Fieldwork supervision: supporting ethical reflexivity to enhance research analysis

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Abstract

This is an inquiry into my experience as a doctoral researcher undertaking an action research/narrative inquiry project investigating the emotion experienced in teacher practice. From the outset, I recognised my position as an active participant of the research — a protagonist, a story-teller, a listener, a re-teller — and facilitator. This recognition prompted me to innovatively employ fieldwork supervision (FWS), in addition to my research supervision, to support a process of ethical reflexivity. Such reflexivity refers to an interrogation into personhood by making conscious cognitive and emotional aspects of oneself that compel feeling and action to influence future action. Data from my reflexive journal, interview transcripts and supervision meeting minutes detail a gendered dilemma, which demonstrates how layers of experience, and associated emotion, weave together and that understanding their connection can add depth to research analysis. I argue that the FWS relationship allowed the research to unfold in ways that it might not have otherwise by helping me to understand the power dynamics of the research relationships. In essence, the FWS relationship deepened the rigour and ethicality of this qualitative study by strengthening researcher reflexivity.

Keywords: Emotion, dilemma, fieldwork, power, reflexivity, supervision, teacher,

Introduction

This article is an inquiry into how I innovatively explored research relationships and emotion through *a form of research supervision* — fieldwork supervision — in a particular case of doctoral research. By drawing on specific expertise, I was supported to understand *the research context,* including the complicated relationships that existed within such a context and to which I became a part of. The case that is at the centre of this inquiry is an action research/narrative inquiry project that took place in an Australian secondary school in the state of Victoria, with a small group of teachers. The

project aimed to explore how emotional consciousness could impact teacher agency and whether professional collaboration could facilitate reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to a process of self-analysis that makes conscious cognitive and emotional aspects of oneself that compel feeling and action to influence future action. An elucidation of reflexivity and ethical reflexivity is addressed in the 'researcher reflexivity' section.

Researchers feel things when they are working with research participants as do the participants (Elliot, Ryan and Hollway 2012; Holland 2007; Holmes 2014; Hollway 2016; Hollway and Jefferson 2013; Clandinin 2013; Bondi 2014). Tapping into those emotions can allow researchers to understand themselves and their relationships with their participants in new ways (Bondi 2014; Holland 2007). In extension I argue that tapping into such emotions might also support a deeper understanding of the research and the researcher-supervisor relationships. Groundwater-Smith et al. (2012), facilitators of participatory action research in educational settings, highlight that the quality of the relationships between the research team is significant to the success of the research and requires reciprocity, respect, and critique. Tapping into one's emotions is easier said than done considering they are not always easily conscious (Elliot, Ryan and Hollway 2012; Hollway 2016). This article focuses on how I went about uncovering the emotion that lay beneath the surface of my understanding.

The work of understanding and managing teachers' emotions was the focus of the project that generated this exploration into research relationships. The research aimed to investigate the characteristic emotions involved in teaching along with the experiences that acted as a catalyst; whether in or out of the classroom. Six teachers participated in the project forming two groups of three. I was the fourth member and facilitator of each group. The teachers and I selected and shared stories of experience that were significant to each of us because they caused a perplexing emotional response.

There was another layer of emotional exploration — how I managed my specific emotional experiences that I reflected on with the teacher participants, and also how I handled the emotional experience of facilitating such research.

The research also aimed to go beyond investigating the work of managing emotions. Using the knowledge gained through the literature and collaboratively working with teachers, a support structure was developed through action research and narrative inquiry. An action research process of plan, implement, observe and reflect was repeated cyclically (Hinchey 2008).

From the outset of the research, I had a background teaching in primary, secondary and alternate education settings and wondered how my experiences as a teacher might impact my perceptions of other teachers' experiences? I also have a theoretical background in psychodynamic psychotherapy and experience as a counsellor. It was due to my experience as a counsellor that I was aware of the potential power dynamics at play in a research context. I drew some similarity between counsellor-client relationships and researcher-research participant relationships. I was also aware of the complicated position I would occupy. I was a teacher member of the research participant group equally sharing my stories that were exposed to interrogation, but I was also an external researcher and not an employee of the school. Drake (2011), Hollway and Jefferson (2013) and Holmes (2014) suggest a need for researchers to self-interrogate due to such power dynamics.

Foucault (1980) states that:

> Power must be analysed as something that which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of

simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. … The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.

(Foucault 1980, 98)

The threads of power that Foucault (1980) describes are represented by the relationships that evolved throughout the research project, which became interconnected like a web. I will demonstrate such evolution.

There were issues of power at play within the research team as well. I was new to professional academia, unlike my supervisors, but we were all educators at the same university. Having a supervision team made up of me and two supervisors meant, as Guerin and Green (2015) put it, my supervisors were each 'bosses', and I was not. My supervisors were people in more powerful positions than I in the university in which we worked, where I was a contracted lecturer, while my supervisors were permanent staff members. One supervisor was employed as the program manager of the course in which I taught, and the other was the Dean of the college. They were quite literally my 'bosses'.

My research supervisors held power over my position, not only as a doctoral researcher but as an employee and trusting them was demanded by this position. Robertson (2017) highlights that trust is a form of power and that in a supervision team, trust is essential. 'By placing trust in others, we place ourselves in a position of vulnerability, ceding power' (Robertson 2017, 1464). I felt like my professional future was in their hands, which made me feel vulnerable and cautious.

I had some understanding of the complex nature of my position, and due to my previous experience as part of a multi-disciplinary team of allied health professionals, I recognised the potential benefit that professional supervision could offer the research fieldwork. A social worker was employed to act as my fieldwork supervisor in addition to my research supervision. The fieldwork supervision (FWS) relationship supported the

research by enhancing reflexivity into my thought and emotion as well as allowing space to reconceptualise boundaries and understanding the power relations at play.

The subsequent sections firstly frame researcher reflexivity and I further discuss FWS as a form of research supervision as well as detail relevant analysis and fieldwork. My professional position throughout this paper is as a researcher, employee, facilitator, teacher peer and participant combined. As Drake (2011, 22) states, researchers 'frequently inhabit multiple positions' which are always in motion. Likewise, Clandinin (2013), who draws on Vinz's work, refers to this positional motion as continually becoming 'dis-positioned'. Such fluid dis-positioning occurs in concert with the circulating power that Foucault (1980) articulates as 'never localised here or there'.

The dilemmas — ethical concerns —faced when operating in such a position are discussed. Engaging with boundaries in doctoral research is typical — I use a particular dilemma to explore the perceived boundaries between researcher, research participant, student, academic and employee. This account highlights the purpose and benefits of the FWS relationship; an innovation that could be adopted in other qualitative research settings where relationships are multi-dimensional.

Researcher reflexivity

Stîngu (2012), examined how reflexivity is applied in teacher practice. Stîngu (ibid) drew on and contrasted the work of Schon (1991), who coined reflection *on* action and reflection *in* action, with Eraut's (1995) emphasis on reflection *for* action. Eraut (ibid) noted that useful reflection requires more than thinking about an experience and a context but also a purpose—reflection for the future. Brookfield (1995; 1998) expanded on the concept of reflection in teacher practice by introducing critical reflection, which requires a practitioner to consider one's practice as though they are an outsider looking in. A critically reflective practitioner examines 'core assumptions about why she does

what she does in the way that she does it' within a moral, intellectual, and political frame (Brookfield 1998, 204). Stîngu (2012) describes teacher reflexivity as evolving and encompassing both reflection and critical reflection, suggesting that reflexivity is also necessary for developing a teacher identity because it enables a deconstruction and reconstruction of oneself. On the other hand, Ryan and Bourke (2013), also interested in teacher reflexivity, suggest that reflexivity is something other than reflection and critical reflection. They describe reflexivity as akin to transformative reflection where the outcome of a reflexive process is future change, particularly change in oneself that initiates action.

Frosh (2012), from a psychoanalytic perspective, describes reflexivity as a process of making meaning through interpreting personal actions and thoughts in relation to the actions and thoughts of others and the level of reflexivity is dependent on the degree of consciousness during the interpretation processes. The significant difference between the teacher reflexivity mentioned above and Frosh's (2012) standpoint is an acknowledgement of shifting consciousness and the relationship between oneself and others. Holmes (2015) describes a process similar to Frosh's (2012) but also considers the significance of emotional consciousness to reflexivity rather than relying heavily on cognitive aspects of reflexivity.

Elliot, Ryan and Hollway (2012), who also draw on psychoanalytic theory, describe, similarly to Holmes (2015), researcher reflexivity as making conscious as well as critiquing past thinking, feelings and action concerning the whole self — intellectual, emotional and physical — to influence future action. Reflexivity is self-referential, but it is also a process that mines for more deep-seated assumptions and emotions, that are not always immediately conscious and are informed by and inform relationships with others, which lead to action. This short review of reflexivity is by no means an

exhaustive consideration of the extensive literature on reflexivity, with its varied nuances between definitions of reflection, critical reflection and reflexivity, as well as temporal, relational and emotional considerations. Though, this review does merge a teacher reflexivity perspective with a psychoanalytically informed researcher reflexivity view.

Reflexivity takes time and is not necessarily sufficiently built into research. Bourdieu (2000, 14) states that 'it is not sufficient to perform the return of thought onto itself' to determine the implicitness of knowledge, due to the unconscious history, physicality and innate power dimensions of that knowledge. There is more to knowledge than assumed which lies beyond conscious thought. Reflexivity contributes to understanding and insight into our social worlds including the web of power that knit together relationships. As Foucault (1980, 102) expresses, evolving power will 'put into circulation a knowledge'. A knowledge that Giddens (2013) describes as more like an assumption that may seem like truth but might also be revised or even dismissed. Such revision, as Bourdieu suggests, requires reflexivity, because to 'bracket off' knowledge is to remain ignorant (Schirato and Webb 2002, 267). So, ultimately, reflexivity can contribute to the production of knowledge and how this knowledge is produced.

Fox and Allan (2014) describe three reflexive lines: conceptual, ethical and performative. Conceptual reflexivity entails inquiry into the interrelationship of theories; performative reflexivity requires an examination into action; ethical reflexivity necessitates interrogation into personhood. It was my feelings of vulnerability and caution, which prompted me to employ the FWS relationship to help support ethical reflexivity.

A concern that researcher reflexivity is sometimes overly dwelled upon is also asserted by Fox and Allan (2014). They argue that the issue of researcher reflexivity is

not about whether or not it should be contemplated, it naturally just is part of research, but that researcher reflexivity is not only an endeavour to understand one*self,* it is a process to understand relationships better. The reflexivity I describe, like Fox and Allan (2014), does not occur in isolation or is a process of interrogation into oneself — it is a negotiation within relationships. I also employed the FWS to include a collaborative element to reflexivity.

I have referred to 'the whole self — intellectual, emotional and physical'. While I have identified three elements of 'the whole' these elements are not individual entities. Emotion is the interrelation of pre-dispositional means of interpreting and expressing emotion, physically feeling and socially composed emotional experiences (Holmes 2010; Fried, Mansfield and Dobozy 2015). The embodiment of emotion and associated thought processes cannot be divided, although, particularly in academia, emotion is often minimised (Holland 2007; Holmes 2010).

The research context

Four female and two male teachers from a single Victorian government secondary school came together to share stories of their emotional experiences in their day-to-day practice, and a 'collaborative inquiry process' (CIP) was developed and trialled. The purpose of the CIP was to offer a method of meaningful professional learning by building a community while exploring the successes and challenges of teachers' work reflexively.

We captured our lived experiences through the sharing of stories (Bruner 2004). The sharing of a story is layered because past experiences, and how we relate with people in those experiences, lay the foundation of how we interpret current experiences (Clandinin 2013). The past shapes lived stories but also influences stories waiting to be lived. The notion of shifting power balances and dis-positioning also plays out through

narrative, where stories shift and merge, and with each shift, there is an opportunity to learn what Clandinin (2013) names the 'un-known' or 'not-known'. I will demonstrate how these layers weave together in the 'layers of experience' section.

Sharing a story is also a reflexive process if the 'central figure' in the story is also the narrator (Bruner 2004); the narrator makes decisions about the content they wish to share (Kohler Riessman and Speedy 2007). But not all of those decisions are conscious (Bruner 2004; Hollway and Jefferson 2013). The listener also makes decisions when hearing a story, so there are stories nested within stories — there is a story lived, a story told, a story heard, a story retold and so on. Each of these stories might be nuanced (Clandinin 2013).

I was an active participant — a protagonist, a story-teller, a listener, a re-teller — and facilitator through this process where the feedback from the teachers helped fine-tune the process and tailor it to meet the needs of the teachers as a support structure. I needed to be reflexive as a researcher. I had to ask myself the tricky questions — 'how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis' (Pillow 2003, 176).

I conducted a background interview with each of the teachers to gauge their understanding of the emotional experiences in their work and gain a sense of their current reflexive practice. The interviews were what Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) describe as a semi-structured life world interview. I would ask a general question such as, 'how is emotion involved in teaching practice?' A conversation would flow that would, for example, inform me of the emotions the teacher consciously experienced in practice as well as what was felt to be the catalyst for these emotions.

The CIP was something different. Initially, it was not structured and was more in line with Hollway and Jefferson's (2013, 151) work on 'free association narrative

inquiry', which enables the 'interviewees to give answers that reflect their own concerns even when these are not immediately consciously accessible'. I was able to compare what the teachers had consciously and explicitly stated when prompted in the background interviews to what unfolded naturally through the stories they shared. Drawing on both interviews and CIP sessions allowed us to uncover our layered narratives, particularly the emotional elements.

Action Research Cycle One (ARC1) was a stage of reconnaissance where I worked one-to-one with the first three teachers that volunteered to participate. I drew on what the teachers were sharing to develop a possible structure for the session that would encourage reflexivity. In Action Research Cycle Two (ARC2) the first three teachers, Group One, and I came together to trial a formal structure for the CIP.

Action Research Cycle Three (ARC3) had two purposes: 1) To trial the resulting CIP with Group One while having the teachers act as facilitators; and, 2) to introduce a new group, Group Two comprising of three new teachers, to trial the formal structure. Group One and I collaboratively developed the CIP that worked for us, ARC3 allowed me to see if the process would work similarly with a new group.

Each teacher was involved in between three and twelve one-hour CIP sessions. The resulting CIP had four stages: 1) a teacher shared a story from their teaching practice — any story that struck them as significant; 2) the CIP group identified the strengths in the story shared; 3) each group member shared a story with a similar theme; and 4) the group inquired into the underlying emotion, expectations, limitations and assumptions. The purpose of this article is not to explain the CIP that evolved in depth but to explore my position as a reflexive researcher in this space.

The merging of narrative inquiry, which is a reflexive process in itself, and action research, which aims for future change, is in alignment with the aims of the

research — to employ reflexivity to make conscious the underlying assumptions and emotion that drive the negotiation of relationships and the ensuing action. Reflexivity supported change in oneself, and with each individual shift, a collective change occurred resulting in action. As we inquired into the narratives that we initially told, they became a shared narrative where each of us was responsible for holding and giving life to a version. This article narrates part of my journey throughout the research, whereas the thesis narrates the collective journey of researcher and research participants.

The fieldwork became a space of intersubjectivity, like Winnicott (1969) describes: a relational space that bonds people together. It was through the sharing of stories that our worlds converged. Intimate details were shared, and we were exposed to each other. Through such a dynamic an intimacy evolved with a set of relations unique to the group of participants involved. Initially, I employed FWS to support my understanding of the relational dynamics within the fieldwork but what I realised later is that more than supporting my ability to facilitate such research the FWS supported an analysis of the research relationships, which in turn strengthened the analysis of the research data.

Extending professional supervision to becoming a form of research supervision

Davys and Beddoe (2010, 21) describe professional supervision for the helping professions as an interactive dialogue that 'shapes a process of review, reflection, critique and replenishment for professional practitioners'. In seeking a rigorous process of reflexivity, the expertise from a social worker was sought to, as Lather (1993, 683) declares, 'make productive use of the dilemma'. I use the word 'dilemma' rather than 'issue' or 'incident' for example because while the experiences I raise are part of the

course of normal human interaction, there is also an element of dilemma. A 'dilemma'

is a predicament where a *choice* has to be made between two or more possibilities,

particularly when the potential outcome may have an undesirable side effect. The *choice*

within the dilemma lay in how I perceived the interaction with the teachers, my

supervisors and the fieldwork supervisor, and how I consequently chose to engage with

each of them.

Floyd and Arthur (2012) detail external and internal ethical engagement in

research where external ethical engagement involves navigating checklists and ethics

applications — the surface ethics. Whereas internal ethical engagement entails the

negotiation of dilemmas that arise from sensitive knowledge and relationships. FWS

was employed to specifically support internal ethical engagement by reflecting on the

dilemmas of research to determine underlying relational aspects of working with the

teachers and my supervisors, and to explore how emotion might affect ways of

knowing.

An experienced social worker and supervisor, Sharlene, who is also an academic

with a PhD qualification, was invited to join the research team to fulfil the role of

fieldwork supervisor. Sharlene had also conducted a qualitative doctoral study via in-

depth interviews so was somewhat familiar with what I was experiencing. We discussed

the practicalities of the relationship and decided we would meet monthly throughout

data collection, as this was the phase of the research when I would need to develop and

manage relationships with the teachers in an intimate space. We met six times

throughout seven research active months while I was collecting and analysing data.

Sharlene explained that the process of supervision would be based on Kolb's

(1984) reflective learning model and that I, as the supervisee, would bring to the

meetings any concerns, feelings or perplexing thoughts (limited to relational

experiences with the teachers) to incite reflection. Through Sharlene sharing her professional experiences, my own experiences were reconceptualised, leading to experimentation in the field. For example, the FWS meetings would often lead me to inquire into or share knowledge in the field with the teachers in ways that I may not have otherwise.

The term 'critical friend' is sometimes used to define 'a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens and offers a critique of a person's work as a friend' (Costa and Kallick 1993, 50). The FWS role might embody the elements of a critical friend, but the role was something more than a friend acting on a favour. Sharlene was a trained supervisor fulfilling a contract by officially agreeing to be an associate supervisor; therefore, there was an element of work and duty of care that goes beyond the boundary of 'friend'. On the other hand, Sharlene is also someone I know as a friend — someone with whom I shared mutual respect and affection, which I later realised was essential to the role as required by me.

Analysis

In addition to the employment of the FWS, I maintained a reflexive journal, which became a repository for researcher stories. I recorded fifty entries in my reflexive journal, which allowed me to self-interrogate through the analysis of the layered images constructed. I recorded an entry immediately after every interview, CIP session and FWS session.

All of the interview and CIP transcripts and reflexive journal entries were analysed for themes, which was useful to see the emotional threads weaving the stories together but also runs the risk of fragmenting the experience (Hollway and Jefferson 2013). To begin with, I did not realise how vital the researcher stories were in scrutinising ways of knowing and making sense of the interview and CIP transcripts that

contained the teacher stories, some of which were mine. Analysing both the researcher and teacher stories stimulated revision of knowledge.

Initially, I began categorising every segment of the teacher stories and establishing a quantifiable measure as to which emotional responses were most significant. Eight emotions were found to be inherent in teaching practice; defeat (302), contentment (122), frustration (88), worry (86), anger (80), sadness (59), happiness (40) and love (33), where the associated numerical values illustrate how many times these emotions were referenced (see, Hopman 2019). I then went back over each category to analyse the context of the emotional experiences to gain a qualitative sense of each emotion, that were often clustered together, and the emergent themes that connected our shared stories. For example, 'power' and 'gender' were sometimes themes that overlay the stories.

The reflexive journal, contributed to the process of analysis because during analysis I was not only referring to transcripts, I also referred to the associated reflexive journal entry, and some of those were also linked to FWS related entries. This process reacquainted me to the evolving relationships I had with the teachers. Similarly, I also listened to the corresponding audio as I analysed to reconnect myself with the bodily sensations of hearing the teachers speak (Clandinin 2013; Hollway 2009). I cross-referenced the emergent themes from the teacher stories with the emergent themes from the researcher stories. I could have stopped there — to merely note that there was a theme that connected our shared stories — but the FWS helped me uncover and understand what the thread of 'power' and 'gender' meant to the research participants as well as the researcher and the research itself. An example of such an understanding is outlined in the 'layers of experience' section.

The FWS relationship was not about reading into the unconscious processes of the teachers; it was a method in uncovering the stories from my history and understanding how they affected my relationship with the teachers I worked alongside. Though I did not understand it from the outset, it also became a way for me to understand my growing relationship with my research supervisors. I did interpret what I believed became conscious for the teachers, but I also employed a feedback interview process after the analysis was complete to check with the teachers that my interpretations were a fair representation of the experiences. In a way, the FWS relationship was like a feedback interview for myself — where Sharlene supported me to check that my interpretations of myself were fair. Holmes (2014) suggests that conducting feedback interviews is a suitable process when working with content that might not be well understood by those who share it.

The fieldwork

There is one dilemma from the fieldwork that will be explored. Without the support of the FWS, my perceptions and choices may have been altogether different. Though there are many more incidents to explore the one chosen was the first that arose and helped prepare me to navigate the subsequent dilemmas. The following extracted content comes from my reflexive journal, interview transcripts and supervision meeting minutes. Reflexive journal entries were immediately recorded after I met with the teachers and Sharlene. The supervision meeting minutes were recorded by either my supervisors or me and emailed to each other for endorsement.

Layers of experience — a gendered dilemma

A gendered dilemma became evident early on in the CIP sessions and was raised with

Sharlene, who, like me, is also female. I was concerned over feelings around what appeared to be a power battle that existed between a male teacher, whom I have attributed the pseudonym of Henry, and myself, which Bondi (2014, 45) highlights as a problem for 'social researchers attentive to the power relations of research'.

The first story of experience was when I met with Henry for the second time in October 2014. This second meeting was our first CIP session, whereas the previous meeting had been a background interview. The detail of this account has been derived from the audio transcript of the CIP session. Early on in the CIP sessions, the teachers were asked to bring a newspaper or magazine article that piqued their interest to stimulate the inquiry. Henry brought a newspaper article about the Australian Prime Minister threatening to 'shirt-front' the Russian President. We discussed what it means to 'shirt-front' someone and Henry understood it to be an 'act of violence and aggression'. Henry stated that there was 'a humorous angle' to the Prime Minister's behaviour but that he also felt, as an Australian, 'outrage', 'shame' and 'embarrassment', and that the Prime Minister's behaviour was 'just macho rubbish'. Henry then went on to discuss another more personal story in a previous workplace where an elected union member acted 'shameful' which made Henry 'so mad [he] went around to every single staff member and said, 'We have to get rid of [the elected union member'. Henry wanted to stage a 'coup' but thought better of it because people would only 'remember the fight'.

This session featured a thread of anger and fight — a challenge of power, and I felt the challenge of power at the time when I reflected in my journal:

> Interestingly the newspaper article Henry brought into discuss featured a powerful person and the discussion that unfolded featured, professionalism, power, macho-behaviour and gaining respect in the workplace. … When I made suggestions, I usually framed it in a question. 'I wonder whether …?' 'Do you think that …?'

> [Henry] either agreed overly with "of course", which automatically made me think
> that it was a stupid question to ask in the first place, or with complete
> disagreement. ... I wonder whether this is a power play?

<div align="right">(reflexive journal, October 2014)</div>

The FWS relationship helped me explore further my feelings and attitudes toward gender. I did not sense the same power dynamic between myself and the other female teachers, and so I wondered whether it was gender related. I asked Sharlene if gender had ever played a role in researcher-participant dynamics from her perspective. Sharlene gave me examples of similar situations in her experience — situations where she felt gender was influencing power dynamics. She premised her stories by stating that 'she views the world through a critical feminist lens' (reflexive journal, October 2014). The following story has been pieced together from the October 2014 reflexive journal entry. The story was then sent to Sharlene to determine it is a fair representation of her experience, which she approved.

> I have had a long career and have experienced many instances of blatant sexism.
> On one occasion I had been told by a potential employer 'there is no way I would
> employ a woman'. While explicit sexism is not as obvious today, it is much more
> subtle now, but it still happens. When I was a novice researcher I interviewed a
> male participant much older than me. Right from the beginning I felt inadequate
> and I felt that dual sense of being younger, of being a woman and having to prove
> my expertise. The participant subtly asserted control by providing more detailed
> information than was necessary as though I needed educating and including a good
> deal of detail about his expertise. It was definitely tied up with gender, but I think
> also age too as I reflect back on it. It felt uncomfortable and I just wanted to get out
> of there. But I just had to wear it and persevere. I tried to be as competent as I
> could be, and I just thought there was nothing else I could do. I felt he had all of
> the power and I had to be grateful to him for participating. But I think that all of
> those experiences alert you to what's going on and the dynamics. I certainly was
> able to reflect on what happened afterwards and think about the experience of

researchers, women researchers, and see that as an example. It makes you more prepared for the next time that it is likely to happen.

After hearing this story, I recorded the following in my journal:

> While this research has not been underpinned in particular by critical feminism, perhaps I need to be more mindful of [my critical feminist stance] and recognise the impact on my research. … It [the meeting] made me think of something specifically [Henry] had said, "this [session] didn't seem very collaborative" and I immediately remembered having a sinking feeling and thinking that I was doing something wrong — he was doing all of the work. He was in one way asserting himself and his position as being 'useful', and I was not, but he may also have been concerned that he was overtaking and perhaps suggesting that if I want the power, I will have to take it.

(reflexive journal, October 2014)

The story that Sharlene told clearly made me think more critically about the lens I was viewing the unfolding research relationships through. I had quickly tapped into Henry's anger but started to sense that I was missing something. I trusted Sharlene with my story and she reciprocally trusted me with hers. As Robertson (2017) points out, she ceded her power, which gave me confidence. It was not until hearing Sharlene's story did I begin to understand why I might have felt such power dynamics. I became open to possibilities. I was then ready to trust the story with my supervisors in our February supervision meeting, four months after I raised it with Sharlene, where the topic of Henry and his newspaper article featuring 'Tony Abbott [Australian Prime Minister at the time] shirtfronting Putin [Russian President]' (supervision minutes, February 2015) was a point of discussion. I expressed my concerns that I was possibly misinterpreting Henry's response to me and that Sharlene had facilitated a train of thought that may not have been articulated otherwise. I understood such concerns were reasonable and that my past experiences frame how I might see or feel about a current experience. I had

started to see how our experiences were layered and our stories connected.

I had entered the school with an understanding of professional roles within schools and gender from my previous (mostly primary) school settings, where there is currently a disproportionate number of female teachers (81%) to female deputy principals (77%) and female principals (58%) (McKenzie et al. 2014). Sharlene allowed me to bring into consciousness my underlying attitude and feelings towards men working in schools. It was at this meeting that one of my supervisors suggested that I could ask Henry about his attitude toward gender in schools.

Gender arose again at a later CIP session where the critical incident being discussed involved a female teacher feeling excluded from a professional activity and Henry commented little throughout the session. I noted that Henry had been unusually quiet and, following my supervisor's advice, I asked if there was any particular reason. Henry's reply is detailed in the excerpt below. At the next FWS meeting, I discussed with Sharlene my surprise about the taken for granted assumptions about gender roles. The thinking that flowed after the meeting led to this record in my journal:

> [Henry] did not share an alternate perspective in the previous session and when queried
> he had said that he was mindful of the fact (to his mind) that men are rarely excluded and
> felt that it would be inappropriate to claim an experience of exclusion as it would seem
> trivial. In thinking about this, I wonder whether then [Henry] being encouraged to be
> facilitator plays on the group psyche around gender roles.

(reflexive journal, March 24, 2015)

By this stage into the action research cycle the teachers were given the opportunity to act as a facilitator of the CIP session. No one was particularly forthcoming in wanting to take on the role, so I asked Henry if he would like to, knowing that he had some

experience in facilitation, which he agreed to. However, the conversation with Sharlene made me wonder whether I had assumed Henry to want to take on the role of facilitation based on his gender.

After a later CIP session, in my journal I noted:

> I asked [Henry] whether he had any issues around his gender and acting as a facilitator last week. He felt that men often put their hand up and get offered the roles (that is his daily experience) and he was mindful of not preventing someone else from taking on the role.

(reflexive journal, March 25, 2015)

Henry's, Sharlene's and my experiences were layered and very much connected — where the teacher, the researcher, the research participant, the academic, the employee, the friend are merged. Each of the lived stories connected through anger, frustration, sadness, care, shame and embarrassment. Such stories are worth exploring because without interrogation the connection between experiences — the relationships, power and knowledge — is less clear and left to the imagination.

Conclusion

Foucault (1980, 114) states that 'history has no "meaning"', not to say that it does not mean *something*, but that *something* cannot be intelligible until it is understood through the web of power and associated knowledge. So, knowledge cannot be obtained from a narrative account without exploring the intrinsic power dynamics that give life to such knowledge. Power is experienced in the social world and in the individual through visceral sensation, which is why reflexively inquiring into emotion is also an excavation

point for understanding what is 'known'.

Fox and Allan's (2014) three reflexive lines — conceptual, ethical and performative reflexivity — were enhanced through supervision. Conceptual reflexivity, inquiry into the interrelationship of theories, was more comfortable to work through with my supervisors from the beginning. To a lesser degree so was performative reflexivity where we examined action. Fox and Allan's (2014) ethical reflexivity, encompasses Holmes' (2015) emotional reflexivity, which ultimately shifts one*self* in a fundamental way. Ethical reflexivity was much harder because it required interrogation into my personhood in conjunction with aspects of performative reflexivity concerning inter*action,* which was the focus of the FWS relationship. Though, my hesitation to broach ethical reflexivity with my research supervisors did not become abundantly clear to me until I explored the gendered dilemma with Sharlene.

Elliot, Ryan and Hollway (2012) note that feeling vulnerable is likely to hamper collaborative reflexive work, and I am not sure that it would have been possible, or comfortable, talking about the experiences I discussed with Sharlene with my research supervisors from the outset. Yet Clandinin (2013), Elliot, Ryan and Hollway, (2012), Fox and Allan (2014), and Groundwater-Smith et al. (2012) each discuss the merit of having others inquire into one's thinking. Sharlene's position in the research project supported the research relationships to grow while supporting me to inquire into my thinking and feeling.

I felt the power dynamics with Henry as the novice researcher. I felt the power dynamics between my supervisors and me, as well as with Sharlene. The power dynamics between Sharlene and I were more evenly balanced because we had come together from a position of trust from the start — we were friends — and due to me

having limited power in the beginning, the FWS relationship perhaps felt comfortable because it allowed me to reclaim some power.

All of these power dynamics were tied together for me. When Sharlene ceded a little of her power, it gave me the confidence to trust my supervisors, and through that trust, more trust flowed. My supervisors demonstrated trust from the outset in that they ceded their power by officially including Sharlene in the research team, hence increasing their vulnerability for the benefit of the research. The growing trust affected how I worked with the teacher participants and what sense I made of our interactions. It was up to me to make sense of a 'way of knowing that was not just about unruly emotions getting in the way of rationality but the relational communication of body-based emotional experience, past and present' (Hollway 2016, 2).

Relational aspects of the research will be unique for every case of research — not every doctoral researcher will feel like I felt — and while the FWS intended to support relational aspects of the research, I think the most significant impact the FWS had on the research was to strengthen analysis. The theme of power was replicated in the multiple layers of experience, and it was by cross-referencing the teacher stories with the researcher stories that alerted me to the recurrent theme. I had assumed that the male teacher was seeking power and control leaving me feeling vulnerable and incapable, however, through the dialogue with Sharlene I was led to investigate further. The fieldwork supervision offered, as Kalmbach Phillips and Carr (2009) highlight, a necessary alternate perspective on the interactions that unfolded through growing relationships to illuminate positionality and situatedness. I uncovered that what I had mistaken as a power play was actually Henry's caution to not dominate. I had picked up on the overtones of anger and frustration in Henry's story but not on the undertone of care, concern and sadness, which partly fuelled his 'shame' and 'embarrassment', also

threading through each of the highlighted stories. The FWS relationship influenced my capacity to analyse the research data.

While gender was not a specific element of my research these assumptions could have interfered with the evolving researcher-participant relationship and the richness of discussion that flowed. As a listener and the person responsible for the interpretations of the teachers' stories I had to be scrutinised (Clandinin 2013; Groundwater-Smith et al. 2012). There is also another ethical consideration where, if I had not been prompted to inquire into Henry's position on gender in his professional setting, his input would have been diminished and he may have been represented unfairly. The FWS relationship served to increase the trust of the research itself as well as heighten the trust of the research relationships. Without trusting research relationships, in this case of research, there could be little trust in the research.

I was a researcher occupying a multi-dimensional position and hence having to navigate naturally messy relationships. The aim is to use reflexive strategies to explore the unease of such a position and be as aware as we can be with the realisation that we can never be completely aware of anything or everything. I was able to acknowledge the fluidity of my position. People can only attempt to find ways through the world and 'be able to exercise some control and be the kind of person that they want to be, within the roles available to them' (Holmes 2010, 143).

The fieldwork supervision was no *fix* to the messiness of research though it did facilitate reflexivity to assist me to better understand my thoughts and emotions; allowing me to improve the ethicality and rigour of the research — to be the type of researcher I wanted to be.

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