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*Exploring ethical difficulties in doctoral supervision:
reflexive collaborative theorising around memory and
practice*

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EXPLORING ETHICAL DIFFICULTIES IN DOCTORAL SUPERVISION: REFLEXIVE COLLABORATIVE THEORISING AROUND MEMORY AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT. This study explored ways that doctoral supervisors working together across distance can enhance ethically reflexive practice through collegial support. A form of collaborative biographical memory-work was used to enhance theorising around the discursive positionings and subjectivities that emerged from experiences remembered and shared. This method is usually based on memories from childhood assumed to have undergone less re-scripting through re-telling over time. In contrast, in this study six experienced doctoral supervisors worked over two years to re-member and theorise ethical difficulties in their adult professional practice before turning to shared memories of childhood experiences linked to adult concerns. These insights led supervisors to re-articulate earlier difficulties in supervision, linking earlier experiences of mothering and schooling to ethical stances taken in later life. The collaborative memories elicited unexpected intersections between dominant discourses of rational authority/ knowledge and power and feminist understandings of disciplined bodies/emotions and care within the constraints of contemporary university environments. The research points not only to the value of collaboration in the work of theorising, but to the contribution of biographical memory exploration to reflexive ethical practice.

Keywords: doctoral education; postgraduate supervision; ethics; embodiment; feminist poststructural theory

1. Introduction

The practice of research supervision is receiving increasing research and policy attention, much of it within humanist discourses of individual skill development, serving narrowly based neo-liberal productivity agendas, and largely under-theorized (see Petersen, 2007). Relatively little attention has been paid to the relational ethics of research supervision. Suggesting that there are parallels between doctoral supervision and Aristotelian intellectual virtues¹, Halse and Malfroy (2010) identified what they argued are five central facets of doctoral supervision: an alliance between the candidate and supervisors, developing good scholarly habits, and increasing expertise in scholarship, technical aspects of the research field and the wider context. Noting that the first two of these are more difficult to teach doctoral supervisors in current approaches to supervisor development (because of their complexity and because they often arise out of reflection on experience), Halse and Malfroy suggest that doctoral supervision requires alternative frameworks, discourses, and language in order to grapple with the contemporary complexity of its practice. Congruent with this view, Petersen (2007) had earlier described critical approaches to doctoral supervision:

These deconstructive and theorising inputs to the conversation are less about finding out how to better (i.e. more effectively) succumb to neo-liberal or economic rationalist discourses of effectiveness and completion, and more about critically exploring, for example, *how* those discourses may be operative and regulatory, what they make possible and impossible, and how they compete with other available discourses about the course and purpose of postgraduate research and supervision. (p. 476)

The contribution of this current article to the tasks of grappling with the complexities of supervision practice is to centre supervisor subjectivity in order to explore the relational ethics of doctoral research supervision. When the individuals of classical, humanist and neo-liberal discourse are replaced by the subjects-in-process of post-structural theory (see Davies et al., 2006), a critical analytic becomes available by which research supervisors might study relations of power in research supervision and the constitutive force of supervision discourse. Based in Logstrup's and Levinas' discussions of morality, Bauman (1998) suggested that goodness begins with steps that "take responsibility for one's responsibility" (p. 17), arguing that "the greater the moral responsibility the dimmer its hope of normative regulation" (p. 20). As we describe later, this project emerged out of the lived experiences of supervisors caught between responsibilities arising from increasingly normative regulation of doctoral supervision (see, e.g., Manathunga, 2005; Petersen, 2007) and our sense of the ethical responsibilities of supervisory

relationship and practice. At the heart of our practice, and informing this study, were experiences that produced great uncertainty for us as supervisors: "It is easy to spell out the guidelines, even the norms, for small and insignificant responsibilities, trite and inconsequential responsibilities. ... The more it counts what we do, the less certain it is what is it that we ought to be doing" (Bauman, 1998, p. 20). In the face of experiences of uncertainty within a wider discourse of neo-liberal certainties, we considered it ethically imperative to examine the constitutive effects of discourse for supervisor ethical subjectivity.

Becoming a supervisor, however, involves "more than information sharing, more than skills development and more than a confessional" argued McCormack and Pamphilon (2004, p. 35), who asked "what other ways are available for supervisors to explore their experiences and practices that make visible the complexities of the context in which they currently work?" (p. 4). In response they proposed a post-modern group-based story-dialogue process in order to trouble the taken-for-granted of supervision discourse. Building on McCormack's and Pamphilon's argument for alternative processes for understanding research supervision, this article offers an account of collaborative biographical memories (CBM, of which more below), a process that at once is research method and carries possibilities for supervisor transformation. We make the argument that being available for transformation in researching our own day-to-day encounters of supervision and considering these as discursive practice, is a move towards engaging with the questions that we hear in Bauman's discussion of responsibility, and with Lather's (2007) suggestion that "not being so sure of ourselves is ethics in postmodernism" (p. 160). Further, the CBM process, here initiated by supervisors, offers supervisors positions from which to research and theorise our own practices in ways that fit with our preferences in respect of research ethics, avoiding the problem noted by Manathunga (2005) of resistance to institutionally-driven programmes of supervisor development. Through the poststructural CBM process, which we describe shortly, we examine how discourse and practice work on us in supervision, thus opening both ourselves and discourse to possibilities of change.

When a desire to explore the possibilities of change arises directly out of the practice of research supervision, a project lives out Hoshman and Polkinghorne's (1992) emphasis on the value of "practicing knowledge" and more recent interest in professional wisdom rather than technical-rational decision making (e.g. Bondi, 2011). In particular, this study emerged out of experiences of doctoral supervision in the context of enterprise universities that are governed within political agendas of economic rationalism where risk management policies and strategies hedge the parameters of "viable" doctoral research and effective supervision. The project facilitators identified

significant ethical quandaries within which they were positioned as doctoral supervisors. Dominant Enlightenment rationality and neo-liberal entrepreneurial discourses, contested by some feminist discourses of care in supervision (as noted in Court, Cornforth & Manthunga, this issue) positioned them to attempt to provide authoritative knowledge and sometimes financial and/or emotional support, while requiring their enmeshment in surveilling students for compliance with ever-increasing forms of accountability and pressures towards a time-limited completion. In considering how they might continue to understand themselves as ethical practitioners in these challenging and often conflicting relational spaces of supervision, they were working at an intersection between their earlier work (Cornforth and Claiborne, 2008a, 2008b) that investigated synergies and disjunctions between thesis supervision and the professional supervision practice familiar to counsellors and psychologists, and a wider body of work on academic life and practice in neo-liberal times (see, for example Davies, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Davies & Bansel, 2005, 2010; Petersen & Davies, 2010).

Thus, emerged this study of research supervisor practice and subjectivity, into which the project facilitators invited four other women academics from three Aotearoa New Zealand universities to collaborate in shaping ongoing practice wisdom for ethical practice. They sought ethical companionship in the uncertain tasks of fracturing dominant paradigms and of generating multiple discursive possibilities for supervision practice. The invitations they offered were in themselves acts of resistance to and refusal of what McCormack and Pamphilon (2004) described as “performance-derived quantitative measures of good supervisory practice”, measures that “turn(s) our gaze as supervisors inward – on to our selves as individuals” (p. 34). Refusing such self-governance of their academic selves, as they sought not-yet-known possibilities for ethical supervision practice, the facilitators offered participants in this project an opportunity to turn their gaze outward to collaborative investigation of the discursive constitution of the academic supervisor through a particular expression of collaborative memory work.

2. From Collective Memory Work to Collaborative Biographical Memories

While collaborative biographical memories were produced in unique ways in this project’s processes, its emergence can be traced through a number of feminist histories. The first trace (as discussed Court, Cornforth & Manthunga, this issue) takes us back several decades when feminist activists and researchers in New Zealand and elsewhere began to work hard to make the personal experiences of women visible. Believing in the potential for women to work effectively and supportively together through drawing on

their collective strengths, they told their personal stories and revelled in new insights about how their own seemingly separate individual lives had been shaped by larger social forces. Drawing on processes from consciousness-raising groups (see Enns, 1993), they worked to make personal experience visible and political.

A second trace is the hybrid method that used aspects of memory-work as it has been described by psychologists who collectively examined early memories (e.g., Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault & Benton, 1992; Onyx & Small, 2001), with exploration of the specific memories reworked collectively in a group so that they become part of shared personal experience. This method originally built on the reflexive political approach of socialist feminist Frigga Haug (e.g., 1992) whose collective remembering among a group of activists led to theorising around the constitution of participants’ subjectivities within historically important discourses in Germany.

A third trace is the collaborative post structural theorising that characterises Bronwyn Davies’ use of collective biography:

... through the shared work of telling, listening and writing, [participants] move beyond the clichés and usual explanation to the point where the written memories come as close as they can make them to ‘an embodied sense of what happened. (Davies and Gannon, 2006, p. 3)

The memories brought to this process are often ones that have not been spoken by participants before, especially as the process calls for the initial memory presentation to have as much sensory, embodied detail as can be recalled. Davies and Gannon (2006) also note that

In working in this way we do not take memory to be ‘reliable’ in the sense of providing an unquestionable facticity, nor do we take what initially surfaces as being truer, or more valid, than the texts that are worked and reworked in this approach. (p. 3)

As in all ethnographic writing, the detail of embodied experience is crucial in communicating a moment in time that speaks to a wider audience, and with Davies and Gannon, we argue that shared insights can arise through such a process. What also makes this research approach different to other methods such as autoethnography, is the search for embodied memory from early in life, moments that people can recall that have not been scripted and re-storied over the years but still have primal power to move and shake us. Often in writing accounts of these memories that have not been spoken aloud before, there are moments of physical discomfort, pain or exhilaration – possible embodied markers of discursive positions that threaten to derail us.

A fourth trace emerges from the extension of this poststructural collaborative theorising by the Waipops collective that worked with Davies to analyse notions of mastery and inclusion. The work extended Foucauldian

concepts of subjectivity and Butler's discussion of exclusion and differentiation to foreground a transgressive form of mastery that involves subtle, complex and fleeting freedom from discursive constraints (Claiborne, Cornforth, Davies, Milligan and White, 2009). During this process, a particular detail may be recognized as resonating with aspects of another's memory, sparking new insights into and re-thinking of sedimented personal stories into a revisioning of experience focused on how our selves have been constituted by the dominant discourses of our cultures. It points to different possibilities in terms of previously unnoticed subjectivities hidden in our accounts until the memories are reworked collaboratively to fracture the old story-lines. The CBM method in this project relies on viewing the original remembered experience told to others as a stimulus for collaborative sharing and re-writing. The group use its visceral evocations to take the original experience in new directions in order to learn something new from it.

In place of ... usual story-telling devices, each story teller works to evoke the embodied detail that is glossed over and lost in more usual clichéd or explanatory versions of their stories. They attend to the detail of their own bodies in the present in order to find the words that will evoke the remembered bodily sensation in their story. In this way the participants work on their text until each member of the group can enter the story as if it had happened to them. Through this strategy of re-writing and re-reading our stories we were able to listen to each other's stories in such a way that we opened ourselves to the possibilities of learning what it was to live in each other's stories and to know our own stories differently. (Claiborne et al., 2009, p. 51)

There are complexities in this process. Cooperative work, especially that which focuses on embodiment and emotions, invites transgressions that may be both pleasurable and dangerous. Memories are to be treated with caution. Unpleasant affect can sometimes be triggered as we reconnect with old memories. People also may have much invested in their memories, have been accustomed to storying their sense of identity, and may be uneasy about relinquishing a sense of ownership to a collective analysis. Consequently we were – and are – aware of the need to be transparent and caring in the way we research and write about personal experience through a CBM approach.

We understand these various traces to offer different applications, despite Stephenson and Kippax's (2008) review of memory work putting the psychological work (e.g., Crawford et al., 1992) on the same continuum as the work of Davies on collective biography. We have called our approach "collaborative biographical memory work" (CBM)(Waipops, in preparation) to honour both the memory work tradition that foregrounds the collaborative process and the collective biographical work that emphasises a poststructural theorising of subjectivities.

3. Ethical Processes

As we have indicated throughout this special issue, ethics is an uncertain practice: this project thus began with some tentativeness, and a willingness to be open to what Lather (2008, p. 190) called "an ethic of getting lost with the other," with all the risks that that entails. We all entered this project prepared to open up difficult spaces for scrutiny in the hope that we might find a way to re-imagine doctoral supervision practice differently.

Although formal approval was sought and gained from the lead researchers' university ethics committee, our view of ethics as an uncertain practice, awareness of the potential sensitivity of some memories, and previous experiences of the need to be respectful in reacting to others' memories, cautioned us to be more proactive in caring for our participants. We therefore decided to begin our collaboration by being transparent about these potential problems, by discussing how we might handle any such difficulties, and writing our own guidelines for working together.

Potential participants were sent an introductory email invitation, which outlined the project and explained that it was aimed at trialling a particular way of thinking about, and acting on difficult experiences of supervision. An information sheet enlarged on details of the project, explaining that the aim was to generate material for identifying troubling experiences of supervision not usually addressed in academic professional development workshops.

It was explained that in the initial memory exercise, participants would be asked to create a "text" of memory using pseudonyms for people and places, blurring details so that no particular person or example could be identified. The instructions used suggested that

[o]ne way to do this is to combine aspects of different situations or people together into one constructed story, or to expand the description to take in wider issues. We think that many people in the 'helping' professions are used to these constraints and ethical protocols. Our aim regarding the sorts of texts we would like to discuss are also based on current research techniques, particularly from sociology, in which responses and respondents are described using techniques that were previously only employed in fiction or autobiography.

4. Collaborative Biographical Memory-work Processes

The collaborative biographical memory work project was conducted through two writing retreats (two days for the first and one for the second), held 12 months apart (see CODIS, this issue). Between these retreats discussion of the memories was continued through online discussion on a secure site

hosted by one university. For some of us, CBM offered a welcome chance to experience an unfamiliar research methodology: in the tradition of feminist collective practices identified by Hartsock (1981), we were supported apprentices here. It also offered us all opportunities to collaboratively reflect on and write about difficult supervision issues with researchers familiar with feminist poststructural theory.

During the first retreat the process moved from writing, to telling and listening to each other's memories, reflecting on these and collaboratively interrogating, deconstructing, rewriting and re-viewing them. We began an initial process of remembering gathered around a large table in a quiet room, in a garden setting. Space emerged as one foci of our theorising supervision during these two days (Manathunga et al., this issue).

As is common with various memory work methods, each remembering event focussed on a particular "trigger" concept around which each person would begin to remember (Stephenson and Kippax, 2008), in this case "a troublesome memory of an early academic supervision experience" that might have had emotional resonances of exclusion, shame or excitement. Each participant spent 20 minutes writing a memory. This writing was photocopied and distributed, and each person then read their memory aloud to the group. As we responded to each other, we began to make further connections to our experience, sharing the process of remembering to bring out common themes. After all the memories had been considered by the group, each person re-texted their memory in the light of the ideas put forward in discussion.

The next step was a second memory exercise, involving memories experienced before the age of eight years. Participants were asked to write an early memory that was in some way related to their later memory of supervision, for example through having similar emotional resonances of exclusion, shame or excitement. Rather than starting with earliest memory, as is most often done in collective biography (Davies & Gannon, 2006), we began with the adult memory before moving to an earlier memory because it had been difficult to find trigger statements for early memories that could be easily related to the topic of academic supervision. For these memories the same process described above was followed, moving from individual writing, telling, listening to each other's memories, through collectively reflecting, interrogating, deconstructing their details and emerging themes, to individually re-rewriting and re-viewing them. No one had trouble remembering a relevant early experience, though the connections to supervision practice were not obvious to some of us for quite some time, emerging as they did during later stages of the project.

CBM research can raise difficult early memories. Participants had agreed to listen respectfully to each other in the process. Because all participants

were well read in discursive and poststructural theory (though of various kinds), as we listened we noticed clichés of language (such as "it went well, it was the bee's knees") which can indicate the operation of a well-known trope or social construction, with little flavour of immediacy that memories with sensory detail hold. Discussion of clichés was done to expand on those remembered moments. We also listened for those times when what was said felt "out of synch" with how a young person of that age might phrase things, and the vocabularies to which they might have access. Asking for clarification during the follow-up online written discussions helped further embody the vignettes in our collective memories.

Our contributions to the ongoing online discussions were at the discretion of each participant. The aim to have everyone joining in the discussion every week to make the conversation work did not eventuate for some of us as we were caught up in personal or other professional responsibilities. The online conversations enabled continuing collaborative reflection and theorizing of "echoes" that reverberated in our accounts of previously unexplored memories. The first author facilitated the online site, ensuring there was no identifying information about particular people in the discussions.

As we moved together through the process of sharing, discussing, deconstructing and reconstructing, in common with the earlier work of the "Waipops" collective (Claiborne et al., 2009; Cornforth, Lang, & Wright, 2012; Cornforth, White, Milligan & Claiborne, 2009), we found the creation of a more collective account of memory more available through allowing all the memory texts to be voiced by a single figuration. By consensus we chose the name "Oriana", which means "dawn gold", for the subject of these texts. This name helps to capture how the collective conversations not only generated insights that were enhanced through thoughtful reflections and ruminations, but also illuminated at times new views of our own individual embodied memories and feelings.

The first two memories below are from Oriana's childhood, as re-texted by the original writers. The analysis draws on our online discussions, with links to nascent theorizing that was evoked. We present the memories in this order to better highlight the larger cultural and historical discourses that produce our professional supervision practices.

5. Oriana at School: The Girl Outwits the Strap

Schooling was a complex experience, as we gladly took up positions as good girl/student in preparation for the educators we were to become. This subjection to the dominant discourses of education (Foucault, 1977) was not always easy. In the memory below, Oriana is just five and a half years old.² She had received a brand new bike for Christmas and then on the first

day of the new term in February she joyfully rode to the little country school where she was a “new entrant.”

She was a big girl now
could ride, all by herself
down the long gravel road
to school –
the bell’s ringing – quick!
Run inside, hang
bag on hook, slide
into her smooth wooden desk.

There’s a brand new
exercise book!
It smells nice.

She could write her name on – draw
flowers and grass, waving
from the side of the road
as she zooms past
on her new red bike

Suddenly Mr Beardley is looming, loud voice yelling

‘What are you doing? You naughty girl!

Look what you’ve done to your book!’

He’s going to the cupboard, getting out
the big brown strap.

She slides out of her desk, choking –
falling

scrambling
running outside to the

dunny, dark, smelly.
Pull the door shut, lock
the bolt – quiet –
he might find her.

Tonight she’ll sneak out
ride fast back home.

We all “remembered” with the teller of this memory what Oriana felt: her heart sinking; then pounding as remembered fear swept through her body. Momentarily breathless, tears pricking, the participant reading this memory was puzzled at her own reactions.

Some of us found ‘the cupboard’ a puzzle: it had cultural resonance only for those whose own schooling experiences were in small rural schools in Aotearoa New Zealand during the 1950s. Through discussion, and additional writing work by the teller – using first person and prose – we all came to understand and to claim this memory. The importance of the cupboard became manifest as an artifact of discipline as described by Foucault (1977). The tall, wooden cupboard was a standard feature of rural classrooms, the

place where books, stacks of paper, pen nibs and ink, and chalk were stored in tidy shelves, along with the instrument of discipline, the “big brown strap” for corporal punishment delivered to the open palms of offenders. The cupboard loomed over the lower wooden desks of the classroom and even the teacher’s large desk. Opened only with the key held by the teacher, the cupboard was the source of the male authority in life and in the classroom.

The looming of the male teacher and the hidden power of the strap sucked the joy out of the bike ride to school, the blissful sketching on the book of the flowers and wavy long grass Oriana had seen from her bike as she rode to school. Such joy had no place in this classroom. The exercise book was meant only for practising printing; for letters and words, not drawings of flowers.

As we discussed and incorporated this memory into our own experiences, all but the teller initially identified the pluckiness of Oriana in this situation. Racing to the outside toilet (“dunny”) to hide seemed an inspired move and Oriana’s nerve to stay in the cramped dark space till later in the day also seemed an incredibly brave resistance to Mr Beardley’s overwhelming and violently maintained authority. In discussing the “cheek”, the chutzpah, the gutsiness of Oriana, we all sat up a little straighter, proud of “our” strength in resisting, however momentarily, the initial encounter with authoritarian, masculinist strictures of schooling.

The re-written version made Oriana’s memory more available for further reflections in our on-going conversations that developed over the following few weeks. The implications of Mr Beardley’s authority were clearer in the detail that it was *his* cupboard and the teaching “tools” in it were evidence of his legitimation to teach, discipline and punish (Foucault, 1977) – as one of us noted, “What a terrible tale of discipline!” Changing from a third person poem to a first person narrative also made the story more personally immediate, highlighting the young girl’s agency. One person responded “I’m in awe of how you gained the courage to leave the room and scoot off on your new bike. I find myself saying, “Go girl! Fly like the wind!” Another person agreed that Oriana’s memory “instantly made me feel freedom, freedom from demands, expectations, positioning that are set by others and also from the many specific constraints of education settings. Hide in the dunny, keep to the shadows, till you can emerge, strike for freedom and home.” A different response asked what Oriana’s running to the dunny says back to the teacher about how he was (mis)using the power relations of education.

Both common and different discursive positions were being noted here. And as suggested by the earlier Waipops group (Claiborne et al., 2009, p. 51), through writing, telling, listening, re-writing memory work, we could not only “[open] ourselves to the possibilities of learning what it was to live in each other’s stories” but also get “to know (parts of) our own stories differ-

ently." Our reflecting about each other's memories sometimes sparked shifts in our own views of ourselves as a young girl/supervisor, offering us richer appreciation of how we had accessed alternative subjectivities, and of the struggles for authority in which we were engaged.

Surprised by the gutsy resistance and protest her research colleagues were pointing to in Oriana's memory, the writer reconsidered her own view of her young self as fleeing in fright from Mr Beardley. She experienced a shock of re-cognition as she realized that while hiding in the dark dunny she was also rationally planning her escape from the disciplinary practices of schooling (Foucault, 1977). Some ancient and on-going gendered separations between rationality/emotionality and mind/body were suddenly deconstructed and revealed as inseparably interwoven dimensions in this young girl's actions, working together to effect her escape. Understanding Oriana's running to the dunny as resisting schooling discipline and escaping to home, began to resonate with Foucault's (1980, p. 142) point that "there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised." Yet somewhat paradoxically, it seemed as if she had catapulted herself out of a punitively constraining public schooling space into a differently darkly confining private place for necessary bodily functions. However, this place provided her with space to think. The motif of places/spaces for supervision occurs in a number of our memories (see Manathunga, Crockett, Cornforth, Court & Claiborne, this issue). The link may be drawn between the dominance of discourses of Enlightenment rationality in university constructions of what counts as research and worthwhile knowledge, and what (metaphorical) spaces and (physical) places are legitimated for that work.

Mr. Beardley's intended but thwarted act shows one further effect of masculine disciplinary power that has extensive ethical consequences. In his expectation of the duly offered contrite palm on which punishment was to be meted out, Mr. Beardley positioned himself as an agent of subjection. In one stroke he would effect the individualized internalization of feelings, whilst at the same time separating Oriana from the natural world, from "everything 'out there'" (Davies & Whitehouse, 1997, p. 237). Oriana learns that the wild joy of her relationship with wind, trees, flowers and grass has no place in the classroom. In reinforcing this binary split between humans, who are to be in control of everything including their own wild nature, and the natural world, Mr. Beardley is complicit in ensuring the continuance of an anthropocentric world view. Many philosophers, educationalists and ethicists have argued that placing "man" at the centre of the universe is antithetical to our ability to deal with the increasingly complex problems with which our world is faced, such as resource depletion, social and environ-

mental justice, specie loss, global warming and climate change (e.g. Fisher, 2002; Gruenwald, 2008; Jamieson, 2008; Naess, 1984).

The subjectivities available to Mr Beardley are also recognisable and available to us as we perform research supervision. While we recognise Oriana's pluckiness in refusing discipline, Mr Beardley's positioning within schooling discourse also offers us pause for reflexivity as supervisors. Mr Beardley was faced with the arrival in his classroom of a child who drew in her exercise book as a practice of freedom. She was not yet disciplined by the discursive practices of schooling, which would shape her to print neatly in neat exercise books, and to keep within the lines. Similarly doctoral candidates may ride their new bikes to arrive in our offices, first class masters degrees notwithstanding, with hopes and fantasies that they might metaphorically draw their way to doctoral completion: their hope may be to use the doctorate to produce a quite different project from the one a supervisor imagines. In this situation, the urgency of proposals, enrolment, confirmation, six monthly progress reports, and timely completion may position supervisors akin to Mr Beardley: it was experiences of such positionings that contributed to the emergence of this project. As we ourselves take up available disciplinary tools that require doctoral candidates to print rather than draw, and to keep within the margins, wounded students may also flee to contemporary equivalents of dark and private rooms, in rejection of the setting of disciplinary standards and our means of setting these. When we, like Mr Beardley, become agents of subjection of others we also become subjected to the dividing practices offered by neo-liberal governmentality. We therefore hold hope that Mr Beardley, too, carries inscribed on his body, traces of the memory of Oriana, the little girl who pluckily refused discipline: that is his gift to us in this memory work, that we take seriously the responsibilities of our responsibility, further described by Bauman (1998, p. 18) as amounting to "eternal hesitation, to perpetual anxiety about my actions that stubbornly fall short of my responsibility and fail to match up to the demand".

6. Oriana as the Little Teacher: Help from a Wise Mentor

Oriana's encounter with Mr Beardley was perhaps an early indication of the feminist researchers we were to become. Another early memory is prescient with the difficulties we were to encounter later in our professional lives in supervision. Here Oriana is a little older, perhaps seven or eight, already assuming the "teacher" role with some local children who are two to three years younger.

Four younger girls from my neighbourhood are visiting me in my bedroom. I have been showing Tara Janson how to play 'chopsticks' on the painted upright piano in my room. Mum won't have the piano anywhere else because it's so ugly, and she insists that I practice every morning before school. I'm bigger than these girls and seem to know a lot of things they don't. I feel a bit uncomfortable with the questions they keep asking me. Tara says, 'Mum is always talking about germs. Be careful! Germs! What are germs, anyway?' I love reading about science and I know about things you can only see with a microscope. I say, 'There are tiny, tiny animals you can't see at all they are so tiny, but they are everywhere – on the floor, on our skin and in our tummies.' Tara is suddenly very angry, and says, 'I don't believe you!' The other girls start shouting, 'That's not so!' Then they all run out of my room. I am surprised and confused, because I told the truth and was trying to help them learn. But now I feel like a weirdo. Maybe that's why some kids call me a bookworm, like it's something bad.

In a little while my mother comes in. 'Mrs Janson said you scared the girls and they're not going to play at our house any more. What did you say to them, Oriana?' I tell my mother that I told them about germs being little animals and that they're everywhere. My mother says, 'Yes, but they're too young to understand that. Sometimes you have to be careful what you say, even when it's the truth.' I feel better now, knowing Mum knows I wasn't being mean to those girls.

Here Oriana has sought wise counsel from an older woman, her mother, about an incident in which she has taken up a position to teach younger children. The interest in science and love of books are consistent with the positioning of middle class privilege that having a piano in her room (no matter how ugly) bestows. Oriana's attempt to "help" others gain knowledge that they have requested from her goes terribly wrong. Oriana knew too much, revealing a hidden world of microbes none of the little girls wanted to know about. Oriana feels shame once again; she can't get it right, even when she is truthful, even when she is trying to help others.

Freudian discourse might suggest the possibility of this shame being viewed as displaced affect, projected onto Oriana by the little girls who refuse to abandon their cultural positioning as sweet, innocent, pure, clean and definitely germ-free. Her performance of knowledge beyond the domain of "sugar and spice and all things nice" marks Oriana as transgressive, stepping towards the "frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails" of unpalatable and dangerous knowledges. In poststructural terms the little girls have engaged in "category-maintenance work" (Davies, 1989, p. 28), excluding Oriana for her transgression and thereby working to shore up the category of acceptable knowledge.

Unpalatable truths may also enter our supervision practice, and thus offer supervisors opportunities to engage in such "exclusionary" (see Butler, 1993) work: there are many opportunities for supervisors to perform knowledges that connect others to shame. Uncertainty looms large when we are faced with the responsibility for our responsibility (Bauman, 1998) to remain in relationship while speaking to truth as we offer candidates feedback about a badly written chapter draft, or comment on a garbled test run of an oral conference presentation, for example. As Petersen (2007) suggested, "We can understand it [supervision] as category boundary work, where processes of inclusion and exclusion take place, and where the *object*, that which signifies the zone of uninhabitability or the unthinkable, continuously wavers on the horizon (Butler, 1997, pp. 480–481).

As the original teller heard responses from others who positioned themselves in and out of this memory, her focus moved from centring on shame to the appreciation of the mother's perceptive intervention. She is on-side with her mother, despite the rejection of the neighbour, Mrs Janson, and of the other girls. Oriana considers how important this kind of perceptive feedback is: what strategies and opportunities are there for us as supervisors to consider the effects for us of the ethically dangerous places knowledge-work takes us in supervision? How do we take up the task of making visible the category boundary work in which we are engaging in the intersubjective actions of supervision, in order to ongoingly produce what Petersen (2007) refers to as "analysis of the inclusionary and exclusionary effects of contextually operative categories and significations" (p. 485). Such analysis, we suggest, is a further step towards the possibility of ethical practice.

7. Oriana as Supervisor: The Student on the Edge of Reason

Jumping ahead a few decades, we return to one of Oriana's memories of her supervision practice. Now Oriana is an academic staff member with a PhD, someone who mentors, supports and supervises doctoral candidates.

It's mid-morning and Tom is sitting on the window sill in her office, talking. Oriana likes him and he's keen to do something different with his doctorate, he says. 'What sort of different?' she asks. Her skin prickles and she's nervously excited about what might come next. 'I want to do a participant observation study of sex tourism,' he says. Her stomach clinches, but she likes him so she asks him to say something more. He tells her that he thinks there's been too little attention paid to sex work and he's keen to go into the field and find out what sort of experiences happen in sex tourism. 'What kind of participation?' she asks, acutely aware that she wants to stop the conversation before she

hears the answer. She can feel the tension building in her thighs and she could spring out of chair and run about now. 'If I'm going to do it properly, I'd have to be working or touring too. What do you think? Will you supervise me?' She hesitates. 'What about just checking out brothel work? You could be involved in the scene without needing to be working or a trickster and it'd be safer. Your safety would be an issue for me with the sex tourism idea.' ['Pathetic,' she thinks, 'just say no and be done with it. Why would you even consider it?'] 'I don't think so,' Tom says, 'It would not really be so connected with what happens and the scene in brothels here isn't the same.'

The embodied feelings expressed in this memory resonated with us all though not all of us had encountered topics that might cover illegal activities. At first there is nervous excitement ("skin prickles") at the possibility of innovative research from the confident male student perched not on a chair but on the windowsill. Positioned both in the room and out of the room, this male candidate takes up a freedom to position his body in the supervision space (see Manathunga et al., this issue).

Nervous excitement is trumped, however by stomach-clinching fear (doubt?) that makes Oriana's thighs tighten, ready to run out the door. The suggested topic is risky, difficult and far outside typical norms of doctoral research. Yet because she is a good mentor, a good supervisor and teacher Oriana hesitates: unlike Mr Beardley she does not immediately assume she knows enough to take action. She is attracted to his claim of difference. She wants to support the quirky, the misunderstood, the candidate who is different and who might have hidden talent, or provide an alternative to educational discipline and control – and she wants to demonstrate open-mindedness. At the same time, Oriana is irritated with herself, self-castigating as she considers her hesitations in refusing this student and his proposed research: "pathetic." The topic is ridiculous for a feminist academic, its potential to enact harm taking it beyond respectability. Oriana imagines unexpected publicity, even danger or ignominy: the chance of disaster for all concerned is a possibility that cannot be ignored. Oriana now positions herself as regulator, calling the limits of disciplinary practices, taking responsibility for her responsibility.

Yet something remains to present an on-going challenge in this memory, evidenced in our online discussions. Perhaps Tom's half-in, half-out stance and the seductive open window offer dizzy possibilities which continue to disorientate Oriana. We are reminded of Foucault's (1979) work on sexuality and biopower: the governing of populations through disciplined bodies. Tom represents a sexuality that cannot be categorized and which resists location within the 'psy' body and is thus not amenable to the universalising processes of the academic ethical imagination. Sex tourism similarly

represents an ungovernable. Situated at the interstices of bodies, ethics, economics, internationalization, politics and the domestic, its material effects are significant and various costs are involved. Yet this complex intersection of public, private and political, with all its dangers, is the very substance of ethical engagement according to agonistic feminists such as Cloyes (2002). Oriana's dizzy possibilities for supervision include conformity, transgression, resistance, liberation, each intersected with discourses of ethics, historically and culturally implicated with discourses of sex and sexuality too. Oriana's ethical subjectivity is felt, conflicted and paradoxical.

8. Discussion

In opening up questions of ethical subjectivity in doctoral supervision, we suggest that CBM has offered us strategies for

working within/against the dominant, contesting its border, tracing our complicity, moving toward a double(d) science in order to capture the vitality of the deviations that elude taxonomies in addressing the questions of practices of science within a post foundational context. (Lather, 2007, p. 19)

The evocative reflexive biographical writing style used to capture memories takes us into the dominant discourses which shape our day to day practices of knowledge-making, for and in doctoral supervision. We have shown Oriana both within and against the dominant, contesting its borders – by fleeing its authority; by speaking science's truths; in the ambivalence of half-in/half-out supervisory interest and support for a candidate's suggested project.

In noticing other available subject positions within discourse we have made visible to ourselves the potential for our own complicity: Mr Beardley, the little girls and Mrs Janson, and then Oriana herself were seen to be policing boundaries, complicit in delimiting the subjectivities in which legitimate knowledges might be performed. While as supervisors we might tolerate beyond-the-margins imaginative knowledge-making, like Mr Beardley we have responsibilities bestowed on us by our positioning as supervisor-subjects. Oriana's participation in policing boundaries – as she engages in "the discursive constitution of academic subjectivity as an ongoing process of category boundary work" (Petersen, 2007, p. 485) – is shown as an uncertain process, where she grapples with her responsibilities for her responsibilities. Recognising, in the moment, the discourses by which her supervisor subjectivity was being shaped and her own visceral responses to that shaping, Oriana enters the impossibilities within the possible of doctoral supervision.

In these ways, CBM has provided us with the context within which to speak between the responsibilities and uncertainties of doctoral supervision. It offered us opportunity, in ways unique to its method, to explore the possibilities of generating alternative storylines about supervisor subjectivities. The use of a single voice of the figure who tells and re-tells our stories not only emphasizes the differences between collective biography methodologies and more standard qualitative approaches to individual narrative data. It emphasized subjectivity as discursively produced. Importantly it also protects anonymity for ourselves and the candidates and others in our memory stories, several of which are shared in different articles in this Special Issue. The collaborative process through which these memories were interrogated, deconstructed, rewritten and eventually made collective enabled us to move from recounting individual and isolated supervision tales to ways of (re)theorizing the demands within and through which we work to construct supervisory subjectivities. It became clear that difficult and painful ethical dilemmas emerge within the work of even the most experienced research supervisors: it might be argued that such uncertainties might perhaps arise even more in the work of more experienced supervisors who are positioned to reflect on their own submission to or refusals of the terms of the discourses within which they continue to experience uncertainty and to struggle for mastery.

NOTES

1. See Court et al. (this issue) for a commentary on ancient Greek philosophical and political views of humanity and social relations.
2. In New Zealand it is usual for children to start school on their fifth birthday.

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