# Chapter 3: METHODS

Chapter 3 is divided into four main parts, with parts 1-3 sub-divided into several sections.

1) A synthesis of methods
2) The Scholarly Self
3) Interpretation, limitations and the future
4) Summary

**Part 1: A synthesis of methods**

Part 1 is divided into seven sections.

1) Overview
2) Various methods of inquiry
3) Dual roles
4) Qualitative and quantitative methods
5)  Methods and the use of literature
6) The survey and the recruitment of participants
7) Borrowing from grounded and action-oriented research methods


**1) Overview**

I approached this inquiry with an understanding that scholarship can emerge from all of Boyer's four domains (Boyer, 1990), hypothesizing that change in the process of evaluation of faculty scholarship (the problem situation) is long overdue.  My choice of methods was focused upon building knowledge and finding ways to explain and improve the process of performance evaluation for artistic, creative, scholarly and professional work by faculty in the field of film and digital media.


**2) Various methods of inquiry**

From a conventional perspective, scholarly method is a crucial factor in any judgment made about the integrity, quality, or professionalism of research and its output.  Methods of inquiry can vary vastly from each other, yet it is arguable that many qualitative and quantitative

research methods are doing essentially the same things, albeit in different ways (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Just as pedagogy cannot be narrowly reduced according to a specific discipline, for example, psychology, sociology, theology, or history---and must not be subservient to social, cultural, political, corporate or social sectors of society---I have taken a holistic view of research methods and the approach to my work. My intention has been to exercise relative autonomy as I move forward, therefore, by choice I have not succumbed to the temptation of a singular method in my inquiry, nor am I intending to describe or implicitly defend the status quo through reductive discourse, as might be the case in a more conventional approach.

Most researchers who are working within the broad spectrum of conventional or alternative research methods, like myself, are motivated by a confidence that they know something worth telling to others, and they use a variety of methods and means to discover and communicate their ideas and findings. My research writing emerges from systematic observation, personal reflection and integrative analysis about the problem situation and the emergent data, including the placement of value upon my own perceptions that emerge from *self*, in tandem with phenomenological data gathered from multiple other perspectives. I have used a multi-method approach, prioritizing individual experience (my own and others) as fundamental to the scope and nature of the research problem and research question. My inquiry has taken place over time, in various stages, using what I have determined to be the most appropriate methods and tools for the purpose at hand. In my opinion, the research question that frames this dissertation has determined what methods are appropriate; and I have borrowed from various methods and theoretical approaches, to varying degrees at different times depending on the context. I have engaged in various stages of research as follows, not in any particular order:

- Identification and recognition of the problem situation

- Reading many kinds of literature to contextualize the problem situation---before, during and after I commenced work for this formal project

- Formulation of the research problem and research question

- The recruitment and in-depth interview of participants for the survey

- Data analysis and synthesis

- Formulation of themes and theoretical conclusion(s) that emerge from data

- Formulation of recommendations and theoretical conclusions to be used by others during evaluation of faculty scholarship and professional work in the field of film and digital media

- Seeking considered input from my dissertation chair and committee members as I write/edit/re-write/finalize this dissertation

The above-listed stages of research in which I engaged did occur simultaneously and in random order---it was not imperative that one stage necessarily occurs before another. The process of writing for me was non-linear in nature. For example, during the process of writing/editing/re-writing/finalizing I found a need to re-formulate the research problem or research question; through reading I found the need to re-write or edit my written work; and so on. The first step was a certain awareness that a problem situation existed, and from that point the reticulated stages of research inquiry commenced---and a re-formulation of what I imagined to be the first step also did occur. Each step and stage of inquiry shared a frame of reference with all of the others. My intention was to achieve a deep understanding of substantive issues in the problem situation, to take time and reflect upon my new understanding and then make

connections is disparate and creative ways with other knowledge that emerged.  My search was for implicit and explicit meaning occurred within a reticulum of values, feelings, actions and purposes that are objectified in text based artifacts, beliefs and institutional value systems.  My exploration was open to the possibility that problem solving action and informed change are needed and could occur at individual and macro levels within educational institutions.  Specifically, I have borrowed and relied upon the following methods:

- Auto/ethnographic writing: my reflections are largely a part of my personal story as it relates to this topic;

- Quantitative surveys: this data will help illuminate the degree and extent to which the problem exists;

- Phenomenological interviews: in depth written interviewing in which I hope to unveil the conscious feelings and ideas about this issue in ways that will help me reflect upon my own;

- Qualitative analysis: many of my interpretations and conclusions about theory and phenomenon emerge from literature that is directly or indirectly related to this topic.

As I have borrowed, applied and integrated the various methods above listed, I have also relied upon Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of learning, with its various key verbs/words to depict the different levels of action and thinking that are used during research (Appendix F).  Bloom (1956) has been recommended by Levy and Ellis (2006) as a useful framework for developing and structuring the entire process of research inquiry.  Bloom (1956) facilitates an understanding of the sequential nature of learning through a series of domains and steps---for example, from knowledge recall to comprehension of meaning, from application to analysis, from synthesis and

pattern making to judgments and appraisals (Appendix F).  In the context of this dissertation,

Bloom (1956) facilitates a systematic approach to the process of inquiry that makes discernment

of key and relevant ideas more tangible, and helps to highlight gaps in knowledge that the

dissertation research aims to fill (Levy and Ellis, 2006).

**3) Dual roles**

I have worked in dual roles on this dissertation, as a participant and as an observer.  I

have been a participant as I researched and wrote this dissertation, while working as a faculty

member at a university in the field of film and digital media and simultaneously applying for

promotion of rank, from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor.  I applied for promotion of

rank on the basis of my artistic, scholarly and professional work in the field of film and digital

media, instead of meeting the conventional expectation for faculty to submit peer-reviewed

publications for their performance evaluation.  I am also a participant through my use of an

auto/ethnographic writing approach, wherein I reflect upon the personal experiences and

circumstances that relate to the ongoing problem and question under inquiry.

Aside from gathering and evaluating data from others and reflecting upon my own

journey as an applicant for promotion in academe, I am a participant in this auto-ethnographic

doctoral dissertation based the following aspects of my background:

- I have been an undergraduate (B.A, Film and Television Production) and graduate

  student (M.F.A., Film and Television Production) at UCLA's School of Film and

  Television, and this has given me first-hand pedagogical, theoretical and practical

  experience in a prestigious film school;

- I am a professional filmmaker with more than 25 years of international experience in documentary, commercial and experimental filmmaking; and with a resume of recognized, award-winning creative work to my credit;

- I have been a professional consultant in media production for social development in many countries worldwide;

- I am an educator with more than 12 years of full time teaching experience at the university and College levels in the knowledge-and-practice areas of film/TV production, electronic/digital media production, multimedia design and other related areas of fine arts and design practice.

In addition to my role as a participant, I have also been an observer. I have experienced and have observed the scope and nature of actual performance evaluation processes in higher education, and in other hierarchical systems. I am also an observer of alternative and indigenous worldviews that are non-hierarchical, for the sake of learning what may once have been useful but now ignored or forgotten in the mainstream of contemporary institutions of higher learning---but of potentially great value if renewed and revisited at this time. In my role as observer, I have recruited faculty to respond to a Survey (Appendix C) to determine and compare the nature of their/our perceptions and experiences with performance evaluation on the basis of creative scholarship and professional work in the field of film and digital media. While filmmaking and digital media production are relatively new domains of knowledge and practice in the bastions of academic institutions, in the data I have observed the idea that change in the existing institutional paradigm about scholarship is overdue but slowly emerging in some corners (Boyer, 1990). In sum, as a participant and an observer I am seeking to build a deeper theoretical and practical

understanding of the research problem and research question, and to facilitate and develop a useful model for change.

## 4) Qualitative and quantitative methods

By definition, qualitative research and qualitative research are fields of inquiry in their own rights. My first interest was to compare qualitative with quantitative methodology in relation to creative work in the arts (including work in the field of film and digital media), to discern differences and similarities, and to determine applicability in the case of the my evolving understanding of the research problem. Quantitative methods emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables. Quantitative researchers argue that their work is done within a value-free framework. I do not consider quantitative methods to be the most useful way to inform this inquiry, nor is this method been a major factor in my research approach, but I have made use of this approach in a survey (described below, Appendix C) to facilitate the emergence of unanticipated data. The process of knowledge building through quantitative methods is considered to be an accumulation of accurate facts that represent *what is*---and what is infers to that which exists outside or independent of *self*. Accordingly, by employing and adhering to quantitative methods it is presumed that subjectivity---opinions, ideologies, biases---are constrained and the knower (myself) thereby gains an accurate and objective description of reality. As I quantify and compare particular aspects of the participant responses from the survey, I am borrowing from quantitative methods.

In contrast, qualitative researchers are encouraged to use (for example) ethnographic prose, historical narratives, first-person accounts, still photographs, life histories, fictionalized facts, certain kinds of films and other media elements, autobiographical materials, in addition to

more conventional writings, as preferred sources---for the purposes of representation, interpretation, establishment of trustworthiness, and (*self-*) evaluation; while quantitative researchers commonly rely upon mathematical models, statistical tables, and graphs---and they usually write about their research in impersonal, third person prose (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research is usually committed to a naturalistic, interpretive approach to subject matter, emphasizing the qualities of entities; and on processes and meanings that are not intended to be experimentally examined or measured (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). There is an intimate and value-laden relationship between the qualitative researcher and what is studied, with situational constraints continuously shaping the scope and nature of inquiry. Qualitative research has separate histories in education, social science, communication, psychology, history, organizational studies, medical sciences, anthropology, sociology and the arts, so qualitative research methods are not a homogenous whole, and their variant forms constitute many different things to many people.

Although both quantitative and qualitative methods have focused upon the search for empirical truth, the broad range of methods that comprise the qualitative approach are more oriented toward commentary and interpretation; for the purpose of exploring, studying and answering questions about attitudes, behaviors, values, concerns, motivations, aspirations, experiences. Qualitative research methods are concerned with what people do, say, desire and experience. A qualitative approach reflects the scope and nature of my pursuit as a researcher, and it generally reflects the underlying purpose(s) of most work (artistic, scholarly and professional) in the field of film and digital media. I acknowledge that defining precisely what constitutes qualitative research is a vast and complex challenge, particularly in the specific, unique and qualitative field of film and digital media.

This dissertation can be generally described as partially quantitative, but mostly qualitative and personalized in its approach to inquiry. I have considered a fairly broad range of data sources in my inquiry, including my *self*, and I collected data mainly through the use of qualitative methods. My inquiry was a strategic process that generally moved from collection and thinking about the data, to description and analysis in relation to the problem, to self-reflective writing about the problem and question, to theory building. A process of data sampling followed my description of the problem, and the data included text-based literature, a survey and interviews. The collection of qualitative and quantitative data was theoretically based, rather than random---although serendipitous good fortune was never discounted or ruled out. Sources were identified, gathered, and selected for further analysis according to my perception(s) about their relevance to the research problem and research question; and upon their impact and influence upon the theoretical conclusions that were constantly emerging and re-emerging. Over time I observed, defined and analyzed the problem from many perspectives, over and over again, without knowing how or when I was going to reach a point of finality.

## 5) Methods and the use of literature

In my reading, I was able to identify a vast array of many important variables with significant implications. As I read, I began to perceive multiple possibilities and systemic connections---theoretical, political, sociological, psychological, and historical---that were relevant to the process of performance evaluation in academic settings, reified and reinforced by what I was experiencing in my own workplace; and through what I was gleaning from interviews with project participants. The possibilities and systemic connections that emerged from my reading began to clarify the scope and nature of the problem that was negatively impacting my

own career, and the careers of others like myself who are faculty members in the field of film and digital media---those of us on the borders who have faced the gauntlet of performance evaluation.

In some ways, my search for relevant literature and data sources relates to my background with the method of grounded theory and grounded action (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), yet in other ways it clearly does not.  The approach of grounded theory and grounded action are framed consistently by systems theory and systems thinking.  Throughout my inquiry I have been guided by an underlying belief that everything is data (Glaser, 1978; 1998), so I have searched through a broad range of emergent bits and pieces of information and other evidence to build and achieve a better understanding, leading to my writing with a hopeful aspiration that change can occur.  My approach is also similar to GTGA because I did not seek to verify or refute an already established theory, and I subjected the data that was gathered to rigorous inferential and deductive analyses (Glaser, 1978).  In a subsequent section of this chapter I further discuss the role of GTGA in this project.

Critical reading of what has already been established and known, as conveyed in the literature, has facilitated my ability to build an integrated awareness of what is *not* known---as I have expressed in the research problem and the research questions.  By establishing the state of the previous research, it is more possible to establish how new research can advance previous research (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996).  Critical reading of the literature is necessary for building a bridge between the controversies, discrepancies, assumptions, gaps and alternative perspectives that have emerged from my inquiry.  Inquiry and examination of a range of conventional, traditional and alternative views of scholarship has helped to contextualize and enhance meaning about the present-day ontology and practice of performance evaluation of faculty work in

institutions of higher learning, and has also facilitated my ability to build a tool for use in performance evaluation of artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in film and digital media. These are the benefits of what constitutes my methodological approach to the literature for this dissertation.

My interest and approach has been to read literature from historical and contemporary perspectives, framing my analysis in the form of a problem and related questions that are posed by this dissertation. My motivation is driven by curiosity and courage, but my purpose constitutes a reflection upon issues that reach to the heart of what it means to be a faculty scholar and professional in higher education---specifically asking, as a faculty member, what am I expected to do and how am I expected to spend my time?

**6) The survey and the recruitment of participants**

In an effort to improve its scope and nature as I commenced my work, I developed the survey after review of some other surveys. I looked closely at previous sampling, measurement and other questionnaires for ways to improve and enhance the scope and nature of this quantitative and qualitative tool. My goal was to recruit and interview professors (through the Survey) who rely upon filmmaking as an important aspect of their intellectual and professional work, and who have successfully (or unsuccessfully) undergone a process of evaluation for promotion of rank at an academic institution. As described in Chapter 4, I have been particularly interested to learn about the experience of faculty members who rely upon the alternative forms of scholarship in a performance evaluation setting, specifically in the field of film and digital media. The Survey is included as Appendix C. From this group of faculty members who responded to the survey, I solicited further participation from three individuals for personal interviews. My

goal has been to discover or affirm a range of ideas, problems or solutions that emerge from data gathered in response to the survey, analyzed in the context of my own experiences and critical reading of literature.

The survey sought to solicit, measure and form the basis for interpreting the experience of others with direct knowledge with performance evaluation processes in the field of film and digital media. I recruited participants for this purpose from various professional organizations such as the University Film and Video Association (UFVA), CILECT, International Documentary Association, Explorer's Club of New York City, Broadcast Education Association (BEA), and others. In total, I contacted more than 300 professors (assistant, associate and full) in the United States, Canada, Europe and other parts of the world, faculty in the field of film and digital media who have previously applied or are planning to apply for promotion of rank, presumably including those who have been denied promotion of rank. While it was disappointing that only 13 of the 300 faculty members took the time to take the survey, there is likely some data to be discerned in the friendly notices of regret that I received. One professor wrote:

> Dear Anthony…no way I will get to this in near future. I apologize. I am way behind
> my own work on top of which I have several interviews to address. Good luck with it
> Best, xxx (email message to me from a colleague)

My feeling of dejection due to the low level of response can be summed up in stoic terms: All circumstances will eventually be transformed in their time in accordance with their inner nature. Alternatively, it can also be argued that people get the government, situation, relationship, and life that they deserve for themselves. Faculty are overworked and in many cases, as illustrated in

Chapter 4, de-motivated to the point that pondering of theoretical issues concerning faculty advancement is not prioritized.

The quantity and quality of response to the survey (Appendix C) prompted my decision to conduct more in-depth one-on-one interviews with particular participants. My intention was to know more about their first hand experiences, opinions and feelings as faculty members who have gone through the process of administrative and peer evaluation of their creative scholarship output. This data is described in Chapter 4 and integrated into the recommendations of Chapter 5.

First, I sent an email message to the above-listed organizations to solicit their cooperation by allowing me to contact their membership (Appendix A). That effort was less than successful and I basically received words of encouragement but no direct assistance from any organization. Second, I contacted and recruited the members of the University Film and Video Association (UFVA), using the UFVA's 2009 membership catalog, selecting from the membership roster all the full time faculty that were accessible by email, seeking their informed consent (Appendix B) and completion of the Survey (Appendix C). Specifically, I sent each of them an email message with a hyperlink to the online survey. The survey was sent electronically to a wide range of faculty members in the United States and other countries worldwide, targeting those who have submitted creative scholarship or professional work in an educational institution setting for the purpose of achieving some form of institutional reward in an academic setting, including but not limited to promotion of rank, tenure review, contractual renewal, and more. The majority of faculty members who participated in this project are practitioner-filmmakers, and those who are creatively producing film and digital media for various reasons, in any style (or combination of styles) of filmmaking---commercial, experimental, documentary, industrial, dramatic, etc. In

other words, the project participants are filmmakers, artists or digital media producers who also work simultaneously as full time as faculty members at an institution of higher learning. I sought project participants with successful and/or unsuccessful personal experience in the process of evaluation of scholarship in an academic setting, including those who may not have had such experience(s) because they have found that creative scholarship is discouraged or disallowed from the evaluation process in their particular setting. I also sought and considered the perspectives of academic administrators as project participants, those persons who make final decisions at the University level about the evaluation and acceptance of creative research in the context of rewards. I also have sought out the perspectives of other faculty members who advocate conventional notions of research output, to represent a full range of perspectives as I collect data, develop grounded conclusions and formulate a theory. It was unnecessary, in my view, to interview those who advocate the traditional template and the trilogy of faculty work because this perspective is well articulated in the mainstream literature. At this time I believe there is a broad and accessible body of scholarly literature that adequately summarizes the conventional paradigm that is in place in most academic settings.

As data emerged in the initial stages from the survey, I decided to modify my approach and ask participants to write about their personal experience(s). Based upon my new knowledge about the importance of experiential narrative in inquiry I have modified Section II of my Questionnaire (Appendix C) to read as follows:

Please write a direct account of your personal experience with the academic faculty promotion process as you lived through it. Describe the experience from the inside, as it were-almost like a state of mind: the feelings, the mood, the emotions, etc. Focus on a particular example or incident as your object in that experience: for example, describe a

specific event in the process as a particular experience. Recall and write about how you

felt and sensed during the process of that experienced.

It is not of great concern to me whether the participants conveyed their experience

exactly as it literally may have happened. I am less concerned with factual accuracy than with

the plausibility of their account---whether it reveals a living sense of it was experienced, or not.

In the survey and in interview situations, I asked participants to write vignettes in a free

association style (Freud, 1995)---where the participant is encouraged to talk with little or no

guidance from the researcher (myself). Chapter 4 provides a detailed analysis of what was

expressed and learned through the process of surveying and interviewing project participants,

and the cumulative results are interpreted within the recommendations and analysis of Chapter 5.

## 7) Borrowing from grounded and action-oriented research methods

This dissertation includes elements of grounded theory and action-oriented research

methods that I have borrowed, when appropriate. Grounded theory is a highly systematic

research approach and method for the development of theory to explain basic patterns that are

common in social life, and there are many aspects in its practice that are useful in this research

project. Grounded theory research is similar to other research methodologies in that it is a

rigorous process of data comparison, collection and analysis, but there are many other important

differences. I share the view set forth by Chenitz and Swanson (1986) who argue that grounded

theory is complimentary with other methods, not as a replacement, where my job is "to take the

role of the other, to discover all of the variation and perspectives in the situation, determining

levels of symbolic and behavioral meaning wherever the problem occurs" (Chenitz and

Swanson, 1986, p. 46). For example, a grounded approach is very appropriate as I code the

interview responses, being sensitive to the data that emerges without regard to my own preconceptions and expectations, and as my data reaches a point of saturation that enables the generation of theory and the possibility of theoretical fit (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theory methods were useful to me as I posed a question in my mind throughout the process of my research inquiry---how long must I continue and how I will when/where to end?  The methods and approach of grounded theory research recommend that data be gathered until all categories are saturated, so the theory that is developed will be dense and precise (Levy and Ellis, 2006).  Glaser (1978) wrote: "In trying to reach saturation he maximizes differences in his groups in order to maximize the varieties of data bearing on the category, and thereby develops as many diverse properties of the category as possible" (p. 62).  The conventional method and approach would be to compare data from one institution that does not deviate from the expectations of the trilogy and the traditional template in the recognition, evaluation and rewarding of faculty work in the field of film and digital media, then to compare that institution with another (more supportive) institution; and then seek to make recommendations (regulations) with regard to how the first institution manage their staff and running a further analysis as to whether this may be linked with improving faculty satisfaction, etc.  While this type of investigation may yield short-term solutions, a lot of theoretically relevant data could be ignored and many important questions do not get addressed (Haig, 1995).

My approach to literature, in some ways, contradicts the GTGA approach.  According to method and approach of GTGA, the review of literature should be conducted after the emergence of substantive theory; it is then, and not before, that data from literature contributes to a study (Glaser, 1978).  But, in my research I did my reading(s) before, during, and after the time of

determining the research problem and research question; and before, during, and after doing of

my investigative search through surveying and interviewing of project participants.  I did read

for the specific purpose of building broader knowledge, regardless whether or not it would be

directly or indirectly relevant to my purpose of building a theoretical understanding; always

hoping that connections would emerge, but with no guarantee of results.

The approach of reading the literature first (or during), with the objective of identifying

gaps and relevant theories, is opposite to the role that literature serves in GTGA.  Glaser (1978)

is specific in recommending not to do a literature review in the substantive area and related areas

where the research is done; waiting until the grounded theory is nearly completed, during the

processes of sorting and writing.  Only then is a literature search in the substantive area to be

accomplished and woven into the theory, itself becoming just one more source of data for

constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 360-67).  Some observers might construe this

approach as a neglect of the literature, but I perceive that the purpose is to keep the researcher as

free as possible of influences that could restrict the freedom required for theoretical discovery,

not to ignore current and relevant knowledge (Glaser, 1978).  I have no regrets about my

approach, and I am aware of its (partial) inconsistency with GT.

Saturation is an important concept that is borrowed from grounded theorists (Glaser,

1978).  Saturation is the intended end result, after the process of gathering, organizing and

preliminary analysis of incoming categories of data, that affirms that my research has reached a

point that I can quit my search because an appropriate number of groups have been surveyed and

no additional data can be found (Glaser, 1978).  Saturation means that I have continued my

inquiry until (a) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, (b) the conceptual

categories are well developed in terms of properties and dimensions that demonstrate variation,

(c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated. Categorical saturation means that one category is saturated. Theoretical saturation means all categories are saturated, but core theoretical categories should be saturated more than peripheral ones. Strauss and Corbin (1990) wrote:

> A category is considered saturated when no new information seems to emerge during coding, that is, when no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data…In trying to reach saturation he maximizes differences in his groups in order to maximize the varieties of data bearing on the category, and thereby develops as many diverse properties of the category as possible (p. 62, 136).

I also have borrowed from the approach of action-oriented research methods. Action-oriented research does resemble certain methods and ideals found in conventional approaches to research, but it is fundamentally different in many other ways (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Although my dissertation will not directly develop or implement the cycles of a pure action-research project, what I do can be considered a first step in data gathering and reflection upon my hypothesis with interested parties, including my own reflection. Action research cycles involve reflection on data, participant ownership of organizational change and implementation of actions based on research conclusions, and I view these cycles as ideal for my research. Although I will not address the action-research cycles of organizational change in this dissertation *per se*, it is my intention to reflect upon data for the purpose of finding a grounded theoretical basis for implementation of actions based upon research conclusions. In these ways my research borrows from action research. This dissertation is also borrowing from the philosophical purpose of action-oriented research as I am intentionally seeking to find ways to facilitate intrinsically-

motivated autonomy, enhancement of competence, and career advancement for creative faculty in academe that seek a fair and considered evaluation of their creative research with film and digital media as a communicative means for expression (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996).