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Dismantling Methodological Silos and Normative Confinements in Qualitative Research: A Shared Meal of Knowledge in a Postqualitative Langar Space

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Abstract

Building on qualitative approaches, post-qualitative is a turn of “becomings,” never reached but always moving. Turning from and beyond established qualitative traditions, in the post-qualitative, we pursue the leads of St. Pierre and Lather to push qualitative boundaries and offer Langar – a Sikh cultural practice of collective cooking and consumption of a shared meal as an alternative site of knowledge creation. As part, we harness the philosophical virtues of Langar and utilise its resistive prowess to put forward a methodological footprint that turns from the qualitative yardstick of rigor-tested legitimisation of knowledge. We navigate the ontological turns to locate the post-qualitative determinants of Langar and argue for its methodological rightness that disclaim scientism-based warrantability of knowledge building and acceptance.

Keywords

post-qualitative, Langar, becoming, rigor, scientism

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Dismantling Methodological Silos and Normative Confinements in Qualitative Research: A Shared Meal of Knowledge in a Postqualitative Langar Space

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Building on qualitative approaches, post-qualitative is a turn of “becomings,” never reached but always moving. Turning from and beyond established qualitative traditions, in the post-qualitative, we pursue the leads of St. Pierre and Lather to push qualitative boundaries and offer Langar – a Sikh cultural practice of collective cooking and consumption of a shared meal as an alternative site of knowledge creation. As part, we harness the philosophical virtues of Langar and utilise its resistive prowess to put forward a methodological footprint that turns from the qualitative yardstick of rigor-tested legitimisation of knowledge. We navigate the ontological turns to locate the post-qualitative determinants of Langar and argue for its methodological rightness that disclaim scientism-based warrantability of knowledge building and acceptance.

Keywords: post-qualitative, Langar, becoming, rigor, scientism

Post-qualitative is a progression of “becomings” that builds on qualitative approaches but acknowledges that no finite resolution is achievable, and that the journey is always moving. Pursuing the leads of St. Pierre and Lather, we turn from and reach beyond qualitative traditions to the post-qualitative. We offer an alternative site/medium of knowledge creation based on Langar – a Sikh cultural practice of congregational cooking and consumption as a lens through which to understand the building of communes of scholarship. We harness the philosophical virtues of Langar and utilise its resistive prowess to put forward a methodological footprint that eschews the qualitative criterion of rigor-tested legitimisation of knowledge. We revisit/reflect on potentially siloed thinking traditions and navigate the ontological turns to envision an innovative methodological practice that eschews scientism-based warrantability of knowledge building and acceptance. We begin with a beginning.

“Is this going to be rigorous?” I (Kanwar) asked.

“Do you mean Langar?” replied Jane. She then asked, “Are we not in a postqualitative space?”

“Yes, we absolutely are,” I responded.

“Langar is a new notion” added Damien. “What about its processual implications, I mean the qualitative yardstick?” Damien inquired.

I posited, “The talk around credibility, scientism and so on.”

“You mean the correctness of Langar as knowledge creation choice?” inquired Jane.

“Exactly,” said Damien, whilst I nodded my head in concurrence.

“Well, that is the task at hand,” said Jane, “and we better get on to it and find out.”

These are excerpts from our research conversations in which I (Kanwar), and my co-authors Jane and Damien (who also happen to be my previous doctoral supervisors), brainstorm research ideas and moot possibilities of knowledge creation. In passing, you have entered our post-qualitative kitchen – a shared research space that Damien, Jane, and I have created as part of our ongoing doctoral enterprise my now culminated doctorate. This shared research space or post-qualitative kitchen is inspired by Langar – a Sikh cultural practice of collective cooking and consumption of a shared meal (Elsberg, 2019) where we brew ideas and cook knowledge meals. As part, we have come to think of ourselves as a *research commune* to which we bring different and (to each other) exotic offerings that we use towards creating our sumptuous knowledge meals.

In the spirit of shared Langar co-creation which will be detailed shortly, to our commune, Jane, I, and Damien bring different insights, experiences, and understandings that we use to prepare various metaphoric knowledge meals and offer to others to share and savour. Here, we wish to apprise our readers that as this paper unfolds and the knowledge meal gets prepared, discussion(s) of positionality and use of single or plural pronouns of authorship (I, we, and us) will appear interchangeably throughout the article. This piece and other knowledge meals (indicated below) remain a product of our shared Langar effort. To make it more explicit, as the first author, I (Kanwar) am merely leading insights and not the commune. Very Langar-like, all insights and understandings within the commune are co-informed and co-owned. Please be apprised that it is the shared meal and the sharing which remains central in this paper, and not the authors or the cooks; they simply melt into the meal.

Our ongoing Langar (intellectual) undertakings within the post-qualitative kitchen are inclusive of a progressive series of knowledge meals which focus on different aspects of knowledge production and scholarship. These shared knowledge meals constitute my thesis, including published works, which is now a successfully completed doctorate. One of our earlier commune creations explored possibilities of emulating Sikh Langar as an alternative site of knowledge creation in which Damien, Jane, and I suggested the moulding of Langar practice into a post-qualitative methodological footprint (Singh et al., 2021). In a subsequent meal, Jane, Damien, and I employed and tested the methodological and vocational power of Langar in the realm of doctoral supervision that seeks pedagogical transformation within less explored doctoral relational experiences (Singh et al., 2022).

The current article dismantles methodological silos and disrupts normative thinking in qualitative traditions to confront the notions of rigour and scientism which sometimes may act as criterion of knowledge acceptance and legitimisation within scholarship.

Dismantling Methodological Silos and Disrupting Normative Thinking in Qualitative Traditions

In the context of educational scholarship, what falls under the umbrella of legitimate and rigorous research is constantly evolving and challenged because alternative epistemologies approaching research from different individual, cultural, and contextual frameworks are generally marginalised (Patterson et al., 2016). To unfold the post-qualitative determinants of Langar as a shared research practice, in this paper we upkeep the post-qualitative philosophy and write from our own frames of reference that were based on the qualitative. Thus, we offer Langar as an alternative methodological footprint and tender its innovative potential to extend and not reject qualitative options. Through such understandings, Jane, Damien, and I offer this metaphoric meal to you to relish, share, and savour. To tastefully nourish this sapid meal and to enhance its savouring, it is imperative to summarise the underpinning notions of this paper being post-qualitative, Langar, and rightness or rigor. We begin with the post-qualitative.

What is Post-Qualitative?

Surprisingly, a clear, precise, and single answer to this question does not exist (St. Pierre, 2021) and may never be formed (St. Pierre, 2019). Post-qualitative is unique, without substance, existence, essence, stability, or structure (Lather 2013; St. Pierre, 2013a). Essentially, post-qualitative can broadly be treated as an assortment of negative definitions. According to St. Pierre (2019), negative definitions in philosophy are a good starting point. In general, post-qualitative indicates a “shift in how knowledge-creation and engagement with the world are understood” (Østern et al., 2021, p. 7). As St. Pierre (2019) argues, post-qualitative is not yet here but is yet to come. Something which has not fully arrived but is always arriving (St. Pierre, 2021). Braidotti (2019) posits that post-qualitative entertains imagination, creativity, and fluidity of practice, and given this malleable nature, post-qualitative inquiry should remain occasionally hazy, formless, and inconclusive. In this article, we employ all of these processes but remain open for future conversations and expansions.

Hence, post-qualitative can be treated as a stance, viewpoint, approach, or perspective that entertains curiosity and innovation of thought and practice in research. Post-qualitative can be understood as “no-thing, any-thing, and every-thing” (Bodén & Gunnarsson, 2020, p. 5), that turns from set qualitative traditions (Østern et al., 2021) to seek and promote newness in inquiry praxis. It is a “product of the desire for a new kind of knowledge” (Kerasovitis, 2020, p. 65) that fosters resistive forms of knowing and thinking about knowing (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2021; St. Pierre, 2014). It can be viewed as “a promise – a question – a hint of the many things that research might become. Or perhaps all of these things at once and also ... infinite possibilities” (Nordstrom & Ulmer, 2017, p. 1).

We enact and analogise post-qualitative as a shift away from qualitative methodology. For us, a shift is not rejection because it does not discard previous qualitative inquiry traditions but rather builds upon them. Historically, post-qualitative fermented out of the fissions of rebellion as it was shy of accepting the normative, and prescriptive ways of knowing that were established within what St. Pierre (2014) terms the Conventional Humanist Qualitative Methodology (CHQM). This research approach sprouted from positivist traditions of knowledge building. All reformations are built in their context and are refutations (at least in part) of what exists. The arrival of post-qualitative emerges from and is entangled within the arrival-departure flip-flop of changing research traditions underpinned by varied research beliefs, norms, and practices. This can be explored in a short excursus into the evolution of qualitative research methods from the positivist to the constructivist and then to the post qualitative.

The Evolution: Qualitative Before the Post-Qualitative

In the 1980s there was considerable debate bordering on turmoil in approaches to social research. At this time, budding qualitative researchers were pushing the boundaries of apologist responses to the positivist traditions that were woven on natural science models and laced by threads of scientism, system, and exactitude. Whilst the advocates of the interpretive turn were renegotiating the boundaries of social and human science research, Rorty (1982) advanced a pragmatist orientation towards social inquiry. By now, the evolution of CQHM marked by the crisis of representation and legitimation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) was in its fourth phase (Holt, 2003). Having moved through the interpretive and ontological turns of the 1990's, and by refusing the positivist ways of knowing, qualitative methodology had gained significant impetus. The challenges and declamations concerning scientism and rightness in research were in full roar. Eventually, CQHM carved its niche and through the humanist and interpretive turns, opened itself up to new ways of knowing via new knowing of ways. The inception of

human-centred inquiry techniques including open-ended interviews, narratives, discourse analysis and lately, autoethnography concretized as research methodologies. This indicated the establishment of qualitative methodologies over natural science and positivist models.

In up-ending positivist methodologies, ironically, CQHM did the same and turned on its own axis. Whilst re-negotiating research norms and re-drawing normative research boundaries, CQHM adopted the same structure and formed itself into a research rubric (Lather, 2013) comprising methodologies, methods, system, exactitude, compliance, replication, data, analysis, and prediction. Guttorn et al. (2015) posits,

Qualitative methodology was invented in the 1970s and 1980s as a critique of positivist social science, but we've structured, formalised, and normalised it so that most studies look the same. The process is the same: identify a research question, design a study, interview, observe, analyse data and write it up ... drop a researcher down into that pre-given process and they know what to do ... we can pretty much predict what will come out ... qualitative methodology has become predictive, like positivist social science. (p. 16)

During the mid-1990s and the early 2000s, scholars had begun to defy the ideological and procedural apparatus of qualitative methodology and turned from it. In this turn, the post-qualitative foundation was originally laid by St. Pierre and Patti Lather. Their initial works were furcating out of post structural, post-modern, and feminist spaces as they disputed the idea of "how research-based knowledge is conceptualised and produced" (Lather, 2013, p. 636) within the academy. St. Pierre and Lather disrupted the intelligibility of the qualitative research rubric and dismantled its ideological, conceptual, and operational equipage.

In this deconstruction (Derrida, 1976) and through creative experimentation (Fahey & Prosser, 2015), St. Pierre and Lather turned shifted from qualitative traditions and refused to accept the normative knowing of ways. Stated otherwise, they turned from the underlying ideological and philosophical assumptions of CQHM, through which qualitative traditions had arrived in its own departure from positivist traditions. As a mix of different philosophical orientations that are peculiar of the varied paradigms and ontological turns (Taylor, 2017), post-qualitative facilitated its own shift which we explicate below.

The Post-Qualitative Shift

Qualitative researchers employ procedural methods that prevails in normalise both research norms and forms (Jackson, 2017). Prescriptive normative-ness is both a norm and a yardstick of assessing normality. Linearity underpins the research trajectory of a question emanating from prior research, which progresses through the rigour and exactitude of method, analysis, conclusions, and reporting (Lather, 2006). This linearity denotes a beginning towards an end. Post-qualitative inquirers abandon this linearity to encounter zigzagged multiplicities because abandoning is an intentional and purposive act of resistance.

Post-qualitative inquirers revel in the resistance to linearity and the frisson of rebellion. It seems that they do not write to meet expectations but to create (Honan & Bright, 2016). As creative experimenters (Richardson, 2004) post-qualitative inquirers thrive on a trust that something will emerge but is never assured (Rajchaman, 2000). Research is not an unfolding story narratable through established knowledge practices (Britzman, 1997). Rather, it is synonymous with the uneasiness which sprouts along less travelled pathways that lead into unexplored terrains. Post-qualitative writers harness this uneasiness and step off the train. The idea of post-qualitative is not to revert to the established procedure (St. Pierre, 2019) but to

offer emerging and risk being strangled from the start, a predicament in which philosophers and writers engaged in creative spaces for exploration (Deleuze, 1994).

The idea is to “produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (Lather, 2013, p. 635). It seems to us that qualitative approaches may have originated from and were fed by methodologies that rely on evaluative research systems, within which accuracy and quantifiability chiselled through exactitude, analysis, and rigor draw scientific boundaries to frame metrics around the quality of research (Patterson et al., 2016). Such applied metrics create binaries to exclude the non-quantifiable and transformational aspects of the inquiry. Post-qualitative abjures repetition, disrupts stability, and blurs boundaries. In the post-qualitative the knower cannot be independent of the known. Sometimes in the post-qualitative, boundaries between the researcher and the researched become fuzzy, hierarchies are interrupted, and stratification is disarranged. Researcher and researched positionality become messy until we resolve that each of us is both – as researchers we are the creation of our positionalities and our intentionalities coalesced. Post-qualitative inquiry is a redefining act of research that fosters co-creation of knowledge (Romm, 2020), wherein,

assembling a we ... a scholarship ... invested in gathering people to create an us: one that brings about a plurality that is invested in one another. A collective which does not speak for another, but instead speaks with one another. (Jones, 2017, p. 131)

Before it is generated or arrives, post-qualitative inquiry does not exist, and every time it is generated, it should be created anew (St. Pierre, 2019). It cannot be planned and designed in advance; it just appears (St. Pierre, 2019). Post-qualitative strategies are not regulating but emerge in transit (Jackson, 2017) and mistakes are an inherent part of their unfolding (Deleuze, 2007). In the post-qualitative, nothing is “set at the beginning of the work” (Jackson, 2017, p. 667). According to Deleuze (2007), a post-qualitative inquirer

is like a spider who does not know it at the beginning, he learns it by following different rhythms, on very different occasions, and this method, literally, is the spider strategy. (p. 45)

As post-qualitative inquirers, we “begin to do it differently wherever we are in our projects” (Lather, 2013, p. 635) and play with playfulness to rejoice the notion of joy. Post-qualitative has no finite point of data. The qualitative premise of data, including collection, interpretation, and analysis, is confronted with multiple questions. As St. Pierre (2013a) posits,

I’m interested in the occasion of data’s appearance; that is in when, where, why, how, and by whom data is called into being to do some work ... what data looks like when it appears, in what counts as data. (p. 223)

Given the space and scope limitations of this piece, a detailed discussion on the implications of data is non-feasible and is left for elsewhere. Simplistically, what we gesture towards is that in a particular context and for a particular purpose, data is not what we seek from our participants; it is not something out there to be collected (Law, 2004; St. Pierre, 2013a).

We argue that in research, everything and everyone is data which is “partial, incomplete, and always being re-told and re-remembered” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 3). St. Pierre (2013a, p. 224) bows to Derrida who “taught us is that meaning is uncertain, contingent, not present, not yet, but always to come.” In becoming post-qualitative inquirers refuse the “bifurcation of knowing from being” (Kuntz, 2020, p. 1) and crave to engage with the

movement and moments of becoming, an idea of “unfinished present, lacking any predetermined future” (Kuntz, 2020, pp. 3-4). Let us now explore the notion of becoming.

The Notion of Becoming

As unfolded, post-qualitative can be a progression turn of becoming - an entangled notion of entanglements and an unending process of change and mediations (Angervall & Gustafsson, 2014) that defies stability (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), and/or pre-determined goals (Deleuze, 1983). Becoming feels like a ceaseless sequence of contesting negotiations which is indefinitely coiled to its environment and relationships (Singh et al., 2022). According to May (2003), the only being of becoming is becoming itself. In Deleuze’s (1995) view, becoming is the sole being. A form of newness that is created in the state of in-betweenness and fosters change and experimentation (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Becoming interminably moves between the ruptures that it creates and thrives in the middle (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Becoming erupts in a tangled and cyclical way from the gaps between the disruptive moments, always becoming to become and never be (Grosz, 2005). Post-qualitative, for us, is a “philosophy of becoming” (Kuntz, 2020, p. 3).

Here, now, in this moment, as we think, write, and type; write, type, and think; or type, think, and write, whichever way and whatever combination, in some way or the other, we endeavour to deftly stitch into text and trap within its confinement(s) the un-definitions of post-qualitative inquiry. This is an act, process, and performance of post-qualitative because the essence of post-qualitative is the entanglement of becomings, and that is what is becoming entangled. As Bodén and Gunnarsson (2020, p. 5) posit, post-qualitative “provides us with nothing. Instead, it offers us a tool to navigate and can turn into anything. But it implies hope and therefore is everything.”

Having sketched post-qualitative and its arrival through various paradigm shifts and ontological turns, we now turn to the contention of scientism and explicate how we understand the research rubric and what it means to us.

The Research Rubric

In the wake of such paradigm shifts and ontological turns, for decades, qualitative inquirers have been “battling the scientifically based evidence-based police” (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 1) who, with their scientific yardsticks, measure to determine what might qualify as research. What continues to problematize and transpire within the academy is the “need to guarantee the value and rigor of humanist qualitative inquiry” (Lather, 2013, p. 630)? The rigor-ghost, promulgating the scientific assessment and classification of credible research has haunted the academic corridors for decades.

The “seeming obsession ... with the conditions of legitimation of knowledge” (Lather, 1993, p. 673) still lurks and a “proliferation of available framings complicates” (Lather, 2006, p. 52). The persisting quest to scientifically integrate into the process and product of knowledge creation, the ethos of scientism, has been a bone of contention for many years that persists in the landscape of social science research. Shaped and nurtured by the prescriptive mannerism of positivist traditions (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013), the sounds of objectivity-aspired advocacies of the writing have long echoed in academic hallways.

This zest for scientism and the contraptions of the research rubric (comprising system, rigor, approaches, methods, and modes of knowledge building in the academy) are stifled by complexities (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). To enhance progression, logical “empiricism’s scientific doctrine of truth through method” (Bochner, 2018, p. 362) is consumed by its proof-based rhetoric that aims at attaining objectivity in construction of knowledge explorable by

systematic theories and methods supposedly bound by common agreement (McNamee & Hoskings, 2012). This kind of “preoccupation with methodological rigor as the singular yardstick for judging” (Paul & Marfo, 2001, p. 525) makes good research problematic. Amidst such echoes, every inquirer who sets their foot into these academic hallways, releases a Pandora of choices. Mine (Kanwar’s) were no different and are shared below. In all my choices, my co-authors walked beside me. When we speak of ourselves as individuals, we use singular pronouns but when we speak of our commune, we use plural pronouns.

Research Choices

The template of research approaches, methodologies, and methods constitute “a textual maze through which all doctoral students must navigate” (Honan & Bright, 2016, p. 732). Students are expected to align their research choices to and nominate their preferences of research out of these established templates. As a trainee inquirer, I am fresh at the gates of the academy to which “we always bring tradition with us into the new, and it is very difficult to think outside our training, which, in spite of our best efforts, normalizes our thinking and doing” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630). In “terms of disciplinary or scholarly limits” (Manning, 2015, p. 62), this training tames researcher thinking (St. Pierre, 2018). The tradition of method and methodology “reigns supreme to provide normative forms” (Jackson, 2017, p. 666) to our research.

We have elsewhere addressed our pathway to this writing (Singh et al., 2021) but suffice to state here, I am a Sikh diasporic re-settler in Australia, raised in varied cultural contexts and exposed to cultural practices whose philosophies and values I cherish and remain deeply embedded in my sense of self. One such is Langar – the Sikh cultural idea of collective cooking and consumption of a shared meal.

As stated earlier, within our Langar inspired commune, Jane, Damien, and I acquire knowledge to create knowledge. Together, we learn to learn and know to know. We now offer you Langar as a meal of knowledge to share with us and savour.

Langar: A Shared Meal of Knowledge in a Post-Qualitative Space

Langar is a traditional Sikh religio-cultural institution enshrined by the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev (Elsberg, 2019). The etymological root of the term “Langar” is varied: in Persian it means an anchor or an alms house (Fenech & McLeod, 2014) that is maintained to provision the requirements of the less privileged, particularly travellers (Nesbitt, 2016). In Sanskrit it means a cooking room (Pandey & Pandey, 2018). Over time, Langar became synonymous with the notion of a “free communal kitchen.” The evolution of Langar institution is rooted in the foundations of Sikh religious history (Desjardins & Desjardins, 2009) and to grasp an understanding, it is imperative to explore this socio-historical context. A brief synopsis is offered.

Purity and Pollution: The Stratified Indian Social Fabric

Indian society in the fourteenth century was hierarchically stratified into different divisions of caste based on which the social fabric was customarily stamped with inequality, exclusion, and discrimination (Singh, 2011). These divisions delegated social privileges. The higher the order of hierarchy, the greater the entitlements. For instance, access to places of worship and public gatherings was governed not only by subscriptions of caste, but also religion and occupation. These restrictions even traversed commensality norms. To observe

social purity and pollution between the classified layers of society, upper and lower caste members were not allowed to mingle freely and share the same food.

The Espousal of Equality and Sharing

The first Sikh Guru, Nanak Dev, established the Sikh sect, and upturned this rigidly hierarchical view (Jakobsh, 2012). He cultivated the ideals of equality (Khalsa-Baker, 2019), fraternity, social justice (Fieldhouse, 2017), and equity (Dusenbery, 2018). As a matter of fact, Singh (2011) maintains,

the first Sikh community that developed with Guru Nanak ... fits in with the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner's description of "antistructure," because the neat horizontal divisions of society were broken down. The ancient fourfold class system with its rigid hierarchical codes, or the male-female gender divisions had no place. (p. 11)

To nurture these ideals, the Guru propagated the idea of Langar, a unique socio-cultural practice where everyone irrespective of creed, caste, or occupation could come together to collectively cook, consume, and square away a shared meal (Rutherford, 2018). Langar was envisaged as a challenge to prevailing social inequities that could dismantle social hierarchies (Elsberg, 2019). This congregational enterprise (Desjardins & Desjardins, 2009) was an extension of the Guru's emerging broader Sikh ideals that directly confronted the Brahmanical notions of "purity, pollution and common exclusivism" (Madan, 1986, p. 261). The inter-dining convention (Singh, 2019) of Langar became an instrument of social liberation (Hawley, 2014).

Sikhism grew and post Guru Nanak the seat of Sikh clergy moved through nine successive Gurus (Grewal, 2008). Every seat appended to the evolving Sikh character and identity, some significant virtues, and attributes. These are philosophically and practically intriguing, but space and scope limits prevent further elaboration. The second and third Sikh Gurus, Guru Angad Dev and Guru Amar Dass enhanced the scale and scope of Langar to emphasise its importance in forging a distinctive Sikh identity (McLeod, 1989). However, it was under the patronage of Guru Arjan Dev, the sixth Sikh Guru, that this custom of communal eating was firmly established and crystallised (Elsberg, 2019). To date, Langar remains central to Sikh cultural observance and is a keystone of the Sikh fraternity. It promotes equity and erases boundaries to proffer the shared meal as sign of unity and community creation (Mancini, 2019). As Matofska and Sheinwald (2019) describe,

you can see the king and the beggar sitting next to each other, eating the same quantity of food from the same kind of plate. Anyone, from any religion can come to eat here, Hindus, Muslims, Jains ... The purpose of Langar is to share. (p. 217)

Initially, Langar was spatially confined to the premises of the *Gurudwaras* (Grewal, 2006) or the Guru's doorway (Murphy, 2013) which nowadays akin the Sikh temple but were originally known as the *Dharamsala* - connoting a place of assembly (Hawley, 2014). Gradually, it traversed spatial confines to move out of the temple boundaries and permeate social gatherings and private assemblies. If the communal meal's spirit and goal are inspired by and in line with Langar beliefs, such assemblies can decontextualize spatial confines. Singh (1994) is of the view that in ways, every Sikh household kitchen is a Langar. Today, the altruistic initiative of providing free Langar meals in times of social distress is a common global sight and a simple google search can affirm the same. However, Langar is not merely a free meal. Zavos (2020)

considers Langar to be a “transactional space” in which new ways of thinking are enabled through understandings of food production and consumption. This space is a myriad assortment of philosophies, and functionalities in which we play and explore as below.

Langar Arrangement

Langar holds no set form or structure. Broadly, it can be viewed as an arrangement inclusive of three core components: philosophical, processual, and transformative. Although this may not be a standard view of its layout, this structure may enhance a better understanding of its working and functionality.

Philosophical Edifice

Langar epitomises the Sikh ideals and its philosophical structure rests on the pillars of four enshrined principles of equality, hospitality, service, and charity (Desjardins & Desjardins, 2009). Cherishing these core philosophical values helps us interrupt hierarchies, abjure inequality, abandon inequity, and exemplify inclusion. By nurturing these ideals, Langar weaves into its spirit, the virtues of equity, respect, inclusion, and acceptance. The philosophical dissemination of Langar exemplifies the amplification of social equality (Ranganath, 2020) and furthers the disbursement of social service. It erases partisanship and removes biases that arise from social inequities (Singh, 1994). Langar philosophy strengthens the ability to acknowledge, accept, and absorb the ideas, values, and presence of others (Singh, 1994). On a personal and community level, this philosophy promotes openness to intensify democratic thinking and the actions that such thinking is likely to produce. Singh (2011) states,

men and women formerly from different castes, classes and religions played an equal part. Together they listened to and recited the sacred hymns, together they cooked and ate the Langar, and together they formed a democratic congregation without priests or ordained ministers. (p. 11)

Sequencing

In a Langar sequence, towards the preparation, consumption, and nourishment of a shared meal, volunteers come together and render *Seva*, a central Sikh ideal of *selfless service* (Singh, 2011) which aims to “better the local congregation through voluntary service” (Matofska & Sheinwald, 2019, p. 56). Ecumenically, members of other faiths are welcome to join and help in the running of the kitchen (Singh, 1994). The contributions are in the form of *offerings* through which the volunteers may “pay for the expenses, bring provisions or contribute labour of love, by cleaning utensils, fetching water or fuel, or taking a hand in cooking or distributing food” (Singh, 1994, p. 17). The Langar sequence involves multiple activities such as “cooking, serving, dishwashing, cleaning ... tidying the dining premises” (Neki, 1994, p. 7). Having no set sequence, Langar activities are entwined and coiled, both parallel and converging, independent yet dependent, and separate yet synchronous. Every Langar activity synergises into another and yet culminates in its own end.

Transformative Resistance

Langar was not merely a commensal practice. As part of an institutional building process, Langar was also a site of contested negotiations which served social, political, and diplomatic functions (Hawley, 2014). Langar was a resistive act of forming new socio-cultural

ideals that capacitated transformation on both levels: individual and community. The salience of Langar lies in its openness which we liken to Deleuze et al.'s (1987) notion of a map that is open with multiple entry points, detachable, reversible, connectable in all dimensions, and alterable by any individual, group, or social structure. Langar too has no set entry or exit points, malleable and mouldable. Offerors are free to enter or exit any sequence at will and choose what and how to contribute. Their offerings can cut across both time and space and be made from any part of the world. What is offered may not be nourished immediately. It can be stored for another day. Langar is not solely about givings, it is also about takings.

In a Langar sequence, one may choose to consume and be nourished from what others have offered, without offering any contributions. Alternatively, volunteers may decide to offer without consuming. At times, it can be both. This entangled relationship of giving and taking is closely knit, yet open and fluid. This is the peculiarity of Langar. Giving without taking and taking without giving is something that drives our research initiative. Our understandings of Langar are closely woven into our understanding(s) of our own selves, as inquirers and human beings. Our varying positionalities and life encounters sensitised the subtleties of such understandings (Singh et al., 2022) that got us to the doorstep of what we refer to as our post-qualitative kitchen.

Postqualitative Kitchen

This kitchen is a post-qualitative space where we create knowledge innovatively. As an inquirer, I was keen to enter this space. Bearing on my ideological countenance are the ideals of Langar. Concomitantly, I faced the research rubric, gearing myself to step in. I had introduced my co-authors and supervisors to the notion of Langar. They were excited. Mooting had begun to navigate a path (or to reject it entirely) towards Langar as our site of knowledge creation. We wondered how could we do this? The mighty research rubric was institutionally lofting in our faces. Prescription was prevalent. Tradition was calling. We blocked our ears.

Here, we noticed new volunteers. Lather, Khalsa-Baker, St. Pierre, Madan, Deleuze, Guattari, Kaur, Derrida, Singh, Foucault, and Grewal had walked into Langar, each making offerings. Spiced aromas filled the air. A fresh meal was under preparation. Our knowledge meal had begun to become. A new trust was underway. In that trust we wondered and wandered into “the less explored corridors of the academic shrine” (Singh et al., 2021, p. 9). A new kitchen appeared – our post-qualitative kitchen. Langar metamorphosed into our site of knowledge creation. Diffused between the melding walls of our post-qualitative kitchen and the research rubric, we are now wandering and wondering; building the plane as we fly in it. In knowledge building, there are rules to be followed, norms to which to adhere, justifications to be made, reasonings to be provided, and hurdles to be surmounted. This is how we are generally taught knowledge creation and made to understand it. Perhaps, this constitutes our training (St. Pierre, 2019), from which in the post-qualitative we must strive to untrain (St. Pierre, 2016). Within this paraphernalia (of reasonings, justifications, and tests), one that stands aloft and shouts aloud is that of rigor, the warrantability and legitimisation of research and knowledge building. Put more post-qualitatively, to be acknowledged and accepted we must append rightness to our inquiries and correctness to our ways of knowing. In our case, the correctness of Langar which we feel stands in its own right and needs no rigor-based acceptance to feel legitimate.

Post-Qualitative Determinants of Langar

In qualitative research, method is an “apparatus of capture” (Manning, 2016, p. 32) which rules supreme and presumably saves us from the critiques of credibility and reliability

(Jackson, 2017). Langar, however, is neither method nor methodology. It is stance, viewpoint, or way of thinking which furthers alternative ways of knowledge building. The congregation of a research Langar is like “assembling we ... [to] create an us” (Jones, 2017, p. 131). To Jane, Damien, and me, Langar is a non-hierarchical, and unstratified site of scholarship. A shared space of knowledge creation that “we” build as volunteers and offerors. Admittedly, in the institutional (university) context, there is an implicit hierarchy in our relationship – of a student and supervisors, but one that we try not to rely on in how we proceed to proceed. In our shared Langar co-creations, we interrupt hierarchies to function collaboratively as equals. To undertake knowledge meal activities, we do not instruct but volunteer. Allocation of activities is not determined by position or power but by consensual understanding. Rather, positionalities change and meddle. At times, the student becomes the expert and experts become students. This is more explicitly detailed in our previous knowledge meals (Singh et al., 2021, 2022). We offer a small tasting from Singh et al. (2022) below.

In our virtual meal enactment, we congregate as *Sangat* (commune) and render *Sewa* (service). Work, activities, sequences, responsibilities, and accountability are not pre-scribed. Rather they are subscribed. There is no delegation, but abrogation ... Though experience is highly cherished and respected in our Langar commune, ideational offerings are respectfully accepted from every offeror (irrespective of the experience and positionality) and are not established in hierarchies of position ... Feedback is accordant. Critiques are welcomed, accepted, and relished. Work is ascribed (not prescribed) to intrigue engagement not completion. (pp. 7-8)

This way of being and becoming has unfolded as we have worked together over the past five years. The institutional frame that surrounds our post-qualitative kitchen ascribes positions within the university hierarchy denoted by title and role. Within our post-qualitative kitchen, we intentionally work hard to eschew this, transforming our student-supervisor-supervisor relationship into Langar volunteers.

As Langar offerors, Jane, Damien, and I learn together, relishing the tang of risk in challenging norms. We found a safe haven in Langar that held our beliefs – exploration, resistance, sharing, and myriad landmarks of creed. We action challenge and provocation, rejecting the siloed enshrinements of small thinking. We can appear subversive, but really we build with trust and transparency. Our relational and scholarly behaviours are both rigorous and playful as we seek accord and reposed becoming. Langar is our haven wherein this unfolds.

In research, there is an implicit power relation between various research stakeholders which is generally imbalanced and constantly negotiated (Harrison et al., 2001). Normally, this imbalance is less inclined towards the inquired because the inherent and binarised positions of hierarchy (inquirer-inquired) place the inquirer on a higher plane. Langar, through its mutual and non-prescriptive trencher of offerings and takings, attends to reciprocity – a more equitable accord of give and take that fosters research as a shared practice of reciprocations (Harrison et al., 2001). Reciprocity as a research principle challenges the power imbalance between the inquirer and inquired (Lather, 1988). Langar chases this: by attending to reciprocity, Langar interrupts the hierarchies of power and blurs boundaries to inject more parity into this imbalance. Our post-qualitative kitchen has other volunteers whom we do not report in this piece. They are fellow researchers, and faculty colleagues who are keen to explore Langar. Intriguingly, many of them are not Sikh and they don't need to be because “Langar is open to anyone and everyone ... without let or hindrance” (Neki, 1994, p. 8).

In our commune, we collaboratively zigzag “through networks of difference in a non-hierarchical manner” (Lather, 2013, p. 639). We tread as compeers; hence, in our kitchen, there

are no researchers, no researched, but only research. No demarcations; no boundaries; only trust, empathy, respect, engagement, and inclusivity. The way we cook our metaphoric knowledge meal is not defined by our professional and personal positionalities. Rather, it is defined by how we subscribe to the Langar ideology and proceed towards knowledge creation. Besides, it is not only the set up but also the process of Langar that thrives to diffuse boundaries and interrupts hierarchies. This is the elegance of Langar. Due to this vivid disposition of openness and inclusion, Langar disseminates to diffuse boundaries between the knower and the known or the inquirer and the inquired. It lets knowledge become.

Therefore, in our post-qualitative kitchen, we ascribe to research being more than merely creating methodological recommendations for data collection and understand it to be an edifice of human knowing (Clarke & Parsons, 2013). In this regard, Langar continues to become and so do we: to know and to be. Post-qualitative is an enactment of newness that induces a shift from “predesigned or prefabricated entities towards an engagement with the processes” (Kuntz, 2020, p. 2). Langar amplifies this engagement to embrace and enact newness. Volunteers in Langar will have a meal of what is offered because there are no demands, stipulations, or requisitions but only offerings which are purely voluntary. Bodén and Gunnarsson (2020) understand post-qualitative as everything, anything, or nothing that enmeshes innovation. In concurrence, we treat Langar offerings in the same light because whatever comes to Langar becomes an offering and whatever is offered becomes Langar. This unique entwinement in suppleness is a pure post-qualitative determinant.

Langar is a coupled medium of creation and nourishment. As part of a Langar meal, nourishment is not sought from the meal itself. It can be sought from anything and everything and yet be nothing. Every offering, sequence, or dimension of Langar can fulfil nourishment which can be sought from the final meal, or it can be derived from the act of offering itself. For instance, in a physical Langar sequence, volunteers who choose to do the dishes or just make a little donation may not consume the final meal but rather seek nourishment only from the acts that they undertake towards the meal. Thus, like a dance improvisation where, in the spontaneity of moment and space, the creative process is not a medium of accomplishing a dance, but it is the very act of the dance itself (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981), Langar is something that is created in the very moment of that creation. With no past and no future; only the present. It is planned and is not. This is how knowledge is created in our post-qualitative kitchen.

Our research Langar has an abstract blueprint comprising few activities (assemblage, invites, offerings, preparation, washing, cutting, cooking, serving, consumption, nourishment, cleaning, storage, dishes, disposal, and sanitisation) that we undertake to build our shared meals of knowledge. These are not reported here but detailed in an earlier piece (Singh et al., 2021). With these activities, in our kitchen, we sing together and dance the dance as it arrives. We make offerings of ideas, beliefs, concepts, theories, and life encounters. We wash, chop, and cut bite size chunks of comestible possibilities. We layer, blend, stir, and heat curiosities and flavour with spices. Our meal comes into being, knowings to savour and relish, consumed in morsels or slabs. Nourishment is sought either from the final meal being prepared or from the very act of making offerings towards it. Small prayers and playful activities sanitise and sharpen our mental utensils. Leftovers are not disposed, but rather stored for future use. A leftover offering may be an end, or the beginning of another meal. This keeps becoming.

Langar dimensions are arranged in a non-hierarchical and centric manner where every point is connected to another, like a river which has no “beginning or an end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle” (Deleuze et al., 1987, p. 25). Knowledge building within Langar is akin to this: it is not inclined towards an end but rather flourishes in the middle of being made because at any given time, everything that is occurring is Langar and everything that is Langar is occurring. In this arrangement, I, along with others, enter Langar at no fixed point. To cook a meal of understandings, we creatively experiment (Fahey & Prosser, 2015) to

give and take, to seek and offer. Post-qualitative “calls for leaps, arrests and slips ... in how researchers can move and grow through uncertainty, creativity, and irruptions” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2012, p. 808). With Langar we tickle such uncertainties, nourish such creativities, and ignite such irruptive. For us, like Foucault and St. Pierre, inquiry sprouts out of curiosity and Langar is a cradle where such curiosities can be innovatively explored. Post-qualitative is a reappraisal of the meaning we attach to the ways of knowing and telling (Lather, 2013). Langar is our expression of this reappraisal.

Scientism

Despite the ontological and paradigm turns and due to its prevalent authority, the belief that science is the most valuable component of human knowing is a major occupational peril in philosophy (Sorell, 1991). Therefore, in the “contest of science and demands of audit culture” (Lather, 2013, p. 636), inquirers try “hard to be hard and reap the benefits of the game of science” (St. Pierre, 2013a, p. 224). For us, the “key is to contest what counts as science” (Lather, 2013, p. 638) and “who gets to define science anyway?” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630) because “science is a human project that gives the appearance of being other than human” (Bochner, 2018, p. 359). The entire notion of being scientific is neither clear nor useful (Rorty, 1982). Moreover, we concur with Bochner (2018) that who counts the measures and whose measure counts. In our view, knowledge creation is not a matter of measures but a measure of what matters and in Langar, the mattering of matter is not scientism but creativity. We argue that useful knowledge building “addresses how knowledge remains possible” (Lather, 2008, p. 18).

Knowing is not a fulfillment and knowledge is not a product of “an enforced systematicity” (Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017, p. 644). For us, knowledge creation is about knowing the unknowable through a praxis which, “disrupts the horizon of an already prescribed intelligibility to ask what might be thought and done otherwise” (Lather, 2006, p. 45). Langar is such a praxis. The playfield of knowledge building should not be confined between systematising routine and routinising system. Rather, research should play between the fields of creativity, imagination, curiosity, and newness. The systematic and repeated reproduction of knowledge through templated and established qualitative ways is more about warrantability. We concur with Law (2004) and argue that the strive towards an established methodological normativeness “is a form of hygiene” (p. 2) which is practiced getting pure and clean research products. But cleanliness and purity are not always what knowledge creation seeks. Much of the world we live in is messy and unknowable. Similarly, research does not have to be clean and pristine, rather it can, or should be messy (Law, 2004).

Post-qualitative aspires for inquiry correctness (Fusco, 2008). Langar embodies, symbolises, and expresses care in every possible way. We don’t argue that the methods and methodologies in the standard package (Law, 2004) of the “Good Old-Fashioned Qualitative Inquiry” (Brinkman, 2015, p. 620) are “straight-forwardly wrong ... they are significant, and will ... remain so” (Law, 2004, p. 5). We do not challenge the package but the associated normativities that limit research and its understandings to a procedure of systematic and templated repetition. With our abnormal inquiry choices (like Langar), we aspire to grasp the way we can normalise the abnormalities that erupt from the disruption of the normalities in research.

The practice of scientism is not so much about the practice itself but about the infusion of scientific attitude into different aspects of the social world (Hayek, 1979; Sorell, 1991). To do what we aspire to do, which, simply is to build knowledge, we wonder if it is imperative to infuse this attitude into Langar and make it scientific too. The zeal to address such wonderments is our ongoing doctoral project, which continues to become each day. Betwixt the interstices

of the ever-unfurling interplay of creative possibilities and becoming, lies the post-qualitative playfulness of surprise that cannot be rigorously predicted. In context of claims and counter claims of rigor and scientific validation of inquiry, we look to Seidman (2013) who states that for those who would repeat and pose Churchman's (1971) question, "Is telling stories science?" (p. 9). Reason (1981) responds by arguing that the question is not "is storytelling science?" but "can science learn to tell good stories?" (p. 5). In similar vein, the question for us is not "is Langar scientific?"; rather, the question is, "can science become Langar?" Stories offer an aesthetic relationality and open the doors to invention, wonder and curiosity that dissipates evidence to teach us live with what cannot always be explained (McKittrick, 2021). Langar does not explain, but rather tells to share how curious wonderings are cherished to know differently and innovatively.

Philosophy is a thinking practice which is active, entirely practical, and empirically different (Manning, 2016). We understand Langar in same light. It is philosophically abounding, empirically different, and practically active. In our post-qualitative kitchen, Langar offerors co-strive to create knowledge, to know and to tell. To attain this, should philosophy be science and so should Langar be, too? From this stance, we argue whether philosophical knowledge creation must be attained through scientism. Science and philosophy, in our view, can be seen as two locations on one continuum (Laplaine et al., 2019) without need to legitimise the other. We aver that it is not philosophy which needs to vitalise itself via science; rather, it should be the other way around, as per Laplane et al. (2019):

a close allegiance with philosophy will enhance the vitality of science. Modern science without philosophy will run up against a wall ... and the emphasis on methods and empirical results will drive shallower and shallower training of students. We need a reinvigoration of science ... one that returns to us the benefits of close ties with philosophy. (p. 3951)

Education is a task of philosophy (Colebrook, 2014). In conjunction, education and philosophy potentialise innovation and creativity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). As a philosophical site of knowledge creation, Langar is a product of this potentiality and is post-qualitatively determined. Post-qualitative *per se*, is "aligned with ... philosophy" (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 4). Hence, Langar is a philosophical enactment of post-qualitative knowledge building.

Jane: "well how is our meal cooking?"

Damien and I look at each other to respond simultaneously: "we believe it is cooking very well" we said.

"This is how it smells, and the aromas are fragrant enough" I said, gently sliding the lid off the dish to let the melding fumes out into the air.

"It is up to the readers now in how they savour our offerings," pondered all three of us.

"Exactly", enthused Jane.

"I think our offerings have blended together to be to become whatever became possible to become out of these" I remarked.

"Are there any surprises?" queried Damien, looking at us rather smilingly.

"Of course, there are," Jane and I replied nodding our heads at the same time.

"There are musings and questions and wonderings that have outpoured from the cooking" we said.

"I am not surprised either," said Damien. "We are possibly not where we started out for," he inquired expectantly.

All three of us looked at each other and our heads nodded in silent agreement. As our eyes met via the zoom camera (we commune in a pandemic), we thought and communicated to each other in an unspoken manner, “well that is being post-qualitative.”

A shared goal of education and philosophy is to bring forth a possible becoming, of what we are not and a future that we do not know yet (Colebrook, 2014). Having reached the destination we did not anticipate, we are here. But are we close to the end of this piece? The answer is, we do not know because, like the meal, the end is no end. It may also be the beginning of another in becoming. This is the unsurprising surprise of post-qualitative: everything always in becoming. We, you, us, inquiry, post-qualitative kitchen, Langar, knowledge, and the meals of knowledge. The surprise continues to surprise. The pots in our kitchen are simmering. Knowledge is brewing. We are hungry for another meal, ready to be surprised. We hope you are, too.

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