



A Right to Respond? Monopolisation of 'Voice' in CMS*

Edward Wray-Bliss

abstract

This paper explores the power effects of, and possible justifications for, the differential 'voice' and 'silence' accorded academic and non-academic subjects within Critical Management Studies (CMS). I explore these issues through a discussion of the practice of 'giving voice' to some subjects critiqued in CMS journal articles by providing them with the opportunity to publish a 'response'. I question the justification for extending this right only to academic subjects, and use this example to provoke CMS to question further its institutional orientation to issues of voice and silence in relation to the non-academic research subject.

Introduction

This paper uses the concepts of 'silence' and 'voice' to reflect upon relations between subjects involved in and touched by, Critical Management Studies (CMS) research. I explore such questions as who is 'silenced' and how, and who is accorded 'voice' and why, in CMS research. The decision to use these concepts was prompted by reflections on my own previous experience of publishing a paper in *Organization* and having this paper responded to by another academic. In Wray-Bliss (2002a) I wrote a critique of the power relations reproduced between researcher and researched in Foucauldian Labour Process Theory. I argued that researchers were failing to embody their espoused critical (Foucauldian) ethics in their relations with the researched, with one effect of this being that they (we) thereby reproduced the wider subordination of these research subjects' lives and voices. In addition to publishing my article, the editors of the journal invited two senior academics, whose papers were amongst those I cited, to respond to my critique – one of these took up the invitation (Collinson, 2002) and responded critically to my work. Then, and now, this process caused me some unease, for a number of reasons. First, Collinson's (2002) response prompted me to a keener awareness that my

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academic voice can be experienced as potentially silencing by research subjects, including when such subjects of my research are themselves prominent, published academics. Second, I couldn't help comparing the lengthy (two years plus) submission and revision procedure that I had to undergo to have a public/ published 'voice' with the fast-tracked, invited, right to respond accorded the more senior academic. Ultimately, however, what caused me most unease was not the differential right to voice accorded junior versus senior academics, but rather the marked *lack* of attentiveness to procedures for according a similar right to a dissenting/ responding voice to *non-academic* research subjects. It struck me as a troubling paradox that a key effect of my paper criticising the academic's subordinating 'authoritative' voice vis-à-vis the non-academic research subject was to enable one of these 'authorities' to have a further privileged right to voice a response – a right not accorded the non-academic research subjects problematised in the pieces of research I was critiquing. This last concern prompted this paper. Specifically, I explore here whether the 'right to respond' accorded to certain academic subjects can be understood to symbolise a problematic wider institutional orientation in CMS that continues to privilege the voices of researcher and academic research subject over those of non-academic subjects of CMS research.

In the first section of this paper I map-out the understanding of 'silence' and 'voice' that I am drawing upon. I do this through an exploration of (feminist and post-colonial) texts located within the wider social science academy, texts that have explicitly explored issues of silence and voice as a central warrant for, and problematic of, politically and ethically engaged academic research. In *Section Two* I overlay the issues and problematics such texts have raised onto research relations in CMS. Highlighting how CMS challenges the silencing effects of mainstream management research and is concerned to explore the voices of hitherto excluded or disempowered organisational subjects, I suggest that the politically and ethically charged concepts of 'silence' and 'voice' can be understood to be central to CMS's critical warrant. Notwithstanding this however, and while acknowledging some significant examples to the contrary, I argue that there are indications that the parameters of CMS seem to be becoming constructed in such a way that the voices of i) researcher, ii) of other academics whose voice is critiqued in CMS texts, and iii) of the non-academic research subject of empirical CMS articles, are receiving questionably uneven treatment. I explore as a telling symbol of this uneven treatment the above mentioned 'right to respond' accorded some senior academic subjects. I suggest that we view this 'right to respond' or 'right to a dissenting voice' as both a recognition of the potentially silencing effects of CMS research and an attempt to mitigate against these effects – at least for these specific subjects. Through rehearsing, and critiquing, a number of potential opposing arguments, I explore in *Section Three* whether a similar opportunity for dissenting/ responding voice should be extended to non-academic research subjects. Finding no compelling ethical justifications in CMS for not extending such 'voice' to these subjects, I explore in the conclusion some tentative practical suggestions as to how CMS could develop so as to better 'hear' such voices.

Section One: Hearing Silence and Voice in Research

Reflecting upon the academic research process in terms of silence and voice places issues of subjectivity, appropriation, representation, and empowerment central to research practice and its products. Within the wider social science academy, it has been feminist (hooks, 1989; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Lincoln, 1993, 1995; Maynard and Parvis, 1994; Smith, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1983), post-colonial (Opie, 1992; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1990) and other reflexive ethical/ political researchers (Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993; Reason, 1994) who have engaged most consistently and critically with such issues.

'Voice' in such formulations, represents an explicit concern with the question of "who speaks for those who do not have access to the corridors of knowledge or the venues of the academic disciplines?" (Lincoln, 1995: 282). Voice here is political, it is the right and opportunity for self-representation and involvement in the construction of knowledge about oneself and one's group/ culture. Voice is understood as "resistance against silence, as resistance to disengagement, as resistance to marginalization" (*ibid.*). 'Silence' is not inconsequential in these formulations, but is a distinct lack or rather removal of the opportunity to have a voice. Silence is understood as oppression/ suppression, it is expressed as a verb (others – Others – are *silenced*), and it also implies a subject position, *the silenced*. The silenced are defined by writers such as LeCompte (1993) as those individuals or groups, including "children, the disabled, women, members of minority groups, homosexuals, and lower participants in formal organizations", who have been "deprived of voice without their consent – (such) that they are victims of oppression" (LeCompte, 1993: 10).

For researchers concerned to challenge such oppression, an attempt to enable the silenced to have a voice in the process of knowledge construction raises a number of problematics. For instance, the researcher may need to seek out the silenced, decide which communities or individuals to research, decide who to work with, whose voice they are going to try to hear and have heard. Such choices, as LeCompte (1993) tells us, are frequently made not just on the basis that a particular community has historically lacked a public voice. Research subjects are also chosen when there is a belief that their views will be counter-hegemonic, representing a valuable challenge to dominant power-structures, relations of production, or the academic canon (*ibid.*). Researching such groups can raise issues of practical and effective access too. For example, longer 'time in the field' is likely to be required for researchers to build up, and prove, relations of trust with groups of people who, almost by definition of occupying the category of 'silenced', may not have had much (positive) experience of contact with formal institutions and authorities. Furthermore, as Lincoln (1995) highlights with reference to a number of researchers engaging with historically silenced groups (Brown, 1992; Lather, 1995), to fulfill such trust expectations relationships may need to extend far beyond the point where the researcher has finished their data collection. Intersecting across each of these above concerns however are wider issues of power-relations concerning processes of categorisation (who defines 'the silenced' as silenced?) and appropriation (by being so-defined should they necessarily be subjects of/ subject to academic research?). On the latter point, it is possible, even perhaps probable, that

by the very act of engaging in critical, emancipatory, empowering research, researchers take a particular ethical stance toward their informants, defining them as disempowered or oppressed, *regardless of how the informants define themselves*. (LeCompte, 1993: 13, emphasis added)

Such a possibility raises the risk that the researcher appropriates the researched's voice to reproduce their own particular critical ideology (Opie, 1992), such that the researched can become represented as, for instance, bearers of class struggle, fighting against patriarchy, or victims of colonialism irrespective of how they may define themselves. Paradoxically the researcher, who may self-identify as being engaged in a critical academic project to, for instance, challenge oppression or 'hear' hitherto silenced individuals, can thereby slide into effectively denying the legitimacy of the researched's voice if they should dissent from this subject position (Wray-Bliss, 2003a, explores this point more extensively). There is then, an ever present problematic. If, as the preceding arguments suggest, 'silence' is to be associated with suppression or oppression then, from the above, 'voice' too can be problematic, it can represent appropriation, misrepresentation, or indeed an unwished-for visibility and vulnerability for the researched.

One response that might be seen to mitigate against the potential problems of both the exclusion of 'silence' and the potential appropriation of 'voice' might be that the hitherto silenced should represent themselves. Indeed this would seem to speak to the 'feel' of the word 'voice', suggestive as it is of agency, of speaking not just being spoken about. As hooks has written, in a critique of the academy's representation of the silenced, "oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their story" (1989: 43). Such resistance is not complete if instead another 'authority', even a caring and sympathetic one, takes the role of defining their reality or telling their story for them (hooks, 1989). Here hooks is highlighting the still very pressing need to open up access into the academy for those groups and classes of people who, while they may increasingly figure as research subjects, still infrequently appear as the subject who researches. Paralleling this issue, hooks also recognises the risk of what we might call interpretive ghettoisation, where those from minority or oppressed groups who have achieved a position in the academy are conferred only an 'experiential' authority to write about 'their own kind', while the rest of the academy is apparently still free to be able to critique all peoples. Furthermore, while stressing the need for a more representative academy in terms of membership, hooks also recognises the fact that if we are not to continue to reproduce the silencing of particular subjects then the existing academic community needs to engage with others' (Others') silences. Put another way, it is not sufficient for the academy to merely reproduce silences on the grounds that we must wait for the Other to speak for themselves. Indeed, such a position, if it were mooted, would seem to risk reproducing some unwelcome effects, including an assumed (essentialist) 'authenticity' and/ or 'representativeness' (e.g. Collinson, 2002) of 'native' accounts. If we take seriously the postmodern and postcolonial challenges to research practices and the power/knowledge they create then such accounts of course can not be read as unproblematic examples of either of these truth claims. This ever-problematic quality of both silence and voice echoes throughout the work of writers such as Gayatri Spivak.

Described as a feminist Marxist deconstructivist (MacCabe, 1987: ix) this complex combination of signifiers eloquently speaks to Spivak's intersecting commitments and the challenge that these present to her project of marrying a critical academic project, with a critique of textual authority and the academic voice, and a critique of (research subjects' and academics') subjectivity. Thus we find in Spivak's work a commitment to include, for instance, a (feminist) critique of the silencing effects of traditional 'authoritative' academic voice, a (Marxist) political commitment to identify and challenge the subordination or silencing of certain classes of (research) subjects, and a keen (deconstructivist) awareness that 'solutions' tend to slip into the problematic position of essentialising either the 'authentic' silenced subject who is now 'given voice' to speak for themselves, or the enlightened academic subject speaking 'for' them. As Spivak argues,

it is not a solution, the idea of the disenfranchised speaking for themselves, or the radical critics speaking for them; this question of representation, self-representation, representing others is a problem...we cannot put it under the carpet with demands for authentic voices... And there has to be a persistent critique of what one is up to, so that it doesn't get all bogged down in this homogenization; constructing the Other simply as an object of knowledge, leaving out the real Others because of the ones who are getting access into public places due to these waves of benevolence and so on. I think as long as one remains aware that it is a very problematic field, there is some hope. (1990: 63)

It is this 'hope' of which Spivak speaks, a hope arising from a simultaneous appreciation of the *political* need for critical academic work that challenges the historical silencing of particular voices, and an awareness of the *ever-problematic* nature of all such projects, that I now want to carry into an examination of silence and voice in CMS.

Section Two: Silence and Voice in CMS

'Silence' and 'voice' are emerging as recognisable themes in CMS and other organisational studies research. A recent (September, 2003) *Journal of Management Studies* special issue 'Speaking up, Remaining Silent: The Dynamics of Voice and Silence in Organizations' saw a range of empirical and theoretical papers exploring voice and silence in relation to a variety of organisational issues. While many of these articles tended towards a managerialist interpretation, seeing silence as something to be overcome by better (more supportive) management or better (more inclusive) organisation (Böhm and Bruni, 2003), they did articulate issues of employee dissent, the 'silencing' effects of organisation, and the importance of hearing employees' (and not just management's) voice – issues that resonate with the critical/ political concerns of CMS. Moving towards more self-consciously 'CMS' research, a stream entitled 'Silence and Voice in Organizational Life' at the 2003 Critical Management Studies Conference saw papers by 11 contributors, including an earlier version of this paper, on issues ranging from the multiple voices and silenced subjectivity of doctoral research (Copas, 2003) and organisational research in general (Cunliffe and Shotte, 2003), graduate trainees dilemma of 'speaking up' without 'speaking out of place' (Coupland, 2003), and the socialisation/ subjectivisation of children('s voice/silence) within their first interactions with an organisational (school) context (Ehrensals, 2003). Even closer

to home, Steffen Böhm and Attila Bruni edited a (2003) 'Silent Sounds' special issue of *ephemera* exploring the issues of sound and silence in organisation, an issue with links to an earlier EGOS 2002 conference stream 'Silence is (not) Sexy: Organizing Sound and Silence'. Though contributors to this special issue engaged rather more with 'sound' than 'voice', it shows again the emergence of such issues within CMS. A message coming through from each of the above engagements is that the concepts of 'silence' and/or 'voice' are proving useful motifs around which to explore issues central to CMS such as inequality, exclusion, and dominance as well as resistance, agency, and embodiment in organisation.

The above explicit engagements can also be seen, however, as markers of a more lengthy, implicit, echoing of silence and voice throughout CMS. At an ideological level, CMS may be defined by its concern to challenge the dominant voice of mainstream management knowledge, knowledge which silences the less-than-wholly-enthusiastic participants of contemporary organisations (Fournier and Grey, 2000; Parker, 1995). As Alvesson and Willmott wrote in the early 1990s a "careful scrutiny of managerial discourse and practice in terms of voices that not only speak loudly, but also quietly or cannot – yet – be heard is an important task for critical management studies" (1992: 6). Since publication of this book CMS researchers have conscientiously turned to this task. To try to counter the almost deafening capitalist/ managerialist clamour, CMS has reintroduced voices of the oppressed and resistant employee and/or disgruntled manager. In addition, some CMS researchers have engaged with other potential silences/ silencings within this group. Recognising the relatively high volume of the voices of white, male, full-time employees in industrial work organisations as the dominant historical subject of 'critical' organisational texts, CMS authors have also written about other populations. For example, sex workers (Brewis and Linstead, 2000), service workers (Sturdy, Grugulis and Willmott, 2001), drug users (Warren and Wray-Bliss, 2003), the omission/ suppression of gender (Linstead, 2000; Wilson, 1996), as well as subjects relating to managed organisations outside of the employment relationship (Ehrensals, 2003), have each figured as 'subjects' in CMS texts.

In addition to silence and voice figuring as the interpretive warrant for CMS texts, CMS is becoming increasingly aware of the power-laden issues of silence and voice within its research practices. Alongside texts raising such methodological issues theoretically (Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Ellis, 2001; Gold and Peacock, 2001; Jeffcutt, 1994; Wray-Bliss, 2002a), there is some evidence of empirical CMS research also taking such issues on board in practice. For instance, CMS tends to avoid overtly positivistic truth claims in its empirical texts (a position which by definition accommodates no other voices) and instead constructs more interpretive approaches. Although, as I have observed previously, it can be argued that positivist relations and realist claims are possibly still being subtly reproduced in, for instance, the separation of researcher from researched and in the ways that empirical research and the research process are reported (Wray-Bliss, 2001). Similarly, though explicit attempts by CMS authors to name their own standpoint and central subjective location in the interpretations and representations they reproduce are still relatively uncommon, which could suggest that CMS authors still prefer to imply a conventional impression of disembodied impartial authority (Knights, 1995), there are some examples of authors

explicitly locating themselves in their texts and interpretations (Beadle, 2003; Brewis, submitted; Collins and Wray-Bliss, submitted).

In general, from the above, it does seem possible to read into CMS some, still emerging, commitment that it will seek to understand and challenge forms of exploitation, repression, or subordination, in the (work) organisation 'out there' but also, and importantly for this paper, within the organisation of its own research processes. There is, in other words, an apparent resonance between CMS and the issues of voice and silence in the research process raised above.

However, this resonance of concerns does not equate to an equivalent treatment of issues of silence and voice within CMS. Many of those writers on voice and silence in research relations that I discussed in *Section One* above stress the centrality in empirical texts of an explicit account of an embodied research ethics, evidenced, for example, in an articulation of how responsibility, reciprocity, and accountability with/to the researched has been explored (Lincoln, 1993, 1995). But, in general, empirical CMS research articles do not seem to articulate or explore such an ethics. Rather, authors and journals (and by implication can we assume much of the wider CMS audience/community?) seem content for issues of 'methodology' in journal articles to be minimally discussed (and research 'ethics' often not at all).

To illustrate this point I wish to take one, particularly marked, example of research with an empirical element, published in a leading journal, with minimal reflection upon such methodological issues. Courpasson and Dany's (2003) recent article in *Organization Studies* presents an interesting and rich analysis of obedience in organisations, reviewing and critiquing existing understandings of the topic that suggest that obedience is a product of 'soft' organisational policies that encourage submission to organisational goals in exchange for some local autonomy. In setting up their critique of this understanding the authors draw upon empirical research taking the form of three short 'case studies' of organisational obedience to answer the question "are these policies in line with what we can observe empirically within business firms?" (*ibid.*, 1236). The empirical research presented takes the form of the authors' analysis of three passages, presented as 'B.', 'J. M.' and 'C.'s spoken reflections upon an organisational situation where they felt some compulsion towards obedience. B., J. M., and C.'s voices recall highly sensitive, and potentially traumatic, events where they were deeply and personally enmeshed in organisational power relationships – relationships that, according to the authors, subjected B., J. M., and C, variously to "soft coercion" and "exclusion" (*ibid.*, 1237), "violence", "complicity", and "explicit and credible threats" (*ibid.*, 1239).

Given the personal sensitivity of the issues that B., J. M., and C. voice, issues that are now laid bare by Courpasson and Dany for public consumption, we could by drawing upon the above discussion reasonably expect there to be a careful exploration of research ethics. Such an exploration might be expected to include how relations of trust were established, what negotiation for consent was undertaken, what limits of consent were established, and how the authors embodied their accountability to these research subjects. On examination however, the text fails to explore any of these, or indeed any other, questions of research ethics. In addition to this demonstrating a marked lack of

importance accorded to the reporting of research ethics in this published CMS text, this neglect is also rather ironic given the authors' reference to Milgram's (1974) research experiments on obedience and authority – experiments which have become infamous as much for their highly questionable research ethics as for their electrifying findings. Furthermore, despite the 'empirical' cases being central to setting up the authors' subsequent lengthy theoretical critique of existing understandings of obedience in organisation, the *only* engagement with methodology in the text is one line where the authors describe their "cases" (*ibid.*, 1238) or "stories" (*ibid.*, 1236) as "some obedience dilemmas we have observed over the past few years in different surveys" (*ibid.*, 1236). Without any other discussion of methodology we have, as readers, simply no way of knowing, for instance, if the 'empirical cases' are composites or verbatim accounts, whether they reflect original research or secondary sources, or whether indeed they are fictionalised.¹ We have, in short, no effective basis upon which to judge the 'data', and we certainly cannot therefore tell from this data, as the authors wish us to, whether "something crucial is missing" in existing views of obedience (*ibid.*, 1236). Overall then, what might we learn from this example? It is important first of all to state that I *do not* draw the conclusion from this example that these authors don't have a sound grasp of methodology and research ethics – they most probably conducted their research with the utmost professionalism and ethical regard. Rather, the point I wish to make is that this article eloquently demonstrates that no discussion of methodology and no reflection upon research ethics/ relations with research subjects is apparently no barrier to the publication of 'empirical' CMS research in a leading journal. In short, the article nicely illustrates how evidence of ethical/ relational issues of accountability, responsibility, and reciprocity with/to research subjects are simply not required of CMS texts.

While Courpasson and Dany (2003) is, as I stated at the outset, one example of the lack of significance accorded methodology/ ethics in published CMS research, it does seem to me to be illustrative of a wider pattern. As I have argued, and illustrated, in previous writings (Wray-Bliss, 2003a, 2003b) even when methodology is discussed in empirical CMS texts it is normally reduced to a list of formal data-gathering methods and a statement of how much time in the field, or how many interviews or questionnaires were conducted. Such 'technical' treatment serves to create the impression that methodological concerns – including those ethical issues of responsibility, reciprocity and accountability to/ with our research subjects – are somehow peripheral (if indeed relevant at all) and that they should be dispensed with quickly so that the more 'important' and 'interesting' findings and academic implications can be presented. The submission guidelines/ instructions for authors issued by journals that publish CMS research, including, amongst others, *Human Relations*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization*, and *Organization Studies* are also illustrative of this point. Each journal stresses the importance of 'high quality' (OS) research, but quality is only specified in

1 One of the reviewers posed the question of whether it matters if research data is indeed fictionalised. In terms of interest and insight, it would seem clear (to someone like myself who is an avid reader of fiction) that fictionalised accounts can be very valuable – though I think it is necessary not to claim an empirical authority for such a fictionalised account. In terms of whether this matters for the ethical issues of silence and voice: while such accounts may not have the ethical responsibility to specific research subjects, we could still ask of those accounts how they discharge the responsibility that critical academic research can be seen to have in challenging the status of 'the silenced' when no actual relationship with these subjects is entered into and their voices are not actually to be heard.

terms of 'output' (i.e. the publication of interesting texts with 'strong theoretical and/or empirical insights', *JMS*), and 'form' (i.e. style of the text) rather than research process. While fairly extensive and specific requirements exist for authors to submit texts that conform to a particular textual style, no such guidance is offered, nor requirement that authors reflect, upon the ethics of that research, appropriate relations with participants, the effect of the research upon the researched community, etc. In fact, the only two (implicit) mentions of issues that we could understand (very generously) as concerned with 'ethics' are *JMS*' statement that 'our only proviso is that authors maintain congruity within their own theoretical and methodological positions in the conduct and reporting of research' (notice that *JMS* does not specify that it requires evidence of such 'congruity' in the text), and *Organization*'s intention to 'deal fairly and in good faith with potential contributors and readers' (notice how only contributors and readers – i.e. academic subjects again – are cast here as moral subjects). Furthermore, in the case of at least one of the above-mentioned journals we can see a more explicit downplaying of the significance of attention to methodological issues. Thus in the following guidance *Human Relations* appears to contrast 'methodology' with matters of 'substance':

While a description of the theoretical frame adopted by an author necessarily includes some consideration of methodology, such consideration does not normally provide more than a small proportion of the paper's content. An overly long explanation of why particular norms and standards have been chosen *detracts from discussion of substance* (emphasis added). (*Human Relations*: undated)

Again the point I am trying to make here is *not* that journal editors don't take methodological and ethical issues seriously in their own work, nor that they do not expect such serious treatment of these issues by their peers. Rather, the point I draw from this is that, as the principle arbiters of the *quality* of CMS research, journals do not stress the importance of, or require evidence of, research ethics from CMS research as part of this 'quality' mandate.

In the absence of either explicit guidance on research ethics or requirements that authors evidence their own understandings and embodiment of ethical and reflexive practices in reflections on 'methodology', CMS as an 'institution', if we can understand it as such, seems to simply trust individual researchers to behave (but not evidence how they have behaved) 'professionally'. This may serve CMS well some of the time, however 'professional' research practices can and do mask silencing effects both within the wider social science arena (Smith, 1990) and within our Critical Management Studies realm. For instance, previously I have highlighted subordinating representations of non-managerial employees' 'lack' of, or 'inadequate', resistance in texts that purport to have a sophisticated understanding of workers' agency and subjectivity as an example of this (Wray-Bliss, 2002b; also Prasad, 2001). In contrast to relying upon 'normal' research practices as ensuring adequate attention to silence and voice, what those grappling with the politics of voice and silence in research practices have emphasised is a need to move from 'normal science' (Alvesson, 2003; Lincoln, 1993), with its clear demarcations of power and privilege between researcher and researched, toward a (radical) re-negotiation of this relationship. Such re-negotiation, as *Section One* alluded to above, would likely center around much more extensive and public/ published consideration of what constitutes ethical relations with the researched, and seek to evidence in the final research product how this ethics is embodied.

A possible response to such an argument is that academic journal articles are simply not the spaces for reflecting upon, embodying, or being accountable for, these kind of ethical methodological concerns. However, before such calls are 'silenced' as outside the boundaries of what we might expect of CMS research in the journals, I would like to reflect on the fact that journals have already demonstrated what may be understood as a discontent with relying upon unevidenced/ unpoliced individual probity as sufficient safeguard of research ethics. So far, however, they have manifested this in regard to only one class of research subject. For, when it comes to the CMS researcher critiquing the 'voice' (i.e. published research) of other CMS academics, journals have institutionalised another safeguard to ensure that the latter group's voice is properly represented: namely (and here I return to reflect upon the academic practice that I started the paper with) the right of the criticised author to publish a response (see e.g. Calás and Smircich, 1993; Collinson, 2002; Hofstede, 2002; McSweeney, 2002; also Mintzberg, 1991²). I find this 'right to respond' significant in the context of the preceding discussion of silence and voice, not so much because of the extent of its use ('responses' do not, after all, appear routinely), but because of what it seems to symbolise. As well as potentially providing 'good copy' through enabling the academic to defend/ elucidate their position more clearly in response to critique and/or, for the more voyeuristically minded reader, the opportunity to witness a good textual spat, the journal response also signals, to me, an explicit recognition by our academic community of the importance of mitigating against the potentially silencing (misrepresenting) effects of the published CMS text. Indeed the journal response is more than a mere recognition of this. It is at one level an attempt to systematise a procedure whereby the research subject has a right to a dissenting public voice if the research represents their work critically. The specific 'procedure' for facilitating this may well vary between journals, but at its most organised it can include notifying the criticised academic subject, sending a copy of the original article prior to publication, and fast tracking the 'response' so that it may appear in the same issue as the critique – a critique which is likely to have been submitted via the normal lengthy anonymous refereeing-revising-refereeing process several months before. Such an attempt to institutionalise and rapidly process these research subject's right to voice, to self-representation, as a counter to the potentially silencing/ problematising effects of research is, on balance, perhaps to be welcomed.

This guarded rather than wholly enthusiastic welcome stems from my reading of Spivak's (1990) caution to be aware of the ever-problematic quality of all such engagements with representation, self-representation, and representing others – a reminder that we need to remain aware that exercising 'self-representation' (through, for example, responding to another's representation of your voice) does not 'solve' power relations in the research context. For instance, extending to some academic subjects a

2 As this sample list of respondents would suggest, and my own examination confirms for me, it also seems apparent that those academics who respond/ are canvassed for a response tend to be already well-established figures in the field. As such it may be worthwhile too to reflect upon the differential voice and silence accorded senior vs. more junior CMS academics. However, as I alluded to in the introduction, I choose to focus instead on what is for me the rather more pressing and perturbing issue of whether giving only academic subjects (whether senior or otherwise) such right to respond highlights the differential significance accorded the voice and silence of academic vs. non-academic subjects of CMS research.

right to respond does not absolve the researcher from their responsibilities towards those subjects. Nor does a subject's self-representing 'response' present an authentic account free from power effects or the potential to silence. The 'right to respond', therefore, is not a blueprint for ending the dilemmas of silence and voice in critical research. It is not a blueprint, but it is I feel at least a significant, symbolic, recognition of and attempt to engage with such issues. As such, in the light of the previous discussion of the responsibility of critical academic research to 'the silenced', we might consider whether such right to a dissenting/ responding voice should be expanded to include other, namely non-academic, subjects critiqued in CMS research. I examine the *practicality* of doing this in the *Conclusion* to the paper. Before this, in *Section Three* below, I consider, and critique, a number of arguments that could be made *against* extending the opportunity of dissenting voice to non-academic research subjects. Specifically, I explore whether the critiqued academic research subject justifies a monopoly right to voice a response on the basis of: i) a unique potential to suffer *harm* at the 'hands' of a text; ii) a monopoly claim to have something *interesting* to respond; or iii) a likely unique *awareness* of being critiqued in the text; and iv) whether arguments of *academic freedom* might legitimise not extending this right to respond to non-academic subjects.

Section Three: Prerequisites of Voice, Legitimations for Silence?

i) Harm

Perhaps a right to respond need only be extended to academics because only they are likely to suffer potential harm through another's representation. For instance, whereas the non-academic researched are usually anonymised in research articles, the academic research subject is named (by reference to their texts) and thereby is directly and individually identifiable. As such it could be argued that the academic research subject may be more individually and personally vulnerable to the harmful effects of another's critical voice and, thereby, may warrant the unique protection of the right to voice a response. As a defense of the current practice, this seems to have some merit – as academics our careers 'live', and thus presumably can 'die', by the word. However, while it is indeed true that the academic research subject will be (often uniquely) individually identifiable, as the British Sociological Association makes clear, it is not only the effects of research on identifiable individuals that generates ethical responsibilities.

It should be borne in mind that decisions made on the basis of research may have effects on individuals as members of a group, even if individual research participants are protected by confidentiality and anonymity. (BSA, 'Statement of Ethical Practice':1d)

The 'effects' that academic representations of research subjects can have upon groups of people can, as feminists, postcolonial writers, queer theorists, disability writers, and others have reminded us, be quite injurious.

When we write about the experiences of a group to which we do not belong, we should think about the ethics of our action, considering whether or not our work will be used to reinforce and perpetuate domination. (hooks, 1989: 43)

Indeed CMS (along with Organisation Studies and Labour Process Theory) has demonstrated some recognition of the potentially harmful effects of our academic (mis)representations of groups. For example, in such developments in the CMS canon as the (re)introduction of 'gender' to what was understood as the problematic 'gender neutral' (Wilson, 1996) or 'gender suppressing' (Linstead, 2000) theory of organisation (also Knights and Willmott, 1986), and in what has effectively become the 'requirement' (Wray-Bliss, 2003a) that empirical representations acknowledge the resistant agency of working class organisational members if they are to avoid being charged with quietism or privileging structure over agency, we might sense not only a 'disinterested' academic call for an epistemologically accurate portrayal, but also an ethical/ political challenge to CMS to continue to produce less marginalising/ subordinating representations. Furthermore, the establishment of CMS as a subject area seems of itself to be based upon the idea that management research *in general* reproduces harmful (oppressive) effects for non-managerial members of organisation. Already then, there appears to be at least tacit acknowledgement that academic representations, including those in CMS texts, can indeed 'harm' the researched, not just directly as named individuals, but also indirectly as members of groups. If academics, therefore, have no monopoly claim to being vulnerable to potential 'harm' from the published text, then this seems an unconvincing basis upon which to pin an exclusive right to voice a response.

ii) Interest

Another possible justification for extending the right to voice a response only to the academic subject could be that only they would be able to voice the kind of articulate, theoretically sophisticated response that we are actually interested in hearing. Leaving aside, for the moment, the presumption of the non-academic researched's 'ignorance' or 'inarticulateness' contained herein (a presumption that would not seem to sit well for me within CMS wider commitments to challenge, for instance, the class elitism of mainstream management texts), there is perhaps something (uncomfortably) close to home in this position. As both Seidman (1992) and Stanley and Wise (1983) have argued in relation to the older discipline of sociology, and Parker (2002) has argued in relation to CMS, Grand Theory (theory with a capital 'T') tends to confer status and, ultimately, this status confers the right to voice. The voices of the non-academic researched are interesting, it can sometimes seem, only to the extent that they illuminate, illustrate, or help the academic author to contest a particular Theoretical position. That a Theoretical piece of research is divorced from the everyday world, directed at elucidating the finer subtleties of some theoretical abstraction, with no attempt at making it relevant for specific current events, is apparently no barrier to its publication. A piece of empirical work, illuminating what is currently happening to, and between, people in organisations, however, stands little chance of being accepted as an 'academic' text unless it shows what it contributes to, or otherwise wraps itself in the flag of, 'Theory' (Parker, 2002). Extrapolating from the above, we could be excused for thinking that the CMS community might feel that little could be added by seeking out, any more than empirical texts already do, the 'subjective' and 'non-theoretical' voices of the non-academic researched. Indeed, if we judge the value of an academic work narrowly in terms of its contribution to 'Grand Theorising', and assume that only the academic subject can formulate such Theory, then such a view may be warranted.

However, I would argue that there are also reasons to believe that extending the right of (dissenting) voice to include also non-academic research subjects could produce 'better' CMS research – in a number of ways. First, if part of the CMS 'mission' is to enable those "voices that not only speak loudly, but also quietly or cannot – yet – be heard" to be heard (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992: 6, also *Section Two* above) then exploring ways that our texts might enable 'the silenced' to have a stronger public voice could be understood as itself a politically valuable contribution. Second, if CMS research was to become research of a kind that was read and responded to by our non-academic research populations then it might well become more accountable to these populations. At present if authors wish to critique another academic's 'voice' they have to (or, at least, should) craft this critique carefully and substantiate it well. In part I would suggest that this is because we know that it is entirely possible that this subject and/or other academic members from their particular discipline, 'school', or community may become aware of and may respond to our representations. It seems plausible then to suggest that, if other research subjects may be expected to read and respond to an author's critical representation of them, then the quality of an author's 'burden of proof' may improve likewise. Thus, interpretations in CMS texts that are ill-founded or poorly evidenced may be thought marginally less likely to find their way into the CMS academic canon. Third, if the 'response' or 'voice' of non-academic research subjects was to be valued by CMS more, then it may follow that authors might consider making their texts more accessible to such audiences and, as Parker (2002) argues, perhaps as a result more influential.

Can any academic who is seriously concerned with grand words like 'emancipation' and 'justice' afford to ignore issues of readership and effect? What is the point of being a revolutionary, or even a reformist, if no one can hear you? (Parker, 2002: 172)

Finally, if the 'right to respond' was extended to non-academic research subjects it seems possible that the representations produced in CMS texts may be more 'faithful' to these research subjects' own understandings (Lincoln, 1993). Given that methodologies deployed in empirical CMS research often tend to be defined as 'ethnographic', a methodological approach whose warrant is that it allows the researcher to understand the culture as the researched themselves do, such 'faithfulness' could be seen as another marker of 'better' empirical CMS research. Returning to points made earlier in relation to Spivak's work (see *Section One*), such claims of 'faithfulness' in empirical representations of others' voices are of course not unproblematic – just as academic claims to be able to accurately or authoritatively represent others are not unproblematic. However, returning to the issue at the heart of this section, namely CMS's potential 'lack of interest' in furnishing any but the academic research subject with the right to a dissenting voice, I would suggest that grappling with these not unproblematic concepts in empirical CMS research could, if nothing else, produce some 'interesting' research.

iii) Awareness

Following from the above issue of CMS's interest in research subjects' voice, I turn now to the flip-side issue of research subjects' interest in CMS's academic representations of them. This is centred, for me, around the issue of awareness. Perhaps the non-academic research subject doesn't need anything like a 'right to respond' because they are unlikely ever to be aware of how they are represented in the text.

Existing research practices might thereby be justified on the grounds that 'it doesn't matter'; in other words, that CMS research is irrelevant to the lives of our (non-academic) research subjects (see e.g. Collinson, 2002). This could be seen to legitimise the lack of opportunity for voice as a non-problematic silence, for the non-academic researched don't know, and probably wouldn't care, that they may be being critiqued.

Again the above argument can be plausibly made, however it still needs to be remembered that, according to writers on voice and silence, to be non-oppressive silence needs to have been an outcome of consent not suppression (LeCompte, 1993). The academic, offered the chance to respond (by becoming aware of, or being invited to respond to, the critique), can of course remain silent, and if they choose to do so this is an informed decision, an active choice. Such a choice is based not only upon a well developed awareness of how academic publishing works, its likely effect for the individual, etc, but also upon a reading, if desired, of the article in which their voice is critiqued – quite possibly forwarded by the journal prior to publication. An academic subject's choice of silence is broadly 'agentive', it can be regarded as 'freely given' and 'informed', both commonly understood imperatives of ethical relations with research subjects (e.g. BSA, undated: 1b). At present the lack of the non-academic research subject's 'dissenting/ responding voice' can not, it seems to me, be described in similar terms. Though it is almost certainly wrong to understand these subjects' lack of a right to a dissenting/ responding voice as a result of deliberate exclusion or explicit editorial or authorial policy, it does seem fair to describe this silence as a result of an unjustified (both in the sense of unarticulated and unjust) 'omission' on the part of CMS rather more than one of 'choice' on the part of non-academic research subjects.

iv) Academic freedom

So far, several of the potential legitimations I have explored for not extending to the non-academic research subjects a right of dissenting voice have had a somewhat defensive, almost apologetic, tone – downplaying, for instance, the potential harmfulness or significance of CMS's research for these subjects. Here, with the argument of academic freedom, CMS might have a more forthright opportunity to positively legitimise current practice. Academic researchers must guard their freedom to critique. Extending to research subjects the right to read and dissent from 'our' representations of 'them' might inhibit us from feeling able to critique them. We may be stifled by such questions as: What will they think? Will they be hurt? Will our research create "uncalled for self-knowledge" (BSA, undated: 1d)? Indeed, shouldn't ethical research, as the British Sociological Association's 'Statement of Ethical Practice' says, "attempt to minimise disturbance to those participating in research" (*ibid.*)? (As if ethical research is like some unpleasant medical procedure – one where the patient doesn't even get to see the results when it is all over). Letting the researched see our representations of them might make us take regard of their views and values, with the consequence that it may become more difficult for us to critique their lives and voices. Overall, this argument seems to say, CMS as a critical academic field, must guard its right to 'speak the truth to power', regardless.

This defense of academics' freedom to 'tell the truth' unencumbered by such constraints as regard for the potentially dissenting voice of the researched is indeed seductive. It lends a certain nobility and heroism, almost a mythic quality, to critical academic

research. This in itself may not always be a bad thing if it serves to help sustain critical work in the face of a still principally managerialist Business School academy. However, as a credible justification for excluding the non-academic research subject in CMS texts from having a right to respond to, or dissent from, how we represent them I do find it a little unconvincing. For instance, this position is open to a Foucauldian critique of 'truth' that reminds us that 'truth' is already "a thing of this world" that it is always "produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint" (Foucault, 1980: 131). 'Academic freedom' and the 'truths' it produces are already and always multiply constrained. According to the BSA, when we are thinking about the rights of research participants in particular, then such constraint (and restraint) is itself a marker of ethical research practices:

Sociologists, when they carry out research, enter into personal and moral relationships with those they study...Although sociologists, like other researchers are committed to the advancement of knowledge, that goal does not, of itself, provide an entitlement to override the rights of others. (BSA, undated: 'Relationship with and Responsibilities towards Research Participants')

At present the constraints that CMS 'truth' is produced under do not seem to extend to the right of non-academic research subjects to have a dissenting voice. I would suggest that deploying a discourse of 'academic freedom' to defend limiting the right to voice of research subjects whose 'oppression' CMS is committed to end is, like the previous arguments around harm, interest, and awareness, less than convincing.

Conclusions: Responses to Silence and Voice

This paper has had at its center a specific practice, that of allowing certain academic subjects the right to respond to CMS articles that criticise their voice. Despite the specificity of this practice, and my own personal experience of being 'responded to' that prompted these reflections, I have argued that this practice can be regarded as of wider significance because of what it symbolises. For me, the 'right to respond' signals recognition of the potentially silencing effects of the CMS text and an acceptance of the need to attempt to mitigate against these effects – in this case through the mechanism of allowing the criticised subject a dissenting voice. As such the journal response can be regarded as sounding a deeper resonance between the critical/ political academic project of CMS and the concerns of those writing on issues of 'voice' and 'silence' in relation to the ethics of research practices. However, this resonance does not signal a harmony. For while there appears to be a coincidence of commitments between CMS and texts on research ethics/ research relations, I have suggested that CMS has yet to carry these commitments wholeheartedly into its research practices and products. In particular I have suggested that CMS still marginalises reflection upon, and accountability for, issues of research ethics and relations with research subjects. Such issues simply do not seem to need to figure in empirical CMS texts seeking publication. I have suggested that one eloquent indication of this is the practice of extending the right to 'respond' only to the academic subject. Reflecting upon this practice in terms of the concepts of harm, interest, awareness and academic freedom, I have found no compelling (ethical) reasons why only these research subjects should qualify for this right to a responding/ dissenting voice.

Perhaps, however, I have overlooked the most obvious justification for only extending 'voice' in this way to the academic subject. Perhaps it is simply not possible or practical for journals to do otherwise. One reason, after-all, that the academic research subject can be given the right to respond by the journal is that they are identifiable (and thereby contactable for a response). The anonymity accorded the non-academic research subjects in CMS, and other social science, texts clearly normally inhibits extending the exact same model of soliciting the researched's dissenting/ self-representing voice to all problematised research subjects. However, rather than this being a blanket legitimation for continuing the current uneven access to a (dissenting) public voice, I would like to end this paper by tentatively imagining some of the possible alternative strategies and practices that CMS journal editors, researchers, and readers could explore to try to engage more explicitly with the above issues.

In addition to publishing academic work and contributing to an (UK) academic's RAE rating and career, journals function as a check on the quality and rigour of academic research (see *Section Two* above). Writers on silence and voice stress the oppressive (and empowering) potential of academic research, and argue for judgements of quality and rigour to be made more on the basis of research relations/ research ethics. For journals that publish CMS research to fulfill this 'quality control' mandate there may be a need for editors and reviewers to make research ethics (including issues of silence and voice) more central as a marker of the quality and rigour of the research they publish. Journals could usefully start this process by explicitly naming the potentially silencing power relations in guidelines for submission and require of authors that they are familiar with, and have abided by, appropriate guidelines on ethical research practice. Such guidelines might take a similar form to those of the BSA, for instance, which name research as being "frequently characterised by disparities of power and status" (BSA, 'Statement of Ethical Practice': 1a), and recognise that "social research intrudes into the lives of those studied" (*ibid.*, 1d) in ways that can readily be experienced as silencing, oppressive, or harmful by research participants or 'subjects'.

Of course, contributors' familiarity with guidelines or even ethical codes does not necessarily equate with enthusiastic engagement with ethical practice (LeCompte, 1993). Familiarity can just as easily breed indifference (even contempt), and ethical codes can lead to minimal compliance and even, as Bauman (1993) reminds us, to less, not more, ethical conduct. Journals would seem to need, therefore, to guide authors to reflect more extensively in their submitted texts upon power relations and ethics in the research process. Such reflection may necessitate that authors articulate what ethical/ political justification their work assumes – especially for such work which uses the academic's rather privileged access to public voice to problematise the voice/ agency of the non-academic research subject (Lincoln, 1993). Such texts may need to be asked to demonstrate how the research subjects' voice, including perhaps their critical voice on the way the academic has represented them in the text, has been sought and incorporated.

Further, journal editors and reviewers that wish to genuinely engage with the foregoing issues of silence and voice, would need to recognise that those texts which make central the (ethics of the) relations between research participants may well differ significantly in form and content from conventional empirical CMS. To take one example, texts that

are ordered around forms of participatory action research will normally be directed at exploring issues directly relevant to, and chosen by, research participants in conjunction with the researcher. Such issues will not necessarily be those that the wider academic community, left to its own sometimes-introspective devices, would find most 'theoretically' stimulating or current. As such, journal reviewers and editors may need to make judgements about the quality and contribution of such works from different standpoints, evaluating texts not only according to contribution to 'knowledge' but also (and this is clearly far from unproblematic) contribution to the lives of the researched population (Lincoln, 1993). Such a shift may necessitate significant 'unlearning' (Spivak, 1990) on the part of editors and reviewers (if not a different or widened constituency of editors) of the current ways that the status and quality of a piece of research is evaluated. At the least, empirical texts would likely need to change shape, with reflection on methodology becoming more central and significant than its current, often marginal, status.

To meet demands for more ethical accountability, researchers/ authors too may have to unlearn the ways that they come to regard the research process and the empirical text. The work of writers on voice and silence (see *Section One*) may need to be explored further, such that research ethics and methodology could become central rather than marginal to CMS research practices. As Lincoln writes,

in the past, comments on method, design strategy, and analytic method, were often missing, or merely appended, to ethnographies (Van Maanen 1988). In emerging research on the silent and silenced, however, method, strategy and analysis may comprise a more forthright and integral part of texts. (Lincoln, 1993: 38)

The foregrounding of research ethics and methodology may also need to be carried through to our other research responsibilities, including supervision, for instance. This may necessitate a reversal in the status of what sometimes appears to be the last-to-be-done, 'token' methodology section of undergraduate and postgraduate management studies dissertations. For established CMS academics, and those in training, there would also seem to be a need for broadening what we understand as CMS' critical/ anti-oppressive commitments, to include reflection upon, and embodiment of, non-oppressive/ non-silencing (but not necessarily therefore uncritical) relations with research participants. This may well necessitate much more exploration by CMS researchers of those participative, feminist, and action research, methodologies, where the issues studied, conclusions arrived at and representations made are "dictated as much by the needs and nominations of the studied as by the interests, desires, or biases of the studier, or of the current concerns of a funding agency" (Lincoln, 1993: 34).

Such a broadening of relations with research participants would, as LeCompte (1993) reminds us, also ultimately necessitate attempts at using research capital (material, symbolic, cultural, political) to not merely 'voice' the situation of the silenced, or even to enable the researched to 'voice' their own lives, but also to contribute towards

practically changing the 'silenced' status of those that participate with us in CMS research.³

Before I risk getting carried away with an 'heroic' image of what social change critical academic research might achieve, it of course needs to be acknowledged that academic research, with the particular conventions that govern its form and with the rather limited audience it achieves, is not necessarily the most effective media through which the silenced can be supported in a struggle to be heard.⁴ Notwithstanding this, however, I have argued in this paper: i) that the current (rather conventional) conventions that are structuring the form of CMS research texts and research relations are not immutable. They can be changed so as to better engage with the political problematic of 'representation, self-representation, representing others' at the heart of at least one vision of 'anti-oppressive' or 'critical' academic research (Spivak 1990: 63). And: ii) that while some form of (reconfigured) CMS research may certainly not be the 'one best way' to practically challenge the silenced status of some of those that we interact with in the process of conducting critical management research, for those of us that do decide to keep engaging in this research it can surely be argued that we should at least 'do what we can' with this medium that we continue to invest much time and energy in.

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3 In part, this could be understood to be a process CMS academics are already actively engaged in through teaching practice – raising the opportunities for 'voice', the life opportunities, for those who can successfully accrue the academic/ cultural capital that is offered. At present however, it seems apparent when looking at much published CMS research that, for some reason, CMS researchers see such a process to be alien to their research agenda. In this paper I have drawn upon writings of those engaging with the ethical issues of silence and voice in their research relations to suggest to CMS that this does not have to be the case.

4 I am grateful to Damian O'Doherty for encouraging me to make this point explicitly.

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the author

Edward Wray-Bliss works at Nottingham University Business School, previously he lectured at Edge Hill, and the Universities of Stirling and Salford. Since gaining his PhD from UMIST, School of Management in 1998, he has been researching in the area of ethics and organisation, focussing upon such issues as the ethics of discrimination (with Helen Collins), drugs and work (with Samantha Warren, and Joanna Brewis), and the ethics of critical management research. He has published on these and other topics in the journals *Organization*, *Organization Research Methods*, *Tamara*, and *Culture and Organization* and in edited texts including Parker (ed.) (1998) *Ethics and Organizations*, Sage (with Martin Parker) and Sturdy, Grugulis, and Willmott (eds.) (2001) *Customer Service*, Palgrave. When not doing the above, he has fun in other ways.

Address: Nottingham University Business School, Jubilee Campus, Wollaton Road, Nottingham NG8 1BB, UK.

E-mail: Edward@Wray-Bliss.freeserve.co.uk