Paving the way: creating space for the doctoral journey

Jane Spiro

with Dan Butcher, Kathleen Greenway, Jenny Harding and Adrian Twissell

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Dan Butcher, Jenny Harding, Kathleen Greenway and Adrian Twissell

Oxford Brookes University, UK.

Abstract

When I was a doctoral student, I recognized a transformation in both perception and experience, from doctoral journey as compliance and imposition to doctoral journey as empowerment. It enabled me to clarify my values and understand how these are lived in practice, as an educator-researcher-writer. 'Creating space' emerged as a founding principle that connected these different roles and provided congruence between them. In becoming a doctorate supervisor myself, my concern was how to offer 'creative space' for others to clarify their own values in a cycle of self-discovery and empowerment. My wish was that others too might experience the doctoral journey as a means of finding a voice and extending it to a wider audience. In this paper I share the process of transforming my own journey into a pathway for others, through the founding principle of 'creating space', and demonstrate what this means in practice through co-authorship with doctoral students who were part of my doctoral writing programme.

Introduction

The first part of this paper explores how my own living theory clarified as 'creative space' during my doctoral learning, and how this living theory acquired new meanings in my transition to doctoral supervisor. I explore the way the 'living' of this theory entails transitions between self as learner and self as teacher in a perpetual cycle. In the second part, this paper demonstrates the perpetual regeneration of the cycle, through the authorship of my Ed.D. students as they explore their own doctoral journeys within the 'creative space' generated by our Ed.D. writing programme.

Creating Space and the Doctoral Journey

When I first considered doctoral study alongside my full-time practice as a university teacher, my purpose was to make movement as a university teacher possible: from one institution to another, and from one level of visibility to another. I had a perception that doctorate study was a form of 'giving in' to academic pressure, and a compliance with its norms. Yet from first encounter to final submission, I experienced a profound transition: from the sense that the research process shaped and constrained me - the questions I might ask, my aspirations to address them - to myself as shaping the research process - choosing what I wished to ask, how I might answer it, who I wished to address. In its broad shape this is a transition mapped by other academics too, and with varying metaphors and explanations. Leitch, for example, describes "the pain and unexpectedness of personal and professional learning in being challenged to find another "voice" after years of being a "responsible anarchist" within the academy's traditional expectations" (Leitch, 2006, p. 1). Gradually, she acquired 'ownership' of the voice she needed, in order to meet academy expectations. Hunt (2001) describes the same sense of 'pain' as she comes into direct collision with academic expectations, in her first incarnation as a doctoral student. 'Central to the paper is the description and analysis of a critical incident, involving a supervisor's feedback, which caused the thesis to be abandoned for over a year'. Her account is explained by the metaphor of 'climbing out of the void' (Hunt, 2001, p. 351). In dialogue with peer-reviewers about this present paper, Pip Bruce Ferguson identifies with Hunt's metaphor. She writes:

> It reminds me of my own intention when commencing doctoral study. Kind of a combination of Ed Hillary's 'can I climb this mountain?' along with the recognition that to be taken seriously by the academy and hence to be a 'responsible anarchist who is recognised', I needed a Ph.D.

What we see here is that metaphor has the capacity to universalise our individual stories. Hunt's metaphor carries emotion for Pip Bruce Ferguson, and makes her not only empathise with another story but see her own inside it. Although our stories are highly specific and individual accounts of learning, they connect to form a collective one about the capacity of doctoral learning to transform. Stern, in his research into academic loneliness, defines this as the existential paradox of originality, 'if there is nothing said that anyone can disagree with, then very little has been said. So there is conflict built into the system' (Stern, 2014, p. 4). So our stories of conflict and isolation are woven together into a kind of 'living paradox': isolation is a rite of passage in the doctoral experience which we all share, as powerfully described in

the doctoral story of Jack Whitehead (1993). His initial rejection by the establishment led to the powerful testing of values, as his own judgements of doctoral quality collided with theirs.

As a doctoral student I encountered 'Living Theory' for the first time and was amazed to find that it gave me permission, even entitlement, to seek meanings in 'my own unique way' (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2014; Whitehead, 2008). A living-theory account indeed *requires* this level of engagement and the capacity, 'to demonstrate why this is valid work' (Pip Bruce Ferguson's review comment). When a researcher 'owns' the process, this requirement transforms from compliance to empowerment: finding a 'unique way' becomes a journey of self-actualisation. For me this 'unique way' involved the acknowledgement that myself as creative writer and myself as teacher emerged from the same wellspring of belief and inspiration. As evidence I placed side-by-side the writings of my students through two decades of explicit creative-writing language teaching: and my own writings, as they had emerged from the first time I could hold a pencil at the age of three. My findings were a revelation: that I had, without conscious recognition of this, been mirroring as a teacher what I practised myself as a writer: for example, weaving together inner and outer lives and recognising their co-existence; honouring the specific as part of a collective story; and developing metaphor as a way of giving experience symbolic significance. This process of self-discovery allowed me to clarify and articulate core values which underpinned I-as-learner and I-as-teacher, and which came to explain the congruity between the two.

This congruity could be explained by my living-theory of 'creating space' (Spiro, 2008; 2009). I recognized a journey that both emanated from my own personal learning-teaching history and also projected into future roles that might open up as a doctor-teacher: doctoral supervisor, researcher and research mentor, project leader and academic writer. Now returning to those values, and the way I articulated them then, I see how these post-doctoral roles have changed the way I might account for myself, as these values become 'lived' from different perspectives. It is of deep interest to me, as I track transitions, to place in dialogue with one another, the voice of the 2008 Ph.D. graduate, and the 2015 teacher-researcher-educator I have since become.

In the first part of this paper, I invite you to join me in this dialogue between that earlier self in 2008 at the cusp of doctorate graduation, and my current self in 2015 framing the doctoral process for others. This will lead me to an explanation of 'creative space' from the perspective of both the 2008 and the 2015 'self' as the transition is made into doctoral teacher. In the second part of this paper, my own doctoral students take ownership and use the 'creative space' of our doctoral writing programme to explain their doctoral journeys.

i) What Were My Values and Beliefs as a Doctoral Student In the Process of Accounting for my Practice? How has my Lived Experience of These Values Evolved or Changed Since Making the Transition to Doctor-Teacher?

In 2009 I identified five core values clarified through doctoral studies: wellbeing, connection, empathy, empowerment, authenticity. Whilst all remain central to my lived values, they have evolved since then new meanings. Firstly, they have become more complex and secondly they have come to embrace their very opposites as I 'pave the way' for other doctoral writers. For example, in valuing wellbeing I have come to see the importance of

discomfort in the doctoral learning process: in valuing connection and empathy, I have come to see the importance of discovering and holding to one's own distinctiveness. In valuing authenticity, I have come to see that there might be more than one self/authenticity, and that these can hold side-by-side, as a doctoral writer traverses different communities of practice, disciplines and audiences. In 'paving the way' for other doctoral writers, I have seen that these 'darker' sides of positive learning need to be made known and prepared for.

In the sections below, I shall illustrate how these values have clustered together, evolved and become more complex in the transition to doctoral educator.

Wellbeing and Empathy

In 2009 I defined wellbeing as, 'the space to explore, experiment, learn from mistakes. This involves a belief in learners' capacity to achieve at the height of their ability, and a commitment to making the conditions right for this to happen' (Spiro, 2009, p. 145). Now in the 'living' of this value explicitly, I have come to recognize the complexity of 'wellbeing' as related to doctoral learning. For many of the students I have worked with since becoming a doctor myself, doctoral change came about most potently not through 'warmth, safety, comfort' but its reverse: discomfort, challenge and risk. Even so, there is learning discomfort which seeks resolution: and another which results in flight. To put this in concrete terms: Hunt (2001) describes feedback from her first supervisor which resulted in her moving into reverse in the doctoral process, and withdrawing from study completely. I in my own doctoral story also began a first doctorate as a young graduate, and found the incongruity between what I *wished* to say, and what I was *required* to say, so great that I dropped out, only to return at the very opposite end of my career as a teacher. What were the characteristics of this kind of discomfort, and how does it differ from one which is part of a climate of wellbeing and leads towards it?

In the doctoral writing programme I have since developed for a taught Doctor of Education (Ed.D) programme, I have tried to answer this question and generate a pedagogy to enact it. Stern (2014) suggests that the pain of academic study is inevitable and built into the nature of originality. Some, such as doctoral student Jenny Harding in this paper, identify this pain as akin to the adolescent struggling between child/adult in a transition from dependence to independence (Baker & Pifer, 2011): doctoral student Dan Butcher focuses as his central struggle, on the search for ownership, as he navigates between newly emerging writing and professional identities (Ivanic, 1998). In my own experience, the 'pain' entailed embracing academic rejection as a starting point for consciousness: of my theory of knowledge, the community to whom I belonged, and the ways I wished to ask and answer research questions. I made a disciplinary transition, from humanities/literature, to social sciences/education, and in so doing found I was learning a new disciplinary language and discourse. Writers who helped me track this change, and understand its implications as language choices, were Hyland (2005; 2009), Groom (2005) and North (2005). It was a revelation to realize that academic disciplines are culturally determined, described as 'tribes' by Becher and Trowler (2001), and their conventions and practices are assumed - described as 'tacit' by Lam (2000) and Gerholm (1985). Ironically, the most successful participants within their academic tribe are the most imbued in its assumptions, and thus perhaps the least able to make these assumptions explicit. In my first doctorate incarnation, the conventions of

citation were not mentioned until thesis submission: it was meant to have simply been 'learnt' through osmosis, in the air we breathed. Since no-one had mentioned this, I failed to note page numbers of quotations until the last stages of submission, and was forced to find these retrospectively for nearly 1000 quotations. It was a mistake I would never forget. It made me realize, in the process of retrospective discovery, that 'creative space' without the tools of creation is a false gift.

I defined 'wellbeing' in 2009 as 'the space to explore, experiment, to learn from mistakes'. But in my new meanings I would articulate 'mistakes' rather as discomfort, or even collisions, with an academic culture, when its values and practices are revealed, and congruity with one's own values tested. As a student I felt 'let down' by the system which did not explain its values and practices from the start. As a teacher I determined that I should work in all ways to making these values and practices transparent, and offering them as tools for empowerment. As part of my 'congruence' with the process, I share my own writing cycles fully with students, from first concept to papers in draft, rejected and revised. My own writing processes are the 'data' with which I track the journey and scaffold it for others. We review journal aims and scope and the way my own abstracts and proposals have been honed to match them. I share first versions along with peer-review rejections and feedback; my responses to peer-review feedback and consequent revisions. I invite students to identify which of my drafts is the first and which is the final: to explain why, and to act as peer in advising on changes. They have the experience of comparing their own feedback to those of journal peer-reviewers: and their own interpretations of feedback with mine as I share the revisions I did eventually make. This process reveals the continuous vulnerability of the writing process as we hone a final piece that communicates to its identified audience. It also places me side-by-side with the students as an equal in the learning process, and in mutual empathy.

To replicate the complete writing-cycle, students in my doctoral writing-programme are asked to select an assignment from former years that they would like to return to or develop, reframe it for a new audience, and engage in a process with one another of principled peer-review. Their task is to match the message they wish to share through their piece of writing, and a journal with matching aims and scope; and then to simulate the complete writing cycle, from writing to peer-review and submission. Students interrogate me about the meaning and purpose of this assignment. They battle with the constraints of journal specifications, article length, author guidelines, and the variety of citation conventions and house styles they need to match, just as I do/did. In developing peer-review good practice, they are sometimes resistant to receiving or giving negative peer-review feedback. As we share my own 'real world' examples of peer-review, including sometimes contradictory and combative examples, we work towards principles of supportive peer-review to evolve a code of good peer-review practice. The EJOLTS peer-review process characterizes some of these good practice-principles. Comments are expressed as part of a dialogue between reader and writer, and are designed to build the writing so it reaches the reader more clearly and powerfully. In this sense, the peer-reviewer's role is not that of judge, critic or expert: but of 'reader' evolving informed empathy with the writer and explaining how the writing is received. We build a peer-review community on similar principles, offering sheltered and supported 'discomfort' in this learning journey, through the rigour and empathy of peers engaged in the same endeavour.

I see this as the cycle of moving from comfort to discomfort in writing challenge: and the discomfort as part of values testing. In the doctoral writing peer community more than 50% went on to submit their writing 'for real' to peer-reviewed journals, and to achieve success. Four of these writers are represented in the second part of this paper.

Connection and Authenticity

In 2009 I explained that the value of connection:

> … has meant I have disallowed making assumptions that one situation will be like another; that what appears on the surface to be parallel really will be; that what I learnt or the way I behaved in one setting will work for another. Connecting has in fact involved stripping away expectations and stereotypes, and starting again with each situation so that it is possible to continue learning afresh from each. (Spiro, 2009, p. 146)

Now in 2015 I review the nature of 'learning afresh' differently. As a teacher of doctoral students I ask myself the question: what, of the knowledge I now have, would most have helped me then? If I connect current self and past self, how can they best learn from one another? My own answer is this: I learnt that *writing* is essential to the doctoral self, and that in writing one reveals multiple selves. These may be experienced as incongruent, but the doctoral process is to discover what it is that connects them: the core values, and essential message that remains at the centre. On the inside of the doctoral process other things emerge as more evidently important; extensive, thorough, critical reading, engagement with key concepts and theories, taking a position on key debates, a rigorous research design. Yet the surprising knowledge I take away, is that *writing* is what transforms these processes into thinking, and it is writing that transforms this thinking into communication. In this process, 'learning afresh' from each situation is simply not realistic: we cannot start every writing assignment as if it is our first. Rather, it helped in my case to experience each writing assignment as a connection with another: something you have written earlier (as I demonstrate in this part of my paper); connection with others writing in the same place (as I do with my students authoring the second part of this paper); connection with others in the same writing domain (as I do writing for the EJOLTS audience). It is both a connecting of disparate selves: and an outward facing to the chosen audience. Here 'connection' is something very precise; it is a 'noticing' of language, a mirroring of the rhetoric, organisation, vocabulary, terminology as the 'code' of the chosen community. My interest in language and discourse becomes critical in my understanding of what it is to connect with audiences and communities. It is this 'retrospective knowledge' I wish to convey to the doctoral student group, to give them the same tools it took me so many years to appreciate.

My own narrative of 'inner editing' illustrates what I mean by connecting what appear to be disparate selves, through the act of writing. Below are two pieces of writing, both of which explore the question: how are we shaped by our reading, and how does our reading help define our values and practice as teachers? I have responded to this question within two cultures: first an academic/professional/research audience where I account for the testimonies of fifty English as second language teachers describing their personal reading histories since childhood. The second extract is from a 4-stanza poem, with each stanza describing one of the libraries which made a difference to my own reading life. In moving

between these two cultures, I remain authentic to my key message and aims, but hone a form of communication that meets two different contexts and audiences.

Table 1.   Personal reading histories

This paper explores teacher experiences of reading in and outside their lives in education, and asks how this reading influenced their beliefs and practice as teachers. Studies of readers reveal connections between reading speed, reading strategy and reading enjoyment (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). We also have some evidence that reading for pleasure and reading fluently are closely connected (Day & Bamford, 1998; Alderson, 2000). However, these studies do not tell us how these readings directly impacted on professional values and actions---	I am the sum of my libraries, the ways they travel, the forests they plant. The whispering is still there, waiting to be found.
extract Spiro, J. (2014)	extract Spiro, J. (2014) Poetry

In the academic article, I am at pains to show that my thinking about reading connects with second-language literature and research on reading. In so doing, I am establishing a clear connection with my professional community, and earning credibility by doing so. My understanding is that these clues of community recognition are key incentives for my audience to engage. I am also sharing a language that I know to be acceptable within the specific discourse of the research journal: firstly by foregrounding *the paper* rather than myself as researcher; secondly by omitting reference to a specific teacher group in time and place, to suggest generality (at least in the opening section); thirdly by preparing the ground to introduce a new question, beginning with the sentence "However". In addition, the language I have chosen aims to give precise messages and to limit the margin for misunderstanding or varied interpretation.

In contrast my poem does not aim to reference other writers, whether poetic or academic, although it does follow conventions, which make it recognizable as poetry. Line breaks are a significant part of the message, unlike in the academic text. Not only do they participate in the rhythm, but they also alert the reader to the type of text they are reading. I as the author identify myself in the very first word: the descriptions are specific to my experience, and I do not claim otherwise. Having said this, unlike the academic writing example, I am aiming to open up metaphors which can become zones for readers to project their own interpretations; the links between books and trees, between learning and a journey through a forest; and between the written words of writers over centuries of the written word, and the whisper in the reader's mind.

However, what is interesting from the perspective of 'inner editor', are the 'selves' I felt able to communicate through these different discourses. In the first, academic text, I am accessing what I perceive as an outward-looking self that interfaces as a professional with other teachers and language educators. My interest is in teacher reading histories, and the fact this is driven by my own is of only marginal interest: what is of greater interest is the way the study arrives at a degree of rigor and objectivity, and how it arrives at insights which are about the community as a whole, its patterns, varieties, and characteristics. In contrast, the

poem offers my own experience as a metaphor for the reader. It does not aim to persuade that this experience is relatable to the reader by using argument or design. It rather aims to do this by leaving with the reader a choice of relationship or not.

In 2008 I explained the value of authenticity in the following terms, 'as acting with integrity in congruence with (my) beliefs, and wherever they are compromised or threatened I will seek repair and resolution, however hard-earned these might be.' At that time, I perceived 'authenticity' as moral integrity in the face of political or ideological challenge. In the account of crossing writing identities above, I am suggesting another more precisely tuned authenticity, connected with 'who I am' as a writer. It is the case that as a writer I both act, and model for others, stylistic, linguistic and organizational adaptation for different audiences. We even explore the fact that intellectual content is selected and framed differently to meet the reader. However, the questions 'who are you as a writer' and 'why are you writing' lie as persistent voices, as I write, for example, a doctorate, a paper about doctorate teaching such as this one, or a book of poetry, which is being published concurrently with the present paper (Spiro, 2015). The authentic writer inside these multiple voices is one that can say, 'This writing expresses a central, deeply searched and researched self, and makes no compromises'.

Empowerment

The overarching value which has informed my teaching, and continues to do so as a doctoral educator, is the one of empowerment, 'I regard it as a core responsibility of the teacher: to give power back to the learner and to provide a rich environment that allows this to happen' (Spiro, 2009). What this paper does is to ask what this 'rich environment' really means for the doctoral journey, when much of it entails this deep search/research into self. What can a doctoral educator do, apart from vacating the learning space so the doctoral student can enter and own it for her//himself? The next section will attempt to answer this question.

ii) What Does Creative Space mean for my own Pedagogy as a Doctoral Teacher?

In my doctoral self-discovery process I identified my living-theory of 'creative space'. My definition of it at that time was, 'an optimal learning environment, in which both teacher and learner are able to stretch the limits of their current achievement' (Spiro, 2009, p. 9). I still hold strongly to this, and to its extended description, 'a learning space mutually made by learner and teacher in which something new is created, in terms of learning, self-knowledge, self-esteem and its concrete outcome (ibid.). As suggested in this paper, through clarifying my living-theory I have been able to make it transparent, first to myself, and then to others 'paving the way' for their own creative space. However in my transition from doctoral student to doctoral educator, I see *expanding* space as an additional dimension. Not only will a good doctoral educator support students to acquire the self-determination and understandings they need to succeed, he or she will also expand that space to reach new audiences, new aspirations, new and more challenging messages. A living-theory doctorate, for example, in my own case, meant I began to write not only for the language educator audience where I started, but also for action researchers, doctorate writers, living theorists and educators

across all disciplines. Whilst I came to be aware of *creative* space during my doctorate student process with Jack Whitehead, it is only in retrospect I see to what extent this space was *expanding*.

My writing programme as part of the Ed.D. at Oxford Brookes University 'wraps' around the three years of doctoral study. It starts by encouraging students to interrogate their life story for its 'uniqueness' and to develop this as they navigate different writing selves and cultures. We share the 'tools' for interrogating writing cultures through examples of writing in process, review feedback, and analytical frameworks such as Bazerman (1988), Hyland (2009) and Ivanic (1998). A code of practice for peer-reviewing is developed by the group and forms a basis for peer supported writing as they move from novice researcher to publishable outcomes. I, as doctoral educator, place myself side-by-side with them in sharing the stages of my own writing for different audiences, purposes, and with different degrees of success and completion.

This pedagogy is underpinned by the values of wellbeing and connection as explained above, reformulated in the light of lived experience.

1) It provides a 'space' for doctoral students to address the discomfort in their doctoral journey, and identify what it is that might change as a result of this discomfort. In so doing it acknowledges the assumptions of pain and isolation often attached to doctoral study.

2) I occupy the same space as my students in revealing the vulnerability and setbacks of the writing process: by using my own writing at varied stages as 'data' in researching the writing process.

3) We construct a peer-review community based on shared principles of good practice, offering the rigorous empathy of critical friends engaged in the same endeavour.

4) We aim to make transparent (where possible) the conventions and values which bind together a community of practice so it is able to function effectively for all its participants; and in this endeavour to acquire ownership of these conventions, we are all equal.

5) In this climate of sheltered discomfort, writers might discover connections with disparate parts of themselves, recognizing that there is a central 'congruity' and core value system even while playing multiple visible roles. The writing programme invites doctoral students to interrogate what this centrality actually is, and to consider the different ways this can be explained and expressed.

6) In addition we acknowledge that real-world writing cycles require connection with varied academic cultures and communities. Entry into these cultures entails interrogation of the community for its tacit and overt conventions, interpreting its clues as one might a second language. The programme offers questions, frameworks, and tools to assist in this entry process (for example, Lillis & Scott, 2007).

7) It is 'creative' in that throughout this process, students are invited to stay with the 'uniqueness' of their message and explore their own unique ways of gathering evidence and explaining their values. In this sense I am congruent with the value of 'empowerment' as I defined it above – 'giving power back to the learner'.

The power of these seven principles is evidenced by 3rd year student Poppy Gibson as she writes of her excitement in developing herself as a writer and editor as a result of the Ed.D. programme:

> I just have to share some very exciting news with you! As you know, the Ed.D. gave me the skills and confidence to approach teaching publications with my articles and ideas. Having had several articles published in Primary Teacher Update magazine over the past year, the editor contacted me this morning and has invited me to be on the editorial board! I have a meeting and lunch at their head office 4th Aug to meet the editor and other editorial board members and discuss further.
>
> I know it's nowhere near journal standard, it's a monthly magazine for schools, but I am so incredibly excited about this opportunity, and it's all down to you and the other amazing tutors I have had during the Ed.D so far. So thank you.

Figure 1. Kawehi Lucas, Michael Walker , Jocelyn Romero Demirbag, Jane Spiro, Josh Watson, Makalapua Alencastre and Alyson Kaneshiro. College of Education Hawaii Ed.D. students and myself, standing in front of the Hawaiian flag as they open the Oxford Brookes Research symposium, Oxford, June 2014.

Jocelyn Romero Demirbag in this present journal-issue describes her transition from a sense of imposter to one of validation, confidence and empowerment. In appreciating the unique power of her message as a Hawaiian Waldorf educator, she recognizes the gifts doctoral study has brought her. In 2014, I brokered a partnership between the Hawaii College of Education and Oxford Brookes School of Education doctoral programmes, so both communities might 'expand' into new spaces. As a result of this partnership, six Hawaiian

doctoral students on the cusp of graduation shared their doctoral gifts at the Oxford Brookes School of Education research day and Ed.D. colloquium. They opened the colloquium by singing the Hawaiian anthem in front of the Hawaiian flag. Here, Kawehi explained how the Union Jack was a portion of this flag, illustrating that since the uniting of the Hawaiian islands, our histories had been intertwined. I offer the image below, as a moving moment in which 'expanding space' was realised, physically and metaphysically, as the two communities of Oxford Brookes and Hawaii recognize the extraordinary synergies between them. The shared colloquium led in 2015, to the return visit of myself and Brookes Ed.D. student, Elaine Ulett. Through Jocelyn we were able to observe the Hawaiian sense of spirit and place that she describes in her paper, as it re-emerges powerfully into the school curriculum at Waldorf, Kamehameha and Punana Leo schools on Maui. The privilege of this experience demonstrates how enlightened self-recognition brings gifts to all within its orbit.

Paving the way: Stories of Doctoral Journeys - Dan Butcher, Jenny Harding, Kathleen Greenway, Adrian Twissell.

This section shares in extract the narratives of four students in the Ed.D. programme at Oxford Brookes, as they interrogate their personal stories. The stories emerge from a 'creative space' at the end of the three-year writing programme. The students are encouraged to place their own learning at the centre of enquiry, using stages of their writing as 'data', in the same way as we have done with mine throughout the programme. Writing strategies that have enriched my own writing are shared: the use of metaphor and connecting threads, the exploration of symbolic meaning in personal story, teasing out textual organization and rhetorical strategies typical of the target journal. Whilst we share examples of published and publishable auto-ethnographies (such as Stern 2014; Hunt 2001; Leitch 2001; Whitehead 1993), the doctoral writers are encouraged to search for the distinctiveness of their own story. However consciously and painstakingly they hone their voice for the target audience, they are encouraged to remain 'authentic' to the message they wish to share and the core values that underpin this. Thus the process itself enacts the seven principles of 'creative space' explained in section a) ii above.

The doctor-researchers each found a distinctiveness in their narrative, Dan Butcher and Kathleen Greenway as health educators, Jenny Harding as an educational consultant and Adrian Twissell as a teacher of design and technology. Dan focuses on 'ownership' as his doctorate student status starts to 'define who I am'. Jenny describes her encounter with an Unknown Self as she struggles to find a balance between independence/dependence and public/private selves in the doctoral process. Kathleen explores the way different communities of practice have supported her doctoral journey – the Ed.D. peer-community, and her health-professional colleagues. Adrian maps his doctoral journey through significant incidents, and explores the symbolic significance of these incidents. Their stories give us an insight into the collective: individual dynamic of story: the doctoral struggles for identity, space, ownership, and community, but the unique ways each student resolves, explains, and experiences these.

Telling Our Stories: Four Doctoral Journeys

Dan Butcher's Story: Investing the Self

Over the course of the past three years of part-time study leading to the creation of my doctoral project, I have made an investment of time, energy and my own identity has changed as a result. Initially reluctant to share with others my student status, I have increasingly come to see this as an identity that significantly defines who I am. I have moved from seeing myself as a 'covert Ed.D. student' (arising from a workshop discussion with a fellow student) to someone increasingly comfortable discussing my doctoral student role with colleagues and others within the University and academic community including students I teach. Managing the impressions of oneself to tutors, fellow students and supervisors is not uncommon (Baker & Pifer, 2011). Critical incidents have occurred when outlining the details of my proposed research to departmental peers, students and the person whose authority I needed to obtain to access potential participants. Their positive responses validated the work I have done to this point and impacted on my own sense of identity. In combination with other experiences outlined in this reflective article, I am increasingly being thought of as a doctoral candidate by significant others, performing successfully in critical activities and, with the development of doctoral acuity, thinking about myself as a developing scholar and researcher, each an inter-related dimension of identity (Tonso, 2006). While the requirement for doctoral success requires establishing a unique contribution to knowledge, it also requires the development of a personal and professional doctoral identity (Green, 2005) and the assimilation of student and scholar along with all the other identities that make up the individual. Accounts suggest that all aspects of a person's sense of self merge and have significant impact on their professional identity development (Sweitzer, 2009).

As reported in an increasing number of inquiries into doctoral student experiences, there has needed to be a period of rebalancing of roles (Bates & Goff, 2012; Gardner & Gopaul, 2012). Time and energy spent reading, writing and thinking may not directly have impacted on my job performance but has affected my professional attitude, confidence and disposition (evidenced through my increased roles outside the Faculty in which I work). However, this process has not always been comfortable or easy to achieve. The intrusion of my doctorate into other aspects of life, including the very early mornings, walks with the dog and critically, family and personal time must not be overlooked or underestimated. 'Postgraduate study cannot be isolated from other aspects of life' (Hopwood et al., 2011, p. 1) especially when sources of social support are so crucial to role learning (Baker & Pifer, 2011). Informal conversations with family and friends, feedback on my writing from those whose opinions I value greatly and the distraction of exercise have influenced my sense of self as I seek to accommodate my adopted roles (husband, father, lecturer, nurse), my assigned role of student and the developing role of scholar.

Limits to psychological ownership

In the construction of key documents produced during the transition phase (Taught to Project) I have also reflected on my position within the epistemological process. Since the initial stages of the Ed.D. programme I have been more comfortable with the constructivist than the positivist paradigm. Rather than seeking new knowledge that is 'out there' to be

discovered by the 'miner', I see my actions directed at constructing knowledge (Kvale, 2008). This epistemological position raises two important insights resulting from the story presented here. Firstly one is only able to see what has been built at the end of the process. Like the oft-mentioned journey metaphor, slow and steady progress with occasional set-backs characterises the construction of knowledge, pieced together to form new insights. This demands patience, commitment, reflexivity and toil, features of a doctoral identity that I am increasingly comfortable with. Secondly, the co-constructed nature of knowledge raises the issue of shared ownership. While psychological ownership provides a valuable framework for considering my story to date, I must be cautious in its over-application. To be effective I would argue that a doctoral student must increasingly own the process of their knowledge and identity development but stop short of claiming to own the knowledge that is disseminated in their doctoral writing. It is also appropriate to recognise that if effort leads to ownership, the endeavours of those who offer formal and informal support entitle them to a share.

To finish

My days still start early with thoughts often dominated by the actions or concerns that are a feature of my doctoral journey. I have developed knowledge and skills during the taught phase of the Ed.D. and recognise an increasing independence driven by a greater acuity. I am conscious from the experience accounts of other doctoral students that there are many other challenges and achievements ahead. At present I draw confidence and comfort from a greater sense of ownership of my doctoral studies. Concerning the journey as a whole, I am mindful of the African saying referred to by Shope (2006): during preparations for any journey, you own it, but once the journey has started, it owns you. I am already anticipating revisiting this current situation from the perspective of someone who has 'completed' the doctoral journey and is able to validate or reject the notions of psychological ownership, doctoral acuity and recognition on my own self-drawn map.

Jenny Harding's story

Starting the journey

This account of my doctoral journey and quest for growth and change (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) begins with university acceptance onto the programme in September 2011. Looking back at my reflective log reminds me of euphoric feelings followed by trepidation for what lay ahead. The revelation that acceptance into a tribe would be challenging emerged whilst waiting for our first lecture in Year One to commence. Several fellow students gathered, revealing their existing employee relationships with the university and familiarity with the academics hosting our weekend. On introducing ourselves I sensed remoteness when sharing my Ofsted inspector role. Although I felt prepared for student life, I had not anticipated it sufficiently well. Several months of disciplined endurance, coined by Bradbury, *et al* (2010, p. 91) as 'blind obedience' led me hurtling into a pit of despair due to a total loss of meaning and purpose (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Exposing my Private Self to the Public (Table 2) I found myself wearing my heart on my sleeve to my cohort, and close to withdrawing from the programme.

Table 2. Exposing my Private Self in Public (adapted from Loft & Ingham, 1955)

Ambivert	**Feelings of inadequacy**
~~Disciplined~~	**Unconfident**
Need for preparedness	Hard working
	Unsuccessful
	Unreliable
	Low expectations
	~~Likes a challenge~~
	~~Determined~~
PRIVATE SELF	~~Well organised~~
	Outsider
	Overly sensitive
	Compliant
	PUBLIC SELF

Yet, on exposing my feelings publicly with peers during a reflective activity, it transpired I was not alone. Whether those who claimed differently had chosen to retain feelings as Private, Unknown or even Blind Self remains unknown, although negative incidents are recognised by Scott, *et al* (2004) as frequently experienced. However the phoenix rose from the ashes with my greatest achievement so far: successful registration of my research proposal.

I began my story with hopes of identifying what Law and Glover (2005, in Bush & Middlewood, 2005) refer to as a personal learning paradigm. My apparent resistance to integrating with the student tribe (Becher & Trowler, 2001) may be less about independence and more about my Unknown Self. My insecurities about not fitting into a tribe and cognitive ability are not uncommon. According to Gardner (2009) issues of 'belonging' are too often cited as reasons for leaving a doctoral programme. Yet by taking stock and convincing myself I should withdraw from the programme, I reflected forward in preparation-for-action (Pollard, 2008) placing myself in a position of what Scott, *et al* (2004) refer to as an outsider. I experienced changes to determination, routinely and eagerly exploring literature, documenting interesting findings as they emerged, wanting to re-engage formally with greater congruence (Rogers, 1969).

Although I recognize the diminishing student role as I develop as researcher whilst retaining my existing professional roles, this fails to recognise personal relationships: finding time for friends and family, indicating tensions as explored in Lee's (2007) framework. Had the scope of this article been greater, I would explore further each zone and overlap to form a

pathway of self-discovery towards transition to doctoral achievement (Thomas, 2009) and work-life balance.

Kathleen Greenway's Story

One of the biggest influences and benefits for me has been the collegiate element of the course. A traditional Ph.D. course is acknowledged by Scott ad Morrison (2010, p. 18) as a 'original and largely individual search' and is 'constructed around a relationship between the student and her supervisor, with few formal and taught courses required' (p. 23) though they acknowledge this is changing with Ph.D. courses often now having compulsory taught elements within them. Conversely the Ed.D. (as with other professional doctorates) commonly starts with taught courses for several years before the student departs on the thesis-component. The group has time to establish social learning and exchange of ideas as a large part of the exchange of knowledge. The mutual support cannot be underestimated either; it has been a very positive aspect for me. There is no doubt that our cohort-based course established a community of practice (CoP) (Wenger 1997), whereby we shared a common passion and engaged in shared activity. We also formed an online support group, and meet for informal face-to-face support meetings every few weeks with our agenda fulfilling Wenger's definition of collective learning via shared human effort. The collegiality of the course is now being extended further across the international boundaries with links being made with Ed.D. courses in the UAE and in Hawai'i, USA. Such links help form a new additional CoP, whereby members 'buy into, shape and maintain a profile…to contribute, stay in touch and become involved in joint projects (Shacham and Od-Cohen 2009, p. 281).

Social learning shares similarities with the learning that takes place in CoPs; however there are elements that make a CoP more specific. Firstly there needs to be a domain of shared interest, in our case the Ed.D. course, which is a domain to which we all share commitment. Secondly a community – where we build relationships with each other, share information and learn from one another. This community 'spirit' is evidenced at various points in this article, and I feel it continues to thrive as we enter our fourth year and the start of the thesis element. This could signal a time to break away from each other, yet we have actively chosen to arrange meetings over the next academic year so that the bonds are maintained and strengthened. Finally there needs to be a practice – one which has skills and resources that are used by us the practitioners. This may be sharing experiences, or repertoires, mapping ideas or requesting information from each other.

As I near the completion of the 3rd year of this taught professional doctorate and embark on the challenge of the thesis element, I can look back upon my journey and analyse the influences and practices that inherently form the foundations of my current position. I also can track my changing role and I concur with Green (2005) who asserted that the doctoral path is as much about identity formation as it is about the production of knowledge. Jazvac-Martek (2009) described the concept of oscillating role identities, and this certainly has been my experience with different social roles competing in the same timeframe. I am a senior lecturer who supervises Masters degree dissertations, yet at the same time, I found myself studying and writing as a student, initially at Masters level. The concept of doctoral students having multiple identities and roles is acknowledged by Blumer's (1969) symbolic

interactionism theory; and I can see that my role identity and its internalisation affects my behaviour, expectations and actions.

Adrian Twissell's Story

I emphasise four outcomes resulting from the exploration of Ed.D. experiences. Firstly, I attribute learning to personally significant incidents, those that represent a so-called threshold crossing. In doing this however, I am aware that 'significant' incidents are more likely to be recalled than others (Schluter & Chaboyer, 2008) which may also contribute 'subconsciously' to learning.

Secondly, and consequently, I view the incidents noted as symbolic; they have become reified through the attachment of meaning and they align with the threshold crossing process. Turner (1975, p. 146) notes that common understandings embed in symbols of this kind become 'key' symbol types. These may embody the recurring themes revealed by reflections on doctoral 'incidents' such as 'barriers', 'gap crossing', 'drowning' and 'confusion' (Developing Doctoral Responsibilities, 2013). Comparing these doctoral reflections may reveal whether symbol types are shared; in my case exchange with peers and supervisors symbolised the reflection necessary to reformulate my research intention towards an educationally more significant 'real world' issue.

Thirdly, unlike the traditional Ph.D. endeavour which has been described as 'largely individual' (Scott & Morrison, 2010, p. 18), my Ed.D. experience demonstrates that my journey (so far) was not in isolation; contrarily social exchange was key progression. Drawing on Meyer and Land (2003) my interpretation of 'bounded' thresholds relates to boundaries that were unlocked through appropriate negotiation and exchange. Therefore knowledge is viewed as socially constructed and mediated.

One significant exchange has been mediated through supervision. So far, drawing on journal notes, I would describe supervision in the spirit of the route guide, critical friend and advisor. For example a recent journal extract records:

> We discussed whether data collection should adopt a sequential or reversal approach. I was able to explain and justify my preference for the sequential method. I was encouraged to consider the apprenticeship model and my conceptual underpinning in general' (Twissell 2014, personal record, 27th May).

I believe this demonstrates that my supervisory relationship is such that we have developed a constructive approach and used meeting time purposely (Burgess et al., 2006).

However I also note, following an earlier meeting, my observation questioning 'am I developing my knowledge, or my supervisors and which is warranted?' (Twissell 2013, personal record, November 11). My frustration may surround suggested change, when I perceived my position as warranted. It may be a reaction to the perceived work (over-) load at the beginning of Ed.D. Year Three, or it may be, in line with previous considerations a genuine feeling of coercion. As with approaches to disciplinary writing, knowledge development may also be determined through disciplinary enculturation in the form of 'professional doctorate' (rather than Ph.D.) criteria (Winter, Griffiths and Green, 2000).

Finally I believe I have become pragmatically oriented in my philosophy. This is manifested in a desire, reflected in the incidents described, to make decisions and act upon them; to 'yield' but also to comply with institutional procedure and time scales. Indeed these pressures may have influenced my position, particularly as in Year Three numerous decisions were needed which required a degree of instrumentalism in their application to the research process.

Expanding and Creative Space: Doctoral Story as Crossing Boundaries

The four doctoral stories are interesting here both in their separateness and in their collective insights. They have identified different aspects of the journey with the freedom of choice: so have not of necessity selected aspects that would conveniently offer synergy with my own themes – scaffolded writing, the role of peer writing communities. They have 'revealed' the climate of creative space indirectly, through the directness and honesty of their narratives, combined with the appropriacy of the writing for the researcher-reader.

Both separately and collectively they have explained ways in which initial self-doubts were addressed without claiming the path to be resolved or complete. Adrian writes in his account, that, 'boundaries were unlocked through appropriate negotiation and exchange', and Kathleen that the Ed.D. community of practice offered her huge support in the journey.

In conclusion I would like to return to the core value of connection, which opened this paper. In 2008 I explained, "Through care for detail and capacity to listen to the deeper story I recognise not only that every story is uniquely different but also that every story offers insights into the broader human condition." This paper has aimed to be congruent with this core value and show that 'creative space' offers opportunities for these stories to emerge. It is a space I have had cause to explain, return to and redefine, as collective and expanding, and as a place where boundaries are crossed, both physically and metaphysically.

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