2.1 summarises these points.

The frame, to recall the conceptualisation proposed above, refers to the researcher's definition and assignment of meaning to the viva. It is important to underline that there appears to be no agreement on what is going on in the academic viva. This might be because there is a deficit of empirical data based upon observations from actual vivas. The researcher's frame, with the exception of the work by Trafford and Leshem (2002b), is based upon questionnaires to participants after the event. With respect to the professional viva, where research is more strongly based on what is actually going on, there is less reason to question the research findings. This means that the academic viva, unlike the professional viva, can be questioned in terms of its content validity, since what it purports to be the case may not in fact be the case.

If the conception of validity includes, as Messick suggests (1989), the theoretical rationales used by the researchers in the two frames, it is evident that the academic viva is significantly under-theorised, unlike the professional viva. By a theory of the viva I mean a number of interconnected and potentially interacting concepts that provide an account for the phenomenon of the viva and how it takes place.

The concept of 'doctorateness', whilst suggestive of a concept well-suited to measuring the construct validity of the researcher's academic frame, remains to a large extent under-theorised. To say that it is based upon inductive observations, as the authors do, is to sidestep the necessity of theorising the concept(s) generated

Table 2.1 Strengths and weaknesses in the academic and professional viva research frames

Frame	Professional viva	Academic doctoral viva
Theory	Strong	Weak
Empirical understanding of viva	Strong	Weak
Policy	Weak	Strong
International comparisons	Weak	Weak

from these observations. If it is a construct, whose construct is it? How does it function, and under what conditions?

The professional viva is stronger on theorisation. But no alternative theories are presented in Roberts et al. (2000) research. Socio-linguistic discourse theory is taken as true and the only conception of discourses. Foucault's view of discourse, as power/knowledge supporting confessionary practices, might have been re-visited to provide not only a different conceptualisation, but a different sense of the meaning of what is happening (Cherryholmes 1988). Another theoretical perspective that could have been drawn upon is to be found in Scott et al. (2004) important book on the professional doctorates. They move beyond Gibbons' bifurcated distinction between disciplinary knowledge produced inside the university and trans-disciplinary knowledge outside the university to talk of different forms of domain-specific knowledge that cross the boundaries between the university and the practice setting (Dobson 2007).[2] I shall return to the discussion of domain-specific knowledge in the viva in Chap. 6.

An additional point can be made if we take on board Broadfoot's (1996) point that the ideologies expressed in assessment practices, in this case researchers' frames, should be subjected to critique. Researchers in the frame for the academic doctoral viva (Tinkler and Jackson 2000) talked of the need for increased transparency and ensuring examiner reliability. Such policy recommendations appear to have been voiced in the belief that their own research supporting their recommendations and the recommendations themselves were value-free and politically neutral. But, from a Foucaultian (1972) perspective, their appeals to greater transparency and a more 'fair' conduct of the viva might also lead to greater surveillance and (self-)control.

To argue that the viva should be more public, as in Scandinavia, is no guarantee that the control will cease or change its character. In Norway, the threshold for deciding whether a dissertation is to be passed has moved from the public arena of the disputation, which is to a large extent a ceremonial ritual permitting the presentation of an already approved dissertation, to the meeting(s) between examiners some months earlier behind closed doors when they make their decision and write a joint report. In a formal sense the doctoral candidate must first defend their dissertation publicly (in a *disputas*) and hold a public lecture (on a topic proposed two weeks earlier by the examiners) before the examiners can make a recommendation to the faculty that the degree should be awarded. However, examples of the candidate not receiving the degree on the basis of the disputation and public lecture are extremely rare.

Simply put, the ideologies expressed, either implicitly or explicitly, in a researcher's own research frame, can be subjected to a critique, where the focus is upon the researcher and their interests, and the shifting socio-cultural, political and

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[2]They talk of disciplinary (academic), technical (intervening in practice), dispositional (individual develops competence to reflect upon knowledge) and critical (undermining practice setting) knowledge and the manner in which they cross boundaries, for example technical knowledge may originate in the practice setting, but find its solution in disciplinary knowledge (Scott et al. 2004: 42).

economic conditions under which they are formed. In this particular case, the argument for greater transparency might lead to greater external and self-imposed control.

Researcher Frames on the Viva in North America and Non-English-Speaking Countries

Tinkler and Jackson (2000) understand the function of the UK viva in three descriptive terms: as an examination, an opportunity to give feedback about academic development and as a symbolic ritualistic event. This is mirrored in research elsewhere where the mix of all these things is evident. In North America the doctoral defence is understood to include both rigorous questioning and a high-level editorial meeting. According to Swales (2004: 170) in his study of a limited number of doctoral defence transcripts there are examples of the viva producing 'a palpable air of what might be called celebratory relief' that a long journey has been completed. Lovat et al. (2015: 19) have identified the closure supplied by the viva as important. In New Zealand, Carter (2008: 371) found the following in her group discussion with examiners: the viva can be a re-assuring event 'to provide a comfortable opportunity for the candidate to address any issues raised in the written report (which candidates do not see before the examination)'.

Kvale (1990, 1993, 2000), one of the few who has commented on the viva in Scandinavia, provides some largely anecdotal reflections on his own experiences as an examiner of doctorates, where he argues in critical fashion that the viva is more to do with a certification of students than a certification of knowledge. The symbolic aspect is dominant given that the viva is not taken until the dissertation has been approved by the examining committee and failures in the viva are extremely rare. Candidates are nevertheless examined in a detailed manner, or even 'grilled' in the ritualistic viva with its strict procedural codes on who speaks when. This symbolic aspect is slow to change. An example of this is found in a report by the Norwegian Research Council (2002: 108, 115), which limited its proposals for reform of the doctoral viva to letting the candidate present their own dissertation in the public *disputas*, instead of letting an opponent run through its main arguments. Vislie (2002), in an assessment of Norwegian doctoral programs, identified a low completion rate as a problem, but did not even mention the viva.

Even though there is little evidence of either systematic quantitative or qualitative research on the doctoral viva in Scandinavia, this has not stopped Anglo-Saxon researchers looking to the Scandinavian model of the viva. Tinkler and Jackson (2000), like other researchers (Murray 2003; Morley et al. 2002), have noted that the academic doctoral viva is more a public event in other countries, such as the Netherlands and Norway. But they do not comment on the considerable expense of the public event, and how in Norway, for example, the event is more of a symbolic ritual than a high-stakes assessment event. The French *soutenance de*

thèse shares many of the characteristics of the Scandinavian viva, with a highly symbolic ritualistic component; candidates are similarly not allowed to undertake the public defence until the pre-reports from the different jury members are favourable. There are few publications on the French *soutenance*. Dardy et al. (2002) is a notable exception where the linguistic and ritualistic aspects are highlighted and the public defence is seen to constitute its own specific genre.

Chen's (2012) research on the doctoral defence in Canada deserves special mention. She interviewed 11 candidates in the field of education before and after the public doctoral viva and also took field notes of viva defence questions and answers. She was interested in the manner in which the viva contributed to the development of researcher identities. She understood the candidates in a theoretical framework inspired by communities of practice with a specific emphasis on how candidates gain membership of the scientific community. She found in this instance three communities: 'the chair of the panel represents the university community, the external examiner represents the knowledge community, and the other members on the defense committee represent the departmental and faculty communities' (2012: 156). The second theoretical concept she identified was that in making meaning of the actual defence as an event a lack of knowledge is permissible. In detail, non-knowing figured in successful defences as candidates admitted to knowing less than their examiners; and presumably consecrating the novice–expert relationship. This non-knowledge also referred to how some of the panel members did not know the area of the doctoral candidate in detail, asking questions that coded the candidate as not knowing the sub-field to which they belonged. The third construct in her theory is trajectory, understood as the manner in which the doctoral candidate uses the defence to draw together the past (of doctoral training), present (of the dissertation defended) and future of being and becoming a researcher. It also embraces three aspects of identity construction: thinking about oneself, performing, and being thought of as a certain kind of person. The empirical evidence of the concept of trajectory is the number of questions asked by panel members about the research process.

The constitution of the panel differs in doctoral vivas. Chen (2012: 62) identifies a panel of as many as six members in the Canadian case, including the chair from the faculty level, the external examiner and the remainder from the department. This pattern is replicated in French and Spanish-speaking countries. In Scandinavia it is more normal to have a doctoral committee of three, where two are opponents from outside the university and one is internal. The two opponents ask questions in the viva, while all three members write the collective report on the dissertation prior to the viva. In Italy the Ph.D. committee involves three professors external to the university. In the English-speaking viva it is more normal to have two examiners, both external.

Chen sums up in the following manner: 'the public Ph.D. dissertation defense may be conceptualized as a trans-community conversation that aims to develop doctoral candidates as well as examining them' (2012: 157). Her research is important because she is one of the few global researchers who develops a theory of how the viva is pulled off and what it means to the participants. She covers both the

position of the questioner and that of the respondent, the candidate. In the trinity of examination, feedback and ritual it is the middle term which assumes the dominant position in her researcher frame.

Summary

We are apt as researchers to talk of research design as the decisive moment in planning research and formulating hypotheses and research questions. In this chapter I have sought to look at the different interests governing the choice of research frames that inform the research designs adopted by those interested in researching vivas. With the example of the UK, I have sought to demonstrate that the research frame into the academic doctoral viva has been under-theorised and, while the research frame into the professional viva has developed a theory, it has tended not to consider alternative or competing theories. Methodologically, the academic viva's research frame has been more quantitative and policy oriented, while the professional viva's research frame has been more ethnographic and qualitative. Widening the reach to the global landscape including North America and non-English-speaking countries, the researchers' frame for the viva is less interested in the policy aspect and a quantitative approach and a preference is for small-scale ethnographic studies. However, the number of studies developing and contrasting multiple theories to account for the viva are few. The work of Chen, and also that of Trafford and Leshem, are exceptions in this respect.

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