'I did it my way': voice, visuality and identity in doctoral students' reflexive videonarratives on their doctoral research journeys

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This paper presents accounts of four UK doctoral students' engagement in a Higher Education Academy project which used digital video to promote reflexivity on their doctoral journeys. Proceeding from participants' accounts of the production of their videonarratives, the paper analyzes the relations between doctoral research, reflexivity and the use of digital video, and their articulation in different ways by the participants. As an 'assemblage', the written form of the paper aims to evoke both the collaborative design of the project, in that it is constructed as a multivocality, a series of 'plateaus' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22), and also the multiple, shifting and always in-process nature of identity, immanent in each individual's account. The accounts address how epistemological, ontological and ethical considerations are articulated within visual and vocal re-presentations of the self in the individual videonarratives. Each narrative both does (and doesn't) resonate with the other narratives and each offers insights into the specificities of particular doctoral journeys. In experimenting with this form of presentation, we aim to bypass traditional accounts of research 'findings' as a form of transparent knowledge production and, instead, work within a mode of representation which seeks to acknowledge the 'masks of methodology' (Lather 2007, 119).

Keywords: voice, visuality, identity, doctoral students, reflexivity, videonarrative

Introduction

This paper has three aims. The first is to present four reflexive accounts from UK doctoral students about their research journeys. Each account was generated in relation to the participants' engagement in the production of a videonarrative, a reflexive visual narrative of each individual's doctoral journey recorded on digital video (DV). The videonarratives were produced during a project funded by ESCalate, the Education Subject Centre of the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA), and led by one of the

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authors (Carol) while she was completing her doctoral studies. The project is outlined in the next section and the four accounts are included below. The accounts themselves provide important insights into individual doctoral learning journeys, into what matters in terms of reflexive self-presentation, and into how identity is reflexively accomplished visually and vocally in digital video narrative presentations. Substantive findings from the project, and a consideration of the use of digital video as a research method, have been more fully discussed elsewhere (Taylor, 2011, forthcoming) which has enabled us in this paper to focus on the methodological challenge presented in taking up the concepts of rhizome and assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Thus, the second aim is to draw on our experiences from the videonarratives project to explore how a Deleuzian-inspired methodology might be put into practice. The paper procceds from two concepts from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), rhizome and assemblage, which are used to frame the article conceptually and methodologically. As we explain more fully below, a rhizome is a natural form or being which, in its growth and movement, can spread in any direction and move through levels and scales. The rhizome seemed a useful concept with which to explore the ways in which the doctoral journey opens its participants to multiple, iterative and heterogeneous ways of knowing, becoming and telling. In so doing, we see the rhizome as a means to contest academic accounts which construct the doctoral journey as a linear process. The concept of assemblage, simply put, refers to the emergence of non-unified wholes from the interactions between heterogeneous parts (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). In this article, the concept of assemblage describes well the process of reflexive production of the videonarratives as evolving compositions, as narrative (re)-tellings of the self and the relations between subjectivity, knowledge, memory, institutional space and place, are caught (or momentarily assembled) into video accounts which, coherent or not, were recognised by participants as provisional and contingent digital productions.

The third aim of the article was to put the concept of assemblage to work in relation to our methodological attempts to author this paper horizontally and collaboratively, as a rhizomatic series rather than a linearity. Having multiple authors and

no one 'centre' our intention has been to construct the article as an experiment in mulitvocal production. As such, the aim is to unsettle established (normative) modes of authorial academic production by instantiating the practice of assemblage in the writing process. The article stands as one outcome of a complex research process which was itself based on reflexive, collaborative participation (i.e. the production of the videonarratives and the video-prompted reflexive interviews). Furthermore, during the research process and during the writing of this article the establishment of working ethical relations amongst doctoral peers was paramount, given that both research project and article emerged through processes of instantiated, collaborative, negotiated, participatory research practice. Of course, putting these 'immanent ethics' into practice was not always easy: different authors had different roles (Carol as project lead author); relations and experiences (doctoral peers but at different stages in the journey); and methodological and theoretical commitments (Yvonne's allegiance to life history, Gladson's to Marxism, and Rob's to a hybrid interpretivism, for example). More widely, we held varying orientations to the purposes of the project; different responsibilities in the production of the article; and divergent experiences of power relations in the processes of both.

All of these factors have, visibly and invisibly, impinged on the ethical production of the text you are reading. Nevertheless, it is in its constitution as an academic assemblage that we hope to draw the reader into a multicentred complexity, characteristic of what Lather (2007, 120) calls a 'less comfortable social science' in which all the pieces have a place but don't necessarily 'fit'. Of course, the alternative scenario is possible: the 'fugitive pieces' (Michaels 1997) remain fugitive and frustration, rather than insight, might be the result. It is a risk we think is worth taking.

The videonarratives project

The videonarratives project ran from February until June 2009. The participants were five doctoral students whose participation in the project arose in response to an open letter of invitation circulated within the doctoral schools of two Northern UK universities. While

having a small number of participants, the project included both main types of UK doctorate (i.e. a 3 year research-based PhD and an EdD, a professional doctorate, which includes taught and research components); a 'research-led' and a 'post-1992' university; and students at different stages of their doctoral journeys. Its main purpose was to enable participants to gain practical skills in the use and editing of digital video in order to produce individual videonarratives. The videonarratives were then used in one-to-one interviews to prompt participants' reflexivity on their doctoral journeys (Taylor 2009a http://escalate.ac.uk/5214). The project also sought to explore the use of videonarratives for personal and professional development purposes.

The reasons for using digital video include: first, the practical availability of portable videocameras and the ease of use of editing programs such as moviemaker on home computers; second, the ethical requirement that ownership of students' reflexive 'products' would lie solely with them and would not be stored or located within an institutional site such as a virtual doctoral school (all videonarratives were held on a USB memory stick in the possession of the individual); and the methodological desire to explore how video could be used to promote reflexivity, along with developing some critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of video as a method. The use of visual methods is increasingly popular in social science research generally and has recently been used in a range of educational contexts to promote professional development, analyse classroom interaction, and to reflect on teaching practice (Clarke 2009; Coombs and Potts 2007; Hennessy and Deaney 2006; Jaworski 1990). Although Pauwels (2010 545) notes that visual research is still a 'dispersed and ill-defined' conglomerate of varied research practices which remain in need of significant methodological and conceptual elaboration, there have been recent (Banks 2007; Emmison and Smith 2000; Prosser 2000, 2007) and past studies (Curry and Clarke 1977; Hockings 1975) which have argued strongly for the insights that may be gained in using visual sources in qualitative research. In the videonarratives project, the use of DV offered participants the scope to hold and analyse a frame in detail and to conduct repeat observations in a range of contexts. Both of these practices were important in facilitating reflexive engagement with images which are inherently polysemic and avail themselves

of multiple interpretations; and in directing attention to the microprocesses of visual self-presentation through verbal and non-verbal communication. Carol discusses these visual aspects of the project in more detail elsewhere (Taylor 2011, forthcoming).

The project had two stages: a one-day workshop followed by in-depth one-to-one interviews which used the videonarrative as a basis for reflexive discussion. Both the workshop and the interviews evolved collaboratively from participants' discussions. The first part of the workshop focused on identification and discussion of critical incidents in individual's doctoral journeys. As events which are 'critical, influential, or decisive' (Miles and Huberman 1994, 115) and which may 'generate ethical reflection' (Hanhimaki and Tirri 2009, 8), critical incidents provided a useful framework to focus initial reflection on the significance of specific events in the doctoral journey while at the same time opening up a discursive space for discussion of the particular events and experiences which were uniquely meaningful to that individual (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Richardson and van Maanen 1995). The focus on experience of the event rather than the event itself (Worth 2009) generated a reflexive, iterative and collaborative sharing of doctoral stories and enabled participants to develop a narrative 'line' for their videonarratives. The rest of the workshop focused on production and editing skills, filming the videonarrative and a plenary reflection. Each of us produced a videonarrative detailing key events which we considered had formatively influenced our self-production as becoming-researchers (Crossouard and Pryor 2008). The content, structure and visual style of the videonarratives were left entirely to participants (Taylor, 2011 forthcoming).

In the second stage of the project, Carol carried out one-to-one in-depth interviews with the four project participants using the method of video-prompted reflexivity (Taylor 2011, forthcoming). This method is based on a reflexive viewing of the videonarrative in which key images or image sequences are selected by the participant and then used as the basis for explication, discussion and further reflexive exploration. The discussions ranged widely and included biography, career choice, family support and relationships, academic and institutional contexts, relations with supervisors, ontological, methodological and ethical issues. The use of video-prompted reflexivity effectively created a reflexive relay between the videonarrative accounts and participants'

ongoing narrations of their doctoral journeys. Significant also in adding reflexive layers were the repeated viewings of the videonarratives with family, friends and a doctoral supervisor which had occurred in the intervening period in a range of largely informal viewing contexts.

As reflexive accomplishments, the videonarratives exemplified some of the advantages of narrative. They captured the temporality of events within the doctoral journey; they illustrate how individuals revise their stories as new events are added; and demonstrate how personal narratives are structured and made meaningful through the retelling of key events (Polkinghorne 1988). By focusing on the meaning of events in the doctoral journey the videonarratives functioned as self-storying practices which became constitutive of the self then represented on video. Because the videonarratives were designed with an audience in mind, they evoked reflexive consideration of their social dimension and purpose, even where the videonarrative was primarily made for the participant and not for public display. All of these factors gave a depth and complexity to the narration of the individual doctoral journeys in the videonarratives.

However, this article is based not on the videonarratives themselves but on a further reflexive iteration. Participants produced a 1000 word written narrative commenting on their involvement in the project and its impact on their thinking about research practices, on their self-representational practices in their videonarrative, and on their personae as potential public academics. The reflexive layers involved are constitutive of the narratives included here (and their relation with the videonarratives and the video-prompted reflexive interviews) and work as a multiplicity of intersections and contingencies (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou 2008). Thus this article privileges what Kenway and McLeod (2004, 527) refer to as a 'stronger form' of reflexivity which fully acknowledges how the activity of the knower influences what can be known, rather than 'reflection', which is usually articulated to an instrumental improvement of practice (Clegg and Bradley 2006), although an element of the latter does inform one of the narratives below. Our four written reflexive narratives are included below. Taken together, and individually, they offer insights into the relations between reflexive self-

narration, doctoral research journeys and the opportunities and problems of digital video. In doing so, they contribute to an aspect of doctoral education currently theoretically under-elaborated. The heterogeneity of the accounts also underpins the methodological orientation of this paper and it is to this that we now turn.

Doctoral students' narratives, videoanarratives and the doctoral journey: The article as assemblage

In *Writing Degree Zero* Barthes (1953, 58) characterises 'clarity' as 'purely a rhetorical device', noting how what is 'possible' in writing is conditioned by 'History and Tradition'. The pressure to 'prune, eliminate, forbid, purge, purify', in other words perform what Minh-ha (1989, 16 – 17) has called an 'ablution of language', has long been central to modes of academic writing in which clarity has been presumed to be the guarantor of presence (Derrida 1972), whether the presence of authorial intention or of the 'reality' of the events represented in the text. Taken on these terms, academic writing has itself been seen as an instantiation of a mode of power, as a means by which authors (whether un/willingly and/or un/consciously) collaborate in and thereby reproduce the 'official' institutional power of the academy by subjectivating themselves within and to modes of 'correct' writing (Usher and Edwards 1994; Schostak 2002; Dunne *et al*., 2005). Recently, accounts of education emanating from different theoretical orientations including deconstructionism (Stronach and MacLure, 1997; MacLure, 2005), postmodernism (Cary 2006) and feminism (Lather 2007), have critiqued on a number of grounds authorial/authoritative approaches to academic writing by questioning the presumptions of omnipresence, objectivity and linearity on which they rely.

In such a vein, Richardson (2003) regards writing as itself a method of inquiry, as a way of knowing, not simply a way of telling. In positing language as constitutive, Richardson envisages writing as a multiple textual space within which various voices jostle, and in which that which is partisan, partial, personal and perhaps even political can find expression without seeking the resolution offered by an imposition of (fake) clarity. Incorporating Richardson's insights into Deleuzoguattarian analytics, in particular

through use of the concepts assemblage and rhizome will, we argue, move us further on in the direction of 'challenging an image of narratives as unified representations of lives and subjects' (Tamboukou 2008, 360). As we see it, the advantage to be gained from these concepts is that it offers a means of authoring and presenting this article as a series or multiplicity of narratives. These are enmeshed within a multi-centred complexity as a collage of perhaps incompatible parts, which render the article itself as a methodological instance of flux and instability (Law 2004).

As an organic form with offshoots which travel in any direction and points which are connected to others in non-linear ways, the rhizome offers a conceptual means to break with radical (root and surface) and arborescent (root and flowering) explanations in order to get beyond a dualistic mode of thinking which privilege epistemological and ontological binaries e.g. depth/surface, presence/absence, truth/ideology, mind/body. Thus, the four narratives which appear below are not designed to 'follow' each other or 'lead on' in any linear fashion; they are not designed to 'clarify' the essence of the doctoral journey; and neither do they blend into a coherent and contained narrative. Instead, they work as an assemblage. The concept of assemblage provides a way to think about 'wholes' which 'emerge' from the interaction between the parts, and entail a relation of 'exteriority' in that a part may be detached from one assemblage and plugged into another in which it will function differently (DeLanda 2006). In presenting the doctoral journey in its individual complexity the four narratives together form a conjunctive synthesis of heterogeneous elements which retain, and privilege, their individuating differentiation in meaning and style. Secondly, because each narrative stands 'alone' but in conjunctive assemblage, they invite the reader to draw her own 'lines' between them, to read them as 'open configurations [with] continuous connections' (Tamboukou 2008, 368). As such, they aspire to the status of 'plateaus' where each narrative becomes a 'self-vibrating region(s) of intensities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22). And thirdly, the videonarratives and the doctoral journeys they recount, trace the desire of each of us as becoming-researcher as a flow of 'connectivities, intersections and openings between knowing-identity-power-space' (Taylor 2009b, 267), attesting to the evolving nature of identity as a mobile and open process.

8

The article, then, instates our attempt to present the doctoral journey as a multiplicity and, as a horizontality without a central pivot, puts into practice the concept of rhizomic assemblage by foregrounding 'connection and heterogeneity' rather than linearity. While everything in the article 'can be connected to anything other and must be' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7), at the same time, each narrative functions as rupture or break, a deterritorializing line of flight moving out and towards the exterior of the narratives and of the article. This has not been/cannot be 'comfortable': as doctoral students we are positioned precariously in what Lather (1998) called the 'in-between space of any knowing' and this perhaps conditions our academic status and our knowledge claims as it does our identities. Alternatively, this 'in-between space' is an intricate, multiple location from which we can view the institutional entanglements and desiring problematics of the doctoral journey with a keen insight. We would argue that the benefits of writing as assemblage helps us unmask the 'masks of methodology', and moves us in the direction of that 'less comfortable social science' of which Lather (2007, 119-20) spoke by further unpicking the traditional epistemic codes of objectivist social science.

Narratives of the doctoral journey are now increasingly prevalent and include accounts by students (Batchelor and Di Napoli 2006; Luck 2009), joint accounts by students and supervisors (Mackenzie and Ling 2009), and a growing number of accounts, in both written and video formats, of the doctoral journey framed in terms of research skills development arising from recent policy reconfigurations (www.vitae.ac.uk 2009; Wisker 2008; http://www.vitae.ac.uk/ 1274/About-Researcher-portal.html). The current paper adds to the range of doctoral narratives and, through its form as rhizomatic assemblage, provides a distinctive methodological approach in conceptualising the doctoral journey. The next four sections present each of our reflexive narratives. In line with the methodological principle of rhizomatic assemblage, the order in which they appear was determined by the drawing of lots, a strategy deployed as a practical and conceptual move to enable us actively to work against integrating 'parts' into a seamless whole.

Gladson's narrative: Marx, Mills and Me: Crafting a life history from a videonarrative

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past (Marx 1969 , 389).

> The life of an individual cannot be adequately understood without references to the institutions within which his biography is enacted (Mills 1959, 12).

My participation in the videonarratives project precipitated my subsequent thinking and writing about my doctoral journey and how I might represent this as a life history. Taking my lead from Marx and Mills and from Goodson and Sikes' (2001, 88) contention that 'the life story individualizes and personalizes, the life history contextualizes and politicizes', I was moved to consider how an individualised account might serve as a springboard to a narrative at the intersections of biography, society and history (Mills 1959). Awareness of the life history approach to research has in turn broadened my understanding of the epistemological and ontological assumptions in my own research on the use of virtual learning environments in science education where I have adopted a mixed methodology approach.

Identifying critical incidents in my research journey and listening to my experiences and those of co-participants in the project provided the impetus to reflect on the commonalities and differences in our stories. How far and in what respects are they shaped by and relational to their location in specific historical, cultural, political, geographical and institutional contexts? The story of how I, a Zimbabwean from a 'poor' family, became a doctoral student at a UK institution has led me to an understanding that transcends a narrative of individual resourcefulness. This is not to deny my own agency because I have been resourceful. Moreover decisions to leave one's country, family and friends are inherently complex and difficult and not just on a personal level. However, listening to the linear narrative of my doctoral journey on DV I came to understand how desires, beliefs and aspirations are entangled with bigger social forces. I thus re-produce

an albeit truncated version of this linear narrative below. I also consciously interlace critical incidents in the narrative with commentary on their significance. This commentary was not as deliberate in my videonarrative.

I started my formal education at the same time Zimbabwe gained its political independence in 1980. This is significant because the new government was prioritising the formal educational system. Education was an important vehicle for the country's development agenda and academic rather than vocational education held the promise of access to employment. Almost every member of this new society believed that their lives could be improved by an academic education. Thus parents, regardless of their economic status, tried their best to ensure that their children went to school and my parents were no different. However, they could only afford to send me and my siblings to public day schools. My father was a motor mechanic and, although she was an intelligent woman, my mother had received only a basic primary education. My dreams of specialising in veterinary sciences, themselves shaped by the country's development agenda at that time, were shattered by my failure to get a place at either of the two intensely competitive public universities which offered the course I wished to take.

Significantly for me, my country at that time wanted to implement socialism as a political ideology and I got a Zimbabwean government scholarship to train as a science teacher in Cuba. I lived in Cuba for five years, studied at one of the best pedagogical institutions, and graduated with a first class BSc in biology. I also had the opportunity to develop my interest in teaching and learning and research and to present research papers at several conferences. Upon completion of my training I went back to Zimbabwe to work as a secondary school science/biology teacher. Here I was reminded of the fragility of socialist aspirations as corruption and nepotism was rampant. I expected my degree and experience would ensure a sought after job in a good urban school but I was placed in a small rural secondary school in an unfamiliar locality. I realised social connections still seemed to be essential. However, conditions in this school gave me the impetus to embark on postgraduate studies as a way to lead the 'better life' that I had always

11

imagined. I enrolled for a Master's degree at a local university and proceeded to become a university lecturer. My family celebrated the achievement with a sense of pride.

By this time my country, and I, began to feel the effects of the deteriorating economic situation. Personally I also realised that a Master's degree was not enough and I was convinced that a PhD was the best way forward if I wanted to continue in an academic career at university. Due to funding problems I couldn't get a place at a local university and I had to explore opportunities abroad. At this time the Spanish government was offering scholarships for a Master's degree in diplomacy and international relations as a way of promoting cultural ties within the framework of the two countries' bilateral relations. I thus moved to Spain and, because of the volatile political situation back home, I was compelled to remain in Europe. I received a scholarship from a UK university and it was finally possible for me to undertake PhD studies.

In summary, my doctoral journey has again required me to leave my family, friends and country. As I now reflexively see it, this linear narrative of my doctoral journey, and the literal, geographical journeying it has required, is relational to wider social forces including the development agenda of Zimbabwe and its economic and political crises. Not only have these forces impacted on my individual desires, choices and decisions, I have also felt the consequences of having to align my ambitions for educational credentials with the social inequalities of a ruthlessly competitive educational meritocracy. My doctoral journey may be a sign of individual resourcefulness, but it is not singularly heroic: as Marx reminds us, all individual struggle is located within wider social and economic structures. This 'conversation with Marx' is itself a critical incident within my videoanarrative. As Lawler (2002, 242) says, 'narratives are social products produced by people within the context of specific social, historical and cultural locations'. Producing my own videonarrative led me to appreciate this approach to stimulate reflexivity, which, I contend, is both a critical and ethical practice (Adkins 2002).

Yvonne's narrative: troubling reflexivity through videonarrative

Pillow (2003) argues that reflexivity is used simultaneously to validate *and* interrogate research practices and representations. How can this be? I think there are four interrelated reasons. Firstly, 'reflexivity' is conceptually overburdened. Secondly, conceptual elisions and conflations occur within it. Thirdly, this in turn hinders appreciation of how densely packed the term is and from teasing out and troubling what it means. Finally, as a result, 'reflexivity' hardens into a monolith. These are bold statements and I am being provocative, but they can explain why 'reflexivity' can serve a myriad of sometimes paradoxical purposes. It also explains why I am invariably required to clarify what I mean by 'feminist' and 'life history' research but my 'reflexivity' has never been stopped and searched.

Pillow's paper was based on a notion of reflexivity as 'self-telling' (Skeggs 2002) which allowed her to critique its role as 'confession, catharsis or cure'. Assigning this role to reflexivity would have been difficult, if not impossible had she understood it instead as set of practices and actions. This is not a matter of differing interpretations of the same concept. 'Self- telling', and 'doing reflexivity' are in my view different animals altogether and sometimes I use the term 'reflexing' to signify the latter. However, self telling may itself be a way of reflexing, as it was for me in the videonarratives project. In my view, the purpose of reflexing in academic productions is akin to use of *Verfremdungseffekte* (alienation techniques) in theatrical productions by the German playwright Bertholt Brecht. In short they are intended to induce a prickle under the skin and keep us critically alert so that we might hang on to our disbelief. They make us aware of the particular purposes of what we are producing or being presented with. So here, for example, I am employing as *Verfremdungseffekte* the use of German words in English text and referencing literary rather than social scientific work. As a further example, I will now fragment my narrative and interrupt it with interpolations, in italics, from Skeggs' (2002) trenchant and provocative critique of the methods used to constitute 'the reflexive self'. I am not engaging with Skeggs' arguments here. I am simply citing her to keep my (and the reader's) attention on the processes of my academic labouring rather than on the product. Clearly this sort of writing requires a different kind of reading than is the norm (Sparkes 2009) which in turn raises a number of ethical issues. I assure readers

that doing reflexivity is a facet of my praxis so these considerations are never far from my mind (Downs 2009) even if I do not address them directly here.

YD   I am doing life history research and I agree with Goodson and Sikes (2001) that it is the context that distinguishes a life history from a life story.

BS   *The discursive struggle has a long and dispersed history (351).*

YD   For this reason I have been keen to foreground my thesis as a cultural artefact and to represent it in the form of other cultural artefacts.

BS   *(T)he powerful……authorize themselves through their own cultural resources (363).*

YD   Amongst other things I am creating a small patchwork quilt as a way to (re)present my research and I also set up a blog (http://phoenixrising-mindingthegaps.blogspot.com). The latter was intended as a counter-narrative to my thesis. I thus describe my blog as 'recording parts of my research journey other methods cannot reach', one of whose aims is a 'test of my willingness to ramble publicly' (blog entry November 2008).

BS   *(D)ifferent technologies ….enable different forms of narration and visuality (351).*

YD   My participation in the videonarratives project was intended to support and animate the aims of my blog, because as Pink (2007a) observes, the visual cannot be divorced from other elements of culture.

BS   *The self that could be told also had to be seen to be fully known (351).*

YD   Furthermore, cultural artefacts and productions are also representations of social practices and experiences, here understood as the social practices attached to 'being a PhD student'.

BS   *(Reflexivity is) a resource for authorizing oneself (350)…mobilized for the display of cleverness' (351)…to shore up the composite of the academic reflexive self (361)*

YD   For me producing the video narrative epitomised 'the irrational, messy and embodied process of 'becoming-other-to-one's-self in research' (Sparkes 2009, 301).

BS   *(The researcher's) story is based on their identity which is usually articulated as a singularity and takes no account of movement in and out of space, cultural resources, place, bodies and others but nonetheless authorizes itself to speak (360).*

YD   Transfixed, I could not take my eyes off the storyteller. Was that me?

BS   *The telling of personal stories operates as a form of rhetoric whereby we become seduced by the confession, the immediacy of the experience of being there and the personal information.' (364).*

YD   I then took the recording and fragmented these into three shorter 'movies'. This fragmenting of my narrative was, I felt, in tune with my ideas that the stories of our 'selves' are multiple, complex, inconsistent and relational to the specific purposes they serve.

BS   *So we need only to ask who is representing themselves as reflexive, as having a self worth knowing, a voice worth hearing (365).*

YD   I intended to use all three clips in the blog but finally embedded only one. This was due to issues with 'internal confidentiality' (Tolich 2004), when someone may be identifiable even though they are not named. Paradoxically, the clip I did use contained a named person, my mother, as I juxtapose starting my 'journey' as a PhD student with the start of her decline.

BS   *The techniques of telling also rely on accruing the stories of others in order to make them property for oneself' (349). In order for some people to move, to be reflexive, others must be fixed in place' (349).*

YD   In this videonarrative I wanted to show how the self is not a bounded entity but is replete with often competing identities. So I included it on my blog because/although it prompts an (uncomfortable) engagement with Davies and Davies' (2007, 1140) question 'what are we doing when we generate accounts of experience, and what is it that we can responsibly do with those accounts?'

BS   *The telling of the self becomes a manifestation and maintenance of difference and distinction (350)*

This is a necessarily brief example. Nonetheless it illustrates what I mean by 'doing reflexivity' or 'reflexing'. It supports my intention to cast videonarrative as a way to generate opportunities for engaging with 'doing reflexivity' and for reflection on how to transform self-telling into awareness of the ways in which we make knowledge.

Carol's narrative: intermezzo positionality

This narrative muses on the politics of intermezzo positionality in my doctoral journey and during the videonarratives project. As noted earlier, 'a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, intermezzo' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 25) and this became an appropriate characterisation of the epistemological spaces I occupied during my doctoral journey.

The first dimension of my intermezzo positionality was my theoretical location at the border crossing of various disciplines (English, Media Studies, Popular Culture Studies, Film Studies and Social Science) even while I was physically located within a university school of education. My doctoral journey became a move toward deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), a line of flight from territorializing forms of disciplinarity (Foucault 1982) which, I felt, sought to situate my doctoral research as a boundaried subject (i.e. 'education research') and condition my subjectivity within conventional academic educational discourse. In contrast, my intermezzo positionality enabled me to align myself with those theorists who see education as a contested disciplinary field, marked by struggles between different disciplinary paradigms and differing methodological orientations (Bourdieu 1998; Grenfell and James 2004). My intermezzo becoming as a post-disciplinary researcher within 'education' conceived as a 'magnetic subject' (Pels 1999), shifted me into a smooth interstitial epistemological space where different knowledges could mingle (Taylor 2009a).

The second intermezzo positionality concerned my hybrid occupational position as a (new) full-time academic in a post-1992 Northern UK university and my position as a (very) part-time doctoral student at a research-led South-East university. I dispensed with Hartley (1992) and Said's (1994) concept of the traveller, migrant, exile, or stranger,

that quintessential postmodern subject whose physical displacements are mirrored by ontological dislocations, finding them inaccurate descriptions of my experiences. Instead, I considered whether becoming-nomad was a more appropriate explanation. In Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) geophilosophy, the 'nomad' is a category of person whose line of flight leads beyond striated space i.e. institutional and hegemonically disciplined space, into the 'smooth space' of 'nomad thought'. My geographical-spatial shift 'North' did not lead to experiences of dis-placement but, rather, to rhizomic paths which were affective, virtual and generative in relation to writing my doctoral thesis. As becoming-nomad, I ontologically 'found myself' (in both senses of the term) as an inhabitant in 'smooth space', a space characterized by conductivity, flux and immersion (Massumi 1992, 5 – 6). A necessary consequence of my occupation of smooth space was the epistemological requirement that I constitute myself as thesis author by taking up the 'authorizing' possibility to author my thesis in accordance with the flatter, horizontal, heterogeneous connections of the rhizome. From this, various conjunctive syntheses emerged: now, at the 'end' of my nomadic doctoral journey, I see that my thesis, my becoming-researcher subjectivity, and positionality as hybrid lecturer/doctoral student all partake of 'the consistency of a fuzzy aggregate' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 420).

Occupying an intermezzo positionality also characterised my research practice in the videonarrative project. On the one hand, I occupied the position of lead-researcher amongst my doctoral student peers, having budgetary responsibility for the delivery of 'educational outcomes' to an external funding body as well as having an ethical duty to other project participants. On the other hand, as doctoral student, I was ostensibly an equal in a project specifically designed as a multivocal participatory narrative collaboration (Andrews et al. 2008; Creswell 2003; Robson 2002). The different positionalities conferred by my methodological horizontality (as equal) and performative hierarchization (as project lead) enmeshed me in delicate tensions and negotiations during the workshop and interviews for the project. For example, my willing subjectivation (Foucault 1990, 212) to the performative exigencies I imagined necessary to run a research project 'successfully', *simultaneously* enmeshed me within a

contradictory research performative, a feminist allegiance to unmasking the authority invested in normative/ normalized research protocols.

Fourth and finally, I turn to the embodied performative that I produced as a self-representation in my videonarrative. In what way might this too be an intermezzo proceeding from the middle? I did not prepare a script for my videonarrative but as I listened to it afterwards I see it is a carefully modulated storying. It hinges on a distillation of a series of 'me's' in order to produce a contemporary me who stands as a visual and verbal signifier of the distance travelled on the doctoral journey from the 'me then' to the 'me now'. It is an intermezzo 'me now' who speaks in the videonarrative to tell how close she is to finishing her thesis and to obtaining the external badge of academic credibility conferred by doctoral completion, the achieved status of the posited 'future me'. My videonarrative performative is an embodiment of what Deleuze (2004, 96) meant when he said 'it is always a third party who says "me"'.

My videonarrative instates a reflexive process of verbal biographical self-production (Giddens 1991) while, at the same time, it is crafted as a visual self-technology, 'a tool [to] enable embodied communication' (Pink 2007b, 242). Like Williamson (1986) I chose my clothes to present a certain 'look', I modulate my voice using tone and stress patterns to signify I am interestingly knowledgeable and I enunciate consonants to ensure clarity of expression. I also keep my hands still in awareness that quiet hands are the embodied habitus of authority (Zandy 1995), while consciously employing a practice of looking directly into the camera-eye in order to address personally my putative audience and to demonstrate my (feminist) possession of the gaze (Thornham 1999). In other words, I craft an intelligible gendered performative (Butler 1999, 22) that visually embodies academic confidence and the modulated enthusiasm of authorial presence.

But I now ask where am 'I' in these verbal and visual self-representations? Am I that person/those persons? Not any longer and yet … yes, I was, momentarily. My videonarrative is, then, a momentary capture of that instantaneous 'me' in the process of becoming, where 'becoming is not an evolution … becoming is a verb, becoming is a

rhizome [which] produces nothing other than itself' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 262). The particular videonarrative I produced on that particular day is, then, and can only be an assemblage of narrative and visual forces, a 'plane for the emission of signs' (Tamboukou 2010), in which my self-storying as becoming-researcher is momentarily rendered visible, and in which the affective capacities of my body (Ringrose 2010) are momentarily held. Subjectivity, it would seem, is always intermezzo, always a proceeding from the middle, a way of coming and going while being 'here' at the same time. The intermezzo locations I have traced here complicate the doctoral research journey, figuring it as an 'in-between space of any knowing' (Lather 1998), as a rhizomic multiplicity which combines material, affective, symbolic, ontological and epistemological dimensions.

Rob's narrative: the road is made by walking

> Wanderer, your footsteps are
> the road, and nothing more;
> wanderer, there is no road,
> the road is made by walking.
> (Machado 1978)

My narrative has two themes. First, I foreground my doctoral journey as a process of unlearning my entrenched realist thinking to embrace the unsettling indeterminacy of relativism. The second considers the role of videonarrative in this process.

When I joined the Ed.D. programme at a northern UK university two years ago I anticipated a logical, sequential pathway. Module 2, it was explained, built on Module 1 and informed Module 3; a comforting model of progressive knowledge construction. It aligned to my natural sciences background and my view of research as the application of prior-art to new situations. In a short time I realised my learning was becoming amorphous and disorientating - a kind of Durkheimian anomie (Durkheim 1897). I also identified a trajectory towards 'self-actualisation': Goldstein's (1995) master motive for the realisation of all of one's possibilities; *der Wille zur Macht*, the 'will to power' of Nietzsche's philosophy (1909-16) popularised by Maslow (1954) as the pinnacle in the

hierarchy of human need. I began to notice how significant events, 'critical incidents', were coterminous with the seemingly insignificant and serendipitous. These stochastic (randomly occurring) events brought a depth of personal change: a clear epistemological shift to a position engaging with relativism.

One piece of new knowledge could trigger a disturbing cascade through my entire belief system, dismantling much in my entire knowledge structure. I remember vividly a seemingly innocuous remark from the thought-provoking Programme Leader, Paul: "Are then simplistic solutions simple solutions?" Critical moments occurring at otherwise uncritical times also contributed to this often challenging and unsettling situation. I feel as Alice might have done in Wonderland: if we do not know where we want to go (or indeed, where we *could* go), then each path we can take is good (Carroll 1865). I now think of knowledge as a self-searching, self-finding path; a self-organising autopoiesis. As a consequence, my research practice seems chaotic: a confusing plethora of possible paths appear legitimate; no interconnection appears wasted.

I am not entirely unfamiliar with shifts and tensions because I had a career in management in the private sector before becoming a doctoral student, but then I accepted and manoeuvred around them, rather than attempting to analyse and explain them. Fortunately I was reassured that my feelings of disorientation were not unusual when I read Quine's "web of belief", the '*Duhem-Quine hypothesis*' (Gillies 1998). I have traded an insistence on the rigour of logical progression for an entanglement with multiple realities, multiple perspectives and the mutability of 'truth'. Further reassurance has come from Feyerabend's proposal of epistemological anarchism to explain progress in the realist world. I warm now to his rejection of the natural respect for the scientific method (Feyerabend 1988).

Unscripted and without prior thought, I was to foreground these experiences in my video-prompted reflexive meanderings. This event itself was significant, a tipping-point, a water-shed. I recalled a friend's words when I was about to enter teaching: "You only know what you don't know when you have to teach it". My experience with video-prompted reflexivity demonstrated how disorientating doctoral learning has been for me.

Nevertheless, on a practical level, it has influenced me for the better I believe. I was persuaded of this in a recent assignment, a literature review chapter, where I called for a narrative search model, predicated on correspondence to the topology of the knowledge structure being searched rather than adherence to a rigid search model. Reviewing my videonarrative also prompted reflexivity on philosophical orientation for a second assignment.

As a viewer of my own videonarrative, Kottkamp's (1990, 193) definition of reflection is particularly significant for me:

> "A cycle of paying deliberate, analytical attention to one's own actions in relation to intentions – *as if from an external observer's perspective* [Deleuze and Guattari's "deterritorialisation"] – for the purpose of expanding one's options and making decisions about improved ways of acting in the future, or *in the midst of the action itself"*. (emphasis added).

Kottkamp goes on to cite a newly appointed dean of a US university, whose staff, all highly reputed tutors, taught miserably. Classroom videos were made and marked *'for your eyes only';* "seeing themselves teach, they were motivated to improve" (1990, 193). Like the tutors, I also see video-prompted reflexivity as 'action learning' (Revans 1980), that is as an educational process where the participant studies their own actions and experience in order to improve performance. Moreover the ability to share my video clips with significant others, close colleagues and family, lays bare any less-than-coherent thinking. I can identify where my style of presentation could be improved and that should help me prepare better as a doctoral student when I have papers to present or a viva to sit. These too, as well as the epistemological shifts outlined in the first part of my narrative, are important considerations for doctoral students and cannot be discounted or de-privileged. Nor, as I have argued earlier, are the theoretical and practical disjointed entities.

The rhizomatic model of Deleuze and Guattari (1980) allows for a schema of theory and research with multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation. The videonarrative I produced, and the reflexivity it prompted, as with my doctoral journey so far, is not a story of a neat linear pathway of defining moments. I realise now, like Machado did many years earlier, that the path is made by me walking my own doctoral journey, a path that seems to reinforce the notion that "he who sows order, reaps chaos" (Baets 2006, 36).

Conclusion

As an 'assemblage of multiple forces' (Tamboukou 2010, 7) this article has perhaps been a bumpy ride/read. We have traced the origins of the article in the reflexive production of our respective videonarratives, the collaborative video-promoted reflexive interviews they gave rise to, and the subsequent production of our four reflexive written narrative accounts. We alluded to the advantages of using digital video within this process, in particular that video enabled us to focus on the microprocesses of embodied self-presentation, attuned us to the polysemic nature of images, and required us to proceed carefully with image interpretation. As with the videonarratives, the written reflexive accounts included here offer four very different narrative 'takes' on the doctoral journey, each of which has different emphases, different methodological and theoretical orientations, different styles and modes of address, and which articulate different ideas about the constitution of the subject in and through the doctoral journey, and the relations between knowledge and self-production in academia. We have argued that thinking of each narrative as a 'plateau' enables us to posit the individual doctoral journey as 'a self vibrating region of intensities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 24). Working with the concept of the rhizome has enabled us to gesture towards the multiplicity of relations (biographical, cultural, epistemological, ontological) which are constitutive of each doctoral journey. Not only does a rhizomic conceptualisation offer insights into the heterogeneity, variability and particularity of each doctoral journey, it may also produce interesting connections and syntheses between each journey. While such syntheses may be fortuitous, intuitive or happenstance (and, indeed, that is their point) they nevertheless

signal some of the ways in which Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the rhizome has explanatory theoretical value for educational instances. Thus, as it stands, we hope the article manages to 'hold differences together, not as oppositions but as multiplicities' (Tamboukou 2010, 8) and, in doing so, that it affords new insights into the doctoral journey.

In addition, the concept of assemblage both supports understanding of how the article has emerged from the various reflexive, narrative and visual strands of the project and provides a way to think differently about modes of writing and representation. By de-privileging otherwise powerful conventions in academic writing such as linearity, hierarchy and clarity we have moved towards a more affective, 'intensive approach' which instates 'the positive structure of difference' Braidotti (2005, 307). The article stands, then, as a practical example of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, namely as a way to write multiplicity. It does not play with methodology but engages in methodological play as we consider how to capture and (re)present doctoral experiences. As such, it is a brief example of Lather's (2007, 120) 'less comfortable' social science, a practice which provides an 'apparatus for observing the staging of the poses of methodology'. It also opens a line of flight to Flyvbjerg (2004, 432) for whom 'good social science is opposed to an either/or and stands for a both/and'.

We end with some forward thoughts regarding the appropriateness of the concept of assemblage more generally to the analysis of educational processes and practices. First, 'assemblage' has conceptual potential to help explore individual educational instances, experiences and becomings in which affective, corporeal and incorporeal elements are conjoined; second, assemblage may provide insights into how individual educational institutions, as 'collective extensions' to use Colebrook's (2002, 81) term, hold multiple heterogeneous elements together in an assemblage that is historically-conditioned, material-discursive and embodied; and third, it may provide conceptual insights into how educational institutions work within larger assemblages (of governments, parents, unions) on national or international social scales (DeLanda, 2006). However, whatever the educational scale, perhaps the concept of assemblage has most

23

value in exploring how emergent and contingent heterogeneous relations interact to generate an always provisional conjunctive synthesis.

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