DEVELOPING A DOCTORAL IDENTITY – A NARRATIVE STUDY IN AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC FRAME

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by

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Declaration

I, Janet Elizabeth Harrison, declare that:

i. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

ii. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Abstract

The global interest in the production of advanced knowledge workers as one of the drivers of economic growth, has led to questions about the cost and length of time spent in doctoral study. As a result, the pedagogy of doctoral study has come under investigation. Alternative discourses of supervisory practice, learning approaches and arguments for forms of institutional support have in common an emphasis on the work to be done by the supervisor, rather than the candidate.

This study arose out of my observation that those who have graduated with a PhD described their own doctoral journeys as more rationally sequential than my own journey in process. From an autoethnographic stance, I used narrative methodology to investigate the doctoral learning process of myself and nine other women, with whom I formed a support group called PaperHeaDs. Questions explored in this study are: How have I constructed myself as a doctoral learner? What are other members' experiences of constructing doctoral identities? In what ways, if any, does participation in PaperHeaDs challenge or support accepted discourses of doctoral learning? My narratives of our doctoral journeys explore the implications of individual and social positioning for the performance, rehearsal, and social recognition of aspects of doctoral identities.

The process of doctoral learning, conceived as a process of identity construction, involves passing through thresholds of self-perception that are the product of the story the candidate tells of her life. Thresholds of identity challenge experienced as 'stuck places' of anxiety and insecurity are resolved through a process of self-re-storying and repositioning, particularly in respect of knowledge and what it means to be a knower. Support groups such as PaperHeaDs, characterised by democratic and horizontal relationships operating on an ethic of care, assist in the construction of doctoral identity by recognising the process of ontological change that occurs as doctoral candidates re-story and re-position themselves in relation to the process of knowledge-creation.

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Chapter 1: The Tinker: Liz's Story[1]: Setting the Scene

As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be, so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it. (Cooley, 1902, p. 184)

Positioning Myself

In this chapter, I outline my study and my positioning in relation to it, and briefly indicate the nature of the inquiry, all of which will be expanded upon in the following chapters.

In my forties, I discovered the possibility of 'being an academic' after completing a Master's degree and beginning to toy with the idea of doctoral study. I think of myself as a tinker. Specifically, as an educator, I think of myself as a tinker-thinker. The word 'tinker' refers to an itinerant, a gypsy, or one who enjoys experimenting with things, or a travelling repairer of useful items. The word also refers to random unplanned work or activities. As a teacher, I have drawn on whatever theory seems to concisely suit the message or behaviour I want my learners to learn. Yet it seems that the more I engage with what makes learning possible, the further away from a well-defined professional identity I seem to travel. This chapter is the introduction to an account of my construction of a doctoral identity that aligns with a story of my life lived to date, and the contribution made to it by the doctoral study group to which I belong. It explores

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1 This story is presented as a brief introduction to the study – introducing themes that will be developed more completely in the text which follows. It is a modified version of an essay to be published in "Making connections: Self-study and Social action" (Pithouse, Mitchell & Moletsane, 2009).

the contribution of knowledge construction to the potential selves that are available to me and vice versa. Knowledge construction is considered in several senses: in the way being knowledgeable, as a characteristic, is put together and meaning made by an individual, a family, a social group, and institution, and a country, over time and space, in order to make sense of a lived world. In another sense, I am attempting to look at what processes occur as the valuing, judicial-political-economic-academic eye reconsiders and reconstructs the knowledge creation process. What does a Doctorate in Philosophy mean and what social value does it hold?

Learning 'Doctoralness'

At the beginning of this doctoral study about the acquisition of a doctorate from a learner's point of view, I attempted to consider what the end was. Following the injunctions of management training that I have experienced in my life I thought I had to 'begin with the end in mind' (Covey, 1989, p. 187). Yet Judith Butler says that the problem of an individual giving an account of becoming something else or becoming something more, as is suggested by constructivist education, is a 'temporal paradox' (1990, p. 30). To give an account of myself in the process of becoming, I have had to lose or reshape what I am in order to become something different (Butler, 2005). The temporal paradox is that as soon as I begin to say who I am, I am already changed. I have lost the perspective of that person who asked the question about who I am and taken on the (larger?) view of the person who is answering it. In this study, I began asking the question: what does doctoral learning involve for learners experiencing it? In answering it now, I know that learning to be more knowledgeable, or a better thinker, as suggested in the metanarrative of doctoral education (for example indicated by level descriptors in the South African Qualification framework (South African Qualifications Authority, 2006)), I have had to rethink everything that I thought I knew about knowledge and knowing. Butler's work was a foreshadowing that this was not a simple, straightforward or linear process, but rather "an uneasy practice of repetition and its risks, compelled yet incomplete" (Butler, 1990, p. 30).

A good educator[2], I have come to believe, is the ultimate salesperson: she sells notions, aspirations, and ideas. She uncovers the need, sources a solution – maximising the benefits and minimising the costs. She negotiates. She persuades her customers to believe that she knows and is right about what is right for them. And they leave without any physical artefact to show for the transaction. Thinking about a teacher as a salesperson seems appropriate in the current context of globalisation and the increasingly managerialist policy discourses around governance in higher education.

Today I, as a tinker-thinker, am selling mirrors in the sense that I am offering a view of myself that will encourage others to look at their own knowledge history. Yesterday I sold cosmetics, in the sense that what I taught was aimed at enabling learners to represent themselves attractively. Tomorrow, perhaps, I will sell snake oil[3] again. The mirrors I sell today represent ideas of self – stock that I have acquired on my thought-journey towards completing my doctorate: an autoethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Ellis, 2004; Tedlock, 2005; Chang, 2008) about acquiring a doctoral identity. This investigation considered the nodal moments of challenge and resistance, the 'uneasy repetitions' that are marking my doctoral journey.

A doctorate gives an individual a 'right of way' in most social contexts and "such people assume their privileged position, not realising that other identities might be silenced in their presence" (Burkitt, 2008, p. 4). When I started thinking about 'my doctorate', I had to deal with the question of why it would be a valuable and worthy thing to do. I was already wrestling with the notion of the value of being an academic in South Africa and, in the process, confronting ideas that had not even crossed my mind at the simplest

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2 Although all the PaperHeaDs work in Higher Education, I use the term educator throughout, rather than the more status-laden term 'lecturer'. I have an inbuilt resistance to status symbols and find the distinction between types of educators pretentious, perhaps because I have always known myself to be a good teacher. The term teacher has been reserved in this thesis for educators who work with young people in the school sector.

3 'Snake oil' is an American term referring to substances sold by peddlers on the frontiers the Mid-West in the 19th Century. Snake oil was claimed to have supposed medicinal properties, but did not. The term has become synonymous with fraud and misrepresentation. I learned about it watching Westerns as a child.

level in ten years of teaching in a higher education institution: Why is it important to read, critique, evaluate, and persuade in academic forms? Why is it important to teach others to do this and in this particular form? Who cares? In addition, more suspiciously, why do They care?

I have chosen autoethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997, Ellis, 2004, Tedlock, 2005, Chang, 2008) as the methodology through which I will try to answer my own questions about how a doctoral identity is constructed and why I have constructed it in the ways I have. Through this methodology, I will raise questions about what having a doctorate might mean in South Africa in the 21st century. I see autoethnography as a subset of self-study, in the same way that autobiography might be. Both self-study and autoethnography make lived experience central to analysis. Both require the researcher to be reflexively oriented towards improvement, personal or social, through a more realistic and nuanced understanding of a phenomenon. Whereas much of the current work on self-study has come out of the field of education and is "related to the idea of studying the 'self' of teaching as a specific activity of teachers focusing on their own teaching practices" (Mitchell, Weber & O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2005, p. 2), autoethnography has its roots in Sociology and Social Anthropology. Tedlock (2005) suggests that autoethnography emerged as researchers attempted to "reflect on and engage with their own participation within an ethnographic frame" in an "attempt to heal the split between the public and private realms by connecting the autobiographical impulse (the gaze inward) with the ethnographic impulse (the gaze outward)" (p. 467). I am reflecting on the process and the meaning of doctoral learning from my own 'insider' perspective as a learner in the PhD process.

Simply put, "[a]utoethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to the culture" (Ellis, 2004, p. 37). I am questioning the role of my culture in education and vice versa through my own narrative (the primary data), using ethnographic 'texts' such as journals (which I started keeping in 2002 when I felt that I could possibly start exploring the idea of a 'doing a doctorate'), photographs, the accounts of others, and emails. These texts are used as 'triggers' to enable me to 'story' my educational experiences and the context in which they occurred and are occurring.

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Methodologically, it is in my writing and self-analysis that I am able to reveal culture at work and to question implicit assumptions. My storying of the texts and artefacts of the daily life of a doctoral learner gives expression to the discourses at play in doctoral education and insight into the cultural structures that sustain and collide with these discourses.

My account is one of learning to be a PhD graduate, and therefore, of learning 'doctoralness', or that level of knowledge and work currently accepted as worthy of a doctorate. It marries 'private and the public realms' (Tedlock, 2005, p. 467) through the inquiry space of "interaction (personal/ social), continuity (past, present, future), and situation (place)" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50) in my experience of doctoral learning. The 'auto' part of autoethnography, my story of becoming, provides access to a view of a culture (English and white), which at face value continues to dominate the operation of higher education in South Africa. This investigation includes an interrogation of linguistic and discursive agency (Butler, 1990) and also highlights class barriers to epistemological access to graduate status that may be compounded by other challenges. I believe my social position as linguistically and economically privileged whilst being part of a political minority in South Africa places me in a border space that makes it possible for me to make overt some implicit assumptions about doctoral education. I hope in this way to sketch a place for the interrogation of doctoral learning processes that will enable others from groups with less epistemological access (Edmunds & Warburton, 2007; Soudien et al, 2008) to describe, and acknowledge their knowledge-constructions in ways that are appropriate to them.

A Tinker-Thinker's Tale
I am a member of a doctoral (PhD) support group called PaperHeaDs[4], established in 2001. The group has no direct institutional affiliation and its members range in age from the early thirties to the early sixties, all women academics. All of us could be considered

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4 While the group was named PaperHeaDs (not The PaperHeaDs), as group members we referred to ourselves as being PaperHeaDs or "I am a PaperHeaD."

'insiders' to the academic discourses (Gee, 1996) of higher education in South Africa because our work experience is so closely related to our doctoral studies. Our unique positions as both learners and educators within higher education offer a lens through which to look at how academic learning might be constructed.

Through my conversations with my fellow PaperHeaDs, I have come to see that the title of 'Doctor' is valuable to me as providing weight to my voice and the opportunity to speak for change. In order to do that, to see myself as one who deserves the public acknowledgement of my ability to know, I have to tell a different story about myself. My discovery of my Tinker-Thinker self has come in the process of re-storying myself (Richardson, 1997; Bochner & Ellis, 2002). The trigger for this chapter was a phenomenological interview in which one of my fellow PaperHeaDs interviewed me. A phenomenological interview is a conversation that explores the meaning of a phenomenon by continually asking questions about its meaning as experienced.

Sophia[5] started by asking me what I thought a doctoral identity should mean:

> *Liz: … I would think that, for me, part of it is an idea of wisdom, which is not the same as knowing. And for me that seems to be more aligned with kind of Afrocentric ways of looking at the world. That people are honored for their experience and their …*
>
> *Sophia: Okay*
>
> *Liz: … wisdom and hearing. I mean the latest stuff about [Nelson] Mandela's birthday and the reflection on his life and the sort of interrogation of that is almost making – highlighting that for me. And I'm wondering why, given Africa and its problems and its brilliances, why our notion of a doctorate is not more aligned with that notion of a wise person,*

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5 Names have been changed to protect participants' identities as much as possible.

somebody who knows and who can mediate and arbitrate and strategise and do what's necessary for the common good. Whereas the sort of stuff that I'm really quite comfortable with is an almost Eurocentric view of 'look after the individual', 'go for yourself'. It's all about achievement. It's a status. It's the next rung on the ladder, that kind of discourse. So I'm wondering why we don't go there. ... Part of that is also then why – if I reject the Eurocentric view of what a doctorate represents as somebody who knows a lot ... Pretty much an expert and therefore has the voice from what's known and their ability to apply a critical – particular critical frame to things. Why – if – how I can take that notion and say it's valid in Africa, given the cultural basis of leadership and wisdom and so on and, in that case where does identity focus because identity is about individuality – one would think – in some interpretations of identity, so ... does that answer the question? [giggles] – yadda, yadda yadda [self-deprecating].

Sophia: It's about what you're beginning to construct as what a doctoral identity should be about, or the purpose of a doctorate and maybe what a doctoral identity should look like and the purpose of a doctorate – are they two different things? (Liz)

My desire to be seen as clever or wise was an important revelation to me. The conversation continued. Having had this two hour-long exploration with Sophia, I needed to go back in my history to find out how, where and why I had come to the positions I articulated in our deconstruction of the meaning of doctoral identity and what a doctorate might represent.

What Counts as Knowing?
My mistrust of 'the academic' is genealogical. My family roots itself in the Cockneys of the East End of London – butchers and bakers –and the stolid artisans of Yorkshire. My mother was the first of her family to get a post-secondary education and to enter a profession, as a nurse. My father had seven years of schooling before joining the army

with the ambition of being a truck driver. He became one of the first computer systems engineers with IBM. When I went to university, an option that would not have existed without a bursary from IBM, I was the first ever 'academic' student in my family. To this, my grandfather, a recently retired CEO ('by the sweat of his brow') of a heavy engineering company, rolled his eyes, leaned back in his LazyBoy armchair and made the gesture of pulling a toilet chain. "Students," he pronounced; "ticks on the public ox."

Doing well at school was praised in my family but individual initiative, hard work, and practical results drew the rewards of true regard and earshotted boasting. The mistrust of scholarly things and scholars haunts my work today. "What practical value lies in this idea?" I ask myself as I scrabble to find a cognitive tool to justify the hours of reading and writing. "Call a spade a spade, Liz," the voice of my family says, "You just have to look to see that such and such is true." (The 'such and such' category contains politics, the nature of human beings, gender roles, capacities, recipes, and health advice to live by.) I miss the blissful ignorance of the matrices of power and knowledge that governs their view of normality and what is real (Foucault, 1980).

My family understands teaching. "A teacher, eh?" they said as I announced my intention to study for a teaching diploma. "Nice job if you can get it – no heavy lifting". (For me this was an illustration of an unawareness of the physicality of teaching; of carrying stacks of books, of the irritation of chalk dust under one's contact lenses, of rearranging furniture for group work.) Something is done, activity takes place, products are created, and the 'truth' of things is passed along. An email from a close female relative, in response to my attempt to explain my excitement about Judith Butler's theorising of gender performativity (1990), testifies to this:

I suspect I'm being blinded by science, there is no way I would even attempt to read those books, I can barely manage three pages of a bodice ripper, before drifting into the arms of Morpheus. However, my English teacher would be spinning in her grave; you are reading stuff of the Y generation, where due to their poor English grammar and vocabulary they make stuff

up. Not that I'm so great, but you got a degree and are supposed to know these things! Expertness – try expertise. Performability – try performance, i.e. acting! Way back in the mists of time when I attempted to learn some Psychology we had a lecture about integrity and congruence and getting them to blend into a whole that resulted in better mental health. Which I understood to mean that if you try to put on performances that are not how you really are you will go bonkers! After all the study and working in academia you have done I can't see that you need to 'perform' anything, you just are. (Private email communication used with permission, name withheld, 2008).

The ironic tone of the communication makes me laugh now: "blinded by science", "teacher spinning in her grave" (the voice of a long-dead authority, one who knew the truth?). How about the notion that I am "supposed to know", on the strength of a degree (or several) or even on the basis of my experience in academia? It seems that the more that I am supposed to know, the less I can claim 'knowingness'. What is interesting is that there is no questioning of the idea that people who *know* do exist. My relative's easy access to the world of words and text, albeit 'bodice-rippers', to the idea of people who think for a living (however mysterious the work might be), to the ability to play with genres in English – from the colloquial to the analytic – are symptomatic of middle-class access to the printed word.

Why Know?

Along the way, family cynicism has turned to the content of what I teach. When I was teaching in a programme that trained child and youth care workers; my family felt it ironic, that I – who had chosen not to have children – was educating young people in how to take care of children at risk. My own sense of the irony, or possibly a sense of fraud, led me to move into academic development work, specifically, inducting new lecturers into their teaching roles in a higher education institution. These were bright

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young people, successful in their studies, who to a person claimed that their biggest achievement to that date was being selected to teach at our institution. My job was to introduce them to the often arcane ways in which higher education operates, to flag the path through the micropolitical dynamics to the place of satisfaction in teaching well. I was selling snake oil: "Do it this way and you will thrive in the system. Set up your networks of collegial support, give to each other in order to get back and you will not regret the emotional credit you will derive."

It was comfortable for me to be giving practical support to new staff members, experienced and skilled in their occupations, in how to teach in a technikon[6]. The intention was to teach high-level skills and knowledge to add on to the more practical training offered in technical colleges. As such, we technikon educators did not engage or feel the need to engage with the philosophical frameworks that shape the way university disciplines construct themselves (Becher & Trowler, 2001). As a young academic (in career terms if not years, as I was then in my late 20's) I rarely if ever encountered questions about the nature of knowledge and what it means to know.

The unvoiced justification for the technikon approach was the demand for the training of highly practically skilled 'technologists'. Indeed this discourse persists in the field of engineering, where graduates of the three year diploma, the four year degree, and university B.Sc. Engineering are registered with the Engineering Council of South Africa as 'technicians', 'technologists', and engineers respectively. We boasted that technikon graduates would 'hit the ground running' while university graduates would have to do a lot of site-work to catch up. Science and technology obviously, then – despite Thomas Kuhn's (1970) work on the philosophy of science – had no space for perspectives or anything beyond facts and proven theory.

This presented a problem for me, because my formal education beyond my undergraduate studies had been multi-disciplinary in the sense that my Master's degree

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6 Technikons were South African institutions oriented to occupationally directed higher education.

in Education Management had not been specifically discipline-based. In South Africa, the descriptors that talk to the quality of knowledge required for a PhD are as follows.

The candidate is required to demonstrate *high-level research capability* and make a *significant and original academic contribution* at the *frontiers* of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication. A graduate should be able to supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation concerned [italics added] (Department of Education, 2004a). I had no 'field' and I had no 'discipline' outside my identity as an educator.

Looking back at the time when I first started thinking about doctoral study, I see how my adoption of my family belief in 'knowers' and the technikon orientation to indisputable facts and practices led me to believe that a doctorate – the proof of having created an 'original academic contribution at the frontiers' – meant discovering a single truth that would potentially change the way people thought about a phenomenon. I constructed 'high level research capability' as related to complex machinery like photon canons and mysterious glassware in pristine laboratories – in terms of expense and responsibility, rather than in terms of complexity and clarity of thought. I did not understand how these criteria related to what I knew about, teaching: devising learning activities, questioning techniques, building and sustaining relationships with learners, advising, counselling, and transmitting facts.

I was then looking at 'doing a PhD' – the next step on the job ladder. I thrashed around looking for a topic that would meet these criteria, having read several handbooks on how to get a PhD (for example Phillips & Pugh, 2000b; Mouton, 2002). These recommended a subject that would sustain my interest in the long term and suggested that my environment was the source of a suitable research question. I believed in facts and 'the right way to do things as a teacher' and so, what was left to research? What questions might I ask, the answers to which would change the way the world thought

about teaching? The technikon I taught at was historically advantaged, having been constructed for white students by the apartheid[7] government. As part of the transformation of higher education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001) this formerly 'white' institution was merging with the historically disadvantaged Indian technikon next door (physically separated by a wire mesh fence but psychologically by decades of apartness). I thought a case study of the processes of this first merger of higher education institutions would be the first of its kind in South Africa, and therefore, a useful topic to study. I abandoned this topic after a year of watching, reading, and thinking – it was too painful to write about the way my assumptions were clashing hourly with those of my future colleagues.

My Stock in Trade

The 'stock' that my tinker-self carried into my new enterprise of doctoral learning seemed insubstantial; I did not know myself as a knower or a thinker, let alone a wise person. It is not possible to think about my potential 'doctoralness' *now* without thinking of who I was as a teacher *then*. Thus, I think back to what it was like in my first teaching job. It was the 80's in South Africa, when, under apartheid laws, teaching in a government school meant signing an oath of allegiance to the South African Teachers Council (for whites). For a woman, getting married meant losing one's permanent appointment and becoming 'temporary'. And if you were a married woman, you needed your husband's signature on every application and bank withdrawal form. Becoming pregnant while unmarried was a dismissible offence. White, Christian, and heterosexual were the 'default' identities in the segment of the South African school system in which I worked; other races, religions, and sexualities did not exist. The same attitudes ruled the technikon structures when I started working there in 1990. The wearing of trousers by women was frowned upon. Closed shoes and ties were a requirement for males, while skirts (preferably floral prints), blouses, and pantyhose were the requisite 'respectful' dress for women. I attributed these rules to the activity of the National Party

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7 Apartheid was an official policy of racial segregation enforced by the National Party government in South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s.

government of the time, which I believe to this day (possibly erroneously) set up technikons in opposition to the liberal universities that were questioning and resisting apartheid on every level. Perhaps my paranoia attributes more strategic thought to that circumstance than is necessary; I wonder now whether the institutions we had were more a product of philosophical blindness and deafness.

As institutions of higher education, technikons were understood as being hierarchically above community or technical colleges (as they are known in South Africa and which offered the academic elements of trade apprenticeships) but below the universities. (I think we South Africans are strongly historically and culturally driven by hierarchies and taxonomies. Watching myself write, I recognise my predisposition to engage every subject with assumptions about status/ power. I often wonder whose hierarchies I have embraced.) Utilitarian rationales were the justification for everything enacted in apartheid South Africa; the practical ends (for whites) justified the means.

I started at the technikon as a locum in the Education Department, teaching future teachers of 'practical subjects'. In the school curriculum of the time, pupils were able to pursue one of four streams of learning in their senior secondary curriculum: Sciences, Humanities, Commercial, or Practical. In addition to English and Afrikaans, pupils selected four other subjects which they would pursue to senior certificate level. The stream with the most status was the Sciences, which included Physical Science, Mathematics, and Biology. Humanities included languages as well as History, Geography, Music, and Art. Lying last in the hierarchy were the Commercial and Practical options such as (in declining order of intellectual challenge) Economics, Accountancy, Business Economics, Typing, and Home Economics (for girls) and Technical Drawing (for boys). Those less 'academically inclined' and more practically oriented were encouraged to take these subjects. The students we were teaching at the technikon were learning to teach Home Economics, Technical Drawing and Accountancy to the 'less bright' pupils in South Africa's high schools. The technikon taught the four year Higher Diploma in Education (HDE) under contract to the university. As such, they and we, their lecturers, were positioned as intellectually inferior to the teachers in more traditional academic areas, who were trained in the universities.

My own teaching diploma qualified me to teach English and Guidance (typically this involved pupil counselling and career guidance) by virtue of three years of undergraduate English Literature and Psychology. This, in addition to my two year stint as an English teacher, was enough to land me the locum position of teaching Audio-visual Education to the undergraduates and post-diploma students who were seeking an add-on qualification which would enable them to teach in technical colleges.

I found that the curriculum had not changed, as far as I could see, since I had spent two brief years teaching English in the high school from which I had matriculated. The young people who were allowed to study to be teachers of Technical Drawing, Home Economics, Typing, and Business Studies were predominantly white, although I think I had three students of colour in my first tutorial group. A quota system existed which allowed a certain percentage of 'non-white' students to be admitted to historically white higher education institutions. From this experience I learned that certain forms of knowledge were more highly prized than others and that certain students of certain forms of knowledge were more valuable.

What's in a Name?

Labels were important. I struggled with the notion that at the technikon I had to be known as Miss Harrison, not Ms or Liz as I would have preferred. (I never dreamed of the possibility of Dr. Harrison – I did not see myself as academically inclined.) I could not understand why we (the technikon's Department of Education) did not treat aspiring teachers as young adults and potential colleagues, but as if they were like the children they were going to be teaching. Even more puzzling to me was why we never reflected on issues like this as part of the curriculum. My department head and dean battled to control his amusement at the first (and only) reflective report that I submitted about the teaching I had done in my first year – everyone else submitted a list of courses and topics 'covered'. Apparently, this was not the space to reflect on learner development and what might be needed in future offerings. I was puzzled: Why should reflexive practice not be encouraged in teacher education? The large stationery retailer with

which I had worked as a training manager, in the interim years between teaching in high school and joining the technikon, used first names. I knew the chairman of the group, one of the largest listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, as Doug. This business-like approach suited my democratic ideals, but they did not hold in the technikon, which inculcated the hierarchies and cultures of the schools at that time. Unlike at the technikon, part of the routine business in our training programme at the retailer was reflecting on our practice, and trying to improve in it (Argyris, 1976). How could 'good' ways of knowing not be common practice, particularly in an 'academic' institution?

My title as 'Miss' was problematic in other ways. When the time for the Education Ball[8] came around, I was required to attend. The department would find me a date, they said, with understanding and pity for my obviously single status. I could not tell them that I was in a perfectly satisfactory relationship with a lovely woman. Her gorgeous brother offered to attend with me, as I agonised about blowing my chances at a permanent post. In the end, I contracted a convenient 'blue flu' to get out of going. Being seen to be the right person doing the right things was important, more important than dealing with the issues of diversity, privilege, disinheritance, and the legacy of 40 years of apartheid in South African schools. I call this my time of selling cosmetics. I did not consciously participate in the cover-up. Despite my liberal education at Wits University and my feelings of discomfort, I was positioned in a discourse that allowed me to do no other and I did not have the cognitive tools or the confidence to challenge it.

Mapping New Territory

I have gladly watched conservativism become subverted as university-trained academics have more recently moved into the technikons (now known as universities of technology), with their questioning minds and refusal to accept the status quo as good enough, with their visions of a better and brighter democratic future. The flip side of the coin of university-trained educators coming into the technikon zone is that now I worry that qualifications are becoming more important than skills gained from practice. As an

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8 The Education Ball was an annual dance for all education students. It had the same kind of importance attached to it as South African Matric dances – equivalent to The Prom in North America.

academic developer, I am actively involved in providing 'curriculum development support'. Part of my job has been to help staff come to terms with the new national policy of outcomes-based education. My clients – the people I serve – are no longer students and yet perhaps they learn indirectly from our relationship. As groups of educators and I examine curricula to identify the 'exit level outcomes' and assessment criteria that are the goal of each diploma, I stand in the position of a 'professional ignoramus'; my task, I think, is to ask the stupid and naïve questions about what occupationally-directed higher educators are doing. I do this to help them articulate what it is that they value about the work they do. I am a stranger in a strange land, but I can speak enough of each language to translate and get by. In real life, it pays to be a tinker, yet, how does this mesh with the doctoral identity I am trying to acquire? How do I testify to the reality of my work and the contribution of thought I might make?

What to Sell in this New Territory?

The curricula of technikons were traditionally non-discipline specific in the sense of the disciplines acknowledged in more traditional universities. The Social Science that I taught to Environmental Health, Residential Child Care, Public Relations, Homoeopathy, and Food Service Management diploma students was an eclectic mix of what is known as Applied Psychology, Sociology, and Anthropology in more Oxbridge[9]-style universities (Becher & Trowler, 2001). My choice of what to include depended on my assessment of what would be useful for the students. The only guidance was a list of phrases that constituted the 'syllabus', for example: Introduction, Types of Personalities, Motivation, Cognition, Groups. I aimed at theories and stories that I thought would help students understand people better, with no thought that the theory that worked for me might not make any sense to my students and their lives.

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9 Oxbridge is a term derived from the combination of the words Oxford and Cambridge, two prestigious English universities, which are similar in organization (structured into colleges by discipline, tutorial-based teaching), levels of academic excellence and status.

The most enchanting time I have spent in academia was the three months' leave that I was able to spend reading into the subject of graduate education internationally as part of 'doing my PhD'. For the first time in my life since I was twelve years old, I could legitimately spend days reading and being charmed by ideas. I wonder how many South African students ever have the luxury of access to libraries and time for reading for fun. During my study leave, I fought panic continually: What was I producing? How would I remember all this? Knowledge surely is a product, something you own and share. I concluded that the disciplinary frame provides a bounded area of operation, a safe space where the routine structures of thought allow for certain assumptions to be accepted. I realised that I would not be arguing for 'the truth', but I would be taking a position and trying to convince others of its validity. Yet I find myself again on another boundary in my position on knowing – another irresolvable dilemma – that between thinking and practice.

As I sit with programme teams to fill in the required forms to meet policy requirements, I am aware of the tension between the young, enthusiastic university-trained scientists/ engineers, and the experienced practitioners. The voices of the youth ring with confidence in the theory of their fields and excitement of sharing it. The voices of the experienced practitioners: the environmental health inspectors with their tough-tanned faces and crude stories of rat-infestations and salmonella; the crinkle-eyed land surveyors who can remember how to survey land using a ball of string and pegs; and the grey-haired street photographer[10] with his stories of celebration and pain in the townships, are defensive.

This tension is playing out at a policy level in South Africa with the recent formation of 'universities of technology' as contrasted with the established 'universities'. Someone noticed that technikon graduates did indeed start their working careers with confidence but seemed to hit a ceiling after about ten years and that, in the end, university graduates held all the top jobs. Thus, technikons have recently taken on the name

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10 Not Peter Magubane

'University of Technology' and my institution now battles with constructing this new identity. I too battle with this new identity. The easy solution to the problem would be for my institution to take on wholesale the conventions of successful South African universities (in terms of world rankings) specifically related to science and technology. This would erase the craft and contribution of those who work with words and cultural symbols, in subject areas such as Journalism, Jewelry, and Graphic Design, and those who work with relationships, for example, in Community Nursing, Environmental Health, and Child and Youth Care, – people like me. I prefer Chris Winberg's (2005) notion that the core of the work of South African universities of technology is technological criticality – understanding the epistemologies and assumptions that underpin the mechanisms we invent and use to solve problems in our society.

I see my role in this is to become critical of my own assumptions about knowledge and knowing, to think deeply about the potential consequences of how I construct and sell knowledge, and to gain an empathic understanding of the work that has gone into creating the knowings that I will critique as a paid thinker. Through questioning and answering myself, I can apply the same standard with integrity to the complex work of others.

Motivation for an Academic Life

> *I am so good a proficient in one quarter of an hour, that I can drink with any tinker in his own language during my life. (King Henry IV, Part I. Act II, Scene IV)*

Is a spade a spade or is it earth-moving equipment? I can sell both. The work in progress remains: What is this 'doctoral' knowledge that is so prized that the lack of it can silence some and privilege others? My joy in autoethnography as a method of inquiry lies in the realisation that my reality is not the only reality. I can look at my life, as the discipline I know best, and in theorising my judgements and positions, I am able to inquire into the knowledges that I accept and those that I resist. In doing so I can make overt the rationale and the story behind them, opening up spaces for a sharing of experience that

will make possible the joint construction of knowledge that is both clear-headed and useful. The tension in South African academia between knowing for the moment (the economic imperative) and education for the future (social transformation) that Boughey (2007) describes on a macro level is enacted daily in my construction of something original. I am coming to value the ability to move between borders and to speak to the moment, to sell something different.

Chapter 2: A Dialogue with the Canon

The deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated. (Butler, 1990, p. 148)

Where it began

This study investigates the process and meaning of doctoral learning from a learner's perspective. Specifically, I set out to understand how I and others in PaperHeaDs constructed ourselves in the process of learning to be a doctor. The individual experiences and the influence of the group as a collective seemed to offer insights that could be used in service of a more effective doctoral pedagogy. I have belonged to the group since 2001, yet it was only in 2006 that I felt confident enough in my academic abilities to apply for entry into a doctoral programme. I was the last member of the group to do so. I attribute this growth in confidence to my membership of the PaperHeaDs and the learning I have derived through interaction with my peers. In watching my friends' struggles and transitions, I recognised that learning was happening at multiple levels in multiple spaces and directions. I grew curious as I saw the potential value to postgraduate students and their supervisors of giving an account of how and why PaperHeaDs worked and works.

Each of us is or was working towards a PhD in one of four South African universities. The intention for establishing PaperHeaDs in 2001 was to support each member in the process of getting a PhD. At the time we thought that this would be a matter of sharing resources and acquiring the skills and attitudes of doctoral learning. As Manathunga, Lant & Mellick (2007, p. 21) point out, we may have been reductionist in our beliefs about what doctoral learning entails – the process requires more than access to resources, as my thesis argues.

As experienced teachers in higher education, each member of the group has access to the discourses of academia, and it is assumed, access to the literacies required for academic work (Gee, 2000). However, the group has a combined experience of academia which seems to be different from, if overlapping with, discourse related to research work. This is borne out by my account of teaching in higher education without understanding research (see Chapter 1). While 'research learning' (Jansen, Herman & Pillay, 2004) appears to constitute an element of the learning process for individuals in the group, this investigation into how doctoral subjectivities develop, including performativity (Butler, 1990), suggests that an account of doctoral learning from the learner's perspective is at least as ontological as it is epistemological. The unifying concept of this study is that of identity and specifically how doctoral learners negotiate their developing agency as doctors of philosophy within a peer group.

This chapter provides the background and theoretical framework for my research questions, which in turn provides the basis for the adoption of my research methodology (Chapter 3). Starting with a survey of the research into doctoral education, I move into a consideration of identity theory before positing a conceptualisation of doctoral identity that becomes the analytical framework for my study.

The Doctorate: Research Process or Product or Process of Learning?

The longstanding international debate in higher education (Jobbins, Sharma & MacGregor, 2009) as to whether its purpose is that of 'public good' or 'public service' has direct implications for doctoral education. Neoliberal discourses around globalising Higher Education construct it as a tradable commodity ('public service' to the knowledge-economy) as opposed to an expression of local learning in service of the public good. This translates into questioning whether the doctorate should be a qualification that expresses advanced levels of research skill in service of the economy through the creation of tradable knowledge, or a qualification that expresses the individual's ability to operate as an autonomous scholar and thinker. Out of this thinking have developed the notions of the Professional Doctorate as opposed to the Doctor of

Philosophy respectively (Evans, 2002; Usher, 2002; Cooper & Love, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Neumann, 2005; Boud & Tennant, 2006; Lee, Brennan & Green, 2009).

The debates about Higher Education's role in the development of human capital and the knowledge economy, and the particular attention granted to it in recent years, seem to derive from a 2001 report of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), of which South Africa is not a member. The report described the impact of the development of human capital on economic and social development and wellbeing and tends to be cited as the source of initiatives towards increasing the production of doctoral graduates. The report uses this definition of human capital: "The knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being" (2001, p. 18). It reported that "[f]or OECD countries as a whole, the implication is that each extra year of full-time education (corresponding to a rise in human capital by about 10 per cent), is associated with an increase in output per capita of about 6 per cent" (2001, p. 31). The assumption is that the highest level of education will have the most desirable economic implications.

The European Union's Bologna Process has as its aim the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and a European Research Area (ERA). The recent London Communiqué of the Bologna process recognises "the value of developing and maintaining a wide variety of doctoral programmes linked to the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA, whilst avoiding overregulation …. [at] the same time… appreciat[ing] that enhancing provision … improving the status, career prospects and funding for early stage researchers are essential preconditions for meeting Europe's objectives of strengthening research capacity and improving the quality and competitiveness of European higher education" (Higher Education Ministers (Bologna participating countries), 2007, p. 4).

Using the language of the production line, Park (2007) identifies three drivers of change to the nature of the doctorate in the UK:
- sustaining the supply chain of researchers
- preparation for employment

- internationalisation – "important issues include global competition for doctoral students, the need to have internationally competitive doctoral programmes" (2007, pp. 2-3).

I find myself uncomfortable with the idea that as a potential doctor, I am to be part of a cohort of economic instruments to be used in the service of economic growth. While I have no doubt that the reduction of poverty is a desirable goal towards humanity's collective well-being, I am sceptical that of itself employment/employability and the production of goods and services will be enough to ensure the peaceful coexistence of millions of human beings. It is for this reason that I find sympathy with European students' organisations who point to the danger of fulfilling Europe's needs for high level knowledge workers by making the EHEA attractive to foreign students in a competitive rather than cooperative spirit (Geven, 2007, p. 8).

The historico-political legacy of nations, whether colonisers or colonised, democratic or autocratic, is played out in national policy tensions in efforts to structure higher education either to meet a need for the competitiveness of higher education or to improve the structure of higher education institutions as major contributors to successful performance of national economies as a whole (Luijten-Lub, Van der Wende & Huisman, 2005, p. 150). Recently university leaders have been starting to critique this discourse (Boulton, 2009), echoing Lyotard's warning made over two decades ago. Lyotard warned of the adoption of a language game in research; of 'performativity' as opposed to 'truth'; of input/output equations of financing to return on investment rather than scientific rigour in the funding of research. He claimed that in the post-modern world, "[s]cientists, technicians, and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 46).

The demand for access to higher education from countries with large young populations (e.g. Latin America and China) as well as the promotion of life-long learning to address a rapidly changing technological environment in countries with aging populations (e.g. the US and Western Europe) have created market-type discourses. Several nations such as the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands

identify higher education as a profitable export (Van der Wende, 2003, p. 195). Borderless higher education is viable with the advancement of online technology, theoretically making virtual universities accessible internationally. Yet access is premised on access to technological infrastructure, which is a function of economic capacity.

In 2002, Kader Asmal, then South African Education Minister, highlighted the danger of the re-colonisation of local knowledges, because of education being constructed as an export good. At the time, the South African government placed restrictions on international higher education institutions "where partnerships are nothing more than 'marriages of convenience' enabling the foreign partner to enter the local market, with little or no contribution to the development of the teaching and research capacity of the local partner" (Asmal, 2002).

While the value of the creation of knowledge-workers and knowledgeable workers seems undisputed, the nature of what counts as valuable knowledge is disputed. Asmal described the tension between the academic project, emphasising critical reflection and the requirement for post-secondary education when he pointed to "the risk of further erosion of knowledge production capacities and capabilities" leading to further entrenchment of inequality between developing and developed nations (Asmal, 2002). Asmal's finger pointed to the heart of the issue; the question of whether the value of a doctorate should lie in the research completed or the process of learning to research.

This 'fitness for purpose' debate, arising from quality-assurance-driven monitoring systems in Higher Education, is played out at the level of doctoral learning internationally (Marginson, 2000). Proponents for a philosophy-based doctorate argue its value as an entrée into academia and its contribution to knowledge-creation (Bartlett & Mercer, 2001; Lee & Roth, 2003; McAlpine & Norton, 2006). Others suggest that the doctorate should represent the highest level of professional qualification, quite often expressed in terms of patents, management systems and other forms of new and saleable knowledge (Cooper & Love, 2003; Park, 2007). The notion of the public good in public Higher Education is contested. A recent Council on Higher Education report remarks: "That is higher teaching and learning's inbuilt tendency, … [to]… confer[…]

personal advantage on its beneficiaries, to fuel meritocratic individualism – a value globally dominant at present but quite antithetic to South Africa's project of social transformation" (Jonathan, 2006, p. 14).

This tension between education for market competitiveness and the importance of education for social justice is clearly seen in South African policy (Badat, 2006; Singh, 2001). The Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (Department of Education, 1997, pp. 15 & 26) and the Ten Year Plan for Science and Technology (Department of Science and Technology, 2008) situates the production of post-graduates as the driver for the South African national education system and the economy. Like the Bologna Process, South African higher education policy seeks to address the need for high-level skills to enhance South Africa's global competitiveness but with the added mandate of addressing economic disparities and unemployment in the country.

Issues of throughput and progression rates are raised as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) attempt to expand offerings in a climate of tightly controlled public funding. The 'new' funding framework (Department of Education, 2006b) uses progression and throughput rates to weight the calculation of the state subsidy to higher education. Further, the 'capping' of undergraduate learner numbers (Department of Education, 2003, 2006b) places pressure on HEIs to increase postgraduate outputs in order to maintain or increase government subsidies to the institution. This brings to the South African context contestation about the quality and mechanisms of doctoral pedagogy where the ratio of PhD holders employed as academics, to the number of students, is very low (Centre for Research on Science and Technology, 2009, p. 15).

At a provincial level and with specific reference to education, in KwaZulu-Natal, the second most densely populated province in the country, the landscape of higher education has changed as a result of pressure for effectiveness and efficiency as well as attempts to achieve redress and access for the majority of the population (Department of Education, 2002). As a result, fewer institutions are required to produce more graduates with fewer qualified higher educators.

The debates outlined above have implications for the choices that doctoral candidates make and within what context. Whether the learner or the research result is the focus of pedagogical structures will determine the nature of the learning process towards that end. It was within my understanding of this context that I approached my project of acquiring a doctorate, feeling that I needed to produce something remarkably new, yet also feeling constrained by my lack of philosophical foundations and desiring to produce something of value to my society (see Chapter 1).

Doctoral Learning

Why PhD?

I found the recent report by the UK Council on Graduate Education valuable in helping me to understand what my project needed to achieve.

> *The single aspect that makes the doctorate unique in the educational system is that … the learning of the student must change the very nature of the 'topic' that he/she has studied to gain such affirmation. The evidence that candidates present for examination is this 'change' and their ability to understand it to a level that indicates that they can go on to make further such changes in an independent and creative way. (Clarke & Powell, 2009, p. 20)*

This summary assessment of the broad purpose of doctoral learning allowed me scope for both inter-disciplinary and intra-disciplinary research foci, as well as to locate my own development as part of that process. There was room for me in the discourse.

The Carnegie Foundation in the United States helped me to understand what the personal transformation might entail.

> *The PhD is a route to many destinations … for the work of scholarship is not a function of setting but of purpose and commitment. … [D]octoral education is a complex process of formation. … What is formed, in short, is the scholar's professional identity in all its dimensions. (Walker et al, 2008, p. 4)*

Both definitions of 'doctorateness' speak to a transformation of the individual and to the need to take up social responsibility at a high level – both talk to the need for an ontological as well as epistemological change in the self of the doctoral candidate. This purpose and its implication for learning may suggest reasons why attrition rates in doctoral studies are so high, up to 50 per cent in some discipline areas (McAlpine & Norton, 2006). I did not want to be part of that statistic.

Supervision

Within this milieu, the nature of postgraduate pedagogy and androgogy is under scrutiny (Rademeyer, 1994; Sork, Chapman & Butterwick, 1999; Styles & Radloff, 2001; Pearson & Brew, 2002; Sinclair, 2004; Manathunga, 2005; Soothill, 2006; Taylor, 2006; Waghid, 2006; Evans, 2007; Zainal Abiddin, 2007; Vilkinas, 2008). Investigations into improving doctoral quality and pass rates consistently highlight the quality of the relationship between supervisor and student. The so-called traditional process of one or very few students being mentored by a single supervisor has been interrogated and found to consist of a variety of forms that shatter the illusion of a single process of doctoral teaching and learning (Manathunga, 2003; Grant, 2005a). Additional mechanisms for the support of doctoral learners, such as team and cohort approaches, panel supervision, coursework doctorates and structured seminar programmes, have been introduced to reduce the time required to complete a doctoral study (Johnson, Lee & Green, 2000; Latona & Browne, 2001; Lovitts, 2005; Manathunga, 2007; Walker et al, 2008).

Recently academics have questioned the value of this emphasis on time, suggesting that the quality of the product of such doctorates could be compromised because of the lack of time for extended abstract thought and reading for both students and academics supporting them (Barry, Berg & Chandler, 2003; Mouton, 2007). Wright and Cochrane, studying the submission rates of 3579 doctoral students, validated previous research and discovered that the only reliable predictor of completion in either four years or ten was whether the student was studying science or the humanities respectively (2000).

The Bologna Process recommends three to four years' full-time study for a PhD and points to the need to ensure appropriate funding for such study (Higher Education Ministers (Bologna participating countries), 2007). The South African Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) merges PhDs, D. Techs and other doctoral qualification descriptors into a level ten band called the 'doctoral' degree, consisting of a minimum of 360 credits, representing 3600 notional hours of study for the average student, which is considered to be roughly equivalent to two years of full-time study (Department of Education, 2006a, p. 29). In terms of Wright and Cochrane's findings, this would seem to favour doctoral students in the sciences. Another Australian survey reported that the most successful doctoral students are "young, male and in the natural sciences – undertaking more structured degrees" (Latona & Browne, 2001, p. 4). It looked like I was beginning my study with some disadvantage.

I wondered why this should be so and whether my relative economic security might offset some disadvantage. What sort of learning performances were expected of me?

Doctoral Curriculum

The level descriptors for a South African doctoral degree indicate the kinds of qualities appropriate to any doctoral programme at level ten on the National Qualification Framework. I found them overwhelming. The need for research which shows 'expertise and critical knowledge in an area at the forefront of the field, discipline or practice; [and] the ability to conceptualise new research initiatives, and create new knowledge or practice' (South African Qualifications Authority, 2006, p. 16) seemed impossible. And this only referred to the 'Scope of Knowledge'. There were eleven other criteria to be demonstrated (see Appendix 4 for the complete list). While these criteria differ little from those of Australia (Holbrook & Bourke, 2004), the Bologna third cycle documents and the Association of American Universities (AAU, 2000), I could not see how I might achieve them in three years.

Despite these guidelines for quality, Backhouse's recent study of doctoral pedagogy in South Africa found no 'common understanding' of what a doctor of philosophy is

(Backhouse, 2009). She found that the three clusters of views of PhDs that she identified in the South African context approached the PhDs with different emphases. The scholarly view (reflected most often in institutional documentation) focuses on developing the independent researcher, the labour market view (largely held by national policy) aims to produce a highly skilled human resource and the ongoing development view (most often held by supervisors) emphasises education for life.

In the discussion about graduate attributes (Barrie, 2004; Bath et al, 2004; Manathunga, Lant & Mellick, 2007; Bridgstock, 2009; Green, Hammer & Star, 2009), emphasis has been placed on how doctoral candidates need to learn or why. Some call for the inclusion of such offerings as technology, laboratory, and project management skills training in a PhD course of studies. Other commentators emphasise the need for familiarity with a broad range of literature. Others require the ability to work cooperatively in a group. All of these have been critiqued for the danger of these skills being conceptualised as discrete and falling into categories of those favouring employability and those related to scholarship, rather than a holistic understanding of the scholarly performance required for a PhD (Cryer, 1998; Pearson & Brew, 2002). In their argument for an appropriate training of supervisors, Pearson and Brew (2002) develop a detailed framework of how conceptions of research and conceptions of scholarship and their interaction contribute to increasing the confusion about what is expected in and from a PhD. Their suggestion for appropriate training of supervisors is comprehensive yet perhaps misses the point that the expectations of the PhD candidate are important. The sum total of their previous life history and educational experience shapes them. The PhD candidate's conceptions of what constitutes research and scholarship are formed by what they have come to deem as worthwhile knowledge. My own story, described in Chapter 1, illustrates the degree to which I had to work on my belief about my abilities to be scholarly. It would seem that articulating and testing these conceptions in order to rehearse appropriate scholarly performance might be central to the candidate's understanding what the PhD project is about. The necessary epistemological and ontological reflection is all but impossible in the context of large doctoral cohorts proceeding through a lockstep process constrained by their positioning in an institution.

Worthy Knowledge is Personal

Given the variety of positions on what constitutes a PhD and therefore the best way to supervise a PhD, it makes sense to consider PhD candidates' experience of doctoral learning in order to uncover the central aspects of doctoral study that may give a candidate the agency to become autonomous scholars. Backhouse discovered that regardless of university structures, academic contexts do not dominate South African doctoral students' experiences. In fact, for many, contexts outside the academy are equally or more important to them (Backhouse, 2009, p. 292). In proposing her model of intersecting contexts for PhD candidates, she suggests that the congruence of these contexts with the subjectivities of the candidate would provide the best doctoral outcomes. "The extent … to which they are able to develop … their own pedagogic network to meet their needs, depends on the extent to which the contexts they study and work in support a range of subjectivities which are not at odds with their own identities" (Backhouse, 2009, p. 293).

Wright and Cochrane make the point that explanations of the differences between science and humanities submission rates[11] ignore the emotional work that doctorates in the humanities require. They suggest that this "might make research study in the sciences psychologically relatively easy for individuals who are academically competent and practised but who have negotiated few developmental stages in life – often those who are younger in years" (2000, p. 192). In arguing that humanities studies require doctoral learners to interrogate their subjective experiences of self and take greater emotional risks than do the sciences, Fataar says that little research has been done on the "affective and relational elements … of the supervisory process" (2005, p. 39). Fataar's proof of the "necessity of having to reconcile the personal, the political and the analytical, and having to engage with constructions of self" in proposal writing (p. 40) provides a starting point for my investigation of the process of doctoral learning from the learner's perspective. I would suggest that it is less that the supervisory process has been under-investigated than that the learner's process of negotiating "affective and

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11 Time taken between registration and final submission

relational elements" of doctoral study has been backgrounded, lost in a plethora of books about how to manage a PhD (for example Phillips & Pugh, 2000a; Mouton, 2002).

Critique of the idea of the postgraduate learner as a generic, dehumanised target of supervision pedagogy has suggested that issues of learner subjectivity are central in an effective learning process (Hird, 1998; Bartlett & Mercer, 2001; Grant, 2001; Dison, 2004; Rau, 2004; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2005).

In " 'Forged in Fire': Narratives of trauma in PhD supervision pedagogy" (1999), Lee and Williams considered in some depth the emotional experience that is the 'underlife' (p. 7) of the doctoral education experience – something comparatively few educational researchers have done. Commenting on the literature related to doctoral studies, they say: "The focus on all counts is on 'improvement' – of completion rates and times, of economic efficiency, of 'quality' and of the experience of doing the PhD itself" (p. 8). This focus leads to interpretation of the 'traumatic' emotional experience of doctoral students as something 'wrong' with the system, suggesting the need for re-engineering. They point out that the emotional distress that is considered "noise in the system" may be the "on the contrary both a necessary condition and an effect of the production of the subject of doctoral study" (Lee & Williams, 1999, p. 8). As with Lee and Williams, my focus in this research is the experience of doctoral learning. In contrast though, my approach pushes into the background the institutional practices and pedagogies and focuses on each of the women in PaperHeaDs and the way they engaged or are engaging in the process of constructing themselves as doctors. The story of PaperHeaDs suggests that such learning could be learner-centred and peer-supported in a context of individuals negotiating new identities.

Threshold Concepts
Recent work on doctoral learning (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006; Leshem, 2007; Wisker & Robinson, 2009) suggests that, as with undergraduate education, doctoral learning requires a journey marked by the crossing of conceptual thresholds (Meyer & Land, 2005). These

'conceptual gateways' or 'portals' ... lead to a previously inaccessible, and initially perhaps 'troublesome', way of thinking about something. A new way of understanding, interpreting, or viewing something may thus emerge –- a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. In attempting to characterise such conceptual gateways ... they may be transformative (occasioning a significant shift in the perception of a subject), irreversible (unlikely to be forgotten, or unlearned only through considerable effort), and integrative (exposing the previously hidden interrelatedness of something). In addition they may also be troublesome and/or they may lead to troublesome knowledge for a variety of reasons.
(Meyer & Land, 2005, p. 374)

It struck me that the work of threshold crossing is the essence of a PhD. In order to make the kinds of contributions envisaged in descriptors of doctoral learning, dealing with troublesome knowledge and troubling accepted knowledge is the nature of scholarship.

Work in identifying post-graduate threshold concepts, within disciplines and possibly generic ones, takes place in the theory-building phase rather than the theory-testing stage (Wisker & Robinson, 2009, p. 320). The theory to date has been produced through open-ended interviews with supervisors and students. It tends to focus on what the supervisor can do to identify the threshold concept and to support the student in the process of negotiating the troublesome knowledge or 'stuck places' – to encourage the development of 'metalearning' in the student (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006, p. 195). The focus on the cognitive-epistemological elements of learning may obscure the transformation that is occasioned by an ontological shift in identity that marks the change from a dependent learner to an autonomous scholar (Dall'Alba & Barnacle 2007). Dall'Alba and Barnacle point out that "knowing ... transforms from the merely intellectual to something inhabited and enacted: a way of thinking, making and acting. Indeed, a way of being" (2007, p. 682).

Barnacle (2005) proposes the idea of 'erotic knowing', pointing out that learning to know requires at least as much work on the self as it does on the object of study (Barnacle, 2005, p. 187. She notes that "how research candidates are situated by prevailing discourses may not be consistent with the way they see themselves – particularly since the university (at least under its traditional guise) is itself a site in which a multiplicity of discourses vie for attention and are routinely contested" (p. 182). In order to achieve the aims of doctoral education we need to understand the process of doctoral becoming at levels beyond cognition and epistemology. This analysis suggests that not only are threshold concepts such as "problematising of accepted concepts, developing conceptual frameworks and conceptual level work at the point of developing questions, design, data analysis, conclusions – so that conceptual conclusions will be produced" (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006, p. 197) important, but also the person of the 'conceptualiser'.

The shared experience of PaperHeaDs as a group outside the formal structures of a university provides an opportunity to look at the individual experiences of ten doctoral learners at various stages in their journeys to autonomous scholarship. A self-created, peer group of fellows may contribute to both the epistemological and ontological transformations to be negotiated when interacting with contexts that constrain the development of a doctoral identity. If this is the case then encouragement of such self-formed groups may provide an additional opportunity to encourage doctoral candidates' agency.

Identity

Brief Overview of the Field

In answering the question: "What does being the person that you are, from one day to the next, necessarily consist in?" analytical philosopher Korfmacher takes the position that identity is that which enables an individual to be distinguished from another *persistently* (Korfmacher, 2006). He claims that in order for something to be understood as itself over time, it needs to satisfy the criterion of 'transitivity of identity'. In other words there need to be clear linkages between either the psychology or the physicality

of the person that existed previously, or both. He concludes that identity is indeterminate – it is impossible to say philosophically whether personal identity is psychologically or physiologically determined.

Korfmacher's argument is persuasive inasmuch as it adopts the two fields of Biology and Psychology as the appropriate assumptions for considering individuation – what makes an individual uniquely persistent should logically be the individual's body or the individual's mind or a combination of the two. Yet this philosophical argument completely ignores the role of the observer in the identification of sameness, or the similarity across time of an individual.

Immanuel Kant pointed to the impossibility of empirical observation of matters of the self. In trying to answer the question "What can we know?" he said that we are limited by the way our minds can access and process experience (McCormick, 2006).

The concept of identity, the unique characteristics of a person that enable her to distinguish herself from others, is founded in the assumption that a "self" exists that is separate from reality. The notion of an agentic, autonomous, rational self that can reflect on its activity produced the Enlightenment project. Descartes' "I think therefore I am" – is a fundamental claim to the existence of an entity that can observe a reality 'outside' of its self. This idea of the self as separate from the outside world of experience has been central to the science of Psychology.

Judith Butler points out that there is "no 'I' that can fully stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence... when the 'I' seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a *social* theorist" (Butler, 2005, pp. 7-8, italics mine). Butler's point that the notion of identity cannot be a purely psychological one, because the psychological self is the product of social processes, incorporates all social fields of study in attempting to understand the Self trying to understand itself. We need others to be able to help us observe ourselves. The transitivity of identity cannot be purely personal.

Côté in his survey of the field of identity studies (2006) noted that the field is characterised by intransigent epistemologically and ontologically founded cleavages and argues for an approach of valuing what each can bring to the field. This is the approach I adopt in this research, particularly as it was likely that the development of each woman's doctoral identity would be influenced by the perspective on identity each had adopted. Côté's framework (see Table 1 below) captures eight variants of theoretical focus in identity studies, based on three metatheoretical assumptions (p. 5) about identity. He suggests that theories of identity:

- may have an individual (the property of the person) or a social (the property of interaction) focus. These categorise the two large columns in the table;

- may differ on the nature of social reality. Researchers with an objectivist epistemological position see social reality as relatively fixed and "independent of human consciousness" (p7) while those with a subjectivist position see social reality as dependent on acceptance of social constructions. These two positions label the rows of Côte's table; and

- may depend on the researcher's ideas about the nature of the existing social order. On one hand, there is the belief that social ordering processes are relatively fixed and universal and therefore create the framework for identity. On the other hand is the notion that social order is contextual. This view suggests that individuals and the social order may transform (transformational approaches) or be changed (critical approaches) and therefore identity may shift. These divisions further divide the Individual and Social Focus columns.

	Individual Focus		Social Focus	
	Fixed	Contextual	Fixed	Contextual
Objectivism	Identity Status paradigm	Critical & Cultural psychologies	Structural Symbolic Interactionism	Late Modernist (macrohistorical) Structuration
Subjectivism	Life history and narrative approaches	Postmodern Psychology	Interpretive Symbolic Interactionism	Postmodern Sociology

Figure 1 Table 1: Outline of approaches to identity studies (Côté 2006, p.6)

As a researcher considering the development of doctoral identity, I was therefore faced with a choice about where to locate my investigation. I could choose a research approach that suggested that the individual members of PaperHeaDs would all travel through a similar progression of stages towards an identity state recognised as having a generic 'doctoralness'. Such an approach would be located in what he calls an Identity Status paradigm i.e. a doctoral identity would have certain common qualities and therefore the process of its acquisition would be true for every doctoral candidate. It would be assumed that such an identity is a property of a person, rather than one created by society. It would assume a fixed and commonly agreed upon social reality. The equivalent fixed objectivist position on identity with a social focus, rather than an individual one (Structural Symbolic Interactionism), would suggest that social structures socialise an individual into a particular way of acting and being. In the case of doctoral identity, the social institution responsible would be the university, shaping the behaviour of those aspiring to a doctoral role.

As outlined in the previous section, the arena for my investigation is the subjectivities of the doctoral candidate – the lived experience of doctoral learning. My experience of discussions in PaperHeaDs suggested that any attempt to extract a commonly held and 'true' view of doctoral reality from the members would be an exercise in futility. Similarly, I had to consider more than our individual educational histories or the academic cultures of Durban or the social structures of post-apartheid South Africa. I wanted to look at how each of us constructed ourselves as doctoral learners. This pointed to a subjectivist definition of identity as something that is a function of the interaction between the individual's construction of reality and the social constructions in which she was immersed. I wanted to consider each as an individual, and each as a member of the group PaperHeaDs. I wanted to consider the personal, institutional and cultural aspects that contributed to each individual's sense of self. The emphasis would be on the selves of each person, but would need to make overt the meanings each was including in her construction of her doctoral self. My belief is that the value of the investigation would lie in the individual's agency in being able to change constructions of reality and self that might be a hindrance. Therefore, I am locating my conceptualisation of identity in the post-modern paradigms both social and individual –

working on the assumptions that identity is interactional and is seen as people engage in their everyday social worlds, and that identity is emergent and continually constructed in these contexts, which may or may not support them.

Côté points out that the study of identity and aspects and contexts of identity formation/construction, essentially the topic of 'human self-definition', is more likely to occur in the fringes of a discipline area rather than in the mainstream, which will tend to focus on areas that are less fuzzy and (arguably) more easily measured (2006, p. 13). As a result of this 'fuzziness', studies that target the notion of identity tend to cut across traditional discipline areas. For example Ruthellen Josselson's (1996) longitudinal study of women's lives over three decades (on which I will draw in this work) uses Psychology, Education, Sociology and Economics for making sense of her data, but would be quite firmly located in the Identity Status cell of this table.

Being Seen as a Certain Kind of Person
James Paul Gee's perspective on identity, based on approaches to understanding identity, which he defines as "what it means to be a certain kind of person, in a given context" (2000, p. 100), provides an example of thinking that crosses Côté's individual/social, objectivist/subjectivist, fixed/contextual cleavages. However, the lens of power that he uses to derive his perspective places any analyses done using his viewpoint in the 'field' of interpretive symbolic interactionism. According to him, individuals have multiple identities influenced by the contexts in which they move (Table 2). He distinguishes between a stable 'core' identity that persists across context and the contextual identities we construct in life. A challenge in this study has been to decide whether doctoral identity is a stable part of the 'core' or whether it shifts with context.

Process	Power	Source of power
1. Nature-identity:	a state developed from forces	in nature
2. Institution-identity:	a position authorised by authorities	within institutions
3. Discourse-identity:	an individual trait recognised in the discourse/ dialogue	of/with "rational" dialogue individuals
4. Affinity-identity:	experiences shared in the practice	of "affinity groups"

Figure 2 Table 2: Four analytical stances toward Identity (Gee, 2000, p. 100)

Gee's frame makes it possible to move beyond purely biological and psychological ways of looking at identity that have shaped the nature–nurture debate (what he calls Nature or N-identity) and to consider identity as formed by social structures (Institutional or I-identity), communication (discourse or D-identity) and relationship with others (Affinity or A-identity). The concept of doctoral identity is arguably an identity that can be considered from each perspective. This is evident in the literature of doctoral learning described above. An investigation of the nature-identity of an individual would thus investigate the candidate's motivations, behaviour, drives and activity towards completing a doctorate (for example Ahern & Manathunga, 2004; Wisker et al, 2004). An institution-identity investigation would look at social institutions that authorise her agency, aspirations, and positioning and the roles within them that contribute to her success or not (for example Ellis, 2005; Adkins, 2009). Studies of discourse identity would consider how others recognise or mark the doctoral candidate's achievements in interaction (for example Gardner, 2007; Ward & West, 2008). An affinity-identity investigation might consider how group membership constructs the doctoral person in different contexts (for example Dorn & Papalewis, 1995; Fataar, 2005; Backhouse, 2009).

Gee adds to this study the idea that the adoption or ascription of an identity has to be "underwritten by an interpretive system" (2000, p. 107) which allows others to recognise the identity and act appropriately. He calls these systems Discourses (with a capital D to distinguish from discourse or communicative context) and suggests that

each of us have had a "unique trajectory through Discourse space" which, along with the story we tell of it, are what constitutes our (never fully formed or always potentially changing) 'core identity'. He goes on to point out that investigating unique Discourse trajectories enables us to ask how recognition, and being seen as a 'certain kind of person', works. How this process is accommodated, challenged or resisted will shape the creation of doctoral identity (2000, p. 111). I aim to represent individual Discourse trajectories in my investigation of ten doctoral learners brought together in the non-formal space of PaperHeaDs.

Both Côté and Gee refer to the rise in the problems of personal definition arising from living in the modern world, that highlight the growth in interest in the field of identity studies. Côté further points to the problems of exactly what it means to have an "'adult identity' is increasingly unclear as the very nature of 'adulthood' loses its meaning for more and more people" (Côté, 2006, p. 4). He goes on to tell the story of a young woman in a doctoral programme who asked him for advice about being prepared for the world of work. "[T]his woman implied that she had little internal sense of meaning and direction and was fearful of her future." I find it ironic that I was faced with similar lack of meaning and direction on beginning this doctoral journey, having twenty years of working in my baggage of experience. Comparing the young doctoral learner's fears about the world of work, and my own lack of confidence in my scholarly ability despite my awareness of my competence in a variety of work environments (see Chapter 1) suggests that identity construction takes place when we are thrown or jump into new contexts that require us to reconfigure our sense of self.

Located in Côte's category of Postmodern Sociology, Ian Burkitt claims that "to truly understand ourselves and to answer the question of "who am I? ... our identities are not constructed by any one subject: they have been authored 'outside' any single subject in a sociality composed of many"(Burkitt, 2008, p. 187). So is identity about achieving an internal sense of meaning? This study investigates the meaning-making of ten mature (in years) women over a period of seven years. My question about how each of us negotiated the highest educational achievement through constructing her doctoral

identity assumes that there was and is an underlying logic to our activity in those seven years and that the social sphere of PaperHeaDs contributed to this logic.

Postmodern views of identity are hopeful in that they claim the agency of the subject despite the social forces of context. Burkitt's social individuality factors in our ancestors, our relations, the person we want to portray to others, our language and our internal conflicts because "identity is something that is both found, in terms of what we have become, and made, in terms of how this can be reconstructed into what we are yet to become" (Burkitt, 2008, p. 188).

It seems then that my apparent choice to do a doctorate – to initiate the logistical processes of registering, making a proposal about the research I wanted to undertake and to persist with defending that proposal and then engaging with the research – was agentic. The implication is that I made it happen. Yet certain experiences led to that initiative, helped to construct a version of Liz who moved to engage in the process. The Liz that registered was a narrativised construction of a human being born in 1961, having experienced a variety of events that ultimately constructed a doctorate as desirable for that subject.

Positioning Theory

My research makes sense in terms of Bourdieu's three concepts of positions, position-taking and 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1994). Bourdieu's positions refer to locations in social space. For the purpose of this research the social space under consideration is primarily PaperHeaDs, but also includes work spaces, home spaces and universities. In Bourdieu's conception, position-taking refers to the kinds of things we do that flag a position being taken. I suggest that the decision to register for doctoral study is such a signal, in the sense that a doctoral candidate is seeking access to different life chances or a qualitatively different life experience. In my case it was a sense of not being a 'real knower' (see Chapter 1) but rather a tinker in the academy. Bourdieu's 'habitus' refers to "principles that generate and organise practices and representations" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 278). These 'structuring structures', of our individual life-worlds, lead us to

certain kinds of performances and to expect certain kinds of results. My expectations about what doctoral work might entail positioned me in certain ways. My need to work on something that is practical and useful was a function of my habitus and the way I had experienced my life in intersection with the habitus of other structures, including those of the universities where I had previously studied.

Gee's theory that identity is constructed by our location in discourses is enriched by positioning theory (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999). Harré and Van Langenhove show how the idea of discursive positioning more effectively explains social dynamics than does the static concept of role. As our identities are multiple, so, they suggest, is the way we play those identities based on how we are positioned and position ourselves. Accepting that social acts (including speech) are socially real, we have to accept that the people who perform them are the sites of social reality. As such, social reality is not conceived in a linear way, with the past shaping the present shaping the future in a neat causality. Human realities, psychological and sociological, are not fixed but continually shift with anticipations and hopes, "because... [t]he social future can influence the social past" (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999, p. 15) or the stories we tell of it. This idea explains how someone might construct her doctoral identity. Her individual conceptions and anticipations about the meaning of a PhD make the story told. Each individual's 'referential grid' made up of symbolic exchanges and institutional practice constructs their reality and identity through "two discursive processes, one of which is 'positioning' and the other 'rhetorical redescription' ... the discursive construction of stories about institutions and macrosocial events that make them intelligible as societal icons" (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999, p. 15). Doctoral identity is influenced by the challenges, resistances and accommodations we make in the process of doctoral learning. Each of the stories in this study of identity construction show the influence of both conversational (symbolic exchange) positioning, agency in self-positioning and the re-storying of the institutional and societal rhetorics to shape the identity.

A range of Identity theories are available to provide explanations for doctoral learning and success. This thesis investigates the lives of ten women on that journey and represents my theorising on what is happening and has happened in the process. It is my story of how the doctoral me came into being – the character that will be known as,

if not knowing herself yet as, Dr Harrison. The identity of this character is constructed through and upon other constructions of my sense of self and largely relates to a definition of doctoralness that I have accepted as authoritative or persuasive (Burkitt, 2008). Moreover, how I relate/d to the rhetorics of doctoral academia is made visible through my storying of my fellow PaperHeaDs.

Doctoral Identity

At the level of doctoral learning, as with all levels of education, issues of how learning occurs become obscured by a focus on the teaching dynamic of the relation between those who know and those who would know. For example, Green argues that the 'unfinished business' of doctoral education lies in "notions of investment and identification … as well as issues more generally of power, desire and identity" (2005, p. 157). He contends that doctoral supervision as pedagogy is as much about the production of identity as it is about the production of knowledge (p. 162). However, in claiming that the subject of supervision is the negotiation of 'a fantasy' between the supervisor, the student and the field, the true focus of doctoral education is obscured, and the subject of both the production of identity and the production of knowledge is the doctoral candidate.

Tying the discussion above on doctoral pedagogy, chiefly supervision, to the notion of identity-shaping Discourse spaces (Gee, 2000), Grant (1999) identifies what she calls the psychological, the traditional-academic, the techno-scientific and the neo-liberal as four of the 'normative discourses' of 'proper' supervision in the literature of doctoral learning. She argues that when the parties involved in the process of bestowing or earning a doctorate differ on what supervision is and what it should achieve, the contestation contributes to identity confusion for the postgraduate student. "[T]here are several more or less powerful discourses for 'making sense' of ourselves as supervisors and students. The most dominant have established themselves as natural and commonsense while the marginal others appear as more or less ridiculous, outrageous, unethical, improper or unspeakable" (p. 10). This suggests that there are discourses about doctoral learning that doctoral students will find ridiculous or acceptable to themselves in determining what kind of doctor they will be. By definition,

these discourses position the candidate doctor in certain ways as the one to be developed; the apprentice academic; the recruit into a community of practice; or as a link in the supply chain of knowledge-workers, respectively. The question of the degree to which a candidate can be agentic in this process underlies my own investigation, where, as Gee says, "identities can only become identities because they are *recognised*, by myself or others, as meaningful in the sense that they constitute (at least, in part) the 'kind of person' I am" (2000, p. 102).

Women's Ways of Knowing

How we are recognised and the degree to which we accept or reject the social positioning and discursive practices that construct our identities are clearly shown in the work of Belenky et al, (1986). They found five identity 'positions' with respect to knowledge in analysing the narratives of 190 women from both 'invisible colleges', such as parenting support centres, and formal colleges. They found that the women's sense of self, voice and mind could be construed in the categories of Silence, Received Knowledge, Subjective Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge and Constructed Knowledge.

Silence relates to the inability of some of the women to express knowledge with confidence, to engage in 'representational thought' (1986, p. 25) to be part of their intellectual community and to develop a sense of Self. This would be an accurate descriptor of my own position at the beginning of my doctoral journey, recalled below[12].

> ***Looking back now, I remember very little of the first couple of meetings of PaperHeaDs. I recall fogginess, confusion, complete lack of understanding of what was expected in terms of appropriate behaviour in the group or even what a PhD actually meant. I have the sense that I got roped into 'doing a PhD' because of my association with Annie, who was at the time setting up a business and who had recruited Lee into it.***

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12 In this document PaperHeaD 'talk', including my own, whether from journals, conversations or emails, is represented in this intense font.

I have this faded photo in my mind (sepia toned) of leaning forward between the leather front seats of a clean and new-smelling car (must have been Amelia's), a BMW or a Mercedes, as Annie and Amelia carried on a conversation about how vital a PhD was to having an academic future and how good Dr Annie and Dr Amelia would look on a business card. I'd leaned forward when Amelia had said "Hey, Liz?" grasping desperately at the few words of the conversation that my short-term memory could replay from what I had heard. She had asked, "Are you in?" I replied a hesitant "Yes", flattered that these two bright women thought I had the capacity to do a doctorate.

I can't remember now where we had been and what we had been doing there, and even how I was involved. (Reflective journal, 5th March 2007)

The Received Knowledge category included women who trusted knowledge supplied by external authorities, assuming that there is always a right answer, and that their way of knowing involved listening to the words of others. For these women, friendship groups created the space in which they could learn to speak, bolstered by the discovery that others were having the same experience (Belenky et al, 1986, p. 39). They tended to believe that all knowledge originates outside the Self and their internal identity conversations were expressed in terms of the person others wanted them to be (p. 48). Social expectations, such as roles and performances, shaped how they spoke of themselves (p. 50).

Women who had learned to trust their own experience, "to come to a new conception of truth as personal, private and subjectively known" (p. 54), fell into the subjective Knowledge category. Belenky et al deemed this category transitional (p. 56); they suggest that it signals a shift from dualistic 'right/wrong' thinking seen in Received Knowledge to a sense of multiple truths. Belenky et al noted that women, usually younger, from advantaged backgrounds experienced a crisis derived from their rule-following pasts in which 'quiet predictability' was rewarded (p. 65). Suddenly presented

with alternative ways to be and to know, 'good girls' were often overwhelmed by the possibilities, falling into a fugue state immobilised by choice. In trusting their own subjective knowledge these women were almost dualistic in their mistrust of the tools of logic, abstract thought and 'alien expertise' as a way of knowing (p. 71).

The Procedural Thought category was characterised by the women's recognition that subjective truth was not always infallible and that there exist ways of thinking about a world not experienced which can lead to truths that can be shared (p. 93). The emphasis here is on skills and techniques – the procedures of acquiring and communicating knowledge. In this, the women had learned to be tentative, not to trust the first instinctive answer that came to mind, but rather to analyse challenges in more detail. Some women used techniques of 'separate knowing' (p. 103) and completely removing feeling and experience from meaning-making whilst others used 'connected knowing' (p. 112) in which they privileged emotion, experience and empathy as a way of coming to knowledge. The most striking feature of this category is the realisation of the women that expertise can be respected (p. 96).

The final category of ways of knowing described by Belenky et al is Constructed Knowledge. They describe this group of women as engaged in "weaving together the strands of rational and emotive thought" (p. 134). They were able to deal with complex questions by working through the grey areas, rather than seeking an absolute answer. Tolerance for ambiguity, the ability to hold contradicting elements of their focus simultaneously, was a significant feature of their thinking. In seeking knowledge and a truth, they recognised that knowledge is contextual and that their own experience was central to the way they continuously assembled their positions. The embodied epiphany described in the Sheffield Beach vignette below, talks to a moment when this simultaneity blends with audience to move that audience to recognition or to being persuaded.

We are at a Getaway13 in 2006 - the fourth or fifth that we have attended. The venue is a spacious house in Sheffield Beach on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast, which Amelia has found through her friend in the holiday home rental business. The seven of us have the luxury of private space whilst being together. We have each arrived from the hurly-burly of our own lives through the afternoon and have adjusted to being in this space. We are all unpacked and set up ready to get to work early the following morning. Our tradition on the first night is to layout the working sessions (the timetable) and to commit to goals for the three or four days. Maya is timetabled chef tonight and she's busy in the kitchen creating something superb and vegetarian. The rest of us sit on the deck overlooking the ocean, it is cool and the breeze autumnal but not cold enough to chase us inside.

Sophia is speaking about her plans for these precious days. I realise that I can't understand what she is saying. She is talking English but I cannot access her meaning. My ear hears "phenomenology" "Georgi", "Husserl", "theoretical conflict", "in the data". I focus more intently, looking for clues about what is happening. I watch my own confusion as I cannot find a way in to understanding. Alyse, elegantly lying back on a lounger, is asking what sound like intelligent questions which Sophia is answering fluently and fluidly. She appears to be following absolutely the complexity of Sophia's abstractions. The rest of us are an intent audience to the interaction. Sophia is relaxed but upright in a plastic chair, dignified as always, glass of wine absently in hand. Her voice resonates with confidence and I realise that her whole body appears to be explaining her thinking. Her focus is total, her voice confident. There is not a single lengthy pause or

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13 Getaways were Maya's suggestion. She initially made the suggestion, in 2002, that we take time out to go away somewhere lovely, to focus on writing. None of us were yet ready for such a commitment to making time to write. We managed to arrange one eventually in 2004, when Amelia was in the midst of writing up her thesis and Alyse was working on her proposal.

placeholder to indicate the lack of a word or concept to express her intent. I feel a spark of recognition in my tummy. I "get it" in my gut whilst still having no idea what she has resolved. We applaud the moment that Sophia found her doctoral voice. My memory has the moon rising over the dark sea at exactly that moment. (Reflective Journal, 20th October 2008)

Figure 3: Breakthrough at Sheffield Beach

It may be argued that the Belenky study, set in the late 1970's in America, is dated, and ungeneralisable because it has a relatively small sample, privileges academic ways of thinking and is biased in favour of middle-class values. Yet the power of the analysis and concepts continue to influence feminist thinking and diversity education three decades later. As Côté says, it would be a mistake to discount the work because of disagreement about whether the human subject is an autonomous and stable 'self' with static characteristics such as sex, class, race and sexual orientation which proceed through developmental stages influenced by predictable social forces. The fact that the intellectual context in psychology at the time profoundly influenced Belenky et al, and continues to govern the practice of education (Lather, 1991, p. 5) gives credence to the social view of identity previously argued. Yet Belenky's powerful work was and continues to be a point of departure for subsequent work into the ways in which

language and context construct us. It is the connected nature of the construction of knowledge through the weaving of self and voice in Belenky et al's final category that informs this autoethnography.

Where this study aims to contribute is in its descriptions of the time-spaces when identity positions change or are changed. How do doctoral candidates create the positioning or become positioned in order to 'trouble' existing identity positions (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006)? How do they move into the liminal space that signals a changing threshold conceptualisation? What do they do in the time of confusion that triggers the 'aha' moment?

Pedagogy and Autogogy

Barbara Grant adopts the brilliant metaphor of a palimpsest[14] to conceptualise the complexity of the pedagogy of supervision (2003), convincingly showing the levels of intra- and inter-personal, societal and cultural dynamics that are involved in the pedagogical relationship. She identifies three layers: Student-Supervisor; Pedagogical Power Relations, which introduce knowledge as an actor/acted upon in the relationship; and Diverse Social Relations, which introduce social positioning and the "traces of identity" (p. 182) to the process.

Her focus was on the supervisory relationship, whereas my study considers the lived experience of doctoral students in a self-formed group and as much as possible pushes the pedagogy of supervision backwards. My intention in this study is to foreground the process of 'reading for', studying for, doing a doctorate, from the candidate's point of view. In the process, elements that are under erasure – overwritten – or apparently lost in the received discourse are revealed. The stories recounted here aim to cast light on

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14 A palimpsest is a parchment of animal hide that has been converted from a scroll to a codex (or book). When medieval monasteries had no clean new parchment they would often scrape a used scroll clean and cut the parchment into pages to make the book. As a result traces of previous writings often show on the new pages.

the threshold moments that seem 'counter-intuitive' to the doctoral candidate – the 'stuck places' (Meyer & Land, 2005, p. 378).

Burkitt makes the point that identity is not only constructed in social labour at work or in institutions but also in "intermediary activities and liminal times and places" (2008, p. 188). Educators tend to ignore activities outside the teaching spaces that they can influence, yet these lived experiences may be the keys to successful doctoral projects.

Grant's metaphor extends to other layers of meaning that continue to influence modern understandings of doctoral study. As with a palimpsest, because of the transformation of scroll to book where the earliest writing appears to run vertically down the pages, while the later inscription runs horizontally, these stories of doctoral learning experience sometimes run counter to the received discourse of doctoral study (Chapman & Sork, 1998; Balatti & Whitehouse, 2001; Chapman & Sork, 2001; Grant, 2001; Peseta, 2001; Dison, 2004).

For the purpose of this thesis, I adopt the term 'autogogy' to refer to the agentic practices and learning experiences of doctoral learners – the process of learners teaching themselves to be autonomous scholars through research. The following journal extract marks a moment of academic uncertainty, which may be typical of the cross and counter-grain discourses of which Grant's metaphor speaks. I needed to take a position, on the term 'autogogy', that was both academically honest and yet reflected my growing confidence in my own ability to think. I understood that, strategically, the notion would have more weight if I could cite a string of 'believable' references, yet I could find few that fitted the criteria for academic credibility.

I am not aware of this term being used in literature on doctoral learning, but it seems logical to me that if pedagogy is the process of teaching children and androgogy is the process of teaching adults, then the process of becoming an autonomous learner is a process of self-teaching and

learning and should be called autogogy. As a researcher, I was aware that this notion must have occurred to others and I spent hours searching databases of the university, I find that the term is largely being used in the context of web-based learning and was astonished to find only 25 references: 3 Theses, 1 Blog, 2 Books, 7 Conference presentations, 9 journal articles, 1 CV, a magazine article. Of these references: 8 referred to computer programming, 3 to computing applied mathematics, 2 to open source software, 6 to media manipulation with computers and 5 related to teaching, all in the context of web-based learning. One paper was listed as 'forthcoming' but appeared as a reference in three conference papers. An additional Google search revealed the work of Derek Keats (Keats, 2008) working in the context of Web 3.0 Education.

It makes sense that educators in IT are using these terms given the incredible success of "Slumdog Millionaire" and Sugata Mitra's "Hole in the Wall" [and] the research it was based on – the story of illiterate street children teaching themselves to use computers. What is now called "minimally invasive education" (Mitra, 2000).

This is a typical dilemma of a doctoral student researching at a boundary: when one has an original idea, does one claim it or does one look for citation evidence of previous use to give it validity? (Reflective Journal, 23 May 2009)

I made the decision to reclaim the term for education from information technology (IT) and to use Derek Keats' groundbreaking online work as an educator to validate that claim. I felt justified in this by my own repositioning in the field of Academic Development, moving from curriculum development work into working as an educational technologist in 2008.

Asta Rau's (2004) Foucauldian investigation of postgraduate student resistances in supervision relationships showed how institutionalised discourses in one university

produced forms of identity that strongly influenced the way knowledge is created and mediated. She argues that identity is knowledge in a similar way to the way Barbara Grant considers the role of the supervisor. These arguments, applied to the field of doctoral study, the level at which socially authorised permission is given to 'create new knowledge', makes a study of the lived experience of doctoral candidates from their own perspectives an opportunity to reveal the resistances and agency of the autogogic processes of doctoral learning.

It was no accident that identity featured in all the PaperHeaDs' research topics. Their studies range from Supportive Medical Therapies and Community Nursing, through the experience of students with academic literacy practices, the experience of teachers engaged in up skilling themselves, to the online behaviour of older women. Each had to acknowledge that a certain sense of self was part of the research scenario of respondents and themselves. In post-1994 South Africa, whether at a macro level of nation-building (viz. Thabo Mbeki's conception of an African Renaissance) or the micro level of individuals working to deconstruct themselves as oppressors or oppressed, the construction of identity is central to daily life. Who were we going to be in this new place and time?

The three research questions addressed by this investigation are:
1. How do I construct myself as a doctoral student through the time of my involvement in PaperHeaDs?
2. What are other members' experiences of constructing doctoral identities?
3. In what ways, if any, does participation in PaperHeaDs challenge or support accepted discourses of doctoral learning?

The first question presented temporal difficulties that are typical in the process of proposal writing. What tense could I use to write an investigative question about a process of self-construction, assuming that I would be answering it in a retrospective thesis? The proposal committee's suggestion that I use the present tense 'do' but constrain it in the sub-clause helped to predict a time when I could draw a 'line in the sand' regarding when the study would be complete. This too is ephemeral; how could I,

the learner, know when I had done enough to be acceptable? As I write this, I wonder whether it is enough. I am back in the experience of self-doubt that has been a common experience in this journey. My reading of the examination criteria used in assessing a PhD thesis (Winter, Griffiths & Green, 2000; Holbrook & Bourke, 2004; Wisker, 2009), suggest this is so, and having seen Amelia, Sophia, Maya and Maura negotiate this stage in the process, I am hopeful.

Postmodern Frames: Explaining the Style

This study investigates "the extent to which education becomes initiation into a form of life (or several of them), not simply a movement from principles to applications" (Wills, 1995, p. 60). PaperHeaDs was discursively constructed out of and through intersecting identities of Nature, Institutions, Discourse and Affinity (Gee, 2000) as well as the positioning and rhetorical redescription (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999) that its members brought to the social space. Throughout this work I show this, by presenting samples of the evidence of the voices and texts that operate/d in the interactions that shape the way PaperHeaDs operates. Interspersed with the formal 'theorising text' are the 'voice texts' in the shape of vignettes in intense fonts. Through these vignettes immediacy and authenticity is evident within the complex abstraction that is doctoral study in the Humanities. Moreover, in opening up the 'mechanics' of our processes of doctoral learning to your, the reader's, view, I intend to offer access to the kinds of strategies we adopted in making sense of our own learning, recognising that you will construct your own meaning from the text (Polkinghorne, 1988; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998).

In foregrounding these mechanisms of conversation and communication, I intend to demystify a process. To the non-engaged observer, the process might look like a doctoral candidate going through a closed loop. What family and friends might see is Ambition (when considering the possibility of doctoral study), Registration (the processes of becoming a student), Obsession (when every conversation, reading and occupation seems dedicated to the study topic), Disappearance (when the candidate is

unavailable, unreachable, incommunicado) and Renaming (when the individual reappears in her social sphere as a doctor).

I intend this work to help the reader learn to value the unseen/unsaid activities that are part of coming to a deep understanding of the objects of study. This account sometimes considers non-academic contexts (Backhouse, 2009) as spaces for developing doctoral identity. It shows the daily aspects of our lives, often obscured by academic ways of knowing, and vice versa. Often hidden are for example: silly emails that a friend sends to let us know that they are thinking of us and our study and which make us laugh; the word games played as we try use alien languages; and the conversations over tea in the workplace. I argue that these are all part of the process of repositioning and reshaping ourselves.

Summary

This chapter outlines the background rationale and some of the theoretical context of the study, through presenting the macro-level expectations of doctoral education internationally and in South Africa. I went on to consider the nature of doctoral learning, explaining how my focus is on the person of the doctoral candidate, rather than on the pedagogy of supervision where most of the literature is located. I presented an overview of the vast field of identity studies and put forward the notion that doctoral learning can be accommodated within a frame of understanding how the doctoral candidate constructs a doctoral identity through positioning and being positioned in a Discourse. In this process, she passes through cognitive and emotional thresholds that are difficult to account for in a theorisation of doctoral learning that limits it to the mere acquisition of cognitive and academic skills.

At this point, I would like to present my positioning in the study. In the following chapter, I adopt a more autoethnographic approach (Ellis, 2004) to explaining my discovery of the research methodology for this study. In it, I describe the process of researching and rejecting research methodologies until I came upon one that would answer the purpose I was trying to attain.

Chapter 3: Of Process Queens and CEOs: Finding the Methodology

Epistemological Stance

This study addresses the concern that the voice least heard in the debates about doctoral learning is that of the student (McAlpine & Norton, 2006, p. 6). I set out to understand the complexities of how learners studying towards PhDs "go about thinking, acting and making meaning" (Ellis, 2004, p. 25) in this quest. The intention is to describe the ways of being in the world of doctoral learners – holistically and naturalistically. In the previous chapter, I pointed to my adoption of a post-structuralist epistemology of researching the construction of doctoral identity in the context of PaperHeaDs. In this chapter, I will describe the methodology, which helps to articulate my experience, and attempt to codify the tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) of PaperHeaDs about doctoral learning. "Human experience is essentially storied experience: [because] humans live out stories and are storytelling organisms. … One of the best ways to study human beings is to come to grips with the storied quality of human experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, pp. 404-406).

From the time I joined PaperHeaDs, I watched myself and the other group members orienting ourselves, gaining confidence and stretching our mental muscles towards a sense of self that claimed the 'expertness' we associated with the doctoral title. *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky et al, 1986) were in action in South Africa in the 21st Century in ways that Belenky et al could not have anticipated. An early meeting using Blythe Clinchy's 'Tales Told out of School' (1999) as a stimulus piece refreshed our faded ideas of connected knowing first met in our early courses in Educational Psychology. Their conceptions of Voice, Self and Mind gave us the terminology to share with each other about how we were growing – if growing it was. It seems to me that the concept of growing, in the context of doctoral education, constrains the rich complexity of the process to one of mere enlargement and progress. It does not grasp the processes of construction, destruction and de-construction each experienced as we tried on and rejected, re-affirmed and let go of possible selves in finishing our doctoral projects (Butler, 1990; Lather, 1991).

We started calling the product of this connected way of knowing 'developing a doctoral identity' after Sharman Wickham presented a workshop for us on how to go about doing postgraduate study (1999). More important than naming the product, we began acknowledging the process changes in cognition and affect as we heard them during progress reports in our monthly meetings. Even as I say we, I am obscuring some authenticity. Within the group, we had factions called 'the CEOs' and 'the Process Queens'. The CEOs were those focused on a consistent progression through their studies and graduating as soon as possible. The Queens seemed, to the CEOs, to be indulging in the joy of exploration with seemingly little to show for the extravagance. This shows clearly that members of PaperHeaDs are "part of the cultural parade" complicit in the world we study and living with or against the cultural stereotypes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 61).

I was fascinated to discover that the idea of a "narrative of self" dates back to the Stoic Greek philosophers, and that the ethic of self they espoused meant creating the self that one wanted to be through "a relationship with a philosophical teacher" and "using new techniques of paying attention to, and taking care of, the self" (Burkitt, 2008, p. 5). What intrigues me is that the Stoics were interested in how to become who one wanted to be, rather than the more modern question "Who am I?" – the unitary self of the Enlightenment and modern humanistic psychology. My discovery of this history validated my sense that documenting the process of my learning to become a doctor might contribute to understanding doctoral pedagogy. More importantly, I learned that the Stoics' 'new techniques' included writing about their daily lives to friends, an historical fact that throws light on the massive growth of social networking technologies such as Facebook and Twitter and also explained why the PaperHeaDs YahooGroup[15] has been such a valuable aspect of my growth.

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15 I set up this free electronic group in 2001. The other PaperHeaDs kindly agreed to use it to facilitate communication.

A relatively unconsidered part of pedagogy related to doctoral studies is the degree to which a new way of being a 'doctoral self' has to be constructed (Bartlett & Mercer, 2001; Green, 2005; Fataar, 2005). My central assumption is that there exist ways in which we can choose the doctor we want to become if we become aware of the ways in which our ways of being are shaped (Bourdieu, 1994; Butler, 2005). The trust and connectedness that created the space of PaperHeaDs was a large part of my self-construction, because in PaperHeaDs, I was able to imagine myself through at least nine pairs of eyes.

The Participants: The PaperHeaDs

Membership of PaperHeaDs is a function of the connectedness that it an important part of women's identity construction (Josselson, 1996). Each of the nine PaperHeaDs has stories that have intersected with and paralleled my working life in higher education. As such, my presentation of their stories reflects facets of my own that have influenced the construction of myself as a doctor-to-be. The following table (Table 3) presents a sketchy outline of some features of the women of PaperHeaDs[16]. I will introduce them in the order that their stories will appear.

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16 This table picks out features that might be indicative of a 'certain kind of person' but it represents a snapshot in time – the moment that I was discussing 'doctoral identity' with each woman. In the nine years of PaperHeaDs' existence, many things have changed: children and their needs, occupations, relationships, and homes.

Figure 4 Table 3: Participants – The PaperHeaDs

Pseudonym	Age	Current Occupation	PhD topic and method
Liz (PQ)[17]	Late 40's	Educational Technologist	The Development of Doctoral Identity – Autoethnography/narrative analysis
Sophia (PQ)	Mid 50's	Teacher Educator for 18 years	Experiences of underqualified teachers. Phenomenology – PhD Complete
Maura (CEO)	Mid 50's	Nurse Educator for 25 years	Development of Reflective Practice in nurse managers. Interpretive Reflection. PhD Complete
Amelia (CEO)	Late 40's	Entrepreneur (Training) – 3 years	Implementation of the National Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education. Mixed method. PhD Complete
Maya (CEO)	Mid 40's	Academic developer – Student Development	Academic Literacy in Universities of Technology. Critical Discourse analysis. PhD Complete.
Annie (CEO)	Late 40's	Entrepreneur (Training) – 3years	Curriculum transformation in Universities of Technology. Critical Discourse Analysis
Alyse (PQ)	Early 60's	Educational Technologist -20 years	Elderly women's adoption of online technologies. Narrative Analysis
Ntsiki (CEO)	Early 30's	Academic Developer – 5 years	Curriculum development and Service Learning. Critical realist case studies
Mary (PQ)	Early 50's	Academic Developer – 18 years	The learning process of Supervisors. Critical realist case study
Bee (CEO)	Late 40's	University Lecturer – 10 years	Encouraging self-efficacy in pre-practice OTs. Phenomenography

All the members have an interest in education, based on their areas of practice. Of the group, four – Maya, Amelia, Sophia and Bee – have children. Seven members are heterosexual. Three are officially married. Six of us are resident in KwaZulu-Natal, though two commute between South African cities regularly. Maura and Alyse are working in the United Kingdom. As can be seen, neither the group's identification of a member as a CEO or Process Queen, nor any other kind of stereotype that might be applied, has a correlation with whether or not a doctorate has been completed.

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17 The letters PQ or CEO after the name refer to the Process Queen/ Chief Executive Officer dichotomy mentioned earlier.

As shown in the previous chapter, the tensions between self-satisfaction and social responsibility, or in sociological terms, the agency/ social environment debate, are deeply embedded in the conceptualisation of doctoral identity that is under investigation. Côté's (2006) framework suggested a variety of ways of studying how doctoral identity develops. Potentially these ranged from what Côté calls a "fixed objectivist" to a "contextual sociological" study (2006, p. 6). The first pole might look like an attempt to theorise a commonly applicable process after objectively observing common elements in the self-reported experiences of the group members. Moving along the continuum, a possibly Eriksonian account using something like identity status questionnaires (Marcia, 1966; Belenky et al, 1986; Josselson, 1996) was also an option. The extreme pole of the continuum, the one I believed would answer my questions, was a detailed description of the contexts and shapes of the interactional realm of PaperHeaDs with an emphasis on how it was experienced and provided opportunities for constructing this performance (Butler, 1990) we were calling doctoral identity. It seemed to me that I had to illustrate the social constructions, our personal stories and the social discourses we were using to move from where we were to a status of 'expertness'. My research questions reveal that choice to locate this qualitative investigation in a post-modern paradigm.

This work aims to "produce knowledge from which to act" and identify "the range of mobile transitory points of resistance inherent in the networks of power relations" (Lather, 1991, p. ix) around the contested sites of doctoral learning. In many ways we constructed PaperHeaDs as an act of resistance to being positioned as inexpert or as 'merely' students, it was our answer to Lather's question: "What would a sociological project look like that was not a technology of regulation and surveillance?" (Lather, 1991, p. ix). Because PaperHeaDs was created outside the formal structures of education, albeit that we had access to its resources through our work in higher education, the story may provide insights by 'denaturalising' the frames that are applied to PhD study. Frankly some of the frames are weird and arcane (Meneley & Young, 2005), as members of my walking group, mostly non-academics, have pointed out with hilarity. In denaturalising frames that obstruct a view of the variety of doctoral identities

perhaps I/we can open paths to other doctoral learners seeking to 'revise themselves' (Josselson, 1996).

Patti Lather says, "[P]ostmodernism foregrounds an awareness of our own structuring impulses and their relation to the social order. Within feminism … recognition of the doubled movement of inscription and subversion presses one to acknowledge the ways in which feminism is both outside the discourse … and, simultaneously, inscribed in Western logocentricis" (Lather, 1991, p. 89). I have chosen the postmodern paradigm as it investigates both the "contestatory and the reproductive dimensions" (p. 89) of PaperHeaDs' efforts to 'make meaning' and to create knowledge.

Researcher Positioning: Where Am I and What Does it Mean?

At the beginning of this research process, I was aware that without the group PaperHeaDs, I would not have even put my foot into the arena of PhD studies. I wanted to uncover the shape of the group that made it possible for me to position myself and for us to position each other in a way that enabled doctoral learning. This story needed to satisfy the theoretical requirements of a doctorate, while remaining a believable representation (Riessman, 1993) of the experience of the members of PaperHeads. In order to show the cultural (academic and personal) legacy that enabled the construction of PaperHeaDs, I needed to ensure that my study of PaperHeaDs through the eyes of the group's members would be located in the intersection of the disciplines or psychology, sociology and education. These were the subjects that had made up my undergraduate and Master's studies. I was also highly aware that my position in the group as a participant made it impossible for me to claim objectivity. My own experiences would colour the study. Bourdieu suggests that my involvement is a strength of the study. In his work, he aimed to illuminate the relations between structure and agency through the creation of concepts that allow explanation of life in concrete settings, with the intention of understanding the world. He argued for a social science based on the "partial and partisan views of the agents engaged in the game, and the individual or collective struggles through which they aim to impose these views are part of the objective truth of this game" (Bourdieu, 1988, p. xiv).

Bourdieu would say that my habitus, created by my own "history and through which [I] partake of the history objectified through [the university], is what makes it possible to *inhabit* institutions, to appropriate them practically and so keep them in activity" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 282, italics mine).

When I applied for pre-registration for the doctoral programme in 2006, I had been immersed in the ethnographic 'field' of PaperHeaDs for six years. The notion of participant observation for intense periods of 'field work' followed by withdrawal from the field to write an objective account of the process (Spradley, 1980) was not an option, given my ongoing engagement with the group members as part of my work and social life. In addition, the dilemma of how to write an objective but retrospective account of those six years troubled me – given that researching PaperHeaDs only really became an active idea in 2005 (PaperHeaDs, 2005, p. 2). The following extract (Meeting Notes) documents the moment when I committed to PaperHeaDs becoming the arena[18] of my doctoral study. Mary had suggested that we (the group) take advantage of the National Research Foundation's (NRF) policy of encouraging doctoral study through providing funds for research into PhD study. She had pointed out that PaperHeaDs was a perfect example of an 'empowerment' intervention. She wrote up the project proposal and negotiated with each of us with respect to what we would contribute in the way of conference papers and topics. The funding from the NRF (NRF GUN 8953: "Capacity building through group processes: mechanisms for developing supervision and research skills") financed three writing Getaways, ten conference papers and five publications from the group.

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18 This was merely the decision about the arena of the study, I had no idea what questions I would be asking.

7) Progress report

LIZ – The group undertook much harassing and conflicting advice giving. Liz expressed a hope that the NRF project ... may be the start of a focussed activity in regards her PhD. Liz, as keeper of the Paperheads story, will begin to tell our story to us – possibly with a Terry Pratchettian twist – this could lead to a narrative analysis of how women are empowered within the world of academia? Whatever it turns out to be, go for it, Lizzie – we look forward to reading it! (PaperHeaDs Meeting Notes, 3rd August 2005)

I could not plan 'immersion' and 'withdrawal', nor could I practically create detailed field notes (Coffey, 1999) of past events and actions.

I did, however, have artefacts and notes from the group's process that could become aide memoirs to reconstruction. "([A]uto)biographical narration affirms the interiority of the self. ... Reminiscence incorporates past experience into the present performance. It also integrates the selves of memory into an essential and timeless self" (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997, p. 313).

More concerning to me than the fragility of memory, trying to adopt an objective stance would be "morally suspect" (Tedlock, 2005, p. 467) because of the privileged access to deeply personal struggles and triumphs granted me by my insider status as a friend and fellow learner. I could not tell the story of PaperHeaDs as if I was outside it. In fact, I could not tell *the* story at all, because each individual's story of the group is different. We each construct/ed and live/d a story of the group and 'storied' it into existence, as we were storying ourselves as doctoral learners. My own 'confessional tale' (Van Maanen, 1988) had to be part of what was represented as a simulacrum (Lather, 1993 citing Baudrillard) of what the group's existence might mean for individual doctoral identity construction. The differences in our individual stories of PaperHeaDs also needed to be highlighted in order to show this potentiality. All that considered, I needed also to acknowledge that ultimately the dominant perspective would be my own; it is

my study and it represents my truth (albeit deeply considered) rather than *the* truth. "[O]ne's intimate encounters with the field are now not only inscribed but also described and performed as social science data" (Tedlock, 2005, p. 468).

This story of PaperHeaDs and even the stories of the women in PaperHeaDs can never be the only story. The way I tell the story of PaperHeaDs is indicative of the value that I found in the interaction in the group and the value each person brought to me in my doctoral journey. While I can try and represent the voices of the members through using their own words, my choices of how to punctuate the words, what to present, and what not to include in the process of making a coherent case about doctoral identity and the role of the group, say more about myself than they may do about my friends. Each one is a lens through which I see my own journey. This is an ethnography "where the researcher's life is actually studied along with participants' lives" (Ellis, 2004, p. 47).

Research Methodologies of Self

On investigating research methodologies that place the researcher's self and location at the centre of the study, I came across self-study. Self-study has come out of the field of education and is "related to the idea of studying the 'self' of teaching as a specific activity of teachers focusing on their own teaching practices" (Mitchell, Weber & O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2005, p. 2). I wanted to work in the spirit of constructivist education: the notion that knowledge is co-constructed by teachers and learners in a way that is specifically relevant to the life of the learner. I felt that self-study, a practitioner inquiry form of research, was appropriate for me, a doctoral learner who is also a teacher in a group of teachers who are doctoral learners. It seemed a useful way to make transparent my own process of doctoral learning, because it would allow me to focus on the 'practitioner' elements of learning.

As an academic developer by occupation, my interests relate to the development of teaching practice in the higher education institution where I work, knowing that the work is inherently political (Bourdieu, 1988; Burke, Cropper & Harrison, 2000; Hey, 2004; Peseta, 2005; Considine, 2006; Boughey, 2007). Self-study aligned with my

professional identity. Teachers using self-study have employed tools and techniques of research that derive from interpretive-phenomenological traditions including: humanistic (Kitchen, 2004) and psychodynamic psychology (Brown, 2008), feminist research (Coia & Taylor, 2004), narrative approaches (Bass, Anderson-Patterson, Rayer & Baney, 1999; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), arts-based approaches (Pithouse, 2007), ethnography (Spraggins, 2004), and autobiography (Laboskey, 2004), depending on the question that they are asking. I found the literature exciting, opening opportunities for addressing the theory–practice divide that has for so long been part of my biography as an educator and learner in a new South African University of Technology which is seeking new epistemologies of technology (Winberg, 2005, p. 198). Indeed the emphasis of self-study on practices, the things I do and would do as a doctoral candidate, seemed a useful contribution to make to the knowledge around doctoral learning.

Strangely though, I found it alien that the self-study work was predominantly located in teacher education. I thought this was a function of my lack of knowledge of research methodology, and that I was in that space between needing to know something and knowing it without conscious effort. My proposal committee were satisfied with a generalisation that a form of self-research would be central to this study, probably because they knew from experience that the study would change despite the solid six months of work that I had put into reading and writing my proposal (Noy, 2003; Vakkayi, 2006).

I realised much later, as I started to write about my methodology, that the notion that becoming an effective and autonomous learner, through reflecting on the underlying assumptions and beliefs I have about my practices, conflicted with something else. This was my belief about the nature of knowledge. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) enabled me to put a name to it. Much of self-study research is, they say, located in a domain of conceptions about teacher knowledge as "knowledge in practice", and focuses on how practitioners craft and use their practical knowledge to be more effective (p. 271). I thought the notion of a learner learning to learn more effectively was particularly appropriate at the level of doctoral learning, where autonomy and independence are descriptors of the activity (Department of Education, 2004a).

While I liked the contextual nature of this conception of knowledge as an integral part of the knower, it still uses an underlying assumption that there is a better or a worse form of knowing. Paul Deguid points this out in his critique of 'economic views' of knowledge as a commodity for transaction, views that sometimes underpin the idea of a Knowledge Economy (2005). "Accumulation of know *that* does not lead to knowing *how*. Know *that*, we acquire in the form of explicit, codified information. By contrast, "we learn *how* ... by practice" (p. 111).

I have sympathy with the Enlightenment projects goal of self- and therefore social improvement but question whether rationalism is the solution. It seems to me that holistic awareness within a frame of individual and collective accountability is a more productive way of humans living together. Had I adopted self-study, despite its recent emphasis on social transformation and collaboration (Mitchell, et al, 2005), the dynamics of PaperHeaDs would have been obscured because the focus is essentially on the individual.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle's "knowledge for practice" came closer: "knowledge making is understood as a pedagogic act – constructed in the context of use ... inevitably a process of theorizing" (1999, p. 273). I liked the idea that I could push the boundaries of my understanding of how I know through using my social history and current associations. This kind of knowledge of practice as a collective construction allowed for analysis of the social relations lying outside the formal educational sphere of doctoral learning, including culture, relations, connections and rehearsals that I so prized in PaperHeaDs. The problem of this methodology was that it emphasised collaborative knowledge creation. While I felt that while PaperHeaDs and I had 'made knowledge' for practice which was worthy of documenting, I was asking questions about construction of identity rather than practices.

Self-Study or Autoethnography?

In comparing the methodology I wanted, but had not yet found, and the methodology offered through self-study, I discovered that while both philosophies were

constructivist, the epistemologies were different. The first needed to be more socially critical, while the second focused on agency and accountability with the teacher. The official 'teachers' in this study were the supervisors who played the mediating role with each of us individually and the higher education institutions in which we were registered. I needed a methodology that emphasised that as students we lacked institutional positioning and power. I cast around for alternative research methods that would offer similar advantages to self-study, but with more access to the philosophical questions I was asking about the nature of knowledge, power and identity construction, which included teacher identity but was broader for me, incorporating as it did professional, aspirational (Leonard, Becker & Coate, 2005) and social identities. Naydene introduced me to Caroline Ellis and autoethnography (2004). I battled for a long time to try to work out whether autoethnography is a subset of self-study or whether self-study and autoethnography are subsets of research methodologies of self.

Both self-study and autoethnography can be termed methods of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) – systematic forms of inquiry into phenomena occurring in real time. Cohen, Manion and Morrison suggested to me that I could address my research questions autoethnographically, in a naturalistic research process that would allow me to meet my aim. Through autoethnography I could:

> a) identify the characteristics of doctoral identity in myself and other group members;
> b) consider the functioning of the group from the point of view of its members and specifically those that contribute to the development of doctoral identity; and
> c) theorise about the consequences and relevance of PaperHeaDs to doctoral pedagogy (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 169).

Both self-study and autoethnography make lived experience the focus of research and require the researcher to be reflexively oriented towards the questions. Whereas much of the current work on self-study has come out of the field of education and is "related to the idea of studying the 'self' of teaching as a specific activity of teachers focusing on

their own teaching practices" (Mitchell, Weber & O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2005, p. 2), autoethnography has its roots in sociology and social anthropology.

Tedlock (2005, p. 467) suggests that autoethnography emerged as researchers attempted to "reflect on and engage with their own participation within an ethnographic frame" in an "attempt to heal the split between the public and private realms by connecting the autobiographical impulse (the gaze inward) with the ethnographic impulse (the gaze outward)". This appealed to me because I was setting out to discover the parts of doctoral work that are under erasure, the student experience, hidden by the focus on production of knowledge workers and mechanisms to facilitate this (see Chapter 1). As Ellis puts it, "[a]utoethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to the culture" (2004, p. 37). Chang (2008) points out that autoethnography has been defined in multiple ways by many practitioners, ranging from those favouring an attempt at objective analysis of culture (for example Anderson, 2006), to those embracing more descriptive or performative storytelling (for example Rambo, 2007). Bochner and Ellis (2002) show how autoethnographies can vary in emphasis around three axes: the self (auto), culture (ethno) and the research process (graphy). My own preference is to think of the 'graphy' element of the method as the process of inscription at one level, the level of knowledge politics (Holmes & Marcus, 2005) or mapping a terrain at another, the level of marking out a space for interaction and discussion. The autoethnographic method addressed the aims of my research in the sense that the auto axis could enable me to show my own identity constructions and my observations of those of others within the group PaperHeaDs, that is, located in the context of a recently liberated South Africa, and including the discourses of doctoral education (ethno).

Chang suggests that the shape of autoethnography can also vary in its orientation to method, interpretation and content. My aim is an autoethnography that is ethnographic in its methodological orientation i.e. drawing on artefacts of the group: journals, writings and emergent accounts. Its interpretive orientation is educational in terms of the implications of this account for learning as identity construction, and autobiographical in its content orientation in the sense that it draws on the eight-year

history of our lives and the life of the group (Chang, 2008, p. 48). Through it I am questioning the role of my culture in education and vice versa, through my own narrative (the primary data), using ethnographic 'texts' such as journals (which I started keeping in 2002 when I felt that I could possibly start exploring the idea of a 'doing a doctorate'), photographs, the accounts of others, and emails. These texts are 'triggers' to enable me to story my learning experiences and the context in which they occurred and are occurring. Methodologically, it is in my writing and self-analysis that I am able to see the culture of education at work and to question implicit assumptions. My storying of the texts and artefacts of daily life aims to give expression to the discourses at play in doctoral education and insight into the cultural structures that sustain and are sustained by these discourses.

There is a danger in autoethnography of "the elevation of the autobiographical to such a degree that the ethnographer becomes more memorable than the ethnography, the self more absorbing than other social actors" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 402). To combat the danger of obsessive self-involvement described by Atkinson, I decided to use Anderson's suggestions for an analytic autoethnography in my writing of this story: (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis (Anderson, 2006, p. 378).

Atkinson goes on to warn that self-transformation is not the goal of research (even PhD research), and that ultimately the aim is to seek an understanding of social processes (Atkinson, 2006, p. 403). I wanted to describe the variety of positionings, commitments and connections through which we constructed unique doctoral identities (Josselson, 1996) in a way that will help other doctoral learners and their supervisors.

The diagram below (Figure 5) illustrates my methodology in this study, using the nine stories of PaperHeaDs members to illustrate moments of nodal awareness. The eye shape represents my view of the phenomenon of doctoral identity construction, consisting of my theorisation of the PaperHeaDs stories. The green circles represent

narratives of doctoral journeys already completed, while the pink circles represent those journeys still in progress. The positioning of a picture of me behind the study, as well as a PaperHeaD with a story about doctoral learning, illustrates my autoethnographic frame within which the narratives are expressed. The postmodern intent is to include the reader as a participant in this construction by giving the illusion of a mirror. The spaces outside the boundary of the eye shape are indicative of areas of my world not directly included in this study, both my own and those of each PaperHeaD – the diagram express the boundedness of this research.
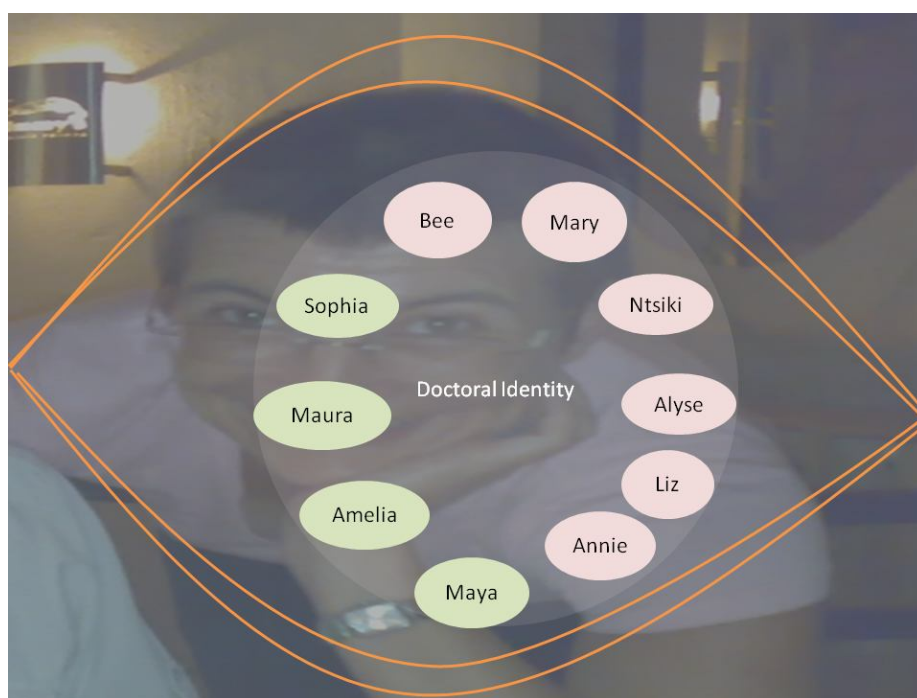
Figure 5: Liz's Autoethnographic Eye

Ethical Agonies

A discussion with the group about the dangers of my positioning in this research in January 2006, gave me a sense of the ethical challenges of the project. The purpose of the discussion was to 'get informed consent'. I found myself starting at the position of ethical friend (Tillman-Healey, 2003) assuming that each person in the group was aware of the potential dangers to themselves of my telling of the PaperHeaDs story, given my insider status and knowledge of intimate details of their lives. I found myself stunned by

the degree of faith the members placed in me. I was surprised at how emotionally (I was in tears) I advocated that they take care in what they agreed to in this study. "The group's stories are the group's stories – your story of the group is yours," they said. The group then urged me to trust myself, to trust them and to know that they trust me, insisting that I "don't become dependent, don't become beholden and don't become a victim" of the group in the process (PaperHeaDs, 2006). I remember this succinct summary by Maya, which was not documented in the meeting notes, because it became an ethical yardstick for me. As can be seen from the extract from the meeting notes below, my tendency to defer to those I see as more capable than I carried the danger of my shifting the responsibility for my study onto the other members. The extract illustrates the degree of care that group members show, and describes the academic interest and engagement that PaperHeaDs activities contain. More importantly, it clearly shows how the group positions me and expects me to behave as a researcher able to argue for and defend my research decisions. (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999)

Meeting extract

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3. Liz's PhD:

Liz wished the group to discuss her PhD, and the extent to which she might or might not use the group as data, since she wanted to use the story of PaperHeaDs as her PhD. If she was to use an ethnographic methodology was it a problem that she herself was also part of the group – both observing the group but also as a participant herself. Was this problematic? There was a plan originally to research the group (PaperHeaDs, 2003). Then, the idea [was] of using the e-mails and this had been agreed on, but would have been different to what was now being proposed [by Liz]. There has been some heavy stuff within the group, and this might all be part of the issue of identity which was core to the study –

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the in jokes etc so that it becomes intensely personal, along with the addition of the researcher's own interpretation. There were implications, it is an easy story to tell, lots of data and within a conceptual framework – for instance all the discussions about childhood – what might be done with that, it is about the rituals of the group.

Liz expressed her concern about how this would work and that she felt that it was not only her study – there was a group ownership. Someone asked whether she was asking whether it meant she wanted the group to trust her – i.e. would they read and agree with it. Two questions were posed to Liz since she sounded uncertain – [1] Was it that she felt that the study might change the dynamics of the group ... relationships might be affected – that they [members] might become more guarded should they be aware of the research? It was felt that the stories in some senses would always remain in the group since even if told through the research; other readers would be unlikely to identify whose stories they were.

Then [2] Did Liz feel that doing the research might change her relationship with the group? Other group members felt that the checking would be an ongoing thing, unlikely to be left to the end. [There was] some concern that this might jeopardize the study should there be objections. One caution was that yes, the tale of PaperHeaDs could be told but that in narrative there also needs to be an analysis – what could be used as examples, and why one would use those. The researcher has to own telling the story and decide whether the story is worth telling – does the group want to tell it? One member felt that she would be comfortable if she knew what the puzzle was about, when she knew that she would be clearer. Another member wondered how similar to action research and participant research this was; as Liz seemed to be moving into this area in the way she described her concerns. A third member indicated that she could feel Liz's unease, there was an issue of boundaries. Could one make an intense friendship group the object of a study, what would one lose in the process?

What does one do when one gets back what one doesn't want? It was interesting listening to this conversation in the light of the group's identity as researchers – if it is framed in this way does that help the problem?

Maya summed the discussion up by indicating that the group supported Liz in her study, and that whilst there might be hesitations, there was trust. Members would read what was produced and would indicate what they didn't want included. She echoed Sophia's questions – where Liz's role was, where her boundaries would be. There was not a problem with informed consent, but there was some concern because Liz sounded worried about the boundaries.

Liz indicated that this was really part of the process, it wasn't possible to get any more personal than identity and change – negotiating identity was part of the PhD and this would be a case study in how this was manifested.

In getting down to the nitty-gritty the questions were posed: Do you show us your descriptions and analysis drafts before they go to the supervisor, before they go to the examiner, when? These things need to be negotiated as one went along. (PaperHeaDs, 2006)

In terms of my concern about boundaries, each time I became aware of approaching aspects of which a member or members "were not proud" (as Annie put it), I discussed it with the person. I have had individual conversations about each story with the person concerned and individually discussed with them the degree to which identifiable characteristics and story events could reveal their identity despite the use of pseudonyms. Each member is aware, as active researchers concerned with ethics, that despite all precautions, the community of academics in South Africa is small and they could be identified. One even resisted a pseudonym until I asked her to rethink the issue. The temptation as a reader is always to try to identify someone you know. Researchers have described the unintentional consequences of such revelations in academia (Peseta, 2001; Tillman-Healey, 2003; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Ellis, 2007;

Rambo, 2007). All stories were approved by the individual before they were sent to my supervisors, Lebo and Naydene, who were probably more rigorous about anonymity than I was. They consistently identified aspects that I had missed, through sometimes being over-confident in the trust I had been gifted[19]. The ethic of care in researching in friendship is interactional. As I took care of the boundaries of the group members, they have expressed themselves as equally care-full of my vulnerability as shown in the meeting notes extract (Meeting extract) above.

The resolution of the discussion produced a request that I share descriptions, drafts and the way I plan to use data, but that an agreement that my analysis would be a new text. Yet I did not regard this 'informed consent' as carte blanche for the entire study (Tillman-Healey, 2003, p. 772). It was always possible that members could choose to withdraw or limit their participation at any point, should it be inconvenient or threatening to continue. I decided then that the possibility of a member withdrawing from the process did not and would not remove from them their right and freedom to comment on my story.

In her analysis of the failure of Western ethics, Alison Jaggar argues for feminist ethics which values traits that are traditionally feminine: "interdependence, community, connection, body, in order to balance the dominance of culturally masculine traits like independence, autonomy, separation, mind, reason" (Jaggar, 2001, p. 530). In her work on the ethic of care in education, Nel Noddings stresses that our capacity for fulfilment lies in our commitment to others (Noddings, 1995b). In this sense then my priority as an ethical researcher lay in honouring the choice of each member of the group and the group as a whole with regard to what is represented in the texts with regard to confidentiality and their identity. This is especially important given the relatively small and intensely politicised academic community of South Africa, as noted above. One of

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19 This word has been specifically chosen because I felt honoured and appreciated by the trust the group members gave me. I wonder often whether we as researchers appreciate the people who are the data for our knowledge-creation activity, much as I have been forced to do in researching myself and friends.

the options open to me was to compile 'composite' characters – to blend the narratives – but it was important to me that each voice expressed its own unique journey. After all each doctoral identity is a unique expression of the individual – to blur this would be to betray the purpose of the study.

Learning from Ellis' mistake of not revealing herself, and not taking back her texts to her research community in her ethnography of a fishing village (Ellis, 2004, p. 149), I undertook to not ask of the members of the group anything that I would not ask of myself (see Appendix 2). I also recognise that given the unpredictable nature of the research, "[c]onfidentiality and informed consent become ongoing negotiations. Researchers and partipants reflexively consider and discuss power dynamics at every turn and constantly strive to balance the need to advance the social justice agenda and the need to protect each other from harm" (Tillman-Healey, 2003, p. 745).

The feminist communitarian ethical model that I adopted (Christians, 2005, pp. 150-155) recognises that identity is constructed in the intersection between the social and the individual; it privileged collaboration and consultation, and reciprocal care and understanding in the completion of the project. These ethical positions overlap with the believability of the account of PaperHeaDs and the value of the account to inform the theory of doctoral learning.

Believability

Feminist communitarian ethics view an "interpretive discourse as sufficient when it fulfils three conditions: it represents multiple voices, enhances moral discernment and promotes social transformation" (Christians, 2005, p. 152). The very strengths of the post-modern, autoethnographic approach in this research – the acknowledgement of the intersubjective nature of meaning-making which allowed me to inquire into how each of us construct/ed ourselves as doctoral learners – had the potential to be viewed as weaknesses.

Early in the evolution of narrative inquiry as an accepted research method, Connelly and Clandinin, in rejecting positivist notions of validity, reliability and generalisation as criteria for the quality of qualitative research, wrote that "each inquirer must search for, and defend, the criteria [for credibility] that best apply to … her work" (1990, p. 7). The stories of ten mature South African women about their doctoral journey are unlikely to be generalisable to the majority of doctoral learners and their ways of negotiating the journey with group support are unlikely to be the single 'truth' of doctoral learning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 26). Oleson (2005, p. 263) cites Deborah Lupton: "The point is not to seek a certain 'truth', but to uncover varieties of truth that operate, to highlight the nature of truth as transitory and political and the position of subjects as fragmentary and contradictory" (1995, pp. 160-161).

Yet, the credibility of this research lies in its verisimilitude (Denzin, 1997), or the degree to which the account seems 'true'. It will need to evoke recognition, remembrance of your own experiences, hopes for future agency and possibilities for enriching the process of doctoral learning in the reader. I recognise that verisimilitude is only ever partial. The "researcher can only ever produce a text that reproduces multiple versions of the real showing how each version impinges on and shapes the phenomenon being studied". Therefore 'deconstructive verisimilitude' – the ability to "reproduce and deconstruct the reproductions and simulations that structure the real" (1997, p. 13) – provides an opportunity to express my version of realities experienced and to question them.

Richardson points out that "Language does not 'reflect' social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality … it is the place where one's sense of self – one's subjectivity – is constructed" (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 961). The value of this research will depend upon what Saukko (2005) refers to as contextual, dialogic and self-reflexive validity. The reader should have a sense of the social realities (the contextual dimension) of our lives as South African academic women, the local realities (the dialogic dimension), and the processes of PaperHeaDs and the social shaping of reality (the self-reflexive dimension) of how doctoral identity may be negotiated. "It is

the balance between the way in which private experience can provide insight and solution for public issues and troubles and the way in which public theory can provide insight and solution for private trial that forms the nexus of self-study" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15).

Paraphrasing Bullough and Pinnegar's suggested criteria for a good self-study to PhD learning, and applying them to autoethnography suggests that this work should:

- be a good read,
- attend to "nodal moments" of doctoral learning,
- enable reader insight,
- reveal an awareness of ethical issues,
- balance the aspects of the private with the value for public theory,
- tell a recognisable learner story,
- portray character development in the face of serious issues within a complex setting,
- give place to the dynamic struggle of living life whole, and
- offer new perspective (2001, p. 19).

My self-study is central to an autoethnographic narrative of PaperHeaDs, attending to the nodal moments of ten learners learning 'academia' for their doctorates. It offers a story of education, but within a matrix of the learners' experience. Bullough and Pinnegar's criteria strongly parallel those described by Carolyn Ellis[20] – that good autoethnographic writing should motivate cultural criticism, be closely aligned with theoretical reflection, serving as a "vehicle for thinking 'new sociological subjects' and forming 'new parameters of the social' and the need to critically engage with 'western ideologies'" (2004, p. 253).

Feminist authors also pick up the need for qualitative research to engage with the transformative. Patti Lather's catalytic validity (1991, p. x) – the capacity of a

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20 These criteria are attributed by her to Bochner, Clough and Denzin

"representation of reality" to be useful in helping women transform reality as "subjects and objects of their own experiences" – is an additional way of evaluating the rigour of my research. "Scholarship that makes its biases part of its argument arises as a new contender for legitimacy" (Lather, 1991, p. 3).

The dangers of narrative inquiry are: the "illusion of causality", "substitution of falsehood for meaning" and "narrative smoothing" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, pp. 7-10). The illusion of causality results when the retrospective temporal construction of the stories seems to show that one event or action naturally led to another. Harré and Van Langenhove's "rhetorical redescription" (1999, p. 15) suggests that this is an aspect of identity construction, so the danger lay in relating narratives that hid the experience of chaos that is the process of self-construction.

I avoided the conscious or unconscious "substitution of falsehood for meaning" by checking each story with each individual.

"Narrative smoothing" – the illusion of the happy ending to a logical and sequential process – was a real concern. I experienced it when Maya asked me to lead a discussion on 'the student experience of supervision' with a group of supervisors in her institution. In the group of fifteen supervisors, not one remembered experiencing difficulty or anxiety related to their doctoral study, including Maya. I was amazed and somewhat horrified at the implications of this re-storying for their practice as supervisors. As storytellers, human beings have the tendency to blur nodal moments into a story of continuity, transforming the points of analytic interest into the illusion of an untroubled linear argument. My adoption of a postmodern representation is intended to trouble the linear argument (Lather & Smithies, 1997). My juxtaposition of the texts and artefacts, and, hopefully, the dialogue that you, the reader, construct from them, is intended to reveal the layers of numerous identity discourses that are part of doctoral learning experience.

To use a metaphor from geometry, the postmodern frame of the stories allows me the freedom to map the points, sketch the possible lines, outline latent planes and add

dimensionality (richness) to the autoethnography's meaning. As suggested by Foucault in *Archaeology of Knowledge*, where PaperHeaDs is the "inert trace ... the object without context", the aim is not to "aspire to a condition of history ... but to the intrinsic description of the monument" that is doctoral study as experienced by ten learners (Foucault, 1972, p. 8).

Unfolding the methodology

My starting point for structuring an account of PaperHeaDs that put my own development as a doctoral student centre stage was to read again the messages posted on the Yahoo Group list (Figure 6).
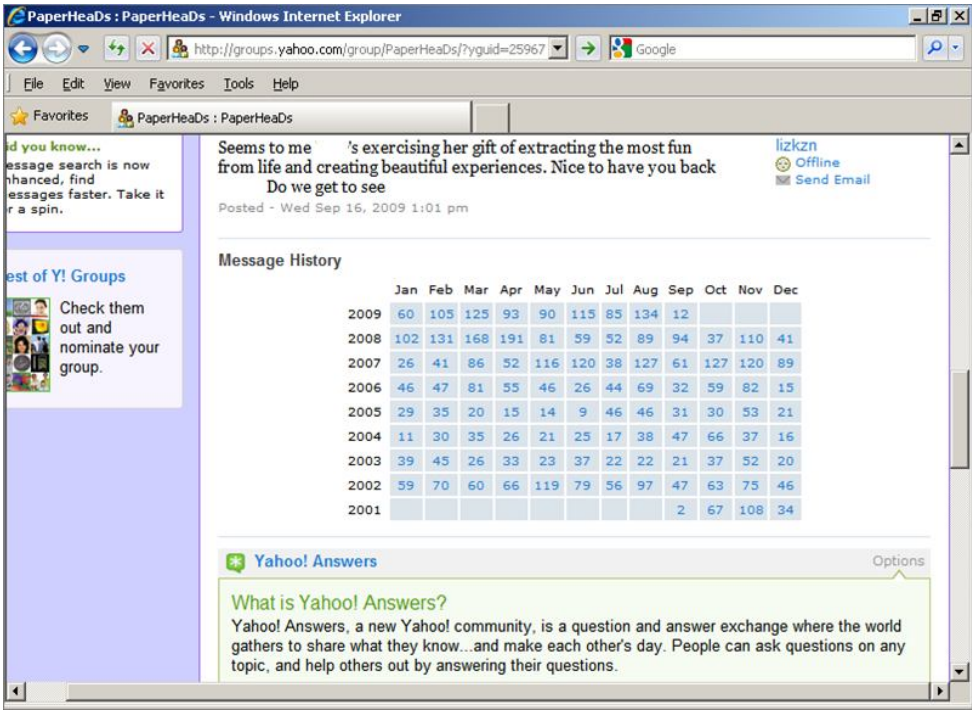
Figure 6: Opening screen of PaperHeaDs YahooGroup showing message history

I downloaded them all (roughly 3000 at the time) and converted them from .html format into .pdf format (which preserves the layout and look of the website see Figure 7), then merged them into a single Adobe Acrobat document. This enabled me to read the posts easily and consecutively – showing the links to responses – without having to wait for posts to load on the internet (and saving costs of bandwidth and time on the

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net). The archive then read like a journal of group members including those who have left or suspended their studies. It covers the times members were dealing with sick and dying family members, funny things children said, jokes about the nature of studying and academia, as well as logistical issues of trying to arrange meetings, Getaways, and food. It enabled me to see a prism of the group as a whole, as well as the individual facets that were each person's uniqueness and contribution.
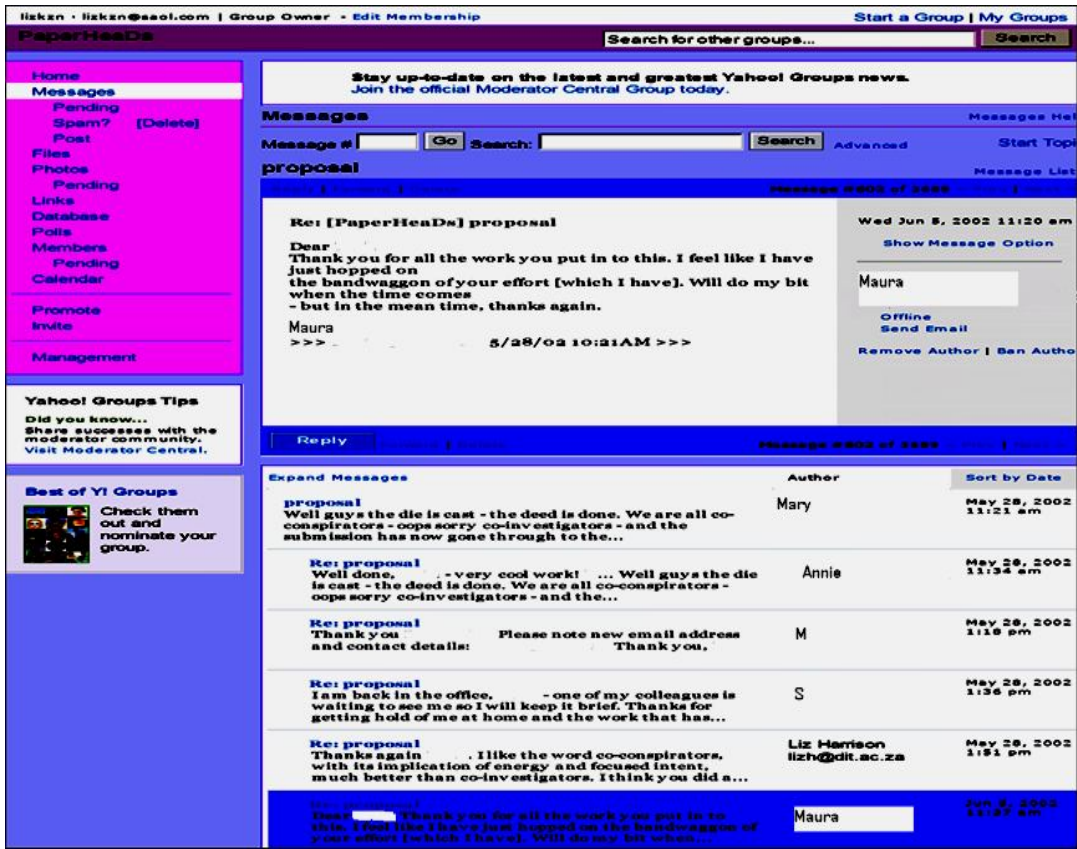
Figure 7: Example of PaperHeaDs messages saved in .pdf format[21]

I found it difficult to see my Self[22] because of the stance I had taken years before as the observer/recorder. I felt very much like a walking video camera from the moment I committed myself to this study. I hoped that hearing the stories of the other members

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21 Identifying characteristics have been removed by using the snapshot tool in Acrobat to create a picture in graphic format, that can be edited using MS Paint.
22 I have used a capital S to indicate the Liz that would have her own story, an external representation – and a lower case s to indicate my internal musings.

would help me locate myself in terms of my role and contribution to the group and thus give me insight into how I construct/ed myself as a doctoral student over time.

To start the story – I read my own contributions on the YahooGroup list, which I created in 2001 partly by accident, because I was experimenting with facilitating discussions online. I also thought it would be an easy way for us to co-ordinate group meetings and activities. It evolved into an archive of our thinking. I saw that the tone and confidence of the 'poster' Liz appeared to shift. I moved (was it evolution?) from the 'tech-head' responsible for helping everyone get registered and operating on the list, to an encourager and provocateur of posts, to the clown playing with ideas. I saw this as myself getting oriented and hiking up very steep learning curves before I conceded to the role the group suggested for me – bard, narrator, storyteller and hence, to the seriously engaged doctoral student facing the logistical challenges of officially performing doctoral learning. This rough analysis seemed superficial to me, it gave me labels for my procession of identity trial runs, but not a mechanism for understanding them or convincing a reader of my narrative's value for understanding the experience of doctoral learning.

To investigate this further, I created a chronological timeline (Chang, 2008, pp. 73-75)
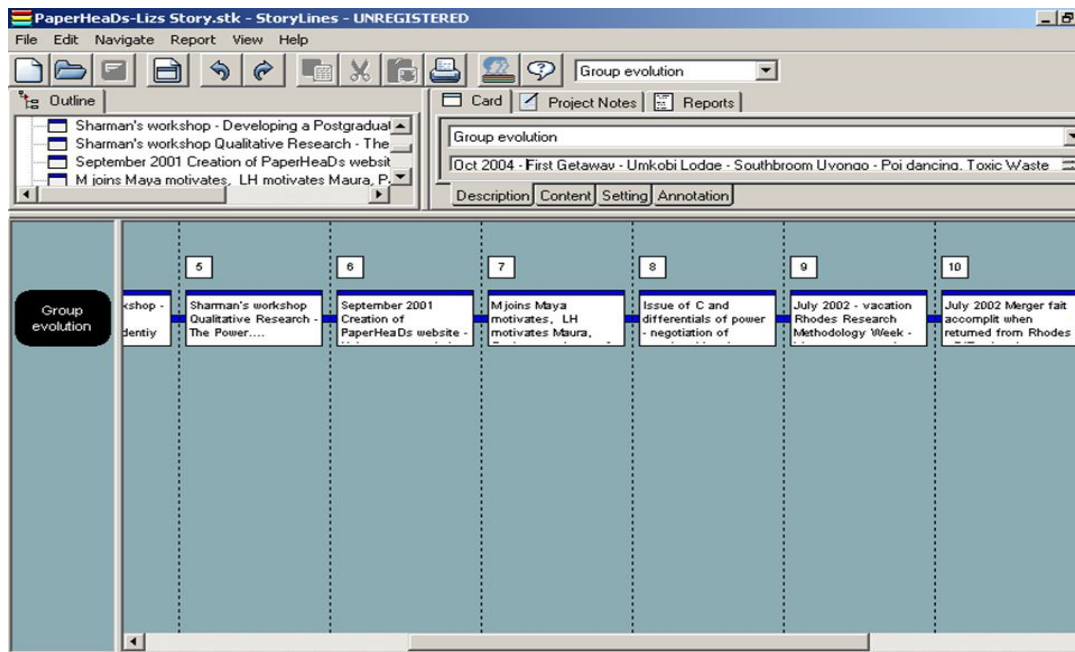
Figure 8: Screenshot of Storyline Programme

that reflected what I thought of as my shifts as events/memorable moments/critical incidents, using an authoring software called Storylines (Figure 8). This enabled me to create an electronic storyboard of my process. Referencing the non-narrative data of my own posts and my personal journals of the last four years, I was able to put dates to incidents, but more, I found that my mind threw me back into experiences – and I relived them on multiple levels. I was tapping the emotions of these embodied memories: the devastation of careless criticism; the frustration of being unfocussed; the terrifying, first international conference presentation. I was looking back from the knowing me on the unknowing or differently knowing person I had been then, and I was looking forward to an identity that I thought wanted to have.

I wrote the accounts of these nodal moments in an exercise book, delving deeply into the implications of my memories and noting how these networked to events and incidents that had little to do with PaperHeaDs, but everything to do with the way I make meaning. These had to be written by hand, they were too multilayered and emotional to capture in a clinical and even font of a word-processed document. My handwriting through my journals told a story of its own. My handwriting is generally a scrawl but represents my feelings more accurately than word-processed documents. Through the years of my journal this graphic representation of my Self lurches through abstractions, marches pedantically joining dots, spins around connections, descends into self-doubt and takes off into flights of fantasy. In the journal extract below, I was writing at 5 am and feeling calm and in control – I was doing something constructive.

Despite my habit of journaling which gave me a feeling of control, I was still not able to see my Self in the mode in which I was seeing the other members of PaperHeaDs. Sophia came to my rescue after we had discussed my problem at a meeting. She offered to use a method she had evolved in her doctoral study – a phenomenological interview

– to help me approach the meaning of my experience of doing a doctorate[23]. She would benefit, she said, from practising the questioning technique with me and I would have an opportunity to see my meanings of knowledge, doctorateness, and PaperHeaDs through our discussion. Incidentally, she suggested, I would get a sense of how sensitive and personal being questioned about doctoral identity might be. Figure 9 (below) is an extract of my journal on the day I was going to meet her. Chapter 1 resulted from this part of the investigation.

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23 This raises an ethical and a logistical question. Sophia's phenomenological work is remarkable, a detailed and astute analysis of the vast (and linguistically dense) area of phenomenology led to her evolving a particular approach to interviewing in this tradition. I cannot emulate it, nor can I reconstruct her thesis argument here. Yet to cite it would be to reveal her identity. She deserves acknowledgement for it and the aid that it gave to my understanding of my doctoral identity development, yet I cannot name her. An extract from the two hour discussion is included in Appendix 3 to give a sense of the value of her contribution to this thesis.

24th Jan 2008

Today I'm driving up to Pietermaritzburg where ___ is going to "phenomenologically interview" me or I am going to be phenomenologically interviewed by ___ Is she interviewing me, of me, at me?

The suggestion came from ___ when we were discussing the ethics of me interviewing everyone and then possibly seeing everyone's transcripts. I think ___ was an impetus towards fairness — of putting our equated experiences in the pot of "data" at the same time.

I liked the idea because of my difficulty locating myself. "Seeing myself in this process — of setting the balance between the "I for me" the "me for others" and the "others for me" that Bawdett uses. What can I know? has to be answered I think from these perspectives. I'm hoping this interview will give me a sense of how I've constructed my knowing from each — and how this is fitting into my notions of what a doctorate is.

... I just had the thought that I wasn't yet ___ about this at all.

I wonder if my views have changed? I'm nagged to by the rock star/screen actor who said when receiving his knighthood that he feels the pressure to perform ethically and with valour. (I'm not sure whether it was in ___ or not.)

As I was searching the net to read up on phenomenology this morning, I wondered how ___ had done her D in such a ___ way. I wondered if she'd seen the masses of resources on-line — or whether she had relied on original sources. It reminded me of conversation with ___ last night as we realised about the necessity of interrogating the concepts that we use — specifically the use of the concept self-efficacy and more of "subtlety".

We crossing to knowing now and referencing it soon. Even if you haven't read in depth about how these concepts evolved in the culture. I remember ___ wrestling with a conflict between ___ view and that of another

I wondered whether this way of constructing knowing had been encouraged by the many times spent with the PaperHeaDs interrogating the meanings of our lives and what that meant for our doctoral studies and vice versa. I believe the space of PaperHeaDs gave me permission to indulge these explorations and to watch these shifts. I was challenged by the need to turn my deep inner cogitations inside out, to expose them to analysis without; I found, a contextual framework to locate them. I did not know who I was in terms of the structure of the group, because I had become so comfortable in the group identity. This situation could be seen as one of four classic validity challenges faced by narrative researchers, described by Polkinghorne as "the limits of reflection to bring notice to the layers of meaning that are present outside of awareness" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 480). How could I begin to understand what I did not know existed?

The process was further complicated by the fact that I was both subject of the research and the researcher. The limits of language to express my meaning of the lived experience of doctoral study were constrained because of my language – I am English speaking from English ancestry. The challenge was to break out of that comfort zone, to make 'alien' my research subject, myself. The hegemony of the English language meant that the discourse frames – or my habitus (Bourdieu, 1989, p 98) – that had structured my entire life, unquestioned, were difficult to make 'strange'.

Michael White, the famed family and narrative therapist (whose work influenced me in another world as an educator of child care workers), argues for an externalising emphasis in storytelling for therapeutic purposes. Using a technique of giving a problem a name and treating it as a character he will ask, for example, "What does Depression want your life to look like?" White as therapist aims to disrupt the hold of 'thin/negative' narratives on the client and to allow the 'subject' to re-story herself within a thick/positive narrative (White & Epston, 1990; White, 2005).

I knew that doctoral study for me was a thick, and I hoped, positive narrative. The process of my involvement in PaperHeaDs had shown me that I needed my doctorate to

be more than a series of steps taken to achieve a status goal (I identify as a "Process Queen"). Therefore, in my journal, I started to answer the question of how I construct myself as a doctoral learner, by asking the question, "What does your Doctorate want your life to look like?" While I did not see the 'Doctorate' as a problem needing therapy, though there have been moments when that seemed to be the case, I felt that the notions of identity re/construction underpinning this practice would serve my investigation. White's notion of getting the Problem, or in this case, the Challenge, to speak, seemed to me a way of accessing layers of meaning I had not previously seen. It meant that I had to write all the roles that White usually allocates to different people in a therapeutic group context. I had to express the Challenge's point of view, give my perception as Subject, and play the "investigative reporter" who exposes the Challenge's successes and failures.

The investigative reporter needed some background data. Polkinghorne suggests that interviewers can assist participants to display the intricacy of their experiences, which are often diminished by a literal account, by "encouraging the use of figurative expressions." Following Ely et al (1997, p. 116) I collected the metaphors I had used in my journals over the years, considering them for the "concepts [I] lived with and [thought] through … [and which structured] the ways in which [I] oriented [myself] in [my] research studies".

I interrogated "Liz's Doctorate" (in the guise of "Dr Wannabe Harrison") about what it wanted Liz to be. This exercise created a vignette expressed as a play (Appendix 5), embodying what I took to be the constructions of my Self at the time of beginning to implement the plan of my research proposal. It was clear to me that the playlet represented a moment in time in the story of my process towards becoming a confident researcher and knower. Even as I finished writing it, I realised that I had shifted in my relation to my study – it was now *my* doctoral study – for better or for worse. I was creating my reality (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

On finishing the piece I had a sense of astonishment: was that really what it was about for me? It did not answer the question, "What does your Doctorate want your life to

be?" but it said much about academic desire and identity negotiation. Analysing it, I realised that this might be the core issue – I had no idea why I felt that a Doctorate was something to achieve. What was clear from the piece was that there was plenty of desire for this amorphous something, that was in keeping with Barnacle's account of erotic knowing, in which she argues for a shift from epistemological to ontological approaches in doctoral learning (Barnacle, 2005). Was lack of commitment the reason why the relationship with my doctoral study felt so cruel and callow? Alternatively, was it that I did not feel that I was a doctor in the process of becoming – whatever that might mean?

I realised that I could use this piece as a conversation-starter in the context of friends investigating doctoral identity, because in it I had exposed deep fears and positions. Ethically this approach would be aligned with asking no more of each of them than I would of myself (Tillman-Healey, 2003) (see Appendix 2). It could become a tool for initiating a conversation around the notion of doctoral identity – a way of "disrupt[ing] the telling of unitary, rational stories" (Williams & Linnell, 2006, p. 58). The fact that I had watched each of us creating a story of doctoral study for between three and eight years, meant that I needed to hear the story in detail from a new perspective.

The linguistic turn in the social sciences, namely that language constructs our reality, makes the idea of an interviewee answering questions about her reality problematic. I therefore could not interview the other PaperHeaDs, because our interaction would be constructing the 'reality' about which we were talking. It would be more honest and authentic for us to have a conversation about their experience of doctoral learning (Williams & Linnell, 2006, p. 59). The advantage of conversation with each of the PaperHeaDs was that each conversation would be founded in the relationship that I had developed with each of them over the years (Oakley, 1981; Rapley, 2001; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). It would, to a certain extent, remove the constraints imposed by trying to 'ask the right questions, the right way' and honestly acknowledge that this telling and attending process (Riessman, 1993) was the product of two of us engaging in an inquiry. The therapeutic conversation with my Doctorate described above (and reproduced in Appendix 2) became a conversation-starter in the context of friends investigating

together their ideas of what a doctorate meant to them and how they got there, or were getting there.

The transcripts of these conversations became the starting point for each story I constructed.

Narrative Analysis

The PaperHeaDs group members were research participants in a different way to the typical collaborations described by feminist researchers (e.g. Lather & Smithies, 1997). Each, individually, and as a collective, had influenced my constructions – and had recognised or not (Gee, 2000) my rehearsals of scholarly identity. How to acknowledge this without giving up my position as 'The Researcher' was a question that I wrestled with throughout the time I was writing. While it fell to me to tell this tale of PaperHeaDs with the purpose of describing how we negotiated relationships, purposes, transitions and ways to be useful in the group, it had essentially to be my tale of them and us. Each had to trust me to give my account; therefore, each had to have the power to determine what might be a justifiable or desirable inclusion from their own life histories (Ellis, 2008). These experiences shaped the way they each shaped the way the group evolved.

The transcriptions of each conversation, checked with each member, provided an anchor, which, along with my recall of PaperHeaDs archived material, helped me write a story for each individual. Most important were the sounds. While the two-dimensional transcript helped me tie down a moment in time, the sounds from the recordings threw me into the experience again, enabling me to relive my empathy/rejection of what each person was positing, and providing me with a locus of analysis (Keats, 2009).

My record of the environment and my reactions to the whole of each conversation, and particularly the way the conversation enabled me to think of the influence of the specific individual on my doctoral journey, provided a holistic sense of each person and their contribution to PaperHeaDs and therefore my habitus. Yet I struggled with the variety of possible points to be made in any story of them that I might tell. In telling

each story the way I chose to tell it, I would already be moving into the fourth level of narrative representation described by Riessman (1993). The experience of doctoral learning in our conversations had already been re-presented in the attending (paying attention to certain aspects), telling (the choice of what to say about those aspects) and in the transcription (the choice of what to emphasise in voice stresses, interpretations of mood, placement of commas, what constituted a sentence). In deciding what parts of the conversation would become the story that I told, I was again foregrounding some things and moving others into the background or completely out of a reader's awareness.

In paying attention to certain elements of doctoral learning, in each of the conversations about doctoral identity, each member and myself had made "certain phenomena meaningful" (Riessman, 1993, p. 9) in the context of my relationship with each of them in turn. This first refining of the wealth of experience that was each relationship, set in the arena of the then seven-year history of PaperHeaDs, was influenced by all the prior history I had had with each woman. For example, the fact that Amelia and I had been at school together was a factor in my telling of her story because of that shared experience.

The second level of refining the representation occurred in the choice of each of us about what to say about the elements, foregrounding some and backgrounding others. By cueing the conversation with my self-revelatory piece about my own relationship with my doctorate, to some degree I had set up the boundaries of the discussion, positioned it to focus on the relationship with the notion of doctoralness. Each PaperHeaD had to make a choice about whether to engage with that construction, to reject it, or to reposition the discussion in terms that were more relevant to them. And they made that choice. While Alyse, Sophia, and Maura embraced the idea of a relationship with their doctorates, Maya, Amelia, Annie, Ntsiki, Bee, and Mary were less comfortable with the idea. This choice of what and how to represent their doctorates provided significant starting points for each story.

An example of this was in conversation with Maya. She had said almost as a sidebar, "It's that thing of if a tree falls in a forest … does anyone hear it?" referring to outsiders' perception of PaperHeaDs. In our conversation, Maya had been looking at me earnestly trying to articulate her interest and speaking very rapidly as she tried to get out a complex thought. I had nodded understanding and she had moved on very quickly. Only afterwards, faced with the decontextualised and stripped down rough transcription, did I realise that as a researcher I could have explored this powerful comment in much more depth. In this way my positioning as a friend and insider in conversation might have obscured details because at the time we were focussed on 'doctoral identity' not the identity of the group.

Riessman's third level of narrative representation lies in the choice of what and how to mark the various elements of the conversation in the transcriptions. Because of the amount of data, I made the decision to pay for the data to be transcribed by an experienced transcriber. All the PaperHeaDs were comfortable with the idea of Del[24] doing the initial transcriptions, because she had been an honorary member of the group since its inception, invited to celebratory functions and lunches, if not to meetings. She was familiar with the group dynamic and had contributed to our work in many ways. She knew the voices, rhythms and accents and was able to make excellent first transcriptions from the recordings. This reduced the amount of time I spent with the transcriptions, capturing the words, but did not take away the work of listening to the recordings and reading them against the words that Del had captured. One excellent example occurred where Del heard that Sophia had 'flung her peas across the table'! I heard the same thing when listening to the recording and was puzzled, thinking that I had obviously been paying attention to some other element of the conversation. This provided one of many moments where I asked myself how reliable I was being as a researcher, and which I had consciously to think through philosophically, considering my positioning and my role in qualitative research as an instrument and the value of aiming

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24 Pseudonym – the invisibility of this kind of labour in the production of doctorates is perhaps another area for investigation in the field of doctoral learning. Del's reliability and dedication in admin support has been critical to my own work.

for authenticity and verisimilitude. It was only when I took the transcription back to Sophia, that she, closer to the original story, was able to point out that she had thrown her 'keys across the table'.

The choices made in transcription go further than simple misunderstanding. As Riessman points out, all forms of recorded data are selective and result in a "fixation of the action" (1993, p. 11). Pauses and sentence repairs, incomplete sentences and things not articulated in face-to-face interaction because of assumptions of understanding and body language are reduced in the capturing through recording to only 'noised' information. I made choices of how to represent these in the transcriptions working with Del's original rough capture. Going back over the transcriptions, I chose to represent silences with three dots [...], to include some signs of my involvement in the conversation, and to highlight emphases and stressed words through underlining. As I worked to achieve the most accurate textual capture of the conversation, I was horrified to discover that people do not speak in identifiable sentences, with clear capital letters and full stops! Our sentences run on and on with 'and's' and 'so's' to maintain contact and communication, so that each time I made a decision about where the capital letter fitted and where a full stop ended a thought, I was making a research decision and to an extent inserting my meaning into the text (Rapley, 2001). An extract showing these decisions that make a refined transcription from an initial rough transcription is included in Appendix 6.

Having attended, talked, and transcribed I was able to focus on analysing each experience of the conversation, identifying nodal moments (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 16) and making decisions about 'how the fragments of lives given [in the conversations] would be housed' (Riessman, 1993, p. 13).

Riessman's fourth level of representation presented more challenges. I was faced with an ethical dilemma of representation – did I tell a story that suited a predefined purpose – for example a clear argument for student-formed doctoral groups – or did I tell a story that reflected my understanding of the journey the individual was undergoing, and only thereafter consider the implications of each for my research questions? I decided that

the latter approach would be true to my research paradigm and ethic of authenticity. Most importantly, it would honour our friendship (Tillman-Healey, 2003).

Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998 – see Figure 10 below) point out that narratives can be interpreted in terms of either their form (e.g. sequence of events, complexity, coherence, narration style, use of metaphors), or their content (e.g. events, people involved, relevance attribution). Both form and content can be analysed holistically or categorically depending on whether the researcher wants to focus on the whole person or a specific phenomenon. I wanted to do both. I wanted to show how the whole person comes to the experience of doctoral learning, how she positions herself and how she is positioned by the discourses of doctoral education.
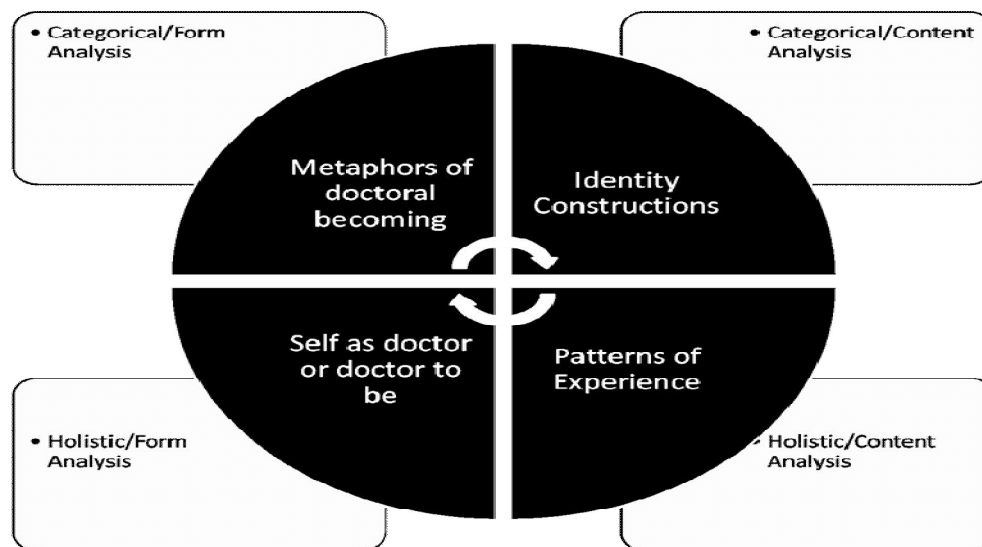
Figure 10: Narrative Interpretations: Application of Lieblich et al, 1998 to PaperHeaDs' stories

I listened for 'nodal moments' (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 16), points of narrative that would allow me to construct a 'pattern in experience' which would enable the reader to see each person (and myself) more clearly. I specifically listened for moments of accommodation, challenge and resistance indicative of identity-work (McCormack, 2000). I then considered my own positioning. Why did I empathise? What was it that I

was rejecting? Why did I resist that interpretation? How did it parallel my own story or contradict it?

For each story, I found a metaphor to describe the positioning I observed in terms that were located in my cultural experience and made it meaningful for me. In all cases, the metaphor arose out of the transcripts. In this way I hoped to codify the "two discursive processes ... 'positioning' and the other 'rhetorical redescription' ... the discursive construction of stories about institutions and macrosocial events that make them intelligible as societal icons" (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999, p. 15).

I took each story back to the 'storyteller' to verify that it was an authentic account of my perspective of their account. Each PaperHeaD had commented on and corrected my transcripts, and therefore could see how I had derived each metaphor. In spite of this, I was not sure that how I had used metaphor in each of their stories would be acceptable to them. It was essential to me that they approved of my version, even though they and I were aware that verisimilitude is only ever partial (Denzin, 1997) and that this was my text of their stories. I needed to know that my text had "mapped the real" and that it felt truthful and real to each PaperHeaD (Denzin, 1997, p. 10). In this, I was aiming for Denzin's second meaning of verisimilitude: that the story represented an opinion about their story that we could agree upon (p. 11).[25]

I waited in tense anticipation for their comments, hoping that the trustworthiness of my account had captured a verisimilitude of their experiences. In different ways, each indicated that the experience of reading my story of their journey – having my view of each of them articulated – was strange yet enlightening.

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25 Denzin suggests that the first meaning of verisimilitude is the capacity of a text to describe the real, while the third is whether a text enables the reader to know something told as if she has experienced it.

Wow ... Such insight. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and I think it says so clearly (more clearly than I could) what the different tensions have been in my story and how they've led me to this point. Thanks so much for doing this. In a way it feels like my own record of my journey and I didn't even have to do it myself. (Annie, Email, 14th April 2009)

At last I'm getting to understand what you're doing in your PhD! i.e. the 'storying' part and your role in relation to that – as external yet internal commentator. It was strange but enjoyable 'reading myself' again – I've made a few comments but only where I think the transcript may have been difficult to hear – and I'm quite happy with 'you' and your voice (and the choice of Sophia) in it all. I can't wait to read the whole thesis to 'read' the others in the group! (Sophia, Email, 5th May 2009)

I have read my 'story' and I am happy that I have been truly represented of how I developed my doctoral identity; I am however embarrassed about some of the flattering things you say in the history that I don't always feel worthy of.

Amelia

[What Amelia's daughter said:] Ma, that showed me so many things about you that I didn't really see but was always aware of. I know about your status and the high regard people have for you, but I only see shadows. I don't see the full form, but this shows it all to me and makes it clear. I dunno if that makes sense. I can also really see your personality in what she's said and what you said. It was nice to see you as others do and I'm proud that I'm your daughter :)

(Amelia, Email, 22nd May 2009)

I have not written till now as (a) I felt quite emotional while and after reading it – in a good way – and (b) I have not had a minute to think about anything for myself – not good. ... I was about to tell a colleague a bit about it this morning and promptly started to cry – all very embarrassing. ... For now I would like to say that it sounds like yet another of my personas/ identities – a strong and confident one compared to how I feel much of the time – very encouraging is that I have – since reading it – been reflecting on that aspect and thinking about past and present e.g. work achievements over a 42 year career so far – ... Perhaps I have been positively restor-i-ed? ... I think you have captured this remarkably well – makes for rather strange reading – a bit like Alice through the looking glass – looking at a reflection that is both familiar and unfamiliar, comfortable but also uncomfortable which tells me you might well be onto something here.

(Alyse, Email, 2nd June 2009)

Thanks for my bits yesterday – quite fascinating to hear myself speaking through you. A few tiny bits I disagreed with (purely technical things). Then as ever the editor in me wanted to suggest a few bits and pieces (polishing perfectly clean windows!). How and what kind of feedback do you want?

(Maya[26], Email, 9th June 2009)

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26 Maya gave me very positive feedback face-to-face, over lunch. I was very nervous before our lunch, feeling somewhat like a child waiting to "see the principal in her office". She on the other hand was reluctant to use her review toolbar because she says she gets overtaken by her supervisor persona.

Thank you so much for this. It couldn't have come at a better time in my PhD journey...I can't afford therapy right now for two reasons; One - medical aid is damn stingy with that kind of thing and [Two] - just where would I find the time? So this for me has been therapy.

(Ntsiki, Email, 12th June 2009)

My comments are probably of a very pure editorial nature. I can't disagree with anything you have said, but want to say that it has really added to my insight to 'Bee – Researcher' and given me much to think about as I continue this journey. So thank you. I'm really happy with what you have written ...

(Bee, Email, 10th July 2009)

I admit I was somewhat afraid to open your e-mail – not because I was worried about what you would say – I trust you implicitly – but because of what it might reveal. I admit to weeping openly. So many thoughts ran through my head as I read your interpretation – flashbacks of different events ... the closeness and cohesion of my department growing and developing almost in a cocoon-like state as we attempted to keep the external politics at bay, my separation from this environment to focus inwardly and think and write my thesis, the return to the growing 'illness' in the department...and the loss of confidence – so destructive and so difficult to reassume... I am glad to be part of your 'motley' group – and proud. PaperHeads came to represent so much of what I wished to aspire to, and I value my experience within and even 'without' the group... I can only end off by saying 'Thank you, Liz'.

(Maura, Email, 14th July 2009)

These responses to each of the stories convinced me that I had achieved verisimilitude in the eyes of the PaperHeaDs – an opinion of their story that we could agree on. From the positive nature of the responses, I was also satisfied that I had achieved 'friendship validity' (Tillman-Healey, 2003). I had not abused trust and I had achieved a successful analysis as well as a representation that was recognisable to each person, if not exactly synchronised with her own stories of themselves.

Summary

Following the theoretical location of this study that was outlined in Chapter 1, this chapter has described the experience of choosing a research methodology appropriate to the questions that I am asking about doctoral learning. It provides the ethical and contextual reasons for my position as an autoethnographic researcher. These reasons led to my choice of method of narrative analysis and the mechanisms I used to inform the narratives of each of the members of PaperHeaDs. The following two chapters present the narratives so constructed: the stories of members who have successfully completed their doctorates and the stories of those who are still in the process.

Chapter 4: Findings and Meanings Made – Doctors in Practice

The stories of successful (in the sense of completed) doctoral journeys that are presented in this chapter are presented together to highlight the similarities and differences between them. I do this in order to emphasise the role that individual habitus and positioning play in the construction of doctoral identity. The stories are presented according to chronological completion, with the most recent completion presented first: Sophia, Maura, Amelia, and Maya. These stories are illustrative of the kinds of re-storying of self that takes place on the 'other side' of doctoral learning. Sophia is the most recent graduate, while Maya has held her doctorate the longest. Maya, Maura and Amelia now describe their doctoral journeys as odysseys of pleasure, noting the identity shifts that they made along the way, probably those that are the most significant relevant to their current constructions of themselves. Sophia, at the point of our conversation, was still reflecting on her experience as a mixture of pain and pleasure.

I preface each of the stories with a quotation that for me encapsulates the central theme of each doctoral journey. The quotations were chosen out of direct references made in the conversations recorded for creating stories or else from previous conversations. The voices of each PaperHeaD are presented in their actual words – in intense font intended to add weight to their voices – and to counterpoint their constructions with my interpretations (Riessman, 1993). It should be noted that I have neatened the transcriptions where repeated words, thoughtful pauses and sentence repairs took place, in order to facilitate reading. I decided it would be unethical to present the hesitant thoughts of the other PaperHeaDs as they occurred when I was hiding my own visions and revisions in shaping this text to conform to thesis expectations (an example of Bourdieu's (1994) "regulated improvisations"). What results represents the interactional dynamic of our conversations.

No god is a philosopher or seeker after wisdom, for he is wise already; nor does any man who is wise seek after wisdom. Neither do the ignorant seek after wisdom; for herein is the evil of ignorance, that he who is neither a man of honour nor wise is nevertheless satisfied with himself; there is no desire when there is no feeling of want. (Plato, 2008, pp. 75-76)

The Lover – Sophia's Story

I think that the deep pleasure is because I love language and writing and words, it's released me because I've had so many difficulties writing in so many points, it's released me to enjoy writing again and I'm not afraid of writing now. Actually that's a huge thing for me because I just want to write now. (Sophia, 19th March 2008, lines 38-41)

The etymology of the word 'philosophy', the love of wisdom, says Barnacle, in her exploration of ontologies of doctoral becoming, "recalls ... that philosophy is permeated by desire. Moreover, what it makes apparent is that being a philosopher denotes an action, or movement: the orientation of one's desire toward wisdom" (2005, p. 182). Plato states clearly in the quotation above that the person who seeks, the person who desires, is never fully satisfied or ever completely complete. Sophia's doctoral story describes a chance encounter with the notion of 'being academic' as opposed to 'being a teacher' that has led to an abiding love and respect for her own intellectual abilities.

Sophia joined PaperHeaDs in 2004. Annie's response on receiving news of Sophia's proposed membership was similar to mine, but more creative.

<<<05/14/04 10:46 AM>>>

It'll be good to have a couple of new members – they might stop you from using such big words!

Here's my contribution:
If I hear another word end in 'ology'
It might force me to have a lobotomy
As I have to admit
I'm such a big twit
My vocab goes not beyond ABC!

Bye
Annie [M1535][27]

Annie's joking post illustrates the playful space of PaperHeaDs online, where we play with a variety of genres of writing and ideas of selves.

Sophia has helped us all with the vocabulary of philosophy. Her first post told us something quite profound about who Sophia is, although we did not realise it at the time. Without assistance (despite later claiming computer ignorance), she posted a message before she had met any of us face to face.

<<<06/04/04 14:39 PM >>>
Dear All

This is the first time I have ever gone into Yahoo in this way
and/or set up/ joined an existing chat group – which may account
for you all getting two emails expressing my thanks for inviting me
to join the Paperheads group! IF this is the first message reaching
you, thank you, if it's the second, ignore it. I look forward to
meeting you all in person at the end of July.

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27 The M number represents the message number on the PaperHeaDs Yahoo site.

Kind regards

Sophia [M1555]

She attended the PaperHeaDs monthly meeting on the 7th of May 2004. I felt cowed by her grasp on her topic and her ability to use the big words of research. In turn, she claims to have been equally intimidated by the thought of the group of 'bright women' and determined to make a good impression by preparing well for the meeting. Her self-possession and discipline impressed me, a complete contrast to my happy-go-lucky approach to PaperHeaDs and registering for my PhD.

Thinking back on that day she says:

> **PaperHeads – became very important. I think I wasted time with my own, my own personality wasted me time benefiting more quickly from it, and I've gone through that before, being peripheral for too long. I should have leapt in more confidently from the start, but I was very intimidated. I mean we joke about it now but I found it very intimidating. That should now be self-explanatory, my own sense of inadequacy and so on, so although everybody might have thought I was intimidating, it was like the very, very last thing on my mind at that day. (Sophia, 19th March 2008, lines 1187-1193)**

Sophia's entry into the group was a significant factor in motivating me to get on with real work of doctoral research, largely because I feared that Sophia would finish before I had even started!

Her second post on the group list was entitled "Help!" on June 25th 2004. She was worrying over the fact that her proposed study had seemed to change direction and asked:

<<<06/25/04 10:08 PM >>>

And now for the Big Question: How do I align an ontological, epistemological and methodological position in this context? Sophia [M1567]

Alyse's response in M1572 captures the group feeling:

<<<06/25/04 4:52 PM >>>

In terms of the ontol – epistomol – stuff: [I'm] still wrestling with those in my own framework and I don't view this as any kind of 'ignorance' – which I think is the word you used? I prefer to see the process of coming to grips with these '-ologies' as one where various aspects get revealed to varying degrees at varying stages – and then as likely as not go back into hiding again just when you thought you had them in the bag ....(sigh).

Alyse [M1572]

We realised that Sophia was serious and seriously disciplined. Sophia's account of that time speaks of the need for safety, space, and desire, which is why I have called this telling of her story 'The Lover'.

At the time of my conversation with her about doctoral identity, her thesis was out for examination, and had been for six months; she was on tenterhooks waiting for the result yet experiencing satisfaction at having completed the work.

I'm absolutely astonished that I completed it. I nearly gave it up several times and yet, as [partner] reminds me, I never gave it up even when I had

the [acute illness], … so I'm absolute – because I always said I had an issue with commitment – so in one way I'm absolutely astonished that the work is done, that I completed it and I'm very now – in retrospect – incredibly pleased with myself that I did it. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 530-537)

Sophia is the first member of her family to begin and complete a PhD. Coming from an 'ordinary middle-class family', which she describes as educated and comfortably well off, Sophia acknowledges that she grew up unconscious of the depth of privilege they enjoyed.

I mean we had – also we had no political conscience, that was the other … that was completely lacking. So I think I really didn't know where to place myself and I didn't, I wasn't a politically active student, but I loved the university, it was a – ah I loved – and to go back as an adult to the old campus, I just loved being there. … I had no – I don't feel like I had any identity, I just was, I just conformed, I just did everything, but I always loved that campus. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 657-664)

She says:

I spent all my life believing unquestioningly that all these things [the innocent purpose of Education, the nature of relationships and roles in society] were givens, you know. That was the right way to do it, and so, and suddenly you know, the day I realised how much was socially constructed, it was just like, everything altered for me. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 846-853)

She spent twelve years as a successful teacher before 'getting in through the back door' by joining a service department of the university, where she now works:

Oh, I just felt like little old me, and have done, almost for 18 years. Um, I came in through the back door, I had no [qualifications] – apart from a BA, UED. [I] came in temporary, part-time, however more tenuous you can describe [an] exploited woman, [I worked] for 8 years, then I got an establishment post in '99. I still had no ... I fought, I think I almost consciously fought, but I think perhaps for very shaky reasons, an academic identity. I kind of, for the same reasons, a sense of inadequacy, I identified as a teacher. I felt good in schools, that's where I [felt comfortable] – and so I hung on to that teacher identity. And because I'd been a teacher I was quite deeply conditioned to that rift between teachers in schools and university people who come in and tell teachers ... how to do it, ja. I mean I've come to appreciate the real privilege of having been in both, because I think it's obviously shown me so much. But I have fought an academic identity for all these years. I think I have an inherent unease about the kind of sense of elitism and superiority that so often goes with higher education, because it's exemplified in so many people. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 622-638)

Sophia admits that she never considered that she might do a doctorate, the possibility opened up for her as she was in the process of constructing a whole new life world. She had left her marriage, with grown children. After eight years as a single woman, she began a committed though socially questioned relationship, in the process of which had adopted a child of a different race.

I never did it because I desired a doctoral identity, I had no conception of what I meant, or – I never actually even began – I never intended to do a doctorate. Long ago I'd thought 'oh maybe by the time I'm 55, I'll do a Master's by 50, I could do a PhD', but I had no conception of what [it meant]. ... It's all tied up with having got [child's name] ... and I did find that I found it difficult when we got her, to juggle what it meant to find space for myself, to juggle these new demands and the ever-presence of a

baby – loved her dearly … but going back and doing this whole[child-rearing] thing again, and so it was really by default and for probably the wrong reasons to legitimately find a space where I could say I'm going away to do my PhD. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 342-354)

So what made Sophia start with her study and persevere with it despite the challenges of constructing a new life and resisting both an academic and doctoral identity? Sophia constructed herself as 'ordinary' in the normalising discourse that was the white hegemony and being a woman teaching in South Africa at the time. "When people (and institutions) focus on them as 'natural' or 'biological', they often do this as a way to 'forget' or 'hide' (often for ideological reasons) the institutional, social-interactional, or group work that is required to create and sustain them *as identities*" (Gee, 2000, p. 101).

There were two points of recognition that moved Sophia into the process of doctoral study. The first was finding a topic and being encouraged by her head of department:

I had never thought of anything that I was studying that was relevant to doctoral research, I had not given it one single thought, and I was just sitting in my office one day looking at the evaluations of [a module] or thinking about it.. I was just sitting at my table on my own looking at some of the student writing and [Head of Department] walked in, and I said to him – there's some such interesting stuff here, and he said 'but there's your doctorate' and he said 'You know that it's as easy as anything. You've got something really worthwhile there. You need to just research that, it could be seminal work, we don't have much on this' and I thought 'Please this is just – I'm just teaching'. You know, I'd never ever considered myself in relation to a doctorate for real. And then I began to think about it and I talked to him a little bit more and then talked at home and [partner] said "Yes, well why don't you?' and .. . I don't even remember what time of the year that was, but the idea began to sit. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 354-376)

This moment of acknowledgement by a head who did not question her ability to do the work, despite her own sense of inadequacy, served to create a focus for the work. Gaining support at home reiterated the possibility. Sophia owns that:

I think it began to get a little bit of an ego thing, a little bit of a flurry of superiority perhaps, you know? You know when people say ooh they're going to do a doctorate? I think it began to gain a little bit of interest like that, and then I thought about, well what would it mean really? Who would supervise and so on? And then I went down to a conference ... I knew then that the only person I would ever attempt it with would be [Supervisor's name], and she was there and I asked her. I said if I ever considered doing one, would you be willing? And ... she said 'I would be honoured' and that was a real issue... because I can never see myself actually very well,.. being honoured!? (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 380-392)

Her surprise and pleasure at the acknowledgement given by her supervisor-in-waiting is indicative of the work required to 'create and sustain identities'. Sophia acknowledges her reasons for accommodating the recognition when she says:

Then it began to feed into my own inner conniving, that if I did this, this would be a perfect way for me to get the spaces I need, because I've always needed space in any relationship. So I think in many respects it was a very, very confused reason for taking up a PhD. And of course the family said "Wow" and because it's the first generation PhD, and you know, because nobody has a clue. ... They position universities and academics on some pedestal, which is so ludicrous outside of the academy, and despite the fact that my brother's a multi-millionaire they still tend to think I have some special quality that sets them apart. ... So it was a very confused motivation for doing a PhD and I didn't, deep down, I didn't really feel like I was doctoral material. I didn't have a sense of being an academic. I've always had ambivalence about an academic identity anyway, so I wasn't

too sure, and I think that's been part of the crisis all the way through.
(Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 394-408)

Sophia's doctoral journey has been difficult. Referencing my piece (see Appendix 5), she construed the relationship she had with her doctorate as abusive when she said:

I recognise that we are the instrument of our own destruction and yet I found it terribly, terribly difficult to ever get really on top of that again. ... I would go through phases of being separate and in control and asserting that me that could not be this victim, not being controlled. I'd go through phases of that, but they were so fragile and so fleeting. I spent most of those four years battling against this. I don't think I did too badly but it was a constant struggle. I think I can trace it back. ... Why I can never really get on top is this deep-seated sense of inadequacy and needing to do things to perfection, and worrying about what other people think of my intellect and I can trace that back to family and my mother and all sorts of things. I'm quite staggered at how I kept making the parallels between that relationship that felt abusive. I was back to that powerless state that – [battling with] not allowing myself to be downtrodden, used, voiceless.
(Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 166-182

Here Sophia recounts her struggles with the demands of academic work at a doctoral level and constantly doubting her own ability to do it. She describes it powerfully in terms of a physical relationship; bruising, damaging, painful. She fights her sense of inadequacy, knowing that it was her choice to take on the challenge, like the choice to enter an intimate relationship. She is committed yet there are unforeseen consequences. Perhaps she is like Jacob wrestling with the Angel. Does the angel, or in this case, her perception of the intellectual work the doctorate represents, actually exist? Moreover, if it does, what strategies does she need to use to overcome it? The dialectic of the struggle is between who the student believes herself to be and her aspirational self (Leonard, Becker & Coate, 2005). Beliefs acquired in childhood; every

moment of formal education; every decision about every learning experience and how to think about knowing shaped the choice to do a doctorate and continually re-shapes the picture of what the doctorate represents.

The paradox of the situation is that as the student is learning through the process, the doctoral topic acquires more concreteness but more and more aspects of the work seem unachievable. As the student learns, she realises that there is so much more to learn, she sees gaps that were not there before, – and the student is chasing a moving target: complete knowledge. This intensely personal struggle, between aspects of one's own self, takes place away from the view of significant others, and is difficult to articulate in the process of working on a PhD. Even in supervision meetings with a mentor who has been through the process and understands to a certain degree the struggle taking place, only the student can resolve it. She has to get to a point where she realises that what she has done is good enough, but that it will never be complete. Finding out what is 'good enough' (Wisker, 2009) looks central to resolving the conflict that doctoral learning represents.

Sophia's resolution lay in embracing the uncertainty, letting go of her self-doubts and throwing herself into her relationship with her own ability to know – she calls it a seduction:

> **But I think I understand the incredible hold, this PhD stuff can have on us. ... When I look back at why did I – not why did I do it - but why did I complete it – is probably the more interesting thing. ... It began to get hold of my intellectual capabilities. What I began to see was the potential of my intellectual capabilities. Personally, completely privately, I began to realise my mind was being really excited by being able to make these new and insightful links and feeding off the thrill of just reading and finding something difficult and thinking, I can do this, I can work this one out, I know I can work this one out, so it became that level of kind of mind seduction. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 230-239)**

Sophia's words speak to a libidinal reaching for and occasional satisfaction with the process of her work. Barnacle's erotic account of thought points out that "[t]his is not the philosopher as rational subject, internally driven by the rational ego to seek enlightenment. Instead, this philosopher is compelled, or seduced, by glimpses of beauty to seek it out and to want more. Moreover, within such a model beauty is itself necessarily other, or not one's-own. It is not, that is, reducible to a projection. Erotic desire suggests a decentring of the locus of agency from the individual (as knowing subject) to a relation (between subject and world, or lover and beloved (note the recurring theme of in-betweenness)). This undermines the idea that knowledge can be treated purely instrumentally" (Barnacle, 2005, p. 184).

Indeed Sophia's account of the value of her work is embedded in her 'in-betweenness' with respect to her view of herself as an academic despite the interminable waiting for the results of her work. She recognises here that her capacities in relation to knowing are enough; she knows that she can think well. Having completed her doctoral journey, having recognised her intellect as 'her own', she reaches further for 'more glimpses of beauty' in the Socratic sense. She continues to find herself 'in between' acknowledgement of her peers and public affirmation that comes from the official award ceremony. Here she describes in-betweenness in the relationship between her self-knowing and her public representation of herself as she waits for her thesis to be passed.

I think I came to realise that my intellect is perfectly good enough for me and I've slowly come to see, through the last four years, that when people have given me feedback on things, that it appears to be better than I think it is. That, in fact, feedback suggests that I can think clearly and I can think insightfully and I just have to believe that now. I mean I spent a long time playing that down and now I've stopped doing that, thinking well that's all so silly. But I had to ... make the decision to do that – it's not something that I do like just – I wish I could. I wish I could just say, ja, I know I'm bright ... but I don't ... I kind of hedge it and angst about it and self-efface

and do this sort of thing. ... I'm not enjoying this period of not knowing. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 416-424)

She sees, too, that this relation between herself and the world has changed her world, that her world is dynamic and she has the agency to influence it through the relation that is her thinking. Here she shows that there are at least two levels of public acknowledgement, one is her thesis being passed, and the second is the public acknowledgement of peers for the work done:

I think now that it's over, people in the school know that it's submitted, [has] appeared to make a big difference in people's opinions of me ... All my Brownie points go up like this (chuckling), and [HoD] ... will at every possible occasion ... say, "You must read Sophia's doctorate." ... Those kinds of comments make me – make me quite uneasy, because I think 'Don't say that.' I get uncomfortable when people do things like that. I get very anxious when people anticipate it's good because [HoD says so] ... [He] did say a nice thing at the last [meeting]. He said, "You cannot read what I've [Sophia has] written, and come away feeling the same about students. You cannot ever ignore their humanity again." That's a compliment I like because that was the point of the thesis, is to tap into the humanity ... the lives of the students. So that compliment I'm pleased about. (Sophia, 24th April 2008 lines 552-577)

While Sophia, perhaps simplistically, laughs at the response to the change in her public status, there is irony here. The amusement may arise from the fact that her intellect was always 'good enough', yet now she has come to know this, she wonders at the change in others' perceptions of her. Could it be that through the different way she experiences herself, she has changed them?

Sophia was not only experiencing 'in-betweenness' in terms of her relationship with her colleagues, she has thrown herself into questions about the relation between the

university and the community it serves. She sees the purpose of her thinking in her relation to 'the academy' as one who has the ability to do the hard work of change, but who is wondering where to start:

I spend a lot of time questioning [the Academy], actually, because, I think through my work in language and applied linguistics and especially, obviously through the PhD process of working at in-depth levels with the students. ... I really do question a lot of what the purpose of it is, because it becomes more and more apparent to me that the university as a social institution ... puts up the most enormous barriers to students' lives. It does awful things to students. ... I have a huge problem with that because ... if you dare ... .to ... work with students below the surface of the content of a module, to their experiences of [life], you will almost without exception encounter struggle, fear, anxiety, shame, disillusionment. ... That really makes me wonder, What are we really about? ... It makes me quite cynical because it throws me back to something like ... boarding school initiations and so on ... and it really makes me then question. But the question is so big that it's impossible, I know. We've lost the capacity to address it, because everything is so entrenched. ... So I have huge concerns about what the purpose of a university is.

If you consider it at a macro level and its purpose in society, then we can talk about knowledge construction and knowledge creation and the essential role of them to – ja, all the usual stuff. You can do that provided you contract not to see the students as people, as part of humanity. ... I think the moment you concern yourself with the deep humanity for students, there's an enormous conflict. ... I think the chances of addressing that are almost absolutely nil. You'll find individuals are probably working at those levels, but I fail to see how anybody could possibly alter the whole thing on a large scale.

But maybe that's not required. Maybe it is only on the individual level that we need to start working at it, but it would mean really examining

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curricula, really examining assessment processes, examining the very substance of what happens in the first class that you have with students. You know, it's right down to that level, and nobody's really worrying about that, ... because it's so detailed, it's like trying to teach people how to write. No-one wants to do it, because it is ... hard, hard, hard, and it's intense and it takes time. (Sophia, 24th April 2008, lines 757-804)

Sophia's conflict between what she learned through her research about the lives of students and the demands made by the university indicates that she is seeking to position herself as someone who shares that knowledge. Her doctoral learning is now part of her habitus. Yet she also sees the university, a "mode of objectification of past history" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 281), as not able to change because its practices are so entrenched. She voices her deep concern of the "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1989) committed by the university on students who do not fit into the modes of knowing that it values. Her question about the role of an individual academic within this system is indicative of a sense of responsibility that comes with the discoveries she made through her doctoral journey.

As I write this, Sophia is breakfasting with her supervisor before starting her graduation festivities. Perhaps in reaching for the next glimpse of beauty, the possibility of a university that creates knowledge that is aligned with the life-world of its students, she will "pull [the university] from a state of dead letters, reviving the sense deposited in [it] ... at the same time imposing revisions and transformations" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 282). From a 'normal middle-class teacher' it seems that Sophia has transformed to an activist doctor, in love with the idea of sharing her relationship with knowledge.

Sophia's story of assuming doctoral responsibility parallels in part Maura's story.

*I know quite certainly that I have no special gift – I am only
passionately curious. (Albert Einstein, in* Hoffman, 1972, p. 7)

The Invisible Doctor – Maura's Story

***I think that the doctoral study is a very, is a very vulnerable position
because I never really felt that I should be doing it, you know, that I was
kind of worthy of doing this, and that's why I always felt I really am
enjoying this experience, I really am. I'm going to trust that I'm going to
get through it, but I didn't really feel [confident], you know, and even now
[when] somebody says Dr Maura, and I kind of go 'Who're they talking to?'
(Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 58-66)***

I had met and got to know Maura through Pioneers Online in 2001. This brand-new staff
development project aimed at teaching staff how to do online course development and
teaching. That first group of Pioneers were a mixed bag of people from disparate
departments who wanted to explore the potential of this new teaching technology. Like
all 'early adopters'[28](Rogers, 2003), this group consisted of thoughtful but outspoken
people, who resisted norms. I still have the tee shirt that marked that academic
adventure.

Maura wanted to provide learning material to adult professional learners who could not
be on site full-time. This was not possible, and probably is still not, due to the shortage
of computers for private use, at home and in their workplaces. I knew her to be a caring
teacher, committed to developing her professional medical field through the graduates
of her department.

> ***I got involved with on-line [learning] and included it as part of the [course].
> ... I saw – some of these really older ladies – I mean the ones that are just***

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28 An early adopter is a person who embraces new technology or ideas before most other people do

about to retire. ...They'd get up early in the morning, get to [the computer lab] and they'd be there. So I would be just so delighted. I mean it was so nice. ... They work in such a hierarchical system. ... You know I had young nurses ... just finished their training and there was a sense of 'I cannot say anything because I am their junior. In four years time, I will be able to say something but I'm not allowed now'. ...I'm saying, "Ah (frustrated urgent) yes you can!" and [get them] also to realise that just [by] emailing you can bypass that hierarchy. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 27-40

Like Alyse, Maura is aware that online technology allows disempowered individuals to create spaces in which they can express themselves, be acknowledged and grow, in ways that are not possible within professional cultures that are intensely hierarchical (see Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2005 for example). In this she shows herself to be an innovator in a field that derives its rank structures from the military – possibly thanks to Florence Nightingale's experiences on the battlefields of the Crimea.

In constructing Maura's story, I need to be aware that "The thought objects constructed by the social scientist in order to grasp ... social reality have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of [teachers] living their daily life within their social world" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 15). The habitus of the nursing profession and Maura's perception of the negative impact of some of the professional structures, namely the hierarchy, are, I believe, central to her doctoral story. It is so ironic that in her striving to empower nursing professionals through her doctorate, she found herself disempowered as a teacher of professionals, unrecognised, marginalised in her department. The pain of this rejection largely contributed to her decision to emigrate. For this reason, I have called her story 'the Invisible Doctor'.

Maura had not been able to come to the Getaway at which I had conversed with the other PaperHeaDs about their doctoral identities. She was two weeks away from emigrating to England, where she'd landed a job at a good university. She was in the process of packing up 30 years of life and memories and trying to sell her home. One of

Maura's (many) agonies was trying to find good homes for her pets. My partner and I offered her 13-year-old Ridgeback cross, Bella, a home. We chatted when she came round to introduce us to her much loved friend. I think the air of sadness affected our conversation but not the triumphs that we uncovered together.

When I asked her how she related to my scripted conversation with my doctorate, she immediately understood the value of conceiving the doctorate as a separate person, in order to be able to look at it.

> ***This in a way enables you to do that a little bit easier ... by creating a third person. ... You know what it reminded me just a little bit of ... [ex-HoD]. ... People could take her for a ride quite a lot. ... She would allow people to put her down ... or she would not... give herself credit. ... I remember saying to her 'If this was somebody else in this position ... would that make it okay for these people to behave in this way?' and she said 'No, absolutely not'. So I said 'Well, ... does it make it alright [for them to do it to you?] Could you not sort of de-personalise yourself ...and say, '...how do I protect that person, as I would anybody else?' (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 19-44)***

Freud first described the psychological defense mechanism, projection, where one projects onto others the unacceptable feelings that one has about one's self. It seems here that Maura sees in me, and in her ex-superior, a tendency to not protect ourselves, to not afford ourselves the same rights as others in our lives, which was indicative of her life position when we talked. This story is an account of someone who has decided to give herself the right to speak. As this story shows, Maura decided to reject the academic environment in which she found herself after completing her doctorate. Unlike Annie, her rejection did not include a rejection of academia, but a rejection of the academic space she then occupied.

While seeing the benefits of forcing an objective account of relationship, she could also relate strongly to the notion of 'falling in love' with her doctorate (as did Sophia).

I just remember falling so in love with the notion ... . Discovering another side of myself when I was doing this ... and just being so thrilled and excited ... and then suddenly discovering that - because I'm not bright - but discovering that I had a brain, that I could use it ... and then I enjoyed it. ... It was exciting ... that ... something small was an amazing idea, and just being able to revel in it and if somebody else [discovered] with me it was just – that was very special. ... I just remember thinking this was so exciting. I mean people would say 'ooh are you studying for you, you know, your doctorate?'... And I'd think ... I'm so blessed, I just remember the thinking [that way] about that journey the whole way through. ...

I just – I've noticed with you, in terms of your academic thinking, as well – I don't know if I'm wrong, but I certainly noticed that ... you're more assured but you're also more acute in [your thinking] – am I wrong? (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 75-91)

Discovering another side of herself, a new identity as a thinker–discoverer, was an important part of Maura's journey. She dismisses the status value of her doctorate as relatively unimportant in comparison with the intellectual journey. In this she is similar to Sophia, who put the brief flurry of self-inflation on beginning her doctorate down as irrelevant and probably a product of ignorance. Perhaps this is why Maura has been the most productive of the PaperHeaDs in terms of the production of journal articles. For her it was the journey, not the destination, which counted. Part of that joy was sharing the development of ideas with others.

Maura's interpersonal skill of constantly checking understanding sometimes makes her seem tentative. As she does this here, she validates my thought that interviewing the women of PaperHeaDs would be impossible (Oakley, 1981), as she affirms my growth as a doctoral student – 'more acute, more precise and increasingly more confident'. There is nothing tentative about her pleasure in her own doctoral journey – the emotional tone is exactly that of Sophia. Like Sophia, she describes starting out not feeling 'bright' and coming to enjoy the process of thinking and her own awareness of her thought.

Unlike Sophia, she does not talk about coming to a sense of her intellect being good enough for herself. Continuing the discussion of the doctoral identity as a third party, Maura said:

> *I feel like I would have let it [her doctorate] down quite a lot recently ... because it's almost like I've moved off a path. In some ways – I mean I did, I did write papers last year and I felt good about that, you know I felt [I'd got] ... some more mileage out of my doctorate ... . It was hard work ... . Also I ... developed an [online] research portal as well, after that ... [which] I was very excited about.*
>
> *I sit with [Mary] ... we've got one student that we [supervise] together, and I just so enjoy it, but I'm very tentative still and I keep thinking 'Why am I still so tentative ... as a supervisor?' And I think in ten years time I'll still be tentative. I'll still go – because [Mary]'ll say something else, and I'll go, 'No, no, no,' and then I'll go, 'Oh well, maybe let me think about that – it's actually a really good idea' ... I've so enjoyed that experience with [Mary] you've got no idea, it's just such a joy for me. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 102-137)*

It is evident here that Maura is not positioning herself as an expert or an authority, but rather as a partner in the co-construction of knowledge. Working with Mary discussing elements of their student's research, there is a space for the discovery of new ideas and insights – a process that is 'joyous' (to use a word that Maura used frequently).

Maura's humility and strong duty to serve are reminiscent of Bee's story, also in a paramedical arena, and might suggest that the habitus (Bourdieu, 1989) of caring in the medical professions will lead to the construction of a different sort of doctoral identity, to that of educators. While at the time of our conversation Maura had been Dr Maura for four years, she still doubted her authority. Amelia and Maya never doubted their own expertise in my conversations with them, while Sophia was aware that she was working on developing that stance in the year in which she completed.

When I asked Maura what she meant by being 'off a path', Maura described a sense of duty to the title of doctor:

> *It's almost like when you nurse and you get bars on your shoulder. ... If somebody has a heart attack you kind of feel that you're obliged to actually do all the right things because ... you're supposed to be able to do that. ... There are certain obligations, I think, that go along with this [the doctorate.] ... Part of it is to publish? ... And part of it is to do more research? Part of it is to also to mentor and work with people and to supervise as well? You know I kind of thought that as being quite important ... to start looking at more post-doctoral work, and also to try and crack some of the codes ... . It's not a self-evident process. There're a lot of things that one is not aware of. ... There're things that people know and others don't really know or understand or could be made easier. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 227-251)*

Like Maya, Maura is aware of the obstacles that she encountered in her doctoral journey, now that she has completed. She has a desire to make these things clear to other post-graduate learners – to make visible the rationale and purpose of the procedures and processes. I wonder whether it is possible to do this until the doctoral learner is fully engaged in the work, growing into the space of expertness. In some senses it strikes me that the journey is the destination. In struggling with the learning I have comes to understand what it is that one is struggling with, and why – reaching a deeper level of understanding with each battle.

Following up on her metaphor of having 'gone off the path', she described her time since getting her doctorate as 'becoming derailed'.

> *I feel like I've almost become derailed, probably because of the dynamics of the department and I've felt enormously disappointed because I really did do the work that I was doing, particularly for the department. ... I see that people [there] are really not interested in actually teaching. There was very*

little acknowledgement [of my doctorate] in my own department, at all ... none. It was not regarded at all.

I didn't mind that so much, but what it did mean is that ... I would have liked to have done more in helping others with research and ... getting more involved and also having more opportunity to do post-doctoral stuff. And that I struggled with, because it was difficult and ... I felt that ... I've lost a lot of confidence over the last year as well. ... I've been pretty much treated as a junior lecturer in the department, ... if I would suggest [anything] ... .they [would] deliberately go the opposite way. So ... all the mistakes that we've made, what they've already made and we've learnt from, I'd say maybe you might want to think of doing that because [it causes this kind of problem] ... . It was like – it doesn't matter. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 141-215)

Here Maura's switch from present tense to past is indicative of her standing on the boundary between her life in the department in South Africa and moving into a new world. Unlike Sophia, Amelia and Maya, Maura has not experienced any change in the way people relate to her. There has been no affirmation of the labour that she has completed and the value it may have. If Bee's skepticism of the practical value of doctoral learning in her profession, and the obstacle this presents to her own doctoral identity, is indicative of attitudes towards research qualifications, it is not surprising that there might be resistance to Maura's new doctoral self in her newly shuffled department, where no one else had a doctorate. Having exercised agency in beginning her doctorate, she found herself invisible at the end of it.

To explain in more depth, Maura had been in her department at the technikon since inception, over twenty years. She had served as Head of Department for many years when the policy for headship appointments at the institution had been on a five year rotating basis. This was based on a philosophy that all members of the department could (and probably should) serve a term as head. Headship was not seen as a rank, but

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a duty to represent the members of the department in institutional forums and decision-making. The pain of the additional administrative work was alleviated by a small stipend.

This philosophy was overthrown in the wake of a decision, in 2001, to establish ranks in which the head of department should be the best qualified member of the department with concomitant salary benefits. Therefore, Maura stepped down in favour of a new member of department who had a doctorate. The new HoD skilfully engaged the experience of the staff and enthusiastically encouraged them to do research – convincing Maura that she could complete a PhD and serving as her supervisor.

Unfortunately, midway through her doctorate, her HoD resigned, probably in the wake of the chaos caused by the mergers (mentioned in Chapter 1 and further described in Annie's story). A new HoD was appointed, one without a doctorate, but who was a nationally-acknowledged senior member of the profession. With the change in leadership came a change in the departmental culture. As Maura gently put it:

> *You know I [had] worked in a department where we were all were so keen for everybody to do well and we were very happy when somebody had learnt something and they'd share with somebody else … [I]t's a very different system now, so there's just a couple of people who're still on that wavelength but others are not, and it's quite a destructive thing because it's … it's like an individualistic thing that's happening. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 279-284)*

> *… The [old departmental knowledge] was totally disregarded and disrespected … Anyway, … I think that I went through a stage in the first year or two [after the new HoD took office] and said 'Well, we've tried this before, it didn't really work, or we tried – this would be a good idea'. I realised that this was a very bad thing to say. [I shouldn't] say what was, when we [were called the previous department]. [They called us] the "when-we's" … . You can see when they're going to do things and you know this is going to fail because you've done it yourself, and you don't say*

anything because it [creates tension]. ... Except that they do things and it's at the expense of students, or students will fail or you know that this is going happen, it's going to really affect them badly. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 606-681

Much of the tension that Maura describes in the department was a sense of borders being patrolled (Dalmage, 2000). While something may be unsaid, it does not mean that it is unseen. The historical past of the department had Maura installed as an authority at a time where black people where devalued, marginalised and disempowered. Regardless of what she, personally, had done for empowerment in the profession, she could be seen, from her new HoD's perspective, as symbolic of someone who had authority in that period and was therefore complicit in the exclusion. Perhaps the rejection of her expertise had less to do with what she had to contribute and more to do with a rejection of authority associated with race. At a political level the discourse had to change in order to allow previously unheard voices to be heard, regardless of what might have to be re-attempted in the process.

Maura mourned the loss of collegiality and therefore her opportunity to contribute to the team's efforts to improve the quality of the profession through constant reflection and active research. In the attempt to avoid confrontation and conflict in the new department, she had lost her voice. When I asked her why the department had become what it had, she tentatively theorised:

I do know that there's a lot of ambition and quite blatant ambition that is not [conducive to education] ... I mean when we did things [previously] we sat down and thought, student first, department second. Then it would be ... what are everybody's needs and how can we fit everybody's needs to meet those two things? ... No more, that doesn't happen now. Individual first and then – on the surface the students, but not at all, not and it's just very different for me now. (Maura, 26th March 2008 lines 802-808)

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Old colleagues had left because of this atmosphere and she had watched them leave the institution and flourish at others. Maura described her attempts to position herself as having some agency and some joy through associating with groups outside her department:

> *It was like I didn't exist … [I just had to] get [the work] done. It was very weird, it was very peculiar. No, I mean I tried ... to look outside and that's where the on-line learning was such a huh! (wow gasp). It's about people who are excited about teaching and really like what they're doing and that was, that was [amazing] – because I really love to teach and I'm confident, so I really, really did [try].*

> *You know I wasn't sure [why I was being shut down] because I always think why is that? Because I don't want to devalue you, you know ... I don't want to do that, I want to be able to acknowledge you as well.*

> *Then after [trying for two years] I thought I'm just polluting my soul, I don't have any more [to give] … so I thought ... this will be a move. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 627-643)*

Like Annie, Maura resisted being seen as 'the oppressor', and sought through her teaching and her relationships to acknowledge the value of individual experience. She felt that the kind of authority that positioned her as a 'junior lecturer' was symptomatic of everything she resisted in her profession. She related a case that came from the reflective journals that were the subject of her PhD:

> *I used to worry a lot about patients, that was my key thing, you know that nurses are not being good enough. And I still believe that, I mean I still see things happening in hospitals that I'm mortally embarrassed about, but I also understand so much better when I see how badly nurses are treated – by each other, by managers who don't know any better, by the systems that they're coming to. ... There was one nurse, it just sounds so peculiar, I'll never forget reading this. She'd gone up – she'd been on night duty the*

***night before – and she arrived at work and she discovered that her ward
had disappeared! In other words, there were new patients and new staff
and she was in an almost Salvador Dalí[29] situation – she didn't know what
was happening ... And they just failed to inform her or discuss with her that
they were actually moving all the patients to another area! (Maura, 26th
March 2008, lines 547-561)***
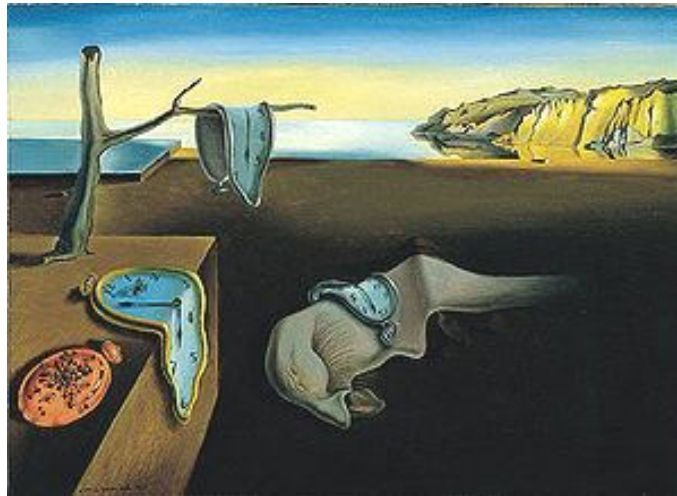
Figure 11: Salvador Dali's Persistence of Memory

Unfortunately despite her association with alternative affinity groups (Gee, 2000) – the
online development project, her setting up of a research portal, and her involvement
with PaperHeaDs – she could not make a collegial space to be heard in the department.
She experienced her positioning there as not valuable, having nothing to contribute and
this made her teaching much less meaningful. It was therefore (like Annie) not surprising
that she left the institution. She started applying for other teaching jobs, and seemingly
on the spur of the moment, accepted the offer of an online teaching post in the UK. The

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29 Dalí was a surrealist painter best known for his bizarre representations – his best known work is the
Persistence of Memory painted in 1931 (Figure 11) and currently in the possession of the Museum of
Modern Art, New York City.

reason given for the job offer was an acknowledgement of what she could contribute in terms of her unusual teaching methodologies. This affirmation was like water in a desert.

> *I thought I needed to work from my own environment. I do know that when you work around and with people who value you, you grow, and I think that that's important. I wish I were strong enough to not have to need that, but I think that I do need to work with people who think that I'm fine and that what I do is good. I think we used to fight [in the old department], but it was a healthy kind of thing, you know, we'd fight about the issue – sometimes the individual but we'd get over it and it was fine. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 894-915)*

"A desire has to derive its sustenance from somewhere. However, if the context that sustains it is disconnected from the very place of its actualisation and development, the person's processing of desire will either gradually be transformed, or she/he will become isolated and detached from their current context" (Søndergaard, 2005, p. 301).

Of her academic identity, Maura's aim in her action research for her doctorate had been to:

> *[set up] types of reflection that were reflective in nature – in other words asking them to … find out what they were doing in their own case work. It threw them quite a lot, but they also found it quite exciting, and also to think that their opinion really mattered and how they thought things mattered, not just the book.*

> *[Then] when we went into their second year, [I got them to] start linking up what they were doing in practice to theory, … What's exciting is when they start to question a theory because their experience is [that] this actually doesn't work, the theory doesn't answer or address it. They don't do it in a highly intellectual way, but they do it in a quite a pragmatic, … realistic*

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way ... . That's exciting when they do that ... So that just became quite joyous and actually to be able to put – to link all these things together and really teach according to a framework or develop a framework that you weren't teaching piecemeal, and that it comes together. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 443-490)

Maura's doctoral journey was a self-described journey of joyousness and pleasure frustrated when the expertise she had gained could not contribute to the work of the department she loved. The central purpose of her research was to inform the work of teaching nurses. She describes her feelings towards the nursing profession in her journal entry triggered by an investigative report on TV:

The hidden camera picked up on behaviour that evoked fierce feelings of shame – that I too, am a nurse, and may be viewed in the same light as another member of my profession, guilt. What am I doing to improve the situation: am I promoting or supporting this type of behaviour in my practice, in any way? ... Nurses who behave unprofessionally must have been someone's student and must have expressed all the appropriate thoughts to allow them access to the discipline. How many of these practitioners were/ are influenced by me? How responsible am I? How true are the reflections expressed within the diary? Who will or can express thoughts that will open himself or herself to scrutiny or criticism? (Extract from Maura's online journal, 20th June 2002)

Her commitment to her identity as a nursing professional is complete. Maura's journals, which she shared on the PaperHeaDs website, are a magnificent resource for those of us following in her footsteps. In them she demonstrates the vast range of her initial reading as she searches for a frame to begin thinking about her data. She cuts and pastes from her readings; adds the initially brief thoughts as she has about the topic; makes hyperlinks between diary entries or adds questions in bold colours in large pitch fonts;

and adds emotional responses as she works to connect her thinking. Reflecting on her reflections as part of her proto-literature review, she comments:

> ***At this stage of my research, I can appreciate these findings [in the literature about reflective journaling] in relation to mine in my reflexive mode form of expression. My diary has enabled me to make explicit that which was implicit or based at a tangled sub-conscious level. For me, the value of writing forces me to come face-to-face with evidence and to link and organise my thoughts in to some form of coherency and to question and discard those irrelevant to the task at hand. I am also aware that with the free flow of thought [or, stream-of-consciousness writing as popularised by Virginia Woolf] that there is much 'mushiness' or 'fuzziness' that surfaces: This, however, will allow me to give more but select less, and select more carefully later on. (Extract from Maura's online journal, 26th June 2002)***

Before this insight into the value of literature, Maura had spent hours in mental dialogue with the literature. As she points out here, despite the 18 months of reading literature around her research questions, it was only at this point that she recognised the value of the literature both personally and academically. The ability to articulate early ideas, then refine her thought, seems to have developed over time. Her journey was not without bumps in the road.

Her proposal had been passed in January 2001, after some difficulties with the institutional research board – because of the qualitative methodology she was using. The institutional research board in the institution where she was registered was "methodologically conservative" (Lincoln, 2005, p. 170) and this led to several re-reviews of her proposal, despite the guidance of her supervisor, who is known nationally for her expertise in qualitative research.

Typical of the challenge presented by such panels is a situation described by Carolyn Ellis. "The questions [on the proposal form] reflected positivist assumptions about what

I was doing to whom and what safeguards were in place. Instructions stated that the study must be considered scientifically beneficial and of significant value to the scientific community to warrant the use of human subjects. The form asked for sample size, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants, and precise research goals and methods of assessment ... I had to make my project sound a lot more scientific than it is" (Ellis, 2004, p. 256).

This kind of difficulty has been described in the qualitative research literature where institutional research boards do not easily accept the philosophical rationale for naturalistic approaches (Ellis, 2004, pp. 256-261; Lincoln, 2005; Koro-Ljungberg et al, 2007; Rambo, 2007; Tierney & Corwin, 2007). This literature shows that a valuable product of the battles of qualitative researchers in institutional review boards is that a more rigorous evaluation of research ethics takes place including, among others: psychological safety for both the participants and the researcher, and protection from possible future prejudice. This has led to an emphasis on process in research ethics – that ethical research needs to consider ethics at every stage of the process. It was a battle worth fighting. In the true sense of knowledge-construction, Maura's hard work getting her proposal passed paved the way for other qualitative researchers in the institution.

In August 2001, Maura recorded her battle to "Just Write" in her digital journal:

> *I have cleaned my computer, tidied up, seen to other chores, looked at the time and realised how much time I have wasted. I know what it is that I need to do, but what an effort to do it. I have thought a lot about my diary and just about everything I read and do, I reflect upon and relate to my research. My mind buzzes. Yet, when it comes to the sticking point – it is another story. I remember reading a book on how to go about a doctoral programme [check reference – in library], and one of the key issues related to discipline and routine. It doesn't seem to require genius to complete a doctoral programme [what a relief] but constancy and discipline seem to be key factors.*

At this stage, I don't have a problem about what to write. Just getting down to it is hard especially when there appear to be so many other things that have deadlines and people who have needs.

Last year I made a major mistake and let other needs overtake mine. I am far more self-centered this year and am trying to draw the lines so that there is a balance to my life, within which features my family, my occupation, myself – and then those around me who either depend on me or are involved with me. I, I, I … how self-centered is that? If I was in therapy, I am fairly sure that my digression would be recognised as part of a defensive mechanism. So, let me become realistic and deal with the issue face on.

I have not sat down to my diary for quite some time now – holidays, illness and work priorities have intervened. The way I propose to tackle today is to just write down thoughts and events as they come to mind. I can tidy up later. (Extract from Maura's online journal, 7th August 2001)

With some insight Maura records her own avoidance strategies which superficially suggest that she is 'stalled' (Ahern & Manathunga, 2004; Kearns, Gardiner & Marshall, 2008). Initially she backs away from this conclusion, by noting the demands of her life. She worries that she is self-centered, in the same way that Mary is concerned about being 'mean' inside and Bee worries about self-indulgence. Here she reflects on her previous year's effectiveness and recognises that she needs to take time out for her Self and her doctorate. This appears to be a similar conceptualisation threshold that Sophia, Lee and Maya crossed, storied in their accounts as 'escape', 'me time' and 'feeling in control' respectively. This 'troublesome knowledge' (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006) is not cognitive or even behavioural, it is a demand to reframe their sense of 'what it means to be the kind of person they are in their life contexts' (Gee, 2000, p. 100).

For Maura, her doctoral study was always about the journey and less about the status, and she revels in the skills of writing, publishing and teaching that she has gained through the journey:

You become a lot more skilled in everything, you do – if you're given that time, given the space in order to do that. I think that you can do it, and I'm quite keen to do it. I do know that I did get at a distance – I never actually saw it as real, I thought it was a journey. … A big part of me really meant that if I don't actually get the D at the end, it doesn't [matter] – I'm not doing it for that … I never did care about the rest, which was a jolly good thing because … I haven't derived any of the status that comes from it at all and a big part of me doesn't worry about it … I also know that I'm not that bright, … but I work hard … and to me that's the big thing. Can you, … fit in a system where you can just keep going and keep being interested in what you're doing. I mean I'm sure that I was far more interested in what [I was doing] than anybody else, and – that part of me didn't actually worry … if people didn't care about it, I cared about it, and that to me was exciting. (Maura, 26th March 2008, lines 319-360)

In March 2006, we heard that Maura's doctorate had been awarded. She was not able to attend the meeting at which she was congratulated, because of her lecture load. Amelia wondered why she was not claiming her title on her email signature. It may be that the lack of affirmation from her department – her loss of agency because of her positioning (Boxer, 2001) – caused her not to 'own' it. If this is true it suggests that possibly the claiming of the title is the final threshold concept to acquire in claiming expertness and a doctoral identity that is part of one's self. Maura's sense of excitement and joy in her thinking and the potential of her work are all the more poignant, given the lack of the final affirmation from her department, which may have helped her to accept that she is 'bright' and valuable as part of her identity.

My hope for her in her new work and life is that she will be 'seen' for her potential contribution to her profession. Most importantly for her work and her doctoral identity I hope her new work is visible. Sanibona[30], Maura.

Issues of how doctoral status is seen socially are a big part of Amelia's story, and radically different from Maura's intrinsic joy in teaching and learning.

To pretend, I actually do the thing: I have therefore only pretended to pretend. (Jacques Derrida, in Derek & Lawlor, 2002, p. 32)

The Fashion Queen – Amelia's Story

I feel in education, because things are so ground-breaking and things change all the time, if you spend three – five to seven years doing a doctorate, what does it say about the data you've collected maybe four years ago? And the laws change, the Acts change, the SAQA Act is changing. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 698-701)

Fashion, say the postmodernist philosophers, is a signifier of identity that has become the sign. This can be seen through historical analysis that shows the three waves of change discussed by Lyotard (1984). The first was a past in which clothing and life accoutrements were an indicator of status, with those who could afford to buy new things able to be in the 'mode'. The second existed when to be fashionable was a desirable, though norm-referenced, sign of aesthetic awareness, political consciousness and intellect within a modern world. The third, was the move into the era during which norms of behaviour, a form of grand narrative, are rejected in favour of personal expression of self. Despite mass production and global markets for fashionable goods, one's choice of what to wear, what to live with and how to live with objects is representational (Appignanesi et al, 2005). In the simulacrum that has become our reality or rather multiple realities, fashion speaks to say something about our choices in self-representation and performativity. Literally, we are what we buy. Amelia is a self-avowed shopaholic, which says volumes about who she chooses to be at any point in time and the discourse in which she is currently located. Academic fashion is therefore a 'doubled and redoubled' (Lather, 1991, p. 89) referent.

At the time I talked to Amelia she had had her doctorate for two years, having registered in 2002 and graduated in 2004. Her 'angst', as she put it, around her

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doctorate related to how she believed she might be seen and how it was located in time. Her choice of consumer-related terms like 'fashion' and 'in the bag' led me to construct her story as one about fashion – and it is indicative of the neo-liberal discourse that currently shapes higher education as a commodity, globally and locally (described in Chapter 1).

Amelia is a pragmatist and a successful one. Mother to two children, who were both at school when she began her doctorate, and wife of a sought-after building contractor, she also worked as the Director of Quality for a previously disadvantaged HEI. She is the mistress of juggling demands and multi-tasking. She is decisive in all her activity. In my conversation with her, she cut directly to the stated purpose of the discussion – the focus on doctoral identity. However, for the purpose of authentic representation and this autoethnography, I will provide some history.

I did not remember that I knew Amelia until Annie asked us to join her for lunch, after the successful completion of a moonlighting job for Annie's newly formed company. Up until then, though we had met briefly and communicated telephonically and by email about the work, I had not been able to place her. I had a sense of familiarity but could not place my recognition. In a split second at the table of the sunny and fashionable café, Amelia asked, "Where do I know you from?" We trawled through places and spaces we might have in common. I, not very hopefully, because I had moved from my life in Gauteng, pretty much rejecting (and forgetting) everything associated with it. Amelia was determined. We established that she had studied to be a teacher at Wits University at roughly the same time as I was there. I qualified with my HDE a year or two after she graduated.

Only when she mentioned her maiden name and her teaching history, did I connect her with my own story. This confident and amusing woman-about-town was the proud prefect with full colours for drama and English that I had been terrified of as an adolescent. I can only think that my terror was of being found to be doing something wrong (unintentionally) – of not being a 'good girl'. To my teenage eyes, her mature and authoritative demeanour was a sign of someone who was not to be crossed. Someone

for whom there were no grey areas, which might provide space for teenage justification. It was clear to me then that not understanding the rules of high school was not an excuse for breaking them[31]. I understood Amelia to be communicating (to me then) that she did not need to be liked in order to get the job done. I envied her, because being likable and good was the core of my efforts to survive adolescence.

Our high school's colours blazer was a natty silver grey affair with thin blue and red stripes. The pupils who had them stood out, head and shoulders, above the rest of us clad in mere royal blue. I thought, at fifteen, that it was a pity that the colours blazer did not have the tailoring of the plebian version. On my blazer, the darts that transformed the garment from a box shape to one that nipped in at the waist made it clearly much more feminine. Yet despite my critique of the trendiness of the blazer, it was a fact that the people who had colours blazers were even more terrifying than the ordinary prefects. My realisation that Amelia had been one of them strongly influenced my relationship with her in the early days of PaperHeaDs – I was still anxious about her potential critique of me.

I wonder now why I never translated this awe into my own quest for colours – a public acknowledgement that I was good at something. I suspect, with the wisdom of hindsight, that my high school years of achieving 40 and 50 per cent report cards reinforced a stronger desire to remain invisible and unmarked. I partly attribute my reluctance to begin engaging with status-laden doctoral study to this early position (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999). Coming face-to-face with Amelia, a symbol of that position, in PaperHeaDs forced me to revisit my ideas of my worthiness. I came to be less frightened of the possibility of being wrong.

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31 And so we were taught the social rule that 'ignorance of the law is no defence'. I often wonder if awareness of this gap between knowing and not knowing and the consequences thereof is not the root of a thirst for knowledge. It seems to me to be a typically British Colonial stance on social restraint.

Amelia and I have a shared memory of our history teacher (who was also the staff member in charge of nail, hair, 'foundation garment', and dress-length inspection) whose stock phrase was that girls should not show their intelligence:

> **You know that Mrs G told me … I'll never get a husband because I flaunt my intelligence. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 765-769)**

It says something interesting about Amelia's memory that twenty years later she could remember my determinedly invisible face. In the conversation in the café, I also realised that Amelia had taught my youngest sister. At eleven years younger than myself, my sister entered high school just as I was beginning to teach. Perhaps this ability never to forget was what made Amelia a loved and respected teacher by my sister's account.

Amelia has another ability, which is flagged by my school girl recall. Her colours were for drama and debating. She has the ability to play roles fluidly and authentically. In our conversation about doctoral identity, she described that time in our small town (there were literally two main roads crossing each other and we had just got our first shopping mall), for her. Having graduated with her first teaching degree, she was an energetic and well-respected member of staff following the script of a respectable teacher. At the same time, she was living, unmarried, with her rather older boyfriend. Had anyone known this, there would have been a scandal of noteworthy proportions.

The early 80's in South Africa were characterised by autocratic and hard insistence on conformity in the white world of our small suburban town, which has since become one of the fasted growing towns in Gauteng. Politically, the black townships were exploding as resistance to apartheid grew. The authoritarian and militaristic response to this insubordination had echoes in the way white education was ruled. Married women could not hold permanent posts in schools, because "they would leave to raise children". In the official discourse, the notion of working mothers, in the white community at least, was an alien concept derived from the morally flawed United States and the (by that account) ridiculous Women's Liberation movement. Falling pregnant meant for Amelia that she had to get married to keep her job and in the process lose her

permanent appointment, thus becoming a marginal teacher. It is not surprising to me that Amelia rejected this positioning.

She says of her decision to leave secondary school teaching:

> *I wouldn't be happier [if I'd stayed in teaching]. I'd outgrown teaching and that sounds horrible but I had – I'd outgrown [it]. I needed – even at the teachers' training college – I needed something more stimulating to keep me going. There wasn't enough compulsion to research and look at new ways of doing things and ... there wasn't enough substance to keep me interested. We just delivered, there was no culture [of interrogating the curriculum]. There was no compulsion to intellectualise it, and I needed to do more than that. That was one of the reasons I got out of teaching. I needed to be in a more stimulating ... environment and I thought [university name] would provide it. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 896-915)*

Having moved to a university, excited by the intellectual opportunities it presented, Amelia worked with a group of colleagues in Academic Development, who were interrogating their practice and the assumptions underlying teaching in Higher Education.

> *[W]hen [colleague/mentor] was working there and we were reading and sharing readings and she would send me a reading ... [W]e used to do that SAAAD [South African Association for Academic Development] which PaperHeads came out of, that SAAAD thing and that I loved. I loved it, I felt like ah, I'm being a real academic ... I felt this is what academic life is about, you know? And then when [colleague/mentor] left and things fell apart in AD and I was kind of on my own. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 896-915)*

The intellectual stimulation that Amelia found in SAAAD[32] and which led her to initiate the founding of PaperHeaDs is, for her, a function of conversation, recognition and a sense of belonging. Through Amelia's involvement in the regional SAAAD group she rapidly built up a respectable list of frequently cited publications relating to assessment in Higher Education.

She decided to study for her doctorate and had a series of bad experiences while looking for a supervisor at high status universities, to the extent that she made the decision to study at her own institution, which not as well regarded. She recalls interviewing a potential supervisor by asking "Are you sick? Are you going to leave? Are you going to die before I finish?" This story has become embedded in the PaperHeaDs' group culture, which has emphasised the importance of choosing the 'right' supervisor, I think now, as a means of claiming agency, trying to position ourselves as customers 'who are always right'. Our rationale was that if the university with which we registered was earning (to us) vast sums of money through our registration then 'customer choice' and 'quality of service' had to be factors in the process.

Amelia's decisiveness and determination to do things her way, her learning from her experiences and her refusal to be positioned as not able or undeserving were factors in her rapid completion of her doctorate. While at the beginning of our conversation about doctoral identity she felt that she could not give an account of her Self (Butler, 2005) that did not include being Dr Amelia, when she reflected back on the doctoral learning she noticed that control was a major theme in her account:

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[32] SAAAD arose in the 1980s as an organisation for the professional association of staff in higher education who were intent on transforming South African HE in accordance with the ideals of the liberation movement. It was mainly intended for those working in central academic development or teaching and learning units as well as for mainstream academics with a special interest in issues related to teaching and learning.

I think if you'd asked me that question while I was writing it, I would have been able to see how the doctorate was moulding my life in certain ways and was shaping my life and was trying to direct me ... but now it's such an integral part [of me]. ... I think if you'd asked me that question before [I finished], ... I would have been able to answer. It's almost like once it's finished, it becomes – [corrects self] you become it.

If I think back ... to the time when I was writing it, ... I suppose it's like where the locus of control is, is – was I controlling the doctorate? Or was the doctorate controlling me? ... I don't think at any point it controlled me, because I liked doing it. Look, there might have been some times when I felt 'Oh shit, I really don't feel like doing this now, I've got to do it, but most of the time, most – I'd say 80% of the time I looked forward to doing it. I was going 'Yay, I've got two hours I can work on this now' [Rubbing hands together] ... and it was like, exciting, it was like – it was... my escape, almost. It was my escape from the things that I had to do and that somebody else was making me do, and that was controlling me as opposed to me being able to control this ... and I could control the pace at which [I did it]. ... I could control what I produced because ... [my supervisor] was not ... prescriptive in any way. So it was the one thing, I felt, that I had some control over as opposed to all the other things that were controlling me, deadlines to be met, and work to be done and things to be done. So I don't think it ever ... allowed my life to look like something because of the doctorate. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 136-194)

The concept of locus of control derives from Behaviourist Psychology. The term was coined by Albert Bandura to explain the difference between human behaviours that are externally programmed through regimes of reinforcement and those that appeared to be unrelated to external stimuli. Annie also uses this term – perhaps this is a product of shared experiences in teacher education in the late 70's and early 80's or perhaps it is indicative of Annie and Amelia's discussions about doctoral process since they have

become partners in business. Unlike Annie, Amelia did not put her doctoral work into the category of 'work to be done'. Amelia's use of her doctoral study to legitimate time for herself, her intellect and her agency echoes some aspects of Sophia's story, yet differs in that she felt no guilt related to her other roles; such as mother and wife:

> *I always know that I give them my all. ... It was guilt toward me that I felt. I knew I was doing myself in ... because I'd do all the things for them during the day, come home and cook the supper, and do all the things and then, when I would have been reading or watching TV or sleeping, I didn't. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 1258-1265)*

Her regular work time was after supper in the evening, having helped with homework, and managed the day's logistics. She noted that the hard time came around 9.30 in the evening, when the day's fatigue seemed to catch up with her, but she pointed out that if she could get through that period she could easily work until 2am in the morning, when she had to insist sternly to herself that she get some sleep. Amelia did not construct the internal conversation with herself about managing her life and her study as a lonely space but rather, she "had to make it for me, it has to be – this is me time so, but me time is towards this identity".

Amelia identified three phases in the process of her doctoral study following the resolution of her difficulties with registering and finding a supervisor: uncertainty in the data collection process; confidently competent data analysis and writing up of her thesis; and the process of finalising and submitting.

She describes the initial uncertainties as follows:

> *At the beginning when you feel insecure, and you're not quite sure that you're on the right track. You're not sure that it's credible. You're not sure that there's any value to this research. You're not sure that it's actually going to fly. You're not sure that you're going to get the data. ... I suppose it's – I realise now it's about control. ... There it almost was controlling me,*

because it was forcing me to do things ... that I wasn't feeling confident about, that I didn't feel I had control over. I mean the data collection is a very frightening process because you don't know if you're going to get enough data. You don't know if it's going to be reliable. You don't know what people [will do]. You don't know, if you arrive at an interview, [that] the person's going to be there – it's like a very, very insecure period. Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 212-225)

Amelia's switching use of the personal pronouns in her account are revealing, when Amelia uses the pronoun 'you' she is describing what she sees as common researcher experiences even when she is talking about her own internal conversations. Here she uses pronouns to distinguish between the 'Amelia' of the now and the 'Amelia' of her past experience as she constructs the narrative account of her doctoral journey.

She felt more secure in what she called the middle phase of her study. Here she sifts the elements that have become Dr Amelia and those to be left in the past:

"[Y]ou've collected the data and you know where you're going and you're sure it will fly, then I sort of got more secure about the whole thing and <u>then</u> I enjoyed it. And then as I moved toward the end – funny I hadn't thought about this like this till now – but as I moved toward the end, you do have more blips on the thing because you're going okay, then you read something that's contrary or that throws you off the path and then you get a little bit wobbly ... Toward the end, you realise 'okay it's got to be finished now', you know, 'it is controlling me again, because it's stupid to have got this far and to not finish it' and then there becomes deadlines and external things like graduation dates... that you might miss. And then it becomes an external locus of control again, and then it's not lekker, and then, I think, it was shaping me.

So then I suppose I because, if I had to think about it in those terms, that the doctorate was wanting me to be more disciplined about writing, more ... committed to it ... because of the demands of the doctorate ... was

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having on me. But in the middle stage I felt in control of the doctorate, but now ... I don't really feel separate from it any more. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 234-266)

Curious, I asked Amelia what the 'it' was from which she no longer feels separate, interested to get a sense of what meaning she attaches to the doctorate. Was the integration or merging related to the piece of work, the actual thesis, the dissertation, or is it to do with the label – the appellation?

It's all those things ... it's other things too that make it part of me. ... It's something you finish. It's something that's under your belt. It's then within you. It's not out there any more. It – it's the ownership, you've got the ownership, because you don't really have the ownership of the PhD until you finish it. ... It still is something that can slip through your fingers ... till you hand it in. I think it can slip through your fingers, and you don't really have ownership until then. Once you've handed it in, for good or for worse, it's still yours. You can't lose it then, but up to that point, I mean, anything could happen ... that you could die and you don't have ownership, and I would have died not having the PhD and it not being part of me.

I still had the ownership because I felt even if, even if it came back and they said 'fail', I've still done it and it's still mine and it's still to my name, and I still know it had value. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 275-308)

Amelia recognised that her doctorate 'was never in the bag' until the result was received. Noting that a minor concern was that she had used a relatively unexplored mixed method research process for her study and that the choice of examiners could have been problematic, she still felt that she had completed a piece of work that she was proud of even though, at a later stage in her life, she might think of better ways of doing it. The thesis represents the best work she was able to do at the time and she is proud of the fact that she did it on her own ironically, basically unsupervised.

While she didn't have the experiences of loneliness or guilt in her doctoral journey that Annie and Sophia had, Amelia describes her particular worry as 'her angst'. This term derives from existentialism and directly translated from German means anxiety or dread, but has come to mean a troubled state of mind in South African English. Amelia's language confirms that she meant it in the original sense (perhaps from her Dutch ancestry) as a feeling of dread about lack of meaning. This related to a sense that her doctorate might be perceived as inferior, that she might have taken the 'easy' road, registering at her own institution where she had some positional power, with an undemanding supervisor:

> ***Amelia – I agonised about sort of selling out. I agonised about the speed at which I was doing it, that people don't seem to value, you know. It seems like 'you did it too quickly, how can it be valuable?' ... I found myself justifying myself often, by saying that ... I could do it quickly because I had done so much thinking and reading about it ... Though it was about Assessment – I'd written and started on Assessment, but a lot of the things, the thinking and the refining the thought processes I had done during that. Secondly, I had prepared that policy on RPL, so I had done a huge amount of reading and preparation and thinking and worrying and ... thinking through dilemmas long before I even started the PhD but I found myself justifying myself, often.***

> ***[They would say] "You did this so quickly!" – [and I would answer] " Ja, but you know, it was because I had done all this before"... So the angst was around that, the angst[33] ... How did I know what I was saying was actually reliable? ... Then somebody suggested I send it out – at least my reading list, list of resources – to somebody who was an expert to make sure that there were no gaps, and I did that and it was quite successful.***

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33 At this point Amelia questioned the value of the supervision she received. Her comments have been omitted for ethical reasons as this study does not give the supervisor an opportunity to defend herself.

Liz – You'd done all the oval[34] readings

Amelia – (smiling) Ja, all the oval readings had been done. So then I felt better but, ... I can honestly say that it is 90% as good as it would have been at ... Wits, Rhodes, or somewhere else. ... I didn't have to ever fight with the supervisor about what I wanted in, it was really and truly my work. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 453-507)

Amelia's concern about the way her doctorate might be perceived is testament to the existence of a normative discourse about doctoral learning which suggests that the process must be hard and complex and, mostly, difficult to access. She had done the thinking work of distilling and synthesising the value of accumulated literature on her topic over years into a useful form – a policy to govern practice. She externalised her internal debate in our conversation, possibly thinking that because of the length of my doctoral journey that I (or I signifying PaperHeaDs as a group) doubted the quality of the work that she had done. Similarly, I have wondered whether my seven-year peregrinations towards a doctorate have not been a source of irritation at my self-indulgence to PaperHeaDs who were more goal-oriented.

That said, Amelia never claimed that the work that she did was easy. She describes a moment when it all came together, the only large block of time she was able to work on her thesis, apart from PaperHeaDs Getaways, was leave she was able to take:

I had 19 days that I could work 8 hours a day on this thing and I remember it was during that time ... I was about at the two-thirds mark ... where it all kind of like jelled and it all came together. ...Up to that stage it was – I think what Annie's describing now – it was bits all over the show. She's

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34 In true feminist form, the PaperHeaDs way is to reject unquestioned masculinisation of concepts and reject the use of the term 'seminal' to refer to the foundational readings in a field – choosing the feminine version of seed – ova from which the term 'oval' is derived. This talks to the way that PaperHeaDs is situated in a space that allows careful consideration of assumptions in language and an opportunity to create a resistant language.

doing a bit here, a bit there and she's probably about two-thirds of the way through ... and the thing is, it's quite frustrating up to that point, if you like things to be fairly ordered. And while I work all over the place, I still want to see the order, and I couldn't really see the order ... It's hard to tell somebody but you just have to work through that, you just have to keep on working ... the order appears eventually. You just have to keep doing the little bits. It's like building a puzzle, you know, it's like putting the pieces and eventually you get one whole segment that hangs together. ... There was definitely a point I remember it coming together like that ... toward the end of the 19 days, and then I felt, okay, I'm not going to lose this, it going to work. It's going to be – I'm going to be able to sustain it. It's going to be credible. It hangs together now. I can see where it's going. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 1151-1218)

Her answers to the question of what the precursors to her thesis 'coming together' were give a useful insight into the autogogy (as defined in Chapter 2) of doctoral learning (Keats, 2007; 2008). By Amelia's account, it is the synchronicity of previous intellectual work done, blocks of time to bring it together in writing, and determination to continue to work even when the situation looks hopeless. A possible factor may also be the approach of a deadline where the resource of time is exhausted.

Shortly after having completed her doctorate, what she called the "pinnacle of academic life", Amelia left academia to go into business with Annie. I asked her what the doctorate meant to her:

... and it doesn't mean nothing ... and I realise that <u>now</u>. I realise that when people say, used to say, what is a doctorate, 'specially if you're not going to stay an academic? What does a doctorate mean to you? It does mean something. It means something to society. It means something to me ... I think people are respectful of it, and they look up to you if you've got a doctorate ... for whatever reason and however misplaced that respect is. But when – even laymen, laymen, other academics, when you say it's Dr

Amelia it means something to them – you can see that. And I feel I've earned that and I've achieved it and that's why. ... Like I can see [husband] get edgy when somebody – because when I'm with him often it's in an official thing and people will say like – we went to go and sign papers at the lawyer – and she said 'Oh, hello Mrs Prada' and I said 'No, it's Dr Prada' and I can see Robert bristles when I do that ... I said to him 'I've worked [expletive] long and hard to do this, I'm not going to say – I'm not Mrs Prada any more, why must I have people calling me that? You can call me Amelia – I have no problem with that at all because I'm Amelia, but I'm not Mrs Prada any more, so don't call me that' ... I've worked long and hard to do that, and why the hell should I undercut it and undermine it to suit somebody else. It's not something that comes lightly ... why minimise it because it suits somebody else because it fits into somebody else's life world to see me as Mrs Prada? (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 583-636)

The vehemence of Amelia's identity claims here echo frustrations that have been expressed by other South African women academics (Orr, Rorich & Dowling, 2006; Pseudonym Professor Livingstone, 2006). She is content with the representation of herself implied by her first name and of her surname taken on when she got married and which is how she orients herself as a member of a family. However, she resists the subordinate title of 'Mrs'. The fact that the attorney, an educated person, was either consciously or unconsciously insensitive to the meaning of her title enraged Amelia. In this critical incident, Amelia rejected her positioning as being merely an appendix to her husband and claimed the right to be acknowledged for her own agency and capacities. In our conversation, she also criticised academics' (and PaperHeaDs') tendency to make light of the achievement, saying that it was like "saying to an advocate, well don't really say you're an advocate, you're actually just a lawyer".

What did Amelia think that the doctorate means? She said that the title is a public affirmation:

It's like the kind of official seal, yes you are a good academic, you can work independently – I think that's a big thing that a doctorate says. A doctorate says that you can work independently. It also says that you can work over a sustained period of time. And that's why, for me, I had to do it quickly because I didn't want to lose interest in it. I wanted to maintain that interest and the best way for me to maintain interest ... is to work on something all the time and to achieve it quite quickly ... [In Education] we're moving too quickly now to allow for long research processes, but by the same token, it's a sustained period and I had to sustain my interest and sustain my thread and sustain all the things that go with it ... developing that length of writing and keeping the same argument going through it ... I think ... people underplay what a doctorate is. And I think that we do that academically – we do that in an academic banter way, but it ... shows commitment, it shows resolve, it shows self-respect, it shows strength of character, it shows a whole lot of things ... You can have those things without having a doctorate, but the doctorate ... brings it all together. It's the final, ultimate test of whether you can wing it or not...and it's also externalising your intellect, it's like showing your intellect. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 681-756)

Amelia values the qualities of 'being an academic' despite the fact that she has left academia.

I think I will always be an academic. ... I think the fact that I'm not in an institution or the fact that ... even if I stop writing research papers – I don't see myself ever stopping being an academic, because I think an academic is more a state of mind than ... a label ... And in my mind, I'm academic. I deal with things academically; I interrogate things academically, so even if I'm dealing with truck drivers, I deal with it in an academic fashion.

I think ... it's about scholarship and I think that's what – ja, maybe that's a better term than academic, because academic has other connotations, but

I will always be scholarly, I'll always be reading for betterment, I'll always be thinking of ways of improving my practice, improving how I'm doing things, without having to work in any institution to do that. ... One of our best friends is a top, top businessman in South Africa. He's scholarly. He goes about it in a scholarly fashion. He researches his business. He deals with it academically. He reads books about business that will enhance it. He thinks about ways to do it better. He intellectualises the processes of business and that's, that's valuable [because] ... it leads to a better whatever that thing is you're aiming at, if it's a business, if it's a policy, if it's a training manual. ... Being an academic is about improvement. It's about not being happy with the status quo .... and finding ways, researching ways of how to do that better, so it always is about improvement. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 808-880)

Amelia's pragmatic account of scholarship as improvement, and the importance of her title as a signifier of her capacities, is in tension with a dislike of an excessive display of erudition:

I underplay being erudite, because I don't like the showiness of showing I'm an academic, sitting around and trying ... outplay each other on being erudite ... I do like being erudite, I do like it – without – I don't like the sort of outward [display] ... I don't like the game of showing it ... showiness. ... And some people can do it quite well. They pick up a couple of readings and they flash them out [snapping fingers] and it would appear that they're well read, when in fact [it's pretty superficial] ... it's discerning, I pick the things I'm really interested in ... I just feel there's too much information in my head to worry myself about some things that don't interest me.

[S]ometimes it's totally out of context, I take that one idea and say okay, how can I domesticate that and make it work ... and sometimes it's got no relevance at all to anything that that person wrote, or it might even be a

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misunderstanding of the whole model ... but it's triggered something for me, that will take me forward in the process. ... No matter how crap any presentation is, there's always one thing that you can take away from it, so I try to do that. (Amelia, 21st March 2008, lines 992-1121)

Amelia's mention of games suggests that there are particular ways of performing in the academic world in order to be recognised, in this case dropping the names of published academics and thinkers to show the extent of one's reading and thought. She rejects this as tasteless and superficial. She claims that her doctoral learning has enabled her to become discerning; to select what resonates as useful to her and to 'domesticate' it – bend it to her own uses. Lyotard, describing the postmodern mood, conceptualised the language games played to legitimate ones discourse (Bloland, 1995, p. 534), in this case fellow academics' positioning of themselves as 'knowers'. Here Amelia challenges an epistemic metanarrative or dominant discourse of academia, performed through 'name dropping', that worthy knowing is a product of consumption of texts. Her demand that valuable knowledge must be useful in her daily life was predicted by Lyotard when he said, "The [postmodern] process of delegitimation and the predominance of performance criteria are sounding the knell of the Professor" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 53).

Amelia's choice of doctoral identity speaks to the aspects of doctoral learning that work for her and who she wants to be, clearly choosing some elements and rejected others. In this regard she is a thoroughly Postmodern Doctor; she has shopped amongst the discourses that circulate in the world of knowledge-creation (see Chapter 2 p.24) and selected those that represent her doctoral self.

It takes an uncommon amount of guts to put your dreams on the line, to hold them up and say, 'How good or how bad am I?' That's where courage comes in. (Erma Louise Bombeck, in Bombeck, n.d.)[35]

The Window Cleaner – Maya's Story

In the process of writing the text, I became this other person … so there might be things like 'What does it mean to be Doctor Silver?' but that would have maybe been a change with any doctorate, provided I felt about that doctorate the way I feel about mine. But I feel like it's there, exactly how I feel … itself, embodied, what my beliefs are about that. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 156-160)

While in my mind Maya's role in PaperHeaDs is that of the Mother[36], this stereotype needs to be unpacked lest an ill-considered generalisation of 'mother' as a metaphor counteracts my representation of Maya's story. In her argument that feminists need "to hold the idea of structures of power while understanding the operation of discourses within which individuals are constructed and construct themselves", Beckwith (1999, p. 391) describes the mother–daughter relationship as structurally hierarchical, entailing "power over" others. "It [motherhood] is traditionally constructed within converging discourses of nurturing, protective femininity and benign hierarchical power" (p. 392). It is in alternative discourses of collectivity and empowerment that I find Maya's story expressed; as such they are sites of challenge and resistance.

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35 I could have found a more easily sourced reference but these words and the person alleged to have said it are iconic, and in my mind strongly associated with Maya's sharp insightful humour.

36 Ironically Maya characterizes my position in PaperHeaDs as The Mother in terms of taking care. Perhaps we mother each other. It was Maya who decided to mark every self-deprecating comment I made about my academic ability by crying "Button!", referring to the colloquial phrase "Pushing someone's buttons" meaning to manipulate someone's emotions. This simple conditioning process quickly broke my self-defeating language habit.

Maya was the first PaperHeaD to complete her PhD, so she became a role model for the process. Registering in 2002 after her proposal was approved, she worked constantly and consistently, completing her thesis on 18th December 2003 – twelve days ahead of her own deadline. What does it mean to work constantly and consistently? Many doctoral students might take this to mean that she withdrew from the world, her family, and responsibilities to dedicate herself to the pursuit of knowledge, but this was not the case.

In our conversation about doctoral identity, Maya referred often to the Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1955), a mental device that I (and Maya), teaching communication subjects in the 80's, used to explain some of the less obvious qualities of knowing and being known by somebody.
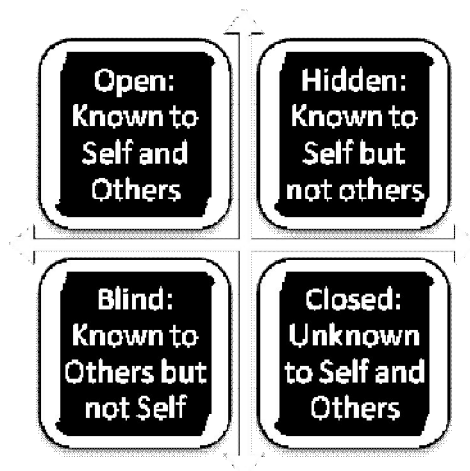
Figure 12: Johari Window (Luft & Ingham 1955)

Using two conceptual axes; what knowledge an individual has of herself and what knowledge others have of her (Figure 12), the Johari Window helps to conceptualise what we choose to show others or not. The model suggests that in disclosing ourselves we enlarge the Open pane of the window, revealing more of ourselves and reducing what is hidden from others. We then get feedback from others, thus finding out some of what we are blind to in ourselves. The process of self revelation or feedback from others ultimately causes a reduction in the area of ourselves that is closed.

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In a humanist psychological account of Self, this process opens up potentials and possibilities for the individual's growth. The model is built on the modernist assumption that a unitary and integrated Self is relatively stable and indeed desirable (see Chapter 2 for a critique of this notion). It is this state that my female relative refers to in defining mental health as being authentic and not pretending (see Chapter 1). Following Beckwith (1999), I ask the reader to hold this "structural" account of Self in mind whilst also considering the discourses of challenge and resistance revealed in a postmodern account of selves which accounts for Maya's doctoral identity construction.

It is in the tension between the metaphorical Window Cleaner and the Mother that I choose to locate this story. In many ways Maya was the PaperHeaD who opened our Johari Windows. Some of my own understandings of 'mother' include the person who does the 'dirty work' – cleaning things up and putting things right. While this is certainly not true in the domain of housework – no Domestic Goddess, she! – it resonates in terms of her ability to find clarity in intellectual messiness. She has an ability to clean the windows through which we look at the world.

At the beginning of our conversation, she breathlessly[37] explained her excitement at my doctoral project:

> *It's quite interesting in a way because what you get ... you get ... you know that whole Johari's window thing? And now you've got to try and get Liz's perspective on Liz, Liz's perspective on PaperHeads, Liz's perspective on Maya and Sophia and then you need to try and get Maya's perspective on PaperHeaDs and Maya's perspective on Maya's identity and try and look at those as different panels in a different way? But when you introduce the perspective of Maya's perspective on Maya ... you're obviously looking at Liz's perspective on Maya, but you've also got to try and see the different*

37 The sentence ran on, and her words fell faster and faster. To try and capture this listening experience, the commas are included to allow for breathing.

perspectives and [other ways of looking at it]. ... Like the case of Johari's window ... it's Maya's perspective on who Maya is and Sophia's perspective on who Maya is and you're going to try and connect up the different panels and of course there's always those parts that none of us can see. And also how we see PaperHeads. And try and see that. You're can never be objective or take yourself out the picture, but you try and say let me [Liz] set aside what I see PaperHeads is and let me genuinely listen to what they say it is. And then compare that against the other panels ... to this is Liz's construction of PaperHeads, with each of our constructions of PaperHeads and then this other text, which is your minutes of meetings and other perspectives of PaperHeads, which ... presumably overlaps a lot with yours now, but you might also see ... different things happening there. ... And then you think ... this is always Liz's understanding of PaperHeaDs ... but then as I say, there's always that other, thing that we can never be, you know, that sort of, objectification of what is PaperHeads outside of how we construct it? Does it exist? (Maya, 20th March 2008 lines 9-53)

In 1963, Betty Friedan signalled the second wave of feminism when she published her book *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan, 1982 (first published 1963)). In it she interrogated the 'sense of dissatisfaction' expressed by women college graduates, at a future confined to suburban housewifery (Quindlen, 1997, p. x).

Dissatisfaction with the notion of the full-time housewife and child-caregiver as the only role for a married woman reached the South African white community in the late 70's. Like the middle-class America of the 50's, white urban housewives had access to labour-saving machines, disposable income albeit via their husbands, the breadwinners (and signatories on the bank account), and domestic help. Many women, including my own mother, kicked against a world that seemed to treat her as a child outside her own home and longed to have control of their own money. To achieve this, my mother returned to nursing, her career prior to marriage, in which she had won awards and public acknowledgement. This was the background to my own decision never to marry

(in the conventional sense) and submit to the community of property contract which was the norm in South Africa at the time.

I assume that a similar act of resistance led Maya to choose not to marry in the traditional sense, but to enter a long-term contracted partnership. It also provided a foundation for her motivation to do a doctorate:

> **Maya – [I]t's the kind of thing that therapists unravel. It's not a theorised thing, it's about showing my Dad that I don't – you know that I [am not] … just a teacher because that's a good job for a woman. It's about showing my family that I'm clever at competing with my friend, who was the brilliant one and I was her sidekick. It's about all of those pathetic little individual [hang-ups] … especially because I have that huge part of me [that needs recognition]… Because it's a doctor of Education – mustn't ever forget that. So, in becoming a doctor, it's still very much about**
>
> **Liz – Your identity as a teacher?**
>
> **Maya – Mm. Funny because I don't have – I wouldn't use the word teacher, because of my father… the way in which my father had always gendered that profession … patronised it. … It was a nice job for women, because you get the school holidays , so for that reason I find it hard to deal with the idea of teaching, but of course it is teaching. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 888-988)**

Maya's story picks up the thread seen in Sophia's and Amelia's stories about the desire to be seen as clever. For each of them the doctorate is a means to externalise their intellects. Here Maya uses the present tense to describe her reasons for doing a PhD, although she already has it. She positions herself as competing (still?) with a childhood friend who was recognised as clever, and for recognition from the father she idolised, but whose stereotypical views of appropriate careers for women she resisted. Completely aware of the psychodynamics of personality, it was Maya that broke the ice

at our first PaperHeaDs Getaway with her question "Tell us one secret you have never told your mother", opening the window for self-revelation and recognition and a bonding that is part of the PaperHeaDs dynamic.

Like Amelia, Maya found it impossible to consider her doctoral identity as apart from herself or to give it words to say, as I had done in the piece inspired by Michael White (see Appendix 5):

> *You see I wouldn't be able to say that – you know, I couldn't be able to put the words to the doctorate, because it's – that's not a separate me. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 115-116)*

Maya's pointing to the inability to give her doctoral identity a voice shows how she now embodies her doctorate, or it her; the fantasy self has become real. She has 'become it', to use Amelia's words. When I asked her how she constructs herself as an academic differently from where she was while working on her doctorate, which she completed in 2004, she said:

> *Um, my identity ... and some people ... [slow thoughtful speech] like me. Maybe I'm less impressed with it now. I take it more seriously as what it really is and I'm less wrapped up in the status part of it most of the time. ... [It's really] a set of literacy practices, a conceptual framework. ... I've got the new topics and new areas, using the ability to develop an argument and also the ability to critique some of the game playing involved in that way of doing things. <u>That's</u> what it really is.*

> *The value of being able to play the game and critique it is ... it's very clear that being able to play the game is what gets you ahead, in this environment.*

> *The ability to critique it ... does two things: it stops me thinking that it is reality ... I mean it's reality but it's not. – It stops me thinking that it's The Truth the God-given way of living, incontrovertible [truth]. So the ability to*

critique it makes me able to get more and more sophistication at being able to play the game.

The fact that I can critique it keeps reminding me that there are other ways of playing – different games. … The other big thing, it does, is that I <u>think</u> it will help me to be a good supervisor, because I'm not – I don't approach students' writing or students' ideas, I <u>think</u> – sounds a bit glorifying but (breathes) I don't approach students' ideas and students' writing as … right or wrong, I approach it as 'Okay, I need to explain to them, this part and the nuance', and justify it to myself … now why should they have to do it like that? (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 188-224)

Getting ahead in the academic environment through playing the game is exactly the legitimation that Lyotard called into question: "To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it" (Lyotard, 1984, pp. xxiv-xxv)[38]. The rational structure of this comment – the summary of her perception of what a doctorate is; the value of it; and the unpacking of that value as ultimately in service to students – are rooted in her educational experience. Like Sophia, Maya records that there was a change in the way people interacted with her, but more that there is an opportunity for teaching in a different way, a way which acknowledges the different ways that knowledge is constructed and how an academic 'game' needs to be played for her students' ideas to be taken seriously. Like Maura, she recognises that

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38 It seems appropriate here to include, as a sidebar, one of the academic language games to which Maya refers. It is also appropriate for me to 'come out of the closet' in terms of the sources I have used in this study, but which are mostly unacknowledged. Wikipedia presents this disclaimer on their website: "Most educators and professionals do not consider it appropriate to use tertiary sources such as encyclopedias as a sole source for any information — citing an encyclopedia as an important reference in footnotes or bibliographies may result in censure or a failing grade. Wikipedia articles should be used for background information, as a reference for correct terminology and search terms, and as a starting point for further research." The editing stats included with this article describe 50 edits over a three year period from 24 unique editors – only identifiable by their IP addresses. These 'facts' provide an interesting example of the language games of legitimation that Lyotard was describing and possibly are exactly the reason why the Postmodern Condition is so popular as a description of the logic loops that are created when legitimacy of knowledge is questioned.

the processes of academia are not transparent. She wants to make clear the reasons for the conventions, positioning herself as a servant to their empowerment:

> ***Why should they use it? What will it do to the piece? How will it shift their position? And ... other things like: ... Why does this sentence here need a reference? ... Why can't they just say it? Why is that everyday knowledge not accepted in the academic world? So I think because I'm able to critique that identity as a way of playing the game, [it] allows me to help my students learn the rules better, and I don't think necessarily, that all people who get a doctorate would do that. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 244-249)***

Ken Hyland in his analysis of authoritative academic discourse shows the power of these 'games' as he creates a model for evaluating academic writing. He calls the two categories of devices 'stance' and 'engagement'. Here, Maya is referring to the writer-positioning strategies that fall into the stance category. Hyland confirms "In the sciences it is common for writers to downplay their personal role to highlight the phenomena under study, the replicability of research activities, and the generality of the findings, subordinating their own voice to that of unmediated nature. Such a strategy subtly conveys an empiricist ideology that suggests research outcomes would be the same irrespective of the individual conducting it". This contrasts with the practice "[i]n the humanities and social sciences [where] ... [p]ersonal reference is a clear indication of the perspective from which a statement should be interpreted, enabling writers to emphasise their own contribution to the field and to seek agreement for it" (2005, p. 181). Maya's desire is to make these conventions overt to her students so that they can access them – a huge task given the deeply abstract nature of ideology and disciplinary conceptions that lie behind the beguiling simplicity of finding the right vocabulary,

appropriate sentence structure and helpful punctuation. This is particularly so for English Second Language learners.[39]

In her own thesis, Maya describes her sense of being a schizoid teacher when she was teaching in a middle- to upper-class white girls school during the week and teaching Saturday school to African pupils in Umlazi, in the late 80's and early 90's.

> *As a middle-class white woman, my home literacy overlapped extensively with my school literacy. I believed that my 'way of doing things' was 'natural' and 'common sense' and that my task as teacher was to teach students to do things in these same ways ... [for example giving feedback to a student giving a speech on AIDS] As well as pointing out the 'wrongness' of giving a personal account in a formal speech, I pointed out the 'common sense' that she couldn't present conflicting views on a topic without stating which one she held to be true. The class could not seem to understand why I was insisting on what to me seemed an obvious need for consistent points of view. The students seemed to perceive the self-contradictions of her presentation as adding value, rather than confusion, to her talk. (Extract from Maya's thesis 2004 p.13)*

Maya's recognition that her performance of teaching had to change and her deep concern with social justice moved her into the higher education sector and ultimately provided the basis for her doctoral study. She needed to make overt the fact that performance of status roles goes beyond a superficial compliance with correct form. Her revealing of the hidden structures of academic voice acknowledges her home literacy, which overlapped with her school literacy and therefore to an extent with university

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39 English second language, the commonly accepted term for non-mother-tongue English speakers, is a misnomer because the majority of South African students have two or three languages in addition to their mother tongue. My point here is that the conventions that are difficult for English first language speakers to acquire, mostly through osmosis (Grant, 2003) must be even more complex from a multilingual perspective.

literacies. She notes that for this reason she 'had easier access' than some students to academic literacies. While completing her doctorate she was self-consciously aware that she was applying the theoretical framework of her doctoral study to her own learning.

However, I had the same or similar advantages. While her father had a post-school education, her mother had not and, in any event, her father had not been present. For all her desire to be known as doctor for the external recognition of her mind, Maya never doubted her ability to do a doctorate. Why had the process of doctoral learning been relatively less fraught for her than for me? Maya investigated this with me in our conversation (Oakley, 1981).

> *Can I just say that, that for me to be now on the other side of Johari's window, it would be more difficult because you don't buy into it? ... It would be difficult [for you] because you have more doubts ... about your ability to have that identity than I did. ... I don't think that's an arrogant thing for me to say, because I have great doubts about my ability to take on all sorts of identities, but that one. [I'm] not saying that it was easy and I wasn't scared or whatever, but that I wanted it, I knew I wanted it and I think in my gut I knew I could do it and I had [supervisor] who could tell me in a critical, challenging way that yes, you can do it. ... I often think that you want it, but there're parts of it that you want to distance yourself from, mainly the intellectual snobbery stuff. I think that really worries you, [laughter] ... but I think you have great ... fear that you can't be a doctor. ... I don't think it's a huge thing and I think you've shifted it, but I think it's there ... I don't think it was ever really there for me. I had worries about how good I'd be, how long it would take me, how easy it would be, but I always knew I could do it. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 577-590)*

Maya's position that she did not resist the doctoral identity brings to mind the comment made by Johnson, Lee and Green (2000) that certain forms of supervision "may work for those who are 'always-already' in part shaped as the form of personhood that these practices seek to produce. But it does not work for [those] ... for whom the form of personhood currently required as an independent scholar potentially involves the

negation of the values and modes of operating historically associated with their gendered identities" (2000, p. 145). Maya recognises herself as the 'always/already independent' scholar. Her absolute clarity that she wanted the doctorate, and her conviction, supported by her supervisor, that she could do it, are the factors to which she attributes her success. Applying this to all doctoral learners, however, would reduce doctoral pedagogy or autogogy – or the process of self-teaching (cf. Amelia's story) to a simple bulleted list.

The reality is more complex (e.g. Diezmann, 2005). Maya frequently apologises for what she perceives as arrogance or domination – as here – showing a very high level of self-monitoring in relation to others. In fact the only criticism she received in stellar examination reports of her PhD was that she "does not always do herself justice" and that "there is no reason for her to stand back – she is steeped in the literature and practices of this field – her own voice deserves to be presented as that of an 'expert'". The latter comment suggests expectations of academic performativity in a doctorate more complex than has yet been considered in the literature. The examiner's comment is an indicator that 'voice' in the Social Sciences and Humanities is a complex thing to achieve. "In the soft disciplines where what counts as adequate explanation is less assured, interpretative variation increases and writers must rely to a greater extent on a personal projection into the text, through self-mention and attitude markers to invoke an intelligent reader and a credible, collegial writer" (Hyland, 2005, p. 188). The issue of personal projection into a text, communicating with a community of practice, requires a fine balance between arrogant claims at one pole and too much tentativeness at the other. Too dogmatic a stance cues resistance in a reader, while too little conviction cues doubt in the value of the argument.

Another source of complexity that defeats the possibility of a simple explanation of doctoral teaching and learning is the relational elements of doctoral identity construction discussed in Chapter 2. Barbara Grant says: "These traces [of identity] are found in the figures of the individuals who stand behind the labels of supervisors and student, 'real' people (variously gendered, classed, aged, ethnic, religious, sexually oriented) who take up the positions of student and supervisor—and a 'real' (and

limited) object that takes up the (idealised) position of thesis" (Grant, 2003, p. 182). It is important to note Maya's comment that her supervisor who affirmed this capacity reinforced her confidence in her ability to play the academic game. Yet Maya describes her need for affirmation as conditional:

> **You see I think because I don't believe affirmation. I think a lot of women don't – I don't believe affirmation. So if I only got affirmation I would have just have dismissed it, whereas if I got someone who was challenging me, challenging me, challenging me and then said about the one piece, "That's really great, I love what you've done with the argument", then I can take that, and then I can say okay, good. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 455-459)**

She believes compliments when she feels they are grounded in her real capacity. She needed to have watched herself achieve a higher level or to have other valid reasons for believing a compliment. Her supervisor recognised this and was able to challenge her and then compliment her on her effort.

As she says, the doctoral process was not easy. Despite her confidence and her current feelings about her doctoral persona, the actual documented processes showed some patterns that are similar to those recounted by the PaperHeaDs who are still in the process (see Chapter 5). For example in a post to PaperHeaDs in February 2002, despite having had positive feedback on her written proposal, she still needed to face the panel and defend it orally. She cries:

> **<<<02/28/02 1:34 PM>>>**

> **Apparently I must "talk to my proposal." What does that mean? Mostly my conversations with my proposal are along the lines of "Oh ^&*!! Why the %^&* have I got to do this now? I haven't got any #$%^ing time for this in my life now. I wish to %^&* this would all just $%^& right off. Maya (M334)**

This post gives an indication of Maya's awareness of conversing with at least a proto-doctoral persona in the form of her proposal, playing on the discourse of postgraduate study that is opaque to even the 'always/already' scholar.

On March 13 2002, she records a moment when she gave herself permission to "Just Write" regardless of tangents and argument structure:

<<<03/13/02 9:02 PM>>>

I had a useful discussion with [colleague] about his writing process and he said that once he'd given himself permission to "just write" without a clear structure or aim, he was able to write much better and discovered that a lot of the learning took place through the writing (as opposed to the writing reflecting the learning that had taken place). He was the most published person at [institution] last year so I'm going to give his relaxed stance a go! Maya (M369)

This notion of writing without a planned structure runs counter to years of education in which writing to communicate through clear and accepted genres is required. Yet this piece of advice garnered in conversation with a more experienced academic introduced Maya to the notion of writing to learn. It seems obvious from 'the other side of the Johari window' of doctoral learning, that the shift from writing other people's knowledge with authority, to writing our own knowledge is central to the idea of 'adding new knowledge' that is mentioned in doctoral level descriptors (see Chapter 2). In this post, Maya captures a shift from Procedural Knowing to acquiring a procedure for Constructed Knowing (Belenky et al, 1986). Gina Wisker suggests that a threshold concept is acquired when the learner crosses a boundary in her perception of a subject, integrating disparate elements that were previously complex and difficult. Such concepts are often troublesome and counter-intuitive, such as the idea that we can write to learn rather than learning something, then writing it down. Acquisition of threshold concepts such as this are powerfully transformative; they move the learner

from stuck places through liminal spaces into new understanding, which lead to ontological change – seeing the self and the world differently (Wisker, 2009).

Just after her proposal defence, Maya reveals her insecurity, another liminal space, again in a dialogue between two inner aspects of herself, posted to PaperHeaDs (this dialogue probably informed my own piece when Sophia interviewed me).

<<<03/25/02 9:17 AM>>>

...How did it go? Well, it all depends who is telling the story. I'll allow both inner-beings a brief summary:

[Ego]:"It didn't go too great.... Then [panel member] says that my concerns about whether I'm in the critical or post-structural paradigm don't matter. They aren't discrete entities. I KNEW THAT! (Why didn't I say that?) ... So [panel member] (who was actually really sweet and supportive) says "But you spell out your sample in your proposal and it's fine. I thought this was all cut and dried and now you seem to have doubts?" Oh &*(^%!! The last thing I wanted to sound was insecure and uncertain...is that how I sounded? Yes, I think that's how I sounded."

[Alter-ego]: "OK, my turn. It went great. [Supervisor] took notes for me and everyone was really helpful. [Panel member] ended by saying it was a tight proposal and very well worded. They think I'm a "strong candidate"!
 So all the hyper-analysis by the other half should be ignored – she just
likes to have something to whine about." ...Keep Well, Maya (M386)

Doubting whether her academic performance was appropriate signals a sense that the role has to be enacted – Maya knows that confidence in presentation is part of that role, but it is not yet embodied. In June, Maya found out at a creative writing workshop that her academic voice had to tell her story first in a non-critical way:

<<<06/14/02 5:49 AM>>>

…(or should I say the main lesson FOR ME …was that the research has to be MY story and I have to be the first reader. The critical voice has no place in the first most important stages of writing – even academic writing. My academic voice must still be my voice telling my story…Thanks, Maya (M634)

This first taking up of a position (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999) – or rather positioning herself as having a valuable story to tell, could arguably be the starting position for her acquisition of her doctoral voice. In a sense, I see Maya as using her posts to look at her own thinking – this particular message has a strong didactic tone.

By September 2002, she is well on her way with data collection and analysis, and feeling confident in her strategies, which is reminiscent of Amelia's remark that in the middle of her study she felt in control. It occurs after a PaperHeaDs meeting where Maya's progress had been acknowledged by the group:

<<<09/03/02 10:24 AM>>>

…Amelia pushed me to give tips about my work thus far, an exercise I found quite useful. For the record my tips were:
1. Take leave (and spend it on your research)
2 . Spend time on yourself and getting yourself into the zone.
([Creative Writer]'s workshop, [Supervisor]'s workshop, [Ex-colleague]'s workshop, going to gym, knocking off at 12 and playing with my kids all help put me in the zone.)

3. Work and all its crises will be there when it's finished, so work on not being distracted.

Ciao, Maya. (M821)

This sample roller-coaster of emotions exclusively related to Maya's self-documented doctoral learning process, suggests that falling into chaos and then designing strategies for scrambling out again are part of it (Lee & Williams, 1999). Her list shows firstly, her awareness of the need for blocks of time to focus, which must be self-arranged. Secondly, the need to connect with activities external to one's self through using academic supports available, taking care of the mind-body balance and maintaining social connections. Thirdly, she specifically excludes social connection with work demands from the external activities. Perhaps this is because at work, we know ourselves as competent and this seduces us back into its time gobbling ambit. The crises that she mentions relate to managing the problems of mergers (described in Annie's story). At the time, Maya was managing the tensions of two groups of people from very different organisational cultures in order to get the new merged department functioning effectively.

Through 2003, Maya was not as visible on PaperHeaDs as she had been in previous years. On May 21, she pops up to record her mixed feelings about having an article from a chapter of her PhD accepted. She agonised:

<<<05/21/03 10:50 AM>>>

I'm also very anxious – what if people read it and say it's rubbish and I won't get my doctorate... Keep well, Maya. (M1201)

Whilst recognising that she was only seeing the negative side of life (perhaps the stress of merger again) she noted with relief that her block of nine days leave is imminent. It is

interesting to note that though the article was accepted by an accredited and peer-reviewed journal, she still doubted the validity of her voice.

Between May and September Maya posted thirteen messages – some logistical, some to give or receive advice and some amusing – while on leave. Between mid-September and mid October she posted nothing. On 'reappearing', she confessed to hitting what she called a 'flat spot' when a second article had been rejected and she had been unable to move forward. This lasted until the holidays, when she was able to pick up her work, which appeared to be rewarded by the acceptance of a third article. Having had the validation, she is less in doubt about her academic ability. Ahern and Manathunga's (2004) suggestion for 'clutch-starting stalled' doctoral students is that academic procrastination needs to be diagnosed, by the supervisor, as having cognitive, social or emotional causes. Maya's month long break seems to have been located in the emotional domain – performance anxiety (Ahern & Manathunga, 2004, p. 246), but is resolved in Maya's case by reassurance from her supervisor, when she eventually shares her difficulty. Her anxiety turns by late October to a worry about the standards for doctoral assessment:

<<<10/31/03 8:46 AM>>>

The further I go in this thing (reading, analysing, writing), the more I worry about the notion of a PhD as contributing "new knowledge". After all there is nothing new under the sun. ...Maya. (M1351)

It is interesting to note here how her capable choice of words locates herself in process (in this 'thing') as separate from the abstraction of a doctorate. This worry about 'new knowledge' is identified by Wisker as another threshold concept which signals an imminent movement into an awareness of the "insecurity of established knowledge and sense of contribution to new meaning" (Wisker, 2009).

This epistemological shift had been achieved by November, when in the midst of devastating family travails, Maya escaped temporarily by working in her office over the weekend (a mistake she claimed then but which possibly served her). In this self-created space, she was reworking a final chapter based on the feedback from her supervisor. Feeling very depressed, she records another breakthrough as she says to her supervisor (and shares with PaperHeaDs):

<<<11/22/03 12:08 PM>>>

I..then read your comments about chapter six and couldn't see anything but a negative. I have since calmed down and relooked at the chapter and feel quite positive about it. When I shift the emphasis ... a lot of my data falls into place. (M1393)

In this post, Maya demonstrates her ability to focus and persist with her work, and a specific moment where her emotional state fostered a negative view of critical feedback, but which she was able to resist in order to make her thesis argument effective. Comparing the differing positions of September and November is testament to an alternative self-positioning. She did not record here how that shift occurred, but in the quotation above from our conversation on doctoral identity, she describes how she wrote her doctoral self into existence. She also used her doctoral work as a way of strengthening and empowering herself, or moving when things were stuck. She discounted the effect of life challenges as a reason to procrastinate:

Life has always got stuff in it so even since I've not been doing the PhD, I've had to have stuff for the house, stuff with [partner] not that you could separate the two, but that there was tough times while I was doing the PhD, but there weren't tough times with the PhD...[I used the Phd] ... because I felt very angry that because of [family member] – we weren't taking the actions which I would have thought were appropriate and which [partner] thought was appropriate. But then at least I was doing a PhD and I had arguments to construct and readings to do, so that need for me to

tackle problems, come to solutions, control the situation, at least I was doing that in my PhD. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 478-494)

Maya differentiates between there being tough times 'doing the PhD, but not with the PhD'. Perhaps the story of the process changes when the doctorate is embodied. In the opening quotation to this story, Maya describes how she wrote her doctoral self into existence, a process of coming to 'embody a fictionalised self or a self that she did not find herself as embodied' as she puts it.

I mean you [there] were ...any amount of times when I hated it. It was just like blocked. I didn't know what to do with something or I was very anxious, had a lot of anxiety came up with the PhD, but it was... as in growing who I was trying to be...[The anxiety] ... was about – would I be able to be – good enough? Ja, it was about that ... wondering... if it was good enough for people to think I was good enough ... It was about pleasing other people. Mostly ... [Supervisor] – probably my parents – my dad certainly – mostly about impressing other people. If I failed, then it wouldn't have been good enough. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 414-431)

Maya is very clear that the anxiety she experienced was growing pains associated with developing her doctoral self. It seems then that the anxiety is a symptom of doctoral liminal spaces and an indicator of thresholds to be crossed (Meyer & Land, 2005). Knowing this she dealt with her anxiety by working on, in spite of negative feelings. She distinguishes (as does Amelia) between the thesis: the argument and the 'book' to be written, the doctoral title and the identity.

Maya – ... it's [doctoral identity] evolving and the thesis – and I think it's quite useful now and I actually differentiate between the word 'thesis' [as the argument];... that document and the PhD and in my identity, you know... And of course – because I don't look at my thesis now and say that

I'm embarrassed by any part of it ... I go back to it quite often. ...That [doctoral] identity and the document ... are different things...Don't get me wrong, I look back and I see things that I could have worded better or I wish I'd included that reading here, that I found subsequently, or whatever, but by and large I still stand by everything I wrote and I'm proud of it. (Maya, 20th March 2008, lines 522-535)

Maya's story, both the one retrospectively constructed by her and the layers that I have imposed from her own accounts of critical learning moments, reveals many of the strangely alien and 'quicksand' moments (cf. Alyse's story) of a doctoral journey. Whilst she frames her journey in terms of the relational elements of student, thesis and supervisor (Grant, 2003), her doctorate is a product of her struggles to perform herself as a doctor. She now differentiates between the visible product of those struggles – the thesis, the public acknowledgement of her ability to think clearly and to construct convincing arguments in the academic world represented by the qualification; and Dr Maya as someone with an expert voice – a full member of her community of practice (Wenger, 1998). This story of Maya's cognitive, ontological and epistemological shifts shows the acquisition of a confident doctoral identity dedicated to revealing what is obscured and perhaps banishing some of the dust of arcane academic practices from windows on knowledge.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented my narrations of the stories of the four members of PaperHeaDs who have completed their doctorates. What they have in common is a theme of using their doctoral studies as a space for themselves. Each recognises that the passage was not easy. Angst, confusion, self-doubt, fear, and anxiety are part of the process that they describe. Having recently finished and not yet graduated when we spoke, Sophia describes her doctoral learning process as a relationship with knowledge that is addictive and all consuming. Maura's story talks of designing herself to serve her students better and of the devastating disappointment when that identity is not affirmed. Amelia described the phases in her journey in emotional terms. She theorised the reasons for her rapid completion of her PhD as rooted in the years of academic work she had done prior to registration. Her recognition that the PhD 'becomes you' is similar to Maya's account of writing herself into being, and not being able to separate it from who she is. All of these stories acknowledge a proven ability to play the academic game and each woman holds the doctoral identity as valuable as an external proof of their individual capacities: intellect, intelligence, determination, problem-solving. Despite recognising that the rules of the academic game are not transparent, each finds value in the abilities that the PhD represents. Each of them moved through the emotional storm, just doing what needed to be done, and discovered a purpose and a way of expressing the doctoral identity they have constructed. All the stories tell me that having achieved a doctorate, the challenges to intellect and identity continue, but that doctoral status becomes another tool for dealing with these.

The arrangement of the stories in chronological order according to how recently each doctorate was completed, allows us to see that doctoral identity formation is a process that continues after the thesis is successfully examined. Sophia's uncertainty about the role she can play in changing academia moves to Maya's confidence in her ability to make overt the academic practices that might become obstacles to her learners.

In the next chapter, the stories of PaperHeaDs members who are still in the process of doctoral learning enable a closer view of the challenges that doctoral learning offers,

aspects that have become blurred or less nodal (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001) in the accounts of those who have completed.

Chapter 5: Findings – Still Learning: Doctors to Be

Following the stories of successful completion, this chapter presents the stories of PaperHeaDs who were still in the process of their doctoral study. Each story of identity formation reveals how habitus interacts with the objectified institution of academia (Bourdieu, 1989) providing unique challenges and transformational thresholds to be crossed by each individual (Meyer & Land, 2005). The stories are presented in the following order: Annie, Alyse, Ntsiki, Mary, and Bee. Annie and Alyse's stories together show the impact of the change of life-circumstances on their constructions of doctoral identity, requiring that they rethink the relevance of doctoral study in new environments. Ntsiki, Mary and Bee together illustrate some of the aspects of doctoral learning that are counter-intuitive and have required of them that they take different positions on who they are as knowledge-constructor, educator and health professional respectively.

My tragic tale, I won't prolong,

Rickety-tickety-tin,

My tragic tale I won't prolong,

And if you do not enjoy my song,

You've yourselves to blame if it's too long,

You should never have let me begin, begin,

You should never have let me begin.

(Tom Lehrer, An Irish Song, Lehrer, 1960)

The Iconoclast – Annie's Story

When it's finished I'm going to get all my academic papers and my books and everything and I'm going to make a big bonfire and I'm going to burn them. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 852-853)

The phrase 'Bonfire of the Vanities' came to my mind when I heard Annie make the comment above. It dates back to the 13th century and references Savanorala's preaching against corruption in the Church and his followers burning religious icons and books. An iconoclast is someone who destroys icons, someone who is not prepared to accept received traditions. While Savanarola's[40] bonfires related to accessing heaven through the destruction of those things that interfered with a pure life – the vanities, the non-essentials – Annie's story is one of achievement frustrated. As a result of this frustration, at the time we spoke, she was questioning the validity of much that is claimed for the value of doctoral study.

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40 The Bonfire of the Vanities refers to the public burning of objects that were supposedly representative of sin. Most famously, supporters of Savonarola, who was preaching against moral corruption in the Church, burned books and art on the 7th February 1497. This was facilitated by the massive contrast between the indulgent wealth of Medici-dominated Italy and the growing poverty of the Italian people (Villari, 1888).

Tom Lehrer's critical ditty mocking the traditional English folk tune talks to the danger of unquestioning acceptance of the discourse – in this case the purpose of doctoral study. Annie's powerful words above talk to a rejection of academia and the trial that is the process of doctoral study when what is valued in it comes into question. It also suggests that a critical part of the answer to poor doctoral completion rates (National Research Foundation, 2008; Center for Research on Science and Technology, 2009) is the subjective positioning of the student within the discourse.

Annie had known herself as a good student – all her life – she had never doubted her academic competence. Graduating with her Master's degree cum laude in 1999, she looked at doctoral study as the next challenge in her career. She began work in Higher Education in 1999 coming from a successful post as a very young (29) head of department in a school. I met her when she joined the Education Department of the technikon; later she moved to the Academic Development Unit, and I joined her in that unit a year later. We were close working colleagues for ten years prior to her leaving to work in her own business. At the time of joining the Education Department, 'doing a PhD' seemed the next logical step. After a brief stint teaching teachers in an academic department, she was recruited by the Academic Development Unit of the institution to bring her expertise and understanding of the then new national policy of outcomes-based education (OBE) to the technikon community. Technikons at the time worked together with stakeholder groups to co-construct national curricula which were then quality assured by a sub-structure of the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP). Each technikon with permission to offer these courses was obliged to conform to the curriculum laid out in this process.

When the CTP acknowledged the need for technikons to align their curricula to the policy of OBE it created a National Working Group (NWG) on curriculum consisting of development representatives from each technikon. The mandate of the NWG was to create policy and guidelines to facilitate the implementation of OBE. Annie's unit director was supportive and encouraged her to participate on equal terms with other institutional representatives.

The closest of these colleagues in the NWG, and those she most admired, had recently completed or were engaged in doctoral study around curriculum matters in the technikons. They pushed for her to start her own doctorate in the field. This was at the time that technikons were battling for credibility as institutions of higher learning, in particular trying to introduce the idea of advanced problem solving and applied research as a counter to the discourse of abstract thinking and blue sky research that dominated the so-called 'traditional universities'. The NWG recognised that simply aligning the content-heavy courses with OBE formats was not going to achieve this end. Winberg (2005, pp. 193-194) characterises this period in her genealogy of technical higher education as the time of technikons 'imitating universities'. As an individual, Annie was 'heard' and recognised (Gee, 2000) within the institution, and nationally, as an organised and insightful voice on curriculum design for occupationally-directed higher education.

It seems logical to suppose that the sense of belonging that she derived from the membership of the NWG and the acknowledgement and recognition she received for her work led her naturally into the group environment. In her account, she was drawn into PaperHeaDs, flattered by the opportunity to be involved in a group of 'clever girls'.

As she puts it:

> *If I think about it now, it was trying to prove how clever I was. Like there was this group of clever girls all getting together, [and I was] feeling a little like these people are all using big words and saying things ... so I'll just sit here and listen a while. ... I was quite quiet in terms of the discussions, because I don't think I was ready in many ways, or even engaging in anything. To me it was – and I think that's what happened to me – I just put it on the table, like it was almost like something I thought I had to do and like I thought I wanted to do it, but that's as far as it went. I just put it on the table and then I didn't do anything about it. For years I didn't do anything about it. I'd sort of pretend to be doing something about it and do a little dibble-dabble and then mosey off but really, I wasn't engaging in it.*

I mean I had like – I've had about … six topic titles. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 458-476)

Annie did not register her PhD until 2006. PaperHeaDs was established in the middle of 2001. As explanation for this delay she cites not actively engaging in the process. Yet perhaps not fully understanding what the process entailed meant that she needed time to enter the discourse. In comparison, Amelia had worked intensively in one area over a long period of time and chosen a sub-set of that area for her doctoral study. One could say that Amelia was pre-oriented to the discourse.

When I asked about this, Annie felt that if she had continued directly from her Master's study into her doctorate she probably would have completed the task more efficiently. However, she had a break between finishing her Master's and beginning her doctorate – because she felt she "was pretty wrecked" and didn't have a balance in her life after having devoted all her time to the Master's. She recognises that had she continued in the same vein she would have suffered massive burnout but "at least I would have had it [the PhD], would have done it, it would have been over". Her regret that she was not able to continue 'in the zone' of postgraduate study lies in the feeling that had she maintained the routine and continued to work with the people that she worked with to produce her Master's, she would have finished earlier, regardless of the personal cost. It is also interesting to note her language – the PhD as something to be done, to have a milestone, perhaps, on the path of life.

Her theorising of her lack of progress focuses on what she claims is a need for an external locus of control. Amelia uses this term as she describes how her sense of control swings from external stimuli to internal motivations. Annie's version augments[41] (Kelley, 1972) elements of her life history when she had to perform for external

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41 Augmentation is a term from social psychology which suggests that in the face of multiple reasons for our behaviour, certain explanations are given more weight than others – that are 'discounted'. Annie's tendency is to blame internal or dispositional causes rather than environmental ones.

authorities. Her mother, widowed early in Annie's life, took very seriously her duty to educate her child. Despite financial challenges, and perhaps as a means of managing her job without access to formal child care, she scheduled Annie's activities in a rigid timetable of music lessons and sporting activities. Here Annie describes her relationship with her doctorate in terms of this history:

> *What I wanted to do was completely insignificant, it was – if I expressed it or didn't express it, it didn't make any difference. I still had to do [it]. ... So I never ever, ever managed to develop an internal locus of control – my locus of control was always external and this PhD has kind of almost taken me back to being ... a five year old or a ten year old. ... I sabotage myself by distracting myself and knowing I'm distracting myself, and watching myself doing it, feeling guilty about doing it, but nonetheless doing it anyway. ... It's almost like a ten year old child sort of stamping her foot and crossing arms and saying 'I won't – you watch me, I won't – I'll just sit here and I'll do what I want to do and you just see if I care'. ... It's [the PhD has] sat there like my mother saying – so I've had to learn to try and stop it from being kind of my mother's voice, from being that thing I've got to do and that I'm rebelling against doing ... and try and make it part of me and what I want to do for my own achievement. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 213-228)*

She ascribes her academic success prior to embarking on her PhD to the structured nature of the programmes she was following. She knew when assignments and papers were due and organised herself around 'delivering' to those dates. She highlights the difference between this kind of study and the total self-management she perceives as required for her PhD as she describes her biggest fears:

> *I've surrounded it with enormous pressure. For example, I made things – I made other things conditional upon it. ... My attitude towards it initially and until fairly recently was that I had to sacrifice other things in my life in order to do this. ... So I turned it into ... a very lonely place. ... I'm finding it*

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very difficult to extract the loneliness from the doctorate, so I'm trying to not see it as lonely any more because I have the association between loneliness and doing a PhD. ... I think the six months that I took off in 2006 was particularly telling in that regard. I think the solitary pursuit of a PhD ... is just not in keeping with how I like to operate, or how I can operate ... in a way that keeps me mentally fit. ... I'm terribly frightened of the isolation and the loneliness that the D brings to my life. I think I've sorted it out now and that I've managed – I'm managing to find spaces for myself to work that don't have that sense of isolation or loneliness.

It's about not working in a team on it. It's about having to be on my own. It's about, the insecurity ... of being on my own and having to produce this thing and feeling a lot of the time that ... I really don't know if I want to produce this, if I'm interested enough in producing this, if it matters to me. ... So every time it emerges and I sit to work with it, those questions come up, like why am I doing this? I'd much rather be sitting reading a book. Why am I doing this? I'll do it tomorrow. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 120-150)

Annie's language is totally mindful of her agency in creating the circumstances that manifest these difficulties, perhaps too much so. I recognise the internal debate that makes everything except the hard work of doing the doctoral work more attractive. Like Mary and me, Annie does not have children, and had fewer household-type duties to distract her. We are used to doing things we like to do in the time that is not dedicated to pay-related work. I find it significant that all the PaperHeaDs who have completed their doctorates are mothers. However, in ascribing total responsibility to her own motives and motivations (or lack of them) perhaps what is forced into the background is the role of the discourse space through which we take our identity trajectory (Gee, 2000).

The national requirements for a PhD expressed in the draft level descriptors do not speak of the ability to be a completely autonomous knowledge-seeker; rather they speak of requiring "a candidate to undertake research at the most *advanced academic levels* culminating in the *production, defence and acceptance of a thesis*. ... the candidate is required to *demonstrate high-level research capability* and make a *significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline* or field. The work must be of a *quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication*. A graduate should *be able to supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation* concerned" (Department of Education, 2004a). This is an example of the layers that make up the palimpsest of doctoral study (Grant, 2003) running counter to the latest inscriptions. Annie's conception of PhD study as a lonely place highlights the tensions in evolving policy. The words 'advanced', 'significant' and 'original' may be read as competitive and speaking to independence, yet parts of the description seem to imply the ability to work together with and for others. The notion of the ability to work in a team is also prevalent in debates related to the design of doctoral programmes (Bazeley, 1999; Pole, 2000; Allen, Smyth & Wahlstrom, 2002; Usher, 2002; Gilbert, Balatti, Turner & Whitehouse, 2004; Vakkayi, 2006). Casey describes how a recent survey of employers valued the ability of doctoral graduates to communicate complex and abstract information in a simple way in his argument for the spill-over social learning effects of having doctorates in the workplace (Casey, 2009, p. 225).

In a keynote address recently, Cheryl de la Rey, CEO of the South African Council on Higher Education, raised questions about the level descriptor: "[d]ebates on quality, relevance and skills transferability have provoked interrogation of the purpose of the doctorate and its form". She specifically talked to the problem of ensuring that a doctoral graduate should be able to supervise, particularly where the doctorate is increasingly trying to accommodate the 'academic career track' as well as high level skills useful outside the academy (De la Rey, 2009).

The vision of the lonely scholar continues to impact on the experience of modern doctoral candidates. Annie's account positions herself as a 'bad subject', someone who

is not getting it right because of personal failures in action and personality contrary to her life's experience of being a 'good subject' (Green, 2005, p. 154).

There were circumstances in the social context that Annie's account of her own process discounts (Kelley, 1972). It is worth noting that between 1999 and 2006, when she registered, she had moved into, and excelled in, two extremely demanding new jobs. The first required an adaptation to technikon culture from that of a school – a challenge of a change in scale and scope of practice. The second required a shift from teaching at a departmental level to leading curriculum change at an institutional one.

Moreover, in 2002 we had returned from our Easter holidays to find that the entire organisational identity had changed as a result of the merger of our technikon with another – the first of the mergers presaged by the white paper *Transformation and Restructuring: A New Institutional Landscape for Higher Education* (Department of Education, 2002) (see Chapter 1). Despite our relative closeness to the institutional decision-makers, the fact of the merger came as a shock. Rumour and vague ideas became reality overnight. We had barely met our neighbouring colleagues in the context of becoming 'compatriots' as opposed to being institutionally entitled to articulate different viewpoints. Suddenly we had to work together coherently – with no preparation. The lack of preparation showed in the most basic and personal of conflicts. Annie described how her view of academia was shattered by the turmoil created through the badly- managed merger (Higher Education Quality Committee, 2008):

> *I don't know, I suppose it [my view of academia] was just that, if you work hard and if you're competent and you know what you're doing that you will be recognised and you will be acknowledged and people will like you and appreciate you. They will give you that affirmation and that recognition and you will reach places or you'll achieve what you want to achieve, because it's as it should be. If you're competent, you're good at what you're doing then you'll get where you want to go and if you want to go there, then you just plot your little route and you go there. When I was exposed to all the back-biting and the politics and the hidden agendas and*

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the realisation [it] had very little to do with competence and a lot to do with all sorts of other things, and that I couldn't work in that world, I couldn't compete in that world. I didn't know how. I didn't have any defences. I couldn't defend myself against being attacked. It just freaked me out. It just absolutely freaked me out. Being from [a historically white technikon (HWI)] and somehow being labelled as something I didn't see myself as. I mean I was shattered that I could suddenly be seen as this white person, when I was just a person. Now somebody's labelling me as this kind of white arrogant ... oppressor, ... but that's not me. [I thought] I've got to get away from you. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 561-595)

Annie chose to leave the academic world in 2007 in order to start a business specialising in the development of training solutions and materials. Her embodied experience of the effect of public policy on an individual underscores the critical role of being seen, acknowledged, and recognised in the process of identity construction. Here she articulates an experience of asymmetrical positioning in the discourse of the newly merged university (Boxer, 2001). Whereas she had positioned herself as a competent academic, she experienced second order positioning by a collective (the potential colleagues of the other institution) as primarily a representative of another collective that she did not accept – a white person and therefore an oppressor. Her own storyline of academia as one in which competence and good work is acknowledged is interrupted by this experience. Her choice was to refuse the positioning and to remove herself from that storyline (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999).

As Annie says:

If the world had not changed for us, I think I would have pretty much definitely pursued an academic career. I think I would have been ambitious. I think the contentment and balance I've got in my life would not be here. Because I've spent that time that I would have been climbing the ladder ... looking at myself and having to deal with things that I don't think I would have dealt with because I would have ploughed on. I pretty

much think in my head that if I'd been going in that direction ... I would have gone into an academic career. I would have got promotion. I would have been really showing up academically and, it didn't happen, the world changed so my priorities changed.

I think it was all caught up with that time, but I think my disappointment with the academic world, what I thought it was and what I ended up seeing, was so vast and impacted on me in such a way that my primary defense mechanism kicked in. [I ran away]. It's gone and it can't hurt me any more. It's gone. I missed it for a while in terms of the fact that I had nothing to replace it. I just wandered around and I felt for a long time at the end of [institution] that I was just wandering around kind of not really having a purpose, because I distanced myself from that world and I didn't have anything to replace it. There was nothing for me to do, there was nothing that interested me, because I would have had to invest in that world. In a sense I'm sure that must have impacted on my PhD as well. I can't see that it wouldn't have impacted on the way I was pursuing my PhD because the PhD is obviously connected to the academic world. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 520-556)

In terms of Gee's four zones of discourse outlined in Chapter 2 (Gee, 2000), Annie's story shows how nature – (psychological factors – both environmentally reinforced and psychodynamic), discourse – (notions of what a PhD is and should be) and institution-identity (location in the social institution of higher education as well as the organisation) have played against Annie's ability to experience herself as the 'good subject' of doctoral discourse. Gee's 'affinity-identity', the identity shaped in relationship with others, perhaps describes the one discourse space where Annie has experienced herself as a 'good' subject – PaperHeaDs.

In response to my question about the role of PaperHeaDs in her doctoral process she described a reluctance to let the group down and intimated a fear of not finding a space in the group now that she is working in the business world:

> *I don't know if this is going to be appropriate for me to be here. If I'll just be distracting people. If I'll just feel like I don't belong any more. I'm not going to make any assumptions. I'm just going to wait and see, because for me PaperHeads is about the space, it's about the people, it's about the collegiality, it's about the friendship. It's got something to do with PhD for me because it's given me the space. I mean all of the people outside of this group know about this group. I mean [my therapist] knows about this group immensely. She says – I say I'm going to my – she says 'Oh you're going with the clever girls again. You're going to be clever this week'. She teases me because I value cleverness, you see. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 1010-1049)*

In Annie's account, which she gave me later in 2007, two themes dominate: disengagement and the need for external motivation. It is not surprising that she expresses her view of doctoral study in terms of resistance and challenge. When I asked her what was keeping her going in her study, she described a moment of breakthrough:

> *Annie – I think that was the thing that turned the corner for me. I mean as silly as it is, because I've read all the mode 1, mode 2 stuff for ages, but those 10 minutes that I sat in my car waiting for a meeting, being locked out of my office, and read them [again]. Suddenly the time was right, I think, for that to make sense for me and to realise something as simple as that, I could use as the hook. Once I had that, I didn't feel so aimless. I have felt this entire process as being completely aimless. I felt that the writing is aimless, I've felt that I haven't had an argument – I keep on producing bits of writing that are exactly that – bits of writing, without an argument, a thread running through them. ...And then I keep on trying to write a bit more and write and [am] just aware that I've just got all these bits of*

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writing and I don't know where they fit. I don't know what I'm writing to. You know me, I like to have a purpose ... But I've got to know what I'm doing. I've got to know why I'm doing it, I've got to know what I'm arguing, I've got to know what the purpose is, I got to – the purpose – it's too big a project, this, for me to say well the purpose of it is just so that I can have a PhD.

It's too big to just have that as a motivating reason. Because having a PhD – having a PhD is not important enough to me to warrant spending 5, 6, 7 years of my life thinking about this and time doing it and that sort of thing. It has to be something else. Even if I do want a PhD, (and I'm not saying I don't) ... there has to be a purpose to this thing that I'm writing, otherwise it's never going to work. I'm aware it's never going to work. I'm going to be sitting with all these bits of writing and not knowing how to string them together and, in the end, if I'd gone on like that I might have ended like that. I might not have ever found a hook and then I don't know what I would have done. I don't [know] whether I would have just [given up]. I mean, I've stopped at [the institution] now and [the academic endeavour] will become less and less important to me. So at some stage, if it really wasn't working and I was getting myself more and more fuddled, [I would] just say ag, screw it, I'm not doing it.

So having this [breakthrough] now means I know I can finish it. This is huge for me because I haven't really, really, really seen the end result. I haven't seen it bound in my head I haven't seen the picture of the thesis. I haven't seen that bound thing with the gold writing on it. Now I can see it. I can see that it can be finished. It can be done

Liz – To what end – to what audience?

Annie [Sings out triumphantly and with perfect pitch] – Freedom! (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 242-314)

Here Annie construes her work towards 'having a PhD' as an asset, but one that is becoming increasingly valueless for her, as she has moved outside the context of academia into the business world. Her comments can be read in economic terms of investment and return, where the means of exchange is time and effort. At this point she sees that the project is doable – her breakthrough has allowed her to see that she does not have to terminate it. Annie does not acknowledge that her breakthrough may have come from continually revisiting the theory underpinning her study. She had used this ten-minute period created by being locked out of her office, to read again through her notes and journal articles, rather than listening to the radio. At this moment she recognises that knowing the theory and being able to articulate it at a certain level, possibly of description (which she had done effectively in her Master's), had not been sufficient to allow her to use it in an integrated way to theorise about her own findings. This shift from consumer of theory to user of knowledge and theoriser signifies a radical shift in her sense of competence as a doctoral student. She has had to let go of previous ways of knowing (a vanity?) and it seems as though this has happened through numerous iterations and reiterations of this theory and her own thinking. Without the previous awareness and foundation, she could not have reached this point in a brief moment of clarity.

Annie does not make the connection between this breakthrough moment, and the value of the skills acquired through it, to the world of business. The neo-liberal discourse that construes doctoral work as production of knowledge-workers and as the dynamo of the economy (see Chapter 2, p.25) seems to have little influence in Annie's identity-construction. Her new positioning of herself as a business person does not acknowledge the value of knowledge-work skills supposedly represented by the doctorate. She has started her own business employing up to ten people without having a doctorate and does not see it as necessary to her business identity:

> *I think, I don't know. I mean when will I use it? I'm not going to be working in an academic environment, presumably. I might need to use it, if I do some consulting in higher education – maybe it'll be useful – but again it's not about academics. It's just about a label that might be useful in opening*

*the doors somewhere … like getting discount at the doctor's rooms[42], but –
or getting a gold credit card or, you know what I mean, … I don't equate it
with the academic endeavour. I think I've so distanced myself from the
academic endeavour. I think [the institution] killed me. (Annie, 19th March
2008, lines 444-553)*

Annie's motivation to extract herself from the academic world which hurts too much has little to do with monetary ambitions and more to do with the affirmation, recognition and meaningfulness that she felt were no longer available to her in the academic world. She says about her sense of success in her business work:

*[When I see a piece of work completed] is really, really good and I can see
it happening and, … that's fun. When I see a piece of work done. When I
see … a module … works and that looks good and [that] I can be proud of
and that I can send off knowing that people are going to say 'Yip, that's
what we wanted, that is what we wanted. We ordered that and you
delivered what we wanted.' (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 901-905)*

In the business world, she has found an environment where acknowledgement and reward is solely dependent on her own skills, thinking and effort. With some regret she says:

*And I'm sorry about that because I think that, had the world remained
stable, it might have been something that meant something to me and I
might have been very proud of it and I might have seen it as being an
academic achievement. And maybe I will, but I will know also how I got*

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42 This is a reference to an unexpected advantage that the title of Doctor had brought Maya – much to the amusement of all the PaperHeaDs.

here. I will know also, how little value I've (By the right sort of value I mean how little of the academic value that most other people attach to it) that I've attached to it. So I don't think it's ever really going to mean to me what it means to most people. It will be like a badge of honour, it will be like a badge of endurance. I did the marathon and I finished.

It means nothing. Nothing, zip, zilch. It's now a challenge that I have to finish. I'm going to finish. I have to finish. It means nothing. I don't care if nobody reads it. I don't care if it gathers dust for the rest of its life. It will mean nothing to me as a project. That's how I feel now. Ask me in three or four months time when I'm near the end of it, maybe I'm more vested in it, but at the moment – nothing! (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 679-683)

'Maybe more vested in it' is a significant remark. Annie seems to be at a threshold (Meyer & Land, 2005) that indicates the kind of move Amelia described when she said, "it becomes [corrects self] you become it". Yet even such an assertion of disinterest is fuelled by contradictory tensions:

It would be so brilliant, I mean, I would just find it so fulfilling if I went away from this PhD and the academic world, and I found it again in business – I found a use for what I know academically in that world. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 1074-1076)

Unlike Amelia, Annie is not clear on the value of her doctorate in the business world. She says now as she puts her head down to get the job done:

You can only talk so long about something before you've actually got to produce the goods. So from that point of view, it's got to get done, but from my own personal point of view, I don't know, maybe it'll be nice being Dr Annie. I don't know. At least I will know I conquered it. It challenged me, I conquered it, I can do it. I can get over my childhood self. I can get over

that. I can control myself. I can be disciplined. I can have an internal locus
of control. (Annie, 19th March 2008, lines 359-364)

Annie uses all three of Harré and Van Langenhove's ways of explaining personal behaviour. She refers to her competence in her academic work and constantly references her own agency and need to have and to prove an internal locus of control; she uses her biography and her personal experience to legitimate her account of her doctoral process.

Yet internal and stable characteristics – the Self as opposed to Personae (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999); or the core identity as opposed to the social performances of identity (Gee, 2000, p. 99); are not enough to explain how "lived narratives … can change direction and meaning in ways entirely surprising to the participants to such an extent that the metaphor of a prestructured play begins to lose plausibility as a viable image to explain what it is that we do in interaction with each other" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 51). Annie had accepted the centre stage role of the rational subject and the instrumental logic that is the representation of academia and the doctoral process (Whitlock, 2001). Yet her loss of a sense of her role in her work environment predicts a period of mourning and a search for a new rationale to complete her PhD, literally a new doctoral identity.

Annie's story of her doctoral process has its vague beginnings as 'the next thing to do' in a world where competence and hard work are acknowledged by advancement in the academic world. Her complete confidence in her competence underlies the story, and talks to her alignment with conceptions of knowledge and valuable work that was represented in a previously white higher education institution. The disconnection that she experiences is world shaking, when her beliefs about what academia represents, namely, non-racial, rational, disembodied, meritocratic, are challenged by being positioned primarily as an oppressor. This speaks to a raft of discursive assumptions and practices that constitute the academic world as experienced in South Africa (middle-classed and raced assumptions about knowledge). It further highlights the power of

positioning in the discourses of knowledge-production where the choice is to accept the positioning, to leave the conversation or to reposition oneself and others in it. Another way of looking at Annie's story is to consider how far removed the legitimated discourses of the world of business are from those of the academic world (Bourdieu, 1994) at least in her perception. Like Bee's story, it raises questions about the value of knowledge-creation that is not concretely located. Comparing Annie and Amelia's stories, it is not clear which one is an accurate assessment: Annie's account of doubting the value of a PhD in business is the polar opposite of Amelia's account of being able to be 'scholarly' in engaging with truck drivers. It may be indicative of a threshold to be crossed in Annie's self-evaluation, or perhaps Amelia's attributions of value changed to account for the investment she put into gaining her PhD. It would seem that the acquisition of doctoral identity must be located in a socially validating environment. For Annie, the value of having a PhD is questionable, but the possibilities of ways of being Dr Annie remain open. Annie's iconoclastic statements about her intention to 'get the doctorate', burn her books and papers and move on with the rest of her life stands in stark contrast to the discourse that values scholarly thought, and may be the exact positioning that is holding her back. By destroying the icons, perhaps she is leaving herself no place to stand.

From a story of negotiating doctoral identities inside and outside the academic world, I move now to Alyse's story, which like Maura's and Annie's, illustrates profoundly the impact of loss of a socially validating environment in terms of geography, heritage and age.

The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code. (Donna Haraway, 1991, p. 163)

The Cyborg – Alyse's Story

It's an interesting concept, isn't it? You know one of the interesting things about outliers is that in quantitative research you usually ditch the outliers, or you treat them differently, or you just ignore them, and in qualitative research the outliers … are really important. (Alyse, 14th September 2008)

Alyse and I arranged to chat about doctoral identity via Skype[43], because she has moved out of the country. At this point she is not sure whether this will be a permanent move or not. She is the oldest member of PaperHeaDs chronologically speaking.

Throughout our conversation, Alyse positioned herself as the outlier in the PaperHeaDs story. An outlier is a case that lies outside an overall pattern in quantitative research and usually indicates that the model or theory is not complete. In qualitative research, where the aim is to understand a phenomenon as it is experienced, an outlier provides important insights that the researcher might be tempted to ignore at her own peril. "[A]ttending to outliers opens worlds of understanding by revealing what has been missed or intentionally ignored" (Bullough, 2006, p. 8). In our conversation, which took place using Skype, Alyse pointed out the symbolic resonance of the word:

You know outlier is a very interesting word. … I've just realised for the first time. It's not about being an outsider, it's being an outlier … and when I said it, can you hear what that word says? It's got the word liar in it, LIAR

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43 Skype is a digital networking programme which is used for voice communication on the World Wide Web. It allows crystal clear transmission and reception without the kinds of delays experienced in long distance telephone calls. Where both computers have cameras the participants can see each other. The conversation is also easily recorded using software which captures the signal without environmental interference.

[in it]. So maybe it means that if you're on the outside, a lot of what you think makes you on the outside, it's actually a lie and it is about distance, and it is about – everybody is located somewhere, and maybe these locations move. (Alyse, 14th September 2008, lines 3414-3426)

Alyse's physical distance away from KwaZulu-Natal and radical change of geographical location does not make her an outlier, because both Ntsiki and Maura are also located away from the province. In this quotation, Alyse is referring to her perception that she has different reasons for completing her PhD and different ways of going about it. Despite her perception, I experience Alyse's role in PaperHeaDs as foundational and her wisdom central to the group's character and my learning.

Having been forced to retire from the university where she worked in 2007, before she was ready to stop working in academia, she landed a job at a prestigious UK university. Internationally, she is known as an expert in the use of software for qualitative data analysis, a role that she claims to have fallen into, by virtue of being an educational technologist. To paraphrase her online work biography: Alyse taught at high school, followed by an extended period of research with the Human Sciences Research Council, and then joined the [university] when personal computers became a desktop reality. She completed a Master's in Computer-Assisted Education that focused on an online virtual classroom. She has designed, co-ordinated and implemented online and blended postgraduate and staff development courses. She has supervised many Master's students and presented and published papers the world over. Alyse did not 'need' to do a doctorate to further her career and she does not question her intellectual competence. Her purpose in embarking on her doctorate was to encapsulate her thinking over the years about the use of educational technology. As she puts it:

I know that my PhD personality is a really important one to me because I don't have to do a PhD, Liz. There's nothing to be gained from it materially, for me. Do you know what I mean? But it such an important. ... It's not career orientated. At the end of the day I don't even need it to – to – to be

more of who I am. ... If I didn't do it, I would still be who I am ... (whatever that means) but I suddenly realised this morning when I was reading your [story of Dr Wannabe, see Appendix 5]. ... I was thinking what is [my PhD] like? ... How do I negotiate with mine? I realise that mine is really important. It is the one ... consistent thing I've had by my side ... since I came over here. ... It's always there in a way that nothing else is always there, because I spend so much time on my own. It's always there and I think about it a lot, I reflect on it, and now I'm making it my default reading as well. (Alyse 14th September 2008, lines 2149-2163)

Alyse is probably the model for me of someone who embraces the possibilities of postmodern life whilst remaining authentic in the humanist sense (Rogers, 1961). Here she acknowledges that she has a 'PhD' personality, or is developing one, whilst simultaneously pointing out that it will not make her more than she is already. As a 'cyborg,' (Haraway, 1991) she is a person completely at home with computers and a digitally networked life, she has sixteen different email addresses and numerous domains in which she expresses herself and interacts – including amongst them a blog, a website, Facebook, Twitter and Second Life. Even the name she chooses to be known by captures this technological plurality.

As Haraway points out, this is an opportunity for empowerment, "Race, gender, and capital require a cyborg theory of wholes and parts. There is no drive in cyborgs to produce total theory, but there is an intimate experience of boundaries, their construction and deconstruction. There is a myth system waiting to become a political language to ground one way of looking at science and technology and challenging the informatics of domination – in order to act potently" (1991, p. 181). Alyse's self-reflexive and self-conscious construction of multiple identities is indicative of a radical politics – a conception of what the world might be like without domination. An important episode in her story of herself is her arrest and being the first accused for seditious activity as part of her Black Sash involvement in the apartheid era.

Alyse describes an incident that talks exactly to how the hegemonic psychological discourse around a unitary conception of self may force an individual into a position of fragmentation and classification of mental ill-health (see Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Maya's story).

> *I think that's going to be the challenge and the excitement, is the location. How does one locate oneself – because in a way it makes setting the PhD up as another personality really interesting. We know from our on-line identities – I mean I caused a little bit of a stir recently by saying that I'm different people in different contexts. ... People took that to mean, ooh, you know, she hides a lot and she's a bit devious. ... I say no. ... Obviously when you put up a profile [online] ... you choose what am I going to divulge to this particular ... area, or strategy or pur[pose] ... or people. I mean usually it's a field – it's a domain of some sort ... and you can be different. ... Different things are foregrounded at different times. ... Which is what makes it really difficult to be in a new world and an unfamiliar country, because there are parts of you that just never get out there, because there's ... nothing in the environment ... there's not enough familiarity to actually divulge or present that side of yourself. (Alyse, 14th September 2008, lines 2784-2815)*

It is not that she is inauthentic or not 'being herself' or not being real, but rather that Alyse has a refined awareness that "[t]he self process involves a constant dialectic between the authorial core which both regulates and is regulated by social productions. The postmodern person may have a richer diversity of fragmentation to deal with, and develop a more articulated and permeable core structure, but the process of self-production has not vanished" (Butt, Burr & Bell, 1997, p. 26).

Understandably, Alyse found herself rather disoriented by her move to the UK. I think that it is significant that every time our conversation touched on painful matters, Alyse and I both fled into our shared sense of competence and interest in technology. She describes herself humorously as an observer-anthropologist living in a little space trying

to avoid getting dysentery from the poor quality water. As an astute observer of social behaviour, she has developed strategies for living in an alien culture:

> *I have been making social gaffes wherever I go. ... I have a good friend here ... and she says to me that if you do that you're going to change who you are. ... I said, "No, no, I'm just going to be very circumspect about who I am in different situations." ... So in some situations I just do the English thing, you know, I get very remote and I'm prepared to share that I'm from Oxford. I might even share with you (because I open my mouth) that I'm also from South Africa, because that's hard to hide ... but I probably won't tell you my name, ... even if it's on a card around my neck, because people are too polite to look hard at it. (Alyse, 14th September 2008, lines 311-325)*

When Alyse speaks of the importance of the relationship she has with her PhD, she positions herself as in relation to a stalwart friend; that it is the single constant that she has with her in this strange land:

> *So the PhD is alongside me if you like, it's almost like the consistent familiar that I have with me. ... I was thinking what kind of personality does it have? ... The work I'm doing at the moment is great – I really enjoy it but ... some of it has to be formalised. I mean it's not that I don't have the freedom to write the reports as I want to, but it strikes me that the sort of more creative side of my personality, I suppose one might say the more poetic side, (although that might be stretching the p-word a bit) but I think ... [that's what] the personality of my PhD is. It's going to be the creative, innovative side of me and I think that's why it's so really important for me. And I think that's why I continue to want to do it ... because if I didn't I'm so afraid that that side of me would get simply ... overwhelmed by the wave of the shoulds and the oughts that are part of a kind of daily work life. (Alyse, 14th September 2008, lines 2206-2231)*

Prof Philly Salmon (mentor of 30 successful PhDs) captured the essence of the kind of PhD that Alyse wants to do, in an interview with Trevor Butt: "To me the PhD venture unless undertaken for purely instrumental reasons, is something quite personal. What powers the inquiry, I think, is that the question actually matters to the student posing it – that it carries real implications, that how things turn out will be of personal consequence, that is far from being just an academic exercise" (Butt, 2003, p. 200). Alyse's PhD is clearly more than an academic exercise. She is pursuing the research not in terms of proving her intellect or to climb the academic ladder, from which she has been kicked because of her age, or even to transform the world. The PhD has become a stabilising factor in a world where it is not possible for Alyse to choose the domain of self-representation, but has the agency to choose her actions.

As an older woman with awareness of the power of digital networking, she is exploring the experiences of technology, of grandmothers in her doctoral study. As a feminist, she sees technology as empowering and a way of bringing marginalised women into social centres. She would like to contribute to making the technology more accessible by understanding these women's experience. This instrumental intention seems quite simple but its rationality is in tension with another desire Alyse has for her PhD work – it must challenge her creativity:

> *I see the personality of my PhD as definitely being my more creative, contemplative, hopefully pushing the envelope a bit, side. … That's what I would like it to be. (Alyse, 14th September 2008, lines 2845-2850)*

Before Alyse left the country, she was actively engaged with her research participants and she continues, between the demands of her new life, to maintain contact with them though feeling some guilt:

> *I was thinking this morning, because I was writing to Granny M who wrote to me and said, "Ooh I wish you were here". Somebody has given her*

'Naturally Speaking[44]. … She said, "I wish you were here to help me with it", because you know she's losing her vision quite badly now. … I was thinking about it and thinking God, I'm so bad at keeping up with the women, and I'm sure some of them must think I've disappeared forever and I think myself I've disappeared forever sometimes … I was thinking in a funny kind of way, I am one of the women in my study, do you know what I mean? I am also exploring elderliness and working with technology in a kind of new world, just as they have done in the new world of technology. So the whole thing about Voice seems particularly important to me because … the feminists are very clear whose voice is it and how do you combine the voices? Which is one of the reasons why I really like that poetic representation of data. (Alyse, 14th September 2008, lines 2354-2378)

The dominance of the 'new world' in which Alyse finds herself means that she has a strong sense of location in time and space, but in a very real sense, Alyse is trying to locate her Self, so as to discover a place from which to write. She is herself under erasure:

But I think – now I've lost the thread – hang on, you see my own voice is now failing me. It is about trying to combine the voices in a way that is meaningful … and balance the voices, because I think it's very easy in a PhD for the researcher voice to get lost. … I'm sure in some kind of very democratic, certainly feminist approaches, it would be just as easy for the voice of the Others, so-called, (because they would get othered again), they would be more important … over-represented in a way. So to me the challenge is about locating myself. Working out where am I in terms of feminism. Where am I in terms of post-modernism. Where am I in terms of my theoretical approach. Where am I in terms of my relationship with the

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44 Voice recognition software.

women which, so far, has been very open. I don't see myself as their technology helper. I have offered assistance where I can in a kind of neighbourly kind of way, because I see neighbourliness as that kind of relationship with the women. ... I need to expand that and pursue it. (Alyse, 14th September 2008, lines 2382-2408)

Alyse's joking reference to losing her voice is revealing. She has in place all the skills and knowledge she needs, the analytical competences and a sense of purpose for her thesis, yet she has been immobilised by her radical life changes. For a South African person of whatever race group, not to be seen – to be anonymous – amidst the English reserve is deeply disturbing. For her, it is not the voices of her participants that she fears not representing, but rather her difficulty finding her own and making it heard.

Alyse's narrative of doctoral identity links to childhood also. She is independent of spirit and enjoys the freedom of movement and experience that she has in England despite the aloneness:

Because ... it's given me a new way of being. ... I am very independent. I catch buses and trains everywhere. People say to me 'Do you go to all these concerts on your own?' – 'Yes' – 'Why don't you go with friends?. Well, I have very particular tastes which I would not impose on my friends, and quite honestly if I had to start negotiating with some of the people I know, who have amazingly busy lives here, I would lose out on the tickets. I wouldn't get the ticket. ... If you're not on line, they say opening at nine o'clock tomorrow, and I have pre-warning about them, within the first ten minutes they can sell out, so I'm not going to mess about. So I go on my own, you know. So that's the whole kind of – it's like I'm back in my childhood where I was a very alone child, doing things on my own and going out into the world, sometimes dressed as a boy, because that was one way of doing it, you know, to be safe ... anonymous, and now I'm doing it again. So it is part of one's identity. What happens around you

socially and physically and geographically, to some extent, does affect who you are. (Alyse, 14th September 2008, lines 4349-4377)

Alyse's father was, in her words, a "very talented musician and mother was a very street-smart shop assistant". Neither of them had attended high school, which meant that she had to live by her wits working out how education worked. As she put it:

When I got to university I knew certain things but I really didn't know anything about bigger world or politics or anything and my best friend at primary school and all the way through was incredibly bright. I mean at six years old she would be able to discuss world affairs with her parents. ... She's still a friend of mine, believe it or not, ... I was so patronised at university, it was absolutely painful. I was the butt of all the jokes in the class of politics because in any seminar, it didn't matter what I was asked ... I mean I was so green [to have admitted I didn't know something], can you imagine? They were so patronising to me. Having said that, I came second in politics as a major – second to the Rhodes scholar in that year, and that's a whole different story. ... They used to let me come to their little work groups [and] they used to let me read because I read very well – They didn't think that I had an idea in my head, but they would let me read. (Extract from interview for a PaperHeaDs joint paper on Choosing Supervisors, 21st November 2004, lines 611-635[45])

Alyse gives an account here of being positioned as ignorant as an undergraduate and being patronised because she did not know about global matters or the ways to behave to seem knowing – her immersion in the discourse space of studenthood (Gee, 2000). The story here tells of not being 'seen' as a clever enough person, but also her recognition that "what it means to be a certain kind of person, in a given context" (p. 100) is a function of performance and acknowledgement. She resisted this positioning

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45 It was through this interview that I learned the word 'agentic' from Alyse.

by drawing on a pragmatic understanding that education is about learning and the starting position for knowing is to mark the point of not knowing with a question. Her ultimate success is testament to the effectiveness of this strategy.

She continues to have déjà vu flashbacks to that time, as she works with unfamiliar philosophers and terms coined by academics.

> *[It's like standing in] quicksand, ... where there's no substance ... so you don't know what to trust. ... You lose all your, everything ... that gives you any kind of stability just isn't there. You're just ... hanging in some sort of place/state and then what do you trust then? So, it's like you lose that sense of your own process. I think that's what ... what's happened along the way is that I think ... it's not about making a mistake. It's not even about not measuring up, which are old kind of narratives in my head. It's about saying okay, fine, this is going to take you further and that's fine. So now when I read – and that's the other thing – every time I keep saying to [supervisor] "Why do you give me that reading now – because if I'd had it two weeks ago, I wouldn't have had this uncertainty, I would have been ... ?" and he says, "No, that will happen to you all the time. Every time you pick up something you'll see it from where you are now. You've got to go through that process." So I'm reading all this stuff and thinking I know that, ja, I've done that, been there, got that, so it's very exciting, it really is. (Extract from interview for a PaperHeaDs joint paper on Choosing Supervisors, 21st November 2004, lines 542-556)*

The creativity of doctoral work is highlighted here. Alyse's acknowledges the insecurity of making substance from her own ideas, derived from her reading, thinking and life, of the tension between trusting herself and self-doubt. In the process, she occasionally reaches ground that is more firm – a sense of security when she finds an authoritative academic reading that agrees with what she struggles to articulate. The support of her supervisor who recognises the process and encourages her to trust it, and believes in

her ability to go on, is critical to her learning. It enables her to keep moving despite the fear fed by her early negative experiences of learning, and to have the opportunity to look back on how far she has come with pleasure. From this reflection on quicksand came a PaperHeaDs mantra, which we attribute to Alyse, 'Just Trust the Process'.

Alyse is asking of herself more than the accepted doctoral requirement of creating new thoughts and ideas, she wants to represent the voices of her participants in ways that represent them authentically. She created a poem – using the words and cadences of one of the women – which captures the meaning of Granny K's experience of technology so powerfully that it brought tears to our eyes when she read it at a PaperHeaDs Getaway, where she had written it. This moment of 'firm ground' in the quicksand of doctoral learning is the person that Alyse wants to express in her doctorate – 'creative, contemplative, hopefully pushing the envelope a bit'.

Alyse's self-positioning in the world of doctoral learning says nothing of the world of academia, of micropolitical ambition or of the value of scholarship. This is not to say that she cannot be someone in those discourses, but rather that her 'authorial core' (Butt, Burr & Bell, 1997) treasures something else. Her founding assumption, the one expressed through her silences, is that knowing how people live and why is something worth doing for herself and others. In this position, the neoliberal educational discourse of production of knowledge-workers is strange, alien and unencounterable, yet I cannot think that Alyse's work at expressing herself and her life's purpose is not valuable for the global world. Without question, her doctoral journey is uniquely hers and she resists norming descriptions, in that sense she is right to consider herself an outlier. I think of Alyse as a dancer in life, moving locations with grace and poise – yet Harraway's cyborg is more accurate because in constructing her doctoral identity, picking out and using parts of her life's expertise, she is shaping her doctoral self to suit to the domains in which she operates. Whatever the domain, she is always deeply engaged, always curious, always interested and always deeply aware of connections between people and ideas. Moreover, her generosity sharing her knowledge and experience has been a core resource of the PaperHeaDs group.

Alyse's story of being misaligned with doctoral work because of geography and age sits alongside Annie's story of being dislocated from academia. In both cases, a sense of clarity about the reason to be the doctor they want to be is absent. The next story, of Ntsiki, picks up the theme and reveals dislocations produced by race as well as gender, and shows how Ntsiki is shaping her voice and identity in her journey towards her doctorate.

Bobbi Markowitz: My psychiatrist says I need creative chaos.
Roger Bannister: My shrink says I need boundaries. (The
Stepford Wives, Rudnick, 2004).

The Stepford Wife – Ntsiki's Story

> **For me … it's clear but also in a way makes me panic sometimes,**
> **because what if – not what if I didn't get there – how do I get**
> **there? Ntsiki 17th July 2008 lines 399-400**

In my conversation with Ntsiki, she completely shocked my feminist soul by describing a fantasy of being a stereotypical 50's housewife.

> **I love the dresses and that whole orderly thing with the washing machines**
> **… just keeping a home, I mean I can do that, I mean really, ja. My friend**
> **says [only] for 5 minutes, you'd get so bored. I'm like, "No, I'd make it all**
> **an activity!" (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 1925-1931)**

This was such a stark contrast to my own sense of the way the world should be and my motivation to avoid the life that my mother had, that it felt almost like sacrilege. Yet I have now a sense of understanding Ntsiki's heresy. In the battle for a doctoral identity so many aspects of who we think we are are challenged. So many unthinking zones of comfort in performance of our roles as daughters, partners, friends and colleagues are forced into the spotlight of developing critical thought and self-representation. The initial seduction of the story of the Stepford Wives is the seeming ease and contentment of a life with clearly defined roles and acceptable performance ideals, but as the story progresses it becomes evident that the lack of personal idiosyncrasies and character creates an oppressive and uncreative community.

A Stepford Wife is the antithesis of Ntsiki, as I know her, but provides a metaphor of challenge and resistance that works for her story. I first met Ntsiki as a first-year student in the second year of the new diploma course we had introduced. The group of the year before had had only six students, for which my colleague and I were very grateful because everything about it was experimental. This first year group had nearly twenty students who arrived bright-eyed and fuelled by a passion for a career that was different from the norm. Most terrifying for the two of us, as the lecturers, was that we needed to make sure that our graduates were emotionally intelligent, creative problem-solvers and able to understand human behaviour at a level higher than would usually be expected for their chronological ages. Those that graduated would be creating home-like environments for children at risk in a context of extreme resource shortage.

Ntsiki stood out immediately in the group. Her joy in life and unusual wisdom made the class a pleasure to teach, despite the intense pressure of a pedagogy that was more like psychological supervision because of the time we spent with the students, and they with us. Much of the time I felt on the brink of burn-out – having to find a way to cope with the emotional challenges of these young people becoming the kind of caregivers that the children needed. Each of them had their own tragedies and doubts.

At 18, before she graduated, Ntsiki travelled for the first time out of the country to a strange land, with a classmate, to present a paper at a conference. I only presented a paper at an international conference for the first time in 2007.

A few years later, she took up a scholarship and completed her Master's in Education in Melbourne, Australia before returning to South Africa to teach in the department where she did her undergraduate studies.

My ex-colleague in that department was angry with me when I 'head-hunted' Ntsiki into the academic development unit to which I had moved. As the head of the department, she was grooming Ntsiki to become the next department head, but Ntsiki was exploring different options. Once in academic development, Ntsiki quickly became a valued colleague. On a number of occasions, while I was head of department, she prevented

me from making mistakes that would have fuelled interpersonal conflict, by reminding me of principles that my younger self had apparently taught her. It was probably poetic justice that she won a Mellon Scholarship and left to do her PhD at a prestigious SA university. As she was preparing to make this move, we asked her to join PaperHeaDs. She is the youngest member of the group.

At the time, she wondered, and being Ntsiki, asked us whether we invited her because she is black. It was a courageous question to ask in the context of South African history and one that was obvious – but one which is incredibly difficult to ask and answer. On one level, the existing members of the group could be seen as the 'power holders'. Sophia and Bee's anxiety about coming to belong to an already-established group shows this. Both had asked, "Why me?" In all three instances, I asked myself why they asked this question? Could they not see what they might bring? I wondered at the level of self-doubt that we all seemed to experience embarking on the PhD project.

On other levels the discourse of employment equity, the discourse of research that requires samples that are generalisable to the general population and the discourse of PaperHeaDs itself which takes on a liberal 'colour-blindness' work to throw up answers to Ntsiki's question that would not be acceptable in the story we were telling of ourselves – a feminist story. Ntsiki's desire to find out if she was the "equity member", made us interrogate how we decided who to invite into the group and who we did not and why (discussed in Chapter 6 p. 309). It was a difficult conversation – hard on every level. It took place at a Getaway, over several glasses of wine and to my enduring regret, I cannot recall it in detail. I did not want to get my tape recorder possibly because I did not want to change the dynamic of the conversation or possibly, because I did not want to miss it. Each of us was inquiring into our own motivations, prejudices, and stereotypes. Together we questioned every conceivable reason, interrogating and

challenging, honestly but gently. My own explanation by Occam's Razor [46]– the simplest explanation is probably the truth – is that I admire Ntsiki and wanted to share the space of PaperHeaDs with her.

I spoke to her on Skype, as I had with Alyse, because of the impossibility of getting together in the real world. In our three-hour conversation about our doctoral processes, she spoke of how lifelong insecurities continue to plague her in her PhD:

No, honestly, it's the same ones ever since undergrad. They just resurface. It's the same theme. I still distinctly remember in first year ... after the first week, we would have a week's orientation and then at the end we got prizes for different things. ... I was one of those who got the 'brain-box' prize ... I still remember looking at you guys [asking] 'Are you sure? Where did you get that from?' Actually I kind of verbalised it because I remember [older student] was my mentor and I went back to her and I said 'What were you thinking? Where did you get this from – or did you run out of presents to give and go oh well, we might as well give her a 'brain-box' one as well?' I did not comprehend where anyone would understand – would even come to the idea that I have, not that I have a brain. .... You know I wasn't the bright one in high school, I was at the bottom of my class so you know all those things, and not believing that I am clever in any way.

So it's those kinds of insecurities. Then later on when you do have a degree or the next thing you do, ... I always go, somebody's going to wake up and realise I don't know anything really. My favourite is, I really can't write or I don't write the way an academic writes. Or, I can't spell, or ... there's huge problems with my grammar and – I know I have ideas. I know that. I know I

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46 Occam's Razor is "a scientific and philosophic rule (attributed to William of Occam, a 14th Century friar) ... that the simplest of competing theories be preferred to the more complex or that explanations of unknown phenomena be sought first in terms of known quantities"(Merriam-Webster, 2009).

have ideas and ... and I know I want to share my ideas and I know they can work, so that's about the only thing I hold on to ... It's like ja there's an idea here, there's something here. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 561-604)

Ntsiki's story of affirmation that was not believable echoes Maya's comment that compliments can be hollow when the person receiving them does not see why they are given. Her fear of someone possibly waking up and realising that she is a fraud is common in academia. Christine Overall's analysis of her own 'imposter syndrome' (Overall, 1998, pp. 127-150) puts the feeling down to two general explanations: the "dilemma of audience" and "our socially-imposed gender roles, exacerbated by ageism"(Overall, 1998, p. p130). Whom we think we are writing for – the performance expected in academia – means that we have to speak the in-language in order to be seen as experts. Overall points out that this is an impossibility; it is not possible to be expert at the boundary of new knowledge creation, but one can give an account of how one got to think what one thinks and expose it to public scrutiny.

Unlike Overall (1998, p. 135), who feels forced into a conflicted mother role (nurturing but preparing acceptable offspring) because of her middle-aged status, Ntsiki, because of her maturity, has a lot of older friends and may feel forced into the role of 'little sister'. I confess that despite the number of times her insights take my breath away, I do tend to think of her in that role. Perhaps her feeling of fraudulence could be likened to the fear of getting caught trying on mum's best shoes. They do not quite fit, yet they are intensely desirable as symbols of adult female power. In a similar way, expertness represented by a PhD is desirable, and by Sophia, Amelia, and Maya's accounts of the desire to have their intellects externalised – so is it desirable for it to be made visible.

One aspect of her doctoral process that Ntsiki was working with is the problem of challenging and critiquing previous knowledge in order to make her own contribution:

The other thing is for me it challenges ... who I think I am. I'm the person who doesn't rock the boat and who I am in my family. Maybe that's ...

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where I'm coming from...I'm the peacekeeper. I don't really necessarily have the loudest opinions, and so I'm safe in that way. So suddenly to take that personality of somebody who doesn't rock the boat and actually if you've got nothing new to say in a PhD, which in some way is going to rock the boat. ... [I have to ask myself] Why are you even starting it? So it challenges that part of me that likes to be nice. As my cousin says 'You're nice!'... (She doesn't say it in a very nice way!) ... So it challenges that of me where I don't like confrontation. I don't want to say 'Hang on, maybe that's wrong'. ... It challenges ... what I've made myself into or have become, that person who's ... nice, [where] nothing rocks the boat but now three-quarters of my life is spent on something that will rock the boat. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 649-668)

The notion of academic knowledge-building as intrinsically adversarial runs counter to what Ruthellen Josselson claims as the need for connectedness in women's ways of knowing. Most valuable in the analysis is her claim that women's identity rests on her sense of how she is effective in the world and how she is linked with others (Josselson, 1996, p. 179), particularly as for women competence is not the same as 'being good at'. Ntsiki went on to describe her process of learning to distinguish between critique and criticism in strongly embodied terms:

I have interesting things in my mind, like, "Where does critique, and being critical [fit]? ... Criticising and critique are two different things ... and watching that space in between ... and being worried about criticising, when am I criticising? And when am I critiquing? And where does each play? Where is each appropriate? ... Sometimes it's that uncomfortable feeling – somewhere between my chest and my tummy, that often tells me now I'm criticising ... Sometimes I have to listen very carefully to that uncomfortableness, because it might just be uncomfortable because it's territory that I haven't charted yet, so it's not necessarily because I'm criticising somebody. ... It is a critique, but it's uncomfortable because it is a critique. I don't know, I'm still working on fine-tuning listening to that

gut feeling [to establish that] now I'm criticising and I've left the path of critique. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 677-709)

In this pre-liminal space-time (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006), Ntsiki is attempting to use interpersonal skills developed earlier in her life in the context of her roles as careworker and lecturer. The uncomfortable feeling she describes could be what Rogers calls 'incongruence' in the context of counselling, where the counsellor is not being honest with the counselee (Rogers, 1961). When she is making a comment that might be counter to a colleague's thinking: when is it critique – a constructive and acceptable academic behaviour and when is it criticism, a potentially destructive behaviour frowned on in academia? She finds it easier to distinguish between them in conversation and in oral communication:

If I'm going into a criticising mode when we're talking, while it's oral, then my tendency is to listen ... criticism is then pulled back [when]... I have this feeling of I want to correct you now. ... If I feel that tendency to want to jump in and correct you, then best I step back and listen because maybe at the end of that sentence you will actually see that you're not doing [what you thought you were], you're actually doing [something else]. ... Instead of jumping in and wanting to criticise you there and then, and change the way you think then and there, maybe if I just listen to you until you reach whatever your end is, then I have a better chance of critiquing than criticising.

But when it comes to writing ... I don't know if I tend to ask questions or not. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 721-737)

By definition writing is a unilateral activity – the product is static, albeit that the reader is free to construct her own meanings of it – the dynamic 'in the moment' opportunity for clarification in response to what is stated is not an option.

Recognising behaviour of the community of practice to which she aspires, Ntsiki positions herself at the margins. She is self-reflexively working on the ways academics raise questions in text. This is a much more fine-grained description of a "troubling knowledge" that signals a threshold conceptualisation, than those currently identified in the available literature on doctoral learning arising from phenomenographic studies currently in process. These studies have identified potential 'sticking places' in doctoral learning as almost exactly overlapping generic stages in the process, namely:

- Identifying a research question;
- Theorising – interaction in a dialogue between and with the theories and own work in the theoretical perspectives chapter;
- Methodology and methods – engagement at conceptual level;
- Research design – which actions the question;
- Data analysis – which carries out a theorised exploration and investigation;
- Conceptual conclusions and Viva preparation (Wisker, 2009).

Gina Wisker suggests that the goal is that "the thinking planning research work and articulation are using the meta-language of postgraduate level expression and [that] the student is working at a conceptualised level".

Even as she notices herself working on this challenge, Ntsiki resists a sense that she might lose something of herself in the process – she understands the ontological as well as the epistemological consequences of crossing this threshold (Meyer & Land, 2005):

> *I think one of the things I've decided is that I want to not lose some of it – what I term 'just being Ntsiki'. I can't let the process of a PhD or any degree make me so different to who I know who I am. Obviously there'll be things that have changed and there'll be movement, whatever movement will look like, but the core of how I operate and how I'm authentically me, that I don't want to lose. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 758-762)*

When I asked her whether she felt that she is changing, is aware of changing, she said:

Ja, no, I do feel that and I do see that – more clearly now this year than I did last year. ... The difference is last year I saw it in your eyes and Maya's eyes, you know, your lenses. Like it's only when you said it that I saw it. This year I have a more sense of seeing it in conjunction with other people seeing it. ... Whereas last year I was relying on external people saying oh, you have changed, and then I have to go back and go, 'I have? Where? How?' And do I like the change? Do I not like the change, you know? Now it's like I'm starting to see the changes. I'm starting to see the changes rather than just relying on the external [feedback]. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 826-840)

The wonderful South African saying, 'Ja, No' captures the ambivalence of being on another border. This is a boundary between pre-doctoral Ntsiki, and the Dr that she is becoming. She shows here the importance of others noticing the change as giving her a place to start watching her transformation. Ntsiki remembers a time when Maya and I recognised her as "acting and interacting as a certain 'kind of person'" (Gee, 2000, p. 99). Now that she can see the changes, she is able to see how her academic behaviour has changed. She gave an example of how her participation in doctoral seminars has shifted since she began her PhD:

The first one I enjoyed, just for enjoyment's sake, but I really wasn't really doing much mentally – when I say mentally- it's like I wasn't thinking. ... Somebody would present, it would be like: okay, that's nice, moving on, next one. There was no lasting power ... it was just a nice experience.

Now, when people are presenting (and maybe that's because I'm further along with what I want to do) ... I'm listening to how they're negotiating what they are doing in relation to where I am. ... I'm actually going there – how is this presentation going to be helpful to me? Okay, let me listen with that kind of ear. ... Then I moved on into being able to, when people do their proposals, I'm sitting there going 'that wasn't clear'. I didn't get what their main topic was or I'm not sure how their methods are going to work

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with what they're doing. ... And, so I'm asking questions now rather than just what's in it for me or just seeing a flash of different presentations.

It's now I'm actually asking questions that I could now ask the presenter, saying putting up my hand and saying, 'I just didn't get this and this and this and how it would work with that and that?' (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 857-874)

Her description of moving through a 'nice experience' of passive listening, to 'what's in it for me' as an active listener to a more confident engagement with her own opinions and those of others is a voice of growing confidence. Most recently, she records a sense of connection; the transcript extract here does not record the joy in her voice as she finds herself in a position to give useful contributions:

I'm actually able to contribute, I think, to other people's work to move them forwards or backwards or scratch, whichever they choose. I have more confidence now to ask questions to, not just say the nice stuff like 'oh, I thought that was so brilliant, thank you'. No, I actually want to say stuff like 'I don't know' or 'have you thought of this'. It's like giving somebody something back as they've given me in their presentation. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 878-883)

The principle of collegial participation is very important to Ntsiki. This sense of being able to contribute was reinforced when a colleague working with a particularly complex theory, asked her to read a paper:

J asked me to read her paper that she was going to present at Cape Town and at first it was like, "but I don't even know spelling or grammar, J?". She goes, "Yes, but you're working with [theorist]'. And so, you know, she gave me confidence [as] somebody who's using the theory just to see ... that we're not talking amongst ourselves, in a special language – that language which we speak amongst ourselves is relevant to people outside – they can

see the relevance to people outside that [theorist] group. (Ntsiki, 17th July
2008, lines 896-911)

Ntsiki perceived the in-group of knowers of a particular theory and the out-group of those not familiar with the theory and recognised her position as being on the boundary, uniquely placed to give feedback to a colleague wanting to reach a wider audience. Her colleague had affirmed her growing knowledge in a way that Ntsiki could accept as believable and encouraging. Recognising the transformations that Ntsiki was describing, from my own experience, I wanted to know how she saw being academic. She struggled to articulate her feelings about being academic and described her resistance to the idea of research that she had come to know in her Master's degree:

[Big sigh] Mm, you know Liz, I never wanted to be an academic. No
honestly. I had a huge big problem with it, particularly in my Master's ...
and it probably had to do with research, because in my mind I was like 'oh
my word, to be an academic means I have to research and I have to
publish'. ... To be honest I have a huge struggle with that because I don't
(mainly because I just think I'm not good enough for that yet) ... see myself
as an academic. ... There is a portion that means that I have to research –
however I see research – and I think I have a particular way of looking at
research, which might be what constrains me. I have to publish. I have to
do research. It's all ... the hard stuff that makes me kind of question
whether I really want to be an academic or not. ... When my PhD is done,
will I still want to go and find out new things and have the same energy? ...
Does that not stop? I don't know. So I'm still struggling with the idea ... my
identity as an academic, but I know that – I actually watch or listen to
other people's ideas of what an academic is, and I'm very aware of ... the
ideas I don't like. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 916-933)

Here she positions herself again as the apprentice, 'as not being good enough yet'. The sense of being on a path towards being 'good enough' and doing the hard 'stuff' is in tension with her self-questioning of whether this is what she wants to be. Interestingly, she does not conflate the PhD with the role of an academic, suggesting that for her the qualification is not necessarily about a career in academia. Her acute observation of the academics in her environment is indicative of someone who is deciding what sort of identity she would like to take on. To give an example of the kind of academic she did not want to be, she went on to describe a minor disagreement in the workplace:

And, at the end we had tea and coffee, and at the end I picked up, ... teacups, ... just packing them together... And [colleague-peer student] immediately made me stop, she goes, "That's women's work," and I'm like, "Okay." And we had a little byplay, I was like, "No, it's fine, you know, I'll do it". I mean when the rest of the group was watching, it looked like a little bit of a Madam and Eve thing going on, and I'm like, "No it's fine, I'm on – I'm on my day off today," kind of thing. But afterwards ... it was funny in amongst the group because we turned it into something funny. But afterwards, I felt very chastised by her. ... She said, "No you don't do that, you don't pick up plates and things", and for me it went back to her saying [that]... by picking up those cups and saucers, I now made myself a less of a player on the academic field in front of those people. ... It just was mind-boggling for me, because I was like, "No I haven't, it doesn't make me less of an academic to be able to pick up a teacup, because my academicness is not confined to a teacup or not. ... I'm not suddenly less of a brain – I don't suddenly lose a brain by picking up a teacup." ... Somebody else must do that, somebody who's not academic. Liz, I don't think I could ever be anything else, given that what was taught in Child Care was 'Hey listen, before you start therapy with a child, if the child needs a nappy change, then change it, because that too, is therapeutic', so for me picking up a cup, that too, is academic. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 995-1019)

The way that Ntsiki uses humour to defuse a tense situation, is a strong reason why she will never be a Stepford Doctor, because she questions the validity of her own behaviour related to accepted practice. The Madam and Eve cartoon strip that Ntsiki refers to here, is an ongoing satire of the relationship between domestic employers and employees in South Africa. In this cartoon her much more astute domestic worker constantly outwits the arrogant white mistress of the house, yet in stressful times, they join forces. Ntsiki's description of this moment of ideological difference has overtones of either or both racial and gender border patrolling (Dalmage, 2000, p. 44) as well as illustrating the ways in which membership of the in-group 'academic' might be recognised and created in this context. The degree of peer or would-be peer pressure would depend on the status of the individual who made the comment, possibly jokingly, and the degree of power she held in the group. Putting myself in a similar position, I have a sense that I would probably have gone along with the behaviour required. Ntsiki resisted and experienced 'chastisement' and confusion, but worked out where she stood and why. Her choice was to self-affirm her agency to be human and caring in this environment.

Ntsiki further displayed this intensely pragmatic and embodied stance when she described herself as a strategic user of knowledge:

> *I don't desire to walk around with just a head on the body, but I am seduced by some aspect of that. I think the theory stuff and ... that idea of whatever I'm doing or not doing and the choices I'm making or not making, ... I can strongly say, because I come from a critical realist perspective or are rooted in whatever. I'm seduced by that, it gives me a sense of security even though I don't fully understand those frameworks. But to be able to understand that the way I'm thinking or the way I'm going for this particular project or this particular assignment or whatever it is, I'm choosing to use x's framework or x's theory. I like that about it – it centres me in a way.*

> *And I'm always aware that ... whichever theory I pick, I don't think I'll ever get to the root of and understand fully backwards and forwards. But I*

understand the part that I'm using and why I'm using it. I don't know ... I haven't decided whether it's a bad or a good thing, but my hunch is it's probably a bad academic practice. I don't want to read Bernstein's theories from page 1 to page 250 and know it so well backwards and forwards. I want to know that between page 10 and page 25, that is what I want to know ... that's important to me because that is what moves my project or explains my project or frames my project ... however I want to use [it]. I'm going to explain how those 10 pages are important and I know there's a danger because if you read the next few chapters you might realise you might have misused the person's theory, but that's something I worry about. Somebody else can tell me I misinterpreted it and then I'm fine, I'm open to that. I misinterpreted because I didn't read the next three chapters [and] which I could have avoided because had I read all five chapters, I would have got a deeper understanding of Bernstein. Great. I don't want a deeper understanding of Bernstein. I want that chapter, and that chapter, and that chapter and now I've taken that chapter and made it work for what I'm doing. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 1106-1135)

In words reminiscent of Amelia's comment about 'domesticating' ideas to her own purposes, Ntsiki acknowledges the temptation to 'live in her head' (Robinson, 2006)[47] because theory offers a sense of security. Yet while having an anchor in the work of past thinkers suits Ntsiki, she recognises her way of working as needing the theory to be relevant and useful to a specific project that she is doing. It is significant that she is not fearful of criticism for misusing a theory. She does not need to 'get it right'; she needs it to be good enough. Perhaps Ntsiki's pragmatism stems from her family. Hers will be the third doctorate in her family, which contains a host of teachers. I joked with her that she had her own private university at hand. She was raised in a family that values education for practical reasons, as she put it:

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47 Robinson argues for teaching creativity in schools and amusingly claims that "University professors look on their bodies as a form of transportation for their heads".

Education is revered in my family and I think that's one of the things, that I brought [here] … with me. That was part of my presentation [for the scholarship] because that has been strong in my family. But what has been nice about it being that strong is we don't care what. If you want to be a bricklayer, go learn how to be a bricklayer, go get an education on it. … You're going to go and get an education about bricklaying. Now, it doesn't mean university education. It means whatever it is; go get some piece of paper behind you that supports that. If you have a natural talent of bricklaying or an interest in bricklaying or whatever. It doesn't matter where you go [to learn it]. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 1862-1869)

Having said this, Ntsiki also acknowledged that her generation of matriculants went into higher education in order to get jobs. It was not important that one enjoyed the subjects that were studied but that you needed to get a job. Mentioning friends who are accountants, but hate accounting although they are good at it, she said:

You need to get a job … either because you have to supplement your family income or because you're one less mouth to feed, whatever your social background is. So it was never going into it [higher education] because it's what I just longed to read or find out or was curious … So obviously not even thinking … about knowledge and how … and what knowledge is used for. So when you start asking the question 'what is an academic's role' I'm not even thinking an academic. You're a teacher but you're not a – whatever an academic is. I don't know what that is – I teach or I don't teach, you know? Yes, [I ask] what am I teaching? And why am I teaching? Sometimes why am I teaching? But what am I teaching and yes, relevance, you know. Will the students get it? And will it help them get their job? So it's again going back to that. It's not – it's I don't know … that love of, or for the love of, or for the curiosity of, to me is a luxury … that I would not have perceived had I even thought of it. I would have perceived [that position] as a luxury. But now … for the love of – is something that now

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becomes something I want to entertain. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines 1530-
1560)

Ntsiki's reflection on the way that the cycle of education expressed itself in her perception – from needing to get a job to making sure that others can get a job – is indicative of a strong sense of social responsibility. Her newish recognition that pleasure can be taken in knowing and knowledge-creation is something that she wanted to consider for herself as an individual. The powerful combination of reflexivity, pragmatism, social service, and the potential of joy in learning suggests to me that the future Dr Ntsiki will bring a unique contribution to South African ways of knowing. Recalling her 50's housewife daydream with the fantasy of an ordered, predictable and secure way of living, I referred to an American/British stereotype of the well-organised housewife who wears a matching blouse, cardigan and skirt, and finishes the look with subtle jewellery indicative of wealth:

> *Liz – I still can't see you in pearls and a twinset, I'm sorry.*

> *Ntsiki – No, I can't either, hence it being a fantasy, because if it became*
> *real it would choke me within two minutes. (Ntsiki, 17th July 2008, lines*
> *1966-1969)*

Ntsiki recognises that while she is entering the discourse of academia and research, she will never sacrifice her own agency. To do so would be fatal to her sense of who Ntsiki is.

Ntsiki's references to popular (globalised) cultures, e.g. The Stepford Wives, interact with her schooling experiences, her family culture of education for economic purposes as her habitus (Bourdieu, 1994) and make her observation of the practices of academia in her prestigious university all the more useful. Her story reveals conceptualising thresholds that are experienced in her body, not merely at cognitive level.

Mary's story, which follows, describes how emotional as well as cognitive thresholds have to be negotiated on the way to a doctoral identity.

"All right," said Susan, "I'm not stupid. You're saying humans need ... fantasies to make life bearable." NO. HUMANS NEED FANTASY TO BE HUMAN. TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE FALLING ANGEL MEETS THE RISING APE.

(Susan Sto Helit, in conversation with her Grandfather, Death. Terry Pratchett, The Hogfather, 2000, p. 270)

The Shapeshifter – Mary's Story

I recognise that in myself. A part of me really actually doesn't care and doesn't really want to be bothered, and another part of me really, really, really wants to get that, and then another part of me which says okay, I've got to have it so I might as well do it. Maybe it's a three-way split, I don't know. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 1003-1006)

In the fantasy genre of literature, a classic character type is one who has the magical ability to change forms. Quest narratives speak of capacities to become animals or birds. In some, where the character is still learning to control these capacities, emotional conflict and resistance become part of the story. It seems to me that at the time we had our conversation about doctoral identity, Mary was working on what shape she would like to be, but was resisting her understandings of what that might mean. This was causing her to present herself in ways that I saw as ambivalence personified. Other PaperHeaDs had similar moments including Annie, Bee and myself (by Maya's assessment p.178). For some early members of the group this kind of slip-sliding may have caused them to withdraw (temporarily?)[48] from the process of doing a PhD. It seems to me that 'tolerance for ambiguity' is a critical mental set to be acquired in the process of doctoral learning.

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48 Two members of the group whose stories are not included withdrew because they decided to suspend registering for their doctorates until their children were a bit older.

Mary and I share an admiration for Terry Pratchett's Discworld[49] fantasy novels which examine human behaviour satirically through fantasy devices. Both of us enjoy his witty and dry sense of humour and the gentle mocking observations that become deep philosophy as in the quotation above. Our conversation contained much laughter and many shared, but unvoiced understandings that I did not think to clarify at the time we were talking. These are obscured in the transcription but are recoverable from the voice recordings, including one moment in which we both held our noses and made drowning noises. We were talking about where Mary was in her doctoral process. I had just commented that I thought that Mary was in 'the middle bit' (cf. Amelia's story) of coming to terms with her theoretical framework because she was starting to 'play with different perspectives' of critical realism:

> *Yes, that's also true – I mean, I think that is quite a lot to do with the voices, whether you think you can speak the speak and have you joined the group that can talk like that, I suppose because you don't see it happening.*
>
> *You're just sort of in this mess of... it feels very much like going down for the umpteenth time. [Drowning/ Bubbling noises] (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 1615-1633)*

The fantasist in me wonders whether bubbling noises could be introduced as a coping strategy for doctoral learners – a signal for help. Here they might indicate the shapeshifter needing to take on a different shape, or in a formal theoretical discourse; to position herself differently in relation to her topic. Mary went on to say:

> *If somebody throws one more long term at me ... I think I have this ridiculous notion – there are two that I have. One is that actually having*

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49 Discworld is an imaginary and flat world that rests on the back of four elephants which stand on the back of the great star turtle – A'Tuin. It is populated by every possible imaginary creature, which Pratchett uses to observe humanity from different perspectives.

got over the hurdle [of coming to terms with the theory], I can now sit down and write the damn stuff and get this bloody thing out of the way because ... well I mean I've got the literature and ... I'm getting the handle on this and I'll bloody well write this chapter first, and then just go and get the damn data and do it.

Now that sounds very easy and you should be able to wrap it up. [Two] But I'm also aware that writing is also an enormous block for me, that – and I used to be aware of it when I was at varsity, that you go off in November and you'd come back beginning of February and you couldn't write a long essay any more.

I can't really get my head around it, and it is what I recognise in my students. Writing a dissertation is a very different animal from writing an essay or anything else. ... It requires a different kind of thinking and holding together, of that process. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 1637-1679)

Standing on the margin between being outside the discourse and fluently speaking the way that other critical realists speak (Wenger, 1998), Mary feels that she has come to terms with the nuances of the theory and should be able to write it. In describing her two 'ridiculous notions', she marks a conceptualising threshold that is not often described in the literature of doctoral learning, that theory is never crystallised; it is fluid and changes and yet has more than one reflective aspect. Like mercury (quicksilver), theory is often heavy, difficult to manipulate, and hard to hold, even toxic. There is always someone else writing about it in a different way to consider: different critiques and solutions to epistemological questions. Our discussion presented an interesting contrast to my conversation with Amelia in which she described being able to "domesticate an idea" to her own use, from her position of having completed her PhD. Ntsiki also talked of her worry about not really knowing a theory and therefore possibly misinterpreting it. Mary and I theorised stages of theory acquisition in our conversation. Firstly, the stage of Big Words and the learner realising that the Big Words are real

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words and mean something theoretical. The second stage is the learner actually knowing who said what about the theory that is useful. The third stage is being able to compare perspectives of different theorists. At this point, the learner might be asking herself, 'Well, what's different? I don't see the difference.' The final stage would be the doctoral learner manifesting her own voice[50] on the theory.

In framing her study, Mary needs to specify clearly which aspects she will use, to make her own theorising clear. She uses the phrase, "I'm getting a handle on this" as she explains her 'ridiculous notion' of how she intends to capture it in her literature review chapter and then go and get the data – perhaps to do the 'real research' or to see how the data works with the theory. This strategy suggests a plan, which helps her deal with the insecurity of not knowing. Leshem (2007) describes the challenge of the conceptual framework, from the perspective of being a tutor to doctoral cohorts, as passing through three stages. The first stage was conceptualising the research theoretically, the second was where students had to be clearer about the concepts they were using to construct their theorisation, while the third was indicated by students being able to confidently challenge each others' thinking across theoretical boundaries. Leshem points out that students at stage 2 "were now under more pressure to be explicit and focused than in Stage 1. This occasionally resulted in symptoms of defensiveness but for most candidates it produced collaboration and sharing of ideas" (2007, p. 293). Mary's emotional resistance, and her calling her notion of having mastered the content before starting to write, 'ridiculous', shows a gap between her intellectual understanding of the process of research and the actual embodied performance of the work.

Mary knows from her experience of supervising Master's students that the creation of her thesis is an iterative process. The data she gathers may 'fit' the theoretical framework in which her study has been conceived in her proposal or it may not. Critical realism has located her as researcher, epistemologically and ontologically. It suggests what she is looking at and why, yet it may be that the experience of her research, the

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50 In PaperHeaDs we point to The Voice when we recognise this shift (cf. Chapter 2 p.52)

data she gathers about the phenomenon she is studying, and her data analysis will not be comfortably accommodated within those assumptions. This partly explains what is difficult, the process seems simple and one that can be dealt with using a planning strategy, yet it is not predictable. Mary's cognitive dissonance is between the theory and the practice and speaks to the existence of a conceptual threshold (Meyer & Land, 2005) through which she must pass. Uncertainty is the state of being whilst in the process of doing a doctorate. Mary's frustration with her discomfort is quite evident in her epithets. Leshem's point that engagement with others around theory characterises this part of the process indicates that Mary might be assisted to cross her threshold by engaging with others around her theoretical constructs.

Another option might be interacting with her own thinking. Her shift of pronoun from the first person to the second person in "that sounds very easy and you should be able to wrap it up" is surprising. The 'you' that she is speaking to is herself. This sounds like the kind of thing a supervisor might say to a student. This internal didactic voice is evident in all the PaperHeaDs stories. It is evidently not as simple as it seems or as her internal supervisor is suggesting.

To add to the complexity, Mary owns that writing is a major block to her. I mentioned that both Sophia and Annie had spoken in a PaperHeaDs meeting about a process they called 'mosaic writing' to overcome writer's block, in which one writes ideas as they come up and then later arranges them together in the pattern that best tells the story (PaperHeaDs, 2008). Mary said:

> *But you see for me, I can't write like that – I don't write like that. I write from beginning to end. ... So having made a commitment to say to [supervisor] I will write about the critical realism chapter first, it bothers me because I need to know where I'm going ... I noticed it when we [fellow PaperHeaDs] were writing those articles together, ...[that] I can't write in a vacuum. I ... have to have a sense of the whole picture, of what it is that we're trying to do and where we're going. I can't just write a piece, which has got no connection to anything else ... I find that very, very difficult.*

Maybe it's why I'm not a creative writer but I actually can't. I need the sense of ... what it is I'm doing ... and how have I arrived at this point, so I've got to know where I begin before I can actually [go on] – because you can begin in many ways and if I began in that way I would go one direction. If I began in a different way I would go in a different direction. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 1685-1713)

Mary's comment suggests that she has learned to write to communicate an already formed idea, rather than writing to formulate an idea. This echoes Maya's threshold crossing when she recognised the value of 'Just Writing'. Mary is in a liminal space before she moves through that counter-intuitive portal (Meyer & Land, 2006), which it seems can only be crossed by actually writing. She fears the idea of writing something down or even writing it down several times because:

You see the thing is, that I'm also aware that once I started writing, for me, that shapes the way I think about it. I would already have those thoughts and that shape in my mind. It's what worries me about students – when they write and I then want them to write something quite different, because I don't know how they shift their thinking and I can see that that's the problem they have with it. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 1717-1725)

The fact of writing shaping ones thinking is not part of Mary's internal debate, but rather her internal teacher knows how hard it is to shift a position that is wrong or inaccurate or not quite to the point – she has watched students do it for 20 years. In short, what worries Mary about writing down 'what she has a handle on' is that she might have 'the wrong end of the stick'. She does not want to commit to a position for fear it is the wrong one. This position points to Mary having the self-sabotaging behaviour of perfectionism, the need to get the right answer, rather than conceiving of writing as the external manifestation of an internal dialogue with herself.

Kearns et al point to a variety of research about key self-sabotaging behaviours of doctoral students which include: overcommitting, busyness, perfectionism, procrastination, disorganisation, not putting in effort, and choosing performance-debilitating circumstances (Kearns, Gardiner & Marshall, 2008, p. 79). Rightly or wrongly, the student is positioned as the author of her own misfortune. Indeed the example they supply for perfectionism appears to fit Mary's position precisely: "The PhD student sets unrealistic and impossible expectations. Rather than start a draft of the literature review, the student decides that until the writing can be the best, then it is better not to start it at all" (p. 80). I would like to suggest that, at least in education, 'perfectionist procrastination' is less a product of student wrong-headedness and more related to a conflict between internalised teacher/supervisor and the doctor she wants to be. Mary's internalised teacher is comfortable and embodied aspect of her identity, whereas her idea of what her doctorate represents is in rehearsal.

The perfectionist account for Mary's 'stuckness' rests on an assumption that the student has a static conception of who she is and is appropriately assisted by those more able, through cognitive-behavioural coaching to identify patterns of behaviour and their consequences. Ahern and Manathunga elaborate, suggesting that the reasons underlying the behaviours are related to "general anxiety, performance anxiety, perfectionism ... low frustration tolerance, inability to accept help, low self-esteem, and lack of self-confidence" and may be cognitive, affective or social (Ahern & Manathunga, 2004, pp. 239-240). I suggest that these self-sabotaging behaviours may be a product of a lifetime of experiences in education and might be understood, more usefully, as the result of positioning of self in a discourse. The shift that Mary needs to make is from the certainty of right answers to the messiness of trying to communicate a tentative position for critique by peers. Her position here has the characteristics of emotional turmoil that presage a threshold moment, a transformation. Fight, flight or playing dead – Darwinian success strategies – are not surprising symptoms when survival is at stake. Mary's sense of self is at risk. Like Annie, Mary has experienced herself as a capable and competent student – a good subject (Gee, 2000) of education, reinforced through a lifetime of assessment as both teacher and learner. Her desire is that this pleasure will continue. As she says:

I mean it's very interesting that you've got to constantly seek that affirmation. Am I doing this the right way? Am I? And I can sense it, that even in writing the proposal ... I'm still waiting for somebody to say good job. You're on the right track. You're thinking in the right way. But it also means that you're not thinking outside the box. And ... if you're trying to create new knowledge or a new space, you should be, hopefully, thinking beyond the box, thinking outside of it, challenging it in very different ways rather than in the same old, same old way. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 129-153)

'Being on the right track' might parallel Ntsiki's 'not rocking the boat'. Both are aware that in order to progress with their doctorates they need to work against these accustomed behaviours. Mary's need for affirmation frustrates her. I recognise her desire for strong direction in embarking on a new activity, and the internal conflict that comes from knowing that it is not only a new activity, but also a new way of thinking about something. It mirrors my own anxiety about having to let go of typically positivist ways of thinking about research methodology and to identify new ways of thinking about validity.

This recognition puts the student in a Catch 22[51] position of wanting direction that is impossible for a supervisor to give, by definition. In the context of doctoral learning, a supervisor is a Vygotskian peer in this 'zone of proximal development' (Santrock, 2004, pp. 200-225). Knowing this rationally does not defeat the desire for indicators of approval.

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51 Catch 22 refers to a double bind created by a self-contradictory logic loop. It derives from Joseph Heller's novel set in the closing years of World War 2. The Catch 22 is encapsulated in the following conversation from the novel: "You're wasting your time," Doc Daneeka was forced to tell him. "Can't you ground someone who's crazy?" "Oh sure, I have to. There's a rule saying I have to ground anyone who's crazy."... [But] there's a catch. Catch 22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy."(Heller, 1955, pp. 40-41).

Another element of this paradoxical situation is that resistance to a supervisor's opinion on some aspect of the thesis would therefore be a predictable part of the process of doctoral learning. The process of this challenge maybe part of what Maya describes as conditional affirmation – recognition that she has worked for related to her thinking and her skill at presenting an argument rather than the 'thinner' acknowledgement that she has met the requirements of form and process.

Mary has been an able academic, teaching in higher education for decades. Having always been in the top levels of her classes, she left high school wanting to become a medical doctor. She was frustrated in this goal because she did not have 'hard' science subjects, and felt forced into the only alternative – studying to be a teacher (a shape that she did not necessarily want).

> *Teaching was just purely a pragmatic move. ... Just simply because I was interested in what I was doing and when I got to the end of schooling I actually wanted to go into medicine ... and they told me I couldn't do that, because I didn't have physics and I didn't have chemistry, and so I said, "Well now what do you do with English and biology?"... Well they offered you a three-year teaching thing. So I said, "All right I'll take that for now." It got me into university, so I did my university through that, thinking well, actually, at the end of it I can always do whatever it is that I want to do. But, of course, you're then in the arts or the sciences, but I was in the humanities. What do you do with English and history? You become a teacher ... I did my three years contract [in] three different high schools. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 734-761)*

Mary's access to university was via a government policy of providing funds for young people to enter teaching. One's university study was paid for, by the government, on condition that one taught for a certain length of time – service in lieu of paying back the fees.

I quite enjoyed it. I wouldn't have said that was my passion. [I] went back to varsity to do my honours and was offered a tutorship and ... university for me was the best experience in the whole wide world – [because it] opened my eyes to all kinds of things. It was a completely different ball game and a completely different space. ... So when I got offered the opportunity to go back, that's what I did. And I just loved it, I thought that was great. I enjoyed working with the students and I liked the department I was in. Until the change when it became quite clear that nobody was going anywhere if you were white. ... I thought well okay, I'd better start looking around ... so that's how I ended up [teaching in current institution] and ... to this day I say I actually don't like the environment in which I am, but I love the job, I enjoy the students. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 765-777)

Like Sophia, Mary recalls the joy of exposure to a variety of different ways of thinking and being that were part of her university experience. She gives this as her reason for taking a job in higher education as a tutor. Although she enjoyed high school teaching, she recognises that it did not capture her whole heart, whereas working with students in higher education did. The change of government regime[52] in the country in which she worked, meant that she looked for different options: finding a job in a different country, different university and different disciplinary department. Her approach to dealing with the potential lack of opportunities resulting from affirmative action was pragmatic and she seems to carry no resentment or bitterness about it.

Having moved from where I was, which was consolidating [an academic career] space in a linguistic space, which I was comfortable with, I then wasn't using that in the new space. ... I realised very quickly, that it [my expertise] wouldn't have been totally appropriate.

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52 This is a reference to an African country other than South Africa, but to fully contextualize this statement would mean providing revelatory detail which could harm Mary.

I also found it quite hard to get into the academic spaces. ... I can remember going and speaking to somebody and saying ... "This is what I want to do for a doctorate." (I was looking at school text books and the difference between school text books and the university text.) [The response was] "Oh well come back when you've got some ideas", and that was literally it. Of course, I didn't do that.

And of course being very isolated ... I worked for three different deans. Some of whom liked you, some of whom didn't, some of whom couldn't have given a damn what you were doing. ... And backwards and forwarding between centralised units and not. ... Those centralised units, as you see, are quite small, so you ... keep carrying the load. ... It didn't go anywhere. So I suppose that feeling of inadequacy and not really being a real academic has rankled and so the D for me is that, further confirmation that you can play the game. So that's one of them, I think one of the most [important things about my motivation]. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 391-430)

Mary had moved into academic development (AD), a notoriously complex area of higher education (Peseta, 2005; Trowler & Bamber, 2005; Brew, 2006; Manathunga & Peseta, 2007; Rowland, 2007). She refers here to an in-joke in the field – that AD units are regularly broken up and decentralised (if they are centralised), or centralised if they are decentralised. The fragmentation and consolidation process occurs roughly every five years, when new academic management teams consult their spreadsheets and conclude that academic development units or activities are not cost-efficient. I have personally experienced it three times in my twelve-year career in AD. It is a function of people in the field, of necessity, being experienced teachers in higher education, and thus expensive in cost-to-company terms. Academic development work with staff does not have results that are directly attributable to the work of AD staff, in terms of student throughput or success rates. Moreover, AD staff operate in a service-to-community mode, tending to step back and applaud the successes of the mainstream teaching staff

as their own, rather than partly the product of work that AD programmes have done. They do not often receive institutional recognition.

Whichever form academic development takes in higher education the units are usually small, consisting of a handful of members – hence Mary's reference to isolation. As well as isolation in terms of collegiality, academic developers also often feel isolated from mainstream or discipline-based academia (Becher & Trowler, 2001). It certainly is a difficult space in which to start thinking about doing a PhD, though it might parallel the experience of people experienced in the business environment who choose to embark on doctoral study.

Her consciousness of academic politics has become finely honed. In order to reinforce her credentials in higher education, Mary decided to complete a second Master's degree, this time in the field of higher education studies – at the time only offered at overseas universities. She recognises that this alone is not enough and that in order to be recognised as a 'real academic' she needs to get her doctorate. Yet she resisted:

> *I'm not going to be bullied into it because I need a qualification. That's not what it's about. ... It is about an intellectual journey. It is about stimulating thought. It is about getting you to think about what it is that you're doing. I think that's what it is. ... It's actually pushing you to think and to theorise. ... But at the same time ... I'm aware that there's a pressure from out there which says, ... do this in the most instrumental way possible. Flip it off, write it, get it done – you can probably do it, you know. So there is a tension. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 337-350)*

She wants her doctorate to be about the joy of discovering knowledge, the intellectual journey, but is resentful of what she experiences as pressure from the university (as both her employer and her educational institution) to complete a doctorate in the shortest time possible, i.e. within three years full-time study (or the part-time equivalent – six years). If a student takes longer to complete than the time allocated by the formula the institution receives no further subsidy and has to carry the expense of a

doctoral student until she completes. Mary having a doctorate would also be desirable to the university, in that she would then be able to supervise doctoral candidates. Doctoral students derive the heaviest per capita weighting of subsidy funding for the institution, which is paid in two parts: two years after registration and two years after conferment of the qualification (Department of Education, 2004b).

While she recognises that a doctorate is the pinnacle formal acknowledgement of her abilities she finds herself torn in a similar way to Alyse (who said "it is not going to make me more of what I am"):

> *But I also in a sense feel that it's irrelevant, because it's not going to make a difference to the way in which I work ... because I'm already doing the job. And so I've got that – it's the tension I have with this whole nonsense of you have to have a PhD before you do this. It's nonsense. People are doing these things. You know when I hear Bee saying it's got to be about having a PhD to be a registrar. This is a person with experience, who knows the system, who is working it. Nonsense. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 435-452)*

In a sense, Mary is rejecting the idea that the doctorate will enable her to do the work she does any better than she already does it. Facing this conflict, Mary appears to be approaching a threshold required by doctoral learning, she will find her view of herself transformed and will position herself, embodying her expertise as described by Sophia, Amelia and Maya: externalising her intellect and receiving the acknowledgement of her right to speak her own thoughts that she is currently missing. This is a reverse echo of Ntsiki's amazement that there can be pleasure in knowing for the sake of knowing. Mary's career has been about moving and changing shape according to the spaces in which she finds herself.

> *I mean I think for me it is about an intellectual journey. It is about development, for me. I mean I would only engage in it if I'm interested in it, if it's a topic I'm interested in and it's taking me forward. ... If somebody*

was pushing me to do it, just because, I don't think I would do it. ... So I'm kind of torn. ... You see ... if I'm in the first mode, time is not important to me. I would do it as and when and how I go along because I'm developing a different way of thinking. I'm now in a space which says it costs you time and ... you'd better do it now, which will then circumvent the process. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 473-492)

Along with her resistance to instrumentalist reasons for doing her doctorate, another obstacle in Mary's path is the distractions she finds along the way. Kearns would suggest that this is self-sabotaging behaviour. I would like to suggest an alternative interpretation – that Mary has achieved a sense of comfort that makes it difficult to find a new, enhanced or totally different sense of self that will be Dr Mary. Her identity as a teacher and academic developer is secure and part of it is a sense of service, ethics and integrity that she needs to risk in order to take on a doctoral identity. When I asked her if her upcoming sabbatical might accelerate her doctoral process, she said:

I don't know, we'll see. ... But, I mean, it will have to be in that space, because otherwise it won't accelerate it, I don't think. It's too easy to put distractions in. That's what I'm talking about – the distraction. I will distract myself, and students' needs and teaching will always come first. ... It's the way I play it, unless I become really mean inside, which I won't do. I won't do that to my colleagues and I won't do that to my students. So, I know those things about myself ... I know that about myself. I mean I don't think that that's ethical or has any integrity to it, if you're just going to play those kinds of game. Unless you're very open and upfront about it. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 500-511)

If she has to 'steal time' from her students and colleagues to indulge in her doctorate, Mary's view of herself (and mine) as a generous and sharing spirit is at risk. She does not want to see herself as 'mean inside'. She wants to keep her essential 'Maryness' (cf.

<u>Ntsiki</u>'s story) and does not yet have a way of storying herself into a doctorate that preserves that self-perception:

> *I think I'm still very stuck in an old way of working, and I don't think it's invalid, although it runs against the currents that are currently working. ... It's about development. It's not about making money. It's not about pushing people to become economic – whatever they are out there – making money. They [students] might be interested in doing that, but I'm actually interested in their development. I really want them to get involved in critical thinking and in engagement with the stuff that they're doing ... rather than just simply saying well give me the book, I'll read it. I mean we can all do that. We can give them the tables and whatever and tell them to read Chapter 5 and answer those questions, and they could probably get through. ... But that doesn't satisfy me and that's not the kind of teaching I'm interested in ... that's not intellectually stimulating. That's not growing knowledge. That's not doing anything. That's just churning out something for the sake of churning it out ... I think it's really about the ways in which people engage and think through things, and tackle problems and are prepared to think differently, which will move the world differently, which is both a personal development as well as a broader development. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 523-563)*

While Mary describes her understanding of the value of knowledge here, she retreats into her comfortable teacher identity, a position in which she can exercise control. Ironically, the very kind of thinking that she wants to facilitate is the challenge she is facing in her own doctoral study. She recognises that she has to make shifts and already sees how she has moved.

One of the distractions from her doctorate that Mary experiences, partly out of her desire to serve (to "not be mean inside") but also out of her political awareness, is her union activity in her workplace. She finds it strange (as did I) that she is engaged in union work, which runs counter to her own culture of individual responsibility and

accountability in many ways. She is aware that the sites of knowledge-construction are arenas in which discourses of power are shaped (Foucault, 1980):

> *I mean I'm aware of how my thinking shifted from quite a superficial kind of engagement and to, I hope, something that's a little bit more ... recognition of the complexities of the process. ... I suppose I find myself in a space now where I'm actually ...very antagonistic to being told that this is the rule. This is the way is has to be done. ... Partly because of where we find ourselves in the institutions these days, and I actually think it's wrong. ... I think generally, I think society generally – I mean if I think of South Africa where it is at the moment. I think there are too many people laying down too many rules in ways that are actually very unhealthy ... and that bothers me. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 588-600)*

My own interpretation of Mary's union activity comes from my own experience as a union leader. On a simple level, my involvement in working for a higher education union might be seen as a simple distraction, a way of avoiding my doctoral work. At a more complex level, I see that I was resisting my positioning in what I see as a managerial/neoliberal discourse of production worker. Although the production of knowledge might be seen to have higher status than the work of a factory worker, being positioned as a 'resource', a 'cog in the machinery' by directives that do not engage with the personal contribution I can make, is the antithesis of everything I have believed about academic worth. Unions are the vehicles of resistance to dominant discourses and therefore their struggles are the perfect arena for rehearsal of acts of academic resistance. As Mary explains her surprising involvement:

> *You see that things have changed ... the traditional values have changed, so I would have always said that I didn't mistrust and distrust employers, I don't always think that they're out to gyp you. I do now, and the more I see the more I'm inclined to take that position, because I think everybody's out for themselves. ... I see it everywhere and I think 'I really don't like it'. That's never been my nature. (Mary, 19th March 2008, lines 721-726)*

Situating herself in this space of resistance to managerial modes of working in higher education, Mary has been externalising her struggle to come to terms with the power-relations of knowledge-construction. In sculpting her own doctoral identity-to-be, Mary is setting up her positioning as a voice of social justice and education that is collegial and humane. For both Mary and me, the challenge of doctoral learning is the continual iteration of not only cross-referencing and reflecting on the research challenge and state of that topic's art, but also the macro- and micro-political levels that influence our positioning and the position we desire to occupy. The 'distractions' may therefore provide a significant part of constructing a doctoral identity and discovering a shape from which our newly acquired doctoral voices can 'speak the speak'. The shape of the person that she has always 'known herself to be' is being challenged. The blurring of identity, that was Mary's sense of self at the moment of our conversation, is testament to process of reviewing her beliefs about being and knowing. She had not resolved these tensions by taking a new position, literally taking on a new shape.

Mary's story of resistance to 'must do's' combined with cognitive shifts she needs make to take on her doctoral shape have many echoes in Bee's story. Mary and Bee's stories could be what exists before you get Maura's story, in women with a strong duty to care. Like Alyse, Bee is contending with geographical distance in her doctoral journey.

There's no Discouragement,

Shall make him once relent,

His first avow'd intent,

To be a Pilgrim

(The Pilgrim's Progess, John Bunyan, 1838, p. 255)

The Pilgrim (La Pellegrina) – Bee's Story

I really feel terribly ambivalent about it, the whole doctorate ... and I'm still questioning why, and is it going to make me any better at the job I really think I'm quite good at doing? And why am I putting this stress on myself? ... I actually can't talk the paradigm and the epistemology and the ontology ... talk. ... I feel like I can't talk that, but I also think it's maybe because of where I've come from as a professional. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 36-55)

While she claimed a pragmatic intent and a non-philosophical bent, my conversation with Bee about her doctoral identity was possibly the most metaphysical of all the PaperHeaDs stories. Our conversation ranged over the value of pure reason, philosophy, and practical reason in ways that would make Immanuel Kant smile. I have chosen the title of the pilgrim for Bee's story because she is, in my account, a seeker after truth strengthened by her faith. Bee's challenge, as Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2005) put it, is to "take on the role of researcher, along with the associated skills and activities, and eventually, a degree of 'commitment' to the new role [has] to be incorporated into the extant identity and amalgamated with the skills and practices of that role" (p. 81). Her doctoral journey is involving her in renegotiating her identities as a professional therapist, teacher, administrator, mother, and knower.

I came to know Bee through joining a walking group for various reasons. Never having engaged in sport or physical competition at school (I would usually be the kid bunking

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cross-country day – sitting in the girls' lavatory with my book), my discovery of the benefits of exercise was a revelation to me despite all I had read about physical and mental health. At that time, Bee had been a member for five years, had 10 000 kms under her takkies[53] and was one of the road leaders. She was preparing to undertake a 700 kilometre (+- 440 mile) walk from Lausanne to Rome along the Via Francigena, an ancient pilgrimage route.

It is amazing how much you learn about and from someone while walking kilometres together. I only learned that Bee was also registered for her doctorate after walking about a thousand kilometres. She never mentioned that she worked at the university, never spoke about work or her studies at walking sessions. I know that for me one of the joys of walking is to be with 'normal' people, who have 'normal' lives and who do not agonise about teaching, learning, and the power relations involved in them. Walking means not having to be 'smart' but to be human. How else would I have heard the amazing story of the 'soccer gran', Christine, who sailed around the world for seven years with her husband on their self-built yacht, sailing the last three months of the trip with two broken ankles?

Walking regularly, sticking to a routine with a group, may have been the single influencing factor in getting me registered and focused on the work necessary for a doctorate. From walking, I learned about saying that I would do something and doing it, regardless of fear, anxiety, or feelings of apathy. I learned to overcome the natural human tendency to avoid discomfort through procrastination.

Having discovered the joy of being fit and having discovered new elasticity in my muscles, I began to walk in races. Then Bee threw out the challenge of participating in a 50 kilometre race. Three of us took it up. Christine, Amanda, and I found ourselves involved in a world of training, preparation, anatomy, and physiology completely alien to us, generously guided by Bee. We were training to spend seven hours on our feet in that race. We had plenty of time to talk as we built up our stamina and, most of all, our

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53 South African for sports shoes. Bee has calculated that each pair costs her 50 cents a kilometre!

mental set to deal with the challenge. There were injuries and pain, breathlessness and triumph along the way. Through it all, Bee coached and coaxed, encouraged and prodded us into believing we could do it. We did – and the satisfaction of completing was worth every step. (The picture below – Figure 13 – talks to discomfort; 5 am on a cold July morning, determination and fun.)

Figure 13: At the start GateRite 50km walk 2008

Shortly after that, I invited Bee to join PaperHeaDs, knowing that the group would benefit from her focus and organisational talents as well as her pragmatic 'get it done' attitude. I was anxious that she would not want to join, would not understand what it was that the offer entailed. I was worried that the PaperHeaDs idiosyncratic ways might be very strange, that some of the personal joking might be scare her away. I should have known that this woman, who had walked from Lausanne to Rome with only what she could carry with her, would not put off by such human failings. I have learned from her

that the doctoral journey has much in common with distance racing; Poly Shorts[54] is only insurmountable if you look up, rather than just doing the work.

For all my anxiety, I thought belonging to PaperHeaDs would give her the support without which her doctoral journey was very lonely. A similar kind of support, I suppose, to that she had offered Amanda, Christine and me for the race. Bee is registered at one of only two South African universities that offered a PhD qualification in her field at the time of her initial registration. It is two thousand kilometres away from her home. She has two supervisors, one based at that university and the other in the Middle-East. She originally registered for her PhD in 2005, and has had to motivate for permission to continue her studies on one occasion, because of the time limitations imposed as conditions for PhD registration at that university.

In our conversation about doctoral identity, which took place early in 2009, she said that she had benefitted from belonging to PaperHeaDs – to my relief.

What I want you to take from this sketchy outline is that perseverence and commitment are not issues with which Bee struggles. While she might be charged with overcommitment – doing too much unrelated to her doctorate, "perfectionism, procrastination, disorganisation, not putting in effort, and choosing performance-debilitating circumstances (Kearns, Gardiner & Marshall, 2008, p. 79)" are not her way of operating. She does 'too much' because that is what is necessary to balance work, home, and spirit.

Leadership seems to come easily to her; focus and organisational skills are her strengths. Her reason for taking things slowly was to dedicate herself to supporting her son through matriculation exams. Her son has a neuro-developmental challenge that would usually ensure that he could only be educated in a non-mainstream high school. Bee is a

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54 Poly Shorts is a notoriously steep 2 kilometre hill in the Comrades Marathon that runners have to tackle just before they enter Pietermaritzburg and the end of the 97 kilometre race.

divorced mum who plans to graduate under her maiden name. Like Amelia, her doctorate will be hers alone. That her son passed matric adequately is a testament to her maternal commitment and her practical use of her professional skills. It is unlikely that he will ever understand the sacrifices that she has made – then again, Bee never seems to seek acknowledgement for doing what she sees as her duty.

Bee's professional identity as someone dedicated to therapeutic interventions with people experiencing physical and mental challenges means that she is oriented to using the resources of her patients' environments to improve their life experiences. She also has a strong commitment, as a teacher of future therapists, to her students being able to graduate with practical skills and the confidence to use them – this is the subject of her PhD. In a similar vein, her current job requires her to deal with the kind of administrative hiccoughs that students encounter in their interaction with university bureaucracy. I asked her what the PhD would mean for her after she has completed it:

> *It would give me access ... because I don't really want necessarily to be the Registrar – I want to be in the Registrar's office, it would give me access to that. ... To contribute that which I think I can do really well, in terms of running the university in an admin sort of way, student academic affairs, making sure that the exam procedures work properly and that they're fair to students, and returns and admission of students, and managing the DP field and all those sort of things. ... I think it should just be efficient and effective and transparent and students should understand how it works ... practically I want to solve the predicament and sort it out, with hearing what people are saying and getting the feedback. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 1219-1337)*

Bee's own experience as a distance student also informs her frustration with university processes, which are uninviting. Discussing the difficulties of registration, even as a postgraduate student who understands the administrative processes as well as anybody, she finds it ridiculous that a university seems unable to cope with a post-graduate student who cannot come to the university to register. It is possible that this

kind of inaccessibility would be more of an obstacle to undergraduate students far from home and may be an element of university activity not considered in the recent report on Transformation in Higher Education Institutions (Soudien et al, 2008).

Bee's concern for practical problem-solving shows in her view of what a doctorate will give her:

> *I don't necessarily agree with it but ... writing Doctor in front of my name ... then opens doors ... is a bit silly too because, ... it's not going to make me any more informed to ask a question, to be allowed to ask a question there. So I see it as opening door. Just because you've got a title, not because you're actually any smarter about the questions you're asking or are not asking. ... It's about a status thing ... I don't think that that's going to make me feel like I'm smart, but it's obviously something that you have to have at a university. ... And I keep hearing that if I want to do the job ... then I've got to be a doctor, so then I must be a doctor. But I don't know that it actually makes us any smarter as people, doing what we do today. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 224-254)*

She positions herself as unauthorised to speak within a university environment, due to what looks like a simple title. Describing the experience of someone in her department who recently graduated with her PhD, Bee finds it rather 'sad' that her colleague was only then nominated for a teaching excellence award, "because she's always been an excellent teacher". In her department, there is only one person with a doctorate, and in the entire South African profession there are only a handful of PhDs. Her observation of the difference in the way the system is likely to interact with her, through the acquisition of the title of doctor, echoes Mary's beliefs and Sophia's experience, yet without a sense that perhaps one's thinking does change in the process of doing a doctoral study.

She feels that perhaps the doctorate should recognise contributions to the profession rather than the completion of a single intense focused study. Acknowledging pioneering women in her field, she said:

> *It's much more than just a study that's so focused on one issue. They've contributed in a much wider and in a greater way to the development of the profession. Maybe it was necessary at the time too and it was a time that kind of development was happening. ... I mean, they were the kind of people who went to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and made a submission. They were the people that met with the Department of Health and said that look, we have to have [therapists] employed in this and we have to some ranks and we have to have some promotional criteria. So yes, in a very practical way they've contributed. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 338-340)*

Her point is that these women, now retiring, have thought and critiqued and written about the field – adding new knowledge or new ways of looking at the profession, but they have not completed a formal thesis that has been 'examined' by the university system. They would possibly be candidates for honorary doctorates, but could not receive the stamp of authorisation. It is ironic that they have exposed themselves to social critique in a very real way, yet are not acknowledged with the 'real title' because of the dominance of university-based systems. At a fundamental level, Bee is questioning the role of universities in South African society.

Bee explained the tension between practice and theory again through an incident where a senior manager of the university where she works insisted that the university's task is to prepare students academically, and who claimed that it is not the university's job to prepare students with clinicians' skills. She hypothesised that this was because practical training is expensive.

> *And we're all [the department staff] kicking and fighting that all the way and saying, "Well if we're not going to give them that 1000 hours of*

practical work in the ... socialisation into the profession's ways of doing things ... who's going to do it?" And his view is that ... it's merely to give them an academic qualification. So maybe our place is not in the university, because I don't think any of us agree or subscribe to his view ... you can make [the offering] two years – give them the academic qualification and somebody else must do it. But who's that somebody else? And who's going to inform that, and do we really just want to do an academic qualification, because what – of what point is that to anybody? I [think] what's so nice about our degree is that somebody can go out to a job, into the job, and do it from day one. ...I don't know that you can do our profession knowing theory only. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 764-800)

Bee and Ntsiki share the value of education for career purposes. Bee's belief that higher education should be giving practical skills as well as thinking, reading and writing abilities reminds me of *The Sabre-Tooth Curriculum* (Peddiwell, 2004)[55]. In the piece, Peddiwell satirises the conflict between the discourses of education for economic value in the form of survival skills and education for the social good. In many ways, Annie, Ntsiki, and Bee's stories epitomise this tension from a position of career orientation. Alyse and Mary on the other hand characterise their doctoral identities in terms of the pleasure of knowing, with larger social benefits.

The point I'm trying to make is that I'm not seeing the knowledge that is coming out of doctorates being applied to inform that which we've got to do. And I don't know whether that's the fault of the people who've done doctorates, ... that sounds ... quite hard, but it also puts me actually quite far removed. ... I've not seen the publications essentially coming out [that

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55 Peddiwell's 1939 fable describes the evolution of education in Paleolithic times: New Fist-Hammer-Maker was the first educator to set up a curriculum to educate the tribe's children to survive. Decades later, climate had changed and the skills of that curriculum had become redundant, yet the conservative forces in the tribe insist that the principles of the earliest curriculum were what counted, rather than the actual skills.

will inform practice], because we have other needs in the country that are far more practical, that need to be published in journals, so they get the space as opposed to the research articles. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 535-542)

At this point of our conversation, Bee was questioning the practical value of her doing her doctoral study. The selfish (in her view) pursuit of the doctorate to open doors for her working life was in direct conflict with her deeply entrenched ideas about a good life to live. The conflict manifests in her recognising that there were alternative positions to take on the kind of knowledge that might be valuable. She acknowledged that the field is developing and that there might be a place for research.

I think maybe we need a good blend of people who are thinking and philosophising on the writings, but then I think that they should be afforded the time and the opportunity to do that, because for me they're not terribly good doing the actual day-to-day job. [They need to be] given the space and the time ... to think. But the job ... still has to be done and maybe we also have the other ones who must keep it ticking over. ... I suppose where I'm coming from is ... so I'm going to get this doctorate. I'm not going to be any much better a thinker, and I'm not going to be that much better a doer, so what actually [is the point]? (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 933-947)

Of her own undergraduate training, she explained that philosophical stances had not been part of the way she was taught to think, although the self and identity (ontology) are a key part of the therapeutic care that her profession offers. She suggested that the 'academic preparation' is:

About a certain way of thinking, a certain way of writing, and maybe then if [therapeutic profession] was an academic thing, then maybe you could

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have this whole thing about [the profession's] philosophy ... Whereas you
can't have that argument now, because there's no time, because you've
got to do all this other stuff. ... Because we talk about the philosophy of
[the profession] but we don't relate it to the words that are in philosophy,
in our teaching and I think that that's the error we make, that we must talk
the words from early on. ... Because I do think it fits into the language. I
can't talk the language, but I know it, but I do think it fits into the language
and what informed it. Because old Carl Rogers was an informer of it, so
what did Rogers bring into our profession? ... And what did we get from
Jung? ... In my undergraduate training, we never had that discussion. (Bee,
12th February 2009, lines 813-830)

Reinforcing the tension she feels between the philosophy apparently needed to do a doctorate and the need for research in the field, she said:

In our profession, we're not actually seeing that clinical therapists are
actually doing their masters or the doctorates, you ... have to be in an
academic institution to actually do it, and the longer you stay in an
academic institution, the more you get divorced from what is happening in
the field. ... Yet you can't get people in the clinical field to actually do this
research, because they haven't got the time. ... We haven't got time;
they've got even less time. They don't have the support ... but that's
actually maybe the ones that should be doing [research]. They're working
with 50 spinal cord injured patients a month. I mean just think of all the
data they're sitting on and yet they don't do the research there. ... Here
we've got all these coursework masters in [varieties of therapy] and I'm
thinking that's what we really need, but ... it's not generating good
thinkers. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 418-927)

Here Bee describes the need for research in the field by practitioners. She also mentioned the need to build on previous work that shows that it is inappropriate to

impose Western European modes of therapeutic practice on South African communities. She referred to the need to adapt curricula appropriately and to contribute to policies and activities in the community that will enhance the profession. All of these represent sites crying for research in her field, yet she continues to be frustrated by the impracticality of research so far. She appears unaware of the discourses of praxis in education (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Boud & Lee, 2005) that would help her negotiate this tension, presenting the possibility of what Winberg (2005) calls 'an epistemology of technology'.

The notion of what constitutes research and knowledge-building may represent a threshold conceptualisation that Bee needs to cross. The 'troublesome knowledge' (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006) she is engaging with is the nature of the profession's epistemology – this suggests that she was just about to move into the level of meta-conceptualisation described by Gina Wisker and her co-researchers, in their inquiry into the generic or discipline-specific nature of doctoral threshold conceptualisation (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006). Bee's conceptualisation process is complicated because it is located in both education and her therapeutic profession, which draws from psychology, sociology, anatomy and physiology to inform its practice. A question asked by the Wisker team is: "Are postgraduates aware of thresholds, of crossing them and of the strategies they adopt to do so?" (2006, p. 196). By Bee's experience, it would seem that she is unaware of the conceptual threshold, which requires her to renegotiate her position. Her scholarly identity in relation to her field means that she has to interrogate the nature of the knowledge that is worth contributing. Yet she is aware that she is troubled:

> *Well I'm hoping at the end … I'd like to see it at the end have really practical things. … When you do clinical fieldwork, we have to do x … That's what I'm scared of. I want the Dean to say, "You know what, from this study I believe you are right, we actually have to prepare our students much better for their first year of experience." … Their supervisor that we match them to has got to look like that, because research has told me that. … I'm scared that … the examiners are not going to like it. It's not going to*

be this airy-fairy discussion, basically this is what it actually is. And I don't know whether I'm just seeing things that aren't there, but I'm just scared that people might not appreciate that I'm actually [doing] – I'm hoping to come up with very practical things. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 961-970)

Bee's fear that her theorisation might be 'airy-fairy', not practical but conforming to the mysterious expectations of examiners, indicates that at the time we talked she conceived of theory and practice as entirely separate spheres of activity. Margaret Kiley (2007) suggested that three areas of generic doctoral threshold crossing might be discovering:

- What constitutes 'original contribution' to the research field?
- The idea that doing research is not just a way to justify strongly held beliefs.
- Identifying a suitable theoretical framework and how this can function in the analysis of a text.

It would seem that Bee is battling with all three of these areas. To me, and perhaps her supervisors, it is evident that the unique contribution she can make lies in her own long experience in the field and in higher education. As an outsider, it seems that all she needs to do is to marry those observations and ideas into an argument for her theories in practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974). This development of authoritative voice is conflicting with her awareness that research is not about justifying strong beliefs and her guilty acknowledgement that she is looking for affirmation and acknowledgement of her insights. With these confusions, it is not surprising that she is also frightened that she will find nothing in her data (analysis of the text) as I show below.

Without a sense of her own authority as a researcher who has thought about other theorists' work, and is using this thinking to argue her findings, Bee finds herself lost and questioning the value of her work. It makes her wonder if the doctorate is worth completing. The ability to take a stance and argue it is maybe the exact quality that Bee

needs to build in order to speak with authority in the forums to which she needs 'doors opened'.

Bee's position echoes that of both Annie and Mary: "I want to know that what I am doing is worthwhile". For Mary, the position stemmed from her love of knowledge and knowledge-building, while for Annie it originates from her rejection of things hurtfully academic. In Bee's case, her definition of worthwhile derives from a strong familial training in the duty to serve. Both her parents had diplomas and they encouraged their children to go to university. While she was not identified as the 'clever one' in her family – that title was associated with her sister – Bee has a strong desire be a 'doer':

> *But we all seem to be quite practical doers as opposed to … we read – we read and ja, we could have a debate but … it's also too, I think, we're … stupidly sort of reticent and don't go around saying, we think we're smart, it just is. … We don't talk about those things, so maybe just it's just us as a family [dynamic]. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 1384-1399)*

I recognise Bee's resistance to academic performativity that comes from her family and which is encapsulated in her use of the phrase 'thinking you're smart'. She described how 'thinking she was smart" was discouraged as a child, and that it was more important to be obedient.

> *I don't know who'd want to approve me – but I want to be … I think there were other demands placed on you about being a good person and contributing and taking care of other people as opposed to academic. … I had to be there [at school] every day and behave myself… there was never any question about you have to get 6 As, because I think lots of kids have pressure about getting As, no, I think where I grew up that wasn't the pressure. The pressure was that you didn't backchat the teacher and you were respectful. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 1451-1465)*

The need to be a 'good girl' was present in both Annie and Maya's stories and described in Belenky's (1986) work (cf. Chapter 2 p. 52). Women with rule-following pasts may become immobilised when faced with multiple interpretations of truth. Obedience runs counter in many ways to the need to take an authoritative stance and defend it required in doctoral work. "It might be argued, that such transformed understanding leads to a privileged or even a dominant view and therefore a contestable way of understanding something." (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006, p. 196). Perhaps Bee needed to accept the possibility of contestation.

In a sense, Bee's doctorate has to make her disobedient, in the same way as Ntsiki needs to 'rock the boat' and Mary needs to 'think outside the box'. Bee recognises that the need to please and to be affirmed as good, and doing something worthwhile, may be hampering her ability to act in her doctoral study:

> *And I think that that's also clouding [it], and that's why I think - I do think it's important that one contributes and gives back and you hear and you take care... So I think my parents are quite pleased that I did well as an [therapeutic profession] student but it wasn't - that wasn't what was rewarded. What was rewarded was that I – that I was a good girl and that I contributed in other ways. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 1469-1515)*

Working on an intuitive guess, I asked her if part of her resistance was that she felt that doing a doctorate was self-indulgent. Her reaction was emotional[56]:

> *Yes, yes, yes, it's terribly ... and that's a huge resistance for me, I'll have a doctorate and I'll get research reward money. I battle with that and I battle with the people ... who take themselves out, because I've been in a department and not having a Master's and here [now] are people coming*

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56 Bee seemed relieved that I had recognised this tension.

in and saying oh they want two days off a week to work on their Master's and I'm thinking, "that's a bit rude – you've got to work actually!"

And then being cross with myself, because why didn't I stand up and say well I want two days off to do my Master's, and then being left behind a little bit. Yes I battle with that, because I know that it's about also fighting the process, but if there's something to be done for the collective good, I will leave this to do that. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 1568-1580)

Like Mary, Bee finds herself distracted into serving the needs of others, whilst simultaneously recognising that having a doctorate will give more weight to her voice, and give her the opportunity to serve better.

I'm actually quite frustrated, I'm not writing my own story about self-efficacy as I see it along the way, because I think [that] ... I [am] looking at this ... [because] I have this huge thing about being confident. I'm not really confident as a researcher at all. ... I keep thinking I don't get down to write it, because I don't think it's worth [it]. I don't think other people actually want to read that at all, so I could give it no value. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 1173-1177)

Her obedience to authority and shyness at standing up for her own needs found expression in a dilemma she was having about how to handle a criticism of her writing by her supervisor. In her pragmatic way, she had headed the chapter on her rationale for the study, "Why bother?" Her supervisor advised her to be more 'scientific' in her language, despite her study being an interpretive, qualitative one. As shown above Bee resists 'airy-fairy' notions, ideas that are not practically useful:

Now one of my headings in my rationale is "But why bother?" She says, "That's not good", and I'm actually saying but why bother? Why must I change it to something fancier? The question is ... about rationale ... She's thinking that I'm being a bit Harry-casual ... because that's the question

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that needs answering. ... I'm hoping that it's not in the title that she's going to stop reading, because in my argument ... about why I think we need to bother, ... she'll see that I've actually given it some serious thought. ... But I don't want people to get irritated just because they don't like the heading.

I often need to hear what she's saying, ... and I think that's what she's meaning about being more scientific, maybe I mustn't say 'why bother', I must try and put that into some ... different words. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 1058-1104)

It is clear from Bee's comment that she is writing specifically for her supervisor as her audience. She is also aware that her supervisor is giving her this feedback for a reason. She knows she needs to express her own voice, but has to deal with the requirement that her thesis must be authoritative and persuade others. In her current work, she is not succeeding in that persuasion because the register is not conforming to the supervisor's notions of what constitutes 'scientific' discourse. Bee's everyday professional voice is persuasive, but she needs to find her voice as a researcher in her field, a role in which she has admits to having little confidence.

Despite our advantage of speaking English from childhood and our middle-class backgrounds, I[57] and other PaperHeaDs have struggled with this kind of scholarly literacy. Ntsiki interrogated the difference between critique and criticism, orally and in writing, for an audience of academic peers. Maya did not understand what "talking to her proposal" entailed.

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57 As I write the PaperHeaDs stories, I am continually asking "Who am I writing for?" My intention is that these descriptions of the journeys will have relevance to other doctoral learners rather than their supervisors.

Perhaps the transformation that Bee is working towards is "to place herself in dialogue with the literature" (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006, p. 200). Within PaperHeaDs, we talk, somewhat irreverently, about putting our Selves in the text and the experts in parentheses. This requires more than speaking the same language as the experts. True dialogue can only take place where the doctoral student assumes for herself the same status as the 'experts', but with humility in acknowledging their thinking.

Along with epistemological and ontological challenges to her self-perception, Bee is dealing with writing herself into the text as an expert, as well as dealing with her fear that she has not got the data she needs:

> *I'm really sukkeling[58] there at the moment. … I've got data but that's why I can't really get into it. … I mean I hear [PaperHeaDs] now saying, "Oh [everybody thinks] there's nothing in the data, but then you start looking," but I'm really scared that there's actually going to be nothing there. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 164-171)*

In addition to this mountain of thresholds to cross, today's doctoral students need to accommodate technological challenges such as accessing and transforming digital data into appropriate formats and using analytical and referencing software. Bee is avowedly technophobic and she resists dealing with computers as anything but tools towards an objective. It is understandable that she wonders whether she should not rather give up on her doctorate and her dream job:

> *I mean I want somebody who says, "Okay, so you've got this. We'll get a tape here. Give it to me, I'll sort it out and then I'll give [it] you back." So it's just like, ag, to me at the moment, it looks like a great big mountain. … I've enjoyed the readings so far and the writing and the thinking, but I actually sometimes question whether it's worth all that for what you*

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58 Afrikaans word meaning to struggle. Bee often uses words from her childhood in an Afrikaans community to describe emotional challenges.

actually have in the end. It doesn't seem like it's quite worth the effort now. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 211-215)

Having witnessed Bee's increased pace walking the last two kilometres of a 50-kilometre race, the time that she 'smells the stable' according to her, I have no doubt that she will speedily complete her journey to her goal which is to:

Talk with much more conviction ... to me that's not philosophical, that's just practical. (Bee, 12th February 2009, lines 996-1003)

In a very real way, Bee's journey is a pilgrimage to higher things, but in essence, it is something she has to demand for herself. She has to negotiate her view of herself as a doer and find a position where the teacher, professional, researcher, and leader intersect. Like most pilgrimages, the journey ahead means revisiting the past.

Conclusion

Taking the space, making the time for one's doctoral work, despite all the demands of daily life was a common theme in the stories of the practising doctors of PaperHeaDs. What becomes clear in the stories of the doctors-to-be, including myself, is that the first step towards 'taking the space' is establishing a sense of why the doctorate is desirable, in terms of one's own life history and beliefs about knowledge. Clarity on personal ontology and epistemology seem to be the first steps needed to justify the further journey into the thresholds of doctoral transformation. This requires the doctoral candidate to revisit all her previous notions about the nature of knowledge and competence. PaperHeaDs seems to have assisted each of us in this process.

This chapter has presented my narrations of the stories of the five members of PaperHeaDs who are still engaged on their doctoral journey. The stories present an opportunity to explore the messy detail of negotiating doctoral identity, the experiences that tend to be erased or discounted after the doctorate has been awarded. In each of the stories, the struggle to make the doctoral learning process meaningful is evident. Annie, Mary, and Bee actively struggle with their reasons for 'doing a doctorate', trying to make sense of it as valuable in their constructions of themselves. For Annie, it lies in the degree to which doctoral ways of thinking and doing can serve her in her construction of herself as a successful businesswoman. Mary and Bee resist the notion that they could be doing what they are currently doing any better than they are already. Mary questions the legitimacy of university hierarchies of expertise, and resents the implied positioning that others know more than she, about her teaching in her field. In a similar way, Bee wonders about the value doctoral study for teaching of practice in her profession and Ntsiki questions whether she can express herself fully in an academic career. In seeming contrast, Alyse recognises that she is no longer building a career, but sees the value of communicating the insights of her career as a way of contributing to a better more enlightened world. Yet she is operating in a society and culture alien to her entire life's experience. Whilst she still sees the potential benefit of her research to the global field of digital literacy, her questions arose from the experience of her homeland, South Africa. Each faces epistemological and ontological thresholds to cross. The details

of their selected anxieties and challenges that I have foregrounded in my stories suggest that the decision to 'do a doctorate' is not a simple and final decision, which ends with formal registration in a programme. Fataar's observation of shifting student identities in the proposal development process in relation to a supervisor (Fataar, 2005) seems to continue beyond the proposal and beyond the relationship with a supervisor.

In each of the stories in this chapter, the supervisory relationship is almost invisible as each woman struggles with her unique history and sense of herself, in order to construct her doctoral persona.

My own experience is that there has been a need for a continual recommitment to the process, on a daily or even hourly basis, throughout the long years of study. Each time I have forced myself to sit down and work on my doctorate as opposed to doing something else, I have had to ask myself who am I and why am I doing this hard and uncomfortable exercise. The process of reading literature that uses words and concepts that are unfamiliar, the ability to grasp the intention of the author and to critically evaluate the value of the literature to one's own area of interest, to then learn to 'domesticate' the idea (Amelia's story) to one's own argumentative purpose, is not a unidirectional process. Each piece of the puzzle requires an evaluation of one's conception of a specific element – for example, in this study, I have had to ask whether doctoral learning is merely about moving up a hierarchy of increasingly sophisticated and fine-grained use of language and argument or whether it is more. The dilemma of 'to be a doctor or not to be a doctor' (to misquote Hamlet) is continuous. The constant re-evaluation of the personal meaning of a doctorate is obscured in explanations of doctoral study that suggest that the challenge can be reduced to a series of steps. Each of the PaperHeaDs has constructed (or are in the process) of constructing uniquely different senses of themselves as doctors. For some, at the time of this writing, the construction process is 'stuck', as they find themselves in the liminal space of having to find a way to move beyond their current conceptualisations of themselves.

Most supervisors, in South Africa at least, do not have the time to 'hear' the challenges to self-conception and the meaning of knowing that these stories illustrate. So where does a doctoral student find a discourse space in which to be affirmed and 'recognised' as a doctoral 'kind of person'?

In the next chapter, my description of PaperHeaDs dynamics illustrates the value of a space to voice the ontological and epistemological struggle for doctoral identity.

Chapter 6: Findings: The Role of PaperHeaDs in constructing a doctoral identity

It may seem to you that I'm acting confused
… I've been taking on a new direction
But I have to say
I've been thinking about my own protection
It scares me to feel this way

(Tina Turner, Lyle & Britten, 1984)

What has PaperHeaDs got to do with it?

In the previous chapters, I showed how each individual member of PaperHeaDs has a unique story of doctoral identity construction, which has impacted on their work and particularly the kinds of threshold conceptualisations that have produced 'stuck places' (Meyer & Land, 2005) for each of them. None of us have had identical thresholds to cross because these seem to be tied to our own histories and how they intersect with the discourses that are at play in the world of doctoral learning (Grant, 2005b). The question that remains is what role the group PaperHeaDs has played in the construction process, removed as it is from the formal institutional space of universities? In what ways, if any, does participation in PaperHeaDs challenge or support accepted discourses of doctoral learning?

In the song quoted above, "What's Love Got to Do With It?", Tina Turner questions her own physical reactions and the theory often offered by society for her experience. The stories of doctoral becoming presented earlier talk to confusion that occurs when the rules and expectations change. They also speak to fear of loss of a self (ontological anxiety?); and protection of that self we know ourselves to be, as we have to let go of ways of being/thinking that have served us in the past, but do not in the present and may not in the future.

In this chapter, I present a description of the PaperHeaDs dynamic that presents it as a space in which doctoral identity can be rehearsed, where we could play with theory. Through the account, I question prominent explanations for the value of PaperHeaDs, and groups like it, in the doctoral process. In a sense, I continue the metaphor of the doctorate as a relationship, as I negotiate the path towards completing my thesis.

As a demonstration of the sort of dynamic and conversation typical of PaperHeaDs' activity, I offer the following imaginary scenario constructed from the comments about the value of PaperHeaDs made to me by each of its members as we conversed about the development of doctoral identity. The words are actual words spoken, but the dynamic is constructed from my experience of observing and recording meetings over a six-year period[59]. In this approach, I follow the work of Carolyn Ellis (Ellis, 2004).

A PaperHeaDs Meeting

Shaping the Space

We are at a monthly PaperHeaDs meeting[60] and, suprisingly, everyone has been able to make it. Maura, Alyse and Ntsiki are all in Durban at the same time. The ten of us are scattered around Maya's sunny lounge, each according to our physical preferences. Annie has Maya's aging cat on her lap as she sprawls in a ray of sun. Ntsiki is as far away from her as possible sitting neatly in a shady spot. (She is feline phobic, but the cat is behaving counter to the feline norm of seeking out the individual least likely to want her attention). I am cross-legged on the floor next to the knee high, but expansive coffee table, making sure that the recorder is working, so that I will be able to make the meeting notes – a task that I took on when I chose PaperHeaDs as my doctoral topic. My knees do not creak as much as they did before I took up walking! The plates loaded with treats hide the neat digital equipment. Behind me, Maya sits cross-legged on the coach

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59 Prior to 2003, recording of PaperHeaDs meetings tended to be a rotating duty.
60 Meetings occur monthly as much as possible and each of us take it in turns to host the meeting at our homes. In the early days of this practice, I experienced intense anxiety around the issue of catering. I have a fear of discovery that I have a completely unfeminine lack of interest in food preparation.

– as it is her home, she will be the Chair of the meeting. This is a PaperHeaDs practice; it ensures, in a practical way, that the host is not so busy with feeding and nurturing that she misses the meeting.

There is no formal agenda. Back in 2001/2 we tried to email agendas, but found that ultimately, our monthly meetings needed more flexibility. Maya now battles to get everyone to focus, as in twos and threes *conversations* have to be concluded. She taps a spoon on the side of a coffee cup calling, in a mockery of Robert's Rules[61] (Robert, et al, 2000), "Order, order. The meeting is in session. There are no apologies, although Amelia feels it necessary to leave by 12:00, because there is a sale on at Cuthberts." Amelia laughs but leaps, in feigned indignation, into a faintly academic-style explanation of the value of the sale to the rest of us. Maya sternly reprimands her in imitation of an unpopular academic manager of our acquaintance in one of the institutions in which we work, "You will address your comments through the Chair. Moving on, the first item on the agenda is 'Personalia'[62]. Alyse? How is it to be back in Durban for a while?"

Alyse describes how delighted she was to fly into Durban in bright sunny weather, and how the city's beauty moved her to tears. Questions, sympathetic comments, and challenges follow as each woman takes it in turns to describe matters weighing on her mind. This includes the terror of teenage children learning to drive, household arrangements, experiences of crime, relationships, and business developments. Time is never allocated, as the amount of time needed is dependent on how complicated or difficult each situation seems to the group, based on empathy and caring. 'Personalia' can stretch to accommodate two thirds of the meeting time. Today, half an hour passes before Maya moves us on to 'Report Back', based on notes (if I have done them in time),

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61 The original version of this guide to meeting procedure was Pocket Manual of Rules of Order for Deliberative Assemblies.
62 Roughly speaking the meeting begins with what Amelia originally dubbed 'Personalia'. This is an opportunity for each member to recount what is happening in their personal lives apart from their doctoral work, though often in reference to how this affects their doctoral work.

or memory, each person is questioned about what they have done since the last meeting.

Individual Spaces to talk: Revealing 'Stuck Places'

I feel uncomfortable in the spotlight as Maya indicates that it is my turn. I am feeling proud of myself because I have done what I set out to do in the previous meeting. I have a sense of efficiency of checking off milestones. I have 'managed my project'. It helps to be on study leave. Contradicting myself internally, I have a glimmer of doubt about the quality of what I have done and am clueless about what I will be working on next.

I report that I have finished writing all the stories, and that everyone has been very kind and affirming about theirs. As I talk, I wonder why no one has asked to see the stories of others, and only Alyse had opened access to my story of her. This puzzles me – I am sure I would want to compare if I were in their positions. Then again, each is so busy with her own daily business that there is an unvoiced reluctance to volunteer to read other members' work. Maya, Alyse, Ntsiki, and Sophia are the most willing to read and comment, though lately Maya is more careful with her review toolbar. She says that she has a tendency to take on a supervisor voice, and it is not appropriate (she is now supervising ten Master's and five doctoral students). She prefers to give her comment verbally and face to face. This saddens me because I miss Maya – doctoral student – in the group activity. She was much more willing to exercise her witty insights and joke then. I know she worries about having too weighty a voice.

My asking them to read all the stories would be a major request. I fear some kind of negative reaction, yet the history of the group makes it unlikely. It's an issue that will have to be dealt with before I send the whole draft off to Lebo and Naydene.

I choose not to raise the issue now, and rather explain that my next challenge is to describe and theorise PaperHeaDs as a group, that I see this as my concluding chapter. Sophia asks, "How are you going to bring these theories together?" I reply honestly that I do not know, that I want to write my way to it (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). I read sceptical puzzlement and concern in her expression. It worries me too. I am still having

difficulty with the distinction between data as empirical facts in the form of historical documents and artefacts, and data created out of my own experience. While my stories are truly the product of using myself as the instrument of research, I am still wondering if I am doing this right. However, I am performing doctoral confidence (Butler, 1990), so I do not reveal my worry.

Ntsiki asks with unerring accuracy (how does she do that?), "What data are you going to use to inform your unpacking of PaperHeaDs?" I reply that I will trawl the email archive for commentaries made reflecting on the group process, look at meeting notes, and use the comments that were made in our conversations about doctoral identity. I still feel the need to prove that what I am theorising is more than just my own imagination. Because of my work to date, I know that I am in a 'stuck place', approaching a threshold (Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006). I feel I am thrashing around looking for a 'hook' as Annie put it. I have some idea about the process but no idea about how I am to move through it. I have a sense of what the chapter might look like, as a vague abstraction, but no idea about how it will manifest. Not for the first time, I ask myself why I did not choose a methodology that clearly follows the five chapter structure described by the textbooks (for example Mouton, 2002): Background, Literature Review, Data Analysis, Theorisation and Conclusions). Surely, it would have been easier to just take my headings from Chapter 2 and revisit them in Chapter 6? I do not know how to name the challenge. It has to do with making overt how I see the value of PaperHeaDs but I am not sure what that is. Surely, by this stage I should 'know'? To move off this awkward topic, I decide to share with the group an email I had written to Lebo two years before, when I was putting my proposal together:

<<< 2007/05/04 06:59 AM >>>

Dear Lebo,

Our conversation yesterday has stimulated a new direction in my thinking. You mentioned the three identities that may be merging

into this "sought after identity" – the doctoral identity. Which made me wonder whether PaperHeads has operated as a kind of 'carrier', a transporter vehicle where the other negotiations and reconstructions of identity (including aging, motherhood, loss etc) can be played with.

The transporter beam from Star Trek came to me as a metaphor, because it talks to the aspirational elements (going up), fantasies of selves-to-be, the hope that the journey can be easy and quick, but the danger of disintegration if something goes wrong with the technology and the notion of moving from one space/place to another. Is PaperHeaDs our mother ship hovering out of sight ready to rescue? I have often wondered whether the PaperHeaDs dynamic could be possible with other members, and whether it would work as well with male members or a mix of male and female.

I thought you might find this amusing. Thank you for yesterday and the 'sock'

Take care,

Liz

I explain that the sock was Lebo's way of talking about 'theorisation'. Using the daily lived experience of the missing sock phenomenon when doing laundry, namely that a laundry run never finishes without one sock being missing its mate, she asks for theories about what happened to it. My favourite personal theory is Terry Pratchett's 'Eater of Socks' which lives around washing machines. This creature, according to Pratchett, was accidentally created by the academic wizards of the Unseen University (Pratchett, 2000, pp. 206-210). Everyone laughs at the metaphors – my preference for science fiction/fantasy literature and film is a source of teasing and I have become quite adept at providing academically sound justification for it. I am pleased though, that they

recognise what it is that I was trying to communicate. It speaks to the verisimilitude of my metaphor. It affirms my understanding that theorisation is a matter of communicating my thinking in a persuasive way.

Rehearsing Theorisation

The laughter stimulates focus as Amelia sobers and asks, "Are you talking about academic rescue or something else? Because PaperHeaDs hasn't really been an academic support group for me, I don't know that it had much to do with my actual doctorate."

I challenge her, "What about all those questionnaires we filled in!?"

"Fair enough. You guys helped me a lot with that, but I wasn't really talking about the logistical support, like chasing responses and so on, I was actually talking about getting feedback from the group about my writing and comment on the specific ideas I was working with. PaperHeaDs gave me what I wasn't getting at the university with the intellectual debate and stimulation."

"If I had to redefine what I would want PaperHeaDs to be – and I mean this is ironic for me who never does the reading," says Amelia smiling as she anticipates a rebuttal from someone in the group, "I would still like our meetings to be structured around a reading. No matter how obscure that is and I wish I was more disciplined to do the reading and come to the group with a reading."

I struggle with the idea of having to read a journal article, which is not part of the mountain of literature that I am still working through (600 references at last count in EndNote[63]). I have read most of them at least twice, yet I find it difficult to remember who said what. Will I ever be able to drip useful references off my tongue like Maya, Maura and Sophia do? How do they do that? I recognise this ability as part of the

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63 Bibliographic referencing software

identity I aspire to. I watch my resistance and try to work out a way of articulating it. I assume that the others have at least as much reading to do as I have. Alyse, Maya, and Maura are voracious readers of scholarly literature. I am slow and it takes me ages to get the meaning of each paragraph. Sophia is quicker to comment than I am, and chooses to speak to very different aspect of Amelia's comment than the one in my mind. I move out of my cognitive resistance to listen to her.

"I agree with you, PaperHeads became, and still is, very important to me and not really to do with the doctorate," she says speaking carefully, to avoid offending, and to master her argument. "Because I think even the construction of PaperHeaDs as a doctoral group is fluid and not very well defined, because some have and some haven't finished and some have left and some are not around. I know what the associations are, but it for me it's been much more about having a game[64] which I've missed for the last probably five or six, seven years. A group of women, of a similar intellect and brightness and humour and insight and difference, that I could just sit and spend time with and engage in really interesting and often intellectual conversations and..."

I chirp, "And silly!" As I say this, I reflect that silliness is actually quite educational. Sophia's reference to fun is telling. Gee says of 'affinity groups' and the identity that derives from them that "it is these practices and the experiences they gain from them that create and sustain their allegiance to these other people" (2000, p. 105). Sophia constructs PaperHeaDs as a place of enjoyment and witty interaction in the shared experience of witnessing each person's passage towards completion of their doctoral thesis. Moreover "identities are situated and accomplished with audience in mind. To put it simply, one can't be a 'self' by oneself, identities must be accomplished in 'shows' that persuade" (Riessman, 2003, p7). PaperHeaDs is not a discourse space in the sense that it only borders the university structures. It is liminal, as we, doctors-in-making, are. Through making jokes about academic norms, or in imagination stretching practices to

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64 Sophia's choice of the word 'game' speaks to lightness and play – a sense of lack of dire consequences and safety.

the ridiculous, PaperHeaDs' conversations unpack the way things are done, and often find the original value of the practice. Terry Pratchett mocks academia in his construction of the Unseen University where wizards are trained. I think that is what speaks to me about his work. An example of how PaperHeaDs finds value through satire is the modified version of meeting procedure that we use. Another is Maya's interrogation of 'speaking to her proposal'. It is as though in admitting how alien these practices are – outside the surveillance of the institution (Foucault, 1972) where reputations may be at stake – and laughing at them and ourselves, we are able to approach understanding. The shared experience of confusion seems to make it easier to cross thresholds.

Sophia smiles and her whole face relaxes, "Oh, that's the best, but they're only so funny because they are always tinged with a sharp intellect or sharp insight or whatever. I think that's one of the nicest parts. So PaperHeads is important to me. I mean the Getaways are the best, and I really like the monthly meetings. I think I like the fact that we can work and set up these structures and I like the way it goes, it functions. I'm glad that I finally got easier being here."

Is it Just Us?

As she speaks, I find my mind flashing back to a question that Barbara Grant asked after I presented a paper about PaperHeaDs at a HERDSA conference (Harrison, 2007). She asked, "Would PaperHeaDs have worked so well if you had not all been teachers?" It was and still is a good question. Has our shared university teacher identity given us the ability to create structures to facilitate learning for ourselves? Would other doctoral learners not have that urge to structure, to negotiate ground rules for a learning space? I wander on in my wonderings. Maybe it is a characteristic of women to negotiate to the benefit of a whole group, sometimes pushing their own needs to the background. Is the PaperHeaDs tradition of care and nurture the effect of the mothers in the group? Would a group of men or a mixed gender group create the same kind of space? Maybe it would not be the same for a group of doctoral learners who had not had so much work

experience. Alternatively, is the sense of a shared journey and a co-created space to be liminal without being constructed as 'unknowing' – a student – enough?

Space for Challenge and Resistance

I notice Mary leaning forward ever so slightly, a signal that she is going to talk. It is a subtle movement, and one that is easy to miss, because she never aggressively captures the space to talk through body language or her voice. When she does talk, it is the modulation of her words, and the vocabulary that she chooses, that grabs our attention.

She nods acknowledging Sophia's remark but picks out, of the many ideas that Sophia and Amelia have mentioned, just the thread of the structure and purpose of PaperHeaDs, "I think for me, right at the beginning, PaperHeads was a kind of resistance. I was saying, 'Actually I'm not really interested in just taking on anybody as a supervisor.' I really felt that there was no one out there that I considered an expert in the area that I wanted to study. The university could validly say that I'm not an expert either, but I have experience and have read and thought about my practice. I didn't want to have my thinking directed by someone who had not worked as hard as I have. Remember that course my unit ran?" Maya and Bee, Annie and I nod, thinking of a Master's course that Mary had initiated and driven. Maya had co-taught on it, Annie and I had facilitated a session or two and Bee had been a student registered on it. "Remember how powerful it was? When we all consciously admitted that we did not know what texts and behaviour would inform the process?"

We murmur agreement, remembering Mary's commitment to the ideal of a negotiated curriculum (Boomer et al, 1992), despite the learners' resistance to the lack of direction from the course leaders. While frustrating at times, it had been a genuinely exciting learning experience for all. It was risky, but the value of the course lay in the impact of its graduates on higher education in the region years afterward. One of my colleagues in my Academic Development department, and another friend in the doctoral cohort group that I belong to, not to mention Bee, had all learned to trust their own experience through this module.

Bee nods. "I hated it at first, I wanted you and Maya to tell me what I should be reading. How I should be thinking about Higher Education and you refused. I felt I was running to catch up with everyone else all the time. I think it was good though. You could never predict the perspectives each member of the group would bring to the table."

Mary laughs, "It was difficult to follow the idea through, to constantly be thinking on our feet about what to say or not, but I learned so much through it. It was also a relief to be honest about what I knew and did not. Not to have to assume the 'expert position'. It spoiled me though. When I was thinking of doing a doctorate and finding a supervisor, I thought you guys knew as much about the field as anyone who could supervise me. So I think, coming out of the way we'd run that course, I was at a stage of saying, 'Well actually could we do that at a doctoral level? Could we do that as a group of people wanting to do joint supervision of ourselves?'"

Discovering Doctoral Learning

Sophia reacts, "I don't know what it's done for other people's doctoral processes, but I haven't really seen PaperHeaDs as particularly useful in the supervision-type sense. Maybe that is because I haven't been sure of what we mean by doing the doctorate and different stages and so on. I think you all, for me, seemed to have a much clearer sense, because you'd obviously researched it in various ways and written papers and things beforehand. So I think maybe it's been more clearly structured before I joined you. I just sometimes wonder if you don't all have clearer senses of what it's meant to be, so ..."

I cannot contain myself at this comment and burst out laughing, even though I understand that Sophia is commenting about experiences and the way we had storied PaperHeaDs by the time she joined the group. At this moment, I want to let her know that the dynamic of the group evolved out of chaos. Amelia is right; we did start out reading the same readings and discussing them. Moreover, many of the readings related to coming to terms with what doing a doctorate meant (e.g.Clinchy, 1986; Grant, 1999; Balatti & Whitehouse, 2001). As I recall it Maya, Amelia, and Alyse had been the providers of those stimuli to thought and discussion. Mary kept notes of the meetings to track the process. In addition, perhaps there *had* been resistance to a formal structure

in an educational sense. I set up the YahooGroup partly because I was frustrated at having to repeat things because someone had missed a meeting or because someone had forgotten when a meeting was scheduled. In all honesty, though, I was experimenting with online spaces and the then new phenomenon of online groups was something I wanted to explore as a comparison to the more formal WebCT learning management system we were starting to use at work. Some of the PaperHeaDs like Maya, Annie, and Alyse were enthusiastic 'early adopters' (Rogers, 2003); others were more reticent. This is testament to how PaperHeaDs evolved from a series of ideas brought by each member; some were adopted while others, such as allocating critical readers, were not.

When I was experimenting with setting up the group interface, I used the 'wizard' provided by Yahoo to facilitate the user's translation of ideas into hypertext mark-up language (html) so that the webpage had the desired look and feel. (I chose shades of pink and purple, which were symbolic to me of women and vibrant energy.) The outline of the purpose of the group, demanded by the Yahoo template (Figure 14), does indicate how vague my doctoral thinking was then, although in retrospect it seems strangely accurate:

> *A capacity-building group which provides a cyber-space for virtual conversations, reflections, writing and file-sharing for a group of academics pursuing PhD qualifications and sundry research. It also provides a forum for voicing thoughts about process and giving and receiving constructive feedback on academic endeavours. A particular focus is academic development in South African higher education.*
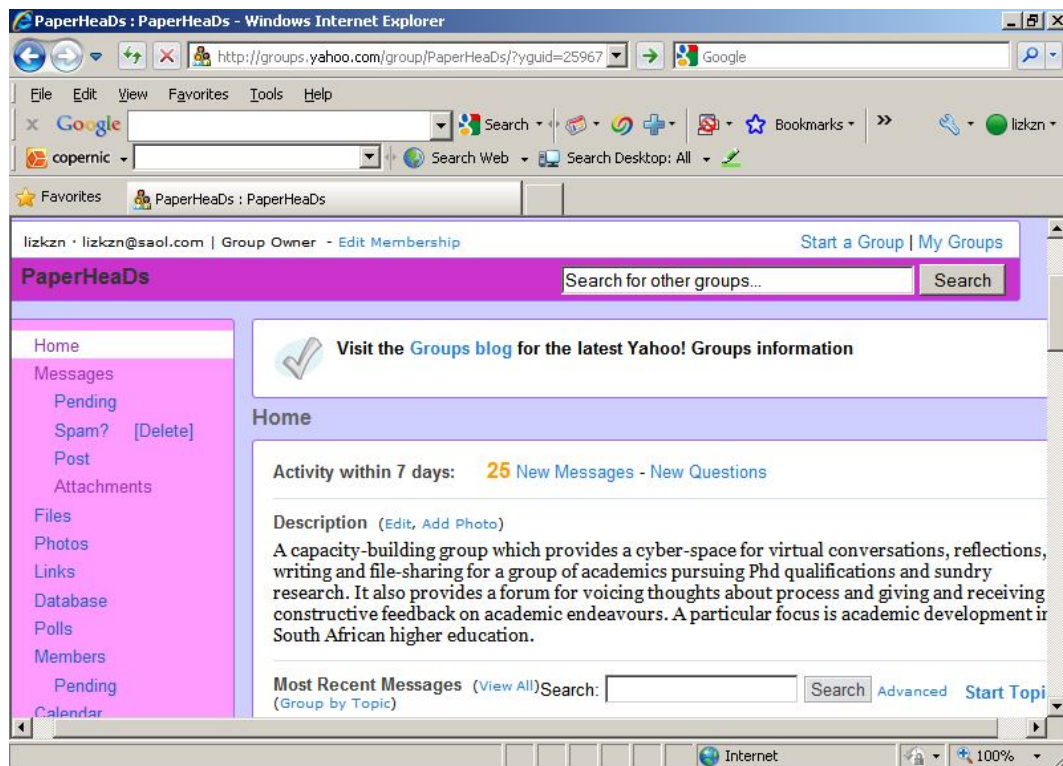
Figure 14: Opening screen of PaperHeaDs online group

It is interesting how quickly the discourse changes. I cannot think of anyone in 2009 who still talks about e-learning spaces as 'cyberspace'.

I hide these thoughts behind my eyes, as I say, "No! Not at all, for me it's not formal in the sense of, this is going to be the process, kind of, like, a 'pedagogical support' kind of formal. That's where my whole study is coming from. Isn't this a problem with formal pedagogy of doctoral learning? Isn't life what is going on with most doctoral learners? Most doctoral learners find themselves in that space where there's no support, formal class structures are infrequent, and they are asked to just produce, produce, produce, produce. It's terribly lonely and nobody really realises how much is being renegotiated?"

Sophia muses, "Mm, I think what makes a difference are the some of the structures in PaperHeaDs. Just being asked what you're going to do? How did it go? That sort of stuff and I think, obviously, the growing support nature of it is simply in the sense of

continuity. 'So where were you last time? Did you get that done?' There's – it's a bit like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission[65], witness to suffering, you know? So I think it's that somewhere out there someone's holding your experience in their consciousness and I think that's probably quite a bit of the value of it."

Amelia has been listening carefully and makes the point, "But if you had to analyse how much of our interaction is actually academic at the moment, I think it's quite little. I would like there to be more academic discussion. I'd like to think the night before a meeting, 'Oh, fuck, I haven't done this bloody PaperHeaDs reading, I must do it tonight because I can't be embarrassed tomorrow' ... but now it's kind of like too easy. We all know we can just come here and say 'Ah I didn't read it, sorry' and it's enough. It's not actually enough. I'd like it to be more ... I think that's what the new members need too. I think what we've become is an emotional support group, not an academic support group".

I wonder about what Amelia means by 'academic', does she mean formal language, following rhetorical rules and structuring arguments in academically acceptable ways? Surely conversation about doctoral topics – questioning and challenging answers to come to some kind of consensus or to refine the question – is academic albeit informal? I find myself resisting the idea of that kind of pressure, although I have always been good about reading whatever has been shared, whether a journal article, news clipping, or someone's writing. I wonder whether it would be possible to have the kind of support of the person, if elements of coerciveness are introduced. I cannot see myself challenging Amelia for not doing the reading she undertook to do for a meeting. How dare I? I decide to be noncommittal, "I must admit that I get a lot of value out of the comments that come on through the list, because I'm not very good at speaking. I like to have time to think about my response."

65 The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up in 1995 to help deal with the psychological and sociological scars of apartheid. In opening the truth of events to public awareness, the Commission aimed to help South Africans to come to terms with this past in a morally acceptable way.

As I wonder why I have ducked that issue, Amelia says, "Don't get me wrong, I think PaperHeaDs is a fantastic group because it's very, very emotionally supportive, but I'm not absolutely sure it serves academic purposes. And maybe you don't need that – maybe you don't need the academic support for the PhD, maybe you need the emotional support."

Academic versus Emotional Support

Maura has been listening quietly and picks up on Sophia's earlier remark, "It has been very interesting, because PaperHeaDs's kind of evolved, it wasn't formally structured , it just evolved and I'm – it's going to be very interested to see how Liz has looked at how that happened. I still remember meeting up with Alyse and arriving up at the AD unit for the first meeting. I didn't really have a clue about what was involved. I don't think any of us did. I also recognise much of the generation of momentum and inspiration has come from our unique communication approach – so easy to initiate a process. It is maintaining it that requires genius."

Mary nods in agreement, "I think along the way PaperHeaDs has developed into this safe space, where you can talk about just about anything and everything and not feel that you are silly. I mean, I do, I think we are a group of equals, and that includes anybody who's just joined or just left. I don't think we've ever had that sense of, you know, 'this is the newby' (Figure 15). Though we tease them a little through the 'toxic waste' ritual[66] (Figure 16), but I don't think intellectually members come in at a different level. Just because we're at a different starting point, doesn't necessarily mean to say that we're different intellectually and I think that's really important. That we're

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66 'Toxic waste' was a Chinese produced sweet, unfortunately no longer available. The PaperHeaD entrance ritual was created at our first Getaway by Alyse. The sweet tastes exceedingly sour, peppery, sweet, salty as one sucks it. It is a very confusing taste sensation, and something of an exercise in trust, requiring the new member to close her eyes and open her mouth, childlike and finish it without spitting it out. Some cut short the experience by crunching it up with their teeth, others suck till the 'bitter end'. It is quite a useful metaphor for doctoral learning.

recognising each other – we've all got strengths and we've all got weaknesses and that nobody is trying to pull one over on anybody else and I think that that's a really important thing within the group – that there's not a jockeying for position within the group.

Figure 15: Getting to know the 'newby'

Figure 16: Experiencing 'Toxic Waste'

"The online aspect has been the most valuable for me," says Maura. "I know when I have felt that it's safe and it's purely because I log on at night. Night-time does things to me. Sometimes if I read what I've written the day after, I get embarrassed and think 'Aah I didn't mean to send that off, I didn't mean to say that!' Yet it is safe. So I don't know, I just think that the Getaways are really, really good and that people – I think the more comfortable you are with people the better it is. I think the connections we've made with each other in our work lives, makes it easier. When Annie calls a spade a shovel, nobody get's offended. It's very comfortable to be around. "

Bee adds, "Mm but it's that affirmation that Sophia meant by 'Witness to Suffering'. You see, we're all in the same boat together, so you don't feel so left out and so alone. And if that is the only function PaperHeaDs serves then maybe that's good too. I do think that when people get their doctorates they change, because I can even see it with my boss a little bit. She says to me, 'You've just got to do it.' And I'm thinking, 'I know, but don't tell me that it's *just.*' There is nothing 'just' or insignificant about it. Whereas we, in PaperHeaDs, will say, 'It is hard to do it hey?' Ja, so I do think you change once you finish. It's also a nice to have Sophia, Maya, Maura and Amelia, even though their PhDs are complete, because in a way I see them fulfilling another function in the sense that I know they're not our supervisors or anything, but they can be the wise members of the group. I don't know if they still get the same value out of the space as those of us who are still in the process. Other things have priority, naturally."

I think about how confident I felt, and possibly seem, in the formal doctoral support group that the faculty runs, where doctoral students attend weekend seminars roughly every quarter year to talk together about the work that they are doing. When I started attending after I registered, I had been involved with PaperHeaDs for three years. I had watched Maya, Amelia, and Maura go through the different stages, though I had not really understood what they were doing. Did I have some kind of 'edge', having dabbled around the fringes of doctoral research (practicing the 'ology' words), as a member of PaperHeaDs?

Maya waxes poetic as she tries to articulate the factor X which makes us treasure PaperHeaDs, "It's that thing of, if a tree falls down in a forest and there's no one there to hear it, does it make a noise?" The comment is a bit mysterious, but I nod, because I think that what Maya is getting at, is the difficulty of articulating publically the private value of PaperHeads, which is limited to our few members. As members we are the only ones that 'hear the noise' (Lee & Williams, 1999) of PaperHeaDs. I wonder if the privacy aspect is what makes the space safe. I remember Alyse commenting on the kinds of conflicts that occur when so-called Communities of Practice (CoPs) operating on the internet become so big that people feel left out or dominated or voiceless.

Maya goes on almost contradicting herself by noting that some kind of 'noise' is heard outside the PaperHeaDs group, "Do you know how many people talk about PaperHeaDs? There are people out there that are constructing what we are. Mainly I think what they're constructing is a community of practice that they are not members of, but they're constructing it as, 'Gee, It's so hard to do this on my own. They're so lucky because they have this camaraderie.' It's a place where you can work on your fictionalised self (Figure 17), the aspirational self that you're trying to embody or that you haven't found yourself embodied in other areas of your life?"

Figure 17: Aspirating

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Communities of Practice

Lather's (1991, p. 118) point that identity is constituted relationally "within live webs of multiple representations of class, race, gender, language and social relations" causes my thoughts to spin off into other conversations we have had in PaperHeaDs about what kind of group it is, that we derive so much confidence from it. I remember saying after one conference presentation, "I wasn't frightened at all, I felt as though I had all the PaperHeaDs standing behind me." Maya's mention of CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as a definition of the group stirs up an old discomfort for me. CoP features largely in recent literature of doctoral pedagogy (Leshem, 2007; Wisker, Robinson & Shacham, 2007; Olson & Clark, 2009), and I remember feeling uncomfortable about the possibility of exploring PaperHeaDs as a CoP when I was constructing my research proposal.

Wenger's nutshell description is that a CoP is made up of "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (2005). PaperHeaDs has the three characteristics that Wenger describes. Firstly, we have a shared domain of interest in the journey to getting a doctorate. Secondly, it is a community in the sense that we discuss, share ideas and help each other. Thirdly, we have evolved and a practice in the sense of performing doctoral learning together, even though some are no longer academics in the official sense (cf. Amelia's and Annie's stories).

Wenger points out that a CoP is "not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest" (Wenger, 2005). However, the shared interest, he says, goes beyond an interest but is rather a 'commitment to the domain'. The expertise of the group does not have to be recognised outside the group, but it is a source of knowledge and knowledge construction for the practice. These elements are evident in PaperHeaDs.

Lave and Wenger sought to explain how apprenticeship works as a learning process. This is possibly why CoP ideas have such currency in doctoral pedagogy, given the congruence with historical apprenticeship discourses (Grant, 2005a; Hopwood & McAlpine, 2007). They wanted to go beyond the obvious relationship between the

Master and the learner, and to include the learning that happens in interactions between other apprentices and journeyman. All the PaperHeaDs were 'apprentices' when the group was established. None of us really had a complete sense of what doctoral learning was about or even the standard of performance required by the degree. What we knew was that we each had the ability to find out. Some were more confident than others, in this ability, as the stories of previous chapters show. We also did not have a 'curriculum' or a plan for how we would operate. It was a negotiated (Boomer et al, 1992) and 'living curriculum' (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 38) in the sense that w drew on our lived experiences, our own questions and attempts to answer them through accessing the various resources we could bring. It worked with the principles of adult learning. It is not a living curriculum in the sense that it is created by educators for students (e.g. Bath et al, 2004; Leshem, 2007). It was student/apprentice-created, but without the student or apprentice role to be played (Leshem, 2007). "Legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the sense of being marginal in the group and coming to the centre, as expertise increased, was not part of the group dynamic. Actually we could say that PaperHeaDs is peripheral to the practices of the community (Becher & Trowler, 2001) which may be why Sophia and Amelia felt it was 'not doctoral support' and 'not exactly academic', respectively.

I return to the conversation just in time to hear Amelia saying, "... and I can honestly say I am not sure that the quality of my PhD, or the speed at which I did it, would have been possible without this group. And maybe that's all it is – maybe this group is just a safety net, that you know that if you are falling, you can rely on them to pull you out of it, academically. Maybe that's all it is. Um, because I can honestly say that while I didn't put things on the list and ask for feedback, I can honestly, honestly say that I felt much, much, much more confident academically, doing the PhD than I would have without it. You know I really wish, I really – I always say it when I've been to a PaperHeaDs meeting, I really must engage with the academic side of PaperHeaDs more, and, ja, without it

becoming a burden I'd like some kind of – I'd like to feel guilty if I haven't done the reading or given a comment. That's what I work best under – guilt."

Annie retorts, "And you are not even Catholic![67]"

Group Practice: Membership

Amidst the laughter, my thoughts drift off again. On the other hand, I think suddenly, legitimate peripheral participation in PaperHeaDs practices may exist for new members.

As Davies shows, "gaining legitimate peripheral participation is a matter of sanction from within the hierarchy. Individuals do not have open access to communities based solely on their desire to be part of that community and to take part in its practices. While practices may define the community, the community determines who has access to that practice" (Davies, 2005, p. 557). In the case of all the PaperHeaDs, we desire membership to the community of educational researchers legitimised by the title doctor. This legitimation can only be given by a university.

Having said this, there is a form of legitimating that takes place in the procedure PaperHeaDs evolved to acquire new members. This usually occurs when a member comments that we need new members, usually to propose another member. They make the proposal and a round-robin discussion takes place via the list. While not as formal as proposing membership for Victorian gentlemen's clubs, it serves to make sure that everyone will be able to get on with each other. Each member has the power to veto a proposed member, though this has never yet happened. It is true though that from the outside PaperHeaDs may look exclusionary, but essentially, it means that once someone is proposed, everybody has to agree to the decision to invite the person to join. Each of

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67 At the risk of not being politically correct or offending, I have included this comment of Annie's because behind it lies a vast amount of analysis (and therapy) about where her inaction came from. Three other members of the group experienced Catholic upbringings and religious views have played into ontological discussions throughout the group's history. These kinds of discussions cannot take place in a formal educational space. Trust of each other is essential before such sensitive topics can be challenged. This kind of consideration is part of the member proposal and acceptance process.

us is very careful to consider the dynamics of the group and the individual personalities that are part of it, as well as what we know of the person we want to propose, before we propose an invitation. In general, we seem to propose people we admire and think the rest of the group will enjoy. When a new person accepts the invitation, they are full members in the eyes of the group, though as Sophia, Bee and Ntsiki's stories show, they may feel peripheral until they become comfortable.

Mary chips in, "Because I think a lot of that happens at PaperHeaDs – those kinds of discussions. I had a conversation with Sophia the other day. I was saying that it's great that she was going to stay with Ntsiki, and how well she fitted into the group, so effortlessly. Funnily enough I think Sophia's had more problems with people joining and leaving than I think anybody else in the group has. Have you had difficulty with that, Ntsiki? You seem to have fitted in and …"

I interrupt Mary before she can finish the sentence or before Ntsiki can answer, powered by the energy of my convictions, "Ja, even with the age difference, which I thought was going to be a challenge for you, Ntsiki! Yet you fitted in so comfortably – despite you and Maura shocking us into silence at the first Getaway you both came to. Remember when you both insisted on watching 'Mcleod's Daughters'! And our practice up to that point had been never to turn on a TV or radio. Any digital entertainment had

Figure 18: Laptop entertainment

to be what could be stored on a laptop (Figure 18).

That experience of difference really highlighted how a small group develops its culture. It was good for us though, to relook at things and to keep the process dynamic."

Ntsiki says thoughtfully, "Mm, I know, what I enjoy about PaperHeads is having the support, as Annie says. When Amelia sent that email asking me, 'Where are you? Why are you so quiet?' it gave me permission to talk, and I went into a whole blabber of what's going on. I was stressed and everybody was so supportive. Then just about two months later, Maya was in the same spot with that issue she was working with. So I mean it's like people are encouraging you or helping you along and supporting you, then they need the same words later. Almost exactly the same words, because they're in the same spot suddenly. It's like this interesting – continuum or cycle that you almost start all the way back again. To not knowing again, to the 'I don't know if this is okay' position. It's like 'why do I have to come back here again, I've done this'. Ja, I mean I'd like to be over some things, but clearly, No," she finishes drily, laughing at herself.

Annie has turned pensive, thinking about what she derives from PaperHeaDs. "It's an interesting question though, whether it is an academic support group or an emotional one? For me PaperHeaDs is about the space. It's about the people. It's about the collegiality. It's about the friendships. It's about the part of something that I feel when I come here. It's about the way that we treat each other – the way that we can tease each other, but that we know that we support each other and we don't judge each other. And the things in life that we do that, you know, are mistakes or a bit crappy or whatever? We just know that here it's going to be all right and people are going to take our side and people are going to root for us. Um, and this group has got – ja, it's got something to do with PhD for me, because it's given me the space. I mean every time I've been to a Getaway, no matter how much or little work I've done or what space in my head has been before I've got here, by the time I've left I've been motivated and

zoned and that's lasted for a little while before it's crumbled again. I've always looked forward immensely to Getaways. The meetings I could do without, um, except as a means to say Howzit[68] and have fun ..."

The Value of Getaways

I nod, "Whereas at our Getaways there is time to sit and talk, either in a group or one-on-one."

Annie adds earnestly, "And again and again and we can mull over things and we can come back to them. So I really, I really ..." She struggles with her feelings, "This space is incredibly important to me so it has that sort of – it's just – it's beyond the PhD. Maybe I'll find a space in here, afterwards when I'm not academically engaged, you know, and I'm sure there'll always be stuff that I can do at Getaways." As Annie speaks, I can understand her fear of loss. While the rest of us are all still in academic worlds, she and Amelia, working as they now do as private consultants, are becoming more and more estranged from an academic vision of work as well as the micropolitics of university life. It must be hard for both of them to come to meetings where the rest of us are talking about the university ecosystem that bears little relevance for their work experience. I wonder if this is why Amelia does not come to every monthly meeting – it is no longer a priority for her.

As if reading my mind Amelia comes in, "I think", she says agreeing with Annie, "I don't know if Liz's research is going to go into it, but I think Getaways – the periods of excluding yourself from the world and writing (Figure 19) are the best – I did my best, best, best work at those. I remember writing at that very first Getaway..."

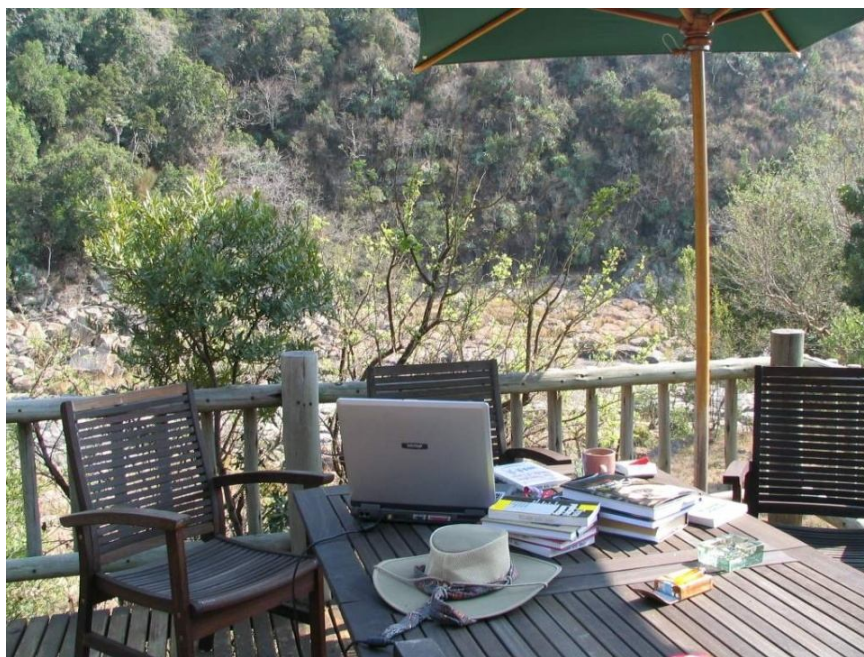68 South African English greeting.

Figure 19: Liz's Getaway work station

Alyse nods and jokes to lighten the mood, "That's where Annie mastered Poi dancing[69]!"

I think to myself that Poi dancing or toxic waste rituals (Figure 16) are not what are conventionally part of the notion of doctoral Communities of Practice as visualised in the literature on doctoral learning (Wisker, Robinson & Shacham , 2007).

"Ja, I had physiotherapy for two weeks after that, AND I was using teabags because the ribbons were too heavy!" says Annie indignantly. We all laugh at the memory (Fig. 20 below shows how Alyse does poi dancing and how Annie modified the art). Another aspect of Getaways is provisions, and the ever presence of laptop computers. The dress requirement is baggy and comfortable. I wonder if taking the risk of looking silly in that context has been part of the rehearsal for our doctoral 'voices'.

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69 Poi is a form of dance which uses a ball (or advanced versions use a fire pot) attached to a length of flexible material held in the hand and swung in circular patterns. Alyse introduced us to this at our first Getaway. She had brought light weight ribbons which are used by beginners. These proved too heavy for Annie, who adapted the concept using tagged teabags.

Figure 20: Getting Away

Amelia continues doggedly, "I remember my best, most consolidated work ... focus was at the Getaways. Every single one of them, while I wrote my PhD, was like a milestone."

Bee makes a connection for me when she says, "I like the way we operate at the Getaways, on the first day, when everyone has to say what they are going to do and then at the end you get questioned about progress. It makes us think and it also – it gives me something to measure my time by, where I've achieved or not. So I think that's good. I also belong to a formal research group within my faculty. Hearing what Mary is saying about the Master's module that I did with her, it's very clear that if a support group is set up within the university structures, then normative educational frames – with all their pros and cons – will govern what happens in the group, whereas PaperHeaDs is nice. Everyone's made a choice to be here and it's not compulsory. I'm actually more likely to use PaperHeaDs spaces, than I am to use the formal group, because I don't need anyone else telling me what to do."

As she talks, I think about the bit of research we did into how we chose our supervisors. It was one of the papers we collaborated on, around the time that Sophia first joined. We noted in our interview data a strong awareness of the power relations that exist in supervision. The literature on the pedagogy of doctoral learning (Chapman & Sork, 1998; Jarvis & Zukas, 1998; Chapman & Sork, 2001; Knowles, 2001) supported our findings. I consider Bee's comment that she does not need anyone else telling her what to do, significant. As a responsible member of her profession, as a mother, as a faculty member, church member, and secretary of the athletics club, her world is filled with duties and 'ought to's'. Even the need to 'get her doctorate' is a duty in the sense that it will provide job security. A university-created support space may assist with the instrumental processes of 'doing the doctorate', but because it is associated with work and work ethics, there is little space for the desire and pleasure that Sophia, Maura, Amelia, and Maya all described in their journeys (pp. 98; 112; 130; 147 respectively).

Even researchers using the CoP model, which claims to acknowledge the value of peer-learning, tend to emphasise the role of the 'leader–researcher' (Olson & Clark, 2009) or the holders of the power, such as tutors or course coordinators (Leshem, 2007). Noting the conflicting policy emphases of 'research learning' and 'generic skills training', which result in demands for enriched learning environments and better supervision in order to produce more researchers for the knowledge economy, Boud and Lee call for attention to the role of peer-learning in a pedagogy of 'research education'. They note that in students' own accounts of their learning process, students position themselves at the centre of their work, whereas supervisors tend to foreground their own role. Boud and Lee argue for a conceptualisation of research learning that is 'distributed' because "studies on the role of dispersed pedagogic systems point to moves to network, to diversify, to democratise, open and horizontalise learning relationships as integral to, rather than ancillary to, pedagogy" (Boud & Lee, 2005, p. 503). Perhaps Bee's preference of PaperHeaDs spaces is because of exactly that desire for horizontal, democratic and networked learning relationships. And perhaps that is what is central to the development of the 'autonomous researcher' (Johnson, Lee & Green, 2000). Even Lee and Boud's radical suggestion seems to me to get watered down when they suggest that universities pay attention "to the specific institutional ecologies of research degree

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communities and environments" (Boud & Lee, 2005, p. 504). This seems to me to underplay the autogogic possibilities of doctoral students' self-organisational abilities.

When Does it End?

While I have been drifting the conversation has moved on to the future of PaperHeaDs, though I note that Amelia still is focused on the 'academic aspect' or rather the lack of it.

She is saying, "I think we maybe need to revive that academic rigour for new members. I'm quite concerned about the fact that we're an aging population, that we've sort of matured to, three of us, four of us, five of us, very soon being PhDs and outnumbering those who are still busy – because you get a different angle on it when you've finished. I would like to see us getting even another new member that would be in the PhD or even just starting a PhD who could maybe benefit and keep that whole notion of support alive, academic support. We almost need to re-launch PaperHeaDs."

Bee's brow furrows as she carefully comments, "But maybe this version of PaperHeaDs is past its sell-by date? It's actually quite hard to fit into a group that's already operating. I think that's what Sophia was referring to, because people will be sharing something and suddenly someone will need to explain to me what the fun is about because I'm not part of the original joke. Um … Yes, you need the history and I think it's right – I'm not feeling left out. I think it's right that the history and the story is there, but it's your story and you're quite entitled to have that story without other people getting bored and not understanding, because I think there would be people who feel left out. I don't feel left out. I just think I'm really pleased you've got a story and I'd like you to share it some more. You don't have to have new people there, ja, and that's what I'm thinking, but I think it did help that I knew Maya and Mary and Liz, so I think it helps. I also prefer small groups to big ones, because I know how 'just me' I can be, you know? Belonging to PaperHeaDs is certainly useful and I think it has helped that Mary, Annie, Liz and I are sort of in the same stage."

Alyse deftly confirms the iterative nature of the process as history agreeing with Bee, and with Ntsiki's point about feeling like one is going in circles. "That's one of the reasons it's so important to document stuff, because sometimes when I go back and look at the stuff I've gathered for my PhD, I'm amazed at how much is there. I mean I think, 'Well, I haven't really done very much', then I look and I think 'Oh God, I'd forgotten that I'd done that!' Like from the conversation today, I've forgotten I've read certain things. I mean things I've read and I've told you about, really I have no recollection of that. So it really is important to document and journal and keep looking back, so that you actually know what you've done and where you've come from, and use that, because I have a horrible feeling I'm forgetting stuff that's really important."

I comment, "You know the Yahoo list contains eight years of process, I think it could really be quite a valuable resource to new members, if they have the time to read it. It captures the history that Alyse is talking about and shows that each iteration of the PhD learning journey is slightly different – it's a spiral rather than a closed loop. So it's really only an illusion that we've been in the same place before. I'd be really sad to lose that in starting up a new group. We're kind of a brand with a culture that can change but has enough established routines to give structure." What I mean is that the other PaperHeaDs can point to the difference in our individual thinking as it matures, which is difficult to see in oneself. Having learned that that is how it works, I prefer to think about gradually passing on that group knowledge. It's the continuity of living the learning that Sophia referred to.

Being Seen as the Doctor Becoming
Ntsiki observes, "I also think that there's a time and a place when you can hear the supportive comments. If you had said to me last year that I was making progress, I don't know if I would have believed you. Sometimes when somebody gives me feedback, I don't believe yet, as in, I don't think they're lying – but I don't see it yet. I save it in a bank somewhere and then I call it up on dark days, or I call it up when I recognise it. I'm like, 'Oh that's what they were talking about, I see it now, I see it now.'"

Maya says, "I think it's that kind of thing that makes the positive feedback seem real. PaperHeaDs – is probably more affirming and less critical of me as a person than my supervisor was, but it's in a way that is real. I guess because you all see me over time. I've been in other places where people are affirming me, but it doesn't have much value for me, whereas here, the affirmation ... and in fact ... I don't feel certain ... I was going to say that's why any criticism, maybe I feel strongly, but I don't feel strongly. I get, determined, you know? When I hear criticism from PaperHeaDs, it's like a challenge – a question that I must answer because I care about it."

Ntsiki challenges this: " Ja, but if PaperHeaDs is so 'safe', how is it that Liz battled to share her doctoral vignette (see Appendix 4) with the group? What holds somebody back from that, even though they know everybody in this group is going to be supportive? It's like a foregone conclusion, I mean no-one's going to tear you apart, but then why the angst of saying, 'Okay, there you are, guys, let me know', type of thing? Amelia was saying that PaperHeaDs is an – an emotionally safe space, but not intellectually, or the other way round, which one is it?"

"I can understand Liz's reluctance," Maya jumps on this with enthusiasm – eyes glinting as her brain races around the idea. "It was easier for her to share that piece with the doctoral cohort group than with us, because they don't know her. We know her really well, and we would be able to identify the radically different self-revelations. We might see her differently than the role she'd played here up till then. So it wasn't because that was a safer space than here, but that Liz knew that we would have more of an understanding of where she was, reading that through the eyes of our versions of Liz rather than our version of A. N. Other – doctoral student."

Mary looks perturbed, "I don't think I'm necessarily reticent about putting a piece of writing on the table in front of this group or – is that true? Don't know, but I don't think I am ..."

I challenge defensively because I am still wondering why I put myself through the agony of worrying about the response from PaperHeaDs, "Ja, okay. When last did you put a piece of writing in?"

Mary responds thoughtfully, "I haven't – that's why I'm saying ... I mean ... it was interesting to say it and then think about whether it's true or not. I mean certainly it wasn't conscious that I'd sent the proposal to my supervisor before I'd shared it with the group. I mean it literally was a last minute thing, and I rationally I would have preferred it to have gone to the group first, but it was simply a case that I was absolutely determined that at this particular meeting, the proposal would at least be presented, if nothing else."

I appreciate Mary's honesty, loving the way she acknowledges the value of articulating something, then questioning it. In a formal classroom, I have to get whatever the thought is 'nearly right' in my head before I say anything. I do not experience them as places for experimentation, for holding up an idea for testing. That is not the fault of the lecturer; it is the product of my entire educational history.

Annie asks, "So you feel some kind of peer pressure about delivering to undertakings made at meetings?"

Mary grins, "Yes, though I can go for months saying nothing new – it does bother me."

"Me too", says Annie, "The pressure of reporting nothing seems to build up and then I have the momentum to do things. It's like I can miss a couple of meetings to avoid the challenge, but then I miss seeing you guys, so I have to deliver something." I think it is interesting that Mary and Annie feel peer pressure to deliver at meetings, yet Amelia does not.

Alyse adds, "Well, PaperHeaDs just really clinched my deciding to do a PhD, because it became a process that more kind of had its own momentum and the monitoring ..." She

drifts off, thinking, then refocuses, "I mean we meet every month, so you can't kind of say, 'Well I've done fuck all' you know, and be conscious of that's what you've done." It strikes me that one of the freedoms of PaperHeaDs is the acceptance of expletives and searching for words, knowing that no-one is offended. Maybe that is why it is easier to start exploring an unformed, even silly idea in this company, to then be able to prod and poke it into some more formal shape. (Figure 21 shows the kind of meeting activities that acknowledge the development of ideas.)

Figure 21: The work of recognition – admiring Maura's poster

Alyse goes on, "You cannot believe how much I miss PaperHeaDs. Together with my PhD, PaperHeaDs is one of the most important relationships for me. When I first joined, I kept thinking, I'm very good at being the outsider. You know I always see myself as the outsider, because I either don't have something that everybody else has or, I don't have enough of what everybody else has, or have something different. I think PaperHeaDs really taught me how to think about that and how to know, what of that is real and what of that is just perceptual."

"You know, that out of all the people that I associate with," says Sophia in agreement, "this group probably knew more of where I was at, in the process, than anybody else, not even my partner knew. I think is why it poses interesting issues for the group now that it's changing … and what we understand it to be about. Is it about us, this group of women, or its function? I think it poses an interesting thing for us to think about, um, ja."

Bee remarks, "I dunno, I think also adding new people to a group does change the group dynamic, and I find it quite interesting that we obviously do consider who we invite in, because it's not just anybody. I think that that is valuable and interesting. So is the group going to continue as it is? Or are we going to get new members to carry on the momentum? Is it going to become a post-doc space, when we've all finished? Is it going to be just a group of friends who enjoy each others' company?"

"It's strange", replies Maya, "I feel such a bond with all of you guys, know your lives and you know mine so well, yet the fact is, we do not socialise together. We all have completely separate social spheres. We mostly see each other in passing through our work or other activities, if we do at all. PaperHeaDs has this identity – it really is a 'virtual space' – it moves geographically, but we create it when we come together and use the practices we've created to work on our own individual goals. For Amelia, it is about emotional support, for Liz it's being seen as able, for Annie it's reconnecting with the dynamic of research and writing. It seems slightly different for everyone."

Bee adds, "Yes, well just sitting, just listening to the conversation even at night …

I laugh adding, "And learning to use the word epistemology with a straight face!"

"Yes," Bee continues, "And being, and having a safe group to actually say, 'Well look I can't seem to work that out or yes, if you've found articles or whether I've found books' – sharing resources whether they are psychological or material. I value the time that I

get in the discussion. But it also has a social function which is quite nice, but I don't see it merely as a social thing. I think the other part of it is being social as potential doctors." Annie says, "Same for me – the other thing – the social part of it is really good. We spend a lot of time looking at the psychological, sociological, political places that we find ourselves and why are we thinking that way."

Alyse adds, "For me in England, it's knowing you're all there and knowing that I have some idea of what you're doing, and that you're still there if I – you know, that you will still be there, hopefully, you know? I mean, I don't think PaperHeaDs is going to stop."

Identity Work

I say with some tension, because I fear the loss of PaperHeaDs as it is, but recognise that the domain of doctoral learning that we share is time limited: "No, I don't think so. For me it's very much an identity base. I have quite a lot of apprehension about not being part of PaperHeaDs. Maybe that will change when I'm Dr Liz, maybe PaperHeaDs will not be such a priority in my life. I don't know. My own dream is that in documenting a little bit about it, there's a base for new members to come into and make their own. Or to create their own groups. My difficulty is in trying to separate what is uniquely valuable to us as individuals who admire the other members, and what is kind of generically valuable."

Alyse says supportively, "I think it's an identity base for me too. And I think – I think you're right, I think it is about identity. I think a lot of the problems I've had with finding my own identity, I also wrestled with, within PaperHeaDs. Then I suppose to some extent we've all wrestled with that aspect of identity, and I think it's partly because we are women. I often talk about PaperHeaDs. People ask me what is PaperHeads? I say, 'Well it's a kind of community of practice of women who' … and I try and explain it. I think you can't really explain because it's everything that comes with it.

She pauses and murmurs, "Mm, constructed and tacit, constructing us and being co-constructed by us. What Liz is doing is actually putting – getting that together and not

letting that get lost. Ja, and we sort of revolve around the PaperHeaDs entity in different ways, moving in and out and circling, a bit like a planet around the sun, maybe not a sun, but different constellations just moving and becoming one and then splitting and so on and so on."

Maya muses, "When I look at identities and look at which ones are held across the whole of PaperHeaDs, I would put woman above doctor or becoming doctor. I would definitely put woman first, because I think it moulds us together in our identity discussions, even more than becoming a doctor. Even when we talk about becoming a doctor, it is in terms of the gender. It is about the power relations in society, as women. How do you become a doctor, as women? How do you manage your different roles, as women? So even when we're talking about becoming, even when we're talking about the theory of a doctorate, it's always in terms of words like 'I don't know if I'm good enough' or 'I don't know if I really understand it', not to do with being women. And then there's the gay and straight thing, but I think that that's part of why the group works, because there is a constant – and challenge is the wrong word because that sounds confrontational – but there's a constant reminder that there are different ways of living woman, and it's not just, um, sexuality – there are all sorts of other things. Mother – not mother, married – not married. There're all these different ways of being a woman, um, that come up and that's why the group works. I think if we were all straight mothers, then we wouldn't have the same cohesion. I see PaperHeaDs as a gender based more than doctoral – and that's what I love about it." As she speaks, I think of Adele Flood's quick sketch (Figure 22) made during my paper in Australia in 2007 (Harrison, 2005) – of the womblike togetherness.

Figure 22: Adele Flood's impression of PaperHeaDs

Sophia confirms, "So maybe Liz's metaphor of the mother ship is not so weird after all, because for me it is about having a community with women, but it's not big enough to be a 'Community of Women'." She lifts and curves two fingers of each hand to indicate quotation marks.

Sophia and Alyse's comment about Community and Community of Practice take me back again to trying to pinpoint my resistance to the notion of a Community of Practice. Instinctively it feels too glib an explanation for the kinds of identity work that this conversation has acknowledged. Maybe that is the nature of theorising. In creating a generally understandable description of a phenomenon, we lose the detail of the lived experience. I think that PaperHeaDs is more like the networked system that Boud and Lee talk about – more horizontal, more democratic, less invested in power structures

(Foucault, 1980), perhaps an opportunity for acts of resistance. Most of all it is safe and nurturing.

Power Relations

As I am thinking this, Maya says, "But there are hierarchies in PaperHeaDs. I worry about me sometimes dominating conversations because I'm coming from a post-doc position. It's not quite power dynamics though. PaperHeaDs is a space where you can be without ever apologising for being that identity, because we accept that that is the identity you are choosing. Some people are more hesitant about it and need more affirmation, other people might be a bit pushy about it and need to be reminded that there're other ways of thinking."

Annie demurs, "Well it's not power directly, it's like the weight of words, the weight of opinion, respect for expertise".

Mary agrees with Annie, "Yes, you've earned the position and we respect it, but we also don't take on everything you say as if it were the last word on the subject. We explore it. And it's OK to say, 'I don't know' and somebody else will admit 'Well actually I don't know either, but I've got this idea'."

I have a feeling that this might be one of the important thresholds (Meyer & Kiley, 1998; Meyer & Land, 2005; Meyer & Land, 2006; Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006; Lucas & Mladenovic, 2007) a doctoral student has to cross. To get to a point where there is an acknowledgement that knowledge is fuzzy, yet to represent one's opinion confidently.

Maura sums it up, "I think too when you also get to meet people, you see, you actually see the humanity of people. I mean I felt it quite difficult initially to get to know Mary, and also I had really looked up to and I *still* look up to her, but I appreciate her more because I know her. I think because doctoral study is a vulnerable time, being seen as a person becoming is important, rather than someone who has static characteristics. I mean I know that when I listened to Liz, initially, and to Annie, there seemed to me to

be a period of time that you pass that barrier and you go 'Ah, ja, I can do this – actually this is fine'. It's like PaperHeaDs has evolved and it's been fascinating to see how things have changed and how each person has brought a different dimension to the group, as they grow – and their roles change within it. And maybe that is the beauty of the whole experience."

Suddenly Maya glances at her watch and realises the time, "Come on guys we have to wrap this up, there's food to eat – we can deal with dates as we eat. Can't make Amelia too late for her shopping!"

Nothing has been resolved, or solved but we have acknowledged the value of each other, our growth and our challenges. I wish for every doctoral student to have this kind of space, one that allows him or her to "I know how 'just me' I can be", to quote Bee, even though it is changing as we take on the skills and values that are encapsulated in the title doctor. We have even disagreed on what that represents. Sophia and Amelia have seen the PaperHeaDs experience as not necessarily helpful 'academically'. Bee and Annie see it as a measure of academic progress and a voluntary space to keep up the momentum. What is common to all of us is that we recognise the way our learnings and histories shape us and the strange comfort that lies in sharing those thoughts – either in meetings or online – and having them acknowledged, if not agreed with.

Affinity Groups and Communities of Practice

Maya's point that none of the PaperHeaDs really socialise together on a regular basis is critical to an understanding of the group. We get together as PaperHeaDs, in the group meetings and as a group to be supportive of each other, for example at Alyse's wedding or at the funerals of parents who suddenly passed away. None of us have attended another's graduation. Occasionally our lesbian identities bring three of us together at events within that small community; mother identities will overlap with matters to do with schooling; work identities ensure that we meet at similar functions. In those spaces, the PaperHeaDs discourse is not appropriate. In general, we go for weeks at a time without contact, except via the YahooGroup, which keeps us in contact with what

each is working on. Some of us are more comfortable online and post more regularly than others, or in more detail than others. For example, Alyse, Maya, Maura, Ntsiki, and I seem to thrive in the online space as an expressive medium. Amelia, Mary, Bee, and Annie tend to only comment in brief sentences and use it for logistical purposes.

Gee's affinity group theorisation[70] is a more accurate description of PaperHeaDs than conceiving it as a CoP. We share little beyond our interest in doctoral work (and more latterly for those who have completed, publishing and other scholarly endeavours). There is no question that we share allegiance to the group through the identity we derive as PaperHeaDs members. Access to the practices is available to all members but individual choice determines what access is claimed. Likewise, participation is voluntary. As Alyse put it, "We sort of revolve around the PaperHeaDs entity in different ways, moving in and out and circling, a bit like a planet around the sun." In this way, our allegiance is primarily to the group and only secondarily to the individual members. The power of recognition, and thereby the affirmation of the individual identities, lies in participation and sharing, rather than the doctoral learning per se. This explains Maya's comment that the identity work of PaperHeaDs might be more about our identities as women taking on doctorateness than the construction of a doctoral identity in itself.

Perhaps it is in this very sense of commonality and difference as people that PaperHeaDs provides the liminal space for playing with and rehearsing doctoral identity that is meaningful to the individual. It may be that similar self-legitimated doctoral spaces can be created by mixed gender, mixed aged groups of students, outside the formal surveillance of university structures, with their own practices and identity, which may replicate the value that we have found in PaperHeaDs.

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70 To be an affinity group members "must share … allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices that provide each of the group's members the requisite experiences. The process through which this power works, then, is participation or sharing. …[T]heir allegiance is primarily to a set of common endeavors or practices and secondarily to other people in terms of shared culture or traits. (Gee, 2000, pp. 105-106)

Comparing PaperHeaDs and a Doctoral Cohort

Like Bee, I am a member of two doctoral groups: PaperHeaDs and the doctoral cohort programme run by the university.

My experience of PaperHeaDs is that it is voluntary and while there exists a subtle kind of pressure to please or perform in accordance with group norms, the group norms are co-constructed and storied, the relationships are democratic. The doctoral cohort programme differs in its formal structure and the pressure to participate is hierarchically imposed – whilst not compulsory at the time I registered, I was 'strongly recommended to participate' in the weekend seminars that take place five times a year. Moreover, at the induction to the process, a senior staff member mentioned (three times) that participation or lack of participation might negatively affect an evaluation of my suitability to continue in the programme should I ever need permission to extend my studies. I resisted this pressure intensely initially. I hated being positioned as what felt to me like an undergraduate. I decided to attend and later decide whether I would continue. If I was learning from the experience I would continue. If I was not – I would take my chances on my own with the support of PaperHeaDs, and the possible displeasure of my supervisor. Happily, I found that participation did bring benefits that were qualitatively different to those I gained from my PaperHeaDs membership. Throughout the first year, the weekend seminars provided a structure and an expectation of delivery that helped to shape my progress. They enabled me to focus on specific aspects of proposal construction that I had only observed through watching Maya, Alyse, and Amelia go through the process. I had read their evolving proposals and occasionally asked questions about what they were thinking. Listening to other participants in the doctoral cohort presenting their proposals, I was able to apply the thinking to my own proposal.

The cohort process imposed discipline that I valued and enabled me to continuously move forward in ways that had not happened in three years of membership of PaperHeaDs. While I established friendly relations with a few other members of the cohort, there were only one or two that I was in contact with between the seminar weekends. At this point, the doctoral cohort programme could not be considered a CoP.

In the second year, our cohort group had shrunk from twenty members to two handfuls of us, and it became easier to remember each other's doctoral projects and specifically why we were interested in them. Tea and lunch times became useful opportunities to discuss peripheral issues affecting us or to go into more depth related to our thinking about our own and each other's work. These times reminded me the most of the dynamic of PaperHeaDs, the relatively casual space in which we challenged and approved aspects of thinking and offered alternate ways of looking at a subject.

Our cohort facilitators deftly repositioned themselves and us as co-learners, aiming for collegiality and commitment to each other's success, by using the feedback sheets from each weekend to construct weekends that were useful to all of us. This is in line with Wisker, Robinson and Shacham's intent with respect to the creation of CoPs for postgraduate research development. "Students who are able to engage in problem-solving dialogues with their supervisors and with peers are likely to develop as collegial equals, empowered to undertake and maintain momentum with their own research, owning both the process and outcomes of their research, and then further able to take research into their lives after the PhD has been completed, sure they have become members of the research community of practice" (2007, p. 305).

During this time we began to share readings that we came across that might be relevant to each other, to help with access to various resources. Midway through the third year we began to be able to identify in each other how we had moved since last we met and to share stories of 'stuck places' (Meyer & Land, 2005) that were more related to our knowledge of each other as people rather than students. In this sense, my cohort group became a community of practice to me. It was more a product of individual choice and voluntary participation, leading through the process of 'legitimate peripheral participation' towards 'doctoralness'. The doctoral seminar weekends as formally constituted by the university were not CoPs, but CoPs spontaneously formed within them.

An interesting comparison between my own experience and that of Annie lies in her decision to not participate in the doctoral weekends. Her stated reason was that she found it hard, as the only Higher Education practitioner in her cohort, to make the links between the work her school-based cohort-members were doing and her own. She felt that she could use the time more productively working on her own. As I write this, we are roughly at the same stage of our thesis production. It is impossible to say which process of social learning would be better; they cannot be separated because my doctoral cohort experiences influence what I share within PaperHeaDs and vice versa. Similarly, Annie's resistance to the formal structured experience could have shaped my participation with my cohort group.

Whilst the cohort situation is relatively relaxed, in that the group interactions take place around a table, with carels set apart for sessions in which we work independently, and we are free to sit on the floor if we wish, I still experience it as a classroom with associated feelings of being 'noticed'. In PaperHeaDs spaces I can choose to participate or not, to remove myself or not, to work on joint activities or not, without feeling compelled to offer explanations. Davies (2005) suggests that the difference lies in whether the membership is imposed by the social gaze or chosen by the individual. My confident voice has been constructed in PaperHeaDs' autonomy though I recognise that my discipline derives from the cohort.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to draw together the stories of each PaperHeaD showing how each life interacts in the dynamic of the group, how the group practices evolved and the differences and similarities in terms of the benefits each derives from membership. This relational context (Lather, 1991; Gee, 2000) has been central to the doctors we are or are to be, in the ways that recognition operates but also as an arena for playing with and rehearsing academic practices.

Throughout my research process, I have had to debate with myself whether PaperHeaDs is a Community of Practice (CoP). CoP is a concept that seemed to me to be too

convenient. In my postmodern frame, I am suspicious of the variety of behaviour that it apparently explains. It is seemingly describes such a variety of manifestations of social learning, for example developing researchers (Dison, 2004), educational psychologists (Annan et al, 2008), community mental health teams (Davis, 2008), gendered language practices (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) and child soldiers in a 'community of military terror' (Hundeide, 2003).

In each, communities have a visible core of expertise which is the resource which is drawn upon by 'apprentices', 'journeymen' and 'master craftspersons', and it is through interaction with the 'living curriculum' that novices move from 'legitimate peripheral participation' to full participation in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1997; 1998, 2000). It is in 'doing' PaperHeaDs, whilst ostensibly doing PhDs, that we have found ways to renegotiate our many identities and find space to construct the person who will be Dr Someone. PaperHeaDs is more like an affinity group in the Gee sense, than a CoP, because of the way it works by participation and 'identity-seeing'. It contributes to self-learning through this identity work in ways that a simple understanding of a CoP does not acknowledge. The essence of my argument is that in making ourselves 'legitimate' through our group identity, we were able to make the space to play with identity, by drawing on, rejecting, resisting and accommodating aspects of the dominant discourses previously expressed with regard to doctoral supervision which did not particularly focus on the lived experience of the 'learners'.

My argument for the work of doctoral 'autogogy' is that doctoral learners can legitimate their identity work themselves through their own resources derived from life, drawing on supports from institutions and their supervisors, but not being positioned in ways that become obstacles their sense of who they want to become.

In the last chapter, I reflect back on the three questions that began this process and what my findings might mean for doctoral learners.

Chapter 7: Constructing a Doctoral Self and Autogogy

How do we become passionately attached to particular ideas about who we are; about right and wrong; about good and bad; competent and incompetent? (Petersen, 2008, p. 56)

I began this argument with an autoethnographic description of my positioning early in my doctoral journey, showing how my beliefs about knowing and living were influencing my work and my decisions about what constitutes worthy knowledge. I built on this idea through my narratives of my fellow PaperHeaDs, discovering that one of the major differences between the stories of completion and the stories of 'stuck places' was the ability to take time for the self. Notions of duty (possibly gendered) mingle with ideas about the value of a doctorate for each person and shape this ability. It was clear that the thresholds to be crossed were not merely related to cognitive or behavioural attributes but also to the sense of the self that was thinking and acting – the stances that each took and our experiences of their ontological positioning. In the last chapter, Chapter 5, I showed how the practices of PaperHeaDs provide an opportunity for each of us to look at these stances and positionings on an ongoing basis and to have friends mark both the changes and the continuity of self (Korfmacher, 2006) in a space that lies outside the formal surveillance of the university.

In this concluding chapter, I return to a more directly autoethnographic method to draw together my learning on this journey.

I had the expectation that through the writing of the stories of the members of PaperHeaDs a clear thesis would emerge, something well-defined and for which I could argue. I was besieged by the possibilities. It could be an argument for being more precise about the use of the notion of communities of practice. It could equally well be an argument for consideration of the nature of identity construction in post-graduate education or a self-help recommendation for doctoral learners – a model for success.

Naydene pointed out me to the importance of my autoethnographic framing of this study, and it seems that it is appropriate in this chapter to reflect on my own 'stuck places'. As shown within each story, the elements I chose to use to construct the stories of each PaperHeaD are those that I 'saw'. I related to specific experiences of my fellow PaperHeaDs. None of them had mentioned the liminal space of finding the thesis, in conversation, though Maya documented this (is it the last?) threshold on the PaperHeaDs list when she described being in extremis and hiding in her office, in the midst of family chaos (see Maya's story). It seems appropriate, in this autoethnography, that I document my own struggles at this threshold.

As I examined my feelings and thoughts and writings over the last several weeks, I realised that there is an element of shame in them. It is a sense that 'it shouldn't be like this', I should 'know' what my argument is, after three years of thinking about my doctoral journey and PaperHeaDs' role in it. I have not been able to explain this to anyone. I have not wanted to make myself vulnerable to criticism, to a sense of inadequacy. The most difficult threshold yet seems to be an admission that I really did not know what it was that I was trying to say. It was lonely, and appropriately so. This last step is into taking a confident position on what I have come to know, bringing into play all the parts of that knowing: ideas about learning, knowledge-construction, ethics, and rigour.

Constructing my Doctoral Self

In answer to my question, "How do I construct myself as a doctoral student through the time of my involvement with PaperHeaDs?" I note the question has changed to a past tense: How have I constructed myself as a doctoral student? This asks "how" asks two questions. The first asks for a description of the process of construction – what has occurred? My narratives of doctoralness in this study reveal the actions of positioning that create learning thresholds. My version of Sophia's story is an account of coming to love the idea of knowing. Maura's story talks to the importance of seeing and being seen on the journey and afterwards. Amelia's demand that a doctorate is a personal claim of autonomy and capacity argues for assertiveness, while Maya's story describes

some moments of unclarity and confusion, which become a story of self as able to know.

Like them, I have moved through positions of struggling with fluidity, and fuzziness, through seeing myself mirrored in the stories of nine PaperHeaDs, to this point of taking a stand on what it means. Annie's struggle with purpose, and the need to understand the desire to achieve a doctorate, counterpoints Sophia's tale and my own struggle with fears of elitism. Alyse's thinking about how identities make social change possible and Ntsiki's acute observations of the rites of passage have moved me, as I have had similar experiences of alienation and accommodation, specifically those where the practices of the academy seem arcane. Mary and Bee's toil through the demands of duty and the definition of worthy knowledge parallel mine with justifying time and space for learning to be a knower – to becoming more than a 'tick on the public ox'.

The second question asks for a report on my agency in the process – how did I do it? I have moved from my statement of position (see Chapter 1) of not being and not being seen as a serious knower – a tinker in Higher Education – to coming to believe I can contribute to a body of knowledge about doctoral learning. Taking a leaf from Backhouse's (2009) modelling of the intersecting contexts of doctoral education, I can represent the contexts of support that facilitated my agency as a doctoral learner (Figure 23, where the size of the ellipse indicates the influence of the support).
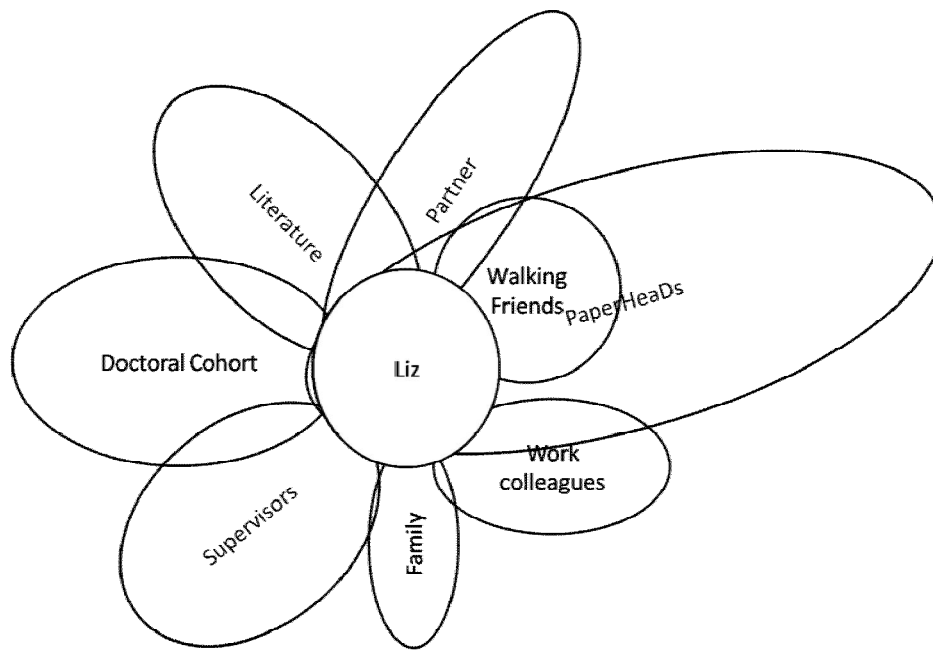
Figure 15: Liz's Nested Contexts (Backhouse,2009)

The process of coming to my thesis illustrates how the four major spheres of influence that have supported my doctoral journey: PaperHeaDs; members of my doctoral cohort, literature, and my supervisors, influenced my agency. I am not sure that any of them have been directly and completely aware of my battle.

PaperHeaDs: Shared Journeys Accumulating Knowledge

I was assisted at this threshold by PaperHeaDs habitus (Bourdieu, 1994) – the acknowledgement that it was fine and normal to be 'stuck' (Meyer & Land, 2005), whatever created that experience. The PaperHeaDs affirmation of this contradicts a positioning that is common in all the "systems of meaning that produce [doctoral pedagogy] as a cultural practice" (Grant, 2005a, p. 337). In each of the discourses that Grant identifies – "the psychological, the traditional-academic, the techno-scientific and the neo-liberal" (p. 340) – 'stuckness' can be constructed as deficiency – the 'stuck student' is unable or unwilling. This 'others' the doctoral candidate by positioning her, in Barbara Grant's terms, as not a 'Proper Student' (p. 339), in the sense that she is outside the norm (psychological); not appropriately disciplined (traditional-academic); not

adequately skilled (technoscientific) or not consuming services effectively (neoliberal). This theme becomes an over-arching discourse which calls for, respectively, more structured interventions (psychological); more stringent entrance requirements (trad-academic); more teaching of generic skills and research methods (technoscientific); and more rigorous surveillance processes (neoliberal). At the point of trying to find a thread to tie six years of experience into a single argument, none of these can assist me. It is too late for that[71].

An alternative perspective, which is my experience of the individuals and the group dynamic, is that 'stuckness' and travelling through it is the nature of the doctoral learning process (Barnacle, 2005; Boud & Lee, 2005), a series of ontological shifts expressed in cognition, affect and behaviour, towards the place where the student "must change the very nature of the topic … to gain … affirmation … and successfully indicate … the ability to continue in [this] independent way" (Clarke & Powell, 2009, p. 20). Recognising 'stuckness' as an opportunity to explore, to be creative, to do something different, I found it possible to let myself 'be stuck'. Being stuck and exploring that experience, I tried to describe it in order to circle it (St. Pierre, 1997) and find a way into understanding the shift I had to make in order to pass through this portal.

Doctoral Cohort: Shared Journeys with Guidance

Brief interactions with members of my doctoral cohort in the form of emails, sighs over tea at the weekend seminar, and brief conversations, have given me reassurance that I was not the only person who was in this position. I was not the only person feeling stupid, or like I must have missed something in the data, or just maybe had not 'got it' yet. Had I cheated – taken a short cut? Was I reaping the consequences of that laziness

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71 As I write I wonder if any research has been undertaken to find out where doctoral students give up in the process. Can drop-out rates from doctoral programmes be mapped against struggles with thresholds? I am not aware of any reports of this. Is it important to find out? Should I take another two days to research this? I decide that this is a peripheral issue to my thesis. It is a topic yet to be investigated.

or of ignorance of a key journal article? I wondered why I was positioning myself as not good enough. Deborah, one of my colleagues in the cohort, wrote:

<<< 07/25/99 14:56>>>

I copied you with my mail to Naydene about perhaps focussing now on the Abstract [for this seminar] as maybe that will help direct the attention to where all this is going??? I feel mine is mundane and unoriginal- does not say anything wonderful or new....I think I am so bored with it all too! Take care, Deborah. (Email from cohort colleague)

Why were these bright peers feeling the same as I? Why could we not say with clarity and confidence – "I will be sending in my intention to submit on the 1st of September"? Surely a doctoral research project is a project management exercise of dividing up the work into discrete pieces and setting deadlines for them? Sophia's voice from the other side of the doctoral threshold came to mind: "I've realised my intellect is perfectly good enough for me." I looked back on where we had been as a cohort three years ago – struggling with epistemology, ontology, what were the 'real' questions we wanted to ask and why. What could possibly be called unoriginal and mundane about this journey? I wrote back to Deborah:

<<<07/25/09 18:33 PM>>>

I keep faffing with things and since I finished all the stories, I'm not sure what there is to say in a final chapter. I got going on the PaperHeaDs summary chapter (maybe the concluding analysis) yesterday, after a week of sitting before my pc like a stunned mullet! In terms of theorisation – I can't think when I wasn't theorising.

I think your idea of presenting the abstract is a good one (I'm also thinking of how long my acknowledgement will be!). I've got a

mantra in my head – just make it "good enough" – unfortunately I can see all the holes at the moment. As you feel your D is unoriginal, I'm thinking mine is simplistic – I suspect it's because we've lived with the darn things in our heads for so long. A doc seminar getting some outside views on abstracts is going to be great.

I know I was completely bowled over by the depth and detail of your presentation last time. That's a lot of thinking and there's no way it's unoriginal. What I liked about it was how comprehensive you have been. You could have taken just one aspect e.g. the Deans and made it a thesis. You have gone the whole way. I think your research is going to be very informative – globally.

Start practicing to respond to Dr Deborah in the mirror! It's dealing with the headspace stuff that's the hardest for me. Liz (Email reply to Deborah)

Email enables me to talk like the person I have always known myself to be. The phrases 'faffing' and 'stunned mullet' stem directly from my parents' voices when I was a child – usually scolding. Faffing is English slang for spending your time doing a lot of unimportant things instead of the thing you should be doing. "Stunned mullet" is popular in Australia – I think because of the Cockney influence. Mullets are fish that leap out of the water frequently. When they land on the shore or your boat, they go rigid with shock and look dead. It is a perfect description of my state of inertia at the time – no thought and feeling dazed. Even the reference to 'bowled over' is an English colloquialism from cricket. All these phrases talk to a view of what has counted as 'real' work in my world (see Chapter 1 p.9): physical activity, doing something, moving forward. These two emails enabled me to look at how my notion of work was meshing with my still unworkable ideas about what research ought to be: linear, time-guided and production-oriented.

Despite all my reading about doctoral study, and conversations with those with doctorates and in process, I had not understood at a bodily level, in a lived way that in exploring doctoral learning I might identify 'gaps' in the extant knowledge and that the task was to try to address them. I realised that the knowledge gap that I thought I had identified in my proposal in 2007, a detailed study of the lived experience of doctoral learners, was not precisely the gap that had emerged in my study. I found myself overwhelmed by them. How was it possible to fill them all, and yet still complete my thesis on time?

Literature: Becoming Part of the Scholarly Conversation
Having had a sense of relief in the realisation that my 'stunned mullet' feeling was common at least to members of my cohort, I began to refine my abstract. The language was formal, and as Naydene pointed out, missed the autoethnographic point. I was still trying to force my study to make generally applicable theoretical conclusions, completely antithetical to the postmodern position I had taken in undertaking the research.

I was back in 'stunned mullet' space, until I decided to look at how other autoethnographic theses had handled concluding the thesis. Once again, Tai Peseta, unknowing, came to my aid. She writes in the introduction to her concluding chapter:

> *I thought I could write a thesis that I would be able to close with ease; where I could signal with a scholarly sort of confidence what it is that the academic development project ought to be about; ... In my own small way, I have extended upon those conversations started in earnest and with difficulty, by others ... while I have been concerned to open up spaces; to ask questions and perhaps to ask them differently; ... the project itself has become more and more slippery (Peseta, 2005, p. 212).*

Through Tai's words, I came to name the problem of doctoral study that aims to uncover, reveal or trouble accepted understandings of a phenomenon. It can never

close all the gaps it opens – even simply the ones that the researcher sees. I realised that the conversation with the literature that I have engaged with is merely a beginning, yet coming to this place, I have to acknowledge that I cannot go back to where I was when I began this process epistemologically and ontologically (Meyer & Land, 2005). This study therefore represents a snapshot of a three-year 'moment' in time. Like all snapshots, it is merely representative of my experience. My move from citing the 'authorities' into conversing with the literature/field has been assisted by my conference experiences (see text box below). I have come to understand that every 'paid thinker' (academic) that I have engaged with, am engaging with and will engage with through their writing is trying to be 'good enough' – is doing their best in the moment. Their authority lies in their willingness to take the risk of being criticised at the most fundamental level of 'selfness', who they think they are as thinkers. Finding my thesis has therefore been about a trust in my own thinking, a belief in the good intentions of fellow academics, and an understanding that knowledge-building is about finding gaps and beginning to approach answers.

Conferencing: Meeting the people who are part of the canon

I had joined the Challenging Academic Development (CAD) collective – a listserve dedicated to questioning the practices of Academic Development, just before I presented a paper at the HERDSA 2007 conference in Adelaide. Members of CAD, with amazing hospitality, invited me to their post-conference meeting, where I was privileged to see academics in my field from across the globe debating and exercising their minds about academic development in informal and authentic ways. The experience completely reshaped my view of the value of academia. I was finally able to escape my grandfather's 'tick on the public ox' comment (see Chapter 1, p.9). Also, as a result, I was able to ask Tai for her thesis, which I could not access through the university databases. She sent it to me with some embarrassment, suggesting that having completed it, she now found it somewhat naïve. I did not. I shared it with my colleagues at work. We were stimulated for weeks by the questions she had raised, and the similarity of our experiences to hers in Australia. Her thesis gave us permission to articulate our own concerns about our practices and elevated the development conversations in the unit to a new level. I became convinced of the value of autoethnography as a method of inquiry as a result of this experience.

Journal: 13thMay 2008

My Supervisors

Finding my thesis has been given a sense of urgency by the months ticking by and further by the need to meet with Naydene and Lebo 'about the book' as Naydene puts it. Once the date was set for a discussion and a meal (both are incredibly busy people and finding a suitable date and time was not easy because of the work demands on them), I had to have something to show them. Their affirmations and comments on the fragments (if one might call a series of 13-page stories – fragments) I had sent them had encouraged me and kept me working.

In 2004, Sophia, Mary, and I prepared a conference paper[72] about the discourses that informed PaperHeaDs' choosing of our supervisors, or in my case what was stopping me choosing a supervisor. At the time I said, "I think I'd rather be able to define what it is that I want to research and be totally in control of it before I start looking for someone to supervise me." I recognise now that I was not 'always-already' (Manathunga & Goozee, 2007). I knew that to be ready to begin I needed to have a sense of what I wanted to find out. It took me three years of 'pretending' (as Annie puts it p.198) to feel that I was enough in control to seek out a supervisor. For me the person of the supervisor-to-be needed to be enthusiastic, interested in the project, and willing to see me as an able scholar (rather than a student) and peer. As Amelia put it, "We are not blank slates – some of our slates are quite full already." I wanted a supervisor with a sense of humour who was prepared to delve beyond the obvious forms of educational research. My shopping list selected elements from two of the discourses in Grant's analysis – the psychological and the traditional-academic (Grant, 2005a). I was lucky to have encountered two people who met my criteria, in Lebo and Naydene. More, I was lucky that they were willing to 'take me on', once I asked them – the first affirmation that Sophia mentions when her supervisor claimed to "be honoured" by her approach. Sophia's and my experiences are in stark contrast to Mary's experience of being told to "come back when she has some ideas" (p. 255). Both Barbara Grant (2001) and Asta Rau

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72 Unfortunately I cannot give the citation for this paper without revealing the identities of my co-writers. I apologise to them for not contributing to increasing their citation count.

(2004), researching Master's supervision, have suggested that success is more likely when student and supervisor share reasonably aligned discourses. Where the complex relationship between the thesis and the embodied persons of supervisor and student (Grant, 2003) is further disrupted by lack of shared discourse the learning process is more difficult.

It appears to me in retrospect that I instinctively knew that I needed the "certain kind of person" (Gee, 2000, p. 100) I needed to be seen as to be a capable scholar and thinker. My respect for Lebo and Naydene, and theirs demonstrated for me, has been a motivational force in my not wanting to disappoint them – to be revealed as a fraud (c.f.Ntsiki p.231). I did not want to stumble at this last hurdle. Although it is outside the scope of this study, it suggests that the identity of the supervisor, both professional and personal, is an important part of the relational context through which a doctoral identity is created. Does the identity of the supervisor make all the difference? The stories of each of the PaperHeaDs suggest that it does.

The work of constructing doctoral identities

As signalled by my choice of metaphor for each story I heard from the PaperHeaDs, doctoral identity is as unique as the individual is. It is shaped by the parts of our lives that we choose to bring to the experience. Each of us have drawn on our habitus and met thresholds that demand that we construct a different story of ourselves as able to: know, question, tolerate ambiguity, be disciplined, be authoritative, and mostly be persistent. Each story I tell describes different aspects of the process of re-storying, yet they describe the existential challenge characterised by fear, anxiety, panic, turmoil, and inertia. Whether the resolution lies in making a plan for external support, reflecting on one's self, or choosing to do something differently e.g. writing when one feels that one has nothing yet to say in text, each threshold challenge requires a shift in positioning.

Positioning, Self-positioning, Authority

Reading my own stuck places through the stories of PaperHeaDs allows me to move. The following extract from my view of my doctoral learning world describes the last 'stuck' place, perhaps for me the most terrifying 'ontologically'.

Monday 3rd August 2009. I'm exhausted and it's not the physical fall-out from walking 49 km last weekend, in preparation for the Dolphin Ultramarathon. That felt like pure bliss, despite the aching muscles afterwards. The serendipitous discovery of a bakery open at 8 am in Umhlanga with fresh hot croissants, after 3 hours on the road and the triumph of climbing two kilometres from sea level to the top of the ridge was fabulous. No, what exhausted me was the 3-day writing PaperHeaDs Getaway, mainly with Bee and Annie, though Maya and Amelia joined us for the last day. I wrote and wrote some more. It was exhilarating, having the words and ideas to construct the Roundtable, even though it never happened that way. It was fabulous to put my ideas about CoP on the table at teatime, or over the evening glass of red and have them critiqued and explored by the others. And then to go back to the writing, all in one kind of stream of consciousness (though without James Joyce's avoidance of full stops). It was good.

As always, the day of the end of a Getaway is a write-off for any further D-work. I usually come home and nap. P calls it 'pressing the reset button'. I call it 'flashing my cache'. It's all about deleting all the recent traces of thinking and worrying a topic, all the stimuli that have been pounding in my brain. This time I didn't do that. I knew I had things to do for the doctoral seminar that weekend: finding two thesis documents to share with the group, and producing an abstract of my own study. I hadn't started thinking about that, I didn't know yet what it was that I was trying to say, although I think what I've done is quite exciting (then again there are the times when it feels quite boring and mundane). I managed to work through the emails that had built up in my absence – but found I couldn't think deeply about my doctorate. I also couldn't face listening to the guest

speaker that usually opens the seminar weekend on the Friday night. I decided to go for a long walk with the walking group instead. I justified this because I hadn't done any physical exercise since the previous weekend. I did feel guilty though – why? Disappointing the coordinators? Contributing to a half empty seminar room? Looking rude? All of my guilt was about my representation in the minds of others, rather than any sense that I would be missing out (how arrogant!). I decided that guilt was stupid and autonomous self-assessment was more appropriately doctoral!

I got up at 5 am as usual and worked on the stuff I needed to bring to the Saturday session. I managed to throw together an abstract, though I knew it was weak, I'm not as afraid of criticism as I was two years ago. Maybe that's another threshold in doctoral learning. You can't take it personally or as evidence of not being good enough, when it's about contributing in a small way to a collective understanding of something. The weekend was useful though draining (there wasn't much left in my head to drain after the Getaway). I was specially glad to be reminded of Lebo's sock theory of theorisation. The seminar process is a very different experience to a Getaway, though the group banter that's come with familiarity is delightful. I think I like how everyone takes everyone else very seriously – the critique is a lot gentler than that I get at PaperHeaDs. It was nice to see how well everyone is getting on – even though we are all starting to stress about submission dates. October the 14th looms large in my mind. Will I get it all done before my study leave ends?

So that's why this morning I'm exhausted. Between 5 and 8, I've rejigged my abstract out of the comments made over the weekend, but since then I've been staring at my draft, adding and deleting commas, but not making any progress. It's 1 pm and I'm going to give up and 'hit reset', do a codeword puzzle and listen to my audiobook, till it's time to go walking again. Maybe I'll find a thesis in the percolation process. (Reflective Journal, 3rd August 2009)

I have found that balancing the exhaustion of mental work with physical exercise has enabled me to sleep well, even though every morning I wake thinking about what I need to do on my thesis. I imagine it would be a lot more difficult for someone who has children, is working full-time, and has a partner who is dependent because of gender role expectations. I have the luxury of time. I am incredibly lucky to have had six months of study leave to spend on completing my study. I sometimes feel guilty about having this luxury (I often feel guilty about having luxuries – I think it is a life-sentence for being a white middle-class South African). I deal with my guilt by reminding myself that I worked for eighteen years to accumulate the leave, and planned how best to use it effectively (without a clear idea about where the research might take me – Foucault (1988, p. 9) said: "The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end"). Being positioned as privileged gives me a duty to care (Noddings, 1995b), to remember that this time off means that my work colleagues are carrying my load. I have to use every second productively.

Within the social positioning that I find myself, my guilt also leads me to self-positioning. It forces me to sit down at my desk and computer (I am lucky to have these too) every morning at 5 am, whether or not I have a clear idea about what I want to do. Each morning I have ringing in my head Amelia's injunction that there is always something to do with a PhD, regardless of how much time is available. It could be catching up with filing, making backups of documents, journaling, reading the newest journal articles, summarising, listening to sound files, or writing a paragraph. I envy her ability to make lists in her head and systematically check off things as she goes through her day. It might be a multi-tasking 'mother thing', because I remember Maya saying that she never goes anywhere without a book or, more recently, her laptop. She does her best academic reading while watching her daughter at swimming training in the early morning or her son playing cricket. Alongside Amelia's and Maya's voices, is Alyse's mantra – "Trust the Process", Maura's story of joy in thinking, Sophia's deep pleasure in academic work and Ntsiki's observation that it is OK to feel that I have been here before. The feeling is misleading. I am moving. I recognise and empathise with the resistances that Annie, Bee, and Mary are encountering. In a reluctance to do something (get up, switch on, open a file that I am fighting with) I have come to see a threshold of self to be crossed,

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to reduce the pain as quickly as possible by doing what comes up next. These are choices that position me as able – yet they seem so obvious. Are they too obvious to be mentioned in the canon on doctoral learning?

Just Write and Just Do Something Related

I have learned through my doctoral process that along with "just write" (cf. Maya's and Mary's stories), sits with "just do something related" as a principle for success. Textbooks do not mention it but "Just doing something related" keeps me in touch with the ideas. Each move of organisation such as creating files, thinking of names and where to put them so that they will be accessible, is a move of connection. It is a decision about my own positioning and it rests on my theory about who I am and the way things are. Eve Bendix Peterson asks "How is the desiring subject produced, and how is *desire* done?" (Petersen, 2008, p. 56). Similarly, every file structure I create reveals a decision about the doctor I want to be. I can reverse the decision simply, by deleting or copying and pasting into different places, but I become attached to the landscape of my thinking, so I prefer to build my new developments in old spaces, rather than constantly tear them down and start from scratch.

My folder name for my PhD work is revelatory. Why do I run 'work' together with the month and year? Why is PHD capitalised and separated by a space from the word 'work'? Simplistically the answer is that at the end of each month I backup the latest version of my work to date on my 100 Gigabyte hard-drive, and I change the month name on my working copy. It helps me keep clear in my mind which version I am working on and provides a record of my changes (ontological and epistemological) since I began. Symbolically though, PHD represents importance – capitalising entire words represents shouting in the digital world. It is separated by a space from the word "work" (see screenshot Figure 24 below). It has an importance, a representivity that is separate from the work I am doing to achieve it. Capitals are indicative of desire in this case. Running the word 'work' together with the month makes each file a marker in the temporal process of the study. It indicates progress and dynamic change to me. It is also

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easy to see the 'stuck places' I encountered: some months are exact copies of the previous one. I saved them anyway. I have come to treasure the stuck places.
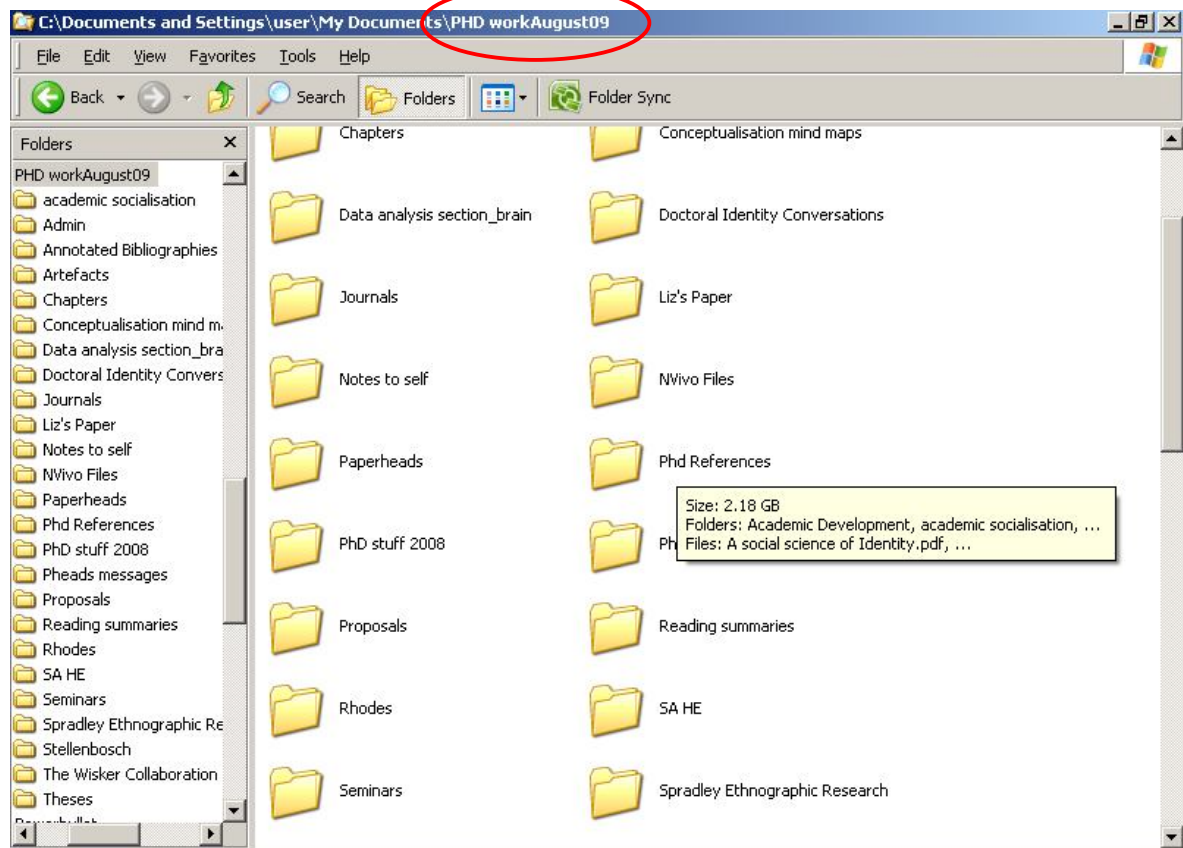

Figure 24: Screenshot of PHD work folder, August 2009

When I was not working digitally, avoiding 'just writing', I was often reading voraciously in what seemed like multiple directions or completely without direction. I frantically searched for established ideas to hang my study on (cf. Annie's story), rather than to validate or challenge my own thinking. My reading journal shows me picking up here a journal article, there a couple of chapters of a book. In my first year of registration, to prepare my proposal, I dutifully summarised nearly the entire 3rd edition of Denzin and Lincoln's handbook (2005) through a very close reading of every line. I had a notion in my mind that this was how to do academic reading that stemmed back to undergraduate skills courses in which I was taught, but never learned, and never practised, 'how to skim, scan and read for detail'. I have since learned to scan for ideas – to create in my mind networks of concepts with networks of authors rather than knowing discretely the detail of every single article I have read. The authors' voices

seem to pop up when I need to access them. Happily, computers have made searching for exact phrases in documents much easier.

In my second year, there were months where I can only track my activity (or lack of it) through my handwritten journal and emails to PaperHeaDs, where like Mary (p.258) I avoided contact with my doctoral work by fully immersing myself in my union activity on campus. It was the PaperHeaDs meetings and Getaways that kept me in touch with the idea of my doctorate in between the frantic bustle of activity just before a doctoral seminar weekend.

I have noticed that after each bout of writing I am mentally exhausted, not a spark of creative energy seems to remain – which often translates into take-aways for dinner. (Does the world know how much creativity it takes to produce a meal?) Even reading anything thought-provoking is out of the question – my mental tiredness will not allow me to be provoked. Besides, any such provocation might require official acknowledgement, which means that I would need to record it in EndNote or in my journal – an entire world of administration.

Just Percolate

On the continuum of doctoral learning activity, between "just do something related" which can easily become a mechanism for avoidance, and "just write," the process of production, is the process of "just percolate". Percolators were popular coffee-makers in the 80's. They sucked up the water in the pot, dripped the water through the ground coffee, and then repeated the cycle several times, making loud slurping sounds. My family had percolated coffee as a treat on Sunday morning, when breakfast was leisurely bacon and eggs at 9 am. Percolation is associated with pleasure for me, and is an apt description of one of the processes of 'doing a doctorate'. The coffee is me and the liquid circulating is all the theory and ideas and connections between them. I have needed time for these to run through me to produce the hopefully flavourful final brew. With the old percolators, putting too much coffee in the machine blocks the flow; too much liquid makes the coffee tasteless. The same is true of the doctoral percolation

process: too much of me in the writing inhibits the flow of theory, while too much theory will water down my thesis.

I never understood how Maya, Amelia, and Maura could be so up to date with the latest popular fiction, movies, or TV programmes while they were writing their theses. Actually, I still do not, but I recognise this as what I have called the percolation process. From being an avid reader of fiction as a hobby, reading has become work. It is still enjoyable, but I prefer to concentrate on reading academic works. Rather than reading newspapers, novels and magazines, I save my eyes from strain by listening to podcasts and audiobooks. I listen to the latest New York Times Digest, episodes from the Philosopher's Zone (Australian Broadcasting Corporation), and BBC 4 radio documentaries to stay in touch with the world. When the world is too much, I listen to science fiction novels. I can listen while I walk, make meals, and do the laundry.

Autoethnographic framing of the narratives

Autoethnography, by definition, is a research method that is deeply personal. It has provided me with the opportunity to look at what Bourdieu calls my 'habitus': my 'embodied history' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 281) and how it influences the fields in which I operate, as well as how they have influenced me. It has also brought to view aspects of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital on which I have been able to draw to support the development of my doctoral identity. As such, this methodology has revealed many of the elements that are under erasure in the educational stories we tell about doctoral learning and what a doctorate might represent. These may be the knowledge that 'becomes' the doctor and informs their practice as supervisors, or it may be the knowledge that is erased after graduation when 'narrative smoothing' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, pp. 7-10) constructs a success story of competent engagement.

My autoethnographic framing is aligned with the post-modern stance I took when I initiated the research. Admitting that my research positioning shaped the narratives, and determined what I heard and what I chose to not consider, has enabled me to bring to light meta-narratives about doctoral learning in ways that reveal the disjuncture

between lived experiences of some doctoral learners and the accounts represented in official documents.

I cannot claim that this is the truth for all doctoral learners or even doctoral learners in the Humanities and Education in South Africa. The approval of PaperHeaDs for the verisimilitude (Denzin, 1997, p. 13) of the story I have told is valuable (see Chapter 3), as is the conversation this research has stimulated in the doctoral cohort as I have shared it. The test of the validity of this account will lie in the ways in which it might open up questions about teaching and learning at a doctoral level. I believe it produces 'knowledge from which to act' (Lather, 1991, p. ix), suggesting ways in which doctoral learners and their supervisors can work alone and together to build doctoral identity.

My study supports the theory-building work by Wisker and her colleagues, which speaks to the existence of threshold concepts and conceptualisations. The theory is extended through demonstrating the lived experience that connects the notion of threshold crossing which transforms individual ways of knowing (Meyer & Land, 2005) to the nature of ontological shifts in the doctoral knower in her life world (Barnacle, 2005; Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007). It shows how doctoral learning transforms individual ways of being.

Survey questionnaire methodology may have a tendency to provoke answers from doctoral learners that are aligned with the dominant doctoral discourses. This study, foregrounds a learning space outside institutional practices and rhetorics (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999) and derives from in-depth conversations and shared experience. It makes overt the chaotic messiness of doctoral learning. Its narrative methodology opens up the possibility of similar investigations with different groups of doctoral learners outside university 'control' or direction and may thereby find resonances with others with different habitus, allowing them to speak and to reshape the African university. A further interest would be to discover what a pedagogy that emphasises the agency of autogogy might look like.

Work on doctoral learning in online communities of practice (Wisker, Robinson & Scacham, 2007) could be extended to consider self-formed affinity groups (Gee, 2000), using social networking technology that allows for playful liminal spaces.

Ethical Issues

I have flagged the ethical challenges I encountered in using this methodology throughout the text, for example indicating where, in a different kind of thesis, I would insert a citation but could not because of care for not revealing the identity of specific PaperHeaDs.

In a few instances PaperHeaDs have asked me to remove elements of their story from my account and in other cases I have chosen to do so in order to remain true to the undertaking I made in my request for their consent (Appendix 2). The risk we have taken lies in the 'fixing' of this particular account as I have made it to the best of my knowledge at this time. Will Liz, Maya, Maura, Ntsiki, Amelia, Sophia, Mary, Annie, Alyse, and Bee be held up as examples of deviant, other, not 'Proper' students in the future, forever? Having chosen their own pseudonyms for their own reasons, they know who they are in this account. I hope they will treasure this story of their stories and celebrate their courage in allowing me to tell it – in all its flattering and unflattering aspects.

A risk also lies in whether the women of PaperHeaDs are taken to be typical of all doctoral learners. This has not been my intention. I aim to suggest that the account offered here indicates that the phenomenon of doctoral learning requires more consideration of the experience of the learner – particularly in a transforming South Africa.

Ethically, I faced a challenge in completing the declaration that prefaces this work. It is a fact, if such a thing as a fact can exist in a postmodern account, that the story of PaperHeaDs is a co-construction. No-one else has physically put the words on the page. But the words I use to tell the story, of each woman and of the group, come from my

interaction with each of them and the group it is impossible to claim autonomy in knowledge-making (Jaggar, 2001, p. 530) or even to claim independence of thought through conversation with the literature around doctoral learning. I have tried in this work to acknowledge in the text all the sources of knowing that I have drawn upon to come to this thesis, but find that in that respect the account is incomplete.

The methodology I have used raises more questions than can be answered here, such as how might the narrative change when one's habitus is not aligned with that of the institution and one's own symbolic capital has no purchasing power in the academy? What symbolic violence might be perpetrated? What attacks on one's being? Can alternative forms of knowledge-creation be considered 'scholarly' contributions to the community of knowledge-builders? Answers to these questions can be found through more autoethnographic work located in the field of doctoral education. Is a story of doctoral becoming different for men, younger people, scientists or business people?

Finding my thesis

Interlude – the fag packet.

It's certainly not healthy, but it is real. I think it was doing the workshop on autoethnography for Joan's 'Self Study in Higher Education' group yesterday, which meant that I spent all night revisiting bits of my study and the literature that locates it. I woke up this morning with the whispers of the BBC 4 programme "The Forum" in my ears. Sleeping with my iPod on all night has really helped preventing me from being startled awake by random night noises – probably not good for my hearing though. It was the episode of The Forum where the guests were Anthony Giddens (the sociologist), Ben Okri (the novelist) and Sarah Hardy (anthropologist) talking to Brigitte Kendall (a science journalist I think?). I can't remember what the words were but I woke worrying my thesis – somehow the two connected. I struggled out of bed with the wisp of an idea and said to P, "I think I've found my thesis". She didn't even say good morning, or ask me

what it was, she just said urgently, "Write it down quick … on the back of this cigarette box". So I did (Figure 25). I think she's tired of listening to me 'gaaning aan' about my anxiety about not finishing or not having anything to finish with. I don't know whether I'll be able to make sense of it later when I actually sit down at my computer. This is autoethnography, right? With all the embarrassing and unpc things that that entails (Reflective journal, 6th August 2009)
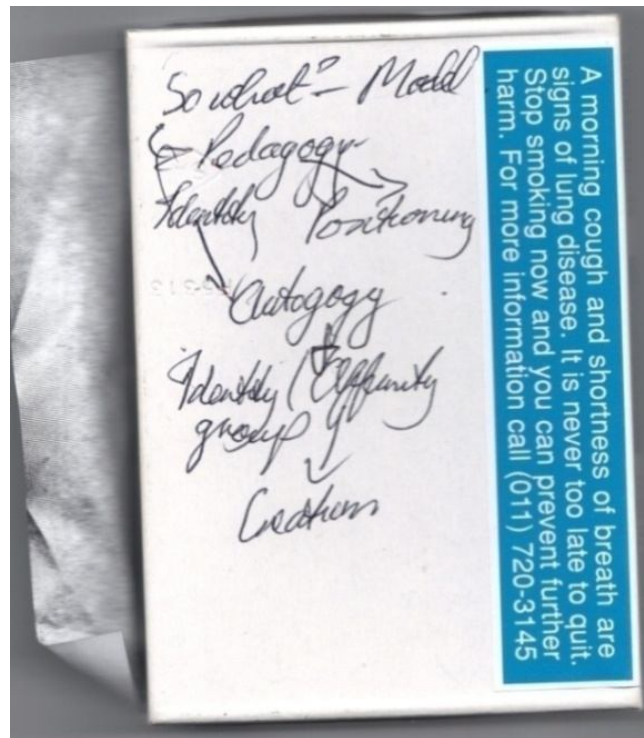

Figure 25: Fag end thesis

Interpreting my scrawl and trying to reconstruct the 'aha' moment, proved more difficult than it would seem, as many victims of overnight inspiration would attest. Throughout my doctoral journey I have been asked, "Why should what you want to do/ are doing matter? Why should I care? Everything you have said is interesting but – So What?" Bee describes a similar experience in her struggle to find a writing voice that is not too colloquial, but which was her own (cf. Bee's story).

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Adding to the canon: Implications of the PaperHeaDs' story/ies

The authoritative voice that represents a well-informed opinion articulated clearly, but within the conventions of academic writing, is a difficult one to find. It is interesting to me that this is the first time in my education experience that I recall this question. In my Master's research, the question was: What does it mean for practice? Not what do *you* think it means, and why? The difference between the 'it' of Master's research and the 'you' of doctoral research is central to my argument that the construction of a doctoral identity is the work of doctoral learning. The pedagogy of doctoral study, whether supervision or classroom-based cohort groups, therefore needs to consider more than the generic skills or stages of the process, concentrating on the affirmation of appropriate doctoral practices. By this I mean seeing the doctor who is becoming (Gee, 2000). Yet more importantly though, the implication of my study is that autogogy, the process of the learner teaching herself to learn by herself, is the dominant process on the way to becoming an autonomous researcher (Johnson, Lee & Green , 2000). I have been empowered by the recognition of what it feels to be on a learning threshold (Wisker et al, 2004; Meyer & Land, 2005; Wisker, Kiley & Aiston, 2006). Being aware that reaching a 'stuck place' is a magnificent signpost on my journey provided me with the opportunity to investigate the causes of my stuckness. I have found that they lay in various places.

The obvious place of ignorance – obvious in the sense that it is the first stop in diagnosing the stuck place, the teacher's explanation, namely not knowing the field well enough – has led me to articulate and refine the question. What is it that I don't know about xyz? I have done this through asking a question on the PaperHeaDs list or in meetings where I have the freedom to ask 'naïve' questions, to be silly, to try out new words. Here the question is critiqued and suggestions for references are made. At this point, I have to take or reject the critique and/or suggestions and find out whether the literature supports what has been said. Through this process, I can observe my thinking and trace the way I work through the problem without worrying about my language. If I still cannot resolve the issue or I want to test the resolution, I can ask my supervisors to apply their critical minds to my thinking – in ways that are more formal. 'Just Writing', whether in an email or in a properly referenced piece of work, enables me to see my

argument developing. Presenting this work in progress more formally at doctoral seminars has exposed it to further critique, from the perspective of those who are at the same point on the road, those best placed to assess whether I am taking short cuts or avoiding an issue, because they are observing themselves doing similar things.

Exposing a big piece of thinking to peer review through conference paper presentation and submitting a chapter for a book have given me some 'benchmarks' for the level of academic thinking required, in addition to the comments provided by my supervisors and the coordinators of the seminar group.

A less obvious place of 'stuckness', but more critical to this thesis, is having had to deal with my learning history, which has often inhibited new ways of thinking about my topic and why I was doing a doctorate. Maya's insight that my rejection of status symbols has made my journey difficult (cf. Maya's story) forced me to ask why I felt that doctoral status was a shallow goal. In the same way every story in this study speaks to the positioning we accept as part of the 'me I know myself to be' (to quote Bee). Some of these positionings do not serve the process of completing a doctoral study, viz. mistrust of academic authority (Mary, Bee), political and micropolitical fears (Annie, Maura, Liz, Amelia), physical location (Alyse), personal teleology and beliefs about academic work (Liz, Bee, Mary, Sophia, Annie). My reflective journal and the open sharing in PaperHeaDs spaces have enabled me to observe these self-positionings. Once they appear in written form in my inbox, via my copy from the list, I can see my thinking through the eyes of others (e.g. the moment described by Maura, when she felt embarrassed to be so open about her feelings in the dark of night). I can then make decisions about what needs to be changed, what needs to be temporarily suspended, and what might serve me in the future.

From my own story and those of the PaperHeaDs with doctorates, the most effective position to take is that learning is fun, and that one's own thinking is interesting. In terms of purpose and management of the project: the position of taking the time for one's self, of having the doctoral space as an escape rather than its being an additional burden in a busy life, refusing to feel guilty about taking time for ourselves seems to

have been the single common feature of successful journeys. This runs counter to the discourse of doctoral study as serious, important and status-laden business. PaperHeaDs makes intellectual engagement fun and funny. It is a space in which we can allow ourselves to be liminal, to circle thresholds suspiciously, and to provide social recognition of the thousands of little shifts that need to be made in repositioning ourselves.

Chapter 1 of this study describes my social position as privileged in terms of access to economic, social, and symbolic capital. My understandings of my fellow PaperHeaDs as represented in the narratives I have presented arise from my recognition of the symbolic capital that we share and have used to rehearse taking doctoral positions.

PaperHeaDs is the production of our interacting habitus, and has a habitus of its own. "The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 281). In this case PaperHeaDs' collective habitus has evolved against and with the schemes/structures that are the institutionalised practice called a doctorate. The habitus "deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms" (p. 281). The collective habitus has been to challenge the practices of doctoral education through laughing at them, complaining about them, exploring them, and in Amelia's term 'domesticating them' and in turn being domesticated by them as they become less strange. In this way our doctoral work, represented by our theses, has become 'regulated improvisations' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 282). The positive reaction of my fellow PaperHeaDs to my stories of them (and their validation of their usefulness) – (presented in Chapter 3) suggests that we are often unconscious of our individual habitus and how it may be in conflict with what Bourdieu calls the second 'mode of objectification' – social institutions (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 282). From this collision arises the sense of being a 'fish out of water', the feelings I have described as the sensation of approaching a threshold, a change in my conceptualisation of the knowledge and the embodied transformation required to move on to the appropriate level of performance that constitutes work worthy of a doctorate.

PaperHeaDs is therefore a social space for threshold activities. Outside the surveillance of institutions, and the need to 'get it right', it has allowed for rehearsal of academic practices and the acquisition of appropriate literacies.

My recognition that my positioning played a large role in the doctoral process provided an opportunity for me to exercise agency. It required dealing with ontology and teleology at a most intimate and personal level, my sense of what my Self was and my purpose for the study (in the short term) and my academic work (in the long term) on an ongoing basis. PaperHeaDs has allowed me to do this.
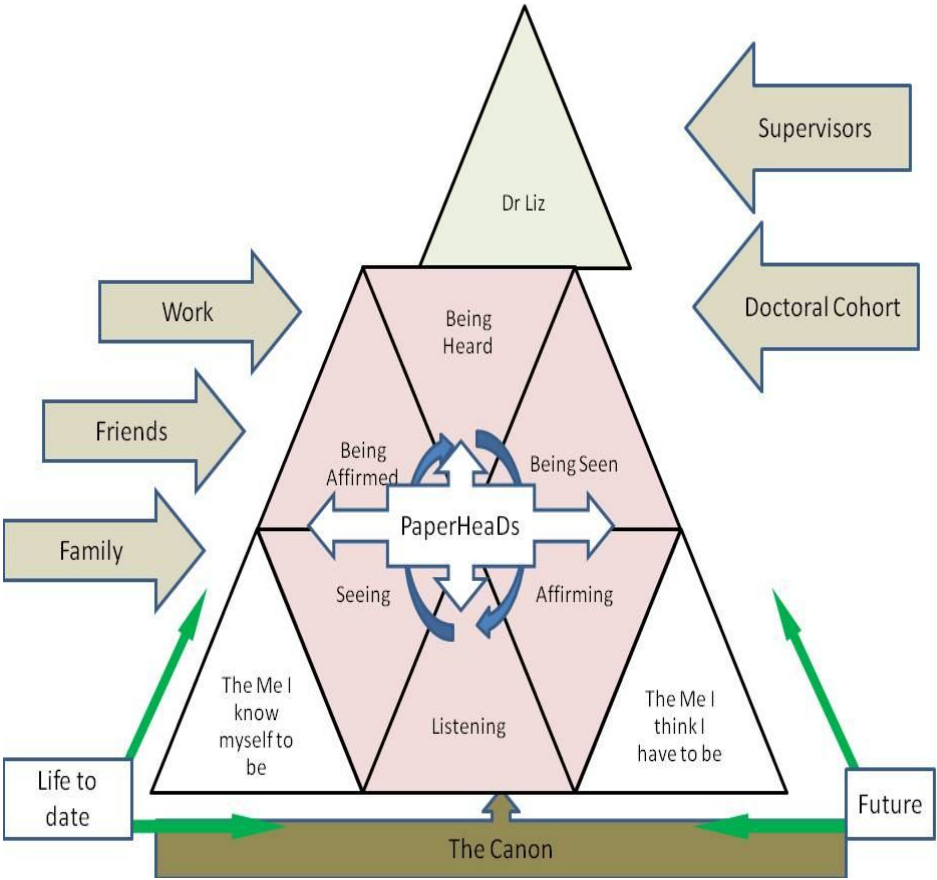
Figure 16: Doctoral becoming within an affinity group

Figure 26 translates my 'fag end thesis' into a summary of this work. My journey of doctoral becoming and those of the other PaperHeaDs occur in the space between the persons I and they have known ourselves to be, and the persons we hope to be in the future, "because... [t]he social future can influence the social past" (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999, p. 15). Between these two forces of expectation operate the forces of becoming known as a certain kind of person (Gee, 2000) – recognition and affirmation (being seen). The 'structuring structures' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 278) of my life world are: family, friends, and work on the side of the 'me I have always known myself to be'. These relational structures provide sites of challenge, resistance and accommodation in the process of becoming a different sort of person. On the right of the diagram are the support structures – doctoral cohort, supervisors, department and university – that operate on the side of the 'me I think I need to be'. These are external to my doctoral learning world where I faced ontological thresholds created at the interface between these two pressures. Making the canon of literature and knowledge the foundation of my work, the PaperHeaDs and I created a space for rehearsal of doctoral performativity required for the future. PaperHeaDs, the affinity group, is not a community of practice (Leshem, 2007; Wisker, Robinson & Scacham , 2007). According to the accounts of the members of PaperHeaDs, the group does not have expectations about the 'me I need to be'. Rather the space of the group has been central to the doctoral identity construction process. Within the space of the group, we have acknowledged our ways of constructing our own stories of our selves, but also identified other possible stories to be told. It is therefore located diagrammatically between the past self and the doctoral self to be. PaperHeaDs is a place of doctoral identity construction.

The combination of the arrows in the centre of the diagram is intended to represent both stability and movement. The blocky, multidirectional arrow represents stability in the security of PaperHeaDs, provided by virtue of its existence. The cyclical arrows show movement as the action of the group is moved by the effort of its members, as we listen and speak in the process of constructing identity. PaperHeaDs recognises the *journey* of doctoral learning, the space between, yet references who we have been and who we need to be simultaneously.

It may be that it is exactly this liminal space, usually occupied only by the individual doctoral learner, that has been documented as the 'lonely' space of doctoral study (Bartlett & Mercer, 2000, p. 199). This study suggests that creating spaces for seeing, hearing and affirmation of the 'self becoming', outside formal classroom settings, will create the environment in which doctoral learners can move more quickly and happily, satisfying institutional needs for throughput and retention. Spaces for connection between the self that was, is and is becoming, through in-depth conversation and life-storytelling, may be more valuable than any number of seminars on methodology. The PaperHeaDs give an account of the value of Getaways as spaces for serious 'play' yet also rehearsal of scholarship, which allowed us to find out 'just how me I can be' as a scholar.

Methodological challenges to the nature of an argument

My challenge has been to represent my discoveries in a form that will be understood as a pursuasive academic argument – a specifically westernised form of thought, arising from traditions that parallel the development of western universities. In order for my argument to be convincing, in this tradition, it must contain the components of a claim, evidence to support it, and probably most importantly a very clear warrant or reason for connecting the evidence to the claim (Toulmin, 2003). In constructing my warrant, I need to anticipate rebuttal and delineate the arena in which my claim is valid – the constraints and limitations of its applicability. I also need to recognise that some elements of my argument are field-independent – true of any research argument, and some are field-dependent – recognised as persuasive in the fields of higher education and social science.

In this format – my argument is simple. I claim that firstly, identity construction is not only an issue but is rather the central issue of doctoral learning and that it incorporates embodied challenge, resistance and accommodation, not merely cognitive change. Secondly, I argue that social learning through the formation of affinity groups, such as PaperHeaDs, can provide the space for this identity-work, which by definition can only be partially provided within the institutions (through supervisory relations and doctoral

cohorts). In support of this claim, I have offered my own story of my doctoral journey, read with, through and against stories of the nine other members of PaperHeaDs. At the same time, I have provided a warrant for the connection of my claim to the evidence, engaging in a discussion with the literature provided by others who are working in this field.

Having met these criteria for a persuasive research argument in the academy, I am aware that it is the stories that are the most persuasive. It is the stories that I would take to a conversation with other doctoral learners. It is the stories that I would tell to open a discussion, about the differences and similarities between experiences with doctoral candidates who are not middle-aged, middle-class and female. In a meeting of trade union representatives in academia from different backgrounds, to discuss how academic staff and students can be supported, it is the stories of experience that would be remembered, analysed, criticised and added to. In this study, I have articulated the struggles of ten women who are socially positioned as privileged; who have both economic, cultural and symbolic capital resources that are fairly closely aligned with the espoused values of the academy. The most valuable consequence of this work may be that it gives permission to other doctoral learners to articulate their own experiences, to create mechanisms and challenging spaces in which their doctoral identity can be rehearsed, affirmed and acknowledged, and where they can know 'just how me they can be' in acquiring their doctorates.

In her analysis of the relationship of trust-making to truth-making, Ruth Beacham (2009) points out that in writing narrative as research, my aim has been to engage you, and by your participation in my words that what I have articulated is credible and resonates with your own experience.

What this investigation has achieved in theorising the learning experience of ten women as stories of identity construction within a liminal space of a doctoral support group, can be developed further. The range of this study has constrained the analysis to the experiences of ten women, providing a data set deriving from a moment in time. It may not represent the experiences of all doctoral learners. Yet the study is also constrained

in that it has erased elements of experience in favour of a coherent account of a privileged finding. While my postmodern stance has allowed me to represent doctoral learning in layered ways, suggesting directions for more detailed investigation, I have foregrounded certain elements of the experiences I have documented. In this account, I have attempted to be transparent in what made me choose these elements. I am aware that adjusting the focus to a specific person, a particular threshold (for example the desire to burn books – Annie), or a particular activity associated with doctoral learning (reading for deep theoretical understanding – Ntsiki) may lead to a more detailed description of conceptual and ontological thresholds to be crossed in this process.

What do we still need to find out? Future research

Post-modern scepticism has allowed me to identify a sort of a space that can be shaped by doctoral learners for themselves, one in which the consequences of inappropriate performance are not threatening of either the self that was or the self who is becoming. My postmodern representation has provided the opportunity for comparison and contrast and the engagement of the reader in alternative constructions of the experience of doctoral learning. My dearest hope (and that of PaperHeaDs) is that post-graduate educators and learners can use these stories as conversation starters in cohort meetings and groups, so making the space for talking about the ontological immobilisation and challenge that characterise doctoral learning. As a new supervisor, working with Master's students, I see similar signs of such identity work, which I would like to investigate.

A phenomenological study based solely on reflective journals (as e.g. Peseta, 2005 in her analysis of academic development work) might provide more detailed insight into the challenge of doctoral learning. "There is an underplayed dimension in psychological studies of self … that recognises the importance of fine-grained, microtemporal analyses of the subtleties of experience" (Benson, 2003, p. 62). This thesis narratively describes lived experience, yet there are gaps which 'fine-grained' accounts might address. As Foucault put it, "The way people really think is not adequately analysed by the universal categories of logic" (Foucault, 1988, p. 10). Going further, mapping student drop-out/

non-completion against ontological/ conceptual threshold challenges in this way, could provide opportunities for improving doctoral pedagogy.

One theme that I am aware of overlooking in this study is the doctoral learner's experience of time, and value associated with time spent, earned and saved. My feeling of time contracting or stretching at particular stages of the work appears to be linked to the degree of agency that I experienced. Where a doctoral student's cultural constructions of time are not linear and results oriented (as within the neoliberal discourse of cultural production), where they are perhaps circular conceptions of a wheel turning and returning, or where time-usage is not part of a cultural value system, this may strongly influence a learner's positioning within the relational context that is doctoral study. It may be exactly this incongruence that makes it impossible, to recast Bourdieu's (1994, p. 282) comment, for learners to "inhabit [universities], appropriate them practically and so keep them in activity". My view of doctoral learning as identity work would suggest that such conflicts of habitus, with institutionalised conceptions of worthy knowledge and knowers, are the site of pedagogical intervention. My study explodes the myth of the 'always-already' student (Johnson, Lee & Green, 2000) and suggests that further detailed autoethnographic studies will contribute to a deeper understanding of structural constraints in universities, such as discrimination and – in Africa – the danger of recolonisation of minds (Asmal, 2002).

At the end of his life, Foucault was working with the notion of how 'governmentality' – guiding rationalities – interact with the self and 'what technologies of self' could be used to ensure agency (Foucault, 1988). In the case of doctoral learning, the question could be: what technologies of self can be used to create autonomous scholars? This idea intrigues me as PaperHeaDs mechanisms of storying and re-storying appear to be such a technology of self. These ideas also suggest that supervisor-identity construction and cohort dynamics may be explored in more detail.

This study has implications for undergraduate teaching in higher education. It may be that the kinds of identity shifts characterised by ontological as well as epistemological thresholds that I have identified in doctoral learners may also be required at

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undergraduate level, as identified in the research into threshold concepts in disciplines (Davies & Mangan, 2005; Meyer & Land, 2005). If learning to identify these transitions and manage them is central to the process of doctoral learners who have achieved at lower levels of study, perhaps helping learners to identify the discomfort of a new learning challenge and to position oneself as able to exercise agency is the core of teaching in higher education.

Conclusion

The doctoral process requires making a path, perhaps a mere track of bent grasses, into new and unstable territory. The metaphor works in the sense that the track may only add a few centimetres to the map of already explored roads. It may repair a pothole or be the small beginnings of a more effective, efficient way of travelling or may reveal a more scenic countryside. This metaphor is rooted in an understanding of knowledge-construction that acknowledges that we add to each other's work and together as a collective reach a better sense of the relevance of the knowledge. Of necessity, then, the sociocultural and interactional aspects of doctoral learning in the stuck moments are central to understanding the process. This study of the narratives of nine women doctoral learners framed by my own autoethnographic eye has analysed these using positioning theory (Murray, 1988; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999; McKenzie & Carey, 2000). My autoethnography suggests that the process of storying and re-storying ourselves, through participation in an affinity group, is an autogogic action, which allowed each of us the space to position ourselves as autonomous learners/researchers. Through PaperHeaDs, we have challenged, resisted and accommodated a variety of discursive positions and exercised agency in the doctoral selves we have constructed.

The process of doctoral learning conceived as a process of identity construction involves passing through thresholds of self-perception that are the product of the story the candidate tells of her life, as well as her experience of her positioning in her life-world. These thresholds of identity challenge are experienced as 'stuck places', fraught with angst in the existential sense. Resolution of a threshold challenge lies in the process of

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self-re-storying and re-positioning through changing behaviours, views of self and value systems, particularly in respect of knowledge and what it means to be a knower. Group processes that recognise the symptoms of imminent thresholds facilitate the doctoral learning process. Support groups such as PaperHeaDs, characterised by democratic and horizontal relationships operating on an ethic of care (Noddings, 1995a; Tillman-Healey, 2003), assist in the construction of doctoral identity by recognising the process of ontological change that occurs as doctoral candidates re-story and re-position themselves in relation to the process of knowledge-creation.

The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning (Foucault, 1988, p. 9).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

RESEARCH OFFICE (GOBAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

04 APRIL 2008

MS. JE HARRISON (207522329)
EDUCATION

Dear Ms. Harrison

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0060/08D

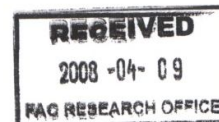I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project:

"The development of Doctoral Identity: An autoethnographic narrative of the role of a non-formal PhD support group"

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully

MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc. Supervisor (Prof. N de Lange)
cc. Prof. R Moletsane
cc. Mr. D Buchler (Faculty Research Office)

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Appendix 2: Sample Consent Form

<u>Request for Your Consent to Participate in My Research Project</u>

Dear PaperHeaDs Member,

In order to fulfill the requirements for ethical research, I would like to give you as much detail as I can so that you can give informed consent to your participation in my research project.

My project is provisionally titled "The Development of Doctoral Identity: An autoethnographic narrative of the role of a non-formal PhD support group".

What the study aims to do is to investigate the process of doctoral learning – particularly the identity constructions in that learning – from the learners' points of view.

Autoethnography is a research method that refers to writing about the personal in relationship to the culture, in this case the culture of our group PaperHeaDs, which I believe has played a large role in mediating some of my own constructions of myself as a doctoral learner.

Your participation in my project would relate to your giving me an account of your own development through the lifespan of the group and thereby informing my account of the value of PaperHeaDs.

What this will require from you in terms of time and resources is that

1) You will spend time reading my narrative of PaperHeaDs, as a background to a one on one discussion with me, of your own development as a doctoral learner and the kinds of events and processes that aided you in this process. I anticipate that this will take two to three hours of your time. I wish to record that discussion, which will be transcribed by either myself or a person approved by you (according to your preference).

2) You will read my construction of your story to see that it appropriately reflects your representation of our conversation. This story will become the data of the study and will be used along those of other participants to construct the narrative of PaperHeaDs, and will form part of the research archive for the study. I expect that this might take two hours of your time at the maximum.

3) That you read and comment on my construction of the PaperHeaDs narrative. This might take about two hours.

Where possible I would like to do this work in the space of a PaperHeads writing Getaway, so I would like to contribute extra to such Getaways to reimburse you for taking the time away from your own projects.

The possible benefit of this story to you is that a story of PaperHeaDs will be written with your input, that will assist future doctoral students in managing their studies and creating support systems for themselves.

Possible hazards of your participation are that revisiting sometimes traumatic periods in the your story of PaperHeads may cause some emotional distress. I believe the expertise and the support of the group in the space of a Getaway, will help to alleviate long-term consequences.

I undertake in the process of this research to:

1)   Keep secrets that you do not want revealed.

2)   Disguise your 'public' identity in a manner that suits you, in all documentation and texts related to this research.

3)   In terms of 'private identities' (those constructed and being constructed through the story), you will have the option, at any stage, to indicate your discomfort with any construction I make of your story.

4)   Respect your right to be as involved in the telling of this story as you choose to be, given the demands on your time and psyche.

5)   Respect your right to withdraw from participation and/or representation should you wish to do so, with no negative consequences.

6)   Never ask more of you than I demand of myself in the telling of this story.

7)   To write as honestly as possible and with empathy to construct a meaningful account of our PaperHeaDs experience.

8)   To honour your disclosures and to use them to try to make PhD study more effective for future learners.

Data storage after the project:

Any original source materials e.g. journals or emails that you refer to help me construct your story will remain your own personal property. The primary data of the study – the approved stories of participants – will form the research archive to be confidentially stored at UKZN. These will be electronically submitted along with the final project report/or thesis. Future use of your story may only be allowed with your permission.

My contact details are:

Liz Harrison (Janet Elizabeth)

32 Scott Rd, Manors, Pinetown

Email: lizkzn@saol.com

Cellphone:0837802971 Work: (031) 3032471 Home: (031)7016788

In the event that you should be concerned by my actions as a researcher, my promoter's details are:

Dr Naydene de Lange

Associate Professor

School of Educational Studies

Faculty of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Private Bag X03

Ashwood

3605

Tel: 031-2601342 Fax: 031-2607003

_____

I,... (your full name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project.

I consent to participating in the research project in accordance with the rules of conduct described in this document.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form and information for my records.

SIGNATURE:..

DATE:..

Appendix 3: Extract from Phenomenological Interview Transcript

Sophia - You used the sort of metaphor of a joker …

Liz – Mm, jester

Sophia -Jester

Liz – … bells

Sophia – Bells, as – can you think of one that would apply, or a couple that would apply that would reflect your progressive …

Liz – Transition, as metaphors

Sophia – Mm

Liz – Um, well there was the famous one of being –I think it's famous I know – 'beam me up Scottie', you know when Captain Kirk – that was

Sophia – Okay and where does that apply?

Liz – That was kind of … the beginning of last year when I …

Sophia – And how did that come about? What does that metaphor apply to?

Liz – It was 'take me out of this chaos because I don't know who I am or what I'm doing, I'm in a completely alien land'

Sophia – Okay

Liz – … I need to go somewhere safe, and PaperHeaDs was the mothership kind of thing

Sophia – Okay

Liz – … also because it was the time that I was starting to do the doctoral seminars at UKZN, and whereas I'd been in a fairly – well I was very, very comfortable before I started getting serious about maybe the PaperHeaDs' story is actually worth saying something about.

Sophia – And that brought a measure of unease, did it?

Liz – Yes, it did, because it started – I had to shift roles again.

Sophia – And what role did you shift – what happened to you?

Liz – Into at sometimes actually being quite serious about being intelligent and about justifying why I'm saying what I'm saying, so it wasn't just an opinion thrown off, but there was some thought about reading and what other people had said that was backing up what I was saying, um, but trying to find a philosophical place to stand in order to ask the questions, um, ja so that was the Captain Kirk 'I'm now going to take charge of my vessel'.

Sophia – So you moved from joker to Captain Kirk. Was there anything in between?

Liz – No there was some – there was stuff in between. I mean, so there was the jester, there was the on-line technician …

Sophia – And have you already toyed with these metaphors? You've already …

Liz – I haven't thought of – I'd sort of thought about – I was aware of the on-line facilitation idea, that the need to create this identity and group and a sense of belonging, without dominating it on line, so that it would become a collective.

Sophia – Have you one for yourself now?

Liz – Sorry?

Sophia -Have you one for yourself now?

Liz – … Student. Um, it's actually quite funny that since I've done my proposal and been through all that time I actually find that when I open my mouth people listen to me, which is quite a strange thing. It's almost like the same kind of shift that happened when I turned 40. Suddenly, people started listening.

Sophia – And in the group – I mean I'm sure when you listen to this, you'll see it for yourself, an interesting progression from joker to technician to Captain, and there's a different progression of an implicit, um, assumption of …

Liz – elation

Sophia – … command, command – a growing sense of command, and in a sense you've now said student – is that a diversification of identity?

Liz – No, maybe it's not student so much as scholar.

Sophia – Yes, maybe

Liz – I think it's more scholar

Sophia – Well maybe you want to think about that because that would, maybe you can think about that and think – because that might be, um, in your – when you go away – that might be very interesting to think about how you have – how you want to conceive – or think about the growth of your own identity

Appendix 4: Self-interrogation in the style of Michael White

What does your doctorate want your life to look like?

Dramatis Personae:

R = Investigative reporter

D = Doctor Wannabe Harrison

L= Liz

Freya- an ex-colleague

Reporter: Dr Wannabe, what is your role in Liz's life right now?

Dr Wannabe: [Airily] Oh, I'm the most important thing – the centre actually – around which everything else revolves. I have to be. She knows that to bring me into being, to create me and then introduce me, means that Liz has to be constantly examining everything in her world at a symbolic level – questioning its meaning and intention, its relationships and resistances.

[Smiling smugly] I find it amusing to watch the panic when she's struck by a powerful metaphor or idea while she is driving or standing in a queue. When she can't write it down she chants it in her head, like a child memorizing times tables. Then what happens is the lovely idea gets old really quickly – she thinks it's boring or stupid – and decides to forget it anyway. The mental agony is quite amusing – well, no gain without pain…

Reporter: What do you mean 'mental agony'?

Dr Wannabe: Well, I guess I mean the way her thoughts run around – it's also an emotional thing, in fact that's the entertainment – better than most movie plots because it is complex and unpredictable.

Reporter: Can you give me an example?

Dr Wannabe: Yes, a recurring scenario with different people in her life happens regularly. She's either trying to explain for the first time who and what I am about or she's trying to explain why they can't be introduced to me just yet. She worries that they think that she's holding back, that they are not good enough for some reason – not clever enough. So she tries different ways to avoid them feeling that way. Sometimes she gives them a brief bio of me like the three questions[73] that brought me into her life and sometimes she tries to go into detail about where I fit in the history of philosophical questions but using what she thinks is simple language. Then she gets so excited that she forgets and they lose interest – she watches the solid, metal shutter of boredom, incomprehension, or judgement (who cares and how is this going to feed the poor?) slide across their eyes. She's given up trying to explain about me to her family, to her partner, workmates and the walking club (who'll usually listen to anything while walking for kilometres at a time). It hurts too much.

Liz: [Nodding] That's true – I do feel minimized when people don't want to hear about you any more. It's like you are so alien and/or esoteric that only useless[74] academics would be interested in you. You could help you know – by falling into some recognizable stereotype or pattern, so I don't have to work so hard!

---

73 How do I construct myself as a doctoral student through the time of my involvement in PaperHeaDs? What are other members' experiences of constructing doctoral identities? In what ways, if any, does participation in PaperHeaDs challenge or support accepted discourses of doctoral learning?
74 The term useless stems back to family cynicism of academia (see Chapter 1) – here indicative of my struggle to conceive of the meaning of my doctorate and the purpose of academia.

[Turns to the Reporter plaintively] I love Dr Wannabe although she really gets my stomach churning at times with anxiety at the time flying past before I can introduce her to everyone. I've got to make her real in such a short time and I'm flailing around looking for what I need to do next to make that soon. Then there are times when she makes my heart race with excitement and curiosity. When she comes closer and we really get talking, she makes me feel that I'm strong and intelligent and capable. [Glaring at Dr Wannabe] Except when she makes me feel stupid!

Reporter: Tell me about times that Dr Wannabe gets closer.

Liz: One of the few places that I can talk about Dr Wannabe, what she looks like and why she's important, is at PaperHeaDs meetings – for some reason we all have different Drs in our lives – tho' Sophia says that her relationship is nearly over and she's convinced that it has been abusive.

Dr Wannabe: [defensively] There's nothing wrong with Sophia's Dr. They get on so well and communicate beautifully about amazing things.

Liz: Yes that's how it looks to us – I often envy her and wish you and I could be as together, but you keep running away! I dream of the day that we could be truly hitched like Maya and her D.

Dr Wannabe: [Wiggles eyebrows] Oh, I do so love to tease you!

Liz: [Leaning forward towards Dr Wannabe, aggressively earnest] I have to say that sometimes I think that my relationship with you is the unhealthiest thing in my life. I'm thinking of you last thing at night and I wake up at the crack of dawn, thinking about you. I resent being in meetings with others because of the time it takes away from

you and even when I'm out with other friends trying to forget you for an hour or two, all I do is think about you and me – I'm getting better about not talking about you all the time. I mean I've always been obsessive about work – I definitely construct myself around and through it, getting horribly enmeshed[75]. But I learned to recognize that in all those family therapy classes I went to with Freya. I feel like I'm betraying that long-term relationship now – putting work aside in favour of a new interest – you. [Whining] Can't I have both of you? And then I ask myself whether I want to get old trying to fit you into my life or my life around you.

Dr Wannabe: [Smug] You do because I thrill you. (heh!)

---

75 Enmeshment is another term from family therapy that refers to a situation where a family or individual has weak/diffuse boundaries between itself and the outside world and therefore provides little in terms of safety and self-definition. The opposite end of the scale is 'disengagement' where the boundaries are so rigid as to divorce the family or the individual from the world completely (Minuchin, 1977)

Appendix 5: NQF Level 10 Level Descriptors (South African Qualifications Authority, 2006)

NQF Level	Level Descriptors
	Typically, a learning programme leading to the award of a qualification or unit standard at this level aims to develop learners who demonstrate:
10	**Scope of knowledge:** expertise and critical knowledge in an area at the forefront of the field, discipline or practice; the ability to conceptualise new research initiatives, and create new knowledge or practice. **Knowledge literacy:** an ability to contribute to scholarly debates around theories of knowledge and processes of knowledge production in an area of study or practice. **Method and Procedure:** an ability to develop new methods, techniques, processes, systems or technologies in original, creative and innovative ways appropriate to specialised and complex contexts. **Problem solving:** an ability to apply specialist knowledge and theory in critically reflexive, creative and novel ways to address complex practical and theoretical problems. **Ethics and professional practice:** an ability to identify, address and manage emerging ethical issues, and to advance processes of ethical decision making, including monitoring and evaluation of the consequences of these decisions where appropriate. **Accessing, processing and managing information.** an ability to make independent judgements about managing incomplete or inconsistent information or data in an iterative process of analysis and synthesis, for the development of significant original insights into new complex and abstract ideas, information or issues.

Producing and communicating information:

an ability to produce substantial, independent, in-depth and publishable work which meets international standards, is considered to be new and/or innovative by peers, and makes a significant contribution to the discipline, field, or practice;

an ability to develop a communication strategy to disseminate and'defend research, strategic and policy initiatives and their implementation to specialist and non-specialist audiences using the full resources of an academic/professional, or occupational discourse.

Context and systems:

an understanding of theoretical underpinnings in the management of complex systems to achieve systemic change;

an ability to independently design, sustain and manage change within a system or systems.

Management of learning:

an ability to demonstrate intellectual independence, research leadership and management of research and research development in a discipline, field or practice.

Accountability:

an ability to operate independently and take full responsibility for own work, and where appropriate to lead, oversee and be held ultimately accountable for the overall governance of processes and systems.

Appendix 6 – Example demonstrating researcher decisions when working with transcribed conversations

Line Number	Rough transcription: Mary lines 50-62	Refined transcription: Mary lines 50-62
50	Liz – Yes why are you laughing	Liz [chuckling] – Yes. Why are you laughing?
51	Mary- Do I want a conversation with my doctorate	Mary [chuckling]- Do I want a conversation with my doctorate?
52	no not really trying to forget about it	No not really [laughing]. [I'm] Trying to forget about it.
53	no I think ja I'm still holding it at a distance to an extent and whether that's a	No I think,[pensive] I'm still holding it at a distance, to an extent, and whether that's a
54	consequence of having thought about it for so long I don't know	consequence of having thought about it for <u>so</u> long, I don't know.
55	maybe its an over-familiarity but its also I mean I can I see in myself I was saying to Maya	Maybe it's an over-familiarity, but it's <u>also</u> – I mean I can – I see in myself.. . I was saying to Maya
56	yesterday	yesterday, [about]
57	the delaying tactics which I put in place	the delaying tactics which I put in place…
58		
59	Liz – Mm	Liz – Mm
60	Mary – and that's not me I mean normally if I've got something to do	Mary – … and that's not me. I mean normally if I've got something to do I
61	I like to get it	like to get it
62	done but I can tell when I'm tidying the cupboards and cleaning the house I'm anything	done, but I can tell when I'm tidying the cupboards and cleaning the house [listing],… I'm [doing] – <u>anything</u>…
	except sit down and write the damn thing	except sit down and write the damn thing.