

The challenges of being a mature doctoral student: the supportive role of vertical and lateral third spaces

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Abstract: From 2009 to the present day, I have been a doctoral student connected to the Centre for Psycho-Social Studies at UWE in Bristol (now called the psycho-social research theme group of the University of the West of England). I started this journey at the age of 64, and I am now 71. During this period, as an experienced organizational consultant transitioning to the identity of researcher, I sought out the support of various “others”. As I have reflected on these support systems, I have begun to think of them as, so to say, third spaces, each of which provided (and contained) a certain aspect of my learning and experience. The aim of this chapter is to articulate the nature of these spaces, especially in light of Mitchell’s (2014) theory relating to family and social axes. My thesis is that the combination of both vertical (family; supervisory) spaces and horizontal (social; collegial) spaces makes for a truly integrated research journey and helped me in developing a new professional “skin” as both consultant and researcher. This chapter has important implications for the “mature” doctoral student and his or her supervisors.

1. Introduction

Between the ages of 64 and 71, I undertook my doctoral studies at the University of West England in Bristol, where I was closely affiliated with the Centre for Psycho-Social Studies (now called the psycho-social research theme group of the University of the West of England). Although I was already an experienced organizational consultant and a published writer, I had to start from scratch in the student role and learn to do research. I naturally sought out the support of various “others”, with whom I have openly shared my work and my ongoing journey. These others include a German supervisor, my husband (a colleague), various organizational development colleagues who functioned as my process consultants and a fellow UWE doctoral student. Other sources of support were provided by the university, i.e. my two supervisors (one of whom was my director of studies), the role analysis group that met during the bi-annual seminars, and my doctoral colleagues. I also add my reflexive journal to this list, as it was my ongoing thinking companion.

As I have reflected on these support systems, I realize that they were not just accidental formations. In each a certain kind of work took place. In fact, each has had its own particular function in my learning. Together, they helped to contain my experience as a learner and researcher.

When I began my studies in 2009, I didn't realize how truly difficult it would be to take on this new identity, to be a student, especially at my age and stage professionally. On the one hand, I had many, many resources to draw upon. I was an experienced writer, and I had published extensively. I was married to a German "doctor father", who had himself supervised countless numbers of doctoral students, knew how to construct bibliographies, and in general was always there to support me. I had colleagues who took on valuable roles as process consultants. And I was undertaking this study, not because I wanted to make a career move, but because I was passionately interested in the drawing of dreams, and this interest was so intense, that I decided I wanted support for doing the research. The praxis that is the topic of my dissertation is called Social Dream-Drawing (SDD).

I see all of these various relationships, in one way or another, as third spaces. As theorised by Jessica Benjamin (2004), the concept of the third characterises the co-created space between patient and analyst. This space serves as a creative holding space between the two role holders, that binds them together in a collective joint task, that of learning. It is a "shared third" (ibid.:19) that stands outside each of them as individuals and yet links them together, in the service of the task of psychoanalysis. It not only holds the work over time, but holds the connection between the two when they are separated, so that the insights and working through connected to it can take place in the absence of the physical other.

This construct moves us beyond the technical focus on the transference and countertransference dynamics between the two. While these processes certainly take place and can be said to characterise the interaction, they don't completely capture what is actually created and how learning is made of them. Even Hirsch's (1996) notion of the transference-countertransference matrix, in which the patient's early issues are enacted and illuminated, is not so much a third space, but a deeply enmeshed and tangled space between them.

The concept of the third has been applied to the psycho-social perspective by Clarke and Hoggett (2009:17), who refer to "the perspective of the 'third'" as central to undertaking psycho-social research. They emphasize that having "different perspectives regarding the data" (ibid.:19) or having one's data "perceived from different vantage points" (ibid.) provides a kind of external check on the rigors of undertaking psycho-social research. In addition, the supervision and support of third figures allow the researcher to 'see' what is strikingly present to others but was in the blind spot of the researcher. In addition, they have a very important function in mitigating the potential pitfalls of psycho-social research. As Hollway and Jefferson (2013:154) put it: "If

psychoanalytic concepts are congruent and subordinated to a holistic treatment of data, they can be safeguarded against ‘wild analysis’”.

While I heartily endorse this perspective, I also see the idea of the third as relevant to the internal experience of the doctoral journey, as well as the content of one’s dissertation. In my case, in particular, I was undergoing a major change in professional identity, which is probably not too unusual for an older doctoral student. Fortunately, the psycho-social approach recognizes that such a transition exists and provides support for this process.

2. Some specific vignettes of third spaces

I have thought of these spaces as vertical and horizontal (lateral) third spaces, and in order to give a flavor of what I am talking about, I will offer some vignettes. On the vertical axis, I will describe an example from the third space created between myself and my UWE head of studies and then between myself and my German supervisor. On the horizontal axis, I will describe an example from the third space between myself and a close fellow student and then between myself and the doctoral organizational role analysis group.

Vertical 1: My head of studies

“Do I deserve to be a doctor? Will I make it?”

In the vertical third space, I was being guided by professionals who made a commitment to help me specifically with the course of my study. Some (UWE supervisors, progression examiners, progress reviewer, course instructors) took on this role and this commitment as part of their professional obligations to students. As such, in their work with me, they were representing the demands of the university and also insuring to the university that this student would fulfill its expectations. They either chose or were asked to work with me. I did not choose them. Being authorized in these roles by the university and by my agreement to participate as a student meant that I agreed to follow their guidance and, in a sense, surrender my own authority to their judgments. This made the transference processes very difficult, especially relating to criticism of my work. At the same time, however, it assured me that whenever I might be making a wrong step, I would be properly guided.

Without doubt, and I think most people will agree, the working relationship in the dyad between a doctoral student and one’s head of studies, is a complicated and fraught one. In a certain way, it is very difficult to create one’s own third space here, due to the major demands on both parties from outside sources to

ultimately produce a successful product. Not much can be held truly within the dyad that is not deeply influenced by external reality.

I have come to realize that the head of studies must stand on a very insecure boundary between, on the one hand, the pressures of the university and, on the other hand, the immense insecurity and dependency of her student. Given this difficult role, I think my director of studies took quite a risk in supporting the direction I wanted to take, because I was on the one hand developing a way of working in organizations (in an organizational role), which I then intended to research (from the researcher role). I needed the support for both roles, which I got.

From my perspective, as an older student, I found myself very much regressing in my relationship to my head of studies, who was much younger than I. One cannot ignore one's head of studies. She holds you together and keeps you on track. She tells you what to do next. She guides you and judges you and prepares you other examiners. In this role, she cannot love everything you do, even if you wish her to.

The head of studies must somehow remain a good object to the student while at the same time contain the demands of the other, i.e. the university. This role is not unlike the mother, tasting the hot food for the baby and blowing on it, so that it can be palatable and digestible. At times my transferences have been overwhelmingly positive and, at one particular juncture, overwhelmingly negative. It has been a major effort for me to contain these unconscious processes in order to stay in role, preserve the relationships and achieve the tasks at hand.

What brought on an overwhelming negative transference reaction on my part was related to two emails sent to me by my head of studies, outlining the problems with two chapters that I was actually quite proud of and tremendously relieved to have finished. In defending myself against what I experienced as a narcissistic wound and very deep feelings of failure, I found myself feeling extremely critical of my two supervisors for what I saw as their failure to provide me the proper guidance on what should be included in such chapters.

I experienced the tone of the two emails as "cold" and attacking. Suddenly I felt abandoned by my up to then "we are totally with you in this process" supervisors. My head of studies, particularly, had gone over to the dark side.

Upon much reflection, I realized that this intense feeling of disappointment with my supervisors (an echo of an earlier negative reaction to a female progression examiner) and an almost baffling contempt regarding their failure, was actually not new. In 1990, as an adult student in a professional training program for

psychoanalytic consulting, this same affect was expressed by a number of my fellow students, who were permanently angry at the directors of the program because of the poor quality of the copies of the articles we were assigned to read. The supplies were defective and so were the suppliers.

Being captured by this same extreme feeling toward my supervisors has made me realize how extremely difficult it is to be an adult learner and to be the teachers of an adult learner. The transference dynamic between the child learner and the teacher is completely different. The vulnerable, professional, insecure adult learner requires perfection from the adults. As my head of studies noted in her feedback to another chapter, supervisors are those who are: “the ‘subject supposed to know’, the one who has all the answers and all the ‘supplies’”. It seems as well as if this dynamic especially occurs when the student feels vulnerable to his or her own failure in the new learning process. As Phillips has written (2012:65): “In this familiar division of labor there is a plenitude – the one who, because he is supposed to know, is in the know – and there is an inadequacy: parents and children, teachers and students...” This connects also to Ogden’s (1999) notion of the asymmetricality in the relationship between the power and status of the analyst and the patient.

This experience, which I fortunately realized was an overreaction and related to some primitive experiences with my unpredictable mother, consumed my therapy sessions for months, until I was able to locate the early experience, connect it to this over-reaction, and internally return to work. Both my supervisors, sensing the distance, gave me the space to work this through, without prodding me for explanations or better chapters, which I very much appreciate. I credit them for truly being, in Winnicott’s terms, “good enough mothers” (1971).

Vertical 2: my German supervisor

“Can I develop SDD and also honor and grieve my lost colleague?”

Even before I began my studies at UWE, I asked a German colleague, Ellen, to supervise me in developing the praxis of SDD. Because she was not in any way affiliated with UWE, this dyad was not vulnerable to the external pressures so present in my first example. In fact, she was a good colleague who was interested in my professional development and also interested in the work I was doing. Between us, we developed a role relationship of supervisor and supervisee that built on our joint needs and wishes. I would say that we both held this third space as very important, but also very much as a luxury for both of us. No money changed hands, and during the course of my studies, we met six times, either at her office or mine. We lived an hour apart by car.

As opposed to the monitoring role of my UWE supervisors, Ellen was not in a position to evaluate or guide me. She had no “stake”, so to say, in my doctorate, although she certainly wanted me to be successful professionally. She and I were free to share, associate and think together. In many ways, our work held many aspects of myself, i.e. the creativity of developing something new and my Germaness, having just moved to Germany four years earlier.

I would say that this third space held the territory between my beginnings of SDD and the university. The important example is the work we did on my mourning of a key colleague, who sponsored my first SDD group in the Netherlands. Her death after the group’s third session not only brought our group work to an end, but our identity as well, as some were unwilling to meet again. This loss of a dear colleague influenced my feelings toward continuing with SDD, especially since our last session together failed in many ways, and she expressed her disapproval of my work. We had only just begun to talk this over when she suddenly died. It was my work with my German supervisor that helped me to separate the mourning process of my colleague from the desire to continue to work on SDD. Ironically, my lost colleague was also a colleague of my German supervisor. We attended her funeral together. So it could be said that this third space was one of co-mourning. Eventually, as my UWE supervisors took over the role of the development of SDD, my German supervisor and I were freer to work on the loss, which then had a place to be worked through.

Lateral/horizontal 1: My doctoral colleague

“Am I competent enough to cope with this unbelievably challenging work?”

In the horizontal third space, I was so very fortunate to have a fellow doctoral student, who was in the same general professional field. Although we did not know one another previously, we immediately spoke the same language, so to say. She was a year ahead of me in the program, and was an invaluable help in orienting me to where to find information and who to ask about what. However, over time, through the various hurdles and failures we both experienced, the relationship grew to be a much deeper one. I felt that this third space is where I held all of my struggling efforts and insecurities.

While the conversation was sometimes about the specifics of our respective dissertation topics, we mostly talked about the experiences of doing a doctorate and the many difficulties it entails. Skyping regularly and meeting up in Bristol and other venues, we have engaged in a deep ongoing process of peer review (Creswell & Miller 2000), not only by supporting one another’s research processes but also reflecting deeply on our experiences as researchers.

Although I had achieved a certain status as a published organizational thinker in relation to consultation, I was starting from the beginning as a graduate student learning to be a researcher. This was not very easy to do at my stage of life. Here it was a great advantage to have close contact with my fellow doctoral student, who is near to my age and going through the same transition. Both of us, established in one field, were and still are struggling to establish our identities as psycho-social researchers. Both of us were driven by a passionate interest in a particular topic to undertake doctoral studies. As I noted in my reflexive journal (26 May 2012): our relationship

...mobilizes our professional selves, and very much helps us integrate our professional selves with the student identity. We can be our professional selves in how we think about our work and how we plan together. That is very self-affirming.

At the same time, we were both able to help one another using our existing professional expertise. For example, during the course of my studies, I had the tendency, especially once I had finished a major step (such as doing my first data analysis scan) to want to dig deeper rather than go on to the next step. My doctoral colleague, who could identify with this tendency, was a great help. As I noted in my reflexive journal on 12 April 2012 regarding a recent Skype conversation with her:

I wanted to talk about being stuck, in a no man's land, about my impressions of [the] data analysis phase. After catching her up with everything, she made a very important comment. Sounds like, in a sense, I am just avoiding getting on to the next step! That was a bit of a shock, but, you know, I think she was right. It is a kind of resistance to go on ahead and get going. We talked for quite a while....We began to realize that both of us are somehow stuck just before we actually create our product that will reveal all our thinking and also reveal us as the thinkers that we are. And both of us are anxious about this next stage. We prefer to stay in our heads or in our experiences. Not to move ahead. For both of us this is a breakthrough.

This collegial third space was not just a place to play or gossip (although, being human, we of course did a bit of both). It was not a defensive or pairing space. Instead we created for ourselves over time a trusting and open space to bring up whatever was spilling over from the experiences of our respective doctoral journeys. By coincidence (or not), we had the same two female supervisors and the same head of studies.

Sometimes our experiences were similar, and sometimes they were not. In any case, we each had our own struggles with the demands of the task of the

doctorate, and each of us had our own separate relationship with our supervisors and the university. Thus, this could be seen as an example of a triangulation, i.e. myself, my colleague and the system. In describing triangular spaces in organization, Tietel (2002) makes the point that, in order to sustain a healthy working relationship, one must accept that the other two members of the triangle have a relationship with one another that excludes one. Thus, my colleague in the program had her own relationship with the supervisory pair that I was excluded from and visa versa. As Tietel puts it, "...this step is tied to a fundamental act of acknowledgement: the recognition of the fact that not only I entertain a relationship with the two actors but that they also have a relationship with each other" (2002:43) and with other third parties.

In our case, we did not conceive of ourselves as a coalition against others. We wanted very much to be valued and successful students of the university and, at the same time, to maintain our own separateness. As such, we were constantly struggling to hold and utilize our expert identities in one field, while fumbling and stumbling into a new identity in another. It was, in other words, a very demanding process of "separation *and* attachment" (ibid.), as opposed to one of coalition, where you are either in or out, for or against.

This avoidance of splitting, i.e. "we are the poor, persecuted but really good students. Where is the caring, appreciative university?" meant that, for the full length of our studies, we had to carry the uncertainty of our capacity and ability to actually succeed at the overwhelming task that we had taken on. It was not that our previous experience was invalid, but we soon grew to realise that it was not sufficient to achieve a successful result.

In retrospect, I think we were very much helped by our own personal strengths, particularly our ability to stay mostly in the depressive position. Tietel (ibid.:36) notes that those such a position helps one to manage the triangular reality and "bearing ambivalence". Therefore, neither of us had an interest in winning over the other to a particular point of view. Instead we helped one another to cope. Although there were clear frustrations with university demands, we did not primarily focus on these problems in order to comfort or soothe ourselves. In retrospect, I give myself and my colleague a lot of credit for somehow realizing this, although we had never articulated it.

Lateral 2: Role Analysis Group:

"Can I dare to go beyond my colleagues and be on an intellectual par with my mentors?"

The on-going doctoral Role Analysis group, which meets during the doctoral seminars, has as its aim “to provide participants with the resources and conditions for examining their experiences of research and framing them systematically” (Program Handout) As such, it has been a major support and source of insight, especially with regard to my status and my identity in relation to my family and to my professional field, socioanalysis. It provided a vital space to bring to mind an issue that might otherwise exist, but not be consciously thought about and worked on.

This group meets for a few hours during each bi-annual doctoral seminar and is facilitated by a member of the faculty, but not one’s direct supervisors. Each group consists of 4 or 5 student participants, each of which has the opportunity to share with the group an issue of concern relating to one’s role as researcher or one’s research itself. Group members then offer their thoughts and associations for the presenter to consider and integrate. For the first few years of my study, I was blessed to have been in a stable group with the same participants and the same facilitator.

In the first few sessions, it was an amazing experience to be, in one way or another, busy with issues around my father (my success being used by him to enhance his reputation) and then with issues with my mother (prone to envious attacks). Not least, this made me realize how strongly these introjections continued to influence me.

However, after I had settled into the research role and into my studies, what began to emerge were the issues relating to an organization that had been my professional home for over thirty years. The feeling of belonging to such an organization, the sense of security and identity that it gave me, began to be challenged by the sense that I could no longer develop intellectually or professionally by staying completely loyal to it. And, in a sense, my development as a theorist would, in many ways, conflict with the familiar role I had in this system. As I noted in my reflexive journal on 9 July 2012:

One extremely important new point is what I realized in the Role Group. It is one thing to help others develop new thinking, quite another for me to develop new theory! And that is what I am doing and I am needing the support of the university to do that, the imprimatur, so to say. One could say there are three levels:

Theory
Thinking
Knowledge

I am aiming for the top level...But also developing a new theory is an act of separation...

While the Role Analysis group was very much a collegial group, the fact that it was housed in the university in the context of doctoral studies, meant that I could do a certain kind of work only in this setting and with others going through perhaps similar identity changes. Outside the university experience, this would have felt much too arrogant to share with others.

3. Underlying theory regarding vertical and horizontal (lateral) axes

This section discusses recent formulations regarding the importance of the horizontal axis, both in organizations and in family therapy. I connect these formulations to my experience as a doctoral student and present an argument for the importance of both axes to contain and support the doctoral journey.

Increasingly, organizational theorists are noting the growing relevance and prevalence of lateral organizational formations in contemporary organizations. Armstrong (2007:194) defines them as ‘a relation between collaborating persons, role holders, groups or teams that is unmediated by any actual or assumed hierarchical authority’. He notes the growing frequency of teams working laterally in organizations, even teams that have no apparent authorization or leadership. I take this definition to apply directly to the work both with my colleague and with the doctoral role analysis group described above. It also applies to many other third spaces that I had with colleagues. Interestingly, although the doctoral Role Analysis Group at UWE was facilitated by the director of the Centre for Psycho-Social studies, in his role as group facilitator, I experienced it as a lateral group.

Armstrong notes that lateral relationships have tended to be ignored in psychoanalysis, in favor of those regarding the vertical axis of parent and child. Particularly, the so-called latency period is seen to be a more or less empty period between the Oedipal conflict and the beginning of sexual identity. Mitchell (2014), in her exploration of sibling relationships, takes this idea much further, in proposing that this middle period is actually a very rich time of experimentation, friendship forming and storming, skill development and curiosity. From Mitchell’s perspective, latency is a period of great “richness” (ibid.:9), a time of “best friends, bullies, playing with peers, inventing, reflecting and learning...far from a gap, it is full.” (ibid.)

From Mitchell’s perspective, the movement to the social explosion begins when the next sibling is expected and then arrives on the scene. The first child is no longer the “only” one and faces annihilation. The mother, instinctively knowing this, begins to direct the child outwardly to the social arena, and, as she notes,

“when the toddler separates from the mother it is destined to form a lateral group of peers” (ibid.:1). This “explosion” (ibid.:10) is an intense response to the trauma of being displaced by the new child. As Mitchell puts it (ibid.:8)

The ‘sibling trauma’ equates to the toddler’s experience of annihilation or death on someone else taking its place and all which that place and its emerging sense of individual identity signified. It is always horizontal. At its centre is kill or be killed. Prohibited, this must be socialized.

Upon the entrance of the new sibling, the soon to be displaced child faces the enormous challenge of how to relate to this sibling AND relate to the reality of no longer being the special one, being emphatically prohibited either from killing the intruder or engaging in incestuous loving. Thus, as Mitchell notes (ibid.:7), “The trauma of separation and the sibling trauma are the same event from two perspectives”. The child, in a sense, “solves” this dilemma, both for the family and for him/herself, by diving into the social realm and developing and enjoying “a range of lateral relations along a horizontal axis” (ibid.:2). The child, while staying in the family is at the same time separating from it, and undertakes “a second route to latency, a movement direct from the dual relation of mother-and-baby/infant to the multi-person relations of the social group. Along this horizontal axis, the trauma is processed as a rite of passage from infancy to childhood” (ibid.:9).

Here I would like to return to my theme of the double axes of third spaces. I see my pursuit of and deep involvement with various horizontal (lateral) support systems as an example of how I stayed in the family (i.e. the university) and separated from it as well. From my perspective, the vertical (or family) relationships have to do with getting on with the task and the various external and internal challenges to this goal (standards, measures, testing, evaluating, performance, success, achievement). On the other hand, the horizontal axes (social) provided the “playground” for the explosion of feeling and thinking. And together, they help me to create a whole, balanced and integrated system, even though the parts were constantly in motion. As Mitchell puts it: ...”the two lines, the family and the vertical, and the social group and the horizontal, go on together, interacting but not identical” (ibid.:11). They interact and resonate constantly within oneself.

In very simple terms, just as Mitchell posits that the rich social life rescues the child from the trauma of the vertical family dynamic and the loss of special identity, so the use of horizontal or lateral social supports during the doctoral process compensates somewhat and provides a containing resource for the humiliations and challenges of the student role.

Research as “Me-Search” (Tchelebi 2015)

As I reflect in a general way on my doctoral journey and the use of this combination of third spaces, I would say that I have been deeply involved in a process of gradually growing a new professional identity boundary for myself. This process is a natural one, and takes place for all of us who are active professionally. However, undertaking a doctorate (no matter at what time of life) creates extraordinary conditions and challenges that force one to examine existing assumptions about knowledge and practice and, by its very existence, expands one's intellectual horizons. Tchelebi (2015) has aptly characterized this process as "Me-Search".

Petriglieri & Petriglieri (2010) offer the interesting notion that business schools can serve as a kind of "identity workspace" (44), where one is gradually able to develop a new professional identity. They define identity work as an ongoing process that "involves individuals crafting, protecting, and modifying their views of themselves, as well as gaining social validation for those views." (ibid.:45). They note that this work does not take place in isolation, but within a certain containing context. They also point out that "identity work is stimulated by moments of identity destabilization and experiences of uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety" (ibid.) I think this very much captures my own experience over this time.

Although I cannot truly say that I experienced UWE as an "identity workspace", I do believe that the combination of horizontal and vertical third spaces did serve that containing function. I join the above authors in defining "a *holding environment* as a social context that reduces disturbing affect and facilitates sense making" (ibid.:50).

One way of thinking of this process is that one is creating a skin around oneself that is continually porous and up for negotiation, what Armstrong (2007:204) terms a "boundary of identity" and Tietel (2002:33) "a holding social skin". Tietel explores the concept of social skin in depth, and links it to one's earliest sense of being as an infant. One exists in a social skin giving a passive "feeling of belonging and of being held, finally a feeling of being 'one'." (ibid.:37). It "offers a context in which one feels contained and held." (ibid.:38). When one, perhaps, falls out of the social skin of an organization (as with retirement) these primitive feelings of losing one's skin can emerge. Here one loses "the experience of a communal surface with one's team or organisation" (ibid.:39).

This process, I believe, also takes place when one undergoes the profound experience of doing a doctorate, where the "pre-existing boundaries of identity" (Armstrong 2007:205) become threatened and questioned. One is in a constant state of leaving and becoming. This is consistent with Ogden's notion that the analytic third "is gradually transmuted into forms of experience of self and other

that can be ...incorporated into one's larger sense of self (including one's experience of and understanding of how one has come to be who one is and who one is becoming)" (1999).

In my own case, with years of involvement in Tavistock conferences (Miller & Rice, 1967), it has been my experience, as Armstrong (2007:208) notes, that "there is something inherently difficult in resisting the pull towards thinking of hierarchy as the only possible form of organization". This pull is also enacted in the student role during one's entire lifetime, and definitely revitalized in the doctoral experience. In fact, nothing could pull more strongly for the vertical. Ogden (1999) notes as well that the analytic third in the vertical spaces are more asymmetrical (i.e. like analysis), meaning that the analyst has more power and status in the relationship. The work of validating the horizontal (symmetrical) axes, therefore, does not come easily. As an older student, I had the luxury of reaching out very broadly for lateral support and perhaps the common sense to make active use of it. Nevertheless, intense childhood feelings were actualized.

Drawing on socio-technical thinking (Trist and Murray:1993), I would cite the long time span (7 years) and the geographical distance between my home and the university as helpful to integrating this process of skin building. Like the analytic third, i.e. a "jointly created unconscious life of the analytic pair" (Ogden 2004:167), it develops over time.

Going back and forth between these two axes made for an excellent balance, and I consciously made active use of them. I never lost my passion for my topic, while at the same time I was often very frustrated with the university requirements. I was very much held by this matrix of horizontal and vertical support and thinking systems. As my head of studies once commented: "It's almost as if there is a third space continuum from vertical to horizontal and from 'passing-oriented' (your supervisors!) to 'free-thinking'". I found it especially difficult to be a learner, on the one side, and a creative thinker, on the other. It is clear that no one person could have taken all these roles in supporting me. The multiplicity of resources was essential. And I certainly couldn't have done it alone.

Conclusion:

In summary, the process of doctoral research is a "full-body" experience, stimulating and utilizing many aspects of one's being. Intellectual theory, the losses and gains associated with transitions in professional identity, the disappointments of being judged, and the great pleasures of creating and developing something "in the arms" of, so to say, many others have been some of the most important aspects for me. One does not undertake this alone or start from scratch. One enters a field and, and, as best as one can, finds one's way.

I very much hope that this chapter will be helpful to supervisors of mature students, who bring to the working relationship a very particular kind of transference. To these supervisors, I would suggest that you take the risk of sharing with your mature supervisees the complicated role boundary issues that you experience, i.e. the part of the role that is there to encourage new thinking and the part of the role that is there to ensure that the university's standards and requirements are met. By this disclosure a new kind of third space can be forged that brings the student more constructively into the reality of doctoral demands and university pressures. In this way, the student would not be so dependent on separate third spaces to process this and would be less at risk of abandoning his or her studies.

I would also like to say to you supervisors that, in an ironic way, the older student may need more guidance with the basics than you may think. Since older students may be seen as already quite competent and professional, supervisors may underestimate their need for clear guidance and guidelines, such as what should be the content of each chapter and what is the acceptable format for bibliography. To the extent that these specifics can be defined at the beginning, I think the mature student will be less likely to feel disappointed and frustrated.

In terms of designing doctoral programs, I very much favor community building structures, such as bi-annual seminars and the role analysis group. These structures make possible for supportive lateral relationships to be developed between candidates that can sustain them throughout the years.

And to the mature student, I send you a special message. Be prepared for an experience that you never could have anticipated when you first started. While you may not "need" a doctorate for your professional career, you may find that the achievement of a doctorate profoundly changes your sense of yourself in relation to your professional world. And that is a great bonus!

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