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Labour of Love:  
Emotions and Identities in Doctoral Supervision

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Thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements  
of the Doctor of Education degree at the School of Education and Social Work,  
University of Sussex

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## Summary

### Nature and scope of enquiry

This thesis explores how emotional dimensions of supervising doctoral students are accommodated in supervisory identities. It aims to answer two key questions:

- What is the nature of the emotional labour involved in doctoral supervision?
- To what extent does an acknowledgement of emotional labour in the supervisory process have implications for the academic development of doctoral supervisors?

The conceptual framework for the study is developed from Woods' (2010) definition of emotions as physical responses to situations involving an element of risk to self, Butler's (2005) notion of accounting for oneself, and Archer's (1995; 2000; 2003; 2012) model of identity formation based on the ability of human beings to reflect on their social situation through internal conversations.

Archer states that identities are formed through the way we monitor, prioritise and accommodate our concerns about our social reality. It is on the basis of this priority of concerns that we embark on our life-projects and it is these concerns that shape our behaviour and actions. It is believed that all humans strive towards a *modus vivendi* which Archer defines as a set of practices which at the same time respects what is unavoidable and privileges what matters most to the person concerned (Archer 2003: 149). In this study I apply Archer's theory to doctoral supervision by viewing the supervisory process as a project and exploring the nature of the emotional labour involved in this project.

Based on interviews with doctoral supervisors, I identify three supervisory identities from Archer's typology of reflexivity – the autonomous reflexive supervisor, the meta-reflexive supervisor and the communicative reflexive supervisor. These identities are constructed around the ways in which individual supervisors accommodate emotional labour in their practice. The thesis goes on to consider appropriate ways of supporting academics in dealing with emotional dimensions of doctoral supervision.

### Contribution to knowledge and practice

This thesis makes a contribution to knowledge in two ways. First, it identifies the nature of the emotional labour that is invested in supervising doctoral students, and by doing so adds empirical evidence to the small number of studies that exist in the field. Second, it develops a conceptual framework that includes emotional dimensions and accounting for one's own practice. This framework can be applied as a theoretical foundation for discussing supervisory practice in an academic development context. The study contributes to practice within the context of academic development. Conventional academic development for doctoral supervisors focuses on procedural and managerial aspects of the supervisory process. This study proposes addressing emotional dimensions as well in such development.

## **Method**

The thesis is based on interviews with fourteen supervisors from five universities – three post-92 and two pre-92 institutions. Between them they represent eleven disciplines, three from the social sciences, six from the sciences and five from arts and humanities. All interviews were transcribed and analysed through close reading and thematic analysis.

## **Principal arguments in this thesis are that:**

- emotional labour is a key feature of doctoral supervision
- emotional dimensions of doctoral supervision should be included in academic development for doctoral supervisors
- timely completion is increasingly becoming a performance indicator for supervisors, and a need may arise for structures to be set in place to provide better support for academics, in particular, in the early stages of their supervisory practice

## **Conclusions**

The findings suggest that the doctoral supervisors interviewed in this study invest considerable effort in managing emotions – their own, those of their students and those of their colleagues - as part of the supervisory process. Three supervisory identities can be mapped against Archer's typology according to how doctoral supervisors accommodate and manage these emotions in order to achieve a *modus vivendi*. The thesis concludes that acknowledging, articulating and addressing emotional dimensions of doctoral supervision should be included as part of the academic development offered to staff planning to supervise doctoral projects.

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## Chapter 1- Framing the Enquiry

### Introduction

Doctoral education is not only about production of new knowledge. It is also about the development of individuals and the shaping of new identities. Crossouard (2010) has shown how the doctoral learning experience has a powerful impact on individuals' views of themselves both during their doctoral studies and after they have completed their degree. Similarly, when exploring motivations among students for pursuing a doctoral degree, Leonard, Becker and Coate (2005) found that the learning process significantly influenced identities with regard to students' self-worth and their professional ambitions. Green (2005:154) too has described doctoral supervision as a 'field of identification', arguing that the transformational processes taking place in the supervisory space are about negotiating and re-positioning identities between students and supervisors. Powerful emotional dimensions to the doctoral learning process are emerging from the students interviewed in all of these studies, and it is this affective domain that I wish to investigate further.

This study explores the emotional dimensions of the doctoral supervisory process from the point of view of the supervisor. The aim of the study is to inquire into fourteen supervisors' articulations of emotional responses to supervising doctoral students and to explore how emotions are accommodated within the supervisory process. In addition, the study aims at recommending ways in which emotional dimensions of supervising doctoral students can be addressed in academic development for academics who supervise.

Grant (2005: 325) has described doctoral supervision as 'a deeply uncertain practice', and it was personal experience of this uncertainty that prompted this study. Between 2006 and 2009 I worked as a Senior Lecturer in Higher Education in an academic development department at a post-92 university in the Midlands. One of my key roles was to organise and facilitate a Continuous Professional Development programme for new as well as experienced doctoral supervisors. The programme was set up partly in response to the then recently revised Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) *Code of*

*practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education.*

*Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* (QAA 2004), and partly in response to a number of unfortunate instances where doctoral students had failed their exams due to what was deemed by university management to be poor or insufficient supervision. The content of the programme was negotiated between the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, the Director of the Graduate School, two very experienced research supervisors and myself, and the final version consisted of a series of workshops dealing with the various stages of supervising students from writing a research proposal to preparing for the *viva voce* examination.

Without exception, each workshop would generate lively discussion with a plethora of anecdotes and stories reflecting the lived experiences of the supervisors. As a facilitator, I was struck by two points. First, how the experiences expressed by supervisors represented a wide range of emotions such as pride, joy, guilt, fear, anxiety, frustration, and anger. These emotions were not always generated by the supervisory process itself, but instead directed towards bureaucratic structures of the institution in which the supervisors worked. Second, the ways in which these academics discussed their role as research supervisors seemed to be closely tied in with their academic identities and how they viewed their role within their own discipline, department and institution. When they reported successful experiences, the supervisory process was seen as a boost to their self-image. When the supervisory process collapsed, the supervisors took it in a deeply personal way even if the cause for the breakdown was outside their control. It soon became clear to me that supervising doctoral students entails far more than motivating, encouraging, advising and guiding students through a specialist subject. From the supervisor's point of view, assisting a doctoral student through the whole process can be a very emotionally charged journey.

At the time, literature on the emotional labour of supervising students was sparse. Doctoral supervisors as emotional beings seemed to be one of the silences within the academy. However, there were a few studies that revealed an emotional dimension to this work. As part of an accredited training course aimed at doctoral supervisors at a post-92 university, Clegg (1997) explored reflective journals kept by participants on their supervisory practice. In her article, she expressed surprise at finding a wide range of emotions in what is otherwise considered in the academy to be 'highly rational

procedures' (Clegg 1997: 492). In a later study, the author identified emotions as one of the key themes emerging when she analysed reflective accounts of twenty-five doctoral supervisors on a training course (Clegg 2000). Since these early findings, more literature has emerged on supervision as emotional labour. In an evocative piece of writing, Horsfall (2008) reflected on her own supervisory practice in Australia and argued that it is time academics move away from 'the neutral disembodied scholar persona and owning up to being human – flesh and blood; someone who thinks and feels; someone who is head and heart' (Horsfall 2008: 7). She based her argument on data consisting of her own feedback to students, diaries and letters from students expressing how they have responded to her advice. And she concluded that the close collaborative partnership that constitutes doctoral supervision involves 'teaching from the heart' (Horsfall 2008: 6).

In another study, Amundsen and McAlpine (2009) interviewed eight academics from two Canadian universities in order to explore how supervision was learned. One of their findings was that learning to supervise was accompanied with stress and the feeling of pressure – not only in relation to the students but also colleagues – but that the process was also associated with great pleasure when students produced something outstanding. In another study from Australia, Halse (2011) explored what academics learned from supervising research students. Based on twenty-six interviews with doctoral supervisors she found that one thing they learned was to control their emotions in order to maintain a harmonious supervisor/student relationship. That meant suppressing feelings such as irritation or anger when students ignored feedback or advice they had been given. Similarly, current work carried out in the UK by Turner (2010; 2011) bears witness to powerful emotions in connection with starting out as a doctoral supervisor. It is to this field of inquiry that I hope my thesis will contribute.

## **The study**

This study is based on face-to-face interviews with fourteen doctoral supervisors - seven women and seven men – representing five universities, three post-92 institutions and two pre-92 institutions. Amongst them they represent eleven disciplines, three from the social sciences, six from the sciences and five from the arts and humanities. The participants have worked in the academy between six and thirty-six years. Eight of the

participants are professors. In June 2011, the total number of completions achieved by research students of the participants was eighty one, and at that time they were supervising a total of fifty-two students. Two of the supervisors are non-native speakers of English. When reporting the findings, I strive to let the supervisors tell their own stories, and in order to maintain anonymity each participant has been allocated a fictional name.

**Figure 1 – Details of doctoral supervisors participating in the study, including their completions and number of supervisees in June 2011.**

Name	Institution	Disciplinary area	Number of years in academia	Number of completions	Number of drop-outs	Number of fails/referrals /MPhil	Number of students being supervised (June 2011)
John	Pre-92	Arts	31	1	1	2	0
Andrew	Post-92	Arts	35	3	0	0	7
Lisa	Pre-92	Arts	26	0	0	0	0
Michael	Pre-92	Science	7	2	0	0	0
Emma	Pre-92	Soc Science	20	1	0	0	5
Kathryn	Pre-92	Soc Science	22	4	0	0	6
Sarah	Pre-92	Arts	6	0	0	0	2
Adam	Pre-92	Science	13	3	1	0	8
Linda	Pre-92	Science	19	12	0	1	0
Joanna	Post-92	Arts	18	8	0	0	7
Richard	Pre-92	Science	10	2	2	0	3
Anne	Post-92	Soc Science	25	8	0	0	10
Martin	Post-92	Science	31	20	0	0	3
David	Post-92	Science	36	17	0	0	1

The two key questions I wish to explore through my interviews with the doctoral supervisors are:

- What is the nature of the emotional labour involved in doctoral supervision?
- Does an acknowledgement of emotional labour in the supervisory process have implications for academic development of doctoral supervisors?

In order to shed light on these questions, two sub-questions are also addressed:

- What do supervisors experience as the pressure points and peak emotions during the supervisory process?
- How does supervisory identity influence management of emotions in the supervisory process?

## **Conceptual framework**

In this thesis I draw on the realist social theory of Margaret Archer (1995; 2000; 2003; 2012) and on her conceptualisations of the dynamic interplay between structure and agency. Archer's work is located within the wider paradigm of critical realism. One key facet of this paradigm is that the world is regarded as structured, differentiated, and constantly changing, and attention is transferred to the mechanisms that produce an event rather than the event itself (Danermark et.al. 2002). Archer introduces the morphogenetic approach to realist social theory. The 'morpho' denotes the assumption that society has no fixed or preferred state, and the 'genetic' is a recognition of the fact that society is shaped by agents and their intended and unintended actions (Archer 1995). Archer's morphogenetic framework is based on two propositions. The first is that structure pre-dates the actions that are leading to reproduction or transformation. People have to act within the social, cultural and political structures that shape their lives. The second proposition is that structural elaboration always post-dates the sequences of actions that gave rise to it (Archer 1995:15). In other words, any changes to structures are results of human agency. Archer introduces a cyclical morphogenetic analytical approach to the study of social phenomena. It distinguishes between three phases consisting of (a) a structure which is defined as a complex set of relations between individual parts of the social reality that is studied. This structure sets out the conditions for (b) social interaction. Social interaction is not only governed by social organisation but also by the personal characteristics of individual agents, and this leads to (c) structural elaboration or modification (Archer 1995:91).

Analytical dualism is the guiding methodological principle in Archer's morphogenetic framework. She stresses the fact that when studying social phenomena, we are exploring emergent properties within structure, culture and human agency and the interplay within and between the three fields.

The social reality I explore in this study is that of doctoral supervision as perceived by fourteen academics. The structures that define this reality are shaped by global trends in doctoral education, national policies and institutional regulations, but also by disciplinary conventions. The social interaction that takes place in this space is between the students and their supervisor or supervisors, and between supervisors in the case of co-supervision or supervisory teams. My epistemological position in this study is critical realism. A distinct feature of this position is that it rejects the idea that individuals can have objective knowledge of the world, and consequently accepts that a phenomenon can be experienced and explained from different perspectives, and that these varied accounts are all valid knowledge (Oakley 2000; Letherby 2010). Another feature of critical realism is that any theory about the world is partial, incomplete and fallible, and always grounded in a particular perspective (Maxwell 2012). Parallel to the critical realist epistemological position is an ontological realism. There is a world which exists independently of our perceptions, values and theories, but human beings' understanding of that world is constructed on the basis of their own perspectives and standpoint (Maxwell 2012: 5).

The basic assumption behind the critical realist view of knowledge is that perspectives are specific and constructed by individuals in that people make their own interpretations of their surrounding world against a backdrop of shared practices, understandings and language (Schwandt 2000). This position also acknowledges the complexities surrounding individuals' representations of their own realities. The narratives which form the key data for this study can therefore not be generalised to what it is like to be a doctoral supervisor in the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Instead, these narratives give a picture of emotional dimensions of doctoral supervision as these are experienced by fourteen individuals. Thus, the study offers a look into fourteen different supervisory realities.

When exploring the supervisory space and the social interaction that takes place there, I use the participants' own accounts of their supervisory practices and of how emotions impact on those practices. For this purpose I draw on Charlotte Woods' definition of emotions (Woods 2010), on Margaret Archer's theory of identity (Archer 2000; 2003; 2012) and on Judith Butler's notion of accounting for oneself (Butler 2005).

## Defining emotions

The complexities surrounding definition and conceptualisation of emotions from both a historical and a disciplinary perspective have been well documented by scholars (see for example Boler 1999; Ahmed 2004; Beard, Clegg and Smith 2007; Zembylas 2007; Zembylas and Fendler 2007). Although conceptualisations of emotions differ greatly, emotions are invariably seen as having a physical dimension and consequently having implications for physical and mental well-being. In her work on employee well-being in higher education, Woods (2010) draws on a conceptual framework for studying emotions, rooted in cognitive psychology and developed from the work of the psychologist Richard Lazarus. She distinguishes between three notions – feelings, affects and emotions. According to Woods, feelings are sensory responses to the environment (feeling cold, feeling tired), and are usually regarded as neutral. Affects, she sees as evaluative, and include attitudes, beliefs, opinions and motivations (Woods 2010:175). And she continues:

An ‘affect’ will only have an *emotional* dimension [...] if it has implications for personal goals or wellbeing, or for those people who are cared about. For example, in the wake of an institutional decision to institute compulsory redundancies among its workforce, a range of reactions might be envisaged. At one extreme, these may take the form of relatively dispassionate opinions about the rights and wrongs of the decision (an *affective* reaction). At the other extreme, for the employee faced with compulsory redundancy, personal relevance may be profound and the situation highly charged with emotion. (Woods 2010:175)

Woods emphasises what Ahmed (2004: 9) calls the ‘sociality of emotion’ and like her regards emotions as social and cultural practices rather than psychological states.

Woods’ distinction between feeling, affect and emotion is helpful in the context of this study because it seems to cut across the old discussion of whether emotions are bodily responses to external events – the Cartesian position – which she classifies as feelings, or whether emotions involve judgements and evaluation – the Aristotelian position – which she classifies as affect. So, when theorising emotions Woods, like

Ahmed (2004), shifts the emphasis on to what emotions *do* rather than what they *are*. What is essential to Woods' emotional categories is that there is an element of risk connected to emotions. In Woods' model, negative emotions will be elicited when an individual perceives a danger or barrier to achieving set goals, while positive emotions will emerge when such dangers or barriers are absent or overcome. Seen in this light, emotions can be viewed as psychological aspects of personal experience. In Woods' model the key characteristics of emotions are that a) they have a physiological dimension and b) they have implications for personal goals and, consequently, for well-being. This model ties in well with Margaret Archer's theory of identity and how identities are shaped by internal conversations.

### **Archer's theory of identity**

Archer (2003: 20) defines reflexivity as 'a generative ability for internal deliberations upon external reality', and human beings' ability to reflect on their social situation is key to her theory of identity. According to Archer, personal identities are changing constantly because they are formed through the way we monitor, prioritise and accommodate our concerns about our social reality. It is on the basis of this priority of concerns that we embark on our life-projects and it is these concerns that shape our behaviour and actions. Thus Archer (2003: 135) proposes the following sequence as a framework for all social activity: Concerns → Project → Practice. All humans – or agents – strive towards a *modus vivendi* which she defines as a set of practices which at the same time respects what is unavoidable and privileges what matters most to the person concerned (Archer 2003: 149). In other words, the *modus vivendi* is

the concretisation of how agents have determined to live in view of their concerns and in the light of their circumstances. It is the modality through which our subjective reflections about what we most care for intersect with our objective conditions of life, which has the potential to constrain or to enable different courses of action. (Archer 2003: 201)

Being human means having to negotiate realities and indefinitely striving for a *modus vivendi*. As Archer argues:

Agents have to diagnose their situation, they have to identify their own interests and they must design projects they deem appropriate to attaining their ends. At all three points they are fallible: they can mis-diagnose their situation, mis-identify their interests, and mis-judge appropriate courses of action. (Archer 2003: 9)

Archer refers to the negotiation we have with ourselves when confronted with new situations as an internal conversation (Archer 2000; 2003). The internal conversation is an emotional as well as a cognitive process and entails three distinct stages: discernment, deliberation and dedication. Discernment is about the choices and priorities individuals make with regard to what projects they find attractive and meaningful. Archer talks about a 'sifting process' (Archer 2003: 102) by which individuals decide what is desirable as a way of life. The discernment stage is guided by guesses, dreams and imaginings and will be tainted by an element of risk in that the options individuals are drawn to may not be achievable. At the deliberation stage individuals start to weigh up the positive and negative sides of the scenarios they feel drawn to. Finally, at the dedication stage it is about what concerns need to be accommodated or subordinated in order to embark on a particular course of action. This internal conversation is continuous, and the process is guided by reflexivity.

### **Doctoral supervision as project**

Using experiences as data involves taking responsibility for interpreting accounts of the social existence of others (Maynard 1995; Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2009). In the case of self-narratives, I will be interpreting *individual interpretations* of the social existence of others. However, I also view those accounts as being underpinned by structural power relations shaping society and hence the institutions in which the participants work. What is essential in the conceptual model I apply in this study is its dialectic features – the fact that individuals and identities may be shaped by external power relations but that those power relations, in turn, are influenced by the same individuals and identities as proposed by Margaret Archer (Archer 2000; 2003). Individuals have power to change, accept or even reinforce existing structures and power relations and how this power is exercised depends on the way individuals perceive their own projects.

'Projects' is a generic term for enterprises that generate agency in relation to constraints and enablements. Archer defines constraints and enablements as:

potential causal powers of structural emergent properties, such as distributions, roles, organisations, or institutions, and of cultural emergent properties, such as propositions, theories and doctrines. Yet to constrain and to enable are transitive verbs; they have to impede or to facilitate something. As with all potential causal powers, they can remain unexercised because it is a wholly contingent matter whether they are activated. In other words, constraints and enablements do not possess an intrinsic capacity for constraining or enabling in abstraction. For anything to exert the power of a constraint or an enablement, it has to stand in a *relationship* such that it obstructs or aids the achievement of some specific agential enterprise (Archer 2003: 5; italics in text)

The supervisory project is shaped by the structural emergent properties such as the role and expectations of the supervisor, the student, academic colleagues, institutional expectations and regulations and disciplinary conventions. The cultural emergent properties include the public perceptions of higher education and intellectual work – the emotionology of the academy - and how emotional dimensions of supervision historically have been accommodated (or not) within the supervisory space. Archer's theory of identity is hypothetical, but it is a useful way in which to analyse what takes place in the supervisory space. She argues that the three modes of reflexivity will mediate socio-cultural constraints and enablements in different ways, and represents different stances towards social structures and cultural systems (Archer 2003: 165).

*Autonomous reflexives* are characterised by relying on their inner deliberations when acting in the world. These are decisive people who have little need for involving other people in discussion before making choices. Archer talks about them being 'economically articulate' (Archer 2003: 211) in that they provide short, self-confident answers without seeking affirmation from others or other people's views. These people also tend to regard concerns as responsibilities and much of their internal conversation is about societal structures and how these aid or prevent individuals from realising their project. Consequently, when it comes to constraints and enablement for agency, autonomous reflexives behave strategically. These people are independent and believe that ultimately we all have to take responsibility for our own actions. As they are happy to act alone, they seem less dependent on their immediate environment. Finally, a

commonality between autonomous reflexives is that their *modus vivendi* tends to be balanced around work and performance.

In contrast to autonomous reflexives, *communicative reflexives* need to share problems and discuss options with other people before deciding how to act. They do not trust their internal conversation but need to get affirmation that they are making the right choices. To communicative reflexives their immediate environment is very important both for deliberation but also as a guiding factor for their *modus vivendi*. They do not like to make decisions and to act alone. All their inner deliberations are centred on the social domain. Their aim is to achieve contentment and they will systematically evade constraints and enablement in order to maintain this contentment. While the autonomous reflexives focused on work and performance for their *modus vivendi*, communicative reflexives will prioritise people close to them.

*Meta-reflexives* are people who transform their inner conversation into self-interrogation, and question their own actions. Archer sees these people as society's critics who hold a deep concern for those less fortunate than themselves. They are idealists who try to draw others with them in their own direction, and in the process will, if necessary, behave subversively in relation to constraints and enablement. They tend to judge causes of actions against their ideals rather than consider them in relation to what is possible. In order to achieve a *modus vivendi*, meta-reflexives will try and align the three orders of reality – performative competence, physical well-being and self-worth – rather than try and prioritise one of them.

In her hypothesis, Archer also includes a fourth category, the *fractured reflexives*. They are individuals whose reflexive powers have been suspended in that they are unable to hold an internal conversation that leads to action. Whereas the autonomous reflexives, collective reflexives and meta-reflexives all are people acting with a purposeful agency, fractured reflexives are disorientated and passive subjects. The fractured reflexives constitute a category that is not represented in the group of supervisors who feature in the study. The fact that these people's internal conversations are impeded means that they are unable to monitor themselves or their surrounding environment. They have – perhaps only momentarily - lost control over their lives.

Archer's proposition is that each mode of reflexivity adopts its own stance towards society and its constraints and enablements. The autonomous reflexives will adopt a strategic stance, the communicative reflexives will adopt an evasive stance, and the meta-reflexives will adopt a subversive stance.

The presumption underpinning this study is that the participants' accounts of their supervisory selves and their practice will be guided by Archer's three dimensions that shape the interior conversation, namely their physical well-being, their performative competence and their self-worth (Archer 2000; 2003). However, as active and in some cases highly successful researchers, all participants were well acquainted with the research process and the fact that I would be interpreting their narratives and the potential risks that that particular process entailed. Their accounts of their own practice are therefore likely to be shaped by the fact that they themselves are working in organisations where their work is being evaluated and assessed on a continuous basis with regard to their research output, their teaching and their supervision of students (Barnett 2011; Fanghanel 2012). As Butler (1997) says:

Power acts on the subject in at least two ways: first, as what makes the subject possible, the conditions of its possibility and its formative occasion, and second, as what is taken up and reiterated in the subject's "own" acting. As a subject *of* power (where "of" connotes both "belonging to" and "wielding"), the subject eclipses the conditions of its own emergence; it eclipses power with power. The conditions not only make possible the subject but enter into the subject's formation. They are made present in the acts of that formation and in the acts of the subject that follow. (Butler 1997: 14, italics in text).

When exploring how emotions are accommodated into academics' supervisory identities, I shall use a model that conceptualises Butler's stance on subject (or identity) formation, but which draws on Woods' theorisation of emotions and Archer's theory of human agency and structure.

## **A conceptual model for accounting for oneself**

Asking people to describe their experiences in order to investigate and understand power configurations in social relationships is a key feature of feminist theory (Hughes 2002; Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2009), but the problems around what constitutes experience and what kind of reality is accessed through experience is hotly debated amongst scholars (Scott 1992; Hughes 2002). Empiricists take the view that individuals gather experiences – in much the same way as data are collected - and that links can be made between articulated experience and reality (Holland and Ramazanoğlu 1995). An example of this approach is the study by Hockey (1996) in which he investigates the motives academics from the social sciences might have for choosing to supervise doctoral students. He ends up with a list of reasons given to him by his interviewees, before cautiously stating that:

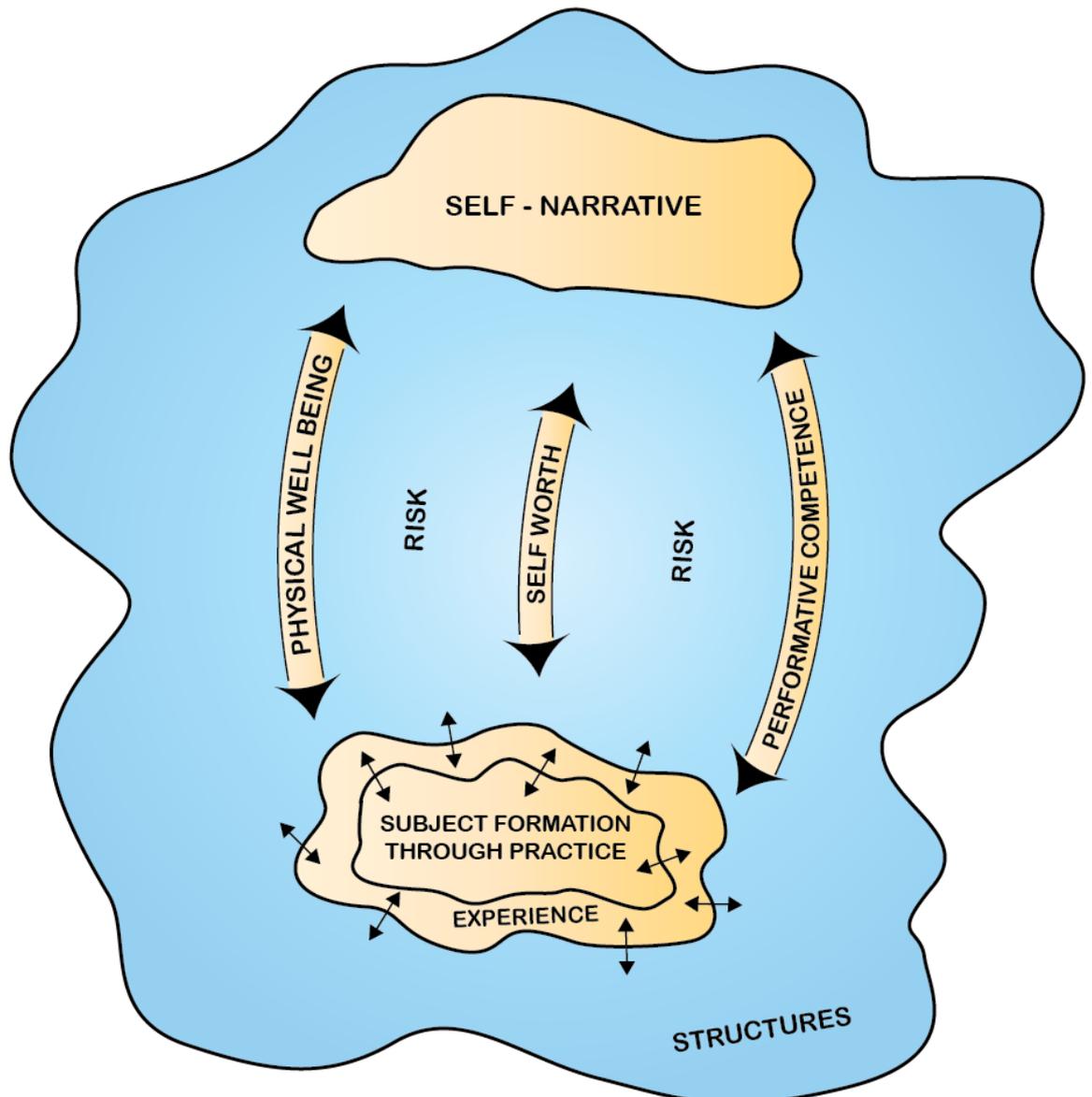
Whether motives declared by supervisors when interviewed constitute rhetoric or reality or a combination of both remains difficult to discern, for therein lies the limitation of purely interview-based research. Ultimately all the researcher and the reader are left with are the reported interview accounts themselves [...] anything further remains speculations (Hockey 1996: 503).

Hockey operates within a conventional scientific paradigm where he as the researcher is left with the uncertainty of whether his respondents have told him the truth about what their motives for supervising research students are. He is simply collating the reasons and presenting these as findings. What Hockey (1996) fails to acknowledge is that experiences – like data – are generated; they are individuals' interpretations of their own lives and social realities. Proponents of this view argue that individuals are constituted by their experiences and that identities are continuously being shaped and re-shaped in this process through the underlying power structures of the social reality in which individuals live (Scott 1992). This is an important epistemological shift from the position represented by Hockey, because from this perspective, accessing personal experience only makes sense if we acknowledge experience as a historical, political and discursive construct (Morley 1996). By the way experiences are relayed – with inclusions, exclusions, emphases and silences – we are constructing an interpretation of our experiences rather than describing them. Our self-narratives are therefore work-in-progress.

Archer's (2000, 2003, 2012) notion of interior dialogue or inner conversation – a self-narrative that determines how we see ourselves and act in the world - would have put another perspective to Hockey's anxiety about how much to trust his informants. Archer argues that as individuals we need to define ourselves in relation to a triune environment consisting of a natural, a practical and a social order, and she continues:

Subjects cannot avoid having concerns, which are vested in the three different orders. These are concerns about our *physical well-being* in the natural order, about our *performative achievement* in the practical order and about our *self-worth* in the social order. However, although all three are inescapable, nothing determines that different subjects prioritise them in the same way. [...] It is the precise configuration of this triad of concerns which represents our strict personal identity. (Archer 2003: 120, italics in text)

This is a more sophisticated way of looking at self-narratives than the one presented by Hockey in that it perceives self-narratives – not as telling the truth or telling lies about ourselves – but as complex narratives of self-preservation in an ever-changing world. This proposition allows for multiple levels of truth and acknowledges that the self is work-in-progress. It also acknowledges that individuals' formation of their selves is guided by practices that are shaped dialectically by historical, societal, political and institutional processes and values as argued by Scott (1992), Archer (1995; 2000; 2003; 2012) and Butler (2005). Based on these theoretical positions I propose the following conceptual framework for the thesis:



**Figure 2 - Model of self-narrative discourse based on Archer (1995; 2000; 2003), Butler (2005) and Woods (2010).**

The blue area represents the historical, political, cultural and institutional structures within which identity formation takes place. When academics act as doctoral supervisors they do so within this context. Supervisors' agency is determined by their internal conversations which are rooted in personal experience and life history and guided by physical wellbeing, self-worth and performative competence and it is through this process that subject formation (in Butler's term) or identity formation (in Archer's term) takes place. Individuals are constituted by their experiences but they, in turn, also influence their own experiences, hence the double arrows indicating the dialectic nature of identity formation. According to Woods (2010) it is in this 'risky' area that

emotions are anchored, and it is these three notions that shape the self-narratives (Archer 2003).

The risky areas are managed in the internal conversation by prioritising concerns. How this is done will depend on personality and what mode of reflexivity an individual applies to his or her project (Archer 2000; 2003; 2012). Archer focuses on the internal conversation and how it shapes agency, but she is analysing conversations – not individuals speaking to themselves. The inner conversations have been made public. To fully acknowledge this, the conceptual model is also anchored in Butler's notion of identity as performance. At the top end of the model is the self-narrative – when supervisors account of their practices. Butler (2006: 529) distinguishes between speech as communication and speech as performance when individuals give accounts of themselves and their practices. I argue that the fourteen self-narratives I have been given access to, are guided by the same three principles as the internal conversation - physical wellbeing, self-worth and performative competence - at the communicative level, but that the same narratives take on a different guise at the performance level because of my particular insider position as a researcher and academic developer. I shall return to this issue in my discussion.

Although I have brought together Archer's theory of identity formation and Butler's theory of accounting for oneself in order to create a conceptual framework for this study, it should be stressed that Margaret Archer and Judith Butler take up different ontological and epistemological positions when it comes to the shaping of personal identity of the self. Archer argues that it is necessary for individuals to have a continuous sense of self in order to contain and unite a variety of life experiences and normative expectations (Archer 1995: 284). This continuous sense of self is separate from (but may still influence) the social identity an individual may have. It is the 'core self' which makes it possible for individuals to live through changes in structure and culture.

Judith Butler would not accept the concept of a continuous, or core sense of self. To her, identity is fluid and ruptured because of the temporality and contingency of individuals' account of themselves. She argues that identities are shaped by norms and conventions that have emerged independently of the self and as a consequence, an individual's account of self will never truly reflect her or his identity. Instead, individuals will need to present themselves in a way that is recognisable to society (Butler 2005). I have included Butler's theory of accounting for oneself because - unlike Archer – she

problematizes the ways in which individuals give accounts of themselves and their practices.

## **Method**

The social reality I want to explore is the supervisory process which is shaped by institutional and national policies, by discipline conventions and by personal characteristics and values. I felt that the best way to explore this reality was by speaking to doctoral supervisors. Neumann (2006) argues that interviews are a powerful tool when charting human knowledge. I decided to conduct the face-to-face sessions as semi-structured interviews. However, rather than adhering strictly to a list of questions I was flexible and conducted the interviews more like an informal conversation. This approach was more in line with a non-hierarchical research relationship much favoured by feminist scholars (Stanley and Wise 1993; Oakley 2000; Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2002), and it allowed participants to focus on and reflect on particular aspects of the supervisory process that were important to them as practitioners (Clandinin and Connelly 1994). Instead of providing participants with a series of questions to answer, I hoped to get them to tell me what they experienced as pressure points and peak emotions during the supervisory process and other ways in which emotional labour manifested itself throughout the process. The headings around which I wished to conduct the interviews were sent in advance of the meeting to participants (Appendix I) together with an information sheet (Appendix II) in which the purpose of the study was outlined and details given about the storage and further use of the interviews. Because of the characteristics of the participants (experienced researchers) and because of the research topic, I did not provide a consent form. I took the email correspondence I had had with individual participants as a testimony to participants' voluntary participation in the study.

The list of headings was sent again around one week before the interviews took place. All interviews were conducted in the supervisors' office except in four cases where the academics had shared offices and a private room had to be arranged. The interviews took place between March and June 2011, lasted between 50 and 80 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. It was made clear to participants that they were allowed to contribute to the research by raising issues that they found important within the context of the research field (Christians 2005), and five of them took this

opportunity. Participants were each sent a copy of the transcription of their interview with me and were allowed to delete or add information as they thought appropriate. The principle behind this was the notion presented by Fontana and Frey (2005) of interviews as negotiated text. Only one participant made changes to the transcription, although two identified passages which they did not want me to use or quote. More importantly, participants were also sent the final thesis. This was partly prompted by the findings of Phoenix (1995) who reported that her interviewees would ask what others had said in response to the questions asked. In three cases supervisors did ask me – after the recorder was switched off - what colleagues had said about some of the issues.

### **Ethical framework and dilemmas**

Although this study is not located in feminist theory *per se* my study is guided by feminist principles and ethics, so in the words of Scott (1998) it can be characterised as 'feminist friendly'. Feminist scholars reject the Cartesian duality that underpins traditional, Western research paradigms (Stanley and Wise 1993; Oakley 2000; Letherby 2010), and have long argued against the myth of hygienic research in the social sciences in particular. It is the myth that claims researchers are able to explore social reality by controlling personal feelings and report their findings as a piece of objectively constructed knowledge (Hughes 2002; Stanley and Wise 1993). The very topic I explore here would most likely have been dismissed as inappropriate within some research paradigms. As Stanley and Wise (1993) suggest:

'Emotional involvement', the presence of emotions, is taboo; and an ideology exists which states that it is *possible*, not just preferable, to prevent this from happening (Stanley and Wise 1993:160).

This would apply to what happens within the supervisory space (rational advice from the supervisor, followed by rational execution of the advice by the student) as well as indeed the choice of emotions as a topic for a professional doctoral thesis. The acknowledgement of the fact that emotions and physicality are areas worth exploring is just one of the feminist principles that underpin my work. When conducting this research, I strove to adhere to Stanley and Wise's (1993: 200) 'feminist epistemic ethic'. This includes four key ethical principles.

The first principle is the acceptance that no statement or interpretation of events by any person should be regarded 'as a representation of 'reality' but rather treated as a motivated construction or version to be subject to critical feminist analytical inquiry' (Stanley and Wise 1993: 200). My conceptual framework which takes account of making self-narratives public was developed with this principle in mind.

The second principle is the acknowledgement of the researcher as an active and constructing agent in the research process (Letherby 2010; Stanley and Wise 1993). Although I strive to let the participants have their own voices, I am aware that I have selected quotes from the interviews that I believe best support my argument. I am also very mindful that some of the participants in the study have been given a more prominent role in my work in that they have been quoted more than others. This does not reflect that some experiences are less important than others, but simply a result of having to be selective and contain an argument within a confined space. I explore this issue further in chapter five.

The third principle is that the people providing information for the research are respected as individuals and invited to contribute to the final presentation of the new knowledge (Stanley and Wise 1993). Participants were sent the final transcription of their interview with me and free to add, delete or alter anything they liked. They will also be sent a copy of the final thesis.

And finally, the fourth principle is that the research carried out aims at benefitting the researched as well as the researcher (Letherby 2010). As I conducted this study as part of a professional doctorate, the fourth principle was particularly important. I wanted my research findings to feed into the professional development activities offered for doctoral supervisors.

Before I started the research, I had anticipated two ethical dilemmas. It was unavoidable that during the interviews, the participants would be discussing third parties (students) who were not included in the study, and I also anticipated that in some cases I would come across references to supervisory practices of colleagues whom I would not be interviewing. All I could do when or if this occurred was to ensure

that these people could not be identified. A third ethical issue appeared during the data generation which I had not anticipated, but probably should have done. On two occasions supervisors spoke about students they were unaware that I knew. Again, I could only make sure that no individual could be identified.

## **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is structured around six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study whereas the next three chapters will serve as a backdrop to the interviews with supervisors. They aim at drawing a picture of the world in which supervisors carry out their practice – of the structural and cultural properties within which they decide to act out constraints or enablement. Chapter two outlines the current position of doctoral studies from a policy context. It draws out key issues within doctoral education which have led to policy changes particularly in the UK. One of the aims of the study is to contribute to academic development practice and in chapter three I explore the role and impact of academic developers on shaping doctoral supervisory practice. In Archer's universe, academic development can be identified both as a structural and as a cultural emergent property dependent on where in the organisational structure supervisors are located and on the organisational culture in which they carry out their practice. Chapter four investigates how emotions have been portrayed and included (or not) in practises in the academy. Chapter five reports on interviews with supervisors and analyses them using Archer's three modes of reflexivity. This is followed by Chapter six which includes a conclusion where I consider how my findings can be applied to practice in the context of academic development, and a futurology of doctoral education with an identification of silences in the field of doctoral education which need to be addressed.

## **Chapter 2 - The doctoral landscape**

This chapter outlines the current doctoral landscape - the landscape in which doctoral supervisors work. I start by giving a brief overview of the policy contexts that have driven doctoral development in the UK. I then go on to explore three aspects of doctoral education which have drawn particular interest in the sector, namely the increased number of students pursuing doctoral studies, parity and equity within doctoral programmes, and, finally, timely completion.

### **Doctoral studies – the policy context**

The 1990s experienced what was generally perceived as a world-wide crisis in doctoral education (Kendall 2002) which sparked policy development globally across the sector. In the United States, the two key problems reported were the length it took students to complete their programmes and the fact that the doctoral degree was regarded as poor preparation for employment outside the academy (Nerad 2004; Walker 2008).

Australia struggled with similar problems – students with doctoral degrees did not acquire appropriate skills to equip them for a job market outside the academy, and the Australian government had started taking an interest in the quality of research education because of long completion times and an increased focus on student satisfaction with their doctoral experience (Pearson and Brew 2002; Gallagher 2000).

In Europe doctoral education was also on the policy agenda. The Bologna Declaration of June 1999 started a process of making Higher Education provisions across Europe more uniform. The aim was for students from member states to be able to transfer credits from one European university to another, and to generally increase the mobility of learners and graduates (Bologna 2010). In 2003, doctoral education was included in the third cycle of the Bologna Secretariat and Coordination Group's qualification framework, and in 2008 the European Council adopted the European Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area to which member states are expected to relate their national qualifications (QAA 2012). This European framework addressed the same areas of concern as had been raised in the US and Australia. In

Europe too, students took too long to complete and they were poorly equipped to take up jobs outside academia (Kehm 2009).

In the UK the public's attention was drawn to doctoral studies by the publication of two reports. The *Review of Postgraduate Education* (Harris 1996), usually referred to as the Harris Report, and the *National Committee of Inquiry in Higher Education* (Dearing 1997), referred to as the Dearing Report, both introduced the notion of quality to the field of doctoral education. These reports recommend that all students should have access to clear information about the provision universities offer, and that a qualifications framework which includes definitions of outcomes at doctoral level should be developed by the QAA together with a Code of Practice for research programmes. The Harris Report (1996: 6.47) also recommends that only institutions who have 'committed themselves to observing' this Code of practice should be allowed to receive HEFCE-funded students. When the first edition of the Code of Practice appeared in 1999 it included an institutional commitment to train supervisors and provide continuing professional development for them (QAA 1999: section 15). This was the first time policymakers had crossed the boundaries of the private space of research supervision, assuming – and suggesting – that the workforce dealing with doctoral students needed regular up-skilling.

Another quality issue brought on by the Harris Report and which was to have an impact on doctoral supervision, was the association between the score achieved in the then Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the ability to supervise (publicly funded) doctoral students. Only higher education departments that scored a four or above would be allowed to take on research students sponsored by the Research Councils. Both the Harris Report and the Dearing Report had been commissioned by Conservative governments, but when New Labour came to power in May 1997, they soon commissioned their own series of reviews which looked into doctoral provision. In 2002, Sir Gareth Roberts called for dedicated training in transferable skills to be available for all doctoral students (Roberts 2002). As a result, institutions must make available a series of skills courses if they want to access the Skills Training Development Funds provided then by the Research Councils. The skills agenda was also highlighted in the later Leitch Report (Leitch 2006) in which it was emphasised that the development of higher level skills among the UK work force was the only way for the nation to compete in the global market. These policy initiatives all addressed concerns about doctoral research training being too narrowly steeped in the disciplines

which made it difficult for doctoral graduates to transfer into employment outside the academy.

### **The increasing numbers of doctoral students**

The modern doctoral degree – the Doctor of Philosophy - as it is known today evolved in the early nineteenth century in what is now Germany as an apprenticeship for a career as a researcher (Simpson 2009). It was seen as an opportunity for a gifted student to pursue a line of discovery under the guidance of an experienced academic and, as a result, make an original contribution to knowledge. The qualification would then serve as an entrance ticket to either the academy or some other research institution (Green and Powell 2005; Leonard 2001). In the course of a few decades universities in the United States, the United Kingdom and on the continent adopted the degree, undertaken by a small number of researchers.

But doctoral education is no longer reserved for a tiny minority – at least in the Western world. In Australia the number of doctoral students went up almost four times between 1990 and 2009, from 9,298 to 37,685 (Neuman 2007). In Europe it is estimated that the number of doctoral students in Europe went up between five and ten percent between 1996 and 2006 (Kehm 2006). And some European countries<sup>1</sup> continue to see a sharp increase in students pursuing doctoral studies. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of students in Spain who were awarded a doctoral degree doubled, and in Sweden the number of students who embarked on doctoral studies in the 1990s went up by 35% (Kehm 2004). In the UK, the number of full-time students who gained a doctoral qualification quintupled between 2000 and 2010 as shown in table below:

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<sup>1</sup> Kehm (2004) includes the following European countries in her study: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

**Figure 3: Number of full-time students who gained a doctoral qualification in 1999/2000 and in 2009/2010**

1999/2000	2009/2010
Total number : 2,450	Total number: 12,580
UK domiciled: 1,490	UK domiciled: 6,445
Female: 680	Female: 3,100
Male: 810	Male: 3,345
Overseas: 960	Overseas: 6,135
Female: 270	EU
Male: 690	Female: 850
	Male: 1,115
	Non-EU
	Female: 1,620
	Male: 2,550

**Figure 4: Number of part-time students who gained a doctoral qualification in 1999/2000 and in 2009/2010:**

1999/2000	2009/2010
Total number : 9,100	Total number: 3,035
UK domiciled: 6,090	UK domiciled: 2,230
Female: 2,400	Female: 1,125
Male: 3,690	Male: 1,105
Overseas: 3,010	Overseas: 805
Female: 1,070	EU
Male: 1,940	Female: 170
	Male: 165
	Non-EU
	Female: 210
	Male: 260

Source: Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA)<sup>2</sup>

The tables show that about half of the full-time doctoral students who were awarded a doctoral degree in 2010 were not UK domiciled. Some of these students are likely to need extra support in order to complete their studies successfully. Southall et.al. (2006) report that some international students come from cultures where critical thinking is discouraged and they are therefore reluctant to question the authority and knowledge of lecturers or other subject experts. In such cases the supervisor will need to introduce their students to new ways of approaching learning. In addition, the authors point out that some international students will have to deal with settling in a new culture and all

<sup>2</sup> In 1999/2000 HESA operated with the category 'overseas domiciled'. However, in 2008/09 this category is divided into 'other European domiciled' and 'non European domiciled'. In the table shown, the 'other European domiciled' and 'non European domiciled' have been added up for the purpose of comparison. HESA data accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

the disorientation this involves as well as concentration on their studies. These are all issues doctoral supervisors need to be tuned into when working with overseas students.

The sharp increase in doctoral students can be seen as a result of the general massification of higher education that started in the 1980s which is already well documented in the literature (see for example Deem 1998; Leonard 2001; Slaughter and Leslie 2001; Morley 2003). The political agenda driving this trend is based on the assumption that a high level of skills and education in a population leads to economic growth (Peters 2007), and that by accessing higher education individuals gain social capital which will allow them better jobs and social mobility (Lauder 2011). This argument also includes doctoral education. Kehm (2006) argues that the considerable increase in doctoral awards in the developed world over the years is regarded as an indication of economic development in the Western world. As more graduates compete for jobs they need to find ways in which they can distinguish themselves from their competitors, and gaining a doctorate is one way in which graduates can, as Morley (2011: 79) phrases it, 'self-constitute in difference'.

Although there can be little doubt that the increase in students gaining doctoral degrees to some extent is driven by the market economy, the doctoral market place can no longer be reduced to a question of supply and demand. Globalisation and advanced technology mean higher mobility of people as well as skills, and the last decades have seen a fundamental shift in the global economy with new economic powers emerging such as Russia, China and India (Lauder, Brown and Ashton 2008). Heavy investments in higher education in these countries have resulted in large numbers of highly skilled graduates and as a result the world is witnessing a global auction in graduate talent (Lauder 2011; Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011). Graduates from these new economic powers – including doctoral students - are competing for jobs on the global market, often attracted by higher salaries. For example, in North America and Europe graduate salaries are eight to ten times higher than in China (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley 2009; Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011).

However, the surplus of doctorate candidates seems to be a phenomenon that is limited to the Western world. In their report prepared for the UNESCO world conference on Higher Education, Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009) estimate that only 9% of the academic profession in China hold a doctoral degree – although it goes up to 70% of the academic profession at the most prestigious universities. In India the estimate is that around 35% of all academics teaching at universities hold doctorates. In most universities in the developing world it is estimated that about 10% of academics hold doctoral degrees. Highly trained academics from the developing countries – such as the sub-Saharan Africa – migrate to higher paid jobs in Europe and North America (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley 2009).

### **Parity and equity between doctorates**

The conventional doctoral degree (PhD or DPhil) involves students undertaking a research project and producing a thesis which is assessed by experts in the field (Green and Powell 2005; Taylor 2008). In the UK the thesis is also examined by oral examination, the *viva voce*. However, since the 1980s new forms of doctoral degrees have proliferated alongside the conventional PhD or DPhil. In an attempt to provide more sustained support for students, some universities have introduced taught doctorates consisting of a substantial proportion of coursework within a framework of a set curriculum and learning outcomes. Like a conventional doctoral degree, students will also produce a report based on research findings and undergo an oral examination (Kehm 2009). Similar to the taught doctorate is the New Route doctorate – or integrated doctoral degree. It was developed in 2001 in the UK in order to attract and provide better support international students. These programmes will typically have three phases: a taught component that covers research methods and subject specific material, another taught component covering transferable skills and a research and thesis element (Kehm 2009).

The PhD by published work provides an opportunity for academics who have published articles in peer reviewed journals or books or book chapters within a field to present their work for doctoral examination. The reviewed work will normally be presented with a narrative framework outlining the claims for a contribution to knowledge (QAA 2011). The PhD by published work is quite different from other doctorates in that it rests on the

evaluation and disciplinary coherence of work already published rather than the process of producing a thesis (QAA 2012; Kehm 2009).

The last group includes the professional and practice-based doctorates. The professional doctorates can be found within disciplines demarcated by a distinct professional element as they usually rely on application of work-related knowledge. Also, professional doctorates are expected to demonstrate reflective practice (Green and Powell 2005; Neumann 2005). Professional doctorates will normally be cohort based, part-time, and include some taught elements. In some cases professional doctorates will be assessed by portfolio and if a thesis is required, it is normally shorter than for a conventional doctorate (Servage 2009). The regulations for professional doctorates will usually stipulate that the thesis should provide an original contribution to knowledge *and* practice (QAA 2012). However, when Lunt (2002) compared professional doctorate programmes in the UK in three disciplines – engineering, business and education – she observed that although much emphasis was placed on practice during the taught elements, it was the academic content of the thesis that counted in the assessment rather than the practice element. A similar observation was made by Scott et.al. (2004) when they conducted twelve case studies into professional doctorates in the UK. Once it came to the final assessment, universities would re-instate their authority as knowledge producers.

Finally, students embarking on a practice-based doctorate - which is offered in the UK and Australia - will also follow a structured programme, but instead of providing a thesis they will be examined on a practice portfolio, an artefact or a performance which they are expected to contextualise and critically evaluate within a theoretical framework (QAA 2012; Kehm 2009).

Although they all lead to doctoral degrees, these programmes of study vary considerably with regard to recruitment, contents and the piece(s) of work being assessed, and not surprisingly this has led to discussions around the extent to which they are comparable. Crossouard (2011: 325) has pointed out that despite the variety of doctoral degrees in the sector, the assessment has largely remained the same in that the student's work needs to be recognised and legitimised by peers within a disciplinary culture.

In Australia professional doctorates have been mushrooming since the 1990s, but the programmes have come under attack from some parts of the academy, claiming that the content has been made less academically rigorous in order to attract students who are only marginally qualified so as to boost numbers (Evans et.al. 2005). Kehm (2009), too, argues that the professional doctorate is looked down upon by the academy and Park (2005) claims that all new doctorates are regarded as poor cousins to the conventional doctorate. Fenge (2009) argues that the negative attitude to professional doctorates stems from the fact that they challenge the academy with regard to who produces and contributes to new knowledge. Instead of relying on knowledge production from within the academy, practitioners and communities of practice become key players in the process. Lee, Brennan and Green (2009) also state that universities are distinctly uneasy about authoritative knowledge created involving organisations other than universities.

While there may be some truth in these assertions there is another more pragmatic reason for the bad reputation some of the new programmes have gained among academics. Park (2005) claims that institutional regulations for some new doctoral programmes are vague and lack coherence, which makes it difficult for examiners to know what they are measuring the output against. Determining 'doctorateness' can be challenging at the best of times (see for example Denicolo and Park 2010 and Trafford and Leshem 2009), but ascertaining the doctoral element in a practice application, an exhibition or a performance may be far from straight forward.

It is not just the variety of doctoral degrees available that makes comparison between doctoral degrees complicated. Tinkler and Jackson (2000) found that regulations and expectations for what constitutes a doctoral degree vary greatly from one institution to another with regard to the conventional doctoral degree. This applies to areas such as the length of the thesis, how to appoint external examiners and processes for providing examiners' reports. Taylor and Beasley (2005) also pointed out that conventions within individual disciplines vary with regard to how doctoral work is presented. In addition, some professional bodies such as the British Psychological Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry have issued their own guidelines as to what a doctoral degree within the field should comprise.

There is no doubt that students on doctoral programmes gain very different experiences depending on what programme they embark upon, but there is one aspect of the doctoral process that has been particularly criticised for being volatile, and that is the oral examination or *viva voce*. Holbrook (2001) has remarked that the PhD examination is an article of faith, referring specifically to the way in which examiners are appointed and how they apply the elusive concept of doctoral standards to the written work.

In some European countries, the oral examination takes place in public, and in Australia it has been abolished in most universities (Crossouard 2011). However, in the UK it has remained unchanged since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite criticism from some scholars who have pointed out the many ways in which the system is open to abuse. In the UK, the oral examination takes place in private normally with two or three examiners and it has repeatedly been questioned with regard to fairness and equity (Deem and Brehony 2000; Tinkler and Jackson 2001; Morley, Leonard and David 2002; 2003). Although supervisors usually can influence who to appoint as examiners, they have little control over what happens in the oral examination and there are not necessarily any records of the actual examination.<sup>3</sup>

All UK universities' doctoral regulations state that in order to be awarded a doctorate, a candidate must make an original contribution to knowledge, but individual institutions vary considerably across the country when it comes to how universities conceptualise the relationship between the thesis and the oral examination (Tinkler and Jackson 2000; 2002) or how much importance individual universities attribute to the oral examination (Tinkler and Jackson 2001). When exploring the purpose of the oral examination, Tinkler and Jackson (2004) found no less than nine different roles expressed by their respondents. Furthermore, there are academics who do not even regard the oral examination as part of the actual doctoral examination, but rather as a rite of passage where the examiners act as gate keepers whose role it is to question students rigorously before accepting them into the academic community (Green and Powell 2005). Some universities give guidelines regarding the approximate length of an

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<sup>3</sup> In the Code of practice (QAA 2004) it is recommended that institutions introduce an independent academic to chair the examination. However, the chair does not have to keep notes. Similarly, in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Research degrees – draft for consultation, it is recommended that an independent chair is appointed in order to ensure fairness and consistency between oral examinations (QAA 2012: 22).

oral examination, but others do not. Tinkler and Jackson (2000) found that 27% of doctoral students from the arts and humanities and social sciences had oral examinations lasting up to one hour, and for 15% it lasted between one and three hours. In the natural sciences the percentage was 3% and 43% respectively. So, whereas universities usually provide guidelines for the format of the written thesis, there are rarely any guidelines for how the oral examination should be conducted, what it should contain or how long it should last.

Finally, as the conceptualisation of the doctorate is adjusted to the variety of programmes offered in the sector, so is the discourse in which the degree is discussed. Boud and Lee (2009) have pointed out how the literature in the field of doctoral studies has seen a shift from doctoral *research* to doctoral *education*, thereby moving the focus from the final product (the research output in the form of a thesis or a portfolio) to the process of producing it. This shift has implications for supervisory practice. First, it allocates more responsibility to supervisors as they become educators rather than co-researchers or expert advisors to an independent investigator. Second, it endorses a view of doctoral studies as a process whereby students produce a thesis that demonstrates they have the potential of conducting independent research.

### **Timely completion**

One major concern for policymakers and the academy alike has been timely completion. A report compiled by HEFCE in 2007, showed that 34% of full-time and 52% of part-time doctoral students fail to complete their studies within 10 years (HEFCE 2007/28). There are variations within disciplines with biological and physical sciences having the highest completion rates (85% and 83% respectively) and architecture and creative art the lowest (63%). Completion rates also differ between individual universities. Those universities that have a large number of doctoral students who are funded by the Research Councils fare better in the statistics because such students are more likely to complete their studies (HEFCE 2007/28). Since 2007, statistics for successful completion are no longer information exclusive to the individual institution, as HEFCE compiles an annual league table for institutions with the most timely completions.

A few studies have looked into possible factors that influence timely completion. In a large scale longitudinal study (nine years) including 3,579 PhD students at a UK university, Wright and Cochrane (2000) found that students most likely to make a timely, successful submission were studying a science-based subject and in receipt of research council funding. They also found that international students and – perhaps more surprisingly - part-time (often mature) students were likely to complete on time. The authors suggest that the high success rate for non-traditional students – such as international and mature students – is due to the high level of personal and financial investment these students have made. In an Australian study, Ives and Rowley (2005) found that successful, timely completion was more likely to happen when students had been involved with the selection of their supervisor and when students' topics matched the expertise of their supervisors. The authors also found a relationship between successful completion and the supervisory experience of the supervisor. It may be questioned how useful studies such as these are in preventing doctoral students from dropping out or ensuring that they complete in time. As McInnis et al. (2000) stated in their literature review of HE completion in Australia (not only doctoral programmes) 'Students who withdraw and students who persist are not necessarily distinct groups. Concerns and attitudes that lead to withdrawal for some students are shared by others who persist' (McInnis et. al. 2000: 2).

Ives and Rowley (2005) found that the relationship between the student and his or her supervisor is important for the doctoral experience and, hence, for whether a student is likely to complete or not. And the quality of supervision is an area which has come under scrutiny from policy makers. A HEFCE report analysing the completion rate of two cohorts of doctoral students states that the findings are 'intended to inform discussion about the quality of supervision of postgraduate research in general, and the time and rate of PhD completion in particular' (HEFCE 2007/28:2). This is not a phenomenon unique to the UK. In her analysis of doctoral education in Europe and North America, Kehm (2006: 69) observes that the master-apprentice model (supervisor and student working closely on a one-to-one basis) is the most widespread but that it is a model marred with problems, such as 'the high degree of personal dependence on the supervisor, a frequent lack of quality in supervision, high drop-out rates and often there is an overly long period before the degree is completed'.

Finally, there are some indications that the strong emphasis in supervision discourses on timely completion also will have an effect on doctoral recruitment, favouring those students who are deemed most likely to complete on time (Neumann 2002). This in turn could affect some universities' willingness to admit non-traditional students to doctoral programmes if they are seen as needing additional academic support. After the first league table for timely doctoral completions in the UK was published in 2007, the vice-principal for students at King's College - the college that came top of the league - admitted that 'you have to choose students who can complete' (*Times Higher Education* 2007: 5).

This chapter has sought to outline the policy context in which doctoral supervisors work in the UK. Over the past ten years the number of full-time doctoral students has quadrupled. As a result, more academics are likely to be engaged with doctoral supervision and/or individual academics supervise a larger number of students. Almost half of the full-time students awarded a doctoral degree in 2009/10 were EU or overseas students which means that doctoral supervisors need to be sensitive to cultural differences when working with their students. Finally, new kinds of programmes have been added to the doctoral scene aimed at professional practitioners. These programmes attract different groups of students who present different sets of challenges to their supervisors. In the next chapter I will explore ways in which academic developers have carved a niche for themselves in this doctoral landscape and the role they may play in supporting supervisors and students.

## **Chapter 3 – Doctoral supervision and the academic developer<sup>4</sup>**

This chapter explores the role of academic development in the context of doctoral supervision. I start by outlining academic development as a profession, before I move on to explore the audit culture within which academic developers as well as doctoral supervision are currently positioned. Finally, I critique the contributions to doctoral supervision made by academic developers.

### **The world of academic development**

Academic development emerged in the wake of the expansion of higher education in the Western world in the 1960s, but it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that it became a regular feature of higher education (Gosling 2009). In the UK, there was a particular growth in academic development towards the end of the 1990s owing to significant government funding. Between 1999 and 2009, £181 million was made available as a Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF). The monies were allocated to individual universities to implement institutional teaching and learning strategies and to support pedagogic innovation in the disciplines (HEFCE 2009). An even larger sum of £525 million was made available between 2006 and 2009 to promote the teaching excellence agenda.

As a result of this funding, 74 Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) were established, and developments such as the National Teaching Fellow Scheme were initiated which reward individual teachers in Higher Education who demonstrate excellence in their practice (HEFCE 2009). All these initiatives would often involve academic developers in some kind of supporting role. An evaluation of the TQEF scheme in 2005 showed that whereas only 10% of the 50 institutions surveyed in 2001-2002 spent the largest amount of their TQEF on central support for teaching

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<sup>4</sup> In this section I use academic and educational developer/development interchangeably. Blackmore (2009) distinguishes between academic development and educational development, claiming that the first is concerned with the development of academics' expertise and the second focuses on development of curriculum and assessment. This is not a very helpful distinction since developing curriculum and assessment traditionally is regarded as central to academic practice.

and learning (including academic development), this had risen to 58% by 2005, indicating that in the course of those three years universities placed increased emphasis on the enhancement of teaching and learning.<sup>5</sup> (TQEF 2005)

Another initiative that increased the opportunity for academic development activity was the Dearing Report (Dearing 1997). One of the recommendations in this report was for higher education institutions to provide support and professional development for new teaching staff. These programmes focusing on academic practice (usually Postgraduate Certificates accredited by the Higher Education Academy) are normally run by academic developers (Gosling 2009). Clegg (2009) observed that when academic development first surfaced it was to support new groups of students who entered the universities as a result of this expansion, and that consequently they became crusaders for what was later to become *the student experience*. She argued that because of this original positioning, academic developers were seen as challenging existing and dominant practices within higher education, and that this subsequently influenced how the field was viewed within the university. Because academic developers worked with academic staff, not the students, there was from the very beginning 'a tension between the rhetoric of support for academics and the championing of the student voice/views as re-represented in the discourse of academic development itself.' (Clegg 2009: 407). It is this position that has made academic development what Peseta and Grant (2011:1) have called 'a field of contradiction'.

The contradictions emerge because academic developers work in a space where they often serve different agendas, and as a result there exists some uncertainty within the profession regarding roles and responsibilities. Often academic developers find themselves as negotiators between management and academic staff when new policies or strategies are implemented, and the developers' contributions to the process are met with various levels of enthusiasm or disdain from their academic colleagues. Gray and Radloff (2006) captured this when describing their academic development work at an Australian university as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> In 2005 the number of institutions surveyed was 24. This means that the increase is effectively about 25% - but it is nonetheless an increase.

Relationships with our stakeholders have been varied and often ambivalent with regard to the focus and value of our work. Sometimes we were expected to take leadership and responsibility for the quality of student learning. At other times, we were sought out as consultants and advisors. And at other times again, we were ignored and bypassed, and our contributions were rendered invisible (Gray and Radloff 2006: 87).

When Clegg (2009) conducted a critical review of how academic developers write about their practice, she found that much of the published work in the profession's key journal *International Journal for Academic Development* was focused on aspects of identity – how the profession struggles with defining itself in relation to others, most significantly academic colleagues and management as the above quotation from Gray and Radloff testifies to

This struggle for identity is partly related to the fact that academic developers are positioned differently in different institutions. In some universities they work in academic departments, in others they are placed in Human Resources, and, in others again they find themselves in units responsible for Quality and Standards (Gosling 2009). And where they are positioned may influence how they are perceived by their academic colleagues. Based in Human Resources or a Quality Office, academic developers may be associated with the general monitoring of academic activity which has become prevalent in higher education (Barnett 2011). Universities have always been what McWilliam (2004: 152) have referred to as 'risk-organisations' where the risks include wasting resources, failing students and declining standards. However, with the neo-liberal ethos pervading higher education in the 1980s and 1990s expectations on universities to be accountable to the government and funding councils by demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness increased (Barnett 2011; Fanghanel 2012). In his survey of the roles academic developers carry out in UK higher institutions, Gosling (2009: 10) found that 16% of the academic development departments he surveyed were involved in setting strategic targets for their institution, 42% were played a part in writing policies for human resources, 37% had responsibilities associated with quality assurance and enhancement, 37% with implementing e-learning and other information strategies, 21% with widening participation and 25% with student support. In other words, academic developers have wide-ranging and varied remits.

The different roles and responsibilities and the different positioning within the university is also bound to influence the professional identity of academic developers. When interviewing academic developers across the UK, Land (2003; 2004) found no less than 12 orientations to academic development. These orientations are summarised below.

<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Aims of the academic developer</b>
<b>Managerial</b>	To develop staff towards achieving the institutions' goals and missions. This may be done by devising systems that can be implemented across the institution.
<b>Political strategist</b>	To be aware of shifting power structures within the institution and to align activities accordingly.
<b>Entrepreneurial</b>	To generate innovative practices within the institution and to be involved in income generation and partnerships.
<b>Romantic</b>	To focus on the individual practitioner and their personal development and well-being
<b>Vigilant opportunist</b>	To identify emerging and 'fashionable' ideas and develop these.
<b>Researcher</b>	To provide evidence-based innovations based on research.
<b>Professional competence</b>	To bring academic staff up to a base level of competence.
<b>Reflective practitioner</b>	To foster an institutional culture of self-reflection and peer discussion.
<b>Internal consultant</b>	To act as consultant, give advice, evaluate practice.
<b>Modeller-broker</b>	To act as a model for practice ('do as I do') or to promote examples of 'good practice'
<b>Interpretive-hermeneutic</b>	To establish a dialectic collaboration between developer and the practitioner.
<b>Discipline specific</b>	To confine development activities within established disciplines.

Collated from Land (2003; 2004)

It should be pointed out that these orientations are based on how developers regard themselves (their own perceived identities), not how their institutions see their role. Clegg (2003) has argued that the role of academic developers is as agents for change which means that it is easy for practitioners to find themselves in political or ethical dilemmas. For example, an academic developer may regard herself or himself as someone who is supporting individual academics (romantic orientation), yet be asked to implement new technologies across the institution which may cause academics high levels of stress as they have to learn new skills. Recently, Harland and Staniforthb (2011) made a brave attempt to argue why academic development should be academic work, but in doing so alarmingly referred to their academic colleagues as their 'clients', thus positioning themselves outside the academic environment.

The literature on academic development reflects an element of confusion and anxiety with regard to professional identity among its practitioners which is partly a consequence of the fact that they have been reluctant to discuss and reflect upon assumptions underpinning their own pedagogical practices. And when they eventually do, it appears that they possess a 'disturbing fondness for colonial approaches' (Manathunga 2006: 20). Exploring academic development from a post-colonial perspective, Australian scholars such as McWilliam et. al.(2002), Brew and Peseta (2004) and Manathunga (2006) have uncovered some of the reasons why work carried out by academic developers occasionally is ignored and bypassed as claimed by Gray and Radloff (2006). One reason may be that the traditional discourse of academic development is 'celebratory, progressive and positively change driven' (Brew and Peseta 2004: 1).

In the context of research supervision, the position of the academic developer (and that of the institution) may be that if supervisors attended and engaged in the workshops designed and provided for them, they would become more effective and efficient workers, enabling their students to complete successfully on time. In fact, as Manathunga (2005a) found when devising such workshops, many supervisors regard such events as an intrusion into a private pedagogical space in the same way as a colonial power attempts to replace a country's existing values with new ones. She agrees with other scholars such as McWilliam et. al. (2002) and Rowland (2003) that this reaction is often triggered by the fact that workshops are developed on the basis of a deficit model with the assumption that there are areas where supervisors have shortcomings, and that attending workshops will raise their level of competence.

Manathunga's application of post-colonial theory in explaining academic development is in itself a splendid metaphor for the guilt-ridden identity crises and anxiety within the field: Academic developers invading the territories of indigenous people (academic staff) in an attempt to impose their (i.e. management's) culture and values on their practices. Clegg (2009: 409) has described the identity crises as being rooted in 'a struggle for legitimacy for the particular social project'. The social project she is referring to is one where teaching and learning is evidence-based and celebrated in terms of quality and excellence, and where the notion of the student experience uncritically drives agendas of the academy. Clegg argues that this discourse is shaped and promoted by academic developers both through their daily work but also through

their writing about their practice, and she observes that structural inequalities such as gender, race and class tend to be absent from their writing except through “a ghostly presence” when discussing widening participation and mass education (Clegg 2009: 413). She goes on to claim that there is scope for critical rather than domesticating orientations within institutional agendas.

It is the quality and excellence agenda and the continuous monitoring of the student experience that brings academic development into the supervisory space. In the UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Research degrees, it is explicitly stated that universities with research students must offer ‘appropriate development opportunities’ for supervisors, and supervisors should be supported in ‘updating their knowledge’ and sharing good practice (QAA 2012: 13). As is evident from the work by Manathunga (2005a; 2007) and Brew and Peseta (2004) academic developers may be called in to facilitate such development events.

### **Doctoral supervision in an audit culture**

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) recommends that higher education institutions provide appropriate training and development activities for doctoral supervisors, and clearly states that universities should provide opportunities for supervisors to update their skills and knowledge in relation to the supervisory process (QAA 2012: 13). Ogbonna and Harris (2004) have pointed out that although university managers are given a high degree of choice with regard to development and implementation of government-derived initiatives and policies, many managers have chosen to implement policies aggressively and as a consequence the organisational expectations on academic staff have increased significantly. In some UK universities, only academic staff who have attended formalised supervisor training are allowed to act as supervisors. Manathunga (2005a: 20) has described this as a ‘narrow, instrumentalist interpretation of research education and supervisor ‘training’ which she claims is shared by governments in the UK, Australia and the US.

This instrumentalist approach can be seen as a by-product of the audit culture that has invaded higher education since the 1980s. Shore and Wright (2000) have shown how

the concept of audit migrated from the financial world with which it was originally associated to the public sector including higher education. The authors argued that when organisations operate within an audit culture they need to make auditable structures visible – in other words, such organisations need to ensure that structures for quality assurance and monitoring of quality are transparent. Supervisor training can be seen as one such auditable structure. Universities can monitor the up-take of these development events and the staff members who attend. By providing training and development for doctoral supervisors, universities accept accountability for the maintaining of standards within doctoral education. However, Morley (2003: 53) has argued that because the term ‘accountability’ is used in everyday speech it over-simplifies power relations, and the training sessions for doctoral supervisors may be seen as an example of such over-simplification.

Although it is important in an audit culture for institutions to be seen to take measures for monitoring and maintaining quality and standards, it is nevertheless still with the individual that the responsibility rests when it comes to academic practice. Universities may provide a structure for professional development for its academic staff, but this can at times be regarded by some individuals as implicit suggestions that they are not quite up to the job in question and need improvement. As Shore and Wright (2000: 77) have stated ‘audit encourages the displacement of a system based on autonomy and trust by one based on visibility and coercive accountability’. This view was adopted by McWilliam (2004) when she went as far as to suggest that the audit culture has turned doctoral supervisors into agents of the audited university whether they like it or not:

The good supervisor is no longer the thoughtful sage or mentor tucked away in a private office surrounded by sandstone and ivy. S/he is now part of a team, in touch with the university’s systems and management requirements, a dexterous and capable user of, and contributor to, the university’s systems for monitoring student throughput, and attentive to the changing needs of students as they progress through the program. S/he understands the importance of timely completion, and the special needs of each milestone in terms of what it requires administratively, not just pedagogically. So the measures of ‘effective supervision’ come to reflect the importance of alignment between the good (risk-conscious) supervisor and the good (risk-conscious) university. (McWilliam 2004: 12)

There is another agenda which underpins the concept of academic development, namely the quest for achieving excellence in teaching and learning. In her exploration of academic identity, Fanghanel (2012) has asserted that there are two paradigms which have been evoked in UK higher education in an attempt to give academic performativity a friendly face – excellence and innovation. Across the sector universities provide websites with institutional narratives referring to teaching excellence and innovative initiatives, usually relying on cutting edge technology. And nationally, the Higher Education Academy celebrates excellence in university teaching by awarding National Teaching Fellowships on an annual basis. In a highly competitive higher education environment, it seems that competent teaching has become mediocre and only excellence will do to such an extent that it has rendered the term meaningless. Indeed, to some academics the term has become worse than meaningless. In a vehement attack on recent developments within higher education, one academic claimed ‘excellence’ is ‘a word now so filthy with dishonest use as to have turned into intellectual sewage’ (Inglis 2012: 50). Academic developers will normally be working within and guided by an institutional quality assurance framework promoting excellence and innovations, and as a consequence be seen by academic colleagues as part and parcel of the audit culture. This is also likely to be the case when academic developers get involved with doctoral supervision.

### **Academic developers and doctoral supervision**

In the literature on doctoral supervision and development, there is a tendency for academic developers to gravitate towards the professional competence orientation and managerial orientation in Land's (2003; 2004) typology when it comes to doctoral supervisory practice. There is a growing body of literature by academic developers which attempts to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of supervisors and to explore ways in which to enhance their productivity – i.e. getting successful, timely completions (see Pearson and Brew 2002; Brew and Peseta 2004; Green and Usher 2003; Manathunga 2005b). Sometimes these studies masquerade as pedagogical models to be applied to the supervisory process, but they are inevitably exercises in efficiency and time management. This particular body of literature reflects two major approaches to increasing the effectiveness of research supervision - a managerial and a mentoring approach.

The managerial approach is unsentimental and hard-nosed. Zhao (2003) has argued that the assumption underpinning the traditional supervisory model - that a close working relationship between supervisor and research student is essential in order to produce a high quality output - is defunct as it is simply not cost effective. She suggests that 'the primary goal of research supervision is the achievement of quality and completion' (Zhao 2003:187). Green and Usher (2003) and their concept of 'fast supervision' is another manifestation of accepting a purely financially driven take on the effectiveness of research supervision. The authors acknowledge that in a new doctoral landscape there is no place for what they call 'curiosity-driven' research 'where outcomes are not known in advance' (Green and Usher 2003:47), and this monumental shift in the concept of what constitutes research does not seem to concern them much. Instead, they claim that 'supervisors need to be readily available, be succinct and speedy in their feedback, smart in their guidance along projected timelines, and resistant to intellectual meandering' (Green and Usher 2003: 44). In a similar business-like vein, Firth and Martens (2008) argued for the application of new contractualism to be a key driver of effective research supervision. Within this framework, the research student becomes 'an informed party to a quasi-legal contract' (Firth and Martens 2008: 286), and the working relationship between student and supervisor is constituted by a series of mini-agreements where roles and responsibilities are closely monitored and adhered to.

To sum up, the managerial approach to doctoral supervision is based on the view that supervision is a form of pedagogic enterprise or even teaching - a manageable, linear process. There is little room for messy creativity or time-wasting curious exploration as the serendipitous nature of research is dismissed. For example, one of the supervisors in the social sciences interviewed by Matos (2006) complained that students normally found it difficult to design their project (i.e. spent too much time on it) and that it would be easier if he could design it for them so they could just get on with the research, i.e. data collection.

If the managerial approach to supervision is entirely outcome-driven, the mentoring approach at the other end of the spectrum is focused on the notion of the student experience and on developing skills in supervisors that enable them to adapt to individual students' needs and preferences. Pearson and Brew (2002) have suggested that supervisors need to be adaptable and capable of moving between supervisory

models and styles depending on the characteristics and needs of their students. The authors also argue that supervisors should be well informed of career paths within their discipline, so they can provide research students with appropriate guidance for future employment. Another important skill to possess as a supervisor is an ability to identify the origins of academic procrastination within cognitive, affective and social domains (Ahern and Manathunga 2004; Manathunga 2005b; Kearns, Gardiner and Marshall 2008). According to these scholars, effective supervisors should develop a systematic approach for recognising early warning signs that a student may not be on track for timely completion.

Finally, a new and exciting body of literature is beginning to appear where academic developers focus on ethnic and cultural dimensions of doctoral supervision. Grant and McKinley (2011) have explored issues around supervising Māori doctoral students in New Zealand and the ethical dilemmas they encounter when collecting and presenting research based on insider knowledge from their indigenous community. A study by Barker (2011) also explored issues around being a black doctoral student with a white supervisor at a university in the American South. These studies are promising because they highlight areas that tend to be bypassed in the literature on doctoral supervision, such as race and the ethical complexities that minority ethnic groups encounter when researching their own communities.

This chapter has outlined the field of academic development and shown the role academic developers play regarding doctoral supervision. As agents of change, academic developers have explored pedagogic models of research supervision in an attempt to make the supervisory process more efficient and effective and to enhance the student experience. Academic developers are part of the audit culture in higher education and their involvement with doctoral studies has seen doctoral supervision move from a predominately private space into a more public gaze where student progress and completion is under scrutiny. In the following chapter I will investigate how this shift has impacted on academics and the emotional labour they invest in their work, particularly with reference to doctoral supervisors.

## Chapter 4 - Emotions in the academy

Carolyn Jackson has shown how emotions such as fear of academic failure have a profound impact on school children and their wellbeing (Jackson 2010). In fact, her study reveals that it is not only the children who get emotionally involved before sitting exams, but that teachers and parents also report high levels of anxiety. Most university students will experience not only fear but also other emotions such as frustration, anger, irritation, excitement, joy and pride at some points of their studies. For example, when Crossouard (2011) interviewed students about their experiences of the doctoral oral examination, she found that a wide spectrum of emotions were articulated ranging from anxiety and fear to joy and excitement. However, emotions tend to have been treated with some discomfort within the academy. The literature addressing emotions in higher education represents broadly three positions. First, there is the position that emotions should be dismissed as they play no part in the rational creation of knowledge, which is the sole purpose of the academy. Second, there is the position that emotions can be beneficial to the university as an organisation if they are appropriately managed. Third, there is the position that emotions cannot be separated from rational thinking, and that both should be acknowledged as playing a part in the learning process. I shall outline each of these three positions in more detail.

The first position is the conventional Cartesian position which regards human beings as operating in a thinking domain and a corporal domain and the two domains are distinctly different – thought is independent of the body (Oakley 2000). It is a position handed down to us by philosophers over the centuries and based on what Lloyd (1995: xix) has called the ‘historical maleness of Reason’, and Bordo (1986: 439) has referred to as the ‘masculinisation of thought’. Proponents of this position see a scholar as someone who thinks rationally and acquires knowledge in a structured and objective manner without being influenced by personal or emotional responses. Furedi (2003) has challenged what he regards as a therapy culture within higher education when emotional dimensions of the learning process are being addressed, and Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) have followed suit stating that:

No matter how we are emotionally involved, or not, in intellectual work we pursue that work in a *disinterested* way. We are not and must not be

intellectually or emotionally biased in the pursuit of knowledge. Emphasis on the emotions in higher education is irrelevant, a time wasting activity based on a generalised notion of personal vulnerability (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009: 97, emphasis in text).

The authors argued that too much focus on emotions in universities has made higher education institutions 'therapeutic' and that 'a therapeutic university discourages academics from becoming practiced in denial of self in the pursuit of knowledge' (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009: 104). Their use of monastic vocabulary such as 'denial of self' is characteristic as the view of Ecclestone and Hayes resonates with the description given by Cobban (1975) of how students who were not quite up to the intellectual challenges presented to them were dealt with in the medieval university:

As there was no artificial cushioning in medieval universities to gloss over lack of aptitude or ability the dead wood was naturally excised to the benefit of the whole academic community. Medieval universities felt no collective guilt or responsibility to shepherd the weaker brethren along the road to a dubious degree (Cobban 1975: 209).

The medieval monks – like Ecclestone and Hayes – showed little sympathy with the 'dead wood' which was keeping back the intellectually more capable students.

It is worth noting that Ecclestone and Hayes' book *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education* (2009) from which the quote is taken is based on no empirical evidence. Instead, the authors choose to rail against individual scholars such as Ronald Barnett, Alan Mortiboys and Stephen Rowland whom they regard as particularly villainous because of their attempts to describe and theorise emotional responses to a changing academic work environment. The authors' take on the help and support provided by universities to assist students with their learning is that it leads to individuals with a 'diminished self' (Ecclestone 2007), an image which is incompatible with the independent, autonomous, rational scholar who ought to inhabit higher education.

The second position emerging from the literature is about managing emotions. Proponents of this position accept that emotions exist in the academy but that they should be managed at an institutional level, mainly in order for the organisation to

benefit from them. In his book *A Question of Morale. Managing Happiness and Unhappiness in University Life* (2009) David Watson explored levels of an ill-defined and elusive concept of 'happiness' in the academy and devoted a chapter to look at job satisfaction among its workers. His assessment is founded on interviews with 100 university employees and, generally, they expressed a high level of satisfaction with their work and with the ways higher education had developed in recent years (Watson and Amoah 2007). Watson compared his findings to those of Bone and McNay (2006) who uncovered a very different picture when inviting academic staff to respond to an on-line survey. The authors found, for example, that out of more than 300 people who responded, 85% found that universities put more emphasis on systems than on people; that 70% found research integrity had been compromised; and that 72% felt higher education had lost its role as the conscience and critic of society (Bone and McNay 2006). It will come as no surprise that Watson claimed the sampling procedure for his own survey was more sophisticated and therefore his picture of happiness in the academy more accurate. He rather ungenerously claimed that the image of the unhappy and anxious academic is an example of academic populism which he defines as 'a potent amalgam of unempirical nostalgia, proxy battles and arrogance' (Watson 2009:77).

Unlike Watson, Ahmed (2010) has theorised happiness. In *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) she argued that the word 'happiness' is a motivated and energetic word which offers 'a hopeful performative' (Ahmed 2010: 200). If it is being used repetitively people start to believe in it. According to Ahmed, it is possible to talk yourself into being happy. And that is what Watson tries to do by repeating the high level of satisfaction and happiness in the academy and just dismissing unhappy feelings. However, within the managerial framework institutions can also put their own spin on findings. For example, when anxiety and fear of losing one's job make people work harder, institutions can choose to interpret this as work enthusiasm (Blackmore 1996). Watson assigns Bone and McNay's findings to the fact that 'the self-selected group of mostly older academics who responded are the natural constituency of the current international wave of professional dystopians of contemporary HE' (Watson 2009: 68). However, a closer look at the 100 people who participated in Watson and Amoah's survey show that although 46% are categorised as 'academic', it turns out that 45% of those are administrators and 20% are HE 'experts' and 9% HE agencies. Only 5% are academics and they are all under 40 years of age (Watson 2009: 53). It is therefore not, as Watson suggests, a matter of which survey presents the most accurate picture of

happiness or unhappiness in the academy. Instead, both surveys capture the wide range of emotions among staff in the academy, and perhaps also the fact that administrators and senior managers may be somewhat happier than middle aged academics. Watson welcomes the corporate culture that has invaded the academy and regards this culture as – to use the words of Blackmore (1996: 338) ‘the social glue which binds together the messiness of change’.

Watson’s work on managing happiness and unhappiness in the academy is interesting because it represents an understanding of how emotions can be of benefit to an organisation as long as they are appropriately managed. What Goleman (1995) called ‘emotional intelligence’ and soft skills like communication and empathy are being recognised as currency in the market economy of higher education (Hatcher 2008). Staff must be managed in a supportive manner which is one reason why the development discourse has become so powerful within higher education.

Academics – like corporate workers – need to project an image of vitality, progress, innovation and enthusiasm, an image of always being on the move. In her explorations of what it means to be an academic, Fanghanel (2012: 24) found that many academics she interviewed lamented the fact that universities only value what is visible and can be measured. This view is supported by Hey (2011: 209) when she claims that as the workload for academics increases (more students, more teaching, more administration, less time for research) they need to present their activities in auditable form in order to demonstrate impact – a key factor in the Research Excellence Framework. She also argues that in the current financial and political austerity discourse, academic staff are even more vulnerable as they are adjusting to the new economic order with cuts and restructuring.

In many ways the working conditions for academics described by Hey (2011) share several features with what Hatcher (2008) calls the corporate character. She has described the ideal corporate character as possessing certain values that include being committed to lifelong learning, being rational, and being passionate about work (Hatcher 2008: 55). Hatcher has argued that commitment to lifelong learning is a euphemism for employees continuously reflecting on their own performance and accepting being regularly appraised for the purpose of setting new goals. Behind the

rational mindset are characteristics such as being committed to efficiency and instrumentality. There is also an emotional side to the corporate character. According to Hatcher (2008), this side was ignored in organizational management until the 1980s when it was suddenly acknowledged as something the organization can take advantage of as long as the emotions are manageable. Emotions can be profitable for an organization for example in the case of employees who are workaholics and are quite happy to work long hours. In universities there is a growing need for staff to show empathy and be supportive and encouraging to learners at a time when students' lives become increasingly difficult as they face financial hardship and fierce competition for graduate jobs.

The display of such qualities previously marginalized women in public life (Helgeson 1990), but, to some extent the academy has discovered that women can be highly effective when supporting students. Between 2003/04 and 2009/10 the increase in female academics went up by 25% compared to an increase in male academics of 11% in the same period<sup>6</sup>. However, the increase in female academics is not mirrored in the appointment to professorial posts. Although the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) in January 2012 could boast a 4% rise in the number of women in professorial posts, there were fewer than 3,500 female professors out of a total of 17,500 in the UK in 2010 - which is less than 20%.<sup>7</sup> (Oxbridge 2012)

Both the Cartesian and the managerial position have been criticised by scholars who believe that intellectual work and emotions are closely intertwined. There is a long tradition within feminist theory which argues that our actions are guided by what we think, what we feel and our bodily responses to such feelings (Oakley 2000; Ramazanoğlu with Holland 2009; Gorton 2007), and that also applies in an academic context. Feminists have theorised emotions in the academy with regard to emotional investment in the learning process for staff as well as students (see for example

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<sup>6</sup> HESA staff data accessed 28 June 2012 [http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com\\_datatables&Itemid=121&task=show\\_category&category=2](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_datatables&Itemid=121&task=show_category&category=2)

<sup>7</sup> BBC News 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-16633634> and Oxbridge Essays <http://www.oxbridgeessays.com/blog/fewer-than-1-in-5-uk-university-professors-are-female-766/> [both accessed on 28 June 2012]

McWilliam 1996; MacWilliam 1999; Clegg and Rowland 2010), as well as with regard to other academic activities such as research, publications and working with colleagues in the increasingly competitive and individualistic culture of the academy (Hey 2004; Neumann 2006; Clegg 2008a; Clegg 2008b).

Emotional discourses have also been identified in relation to national agendas within UK higher education. Leathwood and Hey (2009) have argued that the concept of the therapy culture emerging in higher education as claimed by Furedi (2003), Ecclestone, Hayes and Furedi (2005) and Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) has been linked with the widening participation agenda and the admission of students from non-traditional backgrounds. The authors warn against creating a discourse where these new students are seen as vulnerable and in need of emotional support, thus reproducing inequalities already inherent in the education system. The authors propose that emotions should be recognised as being both about control *and* resistance (Leathwood and Hey 2009: 436), and suggest that controlling emotions is also about resisting being drawn into emotional responses generated by structures we may not feel comfortable with. To underline the point, the authors give the example of a Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) Reject Group which was established on the social networking site Facebook, which academics who had not been included in the exercise could join. Academics joining the group refused to see their exclusion as shameful and instead turned an otherwise negative emotion into a powerful tool to challenge the concept of the RAE. Leathwood and Hey (2009) claim that an emotional discourse is being used to micro-manage the students in relation to employability and widening participation (Leathwood and Hey 2009: 436), but their argument could be extended to include 'the student experience' and 'excellence' – both powerful constructs in higher education discourse. To illustrate this, I turn to a quote by Michel Foucault in a radio interview from 1974 which is included in Erica McWilliam's book, *Pedagogical Pleasures* (1999):

It's quite an achievement the way teachers manage to make learning unpleasant, depressing grey, unerotc! We need to understand how that serves the needs of society. Imagine what would happen if people got into as big a frenzy about learning as they do about sex. Crowds shoving and pushing at school doors! It would be a complete social disaster. You have to make learning so rebarbative if you want to restrict the number of people who have access to knowledge (McWilliam 1999: 115-116).

When students are perceived as customers, learning cannot be boring (or they will complain or go somewhere else), so the teaching excellence agenda becomes even more important than previously. As universities really do want students to be 'pushing

at school doors', they will need to have staff that can manage emotions and expectations and ease what Clegg and Rowland (2010: 724) have called 'the inevitable pain of learning'.

### **The emotionology of the academy**

Much of the theorisation of emotions around academic activities – including teaching – has focused on what emotions *do* rather than what they *are* and in particular, what role they play in the formation of academic identities (Beard, Clegg and Smith 2007; Clegg 2008a; Clegg 2008b). In her exploration of academic identities, Clegg (2008b) found that universities and academia are not only lived and experienced spaces but they are also imaginary spaces. Some of her respondents talked about their expectations of what it is to be an academic – especially if they had joined the university from industry, and how in some instances these expectations were not met. The university and academia as imaginary spaces are partly shaped through the emotionology of the academy. Stearns and Stearns (1985) define emotionology as:

The attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression; ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct (Stearns and Stearns 1985: 813)

It follows from this definition that all emotionologies reflect and are products of their social times, and as Fineman (2008b) states, they are produced and re-produced through a variety of discursive and institutional practices ranging from television programmes and films to government policies.

Staff working in higher education have witnessed repeated changes to their workplace (see for example Barnett 2011; Hey 2011; Fanghanel 2012) and know that many of the practices, once accepted features of academic life and immortalised in popular culture through fiction, film and television are no longer tolerated in universities. Popular culture maintains an image of higher education where the predominant emotions expressed are resentment (in relation to colleagues) or disdain (in relation to students) (see for example Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1953), Malcolm Bradbury's *The History*

*Man* (1990) and various depictions of academics in the television series *Inspector Morse*). Popular culture thrives on a nostalgic image of the academy where eccentric professors are the object of ridicule or pity or envied for their sexual opportunities. Academics featured on such television programmes do not have to support students who are single mothers with child care problems nor do they have to negotiate deadlines with students who need to work nights in order to support themselves.

Nevertheless, another emotionology is emerging alongside this nostalgic rose tinted version, and that is one shaped by market forces. It is one where the quality of services a university can provide – be it teaching, research, library or sports facilities – are compared and evaluated against each other in terms of value for money. It is one where students are regarded as informed customers investing in degrees that will guarantee them future employment. In this environment, academic staff are constantly under the student gaze with their competencies continually being evaluated and assessed (Koster 2011). It is in this incongruent emotionology that academics find themselves, and as expectations and demands of academics have changed, so has their behaviour. Their performance is assessed continuously through publications, ability to attract funding, collaboration and networking, student evaluation, positive media exposure etc.

Hey (2004) has written vividly about being a feminist academic, and the struggle of working within a framework where individual and personal values are in sharp contrast to those of management. She describes the joy when her personal goals are fulfilled (getting a chair) and the guilt she and her feminist colleagues feel about taking pleasure in academic activities that go against a feminist ethos, such as criticising female colleagues' papers at conferences. Such public confession of passion for intellectual work as demonstrated by Hey is rare because the higher education discourses and the institutional structures and agendas that emerge from these rarely concern themselves with any form of personal or emotional impact these may have on academics and their scholarly work.

However, there are a few studies that have focused on emotional responses to working in the academy. Neumann's (2006) interviews with 40 university lecturers present a rich picture of the large spectrum of emotions academics display or struggle with when

undertaking scholarly activity. These emotions are largely positive with respondents describing the huge satisfaction they get from scholarly work in physical terms such as 'getting a huge thrill', 'getting a fix' or 'exhilaration' (Neumann 2006: 394). Neumann argues that in the public mind display of emotion is unrelated to scholarly activity because emotional scholars are a contradiction in terms. However, this may be an area of the academy's emotionology that is about to change. The display of positive emotions is becoming more acceptable in universities because such display is student or customer focused. It is of benefit to an organisation when its workers display motivation and enthusiasm (Hatcher 2008). Indeed, the third statement in the UK National Student Survey that undergraduates are asked to rate is 'Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching', so in the current climate positive emotions are acceptable when on display in order to secure recruitment and student satisfaction.

### **Emotional labour in the academy**

Back in 1983, Hochschild coined the term 'emotional labour' which has since been used widely but often with different definitions. Hochschild (2003: 7) defined the term as 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display'. Later James (1989) extended the definition to include the management of other people's feelings as well. Morris and Feldman (1996) conceptualised emotional labour as occurring when what a person feels in reality (authentic feeling) is incompatible with what is required by an organisation. I shall make use of all three definitions later when discussing my empirical data, but for the purpose of exploring emotional labour within the academy in this section, I will focus on the definition by Morris and Feldman (1996).

It is the organisation for which an employee works that regulates emotional labour – in other words determines what are desirable and appropriate ways in which to behave within the organisational context (Guy, Newman and Mastracci 2008). However, academic contracts do not come with a set of preferred behaviours. Instead, it is assumed that academics will conduct themselves with professionalism, but how this translates into managing emotions - their own and those of their colleagues and students – is left up to the individual. The academy is not unique in this respect. Taylor (1998) argues that in many organisations managerial control of emotions is often incoherent or contradictory, and consequently employees are allowed room to actively

negotiate or circumvent managerial expectations. And there is some evidence of this happening in the academy. When interviewing academics in the UK, Fanghanel (2012: 21) found that despite what she calls 'narratives of despair', many had developed an ability to operate autonomously and shape management expectations in ways that served their own agendas and met their personal values.

Bellas' (1999) research from an American university suggests that emotional labour is performed in the academy not only in relation to teaching but also with regard to research and administrative duties, and accounts from the UK seem to support this view. Gill (2010) has given a lively account of how she and her colleagues at times find themselves at breaking point when dealing with mountains of e-mails, requests from colleagues to take on examination responsibilities or review journal papers, and at the same time trying to write up their own research. When speaking to academic colleagues about work she claims there is a 'palpable *anxiety* that pulsates through these accounts: anxiety about falling behind, missing something important, going under' (Gill 2010: 237 italics in text).

The author also argues that communication technologies have added to the stress. She gives examples of colleagues who check emails first thing in the morning and last thing at night – even when on holiday or on sick leave. What is striking about the academic environment experienced by Gill and her colleagues is that it is one where staff always feels inadequate. In addition, some of the academics quoted by Gill (2010) are on part-time contracts and express deep worries regarding job security – yet another emotional aspect that needs to be managed. Hey (2004), too, has described an intensification of the academic workload in UK universities. She argues that because academics love what they are doing, they somehow adapt to the rapidly changing work environment and, as a consequence, become instrumental to their own exploitation by their institutions.

Ten years ago, Morley (2003) reported how split focusing was a recurring theme when she interviewed academics about their employment. Split focusing is when individuals are forced to multitask to the extent that they feel being torn in different directions, and never get enough time to focus effectively on one area. At the time it was reported as being frustrating and stressful, but it looks like this phenomenon has pervaded the

academy even more as a result of changes to and re-structuring of the higher education sector.

Hey (2011) has theorised the academic work environment in the current UK government's economic austerity agenda in relation to the articulation of affective dimensions of academic work. She argued that an unspoken feeling-rule of the academy is that academics do not show emotions, but that one acceptable emotion that can be on display is aggression (Hey 2011: 214). With increased competition between higher education institutions and continuous restructuring within the sector, she stated that it is paramount for academics to focus their energy on presenting their work in auditable form, because only measurable output matters to the organisations. More importantly, the author calls for an acknowledgement of the fact that power is affect-laden and that when discussing emotional labour, the desires that drive power and the ability to induce certain feelings in other people should be considered (Hey 2011: 212). Seen from this perspective, it is not just the power of line-managers that impact on the emotional well-being of academics, but also the power of colleagues and students. The experiences reported by Morley (2003), Gill (2010), and Hey (2011) suggest that in the marketized and increasingly customer-focused academy, university management relies more than ever on emotional labour being performed by its staff.

On top of management demands for increasing workloads and negotiating space with colleagues, academic staff are also exposed to a high level of monitoring and assessment from their students. Judging from the National Student Survey, academics are expected to be available, approachable, supportive and enthusiastic as these behaviours are assessed as part of the satisfaction rating in the survey. Student evaluations play a key role in universities' marketing strategies, and many universities now have testimonies from (happy) students on their websites.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of these testimonies from student-customers is to advertise the product (the degree) and make other people want one too.

Williams (2011: 174) has shown how newspapers often present students as empowered consumers who shop around for 'best value for money' education. But

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<sup>8</sup> See for example the Wall of 100 faces from the University of Oxford

according to the author, students often equate best value for money with a high level of contact hours and academic success. As Williams (ibid) stated 'if students are rated highly by their lecturers they are gaining value for money, if they receive low marks they are not'.

There were signs of this development already back in the 1990s. In her study of emotional labour in the academy, Morley (1998) quotes a lecturer whose MA students accused her and her colleagues of 'skiving' when they suggested student-led seminars. The students pay their fees, and in their view the lecturers should earn their wages, in other words 'teach' in transmission mode. It is an excellent example of how in a market-led organisation meeting students' expectations become paramount even when it undermines professional judgement of what is the most effective pedagogical approach.

Barnett (2011) has suggested that the free market discourse when applied to higher education impair the pedagogical relationship between students and lecturers – as illustrated by the example given by Morley. What lies behind Barnett's argument is that when students are offered an identity as customers, their perception of their lecturers changes. Instead of being regarded as a resource, the lecturer becomes a provider. This paradigm shift means that in return for their investment (fees), students are now entitled to expect a good degree and a high quality investment. Academic staff needs to prepare themselves for managing such expectations in their students with all it entails with regard to potential complaints about the level of support a student has received during his or her course.

Mumby and Putman (1992) state that when emotional labour is performed as part of a work pattern it is generally regarded as yet another way of intensifying the labour process. In such contexts, emotions are commodified and used instrumentally to enhance the omnipotent notion of the 'student experience'. When Ogbanna and Harris (2004) interviewed 54 academics about emotional labour in the academy, several interviewees mentioned the increasing expectation to be 'nice' to students rather than 'professional', and how student evaluations and assessment of lecturers' performance were 'driving 'student-focused' emotional labour' (Ogbanna and Harris 2004: 1192). Perhaps the most interesting finding from their study is how emotional labour is

*Janusesque* in that it also functions as a coping mechanism when dealing with difficult students. When faced by unreasonable demands from students, some academics coped by displaying positive emotions and engaging in a professional detachment where they make a clear distinction between what they regarded as their real identity and their working identity (Ogbanna and Harris 2004: 1197).

This chapter has outlined how emotions have been accommodated (or not) in the academy and the different approaches to emotions emerging in the literature. It has identified the academy as a work place which is highly dependent on its academic staff managing their own and others' emotions. As academic work intensifies and as the austerity culture in the form of financial restructuring pervades higher education, the negative sides of emotional labour are likely to manifest themselves (stress, anxiety, worries). Referring back to Morris and Feldman's (1996) conceptualisation of emotional labour as occurring when what a person feels in reality (authentic feeling) is incompatible with what is required by an organisation, the academy can be described as an emotional labour camp. The next chapter focuses on the empirical part of this study, namely the interviews with fourteen doctoral supervisors.

## **Chapter 5 – Interviews with supervisors**

I view doctoral supervision as a project in accordance with Archer's (2003) definition, where a project is an enterprise that yields particular practices depending on how individual supervisors prioritise their concerns and own professional values. This act of prioritising within projects is inevitably influenced by other agents such as students, colleagues and examiners and by structures in the form of institutional policies and cultures, departmental expectations with regard to doctoral supervision and by disciplinary conventions. In this chapter I shall present my findings, but before that happens I outline my strategies for analysing my data and discuss dilemmas around representing others on the basis of accounts they have given of their experiences.

### **Interpreting the words of others: the dark art of data analysis**

On one occasion, when I sent the transcription of an interview to a participant, I got an email back saying that this was all fine, but she was more interested in seeing how I used the data – simultaneously reminding me of my responsibilities as a researcher and of the established researcher's (and supervisor's) knowledge of how data can be manipulated and misinterpreted. Participants rarely have a voice when it comes to interpreting data and decide what to include and exclude or how to draw connections between individual accounts. Morley (1996: 133) has written about how she as a highly experienced researcher herself has felt victimised and abused when participating in research even when the researchers have been self-proclaimed feminists who (ideally) should be sensitive to the importance of respecting personal boundaries and to the emotional consequences of the research.

Faced with 213 pages of transcription, the enormity of the task I was confronted with dawned on me. It was not the amount of text that perplexed me. Instead it was the acute awareness of the responsibility I had to the fourteen academics who had agreed to participate in the study. They had spoken to me about the highs and lows of working with their doctoral students, of discourses of power played out between colleagues and between institutions, of feelings of failure, guilt, regret, and disappointment, but also of achievement, elation, and pride. And it was now down to me to present their stories in one narrative. It became my duty to tell the story of these participants in such a way that they all had a voice and would come across as individuals, while at the same time

trying to capture the reality they shared as doctoral supervisors and the emotional labour they all invest in the supervisory process. If data analysis is about the process of bringing some kind of order, structure and meaning to the data (Mason 2002; Bloomberg and Volpe 2008), it is wide open to manipulation such as quoting individuals out of context or linking statements to create meanings which were never intended. The participants in the study were all active researchers and well aware of this which meant that the burden of fair representation became even heavier.

I stated earlier in chapter one that my epistemological position for this study was critical realism, and this inevitably influenced the way in which I approached my data. So my commitment to empathy with the participants and to the acceptance of multiple perspectives had to be guiding principles for my analysis (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). The data analysis was based on close readings of the interview transcriptions in five stages.

The first stage involved reading all interview transcriptions closely looking for the 'big idea' (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008: 100). In this case I looked for places in the narratives where supervision was referred to as an activity that evoked emotional responses – positive or negative - and/or involved emotional labour. All such places were identified and clearly marked. Stage two of the analysis was aimed at reducing the data selected in stage one and this reduction process was guided by my conceptual framework. The transcriptions were therefore coded according to references to physical well-being, self-worth and performative competence, so that the data became more manageable. Through the coding in stage two an overarching theme emerged across all the transcriptions and across the three key themes. This theme was doctoral supervision as a risky activity. So in stage three of the analysis I broke down the themes into areas of risk in relation to doctoral supervision. This enabled me to create a matrix in stage four. The matrix listed all participants down the left hand side and themes around different kinds of risks at the top. Quotations from the transcriptions were placed in the matrix to compare similarities and differences in responses and to get an overview of the data. I also added a column to my matrix which included findings from other studies conducted into supervising doctoral studies and, particularly, research into emotional labour and supervision. Maxwell (2012: 109) has argued that a realist approach to qualitative data analysis involves applying both strategies based on similarity and contiguity. Similarity relationships are based on

commonalities which are not influenced by time or space. Such relationships are virtual, based on comparison of data but with no direct connection. My matrix displayed these similarity relationships.

At stage five of the data analysis my interpretation consisted on establishing relationships of contiguity. Such relationships assume that there is an explicit or implicit association or connection between data (Maxwell 2012: 115). In this case, my connecting strategy consisted of creating profiles of participants in relation to Archer's typology of reflexivity. Finally, at this stage I also fine-tuned the final categories or themes under which I decided to present my findings. It is risky spaces that provoke emotional responses; negative responses emerge when an individual confronts potentially risky situations, and positive emotional responses appear when such risky situations are eliminated or overcome. Risk, therefore, becomes the organising principle by which the findings are reported.

At times participants had given similar answers to questions, and the matrix enabled me to choose the quotation which best represented the views of the group for inclusion in the thesis. This was the stage where I began to interpret the data. However, it soon became clear that some participants were better at articulating – and in some cases interpreting - their emotional responses to the incidents they were relating. Scott (1992: 26) has raised the issue of the authority of experience – or whose experience is most authentic. I was searching my data for quotations that best illustrated and supported my argument, but in doing so ran the risk of silencing some participants while giving voice to others. I saw my prime responsibility at this stage of the analysis as being to ensure that all participants were quoted and would come across as individuals. However, not all participants are quoted in equal measure. When an individual is given more space, it is when he or she is articulating succinctly something that others may have raised as well. In this way, some of the selected quotations became examples of participants exemplifying emotions shared by other participants, or what Mies (1991) has called partial identification.

Due to the small number of participants and in order to maintain confidentiality, I cannot refer to specific disciplines when quoting participants, but I will indicate whether the supervisor represents a science, arts or social science subject. Whenever participants

refer to their own institution by name, I have substituted for the name 'this university', and I have removed references in the text that might identify specific departments. I have also refrained from mentioning specific institutions, but will indicate whether participants represent a pre-92 or a post-92 university when including direct quotes. At times I have left out text when I quote participants. This is indicated by [...]. However, I have taken great care to make sure that meanings are not distorted when editing text. To ensure that the data are presented as the voices of real people, I have allocated a fictional name to each of the participants.

### **Avoiding risks – protection of self**

According to Archer (2000; 2003; 2012), the inner conversation is about diagnosing a situation and negotiating available options in order to reach an acceptable *modus vivendi*. But human beings are fallible and can misjudge what they think are appropriate actions. Not surprisingly, when this happens to doctoral supervisors it impacts on their self-esteem and their wellbeing.

Linda, a science professor, forges close friendships with her doctoral students. She describes supervision as 'probably the best thing I've done as an academic', and claims that when students finish 'you're proud like a mum. These are my children. Grown up children'. This metaphor of the supervisor as a parent resonates with the findings by Clegg and Gall (1998). When analysing the language doctoral supervisors used when describing their role in relation to their students, they identified three distinct metaphors – the role as parental, as being a resource or as a guide accompanying the student on a journey. Having adopted this maternal approach to her supervisory work, it becomes particular difficult to face failure. She describes a situation when she had to inform an overseas student that her work was not at a level required for a PhD:

That was very difficult. I found that really hard and especially with the student who got very upset because she was an overseas student and she had actually had a baby during the research work. And she was from India and she left the baby in India with her parents to look after and she came here and was doing this research work and that's what... oh, she's sacrificed so much to be here, to do the research and get a PhD and then in the end it wasn't going to be a PhD. So that was very difficult and she was very upset and cried (Linda, science, post-92).

Linda's knowledge of her student's personal life makes her conversation with the student particularly hard. Her maternal side makes her empathise with her student, but she is very clear about what is the right action to take in the circumstances:

Well, it was hard but I felt that it was fairer to tell her that she is not going to make it [...] than to let her go to a PhD *viva* and then fail at the *viva* because that I think is bad all around. That seemed the bigger knock and there was no certainty that she would be awarded an MPhil at a failed PhD *viva*. They could just say, 'oh no, this is not worthy of anything'. So I didn't want to risk that, but it was also partly to do with preserving my own reputation because if you let a student who's obviously not up to it go to a *viva* and the external examiner is there – then it looks awful because it is the responsibility of the supervisor as well as the student to make sure that the student is ready for that *viva*. (Linda, science, post-92).

Linda is an autonomous reflexive supervisor who is independent and self-confident, and takes full responsibility for her actions. As an autonomous reflexive she focuses on performative achievement even if it involves painful conversations and outcomes. Archer (2003: 236) describes how autonomous reflexives cannot just unreflectively adopt a new context in which they find themselves, and solve this problem by 'appealing to abstract ethical systems to legitimate their courses of action'. Linda's supervisory project has shifted from successful (she has 12 successful completions) to unsuccessful and the way she is dovetailing this is by referring to the 'fairness' of not letting her student submit for a doctoral degree.

In cases where supervisors have employed doctoral students on externally funded projects, they run further personal risks if those students do not complete on time. Kathryn is an internationally renowned professor in her field, and feels responsible for ensuring that her students complete on time because they are working on research projects which are publicly funded:

I'd heard so many stories in social science of PhD students on funded projects who didn't even get off the ground until half way through the second year, nearly the third year. So I kind of took the model, which is you will be here nine till five, five days a week. This is where you are based. Your job of work, you are being paid to do this, which sounds hugely harsh, especially when you are in my field, but I thought I'm the project lead on this. They've given me half a million pounds to do this work and if I don't get PhD students doing the work, collecting the data, I will never be funded by

this body again. They will never give me any more money because you can't let it drift (Kathryn, social science, post-92).

Kathryn's professional reputation is at stake if her students do not complete, and she has adopted a business-like attitude to the way she works with them. However, although Kathryn has found evidence from research that shows timely completions are more likely if students are told to work in this manner, she is slightly uncomfortable about this approach:

I am a Freirean pedagogue, you know, and to do this is so against type, but actually one of the things I'm learning is that structure and deadlines are actually so much more use than you would think. And part of that comes out of my own journey as a writer [...] If I know that I've got to write 500 words a day in order to complete a book, that's the way it's got to be. And you just have to write. So I don't just do supervision, I also train people to write. (Kathryn, social science, post-92)

Kathryn is articulating what Halse (2011) found in her Australian study, that academics who view research as business often need to re-define their identity as an academic. Kathryn has to compromise on her pedagogical principles and ideals in order to ensure delivery on her publicly funded project.

Richard is another scientist who mentions the importance of guarding his reputation. He works in a field where it is customary for supervisors to present papers with their students at conferences and to publish papers with them. However, he represents a discipline where plagiarism is rife and knows that if one of his students transgresses, Richard too could damage his reputation:

When you publish something your name is always there and the point is if you publish one hundred papers – good – but if you publish something which is copied from somewhere, you've damaged your whole career. So, if your student copies something, and plagiarism is involved... No matter how well you published before, you've damaged yourself immediately. With such kind of things, we need to guard our reputation (Richard, science, post-92).

Richard's discipline attracts a high number of overseas students and he spends a lot of time checking his students' work not just for plagiarism but also for linguistic accuracy. When I met Richard, he had just finished revising a paper with a student and had spent more than 35 hours on it. This is particularly hard work as Richard himself is not an English native speaker. However, throughout the conversation there were no hints of complaints. Instead, working long hours is accepted by Richard as part of academic life:

If PhD students complete or produce very good papers, I become very excited, to be honest, because research is a hobby. I've worked in a research institute before. My boss told me "don't tell me you are writing a paper during working hours!" It should be a hobby. You should go back to work after dinner. (Richard, science, post-92)

This single-minded, driven approach to research and very strong work-ethic is passed on to Richard's students. He has little sympathy for students who do not meet his high standards. Richard repeatedly talks about 'students' attitude' to research. Like other autonomous reflexives he is self-confident and acts on the basis of his experience and thorough knowledge of his field:

I don't think I'm a selfish man. If I see some problem with a student I'd like to stop him. I think this is good for them because they are wasting time. They have some dream, but the dream never comes true, can never be realised [...] I know it's impossible because I see so many failures – not just from my side but from other people's side. So that's why we have the mechanism in the university to stop somebody to continue. To stop them wasting their time, resources, something like that. (Richard, science, post-92)

Richard is here referring to measures implemented by his university to ensure that students make enough progress every year so they can complete on time. Although these measures involve some extra administrative work for the supervisor, Richard welcomes them because they are institutional structures that support his academic judgement. If students have not worked sufficiently hard, they will not be able to satisfy the progression panel.

Where institutional structures are in place to monitor student progress, such structures can support individual academics in their agency when they need to make uncomfortable decisions about the likelihood of a doctoral student succeeding. However, structures can also be one of the reasons why academics may feel under pressure to act against their better judgement. One supervisor spoke of such pressure:

This happened nine years ago, and in those days I think certain students took it for granted that they would be upgraded when going out to try to get a PhD [...] You would have really had to be very tough. It would have seemed very hard on the student if you had refused to upgrade him or her [...] I was enough pressured by the student to upgrade him from MPhil to a PhD and I did have reservations about it. (John, arts, pre-92)

John is an experienced academic from a pre-92 university who has had limited opportunities to supervise doctoral students because he specialises in a very narrow field. He stands out among the group of supervisors I spoke to because out of four doctoral students only one has been successful. Two other students submitted their thesis and went through the oral examination. One was conferred an MPhil, another was given the option of resubmitting for an MPhil, an option the student did not ultimately pursue. The fourth student dropped out. John's story is more revealing about the structures that he worked within than about his qualities as a supervisor. Working in a very specialised discipline in a small department, doctoral students were few and far between and when they emerged it was hard not to accept them. At one point, John spoke about the student who dropped out after their relationship had broken down irretrievably. One problem was that it was hard not to admit research students. John explained:

Well you could, but you were really letting the side down if you didn't [accept them] because it was a small department and didn't have a lot of research students. I mean part of my problem with her was of course my own research interests and my own expertise did not really overlap with what she really wanted to do very closely. (John, arts, pre-92)

John is also an autonomous reflexive. He is independent and self-sufficient and has never published with anyone or collaborated with anyone in his field claiming to 'hate any idea of co-authoring'. Although he admits feeling pressurised to

upgrade his students – both from his department and from the students themselves – he does not blame what happened on others. Instead he takes the full responsibility:

Obviously looking back on it now I regret that I did not prevent those two students from upgrading to PhD. But in neither case did I think that they were absolutely doomed, shall we say. I thought this was risky. But there was some chance that they might make it to PhD level, and I was clearly wrong. It would have been emotionally difficult to tell them no, to say “no. I will not upgrade you”. That would have been a fraught interview. (John, arts, pre-92)

The two unsuccessful students seem to have blamed the examiners rather than John for the outcome of their examination. John was present at both oral examinations and at least on one occasion he intervened:

Well it is a bit hard to keep quiet because you are not supposed to be part of the talking, and I think I did occasionally say a few words to clarify a point, either to the examiners or to the candidate, and I did once intervene to say to the external examiner that he was bullying the candidate. (John, arts, pre-92)

John’s interview is the shortest of the fourteen interviews. Characteristically for autonomous reflexives he is ‘economically articulate’ (Archer 2003: 211), and he is the only one to claim not to have enjoyed working with research students:

I haven’t found it particularly rewarding, but that is because I have not had very accomplished research students. I have only had one out of four who actually got a PhD, and I thought he was rather weak too. In principle the idea of working with a gifted research student on a subject that he or she and I find stimulating would be very welcomed. But I was never really in that position when I had an opportunity to do that. (John, arts, pre-92)

As autonomous reflexives Linda, Kathryn, Richard and John accentuate work – and the standard of their students’ performance - as their prime concern. Kathryn makes sure that she is in full control of what her students are undertaking and by insisting that they work on their research during office hours, she is able to

monitor their progress on a continuous basis. Linda, Richard and John give their students more autonomy. When it becomes evident that a student is failing to meet their own (high) professional standards and those of their discipline, Linda and Richard act. John, on the other hand, takes a gamble. He is unhappy about the situation but is at some level a victim of departmental expectations of automatic transfer from MPhil to PhD.

Although these four academics prioritise the standard of their students' work, they cannot ignore the two other guiding principles in establishing a *modus vivendi*, self-worth and physical wellbeing. To Linda it was clearly a painful experience to break the news to her student that there was not going to be a PhD and to establish her *modus vivendi* she brings in fairness as a point of reference. It would have been unfair to the student if she had let her continue. Kathryn's business-like approach to supervision is unorthodox within her field and she will have to re-define her identity as an academic. She establishes her *modus vivendi* by invoking a social obligation to her work as her research is publicly funded, but also by extending her role as a supervisor. She does not only act as a subject expert. She also teaches her students the discipline needed for sustained writing. Richard achieves his *modus vivendi* by referring to wasting resources – both regarding physical resources and time. Students who do not have 'the right attitude', which is Richard's term for a willingness to work hard, should not be allowed to continue. And in his case there are institutional processes in place to ensure that this happens. John's *modus vivendi* as a supervisor is expressed in relation to his students. His students were not good enough. Even the student who was successful is regarded by John as 'rather weak'. The way these supervisors have found a *modus vivendi* is by learning strategies for self-protection to guard against loss of self-esteem. Halse (2011) reported similar strategies amongst the academics she interviewed.

### **Sharing risks through co-supervision**

Supervisory teams comes highly recommended by the Quality Assurance Agency as best practice for supporting students but also as a way of mentoring young academics new to supervision (QAA 2012: 14). However, such teams can also be a vehicle for senior members of academic staff to shift parts of a heavy

workload onto less experienced colleagues. Michael is a young academic who is keen to get doctoral students in his field and to build up his CV. At his institution doctoral students are supervised by teams:

I inherited a student well into his second year as part of the supervisory team because somebody left [...] the other part of the supervisory team was a very high ranking professor who basically didn't teach – had bought himself out from teaching for the last five or six years and was a key researcher and offered no supervision at all. He was very much of the opinion if someone was going to do a PhD then it was pretty much on their own back and every now and then he would read some work but wouldn't do very much else. So when I agreed to be the second supervisor, I ended up pretty much taking the full role. It was quite stressful because I didn't know how to talk to the other supervisor because I was new to the job as well and I felt like a student at times trying to ask permission to have meetings. (Michael, science, post-92)

Michael was offered no training or mentoring and had to draw on his own experiences as a doctoral student. He adopted the same supervisory model as his own supervisor had used - this incidentally was the case with twelve out of the fourteen supervisors except for one who had had a terrible experience as a doctoral student and one who had got her PhD by publication, and it confirms the findings from Lee (2012). Michael's supervisory model was based on regular meetings and friendly checks on how things were going in between. Things were going well until the student had to make an application for funding in order to carry out a particular scientific analysis of his data:

The proposal is put forward by the team. Unbeknown to me the main supervisor had refused to do it and had asked the student to do it. Then when he had sent him the final proposal before he submitted it he didn't look at it. He just said "yes, that's fine". It got sent off and it got rejected because it was so badly written and of course it had my name on as well. That was the point when I thought "right, this needs sorting out". So I tried to sort it out myself with him and the other supervisor was so hands off that it was embarrassing. He wasn't involved at all. (Michael, science, post-92)

Michael accepts taking over the main supervision but it is a wake-up call for him when he realises that the inertia of the high -ranking professor puts his professional reputation at stake.

Sadly, Michael is not unique when it comes to experiencing power struggles within supervisory teams. The three post-92 institutions that are represented in this study all had a relatively small pool of doctoral supervisors and creating teams is a way in which to build up supervisory expertise. Teams would normally need to have a certain number of completions between the members which means that very experienced academics with several completions often sit on several teams without necessarily doing much of the supervising. Sarah is a young academic supervising her first two students:

First of all I'm a director of studies<sup>9</sup> with two very senior colleagues for the candidate who's hoping to be finishing by next winter. Now there are a few difficulties there. Because of their experience they're much more blasé and they're much more likely to make critical comments and the candidate responds very badly to that. At the moment he's said I'm not meeting with those people. So essentially they're not supervising...We've had this breakdown and it's very difficult. It's one of the reasons why I've felt under pressure to meet with the candidate a lot to keep it going. One of the other supervisors does a lot of international travel so isn't available much anyway (Sarah, arts, post-92)

As a result of the student's emotional response to the feedback from Sarah's colleagues she ends up literally supervising alone. Not only that, she also has to deal with the anxiety of her student:

I always allow a chance for the candidate to express his or her feelings and usually they are not positive. So I kind of build into the supervision session a bit of a rumbling opportunity and then we move onto the doctoral work [...] I probably give more time to supervision than I should do because I've got a kind of obligation system set up and a more friendly approach. It is more demanding for me and perhaps people expect more from me because if you are on familiar terms with somebody they feel that they can push more and send you things at the last minute. (Sarah, arts, post-92)

Sarah's 'more friendly approach' is partly to do with the fact that the students she is supervising are members of staff and, therefore, colleagues. Her interpretation of her current situation illustrates Grant's (2005) claim when she argues that supervision is a heavily invested pedagogy where:

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<sup>9</sup> Director of Studies at this university means main or first supervisor

People who judge each other as acting wrongly may end up 'taking against' each other, accusing each other of negligence, overdependence, harassment and the like with all the destructive and painful consequences that ensue. (Grant 2005: 351)

At some post-92 universities, academic staff without doctoral qualifications is strongly encouraged by management to undertake doctoral studies but with a full-time job on top and little or no study time allocated from the institution, they become a particularly troublesome group of students to supervise. Nagging students is one thing, but nagging colleagues – in this particular case a senior colleague – is altogether different:

It's extremely difficult to keep momentum going with the academic calendar. In the autumn term there is zero attention to the PhD and it's difficult not to panic. I panic because I see a ceasing in activity and lack of willingness to find the time to meet with me because I think at least meeting and discussing things keeps it going. Similarly in the spring term everything stops and then of course in the summer time colleagues want a holiday. So last summer we spent August completing a literature review and I got lots of complaints about how I was a slave driver but I was exploiting an opportunity to be meeting (Sarah, arts, post-92)

This supervisor is articulating a situation similar to what Clegg (1997) found in her institution, namely that for doctoral supervisors it is important to maintain a research flow as well as heading for completion. Sarah has to take the situation into her own hands because she herself is under as much pressure and scrutiny as the student. As an early career academic, she needs completions in order to boost her profile for the Research Excellence Framework (the system to be used in UK higher education institutions from 2014 for assessing quality of research and publications), and she ends up investing a lot of work in the process:

At the moment one of the drivers is preparing for the research excellence framework and having PhD completions is part of the esteem indicators for that. I am conscious of that. I'm aware that to progress in terms of a career as an academic, one needs to be able to supervise successfully and have completions (Sarah, arts, post-92)

As supervisors, Michael and Sarah are both communicative reflexives. Although the standard of their students' work is still very important to them, their key concern is their students' well being. As a result, they both end up doing a fair amount of emotional labour by managing tensions within teams and sorting out the after-effects. Both Sarah and Michael are examples of how university structures allow senior academics to exercise power over more junior colleagues as suggested by Morley and Walsh (1995). To achieve a *modus vivendi* within their practice Sarah and Michael would need to turn to similar others (Archer 2003: 209), which would be their team. Instead they are left largely alone to work with their students, and in the case of Sarah, colleagues. In a way they are both forced into acting as autonomous reflexives because of their supervisory teams breaking down despite their lack of experience. As a consequence, they feel their supervisory situation to be 'stressful' (Michael) or 'very difficult' (Sarah).

### **Risky encounters – managing emotions in self and others**

Working with other people always involves managing emotions and that also applies to doctoral supervision. All the supervisors in this study could give examples of situations where they had worried about students or in a few cases where the supervisory relationship had been strained or even momentarily broken down. But one account is particularly harrowing as it reveals a level of emotional entanglement that had become difficult to handle professionally for the supervisor. Lisa is an experienced senior lecturer who has worked in the academy for 26 years. She is supervising her first (and only) doctoral student who is an overseas student. The student had started a doctoral degree before at another university but dropped out, allegedly because of the way she was treated by her female supervisor whom she claimed bullied her into producing written work. Also, an experienced colleague of Lisa who taught the student at Master's level refused to take the student on as a doctoral student. Lisa recalls how the student turned up at her office unannounced:

She looked so thin, as if she was anorexic and later on she's told me, hinted that she'd been suicidal and stuff. Her parents, her family are not rich and they've mortgaged everything, the house, the business, everything. It's 10,000 quid a year which is hundreds and thousands of rupees so she cannot go back. If she fails she might as well throw herself in front of a train. I know the Indian system and stuff so that's another thing where I think I can't just have the attitude, everyone fend for themselves, nothing to do with me (Lisa, arts, post-92)

The student is under tremendous financial and emotional pressure to complete and, perhaps not surprisingly, shows signs of mental instability. Nevertheless, Lisa expresses an almost moral obligation to get her through the doctoral process, partly because of her own familiarity with the value system of Indian society and her knowledge of the repercussions a potential failure could have. Not to succeed has become high risk indeed – not only for the student but also for Lisa. As a result, Lisa gives the student a lot of one-to-one support. Even when she was on sabbatical, Lisa spent two hours re-drafting an outline with the student.

As a supervisor, Lisa is a meta-reflexive. Archer (2003) argues that meta-reflexives are idealists who will work towards an organic integration of self-worth, physical wellbeing and performative competence, rather than try and accommodate these in a hierarchical order like the autonomous reflexives who favour performative competence and the communicative reflexives who favour physical wellbeing and self-worth. Lisa's student has become more than just a supervisee. If she does not achieve a PhD, the social consequences for her are unbearable, so the student has become Lisa's personal social justice project with all the anxieties and responsibilities that entails. This self-imposed extension of responsibility has an impact on Lisa's *modus vivendi* as a supervisor. It seems to be forever shifting. Throughout our conversation Lisa expresses a high level of anxiety about the student and her progress, but also a steely determination to get the student through to successful completion, whatever the costs.

Archer argues that 'meta-reflexives have a unique relationship to constraints and enablements. They neither evade them nor seek to circumvent them, but exhibit outward *immunity* towards them' (Archer 2003: 280; italics in text). Lisa has turned her supervisory project into a personal quest. Characteristically for meta-reflexives, Lisa judges courses of actions against her ideals and evaluates what she regards as being the right action rather than making a strategic assessment of what is realistically possible. It is noticeable that throughout my conversation with Lisa she brings up her own (unhappy) experiences as a doctoral student in order to justify the time and emotional labour she invests in just one student. Lisa – who is not British – did her doctorate as a mature student with all that that entailed:

Me being a mature part-time student when I did my PhD that you have all these other personal matters if you're more mature, if you're foreign that can detract you or stop you etc. which I think three year full-time, younger students don't necessarily have. I mean, my colleague, an unmarried young man just did his. So rather than say to her 'Get on with it, do your studies anyway' I was quite sympathetic [...] I feel emotionally not detached. I feel quite involved. Partly because I know so much of her history, and can identify with her. Because I had so little help during my PhD and I had loads of health issues and marital issues and problems at uni, working full-time. (Lisa, arts, post-92)

Although Lisa works on a supervisory team, she is the main supervisor. At her institution doctoral students are required to send an agenda before a supervisory meeting together with any written work that has been agreed with the supervisors. Lisa speaks highly of these meetings and of her team but her description of the division of labour between the team members was striking:

We basically look at the questions or she writes a little draft of something, you know, two pages of analysis or two pages of literature review and I go through that with like saying 'Yes', 'No', 'Yes', 'Good', correct the language or whatever and we take it from there. I think my colleague doesn't do it. I'm kind of more into the details like that and start the conversation because I'm the first supervisor. My colleague, I think we're quite a good team. I think he usually forgets to print it out, has a brief look at it or not at all or something and he comes in and he's almost like a young genius. He comes up with these ideas completely out of the box which is very helpful, it's very complementary (Lisa, arts, post-92).

Lisa somehow accepts that she does the reading and detailed feedback on drafts whereas her younger male colleague provides the creative ideas on an *ad hoc* basis without having read the student's work. A false sense of collegiality and mutual support can cover up an uneven division of labour which seems to happen in this case.

The immunity towards constraints and enablements that characterises meta-reflexives makes Lisa charge ahead with her supervision as a personal project. But that same immunity can manifest itself as criticism against structures. Martin is a semi-retired science professor in a field that attracts a high number of overseas students, and he speaks of the particular difficulties of managing this student group:

Well, the university is always trying to push down the levels of English that they allow admissions for in order to boost numbers. And various people have tried to hold out for higher levels and the consequence of admitting students with lower levels of English is there is a hidden workload on supervisors. In lots of bits of the university there is a hidden load on academics because [...] in our contracts we have no set hours of work therefore our work is infinitely expandable. So basically, you can always load people more because basically you own all of them. According to the system. (Martin, science, pre-92)

Martin talks about himself as an institutional commodity. He is 'being owned' by the university which refuses to acknowledge the repercussions it has on staff when students with a poor knowledge of English are admitted onto highly technical courses:

I think one of the things we really haven't got clear at the moment about foreign students in particular is who is supposed to do the sub-editing of completely incoherent text. Because often it is quite technical text which is incoherent, and really it's not easy for some students to find somebody who can do it and proof reading text, which is, actually about complicated stuff, technical terms is actually very hard. So then it ends up, in my experience, with the supervisor and the amount of input that you can have to put in where, because you can't if it is really bad it may take you three iterations where you do your best, give it back, they rewrite it accordingly to that and then more stuff. You can't even see it all because it is so bad. (Martin, science, pre-92)

Martin confirms the claim by Hey (2004) that the Academy has re-worked the concept of commitment and academics have become instrumental in their own exploitation, and by Ogbonna and Harris (2004) who state that lecturers collude with work intensification within universities by referring to professionalism. The authors claim that emotions are intensified in the Academy by high professional and ethical standards which academics impose on themselves. Martin and his colleagues have no solution to their problem and carry on the proof reading and sub-editing as part of their professional role even if it causes them a fair amount of resentment, so they carry on doing it.

All the supervisors in this study generally followed guidelines for when and for how long to see students at different stages. These were institutional guidelines for student entitlement, or based on the individual's supervisory experience. However, there are no guidelines for how much time supervisors should spend

on reading drafts of chapters, journal articles or full theses, and one supervisor, Lisa, even admitted refraining from chasing her students for written work because 'you don't have the brain space to fit it in'.

Most of the interviews I had with supervisors focused on managing emotions – their own and their students – during the time the students were working on their theses. However, some supervisors also stressed the importance of managing emotions after the oral examination as students often found themselves at a loss after having spent years on their project. Joanna, a professor in the arts, has a particular harrowing story to tell. Throughout our conversation Joanna gravitates towards wanting to establish a kind of aftercare for doctoral students, something she considers to be neglected in higher education. When asked about her relationship with her students after they finish, Joanna says:

I've stayed in contact and tried to help them where possible because I don't think you can abandon them after they've finished because they are then going into a new world as well and they just need a little bit, you know, just a little bit sort of guidance, because then if they want to go and produce articles that's a completely different thing, and when I finished my supervisor didn't do that, and I sort of thought 'God, what happens now?' (Joanna, arts, pre-92)

Like Martin, Joanna mentions how work has intensified in higher education and that there seems little space for reflection after you have seen a student through the doctoral process:

Like everything else in academia, once they've finished it's the next one. So there's never that space to sort of reflect on it and to think, or even necessarily follow their progress, you know, because you get the emails from them saying 'Can you help me with this, can you read this?' etc. but not the sort of space to think 'oh yes, actually now that person is this' or anything like that. (Joanna, arts, pre-92)

It is not until the end of my conversation with Joanna that I begin to understand her preoccupation with aftercare for her doctoral students. As I am about to switch off the recorder, Joanna reveals that a doctoral student who had

successfully completed his oral examination five months earlier had committed suicide two weeks previous to our interview:

I've had a quite a lot of discussions with my colleagues about, you know, PhD students and the relationship you have with them, and things like that and I think that that made me think a bit, you know, could I have given him more time [...] There has been suggestions that sometimes students feel 'I've finished my PhD, what now?'. There's a sort of PhD shaped hole in their life sort of thing. I don't know, you know, I don't think I as a supervisor have ever been attuned to that. (Joanna, arts, pre-92)

Although Joanna has all the characteristics of an autonomous reflexive – self-confident, independent with a focus on performative competence and a strong sense of personal responsibility for her project - her recent experience has thrown her *modus vivendi* into a state of flux, and as a result she is reconsidering changes to her own supervisory practice, and maybe even to those of her department. The metaphor of the PhD shaped hole mirrors findings by Neumann (2006: 403) when two of the academics she interviewed claimed that academic writing was 'infused with a sense of loss, sadness and mourning'.

### **Minimising risks – keeping students on track and on time**

Along with closer scrutiny and audit of doctoral processes comes bureaucracy and this is particularly prevalent in the post-92 institutions, some of which have introduced rigorous frameworks to ensure that doctoral research students progress and finish on time. Such frameworks will typically specify individual, time-specific steps or milestones or events that should happen in order for students to be allowed to progress. For example, students may have to give a seminar in order to transfer from MPhil to PhD, produce progress reports to a central committee or attend oral examinations where their research progress will be evaluated. Because these institutional measures for monitoring students' progress involve colleagues, there are occasions where individual supervisors can feel exposed and under professional scrutiny from their peers as they would have worked with their students to produce a passable document. If the documentation is poor, it reflects badly on the supervisor.

To Andrew, an experienced supervisor, having a transfer document going through the committee without too much criticism is reported as a small personal victory:

There is always a feeling of achievement when a document goes through the committees earlier on. Sometimes after considerable debate. Sometimes it is even better when it is after very little debate, and people say complimentary things. Definitely there is a good feeling. (Andrew, arts, post-92).

When Andrew is asked about pressure points during the supervisory process, he focuses almost entirely on preparation of formal institutional documents:

I would say that the main pressure points are getting together a decent proposal that would be accepted by the committees. The Faculty committee [...] and the University wide committee, that is one. Then the next one is getting the transfer<sup>10</sup> through the committees – through the Faculty committee and the University wide committee. And the third pressure point would be getting the thing finished up to an acceptable standard, and hopefully getting it through subject to minor amendments. (Andrew, arts, post-92).

It is interesting that Andrew identifies committee documents as pressure points, because he is a communicative reflexive who throughout our interview emphasises the importance of sharing supervisory responsibility and discussing progress and actions with members of his supervisory team. He explicitly states that

I would not wish to be a sole supervisor myself [...] there have been occasions over the years when I have been glad to have someone to discuss a particular issue with. I think being a supervisor is an extremely responsible job. And I want to feel sure that there is someone around who could advise me. (Andrew, arts, post-92)

The scrutiny of paperwork at various committees throughout the supervisory process is a cause of anxiety for Andrew. However, one way in which he minimises risks is by ensuring that he does not take any student on he thinks

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew is referring to the transfer from MPhil to PhD

cannot complete. As a former admissions tutor for research students in his school, he speaks from experience:

I have always erred on the side of caution and I have advised colleagues to be cautious. And I think we have – in a place like this where the number of staff supervising is relatively small – we have to be careful, we have to prioritise. And it can be helpful to give priority to our own colleagues and to former students who we know are good. We know their track record. Obviously we take people from the outside who look pretty good [...] but I do caution people to err on the side of safety because if you take someone on and he or she is not really suitable, you could be stuck with such a person for ages and ages. And end up doing far too much. (Andrew, arts, post-92)

Andrew is echoing the vice principal for students at King's College in 2007 by stressing the importance of only taking on students who are considered likely to complete, and to complete on time (*Times Higher Education* 2007).

While the bureaucratic structures governing progression for doctoral students were regarded as a cause of anxiety for Andrew, other supervisors may find such structures helpful. Emma is a professor at another post-92 institution with rigorous progression rules, but she welcomes the structures:

I think it is quite useful in some respects to have structure and to have a research registry that's keeping you on your toes all the time and saying "This needs to be done and that needs to be done and have you checked the skills log". But actually, I think for some students that it quite irritating [...] I suppose I am fairly pragmatic. If I'm given a system I'll work with it and I mean you have to sort of buy into it to a certain degree, don't you, otherwise your student doesn't. (Emma, social science, post-92).

Where institutional processes have been implemented in order to ensure steady progression of doctoral students, supervisors need to make new judgements regarding their students' abilities – not just to deliver, but to deliver on time. Being active researchers themselves, some of the supervisors I spoke to were acutely aware of set-backs, slow starts and wrong turnings in research. Martin raises this as a particular issue when dealing with international students:

I think one of the weaknesses... at least how things are at this university is that we have this kind of opportunity at the end of the first year of full-time study to not allow them to progress at that point if you think it isn't working. That's what happens here and it is extremely hard to tell after only a year, particularly with foreign students. Often we have a lot and I have dealt with a lot whether or not they really aren't up to it or they are simply having a very slow start and of course telling somebody that after a year, it is essentially your decision as supervisor. I mean it is dressed up as the university's decision. In the end it's the supervisor who tells whoever he tells. That's really hard. It's hard for both parties. (Martin, science, pre-92)

Overseas students find themselves in a more vulnerable position compared to home students, in that they are likely to have a slow start because of adaptation to a new cultural environment or simply learning the academic conventions and expectations required for doctoral research in the UK. Martin's struggle emerges because he has to assess whether to gamble and progress the student – in which case the student will be charged another year's high fees - or to send the student back with all the psychological and social implications that may have on the student and his or her family.

Completion is the key driver for doctoral research because it is the final goal for all stakeholders - students, supervisors, universities and funding bodies. Some institutions or departments are prepared to ask students to leave if they do not perform satisfactorily. However, in an increasingly competitive higher education environment efforts may be focused on hanging on to students for as long as possible. Anne is a professor who works for a pre-92 institution where structures for student progression are more relaxed than in some of the post-92 institutions:

Completion rates are really important. And we have to think about our own performance as a staff group, as a department, if we are going to survive and, you know, and if my colleagues are going to get promotion and say, should they be getting promotion and so on, we have to have completions, we have to be moving people through. We can't just lose them. So it is the wider context which is making this much more important that we are more [...] that we systematise what we are doing and regularise it and monitor it and review it (Anne, social science, pre-92)

When talking about completion rates, Anne makes the shift from the performance of the student to the performance of her department. Having students drop out reflects badly on the whole department – not just the individual supervisor. She even goes as far as to suggest that colleagues who fail to get their doctoral students through should not be promoted.

Anne works for a pre-92 university where historically there have been few formal structures around progressing students. However, her institution has recently introduced extra measures which Anne welcomes, partly because she supervises a number of mature and part-time students. She describes the difficulties of keeping such students on track:

We have all got more ... we chase up more. I don't think we ever used to. Yes we chase them. If nothing else the process of an annual review... you just can't kind of lose someone. [...] Our students are not at a really early stage in their career. So they've got houses and mortgages and children and ageing parents and all these things, you know, as well as demanding jobs [...] So I've got a couple of supervisees who've developed, you know, one who's developed a chronic degenerative illness while I've been supervising this person and, you know, life things intervene and make things quite challenging in terms of supervision and finding a way as well around university requirements which are tightening up all the time. You can't just go for extension after extension which you used to be able to do.  
(Anne, social science, pre-92)

At one level, Anne is pleased about the university tightening up procedures for progression, but on the other hand she also expresses concern about situations when 'life things intervene'. Anne is a meta-reflexive in her supervisory practice who establishes her *modus vivendi* by trying to integrate performance, well-being and self-worth but who is struggling because of the particular kind of student she is supervising.

When it comes to on time completion some departments can display what could be described as almost subversive behaviour. David is a professor in a science discipline and an experienced supervisor. He is also Head of Department and keeps a close eye on completions as several of his students are funded by research councils:

We look very carefully at students at the end of the third year. We look again at continuation students around Christmas time asking ourselves 'Are they going to complete?' and there have been instances, certainly in the last year or two, where students have been strongly encouraged to put in theses, not of the best quality, but just meeting the four year deadline rather than going across the deadline. Even if that has meant that they were going to need to significantly revise the thesis. (David, science, pre-92)

Even if students' work is not quite up to the standard by the end of their registration, they are encouraged to submit so that the department meets its targets. David is probably closer to being a meta-reflexive than an autonomous reflexive. Although he prioritises work or performance, he is also deeply concerned with ethics and the well-being of his students. This means that he is able to give an account of one of his students dropping out a positive angle:

The student who drops out doesn't have to be a bad experience and I can give a very specific example of that. I had a student who actually did an undergraduate third year project with me and then stayed on to do what was a really interesting doctoral project [...], but she decided that actually in terms of the...well it wasn't too much the ethical issues, but simply what she was needing to do in order to run the project, that this wasn't something she was comfortable with anymore and she wanted to make a change. And we parted on very good terms. (David, science, pre-92)

David regards the student dropping out as a positive development, because the last thing he wants to see is his student feeling ethically compromised by her doctoral work.

### **The final risk – the examination**

Not surprisingly, the examination is regarded by all the supervisors I spoke to as a risky business, because it is the point in the process where they have to let go and are no longer in control. They cannot be involved in the doctoral examination itself, but they can influence who to appoint as examiners. However, the supervisors I spoke to in this study were always very cautious when approaching examiners and they invested much time and effort in the process of selecting them.

Examiners need to have subject expertise and as three supervisors emphasised 'to have no hidden agendas', but they also need to share an understanding of what is expected from a doctoral thesis in the respective disciplines and respective institutions. The concern around what constitutes D-level work that has been occupying the higher education sector is reflected in some of the statements by participants. Sarah who is relatively inexperienced as a supervisor talks about feeling like Alice in Wonderland:

I see lots and lots of people who are working on PhDs and there's always this big self-doubt and to be honest at the end of the day it's the external examiner who decides whether the thesis is publishable. The funny thing is that it's a subjective judgement call and one is very influenced by the external examiner. Sometimes I feel that it's a little bit Alice in Wonderland you know what is the reality? Is there really a true measuring stick or can one ever say 'Yes this is certainly going to pass, you're fine.'? (Sarah, arts, post-92).

Sarah is expressing her frustration about the lack of clear and explicit criteria for doctoral work. She is anxious when working with students because it is a near impossible task to advise them on achieving a certain standard of their writing when it eventually comes down to 'a subjective judgement call' of the omnipotent external examiner. Sarah also speaks about how powerless she feels when students submit draft chapters and want to know 'if it has legs' – in other words, if it would be good enough to pass. A question she does not feel qualified to answer because it is out of her control. This echoes Green's (2005) view that supervision always involves some negotiation of fantasy on the part of the students as well as the supervisor. Green (2005: 162) argues that 'there is always a symbolic figure in attendance, an absent present, the subject-supposed-to-know'.

Martin warns against 'gatekeepers' – academics within a discipline who would only let work of an exceptional standard through:

It is very hard. It's very hard because what you want is somebody that is going to do a good job i.e. read the thing. And read it carefully, is not going to get arsey about it. Some supervisors kind of see - not very many but enough - they kind of see the process as you know, protecting you know, the ivory tower from incursions by those who aren't really, you know, fit to be in it later and can get incredibly kind of picky during the exam in a way

that is, I don't actually think is... It's to set a standard which is too high.  
(Martin, science, pre-92)

The examiner as the protector of the ivory tower is a powerful image because it goes beyond the actual assessment of the quality of the thesis. Such examiners may want to protect their discipline from certain ideas or developments or even certain groups of people. It becomes a question of how it can be assured that students are treated fairly and equally in the examination process, precisely the issues raised by Morley, Leonard and David (2002; 2003). The ivory tower image also comes across in relations between pre-92 and post-92 institutions. There are huge differences between universities regarding the resources they can offer their doctoral students, and in some disciplines this can have a crucial impact in an examination context. Linda explained that she was careful about considering anyone from an old university when selecting external examiners:

I've always been a bit careful with the sort of university that they come from because I think in some of the old established universities, particularly in science, they don't appreciate just how difficult it is to do research at a new university like this one. And they will be highly, highly critical of a student saying well, 'I would have liked to have used this technique but the chemicals were too expensive and I couldn't purchase them'. And they will not like that one bit. So the students are having to make practical choices because they haven't got all the resources in the world to do [their work]  
(Linda, science, post-92)

Choosing internal examiners can be equally difficult, because it can impact on collegial relations. As Martin explains:

I have been an internal examiner a few times and have chosen internal examiners lots of times and there is a lot of pressure on the internal examiner, especially if they think the work isn't very good, you know to speak their mind because [...] then that affects the professional relationship between the supervisor and his colleague the internal examiner (Martin, sciences, pre-92)

Selecting examiners is a particularly risky area for doctoral supervisors and one that is overlaid with complex power relationships. David sums up what other participants say when he claims that as a supervisor you want 'to give somebody an experience during

the *viva* which is going to extend them but not demolish them' (David, science, pre-92). But no matter how much care supervisors take to appoint appropriate examiners there are always unknown quantities which is partly to do with the nature of the examination.

Unknown quantities can also appear when academics themselves act as examiners. Michael, a relatively inexperienced supervisor, recalls his experience of failing a doctoral student:

I was involved with an internal examination where the person failed and it was horrendous, it was absolutely awful. I never really want to go through that again. To the point that if ever I get asked to do external or internal examinations I'll have to seriously think about doing it because you can't say 'Yes, I'll have a look first' and then go 'No, no, I don't want to do it'. You have to take it on or not and it's a horrible worry. Having been on that side because to be honest, I assumed that people didn't fail, I assumed people didn't really fail PhDs because if you've spent three years of your life doing something it's got to be good, with good supervision. (Michael, science, post-92)

Michael's story is an example of the way memories of earlier experiences are embedded in how emotions are circulated (Ahmed 2004). Although Michael describes his own oral doctoral examination in positive terms as a friendly conversation between peers and an opportunity to discuss his research, the experience of having had to fail a student makes him hesitate to take on the role as examiner again. However, Martin is not unique in assuming that doctoral students do not fail. In their Australian study based on 30 interviews with doctoral examiners, Mullins and Kiley (2002) found that academics undertake examination duties on the assumption that the submitted work is of doctoral standard and that students will pass. But it may be that the environment is changing in this respect too. In an article in *Times Higher Education*, Hackley (2012) openly admitted that he would withdraw from the examination process if he found that a piece of work he had agreed to examine was not of PhD standard. He posed this rhetorical question to his readers:

Why would I do two weeks of work for £150 (before tax) simply to ruin someone's life? If the candidate can make some improvements, find a different examiner, and get their PhD without a side order of post-traumatic stress disorder, then that's a good thing. (Hackley 2012: 42)

The statement reveals the emotional labour of the examiners which is an area that has received little attention in the literature about doctoral education. However some studies touch upon it implicitly. It was telling that when speaking about his fear of taking on examination duties, Michael said that students having spent three years working on a topic 'with good supervision' should not be in a position to fail. Michael is hinting at the key role of the supervisor on such occasions. When doctoral examinations are unsuccessful, supervisors have little choice but to share the candidate's downfall. This is backed up by findings from a fascinating study from Australia by Lovat et.al. (2004). The authors analysed 803 reports from doctoral examiners and found that the majority of the reports refer to the student and the supervisor as a team and regard the thesis as a joint responsibility. However, on occasions when a thesis was of poor quality examiners would go as far as blaming the supervisor:

The responsibility for polishing the thesis to the appropriate level rests with both the candidate and the supervisor. At other times, the examiner's authority over the supervisor is unmistakably demarcated through a strong reprimand about the quality of the thesis. Here, we see obvious surveillance by the 'expert', not only of the candidate, but also of the supervisor. The gaze of the examiner, it seems, in doctoral examination is not restricted to the learner. That is, candidates are often not singularly criticized; rather, criticism is also applied to the standards of supervision as well. (Lovat et.al. 2004: 168)

Shifting responsibility from the student to the supervisor is one strategy for managing the emotional labour involved in examining. Another one is by reification of the doctoral examination. Holbrook et.al (2004) also analysed doctoral examiners' reports and found that when feeding back on theses of high quality, examiners would refer to students and their personal qualities as researchers. But when reporting on theses of poor quality, examiners would focus on the theses and make no or only marginal references to the student or author. This strategy enables them to circumvent the (painful) fact that there is an (emotional) human being behind the failed project.

### **Overcoming risk – the joy of supervision**

The risks identified so far from the conversations have all been ones that have caused anxiety, worry or concern, but if those were the overwhelming emotional responses to

supervising students, there would not be many supervisors willing to do the job. However, the positive aspects of supervising doctoral students far outweigh the negative. Although this study is focused on looking at how doctoral supervisors accommodate their concerns in order to establish a supervisory *modus vivendi*, it would be wrong not to include a section where they are allowed to voice the positive aspects of supervisory practice. What shines through the narratives from all supervisors in this study is the love for their discipline and how they embrace opportunities of mentoring new generations of researchers in their discipline – what Rowland (2008) refers to as intellectual love. As David argues:

It is a great way of getting research done, but also kind of getting fresh ideas. I think if you do give students a certain amount of independence, but it is risky because they can fail [...] And then you find yourself having to kind of go in and back things up a little bit, but yeah I mean there have been rather few occasions where I have not enjoyed the supervisory process (David, science, pre-92)

Emma, too, emphasizes intellectual stimuli as one of the positive aspects of doctoral supervision:

I think even when in supervision when you start to see people suddenly get what it is that they need to be doing I think that gives a lot of satisfaction. I would say that my PhD supervisions are one of the most satisfying aspects of my job. Sometimes I come out absolutely buzzing because you've had an intellectual conversation. Quite often, it's ironic isn't it, but in the higher education institution quite often a lot of the stuff is pushing around the paperwork and what have you (Emma, social science, post-92)

Another positive aspect is seeing their students 'make it' within their discipline academically and professionally:

It's very rewarding. To be honest most aspects of teaching you don't have very much one to one with the students and so there's little relationship built up and the PhD is really, well the MPhil and PhD is really the only time you get to have a serious relationship with the student and you can build them up, you can mentor them through the whole process...And so, yes, I do really enjoy it and you can get a lot out of it. You're part of that research although very often after the first year you don't really have a huge amount of input because they've become the subject matter expert. You're there for the ride, you get some acknowledgement through the journals and

conferences they submit to, and of course the final thesis (Adam, science, post-92).

In some cases it is the personal satisfaction of having played a part in someone's professional development that is emphasised – almost like a parental role:

I think the thing that I still get loads of pleasure from is when I see my students make Professor. I try to go to their Professorials [inaugurals]. And I really enjoy that when I think not only have they graduated but they have kind of gone through the process and they have now reached, you know as it were the top of the tree academically at least in that sense. And I know it was their thesis and their work and all the rest of it but I still as it were I like to say 'well I used to help them with that'. So that's really nice. (Martin, science, pre-92).

And in one case, research supervision brought a supervisor into a field of research he would otherwise not have found himself:

It has extended me in ways that I would not have extended myself otherwise. A classic example would be my Somali student who is a permanent UK resident. I was doing a research project in the late 1990s about Somali migrants, refugees mainly, in London, and their changing communication patterns...And this individual was someone I knew and he came to me a year or two after about doing a PhD and as I said I was very cautious, but decided to take him. And amongst other things, the whole Somali involvement led to four visits to Somalia, Somaliland, which is North West Somalia, and pretty safe, on behalf of the African Educational Trust. So that was something that made me develop and took me on paths I would not have gone otherwise (Andrew, arts, post-92)

Even John, who has had bad luck with most of his doctoral students, and who admitted not to have gained much pleasure from supervising students, reports of pride when he witnessed a student perform in a kind of ritual initiation into his discipline:

I suppose I have been proud of the way that at least two of my research students would take all the punishment I could throw at them in terms of comments on their work, but they would sort of bounce back and revise it in a way that improved it significantly. And I was also proud of one of my graduate students who put up a very powerful defence against a very

hostile examination, where a weaker spirit might have faltered or wilted (John, arts, pre-92).

To sum up the findings from my interviews with the fourteen supervisors, it is clear that the supervisory project is shaped by structural emergent properties such as the role of the supervisor, the student, academic colleagues, institutional expectations and regulations and disciplinary conventions. This study's aim was to inquire into fourteen supervisors' articulations of emotional responses to supervising doctoral students and to explore how emotions were accommodated within the supervisory process.

The model used as a conceptual framework for this study presumed that when individuals give accounts of themselves, they enter into a risky area where physical well-being, self-worth and performative competence guide and shape the kind of self-narrative that is being presented. Thirteen out of the fourteen participants in this study viewed doctoral supervision as one of the most enjoyable parts of their academic practice and as essential to their academic identity as they were expanding their disciplines through their doctoral students. Despite the pleasure of supervising students, it is also evident from the self-narratives that highly complex power configurations inhabit the supervisory space. Although supervisors can be seen as the more powerful players in the supervisory relationship because they technically have the power to stop students from progressing, have a say in when the thesis is ready to be submitted and influence whom to approach as examiners, there were two narratives that imply that students put pressure on supervisors to provide more guidance (i.e. tell them what to do) or to be upgraded from MPhil to PhD.

Colleagues are also key players in the narratives both as obstructers, supporters, co-supervisors and examiners. In institutions with rigorous progression frameworks, colleagues can be a source of support but also one of anguish if they wish to block students from progressing. At some of the committees where progression is discussed, hidden agendas are sometimes fought over which seem to have more to do with personal ambitions and animosities than with the quality of the students' work. Acting as an internal examiner was also mentioned by three supervisors as a highly emotional issue, as academics may feel particularly pressured to pass students because both

their institution's reputation and their relationship with the supervisor – a colleague – may suffer.

When Hockey (1996) interviewed supervisors in the social sciences in order to ascertain their motives for supervising research students, he identified three main categories: intellectual (interest in the discipline), functional (benefits such as less teaching or opportunity for shared publications) and subjective (self-esteem). These three motives also came through in this study. It was overwhelmingly the intellectual motive – the love of their discipline – that drove these fourteen academics to become doctoral supervisors, followed by the self-esteem of having extended their field of research through their contribution to their students' work. Another theme that came across very strongly from the conversations was that of kindness as identified by Clegg and Rowland (2010). The authors see kindness as an interpersonal skill that 'involves an understanding of the pain and difficulty that may be involved in realising projects' (Clegg and Rowland 2010: 724). They claim that at a time when there is a tendency to translate any demonstration of care for students into performance indicators such as positive student feedback or – in the case of doctoral supervision successful timely completion – the authors argue that kindness is more than a professional obligation:

It involves the unpredictable judgements of students' needs. There is always a risk of misjudgement in pedagogical encounters, which by their nature are unpredictable and unstable. While one can, and should, be held to account for the exercise of due care, kindness is a quality for which one can only hold oneself to account and is based on different normative criteria from those of audit. The difference between being held to account and holding oneself to account is crucial. It involves alienation and responsibility. Only when holding the self to account is one acting with human agency and in terms of one's own and other's life projects (Clegg and Rowland 2010: 725).

Despite working within – in some cases – very rigid institutional frameworks, the supervisors in this study were able to take control of their supervisory space which is inevitably 'unpredictable and unstable'. They all acknowledged the continuous risk assessment they had to make with regard to their students, themselves, their colleagues (as examiners and co-supervisors) and their institutions. When Clegg (2008b) explored academic identities in higher

education she found that despite all the changes to academic life and the claims of eroding values within the sector, one peculiarity of academic work is that:

very high levels of reflexivity combined with sufficient spaces for autonomous action allow the balance between personal projects and institutional strategy to continue, if not necessarily in harmony, then at least without a major rupture. (Clegg 2008: 340)

When academics in this study talked about their practice, the more experienced supervisors showed a similar ability to contain their supervisory projects as part of their academic identities and within their own personal space, and either work around institutional structures (subversive behaviour) or utilise them in order to minimise risks by for example terminating the working relationship with students that they felt were unlikely to succeed.

However, for the two inexperienced supervisors with no completions their supervisory projects seemed to be magnified compared to other academic projects. Sarah and Lisa both work for a post-92 institution and they both work on supervisory teams. In Sarah's case her team has broken down and she has ended up as the sole supervisor, heightening her anxiety about doctoral standards (the Alice in Wonderland metaphor) and leaving her with a fair amount of extra work. In Lisa's case she has great difficulties in distancing herself from the social and cultural dimensions of her supervisory project. Getting her student through to successful completion has become a personal mission, resulting in huge emotional investment. Unlike the findings by Halse and Malfroy (2010) none of the participants in this study had altered their supervisory practices as a result of changes in the university sector. Some universities are admitting overseas doctoral students whose academic English is not always acceptable without any regard to the implications this has for their supervisors. But this apart, none of the supervisors in this study had felt marketisation of higher education had influenced the supervisory space yet in any marked way.

## Accounts of own practice as data

Butler (2006) makes the distinction between speech as communication and speech as performance when individuals give accounts of themselves and their practices. At the communicative level, I believe the fourteen accounts used as the data for this study to be guided by the three principles Archer claims guide the internal conversation - physical wellbeing, self-worth and performative competence. With one exception, all participants enjoyed supervising doctoral students and several claimed it to be the best part of being an academic. They had agreed to participate in the study because it involved talking about a practice close to their hearts and welcomed the opportunity to reflect on it. It is speech as communication which allows me to quote participants, but speech as performance cannot be captured in writing. Feminist scholars warn against the dangers of speaking for others especially if they are members of groups to which we do not belong (Scharff 2010), and I am aware that what does not get acknowledged in the data as presented in this thesis is the manner in which participants spoke about their practice – speech as performance. John, who had had two students with an unsuccessful outcome at the *viva voce* was deeply upset by their distress, even though it had happened almost ten years earlier and even though he did not regard their failure to obtain a PhD as unfair. Linda, too, expressed great sadness when she recalled her Indian student who had to return home with an MPhil instead of a PhD.

Phoenix (2010: 168) has stated that whether to tell what she calls ‘risky stories’ in an interview is a matter of negotiation in that the participants decide what to disclose and what to keep silent about. This negotiation takes place within the individual (Archer’s internal conversation) but also with the interviewer. On two occasions when I tried to dig deeper the participants declined to elaborate further. Phoenix (2010) has argued that the interview can be used by the interviewee as a space for re-working their identity. In this study there may have been examples of supervisors using the conversation to articulate their supervisory identity. On three occasions participants told me how they had enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on and talk about their supervision practice.

Feminist researchers in particular, recognise human experience as a basis for constructing knowledge, but they also acknowledge that the researcher’s personal

biography and social and cultural capital influence the ways in which data is categorised and interpreted (Hughes 2002; Letherby 2010). I was educated in Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s in an education system that placed much emphasis on collaboration and team work. About one third of my undergraduate assessed coursework was written collaboratively with one or more other students. I therefore found it quite natural to share my work with the participants. I sent them the transcription of the conversation and allowed them to make changes. And I promised to send them my final draft. However, about half way through the interviews, I began to grasp Harding's (1991) concept of 'strong objectivity' and the importance of valuing participants' perspectives without merging with them or 'going native'. As a researcher I found myself in an awkward position in a number of ways. First, I was exploring emotional responses to research students of whom I was one myself. On a number of occasions when participants talked about their anxieties with regard to supervising part-time doctoral students, and how it might be better if they withdrew rather than continue to struggle with a career, family commitment, elderly parents – and a thesis, I had to stop myself from leaping to the students' defence because I immediately identified with the students they were talking about. These situations also induced a deep sense of guilt on my part, because I projected the emotions expressed by participants on to my own supervisor and imagined all the anxiety I had caused her over the years by intermitting twice, being very slow at producing written work, and generally tending to prioritise work over my studies. This was not made easier by the fact that – as my research progressed – I uncovered realities I would prefer not to have known such as the highly volatile make-up of the doctoral examination process itself, and the fact that my own performance in the examination could have an impact of the professional reputation of my supervisors.

Second, I was what Acker (2000) would classify as an indigenous outsider to my research – I was part of the doctoral research community, but I was not a supervisor. Instead, I was exploring what emotional responses people like myself evoked in academics. Much of the literature on interviewing mentions the power relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (see for example Oakley 2000; Mason 2002). From an ethical point of view, it is essential that the researcher not only acknowledges but also manages the exercise of power in knowledge production (Stanley and Wise 1993; Letherby 2010). However, my marginal position in relation to the people I researched caused a number of unexpected situations where my authority

as a researcher was undermined by the participants who were both more experienced researchers than me and also in the habit of advising research students like me.

On one occasion, a lengthy transcription was returned to me heavily cut and edited with an email explaining that some of the interview had been like chatting to a friend and was not appropriate to include in doctoral research. The supervisor was advising me (the research student) on what is 'appropriate' to include in a research project. On another occasion when entering the office of a supervisor I had never met, I was asked to account for how I would be analysing the data before the interview started in much the same way the supervisor would interrogate his own research student about the choice of method chosen for a project.

It was inevitable – although naïvely I had not foreseen it - that my own emotional responses to the interviews would fluctuate between those of a student and those of a researcher when I was working with academics more senior than me. Even the supervisors who were much younger than me had their PhDs, and had been through the process I was currently going through.

At one time, I was discussing research supervision with a former colleague which in itself gave rise to ethical issues. She was talking about the difficulties of supervising a close colleague who was older than her and more senior. I knew the supervisee and the problems she had encountered when her department had asked her to take on more teaching as a result of a lecturer in her department being on long term sick-leave. Several researchers have discussed the complex situations that can arise when the interviewer and the interviewee share knowledge and sub-cultural understandings because they are members of the same community. While this is an advantage at some level in that there was no need for any contextual explanations, it is also problematic. I will remain a member of the same community after the research is completed and be in possession of knowledge about colleagues' academic practice which would, as Platt (1981: 78) states 'normally only be available under conditions of greater intimacy'. Drake and Heath (2011: 27) talk about 'living with the providers of [...] data, and their thoughts and feelings about it'. Naturally, all participants were very concerned about confidentiality, and I had to ensure that participants, students, colleagues and institutions could not be identified. Following one conversation, I

received a very anxious email from an inexperienced supervisor. Having read the transcription she realised she had portrayed the quality assurance processes regarding doctoral supervision as being rather lax in her institution. She was also worried that the emotional responses to her students she described to me would result in her university regarding her as unfit to supervise research students if she were identified.

Finally, reading the transcriptions, I see that I am a rather timid interviewer and should have prodded much more in certain cases. I was much aware of being a research student and conducting interviews with more powerful actors in the process even if they had little power over me personally. Still, their power was displayed in that they alone had the experiences that could inform my study.

In the next, final chapter I will draw together the different elements I have covered in the previous five chapters. I will return to my research questions to see if they have been answered, and to my conceptual framework to see how emotional labour within the doctoral supervisory process is tied in with supervisor identities. I will also present a bit of futurology which will inevitably be speculative.

## **Chapter 6 – Concluding the study**

This study set out to explore the nature of emotional labour involved in doctoral supervision in order to consider how emotional aspects of the supervisory process can be effectively addressed in professional development for academic staff involved in doctoral supervision. In this final chapter I will discuss my findings in relation to my conceptual framework and suggest ways in which academic development provisions may address and include emotional dimensions of the supervisory process.

### **The nature of emotional labour in supervising doctoral students**

The interviews from this small exploratory study confirm that emotional labour plays a major part in doctoral supervision. In Chapter 4, I introduced three slightly different definitions of emotional labour. The original definition by Hochschild back in the 1970s was about 'management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (Hochschild 2003: 7). However, James (1989) argued that emotional labour is as much about managing other people's emotions as one's own. The third definition I introduced viewed emotional labour in relation to organisations. Morris and Feldman (1996) claim that emotional labour occurs when what an individual's authentic feeling (what he or she actually feels) is incompatible with what is required by an organisation. Based on the experiences articulated in this study, it seems that the emotional labour involved in supervising doctoral students spans all three definitions. Emotional labour in doctoral supervision manifests itself through the need for supervisors to manage their own emotions and those of their students and colleagues. But in addition to this management, they have to negotiate organisational structures such as team or co-supervision provisions and institutional measures for student progression, some of which can involve additional emotional labour.

Perhaps it came as no great surprise that particular pressure points which were common for the supervisors who had had completions were the examination and the appointment of examiners. Once the students submit their work the supervisors' cannot control what happens. All the supervisors took great care when appointing examiners, and even the two supervisors who had not yet had students entering an examination were aware of the importance of using formal and informal networks in order to find out

how appropriate colleagues would be as examiners. Other pressure points mentioned by participants were getting students to send them written work (four supervisors), sub-editing drafts – usually by international students (three participants), and getting students to do the write-up on time (two supervisors).

Surprisingly, five (experienced) participants mentioned a pressure point which was around the middle of the supervisory process, where students would be on the point of giving up. These supervisors had all developed strategies for dealing with this ranging from recommending that the student takes time out to sitting them down and conducting a mini counselling session. Another four very experienced supervisors also mentioned a pressure point emerging when the final examination was over. Two supervisors spoke of a 'PhD-shaped hole' that students had to fill. On two occasions, the supervisors addressed this by planning publications with their students as soon as possible after the examination. Another strategy was to keep in regular contact with the students after the examination and support them in career planning or life after the doctorate.

When it came to peak emotions during the supervisory process, the final (successful) examination was mentioned by all twelve supervisors who had had completions. But more interestingly, some supervisors experience positive emotions at other stages along the journey. Four supervisors spoke of the joy when students 'take off' or 'find their voice' – the point in time when they start independently to argue their case and begin to fly the nest as an independent researcher. Another peak emotion mentioned by three participants was pride when hearing their students giving papers at conferences or seminars, or when they published papers – either before or after their final examination. These peak emotions are examples of positive aspects of the emotional labour involved in supervising students. If these were absent, academics would properly refrain from taking on doctoral supervision altogether. Shuler and Sypher (2000) suggest that emotional labour can be viewed by some people as an altruistic service. From this perspective it would mean that despite the stress and anxiety that are part and parcel of many supervisory projects, it is the prospect of guiding students through to a successful outcome that makes it all worthwhile.

The emotional labour involved in supervising doctoral supervisors is varied and complex, but my proposition is that the way this emotional labour is experienced will depend on the preferred mode of reflexivity in the supervisor.

### **Supervisory identity and the management of emotions**

In this study I used Archer's modes of reflexivity (2000; 2003; 2005; 2012) to try and identify different supervisors' agency within their supervisory projects. The fourteen conversations with doctoral supervisors were conducted to explore supervisory practices and how individual academics accommodate their concerns and priorities following Archer's (2000; 2003) model.

Of the fourteen supervisors who participated in this study, eleven of them could be categorised as either autonomous reflexives or meta-reflexives. Supervisors who appear to be autonomous reflexives are individualist and will manage their supervision projects by relying on their internal conversations before acting on their own. The supervisors I have identified in this study as autonomous reflexives are either very experienced supervisors or supervisors who are working alone because of the institutional structures (as a sole supervisor) and have become almost autonomous reflexives by default in relation to the supervisory project. Although they could in principle discuss their supervisory practice with colleagues, this rarely happens. The supervision is perceived as a relationship between the supervisor and the student by the institution, and hence by the supervisor, and the supervisor is expected to act independently on the basis of his or her own evaluation of the situation. Autonomous reflexives prioritise performance or work in their project, and it is characteristic for the supervisors in this category that they would tend to talk about supervision as a managed, time-bound project with very structured models of supervision.

If the experienced supervisors in this study were not autonomous reflexives they had the characteristics of the meta-reflexives. Although the standard of the student performance or work was still regarded as key to the whole process, meta-reflexive supervisors spoke of their students (and their own) well-being. These supervisors would often express their ideals in relation to what it used to be like working in

academia (as opposed to now) or they would regard their supervisory project as a personal social experiment making sure that their students got through – even if it was at a high personal cost in the sense of spending a disproportionate amount of time supporting the student. Interestingly, the meta-reflexive supervisors in this study would speak about their students in terms of their social class ('his dad is a butcher in the north of England'), or ethnicity ('one of them is part-time and based in East Africa'), or gender ('there are issues around her having to have maternity leave and having young children').

Finally, the three supervisors in this study who came across as communicative reflexives were supervisors with little experience in supervising. They were all very dependent on sharing aspects of their internal conversation with others before acting. All three worked in post-92 institutions where they were required to supervise in a team. However, when relationships within the teams broke down and the similar others either disappeared or refused to engage in the process, they were left to make their own decisions which could leave them anxious and worried about the management of the project and the final outcome.

In this study I have used Archer's typology of reflexivity to try and capture how doctoral supervisors approach the project of supervision as a practice. My findings suggest that inexperienced supervisors tend to fall into the communicative reflexive category, whereas more experienced supervisors are autonomous reflexives or meta-reflexives. It may be argued that supervisors start out as communicative reflexives with all the characteristics of that group such as being reluctant to take risks, needing to talk through options with colleagues and peers and being keen to maintain good relations with similar others (students and academic colleagues). However, in some cases, they start out as autonomous reflexives by default, where institutions operate with a single supervisor model.

Another way of interpreting the findings in this study is to propose that all doctoral supervisors have the ability – and hence the option - to approach the supervisory project as a communicative reflexive, a meta-reflexive or an autonomous reflexive and that it is particular circumstances and contexts that bring one of the approaches to the fore. There were examples in this study of doctoral supervisors who felt that

institutional structures forced them to behave in a manner which was contrary to their natural inclination. This in itself gives rise to emotional labour. It is the difference between preference and pleasure that comes into play. Archer (2000: 56) has argued that preference has a respectability that pleasure lacks because preference is related to making (rational) choices. Some of the supervisors in this study may have articulated a preference for supervising in a particular way which has caused me to categorise them as belonging to a particular group of reflexives. But this preference may have come about because it is the only way they could achieve a *modus vivendi* in the current climate within higher education. Supervising in this way may not necessarily be what gives them most pleasure.

### **Implications of the findings for academic development**

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Code of Practice consultation document which was circulated to UK higher education institutions in January 2012 clearly states that universities (referred to in the document as ‘providers’) must ensure that doctoral supervisors are offered appropriate professional development to enable them to carry out their responsibilities (QAA 2012, Indicator 9). Amongst academic developers the discussion continues about form and content of development events for doctoral supervisors - see for example the work from Australia by Brew and Peseta (2009) and McWilliam (2009) - as such events easily can be reduced to a regurgitation of national policy and institutional procedures or consist of declamations of ‘how best to’ – keep students motivated, getting them to submit drafts, etc.

Across the UK – and in other parts of the world such as Australia and the US – academic developers exert themselves in finding ways to deliver academic development that is meaningful and worthwhile to doctoral supervisors. There is always the hard line of not allowing academics to supervise unless they have completed an accredited course in supervision. This approach was taken some years ago at the University of Sydney, but interestingly enough those already supervising when the regulation was introduced were exempt from doing the course (personal information from Dr Tai Peseta).

Halse and Malfroy (2010) made a brave, if futile, attempt to put a different lens to doctoral supervision by theorising the whole process and breaking it down into five interrelated facets: *technē* (craft knowledge), contextual expertise, the learning alliance, habits of mind and scholarly expertise. The authors claim that the first two are dealing with policies and procedures of the universities and, consequently, is what most current development for supervisors focus on, but that there is more variation between individuals and disciplines regarding the three other facets and that training therefore can be more targeted and tailored in those areas. The authors make the assertion that their theoretical framework is distinctive because it offers a holistic view of what is involved in supervising doctoral students. This could not be further from the truth. The authors have divided the supervisory process into thematic headings that can be addressed at workshops, and, surprisingly, emotional dimensions of the supervisory process are absent from their holistic model. Nevertheless, I do agree with Halse and Malfroy (2010) that doctoral supervision needs to be addressed from a holistic point of view, and that means ceasing to look at academic development for doctoral supervisors as training or indeed development based on the assumption that a) acquiring certain skills will better equip supervisors to make students complete on time, and b) that such skills can be learned at workshops.

Twelve years ago, Clegg (2000) noted that the reflective statements she analysed revealed that all supervisors possessed a high ability to negotiate roles and drew on a wide range of skills in order to tailor supervisory styles that most appropriately suited their students. The findings from this study confirm this. As an academic developer I am sceptical of the benefits of running development events for experienced doctoral supervisors for the simple reason that if there are academics at a university who are poor supervisors they are unlikely to identify themselves as such and sign up for a workshop on how to do better. In any case, a poor supervisor from an institutional point of view is someone whose students either fail or drop out – neither of which can always be prevented by the supervisor. In this study, David even argued that dropping out could be seen as a positive development if it was a sign that the student had considered their options and changed their mind about their doctoral project.

At my current institution new supervisors are offered workshops which basically outline duties and responsibilities of supervisors and their students. All new supervisors work in teams, and it is assumed that informal mentoring takes place between experienced

and less experienced supervisors. However, this is not being monitored and little is known about the extent to which it happens. The university has so far resisted the introduction of mandatory development events for experienced supervisors and is somehow choosing to put its faith in the institutional myth that supervisory mentoring is taking place in the teams. From September 2012, supervisors are also offered a three day programme on supervision (MA and PhD supervision) which is accredited by the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), but attending this workshop remains entirely optional.

Since November 2011, supervisory forums lasting for two hours once a term have been introduced at the university where I work. These are open to all doctoral supervisors and are meant to provide collegial support but also to give academics an opportunity for critical reflection on their practice. Attendance at these supervisory forums is voluntary, but they are currently facilitated by the Director of Research and Enterprise who is also monitoring completion rates at the institution. To date the forums have been well attended, but little critical reflection has emerged. Instead, they seem to function as a space where further clarification of the university's doctoral regulations can be obtained, and a space for discussing the benefits and drawbacks of an institutional implementation of the Researcher Development Framework.

In addition to the forums, more formalised provisions are being planned. The institutional implementation of the new UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) that was launched on 2 November 2011 has offered an opportunity to re-think professional development for doctoral supervisors at the university. As experienced academics, doctoral supervisors at the university will be required by senior management and human resources to engage in development activities within a framework accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) leading to a Senior Fellowship or Principal Fellowship of the HEA. From September 2012, the number of HEA Fellows in each higher education institution in the UK will be one of the Key Information Sets (KIS) to be submitted to the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) and to be available to potential students and other stakeholders (HEFCE 2011/18). Staff will be strongly encouraged to engage with the new framework. Senior management apply a 'stick and carrot' approach as Human Resources are in the process of re-defining academic roles and align promotion to engagement with the UKPSF and evidence of personal development.

Cartesian dualism still dominates the way research supervision is regarded at policy level by assuming that if two or more rational minds get together under the right circumstances they will produce successful doctoral theses. The findings from this study and others such as Hockey (1997) and Clegg (2000) strongly suggest that the impact of emotions in the supervisory process ought to be addressed in the academic development of supervisors *as well as* project management and the application of different styles or approaches to supervision. Emotions and power were two key themes identified by Clegg (2000), and it could be argued that the power theme itself feeds into the emotion theme. For some of the supervisors in this study, dealing with challenging behaviour of their academic colleagues – particularly more senior and powerful colleagues – caused more anxiety than dealing with their students.

So, the question remains, how emotional dimensions of the supervisory process are best addressed at an institution like the one in which I am currently working. It is a post-92 university in London which in the past decade has been through a number of restructurings and has invested much energy and money on re-branding itself. The re-branding includes an attempt to strengthen the research profile of the institution, and as a result the spotlight is currently firmly on the doctoral student experience.

This study has shown that emotional labour is a fundamental part of doctoral supervision, yet academic development activities offered to supervisors in my current institution focus on procedural aspects of supervision such as institutional regulations, progress reports and transfer documents, or on how to manage students' expectations and provide cognitive support for them. While these aspects remain very important, this study has shown that addressing the emotional labour involved in the supervisory process could be beneficial, particularly for academics new to the role. One way of raising such issues while at the same time providing mutual support for colleagues can be through self-managed action learning sets.

## **Supervisor development through Action Learning**

Johnson (2010: 267) has called Action Learning a 'nebulous practice' and an opportunity for charlatans to 'profess knowledge beyond their experience'. And it is fair to acknowledge that – like focus groups – Action Learning has been used and abused in academic development for some time. However, if managed properly, Action Learning can offer benefits to participants. McGill and Brockbank (2004: 146) define Action Learning as

A voluntary and professional activity freely entered into by individuals who seek to learn through a repeated cycle of reflection and action, with the support of a set. Set members are there to support each individual in moving forward with their issues.

An Action Learning Set typically consists of five or six individuals (Johnson 2010) who meet regularly. At these meetings set members describe in turn a concern or problem they may have in relation to their professional practice. They will normally present their specific issue as a story where they as individuals play a central role. Ganz (2010) defines a story as a discourse where the presenter translates his or her values into action. Through telling their stories set members give their own perspective on a particular situation and it is the role of other set members to listen and ask challenging questions about the presenter's story. Questions and feedback from the set should help the presenter to reflect on his or her situation. In the light of the feedback the presenter will then decide on an action which he or she will do before the next meeting. From an academic developer's point of view, one attractive characteristic of Action Learning is that the learners or participants are models of abundance rather than deficiency and are bringing their own professional experience to the set as a resource (McGill and Brockbank 2004).

The provision I am suggesting for doctoral supervisors is based on Action Learning Sets with five to six academics. Each individual will develop an academic practice portfolio which at the Senior Fellowship level will be focused around one or more case studies relating to their academic practice.<sup>11</sup> Through these case studies academics

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<sup>11</sup> New academic staff members already develop an electronic academic practice portfolio when completing the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice.

will be given an opportunity to explore their own supervisory practice as part of their identity as researchers and lecturers. And as part of this interrogation they get an opportunity to consider emotional aspects of their research activity.

Despite a trend in the literature to the contrary, I believe that doctoral supervision needs to be shifted away from the discourse of teaching and pedagogy and returned to the discourse of research where it belongs. And it is in this context that emotions should be acknowledged. The negative emotions articulated by the doctoral supervisors in relation to their practice in this study were mostly to do with colleagues or with students not progressing with their research. Negative emotions were not related to whether students learn anything or not in the process. In other words, emotional dimensions of doctoral supervision are to do with experiencing and managing the research process.

Some of the participants in this study welcomed the opportunity to discuss their supervisory practice and found it a useful exercise, for as David, a very experienced supervisor, stated 'you rarely take the time to reflect on these matters'. Jones (2011) has stated that the real power of a personal narrative, is that it offers an opportunity to reflect, but as Clegg (2003) has argued, reflection has not really been a feature of research and scholarship discourses. While lecturers on Postgraduate Certificate programmes in Academic Practice across the nation are asked to reflect on their teaching practice on a daily basis, researchers are rarely asked to step back and consider their research – what they are doing, why they are doing it, how they are doing it, and whether they know it is effective or fruitful. Morley (1996) has provocatively raised this issue by musing about the general assumption within the Academy that research is a useful and worthwhile exercise. Hopefully, the Action Learning Sets will provide space for such reflection.

It is important to emphasise that the Action Learning Sets for supervisors would serve three purposes. First they would serve as a way of engaging with the UKPSF – something that the university will require all members of academic staff to do. Second, they would provide space for exchange of tacit supervisory knowledge. Such knowledge can be crucial for the well-being of students and supervisors alike, and must be conveyed to academic staff new to supervision. Eraut (2000) has highlighted the

importance of tacit knowledge amongst professionals when performing their daily jobs. He argued that tacit knowledge is about recognising situations and making decisions based on previous experiences. All the supervisors who participated in this study had experienced being a doctoral student themselves. The study confirmed findings from other studies such as Brew and Peseta (2004) and Lee (2012) that the single most important thing that influenced academics' supervisory practices is their own experience of supervision as doctoral students. This suggests that practice is rooted in strong disciplinary conventions even if these conventions at times are adapted or subverted to satisfy rigorous institutional frameworks. As this study indicates, supervisors seem to be well equipped to manage their supervisory space and negotiating risks connected with it. However, Action Learning Sets would allow cross-disciplinary discussions and for more experienced supervisors to identify areas of risk when less experienced supervisors present their stories. The conceptual model developed for this study may help contextualise a discussion of emotional labour in doctoral supervision.

Third, the Action Learning Sets would provide emotional scaffolding. They could be places where set members had an opportunity to articulate worries and anxieties and maybe receive advice from other set members of how to deal with these. The paramount principle of this kind of academic development is that it does not aim at improving or enhancing practice. Clegg, Tan and Saeidi (2002) found evidence from their work with supervisors keeping reflective journals that reflecting on practice did not lead to change of practice. Consequently, there is no reason to believe that the Action Learning Sets will make academic staff supervise differently. But perhaps there is no need for that. Empirical evidence suggests that doctoral supervisors already have a well developed repertoire of actions they can apply to different situations (Clegg 1997; 2000; 2003; Clegg and Gall 1998) and that they can style their supervisory model according to their students' needs (Lee 2012). And this small study confirms these findings. Instead, Action Learning Sets would act as a structure to support doctoral supervisors in what is a highly complex and emotionally charged practice.

### **Limitations of the study**

This study only involved fourteen individuals which is in itself a limitation. However, it generated very rich data with regard to how doctoral supervision is experienced by

these individuals. Reading through the transcriptions I recognise with disappointment that my interviews sustain the same silences around doctoral supervision and academic development as much of the existing literature does, and that I missed an opportunity to probe into some of these areas which all involve aspects of emotional labour. For example, there is evidence to suggest that undergraduate students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are poor at networking, especially with students from the middle-classes, and that this is a barrier to obtaining well-paid graduate jobs (Keane 2011). How does this translate to doctoral supervisory spaces? Also, there is evidence to suggest that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transexual, individuals across the UK still do not regard the university environment as a safe place (Ellis 2009). How does this translate to doctoral supervisory spaces? And we know that racism is rife in some parts of the Academy (see for example Harper et.al. 2011; Delgado Bernal 2002). How does this translate to doctoral supervisory spaces? Such issues are likely to affect doctoral students as well as their supervisors. What is it like, for example, for a gay supervisor/student to be assigned a doctoral student/supervisor who displays homophobic views or behaviour?

The work by Sue et.al. (2007) on racial micro-aggressions can be extended to apply to many other groups in society not just in relation to race. The authors define micro-aggressions as 'brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative [...] slights and insults to the target person or group' (Sue et.al. 2007: 273). None of the supervisors' in this study gave any explicit examples of such occurrences, but a number of the participants stressed the importance of 'liking' their students in order to maintain a successful working relationship with them. Martin, for example, recalled a situation when he supervised a Muslim student who had come to Britain with his family. The student had a son the same age as Martin's son and when Martin's son had a birthday party, Martin invited the student and his family along:

I thought, well it will be nice, he won't have seen inside a British home probably, and he said "will there be a special room for the women to go in?" And I said "no, we don't have special rooms for women in British houses. We don't operate in that way." And in the end he just came with the son and wouldn't bring his wife, and I actually felt quite hurt by that. That somehow he wasn't able to, you know, here he was studying in this country but there were little bits of his culture that couldn't be adjusted. (Martin, science, pre-92)

Incidents such as these where values, attitudes or beliefs clash are likely to have an impact on the relationship between supervisor and students. How such relationships are managed and the emotional labour involved in the management could have been explored more closely in the study.

At the other end of the spectrum are the situations where the supervisor and the supervisee both belong to marginalised groups and as a result may share similar experiences in relation to systemic inequalities. In their study of Māori doctoral students and their supervisors, McKinley et.al. (2004) interviewed a Māori supervisor who claimed that when supervising Māori students 'I have to keep emotional boundaries because otherwise I risk disappearing into their needs' (McKinley et.al. 2004: 8). In other words, there is evidence that shared values as well as clashing values within the supervisory space involve emotional labour. These important aspects of the supervisory practice were not explored in this study.

### **A bit of futurology**

Despite the many changes to UK higher education in the last two decades, the doctoral degree has fundamentally remained unchanged. Although new doctorates allow for different kinds of knowledge to be presented and assessed, the fact that doctoral theses must make original contributions to knowledge remains a requirement for all of them. The question is whether the doctoral degree is sustainable in its current shape and form or whether it is time for it to re-invent itself. What is the future of the doctoral degree?

As more people gain a doctoral qualification, its value as social capital decreases. Moreover, as research projects have to be closely monitored in order to be completed within a given time frame, it may be increasingly difficult in some disciplines to argue that the final outcome is moving a discipline or field forward. In a recent article in *Times Higher Education*, Hackley (2012: 42) confesses that he and other colleagues regard the PhD as 'a sort of glorified master's degree in the new world of high volume, high fee students enrolments'. Hackley goes on to argue that it is no longer (morally) acceptable to charge students high fees for working on a doctoral project lasting three to four years in order to be assessed in what he regards as a highly volatile procedure -

the *viva voce* examination. Interestingly, what is underpinning his critique of the UK assessment process is the emotional labour of the examiners. He argues that the responsibility and implications of outcome for the doctoral student are too grave to rest on the shoulder of one or two individuals (Hackley 2012: 42). To lighten the burden the author suggests a European model where the thesis is assessed by a panel before being defended or rather celebrated at a public event.

Changes in the assessment processes for doctoral work may be something to consider in the future, particularly if it would give students a more equal experience across the sector. The institutional autonomy that reigns with regard to doctoral rules and regulations (see for example the work carried out by Tinkler and Jackson 2000; 2001; 2002) can be interpreted as having a detrimental impact on the student experience. What applies in one institution does not apply in another. The terms 'minor amendments' and 'major amendments', for example, are interpreted differently at different institutions.

Rapid changes that are taking place within the academy may also have an impact on the personal characteristics of the doctoral supervisor in the future. Originally, Archer (2000; 2003) developed her reflexive typology based on individuals' on life projects. She invited people to talk about their lives and categorised them according to their priorities and concerns in relation to family, friends, work, career choices, future goals etc. in order to reach a *modus vivendi*. In Archer's world individuals shape their lives in accordance with the nature of their reflexivity. In this study I have argued that individual supervisors shape their doctoral projects or space according to their preferred reflexive mode.

However, Archer (2012) has recently proposed that changes in social structures mean that we are likely to see a decline in communicative reflexives, a stable number of autonomous reflexives, and an increase of meta-reflexives and fractured reflexives. She ascribes this development to social and political changes and subsequent changes in values. Communicative reflexives shape their lives around family, friends and the local community, but the contextual continuity on which these individuals depend is gradually being eroded in the Western world. In order to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people need to accept geographical and social mobility – two dimensions

normally rejected by communicative reflexives. Archer (2012: 306) states that 'the 'decencies' for which the communicative collectivity used to provide aggregate support – loyalty, appreciation, gratitude, consideration – are losing their strongest protagonists and exemplars'. Archer predicts that the number of autonomous reflexives will remain stable as these people act in accordance with values that are highly prioritised in Western culture. They are independent, competitive and innovative high-performers. They are risk-takers capable (and willing) to adapt to new situations. One consoling aspect of Archer's predictions is that there will be an increase in meta-reflexive individuals. These are people who opt out of competitive performance focused goals with material rewards, and instead are motivated by social causes.

Archer's observations are interesting in relation to doctoral supervision, because it could be argued that what she is predicting has already happened in UK higher education. To be a communicative reflexive supervisor is to be a novice who needs the reassurance of colleagues in order to carry out his or her supervisory responsibilities. In the competitive and audited academic environment as describe by Hey (2004), Gill (2010) and Fanghanel (2012) it would be high-risk to be seen as someone who shies away from making decisions that lead to measurable outcomes – i.e. timely completions.

The two modes of reflexivity that remain in doctoral supervision are the autonomous reflexive and the meta-reflexive. The autonomous reflexives are deliberating according to instrumental rationality. They will conduct the supervision as project management and ensure that students complete on time. The meta-reflexives too are goal orientated, but they tend to see the supervisory project as more than an intellectual project with social implications. While critical of existing structures, these individuals tend to be idealists driven by strong values and social justice. Both types of supervisors will invest emotional labour in their doctoral students and the process of guiding them through the journey, but the ways in which this will be experienced will vary. The accommodation of priorities and concerns in order to achieve a *modus vivendi* will differ between the two groups.

The paradox of the vanishing communicative reflexive doctoral supervisor is that it is happening at a time when there appears to be a trend for team supervision or co-supervision within the sector. A supervisory team would seem the perfect space for communicative reflexive supervisors to operate in. However, institutional regulations promoting supervisory teams are not necessarily implemented in order to support individual supervisors in their practice. Instead they are likely to be a result of institutional risk management practices. Manathunga's (2012) scrutiny of policy documents relating to doctoral supervision in Australia showed that since the 2000s there has been steady regulation of doctoral education in order to manage supervision, attrition and completion. She regards team supervision as yet another surveillance tool instigated by management:

Team supervision is an attempt to enhance the accountability of principal supervisors. Supervisors are likely to more carefully regulate their supervisory practice when supervision is conducted in the presence of other colleagues. In a sense, team supervision now ensures that supervisors are watching other supervisors as well as watching the student. (Manathunga 2012: 49)

She also makes the observation that, gradually, there has been a shift in the language used in policies, moving from 'associate' to 'team' supervision with the effect of making the second or associate supervisor as accountable as the principal supervisor. Viewed in this light, team supervision becomes a matter of 'we are all in this together'.

In the UK too, team supervision is being encouraged. The QAA Code of Practice Consultation document which was published in January 2012 states the importance for doctoral students to have a supervisory team with one principal supervisor as the point of contact (QAA 2012, Indicator 10). While team supervision may be introduced by higher education institutions as a measure for quality assurance, it also causes serious distress in supervisors when teams break down or when personal agendas are played out within teams to the detriment of the least powerful team member. In this study there were stories that bore witness to team supervision being far from an unproblematic concept.

To sum up, UK doctoral research in the future will need to be less of the high-risk affair than it is at the moment. It is high-risk for institutions and for supervisors in case students drop out or do not complete on time. But most of all it is high-risk for doctoral students, especially overseas students who in 2009/10 accounted for just under 50% of all full-time doctoral students (see Figure 3 on page 31). These students have made substantial emotional and financial investments in their doctoral work by the time of their examination. Yet not all of them pass. The exact number is shrouded in mystery. In the UK, different institutional doctoral regulations make it difficult to compare numbers and compile statistical evidence. In some universities a fail is not an option as an outcome of a doctoral examination. Instead a student may be asked to make 'major corrections' and re-submit, and if the corrections are major enough, the re-submission may never take place. If universities do keep track of fails and re-submissions, they are unlikely to show much enthusiasm in sharing the data. However, a study from Australia (where the doctoral assessment normally is based on the thesis alone without a *viva voce* examination) suggests that fails and re-submissions are rare. A total of 301 theses were submitted at three universities between 2001 and 2002 of which 1% failed and 6% were asked to re-submit (Bourke et.al. 2004). Not shocking statistics in themselves, but it must be remembered that these outcomes affected 56 individuals who had spent years working towards a goal which they may never achieve.

I would speculate that it will be increasingly difficult for universities to explain to some foreign students (and most likely home students too) that having been admitted to a doctoral programme and paid high fees for three or four years, it is still possible to leave without a doctoral degree. How well these issues are managed will depend on the universities' ability to convince potential costumers that they are paying for access to resources to complete the doctoral degree (supervisors, library, examiners), not the degree itself.

Another aspect that needs to be addressed when considering the future of the doctoral degree is what Brown et.al. (2011: 12) have called the 'opportunity trap'. The authors identified the phenomenon in relation to undergraduate studies but it is equally pertinent when it comes to postgraduates. The opportunity trap is revealed when people are encouraged to spend time, money and effort to pursue

activities which in the end make little difference to enhancing their future prospects. On 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012 a postdoctoral researcher wrote a piece in *Times Higher Education* in which he described how he repeatedly and without success had tried to secure an academic post. He pointed out the large army of postdoctoral researchers in the academy who provide 'highly skilled but remarkably cheap labour' and that while 'professors and universities share in the rewards of graduate student training, the students themselves bear almost all the risks (One Postdoc 2012: 36). The author argued that while waiting for a permanent academic post – that may never materialise – he and his colleagues fight over poorly paid jobs as research assistants. His was a personal narrative of the opportunity trap. And the saddest aspect of his story was perhaps that the author remained nameless - 'The author has asked not to be identified in case this further affects his career prospects' was the postscript in the article. The opportunity trap seems to have trapped the critical edge of the academy as well.

From the point of view of recruitment the UK doctoral degree looks healthy and bouncing. But seen from the perspective of the individuals involved in executing it – the students, the supervisors, the examiners - it seems to be suffering from a series of ailments. Morley (2004: 92) has referred to these ailments as complex micro-political factors that frequently disrupt the rational process which is doctoral supervision. They are to do with sophisticated power relationships between supervisors and their institution, between students and supervisors, between supervisory colleagues, between students and examiners and between supervisors and examiners. And all these relationships are defined and shaped by emotional labour.

## **Conclusion**

In this small, exploratory study I have tried to apply Archer's social realist theory to doctoral supervision by analysing the nature of emotional labour involved in the process as articulated by fourteen supervisors. I hope to have contributed to the field of doctoral supervision in two ways. First, the evidence I have presented in this thesis adds to the small number of empirical studies examining emotional labour in the academy, and to the even smaller number of studies focusing on doctoral supervisors.

I used Archer's three modes of reflexivity to loosely identify three supervisory identities. Second, I have suggested one way in which emotional labour in the supervisory process can be addressed through academic development, namely by Action Learning Sets. This approach is based on doctoral supervisors using their own experiences as a resource to be shared with colleagues. There will be other ways, and the one I have suggested may not work. But it is worth a try.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the supervisors who participated in this study and I was struck by their love of their disciplines, their enthusiasm and their deep commitment to their doctoral students. It is therefore fitting that I end with a quote from Archer's most recent book in which she talks about being an academic – and implicitly – about emotional dimensions linked to the profession:

Certainly, we care about reputational goods, but these are conferred by a diffuse, global constituency in ways that largely defeat instrumental rational strategies. They are not enhanced by receipt of an extra pay increment at one's local university. Ironically, this local institution is of diminishing importance except in one respect – it is where we engage in free-giving to our students in defiance of performance indicators! In fact, most of us have no vested material interests in our local universities because what keeps us going is neither materially nor institutionally based. Instead, it is the quite small group of geographically dispersed friends (and a vastly larger one of friendly acquaintances) which furnish relational goods defying commodification: stimulus above all but also constructive criticism, a readiness to read and improve first drafts, a sharing of their reactions to new material and a reference if you can't locate it. (Archer 2012: 312)

The relational goods Archer refers to defy commodification and are furnished by friends and they are what the doctoral supervisors in this study strive to furnish to their students – no matter which type of reflexivity they apply in their practice. The emotional labour that supervisors invest in their students is evidence of this, and that is why doctoral supervision can be described as a labour of love – love of a discipline or field. And supervisors are instrumental in moving their discipline or field forward through their work with their doctoral students. So when Archer (ibid) claims that *Homo academicus* has died from the speed of change, I have to disagree. Judging from my interviews in this study, s/he is still jogging along – even if s/he is a little out of breath.

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## Appendix I – Interview schedule

Affective dimensions of supervising doctoral students

Areas for discussion

### Supervisory practice

- Changes to supervisory practice as a result of national changes to policy (QAA code of practice; skills agenda; researcher development agenda; monitoring completion rate) and impact on practice
- Changes to supervisory practice as a result of institutional changes to practice
- Preferred supervisory model
- Managing student expectations
- Working in supervisory teams

### Emotional responses

- One or more instances where you have been delighted/proud about a student's progress or performance?
- One or more instances where you have been anxious or concerned about a student's progress or performance?
- What would you describe as the pressure points for supervisors during the supervisory process? [when you as a supervisor experience most anxiety/frustration]
- Relationship with your doctoral students once they have graduated
- Any particular issues working with international students
- Any experience of failure/major re-write

### Examination

- Choosing external and internal examiners
- Preparing students for the viva

### Other

Any key concerns AND/OR positive comments regarding the supervisory process

## Appendix II – Information for participants

April 2011

Dear Participant,

Many thanks for agreeing to participate in the study 'Affective dimensions of supervising doctoral students'. This work forms part of a Professional Doctorate in Higher Education which I am completing at the University of Sussex under the supervision of Professor Louise Morley.

As a participant, your own identity and that of your institution will be kept anonymous throughout the study and in any subsequent dissemination of the work.

Interviews/conversations will be digitally recorded and stored on a password protected computer. Once transcribed, the recordings will be deleted.

You will be asked to spend 40-60 minutes with me discussing a number of questions/headings which will be sent to you in advance. You will also be sent a transcript of our conversation and given the opportunity to add or delete information.

In addition, all participants will have the opportunity to read and comment on the final report on the findings (the result section).

Below is a brief description of the study.

### **The study**

Supervising doctoral students, entails more than motivating, encouraging, advising and guiding students through a specialist subject. From the supervisor's point of view, assisting a doctoral student through the whole process can be a highly emotionally charged journey. Yet, when looking for studies in the literature that explore this aspect of research supervision, they are few and far between. Whereas the emotional roller coaster of producing a thesis and getting through the *viva voce* successfully is addressed regularly in scholarly articles (Delamont and Egglestone 1983; Leonard 2001; Tinkler and Jackson 2002; Taylor and Beasley 2005) as well as in the many guides and self-help manuals for doctoral students (see for example Phillips and Pugh 1994; Cryer 2000; Delamont, Atkinson and Parry 2000; Wisker 2001) there are no studies exploring the affective aspects of doctoral supervision from the point of view of the supervisor. The supervisor/student relationship is a professional relationship, but as in all relationships there are factors of which the people involved are not necessarily in control. Government agendas and developments within higher education such as widening participation, internationalisation, quality assurance, transparency and performativity have had – and continue to have - a profound impact on individual academic's work pattern (Deem 1998; Morley 2003). This research explores these agendas and the emotional responses they draw out in a group of research supervisors. The study seeks to explore emotional dimensions of the supervisory process from the point of view of the supervisor, and considers ways in which these dimensions can be addressed across the sector when providing professional development for academic staff new to research supervision. The study explores the way in which government initiatives impact on institutional practices and shape

requirements and expectations with regard to the supervisory role. It also takes into account the concerns and worries, joy and pride reported by supervisors in relation to their students' progress and performance. The research questions I wish to explore in this study are:

- What are the pressure points for supervisors during the supervisory process?
- What do supervisors regard as the highlights during the supervisory process?
- What is the supervisory model adopted by supervisors?
- To what extent have government initiatives aimed at doctoral studies had an impact on supervisory practice?
- What are the key concerns that supervisors hold with regard to doctoral supervision?

The questions are explored through conversations with 20 doctoral research supervisors from five UK universities.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Once again, many thanks for agreeing to participate and I look forward to working with you.

Kind regards,

Jannie

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## **Appendix III - Professional Development Statement**

This statement outlines my professional development since I enrolled on the EdD programme in the then School of Education, University of Sussex. The statement is divided into three parts. First, I explain my background and motivation for embarking on the EdD. Secondly, I give an account of what I have done on the course and how the different parts fit together (or do not as it may be). Finally, I reflect on what I have learnt over the seven years in which I have been enrolled on the programme.

### Where I am coming from

Almost everything that has happened in my professional life has been a coincidence – including enrolling on the EdD. I started on the EdD after having worked as an academic developer for just over a year. A casual remark from a colleague at an Awayday for the School of Education made me aware of the professional doctorate. I was attracted to the programme because it offered me an opportunity to explore my own area of work – academic development - in a systematic way. I had moved into academic development after spending 20 years doing part-time teaching at a range of educational establishments in the UK. In 1984 I was a student of Scandinavian Languages and Literature in my native Denmark, working on my *Magister Artium* dissertation on 13<sup>th</sup> century Icelandic poetry, when I was approached by the then Head of Scandinavian Studies at University College London (UCL). He needed a new teacher of Danish and since UCL had one of the best medieval Scandinavian library collections in the world, he thought I might as well finish my dissertation in London while teaching a small group of undergraduates. It sounded like a good experience to add to my short and unimpressive CV, so I accepted his offer.

This led to 19 years as a Teaching Fellow in Danish (UCL), as a Visiting Lecturer (University of Westminster), as a primary and secondary teacher of Danish at various International, American and European schools and as a freelance translator and interpreter. All these jobs were part-time, and I was often working at three or four places at any one time. In 1998, I completed an MA in Education (Psychology) at the Institute of Education, University of London in an attempt to move into something that looked more like a career than the travelling Jack-of-all-trades I had become. So, when I saw an advertisement for an academic developer at the University of Sussex, I

applied for the post because a) it was full-time, and b) I fulfilled all the specifications. And I accepted the post when it was offered to me – without fully knowing what the job actually encompassed as job descriptions for academic developers are notorious vague and opaque. I spent three years at the University of Sussex in the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU), and I completed my course work for Modules 1-4 of the EdD while working at Sussex.

What I did on the course and how it fits together (or not as the case may be)

Every assignment I did for the EdD has been closely connected to what I was working on as an academic developer at the time. For the first module 'Research and the professional' I wrote a critique of Rachel N. Johnson and Rosemary Deem's paper from 2003 "Talking to students: Tensions and contradictions for the manager-academic and the university in contemporary higher education" *Higher Education*, 46(3), 289-314. I had for a while been interested in the way the all forms of 'management' were being used within higher education as a way of demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness within the sector, while those who do the managing become increasingly removed from the student body. For the second module 'Research Methods and Methodology' I conducted a small scale study where I interviewed students about being taught in large classes. The title of the paper was "*Do you think they will do anything about it?*" *Students' perceptions of large group teaching*, and again the assignment was closely related to my work as an academic developer at the time. I was working with a group of lecturers who were struggling with large numbers of students in their classes and, as a result, had received some poor feedback, so I set out to explore the attitudes of their students. I designed a questionnaire and interviewed a small number of students and was introduced to the trials and tribulations of both methods.

For module three, 'Research and evaluation in professional organisations', I conducted an impact evaluation of the policy for associate tutors in the university. The title of the assignment was *Exploring Life in No-man's Land of Academe*. Again, it was an area that I had been involved with as an academic developer, as the associate tutors would tend to undertake part of the postgraduate certificate in academic practice. For the specialist component in module four, I wrote about the student experience as a political construct. Since the launch of the Higher Education Academy in 2004, the powerful

notion of the student experience has been appearing in higher education discourses, but the concept is nebulous and often used in manipulative ways in policy contexts.

Looking back on my assignments it becomes evident that they all were attempts to contextualise, theorise and analyse my daily work as an academic developer. Although this was personally satisfying, it meant that – unlike some of my more forward looking fellow students on the programme – I did not ‘build up’ my thesis from the very beginning. In retrospect, I can see that I should have focused all my work on one specific research field and produced a literature review of that field as my Specialist Component of the EdD programme. Instead, my assignments are rather disparate. However, it could be said that one common theme across the assignments on the programme is different aspects of the lived experience of students and academic staff in UK higher education. Building up the assignments towards a final thesis would also have been difficult given that I have changed jobs twice since starting on the programme. In 2006 I took up a Senior Lectureship at a post-92 university in the Midlands. My job included being programme leader for the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, organising and facilitating professional development for doctoral research supervisors, and leading on the implementation of the university’s Internationalisation strategy. In 2010 I accepted my current post as Principal Lecturer at another post-92 university in London. I am Field Leader for Higher Education Research and Development at the university, which includes leading the university’s programme in academic practice which is mandatory for new teaching staff, and being responsible for professional development for both doctoral students and their supervisors.