‘The forms of our knowing are “moving”’: A Reflexive Lens on the Self-study Supervision Relationship

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Abstract

Postgraduate supervision is a complex and demanding pedagogic practice, which goes beyond research and disciplinary expertise on the part of the supervisor. Considering that a limitation of traditional systems of doctoral research training is the master/apprentice supervisory model, we question whether different genres of research, such as self-study, add to the complexity of a supervision relationship, where the support process between supervisor and student changes the practitioner and her situation. By adopting a reflexive stance in a self-study supervision relationship, we engage in the process of self-scrutiny and tenuous knowing of our positions in this relationship as each of us came to know it, and the shifting nature of these positions as illuminated through particular moments in the self-study doctoral project. Drawing on excerpts from supervisory meeting conversations we write together about our struggles relating to our fixed positionings, dis-positionings, and repositionings necessary for reframing the supervision relationship as an ethically and aesthetically caring practice. We conclude that the mutually reflexive process undertaken through writing foregrounds powerful, complex moments that happen as spaces – potential, transitional, creative – in a dialogical self-study supervision relationship, which left unattended may have negative consequences for the self-study researcher and the self-study research project as a whole.

Keywords: Supervision relationship, co-writing, mutuality, reflexivity, self-study research, scholarly identity

Introduction

The excerpt below makes reference to two individuals Jane (doctoral student) and Elizabeth (supervisor), both relatively new to the self-study doctoral relationship. The email conversation offers a glimpse into an important learning space in the self-study doctoral journey, and the supervision relationship, developed over the past year between a novice self-study supervisor, and a novice self-study researcher. The excerpt is from an email sent from Jane to Elizabeth.

> Fri 11/2/2012 10:09 AM
> Dear Elizabeth
> … I have been reading a lot around the self and writing up a self-study and I am convinced it has value. I have done some writing and will continue to do so. Perhaps I could see you sometime later on next week. … If you send a message please use my phone because I don't have access at home to my university account
> Take care.
> Thanks.
> Jane

The communication above between self-study student and supervisor marks a relational moment in the early part of the supervision journey where exploration of the intellectual elements of the self-study supervision relationship have not yet emerged. Waghid (2012) and (Fataar 2012) both write about the supervision relationship as continually transforming, and the need for the supervisor and student to continue to negotiate this complex intellectual and relational journey. Ongoing personal and professional redefinition for intellectual and emotional growth places both the student and the supervisor in a vulnerable, discomfiting position. However, we recognise that vulnerability is an important ingredient for being reflexive, and that it has potential for productive knowing/unknowing.

Although we are aware that participation in a self-study supervisory relationship may involve complex relations of power shifts and entanglements, co-authoring an article presents us with conditions for mutual engagement, characterised by collaborative deliberations (Fataar 2012:24). This article opens up a space for our collaborative deliberations as

doctoral student and supervisor when we ask ourselves 'What is it that I am doing, and why?' Together we probe each of these experiences and sensations to ask 'Why? From where? Founded on what?' to theorise our supervision experiences as a scholarly practice.

Need for 'Stepping Back' in the Self-study Supervision Relationship

Stepping back is a necessary process for the self-study researcher (Pithouse, Mitchell & Weber 2009:45). However, we want to extend the position to include, and argue for the fact that 'stepping back' is necessary and critical for both the student self-study researcher and the supervisor. Stepping back allows for deeper understanding and interpreting in the self-study supervision relationship supporting the research process.

To engage in this process we found it useful and worthwhile to take on the personae of Jane and Elizabeth, using a third-person stance to accommodate a more objective stepping back. The third-person genre allows for a more reflexive stance that we are able to adopt in our analysis of the conversations that took place between Jane and Elizabeth during a data generation and collection 'phase' of Jane's doctoral self-study project. We are reminded by Bass, Anderson-Patton and Allender (2002:67) that 'Reflexivity can push reflection past defensiveness into transformative learning'.

The main idea that drives our argument in this article centres on the following questions:

- By mutually engaging in the reflexive process, what can Jane and Elizabeth learn about the self-study supervision relationship and its place, purpose and process for the self-study doctoral project?
- In what way does the self-study doctoral project inform what should/should not happen in the self-study supervision relationship?
- How should the self-study supervision relationship support the doctoral learning and development process as two interdependent and iterative processes?

We show how sustained attention to what Kirk (2005:233-234) reiterates in

her understanding of reflexivity become sources of insights and a springboard for further investigation. Kirk defines reflexivity as 'the continuities *and* discontinuities, the smooth linkages *and* the dissonances between periphery and center, between self and other, and between theory and practice'.

Supporting our 'stepping back' 'involves using methods that facilitate a stepping back, a reading of our situated selves as if it were a text to be critically interrogated and interpreted within the broader social, political and historical contexts that shape our thoughts, actions, and constitute our world' (Pithouse *et al*. 2009:45). We extend this view to critically read our 'situated selves' as supervisor and student in the self-study supervision relationship.

Co-writing an article helps us to think critically and openly and together we are able to read between our spoken lines about ourselves and each other. For Jane, giving up and stepping back from her authorial position as teacher-educator to self-study researcher-co-learner is to be able to 'provoke, challenge and illuminate rather than confirm and settle' (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001:20) her ways of being, knowing, and doing research. For Elizabeth giving up her authorial position as intellectual-expert and supervisor to promoter and co-learner is to be able to understand how, as posited by Bitzer (2007:1012), 'Supervising as a scholarly practice might be effectively promoted where academics themselves are closely involved in research, but also when they reflect, write and publish on their supervisory experiences, seek student feedback and allow peers to critique their work'.

We argue that a dialogical self-study supervision relationship offers a fertile space for inventiveness and movement, propelling the self-study project. We show how it provides the means to question what our individual and collective responsibility is in the supervisory relationship, and to understand to what extent the relationship as lived and experienced informs the reflexive self-study project. Reflecting through co-writing on our supervisory relationship at a selected moment of the self-study project is not a confessional tale, but a mutually reflexive enactment.

The Research Supervision Landscape

Local and international research studies on postgraduate supervision help us to understand the nature of the supervisory relationship. According to Johnson, Lee and Green (2000:136) supervision as a postgraduate pedagogy

is typified by complexity, with autonomy holding a prominent place in several different models of supervisory relationships. Postgraduate supervision, according to Bitzer (2007:1010), is 'a process involving complex academic/intellectual and interpersonal skills' and the supervisory relationship as a challenging and complex space in which emotions and tensions may occur (Pillay & Balfour 2011).

While some research studies emphasise the intellectual dimension of the supervisory relationship (Connell 1985) for its potential to offer new perspectives, others argue for inclusion of the relational aspects (Fataar 2012; Waghid 2012). Waghid (2012:46) claims that a dialogical climate enables 'a correcting one another and learning from each other in an atmosphere of trust, goodwill and mutual benefit that holds much promise in reshaping teaching and learning beyond indoctrination and rote'. Nekhwevha (2002:135) maintains that it calls for both the supervisor and doctoral student to engage their roles 'actively and reflect critically, with curiosity and uneasiness'.

Although not previously documented, we believe that being reflexive of the self-study supervisory relationship would allow us to reflect critically on our roles. Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) emphasise openness as an essential characteristic for those engaging in a self-study process. Despite self-study requiring courage and support (Pithouse *et al*. 2009:47), risk-taking should be another quality evident in a supervisory relationship based on mutual respect, trust and reciprocal responsibility (Waghid 2012). In this article we engage mutually through our writing to doubt and to know/unknow (Vinz 1997) our scholarly practices as supervisor and student, and question the conditions that enable the workings of the supervisory relationship.

Conceptual Framework

Collaboration through writing as a reflexive process is supported by Said (1994), who maintains that the role of the intellectual in making scholarship known may entail writing. Collaborative writing – or co-writing, as we come to name the process – about our relationship as self-study doctoral student and supervisor provides an alternate and critical space for us as Jane and Elizabeth. Examining our meaning-making of these critical moments to see possibilities for reframing what we are and do, and why, to make public our

gain in knowledge (Bitzer 2007; Connell 1985) is framed by two concepts: reflexivity and mutuality. Co-writing is a kind of mutuality (Waghid 2012:45) 'whereby one engages another and is engaged in return', benefitting the teaching and learning that happens in this space.

Focusing on our insights in the moment as they arise spontaneously in the actual dialogue process is necessary for the co-writing. The mutuality helps the self-scrutinising process (Chiseri-Strater 1996) of understanding and negotiating meanings (of self) and the authorial positions through which the power of self (Lather 1986) is exercised in the relationship. Lather (1986) argues that it is imperative to question meanings of self, where I question what I know, what I don't know, what I come with and how I am moving forward in understanding. However, '…to be reflexive demands both an 'other' and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny' (Chiseri-Strater 1996:130).

Vinz (1997:139) speaks of an interrogation of self that will 'unsettle each of us to examine our own 'becoming''. She maintains that there is a continuous learning to un-know and not know, and that the dispositions that are made explicit through the questions are really 'dis-positions'. She defines un-knowing as 'a giving up of present understandings (positions)' and not knowing 'as a way to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty – a dispositioning that admits vulnerability' (Vinz 1997:139).

Kirk (2005) offers us a way to work through the praxis of reflexivity 'in the field', and in this article our being 'in the supervision relationship' is a critical field for thinking together inventively and without closure – through sustained attention on the positions in which we place ourselves and are placed by each other. This, she argues, requires a 'listening to and acknowledging of inner voices, doubts, and concerns as well as pleasures and pride, and a sensing of what my body is feeling. It implies a constant questioning of what I am doing and why' (Kirk 2005:233).

Casting a mutually reflexive lens to frame our interrogation of our supervision relationship contributes to the joint meaning-making with and for others (Wells 1999), and for oneself, and in the process extends one's own understanding. It calls on us to make ourselves 'strange', to start listening to and acknowledging the inner voices, doubts and concerns as well as pleasures and pride (Kirk 2005). The 'utterance', Wells (1999) argues, viewed from the perspective of what is said, is a knowledge artefact that potentially contributes to the collaborative knowledge building of all those who are co-

participants in the activity. We draw on Wells (1999:108), Bolton (2010) and Kirk (2005) to develop a set of guiding questions for our collaborative reflexive stance:

- How are we, seemingly unwittingly, involved in reproducing social or professional structures in the supervision relationship that are counter to our espoused values?
- How are our utterances being made – what effect does this have on the other?
- What value does this position of 'making the self strange' have for our practices in the self-study supervision relationship?

These questions help us to frame our choices and selections in the research process and reflexively question these selected moments, to better understand what we experienced and how we experienced these moments of 'being', and how to recognise and acknowledge too that the forms of our knowing are 'moving' (Vinz 1997:137). In our joint meaning-making with and for others through our co-writing we are encouraged to make meaning of self and in the process to extend our own understanding.

Our Research Process

Much has been written about the supervisory relationship, but there is sparse literature on the value for both supervisor and doctoral student of engaging reflexively on the supervisory relationship. We draw on transcribed audio-recorded supervision meeting conversations as a stimulus recall to prompt dialogue. The conversations were then interrogated, using dialogue as an inquiry tool (East, Fitzgerald & Heston 2009) to unpack the utterances and what they revealed about the supervisory relationship.

The initial ideas that sparked this reflexive dialogical encounter were initiated in a writing project held as part of a self-study writing workshop that took place on 13–15 March 2013. One of the key foci of the workshop was to ask ourselves 'What are we learning about writing in self-study and about self-study through writing?' Jane and Elizabeth chose to work together on an abstract entitled *Reflexivity in writing* as part of their contribution to this

debate and as part of their learning and development as novice self-study researchers. On completion of the draft chapter sent for editorial review, one of the reviewer's comments stated '*This chapter would be more interesting and relevant if situated within the supervisory relationship'.* We considered this valuable comment and attempted to rework our focus. The revised version was presented as a paper at the 2013 Annual Teaching and learning Higher Education Conference entitled *Reflexive writing in a supervisory relationship.*

Elizabeth and Jane considered the following evaluation from the conference: *'The process of co-learning from supervisory discussions is rarely reported on – stopping to analyse and better understand the learning that occurs in this process is pushing writing, for both, into a place where they continue to learn. Very interesting'* This comment would help us to respond to the question about what we are both learning, what we do and why. Drawing on excerpts of the supervisory meeting conversations that took place over a six-month period from February to July 2012, and using them as a recall stimulus to prompt dialogue, we engaged critically with the conversations to explore our meaning-making in the supervisory relationship. Wells (1999:108) states that:

> ... by contributing to the joint meaning making with and for others, one also makes meaning for oneself and, in the process, extends one's own understanding. At the same time, the 'utterance' viewed from the perspective of what is said, is a knowledge artefact that potentially contributes to the collaborative knowledge building of all those who are co-participants in the activity.

This writing opportunity to see how self-study research impacts on the supervisory relationship, and vice versa, encapsulates the simultaneous, consecutive movement of the dialogical nature of the self-study supervision relationship and the self-study doctoral project.

Data Analysis

We have created three different thematic ensembles (meeting moments) to discuss our reflexive, momentary glimpses of our self-study supervision

relationship. While these are very loosely organised groupings intending to give temporary coherence, they serve to emphasise selected opportunities that are made available for supervisor and doctoral student to exercise agency.

These fragile but explosive momentary opportunities are moments to reflect on what is, to examine our own complicity in the maintenance of the normative, the social order, as well as those threatening, disruptive moments when alternatives to the stereotypical, linear and singular are possible.

Meeting Moment One: 'It's your story …' – The Supervision Moment as a Potential Space

In the knowledge that there is a 'comfort' in remaining entrenched in particular positions (Pillow 2003) as supervisor and student in a supervision relationship, our reflexive gaze on the struggle to give up these positions (Vinz 1997:139) is best illustrated in the excerpt presented below. Jane and Elizabeth make meaning of their complacency and the familiar in their respective positions in which they come to place themselves and each other within the supervision relationship.

After six months of fieldwork, engaging with data collection and generation for the self-study doctoral project, Jane and Elizabeth meet to discuss Jane's work in progress. This comprised videotaped footage of lessons carried out in undergraduate communication classes. An excerpt of and audio-recorded conversation from a supervision meeting held on 27 February 2012 is presented below for discussion.

Dialogue:

J: I have interesting data of my students in my undergraduate communication class, that I have videotaped, and feel I have enough to proceed with my research.

E: Jane, first you need to write up your story. In self-study the process of data generation starts with self. You will need that data, but initially you need to write up your story, which will reveal your underlying assumptions of communication, and how your experiences have shaped your beliefs about teaching and learning. How do these data about students talk back to you – the teacher self?

J: But I need data of my students to provide validation for the study and to explore the 'other'.

E: Videotaping your students will not provide the *full* picture of you as communication lecturer, and it won't reveal to you the reasons for doing what you do in your communication classes. Do you think the problems in your practice lie elsewhere, or in the teacher self? You have to put self under the microscope.

J: So, I am the researcher and the researched. Is that possible?

E: Yes, I can see you are struggling with that position. You should go away somewhere and just write up your life story. Just write up your story!

J: But Elizabeth, my life isn't interesting or dramatic – it's so ordinary!

E: It's your story and your truth.

Analysis of Moment One

In the conversation excerpt both Jane and Elizabeth enter from positions of authority. Jane, in the opening line, takes the position as the author of her script and situates herself as one in control of the research process. As the self-study researcher, her use of the phrase 'I have enough' alludes to a measure of certainty and authority in deciding on her readiness to proceed to the next step in the research process. Evident in this statement is also the inversion of the promoter/student relationship. In Elizabeth's opening line to Jane, 'to write up your story ... data generation starts with self', she takes up an oppositional stance (not listening to Jane), rather than a more probing and inquiring one. This creates dissonance and reveals her struggle to give up her role as 'the one in control' of the research process as traditional supervisor.

However, in a slight moment of stepping back Elizabeth's prompt: 'How do these data about students talk back to you – the teacher self?' opens up a moment of scepticism in Jane's position as a higher education practitioner. It pushes her to re-think her stance despite her discomfort to do so as a self-study researcher. Elizabeth's attention to how she positions Jane as the researcher is evident in her consideration: 'Videotaping … will not provide the *full* picture of you as communication lecturer and it won't reveal to you the reasons for doing what you do in your communication classes'.

Elizabeth's ability to suspend her professional certainty and draw on Jane's ideas does signal the potential for movement – for Jane to see herself as the centre and for Elizabeth to move to the periphery as supervisor. Resisting the inclination to impose (Cissna & Anderson 2002), Elizabeth opens up the climate for dialogue. With some uneasiness, Jane asks 'So, I am the researcher and the researched. Is that possible?' Jane's response in this climate of openness assists her to become sceptical of how she needs to position herself in order to proceed with the self-study project.

An enabling dialogical climate presents itself in this supervisory moment, where questioning and clarifying challenge preconceived ideas (Pillow 2003). Elizabeth's words 'I see you are struggling with that position' reveals her acknowledgement of Jane's discomfort (Pillow 2003), while concealing her complacency as the traditional supervisor. 'You should go away somewhere and just write up your life story' further exemplifies her misrecognition of the critical role of the relational self-study supervision relationship for generating self-knowledge in self-study research. Both Elizabeth and Jane's reductionist view of self as data is indicative of a disconnect between supervisor and doctoral student on one level, and at another level of a disconnect between the self-study doctoral project and the supervision relationship. Moving in opposing directions is unhelpful for Jane, whose doubtful response (Dadds 1993) is '… my life isn't interesting or dramatic – it's so ordinary!'

Elizabeth and Jane's misrecognition and misunderstanding of the commitment and consideration of self, self – other, and the research project, is salvaged in a small but potential space in this disembodied encounter, when Elizabeth displaces herself and draws on the microscope as an analogy to help and affirm Jane's repositioning (Vinz 1997): 'It's your story, your truth'. In this respectful space, dispositioning (Vinz 1997) and repositioning from centre to periphery, however small, is illuminating of the ethical care that is necessary to sustain this shifting, tenuous form in the self-study supervision relationship. Dismissing the ethical responsibility to keep open this fluid shift has the potential to close down the reflexivity necessary for the self-study project.

This selected meeting moment is illustrative of how, when made from a position of closure and inflexibility, our utterances affect the other. Through our mutual reflexive stance that we adopt in the co-writing, we recognise the need for continued commitment of self to ongoing relational

shifts and openness to redefinition of self in these relational shifts, as articulated by Jane's question 'Is that possible?' There is hope in suspending certainty and the power of doubt for self-knowledge (Dadds 1993) in the tenuous quality of Elizabeth and Jane's responsibility in the relationship for generating reflexive, self-study research.

This conversation highlights the supervision meeting moment as a containing and potential space for a dialogical climate. The potential for mutual dispositioning in a dialogical climate is critical for disrupting our singular reality and for a readiness to 'contest our ideas' of autonomy (Pinnegar & Hamilton 2009:168) as we enter into the unsettling spaces of diverse realities (Vinz 1997).

Meeting Moment Two: 'Perhaps memory work will help…' – The Supervision Meeting Moment as a Transitional Space

With the understanding that there is a 'comfort' in remaining entrenched in particular conceptions of self as a neat, coherent package (Bloom, Munro & Pagano 1993), both Elizabeth and Jane cast a reflexive glance to understand their struggles to give up the comforting meanings of the 'narrative of self by ourselves' (Sparkes 1994). Furthermore they want to underrstand the conditions created and means made available in the self-study supervision relationship to enable such a transition. In the selected excerpt of the interactive supervision moment, or calibration point (East, Fitzgerald & Heston 2011: 60), that took place between Elizabeth and Jane on 7 March 2012, we focus on how our utterances are being made and the effect this has on the other in making the transition from singular, essentialising meaning-making to the adoption and negotiating of discomfiting shifts necessary for the self-study supervision relationship to represent lived experience.

Dialogue:

J: Elizabeth, What do you think of *my life history account*? It *took a long time* and a lot of thought to capture in *18 pages* my most significant personal and professional life experiences.

E: Yes, I read it *but it's more like a report*. It isn't a lived account.

J: *What do you mean?* Isn't the writing of the story *sufficient*? I've described nodal moments in my personal and professional life.

E: Yes, but the personal narrative is *more than just words*. *Personal life history requires telling,* not *explaining. Perhaps memory work will help to elicit more about life as experienced*.

J: *I'll have to think about what objects elicit memories* of critical moments in my life.

Analysis of Moment Two

Adopting a reflexive stance allows Jane and Elizabeth the space to scrutinise their respective roles in the supervision relationship. This dialogue is opened up by Jane, who takes up the position as autobiographer in the self-study project. In this authoritative role she describes her personal narrative-writing process as one that is lengthy, time-consuming and complex.

Elizabeth in her position as 'supervisor' fails to attend to the pleasures and pride that Jane expresses in being able to generate data of self (autobiographer), by the self (as researcher). Elizabeth's response instead is a challenge to Jane's singular understanding of what constitutes a personal life history. The moment that Elizabeth utters the words 'Yes, I read it *but it's more like a report*' has a 'shutting down' effect on Jane. This telling rather than mutually negotiating this sense-making by Jane is unhelpful. Despite showing a measure of expertise on the personal life history account, this statement does little to move Jane from this unitary subjective stance.

Jane's questioning '*What do you mean?*' signals uncertainty and reveals her discomfort in being challenged as the author of her own autobiography which charts 'the life' as simple, logical and manageable. La Boskey (2004:858) reminds us that 'it takes courage to expose our shortcomings, to make ourselves vulnerable'. Jane's questioning, however, signals an opening for a dialogical, non-hierarchical supervisory relationship to move the dialogue and for Elizabeth to adopt a more considered position as a professional friend (Waghid & Davids 2013) in the self-study supervision relationship. Samaras and Freese (2009), maintain that critical friends help to validate the quality and legitimacy of each other's claims in the research. We see too how Elizabeth, as supervisor, takes on the ethical responsibility as one of correcting (Waghid 2012) as part of learning, illustrated by the words 'Yes, but the personal narrative is *more than just words'.*

Our understanding here and use of ethical is adapted from Barad

(2007: 393), which relates to 'responsibility and accountability for the lived relationalities of becoming'. This phrase alludes to a more empowering shift that goes beyond the individual in the relationship – a move from *telling* to *acknowledging* and extending – a transition moment for both. For Jane leaving the meeting with some tentativeness about her self-study project makes this a meaningful shift in her meaning-making, when she utters the words *'I'll have to think about what objects elicit memories of critical moments in my life'.* Her scepticism, evoked in the dialogue with Elizabeth, foregrounds the meeting moment as a transitional space, where new ways are introduced for different meanings of thinking and writing about self. Elizabeth illustrates commitment to her responsibility to enable conditions for Jane's self-empowerment (Waghid & Davids 2013). For Elizabeth, adopting a less authoritative role as promoter, rather than supervisor as expert, offers the opportunity for her to be a critical friend (Dadds 1993).

This mutual, reflexive glance at the supervision relationship provides an opportunity for us to understand every supervision meeting moment as a contained, non-linear, complex experience – with the potential to block or to open up agentic shifts and changing roles for intellectual and interpersonal growth (Bitzer 2007). We learn from this reflexive writing moment that adopting less authoritative roles allows for mutual benefit (Waghid 2012).The presence of questioning, acknowledging and correcting in the conversation builds up an atmosphere of trust and respect (Waghid 2012) for self and self–other in the supervision relationship, that cultivates and prepares the site for 'an uncomfortable reflexivity' (Pillow 2003) in the self-study research process.

Meeting Moment Three: '*I began to liken my life to that bench'* – The Supervision Relationship as a Complex, Creative Space

In the selected excerpt of the supervision meeting conversation that took place on 23 June 2012, Elizabeth and Jane gaze reflexively on the interactive dialogue evoked between themselves and the photograph of an artefact. Elizabeth and Jane look at the photograph of the *trencadis* bench by artist Antonio Gaudi that Jane offers as her selected artefact that has cultural, symbolic and historical significance for her and her life as a teacher.

Dialogue:

E: *Why did you choose this photograph of yourself on the trencadis bench?*

J: It represents a turning point in my life when I saw a link between my personal and professional self.

E: Where's the bench located and what is the occasion?

J: After attending a language conference in Barcelona, I visited Parc Guell. Here I am sitting on this beautiful bench admiring the artistry of Gaudi's work.

E: After our discussion about the benefits of using metaphor, *have your meanings* of that critical moment on the bench changed?

J: Well, *in reflecting on the bench, I began to see that the bench could be interpreted on a different level. I began to liken my life to that bench* and question the multiple roles that I play as a woman, mother, and a higher education educator. The trencadis bench encapsulates a colourful picture of who I am and what I do.

E: *The photograph seems to have helped you* connect your personal life experiences with your professional practices.

J: Yes, just like the multifaceted mosaic pieces that form the bench, *I see there are pieces of different shapes and sizes that form who I am and help me to understand my multiple selves.*

E: Now you are using the metaphor as *a heuristic device*. This tool has opened up a space for you to see the self as multiple.

Analysis of Moment Three

In the excerpt above, the photograph of the *trencadis* bench becomes the focus of the conversation between Jane and Elizabeth. Different from the previous two meeting moments discussed, this excerpt highlights Elizabeth's role as Jane's promoter – a position different from one in which her interest was mostly on the intellectual project that she is responsible for in this supervision relationship. In prompting and probing Jane through questions, her authority is productively reconfigured by her acknowledgement that knowledge rests elsewhere – with Jane. Each questioning moment in this meaning-making space provides them with new choices and the potential for creative risk-taking, which La Boskey (2004) contends is possible within a

dialogical climate. It also allows a shift to a more scholarly stance (Fataar 2012).

Elizabeth and Jane draw on a combination of 'research expertise' and 'relational and personal dynamics' (Fataar 2012:34) for delving deeper into an inquiry into situations. The question '*Why did you choose this photograph of yourself on the trencadis bench?'* allows for a deepening of inquiry into Jane's choice of the artefact, and recognises the inherent complexity and plurality of voices that are always somehow present in every situation. In a moment of transition Jane's response, '*I began to liken my life to that bench*' demonstrates a reworking of her meanings of her initial response to the photograph of herself on the bench. '*I see there are … multiple selves',* is indicative of a powerful opening up of Jane's confidence and trust in the value of her personal life history for the self-study doctoral project.

This dialogical encounter – enlivened by a 'wide-awakeness' (Greene 1997: 121) in the supervisory meeting, offers significant contact points during the research process to provide an aesthetic opportunity to suspend certainty, to 'define our positions, and embrace imagination, which may allow space for creative change' (McNamee & Shotter 2004: 103). Bass *et al.* (2002:67) remind us that 'Reflexivity can push reflection past defensiveness into transformative learning'. It is, as Vinz (1997:139) describes an unknowing, 'to scratch at the marrow of understanding to discover a multiplicity of meanings'. It allows Elizabeth and Jane 'to bring into question existing understandings, and produce different meanings perhaps not thought of before' (Waghid 2012:47).

Elizabeth's affirming words, '*the photograph seems to have helped you*', are demonstrative of care and acknowledgement of Jane's choice. The words '*Now you are using the metaphor as a heuristic device*' simultaneously illustrate Elizabeth's prompting to shift this inventive moment to a scholarly discourse. Elizabeth's comment '*After our discussion about the benefits of using metaphor…*' reveals 'an encouraging, collaborative climate with accompanying respect and emotional support' (La Bosky 2004:829) that sows the seeds for scholarly growth.

These slight moments of connecting and commitment are not about 'othering or separating' (Barad 2007: 391-392), but illustrate that the act of reflexivity requires an 'other' (Chiseri-Strater 1996). Elizabeth's means of provoking and encouraging Jane's reframing, using the *trencadis* as metaphor simultaneously calls for her to shift from thinking *for* Jane to thinking *with*

Jane, a necessary move past reflection to a more reflexive stance – a necessary stance for Jane's self-study doctoral project (Calma 2007). Drawing on her methodological expertise, she makes a teachable moment possible, as described by Barad (2007), 'not about a right response but rather a fundamental responsibility and accountability for the lively material-discursive becoming of which they are part' (ibid: 393).This aesthetically and ethically caring meeting moment propels 'the necessary academic and intellectual repertoires' (Fataar 2012:34) relevant to Jane's self-study project.

Elizabeth's 'growing awareness of the personal and intellectual basis on which she has to manage and negotiate her authority as promoter, critical friend and supervisor' (Fataar 2007:34) is heightened. Elizabeth's responsibility as a promoter of Jane's deeper learning to shift from a 'normative stance' to an appropriate 'analytical stance' is a lively moment (Fataar 2012:15), and creative risk-taking is made possible. In this lived, meeting moment, aesthetic care for new ideas, trust and mutual respect (Waghid 2007; Bitzer 2007) in and for each other, work in entangled ways.

Mutual reflexivity for the supervisor and doctoral student makes available the subtle moves necessary for the critical process of redefinition of self as supervisor and doctoral student in a dialogical climate (Waghid 2012:46). Elizabeth's shifting from supervisor to critical friend and promoter, and Jane's movement from practitioner to autobiographer to researcher-scholar, is made possible in a climate of ethical and aesthetic care – when the supervisory relationship offers significant contact points during the research process. This provides an aesthetic opportunity to 'suspend certainty, define our positions and embrace imagination, which may allow space for creative change' (McNamee & Shotter 2004:103). It allows for what Vinz (1997:146) describes as 'moving beyond the familiar boundary of what seems clear and known to look as if for the first time so that we might see more and see differently'.

Discussion

According to an Academy of Science of South Africa report (2010:40) one of the major limitations (amongst others) of traditional systems of doctoral research training is the idea that 'supervision modes are often limited to a master/apprentice model'. By making available the local knowledge of our self-study supervisory experience we hope to 'raise new questions, stimulate

debate, and suggest other possibilities' (La Boskey 2004:858). Mutual reflexivity through our co-writing process makes available the subtle, yet risk-taking moments of doubting our fixedness, heightening our awareness of our discomfort as productive and redefining self – other in a dialogical climate.

Importantly, we see mutual reflexivity as a new way of working with self-study research and supervision relationship development. It is a way in which our intra-relationality with each other, with objects and spaces that are made available, is emphasised. Each supervision meeting is an entanglement of connections and considerations – and embodiment of an ethical and aesthetic commitment to the reflexive self-study project.

In our reflexive account we engage in counteracting our totalising positions as supervisor and doctoral student. Mutual recognition of the complexity rather than the singularity of the encounter for meaning-making in the supervision relationship are acknowledged. The responsibility of both student and supervisor is expanded from one's own perspective and ideas to a willingness to commit to embracing and risking change (Wood 2004). In the self-study supervisory relationship mutual reflexivity is a necessary and critical process for simultaneous and sequential shifts in the self-study research project. Casting the reflexive lens on our supervision relationship has challenged and changed our narrow and traditional conception of this one-dimensional, hierarchical connection. The self-study supervision relationship is a dialogical space that is complex, contained and creative.

Mutual reflexivity allows us to see each supervision meeting moment in the self-study supervisory relationship as a complex space – constituted of and constituted by potential, transitional, creative spaces. As a potential space, the supervision relationship enables us to 'stay with personal uncertainty, critically informed curiosity, and flexibility – an ethical way of changing deeply held ways of being' (Bolton 2010: xix). As a transitional space the dialogue, prompted by the conversations in an embodied atmosphere of trust and respect (Waghid 2012), makes the self-study supervision relationship a fertile site for 'an uncomfortable reflexivity' (Pillow 2003). As a complex, creative space, this dialogical supervision encounter is enlivened by curiosity, care and creativity for becoming.

The dialogical supervision relationship is a contained space. Attending to each meeting that works in different ways, with different meaning flows, and calling for ongoing identity shifts from both doctoral

student and 'supervisor-promoter-critical friend' makes the dialogical supervision relationship a dynamic and lived space. We became aware that in a reflexive supervision relationship there is no stable or static centre or periphery, and that the shifting positions necessitate a giving up of positions to allow for a move to the periphery. For example, Jane had to learn that whilst authoring the script of her self-study, the ideas and perceptions that she took to the supervisory meetings were tenuous. We experienced what McNamee and Shotter (2004:103) speak of as a need to 'avoid certainty' because this 'closes us to alternative views'.

The points of connectedness are small, almost unnoticeable moments of ethical and aesthetic caring. These powerful disrupting moments we have come to recognise and acknowledge as spaces for further exploration of what Kirk (2005:233-234) speaks of as 'the continuities *and* dis-continuities, the smooth linkages *and* the dissonances between periphery and centre, self and other, and between theory and practice'. These become sources of insight and a springboard for further investigation of different perspectives to facilitate 'the necessary academic and intellectual repertoires' (Fataar 2012:34) for the self-study research project.

Conclusion

This article has drawn attention to reflexive practices of the self by both the 'supervisor' and doctoral student to foreground those powerful, complex moments that happen as spaces – potential, transitional and creative – in a dialogical self-study supervision relationship. These are mobile, transitory moments (they materialise as quickly as they disappear), crucial to the agenda of a reflexive self-study doctoral project. These ethical and aesthetic investments by both the self-study doctoral student and 'self-study doctoral 'supervisor' reflect the interplay of forces (identities, meanings, practices) which provide the codes through which both make meaning of their existing ways of thinking, relating (what is) and acting (what could be). We define ourselves by means of the dialogical supervision relationship, and that shift 'toward wide-awakeness' (Greene 1977:119) contributes to the making of the self. Opening up our other identity categories through particular reflexive stances encourages us to continue in our transformation and redefinition as ethical and aesthetic beings in a dialogical self-study relationship.

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The Self-study Supervision Relationship

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