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15 EVOLVING DOCTORAL IDENTITIES

UNDERSTANDING 'COMPLEX INVESTMENTS'

Susan van Schalkwyk

COMMENCING THE CONVERSATION

The metaphor of a journey is often applied to doctoral studies. This journey is characterised by a sense of 'being and becoming' that accompanies the emergence of a candidate's doctoral identity (Green 2005; see also Barnett & Di Napoli 2008). Many students experience this process of identity formation as complex and multifaceted, influenced by individual realities and social contexts (Jazvac-Martek 2009), and fraught with tension and uncertainty (Green 2005). This change in identity is seldom gradual. Often it is marked by moments of dissonance and crisis that lead students to places of change and growth (Di Napoli & Barnett 2008; Jarvis-Selinger, Pratt & Regehr 2012). The doctoral student is expected not only to engage in the process of knowledge acquisition and creation, but to also navigate the developmental journey towards doctorateness (Frick 2011; Trafford & Leshem 2009). Although there is a growing body of research in the field of doctoral education, there remains a need for studies that seek to understand how the identity of the doctoral candidate evolves during the time of study, and why this rite of passage (Andresen 2000) occurs the way it does (Green 2005; Jazvac-Martek 2009). Knowledge about the lived, day-to-day experience of a doctoral candidate is scant. The relationship between student and supervisor is often shrouded in secrecy representing a 'bounded' space that is seldom opened up to scrutiny from the outside. Following on Jazvac-Martek (2009), I argue that drawing on constructs such as identity, and the development thereof, offers a useful lens through which the doctoral experience can be explored.

When describing the supervisory relationship at doctoral level, Owler (1999, cited in Green 2005:154) has suggested that "each individual is revealed to have complex investments in this relationship". In this chapter my interest is in the nature

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

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of these "complex investments", particularly on the part of the doctoral student, and the ways in which their investment choices mould their identity as doctoral candidates and eventually graduates. Ultimately I ask what this means for those of us tasked with guiding candidates on their doctoral journeys and how a more in-depth understanding of these investments might enable us to challenge prevailing boundaries in postgraduate supervision.

ASPECTS OF IDENTITY

There is a rich scholarship devoted to understanding, defining and describing identity – a scholarship too extensive to address in any depth in a single chapter. It attests to the multiple dimensions that require attention when considering identity as a construct. In this section I draw on a selection of the scholarship to offer a perspective on identity that provides a space within which this particular discussion on doctoral identity can proceed. In doing this I acknowledge that there are multiple points of departure that others may feel are more relevant, and as a result thereof, would wish to frame the argument differently.

Identity is a slippery term defying tight definition. How one's identity (or identities) comes into being is equally problematic. Much has been written, from different perspectives, about the socio-cultural factors that influence identity development (Barnett & Di Napoli 2008; Bourdieu 1986; Hall & Burns 2009; Jazvac-Martek 2009). However, Clegg's (2008) work, which focuses on the individual and how she exercises agency within a particular context, including when acquiring an academic identity, offers an alternative insight. She draws on the work of Margaret Archer (2000) who describes identity formation occurring through the personification of a particular role (in this case the role of doctoral candidate) and emphasises that there is a necessary investment or intentionality involved in taking on such a role. Archer speaks of our "personal identities" which are shaped during "internal conversations" (2000:318). In these internal conversations our sense of well-being, competence and self-worth influence how we make decisions about who we are and what we will do as we weigh up the nature of the investment and whether we care enough to commit to it (Archer 2000). One might question to what extent our 'being' is indeed so carefully negotiated. Archer has been critiqued for foregrounding what has been termed 'conscious deliberation' above all else and seemingly leaving little space for the unconscious or the reflexive response (Akram 2013). Interestingly, however, she (2000) contends that we have no choice in the place from which we start out. Our heritage is fixed and cannot be ignored, thus influencing the person we choose to become. This becoming occurs in a particular space where the

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

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interaction between structure (roles, organisations, institutions, systems) and agency informs the internal conversations alluded to earlier. It could be argued that it is here where our cultural capital, the strength we draw from our heritage (Bourdieu 1986), emerges and leads to the establishment of our social identities which are shaped both by the social context within which we find ourselves and the extent to which we seek to engage in that space. I believe that Archer's work provides a framework within which the development of doctoral identity, at both a personal and a social level, can be considered (O'Byrne 2011) and provides a platform from which we can perhaps shift some of the traditional thinking – the boundaries – that currently informs postgraduate supervision.

What is a 'doctoral' identity? Is it a mantle that the doctoral student draws closer around her as she moves to a place where she gains access or membership to the discourse of a particular disciplinary community? Does it comprise a mix of qualities: intellectual quality and confidence, independence of thinking, enthusiasm and commitment, an ability to adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities (Denicolo & Park 2013)? Perhaps it resides in someone who has made 'an original contribution to knowledge' (Trafford & Leshem 2009)? Frick (2011) provides a summary of doctorateness that highlights characteristics such as being a responsible scholar who is courageous enough to take risks in the pursuit of knowledge and who embraces those traits that could be regarded as typical of such a responsible scholar. It is how candidates experience the pursuit of these characteristics towards the development of a doctoral identity that is the focus of this chapter.

GATHERING THE STORIES

By "learning from [the] lives" (O'Byrne 2011:10) of a number of doctoral candidates who meet on a monthly basis, in two different groups, to engage around issues relating to their doctoral experiences, I have sought to understand the nature of the complex investments that these candidates have made in embarking on advance studies. Known as the 'PhD Discussion Groups', the gatherings were born out of a desire to create a supportive and safe space for doctoral candidates. The first group (Group A), that has been in existence for approximately three years, started with 11 colleagues from my institution who work in a division for academic support. Although their academic backgrounds represent a diversity of disciplines including (higher) education, psychology, educational psychology, sociology, language and applied linguistics, this group does not have 'academic' status as they are employed in what is regard as a 'support' division. Of the original group, two have withdrawn

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

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(one because she graduated; the other because she left the university), and three new members have come on board. Approximately nine attend regularly.

The second group (Group B), with 16 members, was formed early in 2012 and is predominantly made up of academics from different professions in a faculty of health sciences including medicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, public health and nursing. In this group there is a core of about 10 regular attendees.

While some of the participants are still at the proposal stage, others have already progressed some way on their doctoral journeys. As facilitator of the groups, I follow the work of Boud and Lee (2005) who describe the value of peer learning within a particular research community. Drawing on a reciprocal relationship that sees each member becoming a doctoral peer, the groups have established a unique developmental space among themselves (McAlpine & Asghar 2010).

The data that provides the basis for this chapter has been generated across a period of time. At the end of the first year that Group A was in existence, seven participants wrote reflective pieces describing their doctoral experiences up to that point. This was followed by seven in-depth interviews that were conducted with self-selected respondents from the Group. A year later, a further eight reflective pieces were submitted (including excerpts from one participant's reflective journal) and this was followed up by a focus group interview with nine participants. At the end of the first year that Group B was in existence, members were invited to submit reflective pieces describing their experiences as had been the case for Group A before. Nine responses were received. In addition, seven members made themselves available for in-depth interviews.

Five participants from Group A participated in all four data-collection activities. As I am directly involved in the supervision of one of these candidates, I did not include her in this analysis. Four candidates from Group B were interviewed and completed their reflective pieces. Together these eight respondents are the main protagonists in this work. In Group A, three of the four respondents, who were all at pre-registration phase when the group was formed, are now formally busy with their doctoral studies. All four are women, have families, and could be regarded as mid-career professionals. There are three women and one man in Group B. The male participant is an associate professor in the faculty. Two of the women are at senior lecturer level and have families with young children. The fourth respondent is in her twenties and could be regarded as an early-career professional.

Ethics approval was obtained separately for the study of each group. All interviews were recorded and the subsequent transcriptions and the written reflective texts exposed

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a rich tapestry of experiences. These were subjected to in-depth thematic analysis and then interpreted against the backdrop of the theoretical framework that I have described earlier in this chapter. My role in this work is, however, as multifaceted as identity itself and also represents a complex investment. I carry the burden of 'guilty knowledge' that comes from conducting research among my colleagues (Williams 2009). My identity, and thus my 'insiderness', has shifted over the three years of the study. Initially I worked quite closely with several of the members in Group A, some of whom reported to me. Later, I moved to a new position within the university where Group B was established, but retained the close ties with Group A through the monthly meetings. I am responsible for either supervising or co-supervising three of the group members and have acted as critical friend or mentor for many of the others. While this enables me to produce rich 'emic' accounts, I acknowledge the impossibility for generating "culturally neutral, 'etic' accounts" (Trowler 2011:2) and remain acutely aware of my responsibility to maintain the anonymity of my participants and be true to their words.

UNDERSTANDING COMPLEX INVESTMENTS

During the process of analysis I first explored the candidates' initial stories about how they saw themselves, and their personal identities, as they entered into the doctoral space. A next step was to consider how they sought to take on this new role of doctoral candidate and to invest themselves voluntarily in a particular social identity – one that they deemed to be expressive of whom they are (Archer 2000). This was followed by a review of the identities that seemed to be emerging as time progressed. Finally I drew on their reflections of how being part of one of the PhD discussion groups has influenced their doctoral journey and, therefore, their identity formation to discern how the group might be of value, and why this might be so.

Initial stories

The candidates' descriptions of who they were, where they started out from, was a clear reminder as to the unique stories – our personal identities – that we each carry within us. For some, doing the PhD was an accepted next step if one worked at a university or if one's father or mother had a doctorate. Others spoke of how they were the first in their family to go to university, and how uncertain they were about taking this next step. Most had not come through a 'traditional' academic track. Apart from one candidate who saw himself as a researcher, all of the group members described having established identities such as teachers, health care practitioners, university staff, and then additionally as wives and mothers. It was

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

evident that they drew strength from these identities and that they provided them with 'cultural capital' towards attaining their educational goals (Bourdieu 1986). Nevertheless, they generally saw these personifications as quite removed from a doctoral or researcher identity:

> "I am an educator, I teach people clinical skills … I don't see myself as a researcher …" (Elsa)

For all of the candidates the potential of the doctorate to advance their careers featured as a key reason for embarking on the degree. One noted that this career advancement would have positive financial implications while another felt that the professional growth potential was equal to the benefit at a personal level and the hope of "making a difference in the community". (Delia)

The group member who held a more senior position at the university was already a recognised expert in his field. He felt he had an advantage and it was evident that despite the additional workload that came with doctoral studies, he had decided that he "might as well enjoy it" (Rasheed) while he was at it. He shared an interesting perspective on why he had embarked on the PhD:

> "… eventually it was [member of the university management] who told me that it's like circumcision. It may not make much sense to you and it's painful, but if you don't do it, they won't consider you a man [laughs]." (Rasheed)

Generally there was recognition of the challenges inherent in embarking on an advanced degree which some felt more prepared for than others. In several cases there was a general expression of uncertainty about their ability and competence to complete the PhD, describing a lack of 'academic-ness' and a fear of having to take a stand for their research. The PhD was described as:

> "… this giant mountain looming ahead [I feel] a little bit panic-stricken actually … I don't feel doctoral at all, no." (Faith)

> "… but I know that I still face a hopelessly long journey to acquire the knowledge that I need, … I think I am still scared to make myself heard." (Valerie)

This latter quote is instructive. Barnett and Di Napoli (2008:198) argue that "voice is the projection of the identity into the world". Doctoral becoming includes being in a place where you feel you have something worth saying (Clark & Ivanic 1997) and thus there is a need to be heard.

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

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Several of the candidates expressed an overwhelming sense of frustration and anxiety at being trapped in this early stage of their doctoral journeys and not making any progress:

> "… it just feels to me as if I'm going somewhere, and my plane is almost ready to leave. I've got my ticket and I'm packing, and I'm packing, and I'm packing, but I'm not getting on that plane … My suitcase is really stuffed with things at the moment." (Delia)

Even Rasheed described the PhD as follows:

> "It's sort of like a monster, it bothers you all the time, but the fact that it is the most important thing to complete, in a sense it almost paralyses you from getting on with other smaller things."

It was also evident, however, that some saw the reason to undertake their studies as "a little selfish, for myself … to prove to myself that I can" (Valerie), which points to an early understanding of the extent of the investment that was being entered into. There was also a sense that the degree would enhance their self-worth even as they described the gap they perceived between their existing skills set and those required for doctorateness.

New roles

Although monthly participation in the PhD groups implied some level of commitment to doctoral candidacy, the extent of investment differed from one person to the next and influenced the level of commitment to the role. In this new role, they articulated challenges that in some instances had been envisaged and were now becoming real, or were completely unexpected. These challenges emerged on different fronts both at a personal level and in their work contexts, often combining, and resulting in concerns about time and space to do what needs to be done:

> "… so I think the biggest thing that is worrying me is that my job is going to get in my way, or the one is going to get in the way of the other and I'm not going to do either properly … so it is time … and I've got children living at home still … I've got an elderly mother as well so I have no idea what is going to crop up … but that is just going to be how it is … I'll start and take it from there." (Faith)

For most of the candidates, their family commitments and family ties were points of tension and ambiguity sometimes requiring them to hide emerging identities or constantly shift identities to meet the demands of their loved ones:

> "We are a very close-knit family and I was the first one to go to university … and my mother also is immensely proud that this child that nobody thought would amount to much growing up in [ ] … so she tells people,

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

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> I say 'Mommy please don't tell them … because they don't understand, they don't realise how long it's going to take and they are, 'Are you done, are you a PhD?'" (Jackie)
>
> "Another obstacle is of course the whole triangle between being a PhD student or a researcher, having a full-time job and being a mum to two children, and having a husband also. Maybe I should make that four jobs." (Delia)

Now, as they embarked formally on their studies, there was a growing realisation of the risk, the commitment and the investment. Inevitably they described the tensions between their being and becoming:

> "It's like trying to make friends with an unwelcome friend and it takes time. Like an unwelcome guest and you can kick him out, but you know you will blame yourself if you do so, or you can learn to live in symbiosis with him for however long it takes. He has rotten shoes, and does not smell nice, and that challenges you." (Ansie)
>
> "It's putting yourself out there, and that fear of knowing that when you do put it out there, that there's … a high possibility of rejection … you've made a commitment, and you've made other people aware of that commitment so they're going to keep you to it…" (Margaret)

The notion of 'putting oneself out there' was described by others, although sometimes in a more positive sense: "… it helps you to lift your bum off the rock and continue the hike". (Faith)

Nevertheless, there was also a sense of being in a space of their own making, emergent from their internal conversations:

> "Also, because I over-task myself I'm often tired and to me that's just part of my life … To my children as well, when people ask them, 'What does your mother do?' She studies." (Jackie)
>
> "I was wondering why am I keeping on running with this thing, why am I going on. I think it's my internal motivation, the fact that I would like to it." (Delia)

Archer (2000:12-13) describes how these different commitments, these 'ultimate concerns', determine the extent of the investment we are prepared to make and how this influences who we become. However, these commitments "are subject to continuous internal review" taking us back "to the internal conversation which never ceases."

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

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Emerging identities

By the time that the candidates had registered for their PhDs and had made some inroads into their research they appeared to be in different spaces from those described before. Yet, the ebb and flow – the moments of dissonance and crisis interspersed with spaces for growth (Jarvis-Selinger *et al*. 2012) – that characterises identity development or formation was still evident in how the candidates reflected on their experiences.

Particularly poignant is this series of entries from Ansie's reflective journal:

> "Research is great!"
>
> [On receiving positive feedback] "This makes all the suffering worthwhile."
>
> "I now have three pieces of work out there in other people's hands."
>
> "I have never experienced such a low point in my research life … I feel terribly alone and there is absolutely no-one I can talk to … I place myself under so much pressure."
>
> "I have to make a few changes, of course, but the bottom line is my research is important. Over the moon!"
>
> [To cope I must] "minimalise, keep it simple, scale down, say No!" (Ansie)

Jackie described it as "almost like a birthing process … It's such an important thing, but starting off so fragile and having to go through that pain … Eventually I'm going to be something."

McAlpine and Asghar (2010:169) remind us that "identity is constituted through thinking, performing, recognizing oneself and being recognised by others as a … member of a particular community". In Jackie's case this recognition came during an international conference where she was awarded a prize for a presentation on her work, which left her confident to continue despite earlier disappointments.

Moving successfully through to registration was experienced in positive and sometimes unexpected ways:

> "… a phenomenon has happened this year, where I, I'm a lot more confident as a lecturer, I think … because, I don't know if it is a feeling of self-worth … perhaps I've been my own catalyst too. I am determined to finish as soon as I possibly can … I now feel as if I've, in a way, 'set the stage' for the real action to begin …" (Faith)
>
> "In the past I focused on the day I will get my D, but now I try to focus on the process, because it is still frustration, because everything does not fall into place, but it is also not supposed to fall into place, so I think I understand it better now … that you grow as the process progresses." (Ansie)

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

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Interestingly, the candidate who was further down the road on his doctoral journey than most others was completing his PhD by publication. He described how focusing on the PhD had led to a drop in his overall research productivity which had previously been quite high and commented that this was a cause for concern – a potentially costly career investment. However, when describing his struggle, it seemed to be less lonely as he clearly saw his two supervisors – his peers in the field – as co-travellers.

Underlying many of the comments are suggestions of the reward emanating from the doctoral investment. In some cases, however, there was a sober awareness of the cost if things did not work out as planned:

> "Patience and perseverance, like that dog, I really feel like I'm holding onto a bone here and not letting go … but one of my biggest fears I think is that I could prolong this process … and then I'll miss out on life." (Delia)

The role of the group

Finally, I reflect on the role of the discussion groups in establishing a doctoral identity among the participants. One is struck by the value that participants attached to being part of a community of doctoral scholars, which is also evidenced in their regular attendance. A more important question is, however, why they experienced the groups the way they did. Three issues appeared to be key: the group provided a safe space, an accountable space and a generative space within which they could test their ideas and draw strength from the experiences of those around them. The fact that they were all on the doctoral journey, despite being on very different versions of it, created a camaraderie that they found invaluable:

> "It was a very supportive group which provided a safe space where any sort of feelings could be shared. No-one, i.e. friends or family, could ever understand the kind of feelings one experiences while doing a PhD." (Margaret)

> "… it is a lonely road, and I'm a herd animal, so I'm only too happy to have somebody else … just a critical friend even, just somebody that you could … just soundboard with, or voice your frustrations with … and one learns a lot, you know, from your experience, or from somebody who is further down the road." (Faith)

> "People learn from one another and they draw strength from other people's difficulties and they know they're not alone, it's not unique." (Rasheed)

The groups were also seen to hold them accountable to themselves and to one another. More than one candidate spoke of how the monthly commitment kept them on track and had been an important contributor to their progress thus far. In the end,

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

Blitzer E, Albertyn R, Frick L, Grant B, Kelly F (eds) 2014. Pushing Boundaries in Postgraduate Supervision. Stellenbosch: SUN PRESS

the groups provided a generative space where the emergence of a doctoral identity was fostered:

> "I now see myself as a doctoral candidate … I often didn't feel that I am intelligent enough to be here. The group discussions have helped me to realise that I am not the only one with self-doubt." (Jackie)

CONCLUSION

What can be learnt about the doctoral journey and the emergence of a doctoral identity from these stories? What does this mean for our practice as doctoral supervisors and mentors? Do we understand the complex nature of the investments that our students make when they embark on doctoral studies? Jarvis-Selinger *et al*. (2012) describe identity formation resulting from the necessary interplay between two perspectives which they have termed the individual (which emphasises the notion of development, reflexivity and intentionality) and the collective (which highlights the socio-cultural influences that shape identity formation). This understanding resonates with what has emerged from my study. On the one hand, the students drew strength from being part of the PhD group which they saw as their "community of practice" where they could essentially test their legitimacy in a safe and generative space as they engaged at the periphery of the doctoral community (Wenger 2000:229). Indeed, the value of creating communities of (or for) doctoral scholars has been gaining traction of late, as moves away from the traditional (dyadic) approach to what Bitzer and Albertyn (2011) have described as 'group' and 'team' approaches, are being recognised.

On the other hand, however, this acknowledgement of the socio-cultural dimension of identify formation has not been the main focus of this study. By drawing on Archer's understanding of the development of personal and social identities, a picture of how the doctoral candidate must consciously invest in her or his doctoral studies can emerge. It is evident that for those in the study, that which they valued (their 'concerns') influenced not only the extent of their investment in their doctoral becoming, but also mediated the emergence of their doctoral identities. If we hope to foster this identity, then the need to engage with candidates to understand what it is that is influencing their internal conversations is self-evident and may better enable us to establish nurturing spaces towards this end (Clegg 2008). This may require that we disturb the shroud that obscures the inner workings of the supervisory relationship and in so doing challenge the boundaries that currently define it. Ultimately we ought to be mindful that doctoral studies represent a complex investment on the

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

part of our students, but that it is an investment that has the potential to generate significant capital once it matures.

O'Byrne (2011:13) has argued that as we seek to reach our goals we follow a cyclical pattern that sees the forming of social identities that are "compatible with [our] particular personal identities" and that will enable us to adopt the roles that are based on these identities. Because the candidates in this study are still all on their journeys towards doctorateness, they are still in the process of role personification and investment therein (Archer 2000). This is a process that will continue for some time yet, and beyond the achievement of the doctoral degree. The identities are still emerging, subject to on-going internal review. The eventual cost of the complex investment is, as yet, unknown.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All those who have attended the PhD discussion groups over the past few years are thanked for their commitment and participation. A particular word of acknowledgement goes to the eight main characters in this chapter. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to Brenda Leibowitz and Julia Blitz for their comments on an earlier version of this work.

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DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

Blitzer E, Albertyn R, Frick L, Grant B, Kelly F (eds) 2014. Pushing Boundaries in Postgraduate Supervision. Stellenbosch: SUN PRESS

CODA

BEYOND THE END OF THE BOOK

RESEARCH AS OPENINGS INTO NEW SPACES OF THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

Frances Kelly and Barbara Grant

A collection such as the one found in this volume brings together scholars and ideas in an eclectic grouping – albeit responding to an overarching theme. This book provides a space in which, between the arbitrary boundaries of its cover, contributors from diverse geographical contexts including South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, the UK and Europe have been grouped together. Each writer brings something of the ideas and flavour of their own place, as well as an understanding of the practices of postgraduate education that occur there. Each seeks to open our thinking – and perhaps hopefully our practice as well – into new spaces.

The research field of doctoral, and more generally postgraduate, education is itself a heterogeneous space. In various forums (e.g. the triennial meeting of the International Doctoral Education Research Network or IDERN, the Doctoral Education across the Disciplines Special Interest Group [SIG] at the annual American Educational Research Association Conference in the US, the biennial Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference held in Adelaide), diverse scholars – some of whom also participate in other cognate fields – collect in order to exchange ideas and accounts of practice, to further their research agendas and to inform their own localised contexts. Despite (or perhaps because of) significant cross-national flows of knowledge and practice, the theoretical and methodological, and the historical and sociocultural, resources they draw upon are profoundly varied.

One way to read the chapters in this book is to read for the different sociocultural contexts in which research into doctoral and postgraduate education is taking place. If it is possible to characterise some local flavours, it could be argued that the chapters that come from a European context – the UK and Sweden – draw on historical ideas of the doctorate and of learning in a way that differs from the other contributions. Sue Clegg's chapter argues that the doctorate is increasingly understood in terms

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15

Blitzer E, Albertyn R, Frick L, Grant B, Kelly F (eds) 2014. Pushing Boundaries in Postgraduate Supervision. Stellenbosch: SUN PRESS

that bring pedagogy to the fore, rather than knowledge. Her call to 'bring back' knowledge underscores a central dimension of the traditional doctorate since the early 19th century – the research thesis, the contribution to knowledge. Khalid El Gaidi, on the other hand, underscores the learning of the individual in his account of the journeyman as metaphor for postgraduate education, an idea of learning that dates back to European guilds. The South African chapters, while diverse, do to some extent each highlight what inherited ideas and traditions in doctoral education might currently mean in this particular context, which has its own unique history and its own future to carve out. Chaya Herman's chapter addresses this aspect and it was also the focus of an opening plenary at a recent IDERN meeting. Risk, as our colleagues Liezel Frick, Ruth Albertyn and Eli Bitzer show, may be a dimension of doctoral education that is of great interest internationally but it also has particular local meanings and effects in the South African context, where many students come from non-traditional starting points, with a desire that their research will 'solve the world's problems', and with significant 'financial challenges'. The predicament of first-generation students, in particular, in South African higher education may well be of a different order than that of such students in a New Zealand university, for example (as Catherine Mitchell describes). At the same time, the term 'first-generation' masks a wide variety of social positions and there may be more in common between some sub-groups across different national sites (for instance indigenous or colonised students) than there is within those sites.

Another way to read this book on pushing postgraduate boundaries is to trace the pursuit of new directions in postgraduate education research. Catherine Mitchell does this through examining the aspiration to an academic version of 'the good life' amongst first-generation doctoral candidates – to date there have been few such studies and this work is ground-breaking in its application of Appadurai's notion of aspiration to make sense of their experience. James Burford likewise focuses on an overlooked dimension of doctoral education research by addressing affect and emotion in (relation to) doctoral writing. In the process he develops an interesting methodology that invites us to think again about how we conduct research in this field. Alternative methodologies were also the focus of a recent special issue of the Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) journal. As a research community, we show a heavy reliance on interviews or surveys – or often, these days, a blend. Taking a different perspective, Puleng Motshoane and Sioux McKenna show that one dimension of postgraduate education hitherto underexplored involves studying institutions to understand how an individual institutional ethos and research culture supports (or constrains) developments in supervision practices. Such studies offer attention of a focused and detailed kind – along with the suggestion of innovative

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methodologies – that promises to produce new knowledge about the complexities of postgraduate education.

A third reading of the book takes account of the ways in which some chapters call for boundary-crossing. Terry Evans outlines what boundary-breaking might be, both in disciplinary terms and in terms of our thinking about 'the doctorate' and its parameters. Arguably, one boundary marker of the doctorate is the extent to which it comprises independent work compared to other degrees. The dominant model of the PhD in particular in Australasia, South Africa and the UK is 100 per cent research: this requirement produces difficulties, especially for students who are concurrently in full-time professional work or have little prior research preparation. The emergence of professional doctorates in the last two decades has been one response to this landscape and, in the UK, the development of compulsory research skills courses. Two chapters in this book address the call for forms of taught doctoral education, either through coursework, as in the chapter by Margaret Kiley, Joe Luca and Anna Cowan, or through teaching writing as modelled on a postgraduate writing course, as described by Pia Lamberti and Arnold Wentzel. Both prospects involve thinking differently about the boundaries of supervision, which is also the case with Nonnie Botha's chapter on cohort supervision and Callie Grant's questioning of the traditional one-to-one supervisory relationship in favour of a community-based approach.

Yet another reading of the contents of this book is for the ways in which its chapters investigate the idea of doctoral becoming, the process through which an individual negotiates the (neither-one-thing-nor-t'other) liminal space between their identity as a student and that of disciplined scholar/researcher. Like Mitchell and Burford, chapter contributor Susan van Schalkwyk is interested in the individual doctoral student's identity and becoming. She unpicks the metaphor of the journey, echoing elements of El Gaidi's chapter, to argue that doctoral identities emerge through a complex process that involves both personal and social dimensions. Along these lines, Cally Guerin and colleagues address the transformative process required to remake postgraduates into people who can function interculturally. These discussions prompt consideration of the extent to which postgraduate education legitimately pushes (at) individual boundaries – or promotes threshold crossing of the kind Margaret Kiley and Gina Wisker (2009) have explored. Research at doctoral level, in particular, demands new ways of thinking and being; working at the edge of boundaries, as Evans describes, is productive for individuals (and for research fields) even if it also engenders challenges or even existential shock.

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The final kind of reading we would like to address is one we cannot make on behalf of others: it is the way each of us is pushed to think beyond the work described in the chapters of the book. What do we notice as we read? Where are our excitements, our resistances, our confusions, our 'ah-ha' moments, our irritations, our marginal notes? All are traces of newness and are food for fresh thought and action.

In many ways, this book is a bounded space. Yet, in writing a final coda, in pinning the 'tail' onto the book, we have taken the opportunity to reflect on how the boundaries in the book function as openings, or thresholds, that issue invitations to the reader to cross into new ways of knowing, practising and researching doctoral and postgraduate education. In that sense boundaries are not just confines to be obediently kept inside or zealously broken through: they are productive, fertile. As we experienced at IDERN meetings, they set a scene for critical debate: they offer light that casts intriguing shade; they provide the grist to our mill, the irritant for our pearl. As Erica McWilliam suggests in her Preface to the late Alison Lee and Susan Danby's recent book, *Reshaping doctoral education*, "doctoral education is ripe for re-shaping" (2011:xxi). It is over to us as researchers and practitioners in the field to make the boundaries we encounter here (and elsewhere) the starting point for a creative reshaping of the scene of doctoral and postgraduate education so that it better serves our students, our disciplines, our societies, our futures.

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DOI: 10.18820/9781920689162/15