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"A structure that other people are directing": Doctoral Students' Writing of Qualitative Theses in Education

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Abstract

Research suggests the teaching of the writing of doctoral thesis is decontextualised and that a traditional form, antithetical to a student's paradigm or theory, has become canonized. Written to disrupt the traditional journal article form, this article explores the traditional form of theses through interviews with eight doctoral students in a School of Education. 5A's creativity theory, where actors, audiences, actions, artifacts, and affordances combine to produce creative outputs, illuminates how students' decisions are shaped by their apprehension of an academic audience as well as their own low positional identities as actors. A focus on contextualised teaching of writing of doctoral theses and further research into writing theses for different audiences are recommended.

Keywords

writing, doctoral thesis, creativity theory, post-structuralism, education

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Acknowledgements

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Research suggests the teaching of the writing of doctoral thesis is decontextualised and that a traditional form, antithetical to a student's paradigm or theory, has become canonized. Written to disrupt the traditional journal article form, this article explores the traditional form of theses through interviews with eight doctoral students in a School of Education. 5A's creativity theory, where actors, audiences, actions, artifacts, and affordances combine to produce creative outputs, illuminates how students' decisions are shaped by their apprehension of an academic audience as well as their own low positional identities as actors. A focus on contextualised teaching of writing of doctoral theses and further research into writing theses for different audiences are recommended.

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Here's my beginning. Because they're keeping it apparently. I took a lot of trouble with it. Here it is. It gave me a lot of trouble. It was the beginning. Whereas now it's nearly the end. Is what I do know any better? I don't know. That's beside the point. Here's my beginning. It must mean something, or they wouldn't keep it. Here it is. (Beckett, 1994, p. 8)

The plays and novels of Samuel Beckett involve characters who persevere in a doomed attempt to make sense of their own experiences through language and form. This doomed attempt is played out fully in *Trilogy* (1994), where any semblance of characters is replaced with the Unnameable. Words can never capture experiences; beginnings are never beginnings; endings never end. In a Beckett novel, the form of the novel itself is under attack.

And so, "here's my beginning. It must mean something, or they wouldn't keep it." But it is a beginning that is one of any number of beginnings and that could also become any number of endings…

I choose to begin with Beckett because when I sit here writing this article now, he once again comes to my mind. I studied his works in an undergraduate module at Sussex University 25 years ago, with the author and academic Gabriel Josipovici. To my mind now, I have "created" this experience as a turning point as Beckett's writing and our discussions made me think about language and form completely differently.

And "here's another beginning." To my mind now, I "create" the experience of reading and discussing Beckett 25 years ago as a turning point for me 10 years ago when I sat down to write my doctoral thesis. A two-year project, which saw me writing creatively with 10–12-year-old boys at transition between primary and secondary school, I found myself exploring the boys' identities and how they were "performed" - I was reading Butler (2000) - in the classroom and in creative writing. In the classroom, I observed "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 2005), where the feminine was othered and emotion outlawed; in creative writing, I

observed how hegemonic masculinity was weakened and different identity performances were opened (Dobson, 2017).

"Here's another beginning." I was also rereading Derrida (2001) – having read Derrida (I have no memory of which text, hence I put no reference here) as an undergraduate some 15 years earlier. Derrida forced me to acknowledge that my observations were acts of creation rather than naming. There was no outside position from which to observe. Or rather, it was all outside. My creating the boys was also my creating of me.

So, I found "another beginning." I moved seamlessly from ethnography to autoethnography. I acknowledged that my observations of the boys were mediated by my own experiences as a boy. My own masculinity as performed as a boy at school. My own repression of emotion as also performed at home with our own unnamable – my parents' divorce…

And then, when the two years with the boys was over, once my research journal had spilled over into almost 1000 pages of winding autoethnographic musings, I sat down and began to write my thesis. I typed:

Introduction….

Literature Review….

Methodology…

Findings and Discussion…

Conclusion…

The headings were right there in front of me. Empty containers waiting to be filled with words. But I found I could not fill them. That was as far as my first draft would go. I could not type the words that I felt were expected of me. But I still wanted to write. As Beckett (1994, p. 418) concludes, "I can't go on. I'll go on."

And so, I began to write my thesis as a play. Later I created it as a "thesis-script" (Dobson, 2017) - a Socratic dialogue with myself, the boys, the reader, and Beckett's Unnamable (1994) as characters. My justification for doing this was not a priori. As so often happens with writing, the process of writing was a process of problem-solving and discovery (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). The justifications came to me through the words and the form I was using. I was writing in this way because my research had been messy and non-linear. I was writing this way because, paradigmatically, I saw knowledge as constructed. I was writing this way because, theoretically, I saw identity as a performance (Butler, 2000). I was writing this way because, again theoretically, I saw identity as participation in the construction of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). I was writing this way because every assertion that was made needed unmaking, every argument needed a counterargument, every naming an unnaming.

Now, almost 10 years on, I am working in the same post 1992 University in the north of England where I studied for my doctorate, in a School of Education, supervising doctoral students of my own. A question I ask of my students is "how are you going to write your thesis?" A simple enough question, but a question that has led me to realise that me starting to write my own thesis 10 years ago with the subheadings "Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology…" is also my students and students before them starting to write their own theses. We are all writing. And so, form becomes traditional. A "good" form (Lyotard, 1984). We write about what happened in a linear way. We take we out of the writing and use the third

person. "One*"* makes what Lyotard (1984), talking about Wittgenstein's language games, categorised as "denotative" utterances.

Science, says Lyotard, repeating Wittgenstein, uses denotative utterances; narrative uses prescriptive utterances. But considering postmodernism and the dissolution of grand narratives, whilst the utterances of science remain denotative, the rules of science become, like the rules of narrative, prescriptive - or "metaprescriptive" (Lyotard, 1984). In a postmodern context, it is the work of denotative utterances to obscure the relativity of their own existence.

And so, we write in this way as if to say, "I did the reading, shaped my questions, put together my project design, collected the data, analysed the data and came up with my findings, conclusions and recommendations, which can now be taken forwards." Correction (remember to use the passive voice): "the reading was undertaken, the research questions were shaped, the project was designed, the data collected and analysed, the findings, conclusions and recommendations established."

That's better, "It must mean something, or they wouldn't keep it. Here's another beginning." The one that perhaps you, a reader of an academic journal article, would most expect. The you who is not my superaddressee (Bakhtin, 1986). Bakhtin argues that any utterance is only rendered possible by the speaker having in mind someone who would perfectly understand what they were intending to say - the superaddressee. It is a strange argument for Bakhtin to make. Overall, he was a post-structuralist, but here he seems to imply that language must always have the potential for absolute meaning. When thinking about the boys' creative writing in my Ph.D. project, the superaddressee became a useful heuristic device to thinking about the different superaddressees that were at play in our respective creative writing pieces and what this said about their identity performances.

As my participants for this small-scale project started to talk about how they were writing their theses, the concept of the superaddressee came back to me. And if I was not conscious of the "you" reading this article not being "my" superaddressee and expecting a certain form in an academic journal article, I would talk about the students' superaddressees right now. Or perhaps I am doing you a disservice there. Perhaps the problem is me…

But back to "the other beginning…" I read articles about the form of Ph.D. thesis. I found Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) study of 100 Ph.D.s in the humanities and sciences over the last 100 years in Australia, America, England and Canada. They conclude - perhaps surprisingly given that Lyotard (1984), drawing upon Wittgenstein, identifies scientific language as operating through denotation - that the theses in the humanities are a more stable genre over time. If this generalisation applies to the theses they included in their sample, the question becomes: why is this so?

A difficult question, with many possible answers, and I was interested to read another research article (Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014), which analysed discourses relating to the doctoral thesis in 11 Canadian graduate schools. They found that teaching the writing of doctoral theses took place outside of supervision meetings. Lessons in writing tended to be run by central university student services and writing was, therefore, decontextualised from the subject area. This led them to the conclusion that the teaching of the writing of the doctoral thesis was "atheoretical and arhetorical, uninformed by research, and located outside of the disciplinary knowledge-making practices that shape and are shaped by research writing" (Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014, p. 12).

I could find no similar, recent studies in the UK, but I was interested in this idea of the writing of the thesis as being "located outside of the disciplinary knowledge-making practices." I looked at some of the "essential" readings we ask our students to undertake in relation to methodology and I wanted to think about the extent to which the act of writing was linked to the idea of different research paradigms – how writing was linked to the disciplines of methodology. My focus for reading these "essential" readings was whether in discussing

philosophy and underpinning epistemological assumptions, the books would also explore how this knowledge was represented in writing. If, for argument's sake, a researcher, adopting the typology of paradigms outlined by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), located their thesis within constructivism with a "subjectivist epistemology," then, accordingly, the act of writing that thesis would need to bring the subjective nature of its own statements into the text itself. Wouldn't it?

"So, here's another beginning." I picked a book regarded as "essential" for our doctoral students and which I decided must be essential because it was now in its 8ᵗʰ edition - Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2018) *Research Methods in Education*. The book runs to 916 pages, starting with paradigms, moving onto methodologies, then data collection and finishing with "Part 5: data analysis and reporting." The use of the term "reporting" I found interesting, suggesting as it does, that the act of writing is straightforward, the utterances "denotative" and, from Lyotard's (1984) perspective, obscuring of metaprescriptive rules. When reading through Part 5, I could find no content which problematised the act of writing itself.

I picked up another *essential* book, now in its 5ᵗʰ edition - Denzin and Lincoln (2018) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. A slightly longer read – 955 pages – and following a similar structure to the last. The wording of the final section, however, was far less denotative, demonstrating an understanding of the relationship between paradigms and the writing of research – "Part V: The art and practices of interpretation, evaluation, and representing". In this section, there is one key chapter which explicitly discusses the form of writing a thesis, insisting, for example, that a criterion for reviewing ethnographic research papers should be whether the "piece succeeds aesthetically" (Richardson & Adams, 2018, p. 823).

A final book I picked up was in its fourth edition and focusses in on "Part 5" of the books discussed above - Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) *Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcebook*. This book has 357 pages and devotes one and a half of them to "Traditional" and "Progressive" "Presentation Modes" (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 326-327). Having adopted a denotative approach throughout, towards the end Miles, Huberman and Saldaña acknowledge that "Reports can go beyond words" (2014, p. 327). This is an interesting denotative utterance for, I would argue, the idea of a report has denotative connotations which would need destabilising before a report could go "beyond words."

So, with my selective focus on "essential" readings finding parallels with Starke-Meyerring, Paré, Sun, and El-Bezre's (2014, p. 12) assertion that the teaching of writing a doctoral thesis is "located outside of the disciplinary knowledge-making practices," I began to formulate the focus this paper in thinking that writing might be the missing link in doctoral students' theses in education. The students are directed to learn about reading, about policy, about literature, about methodology. But they are less directed to think about what this might all mean for the representation of their research as a text. Rather, they are simply directed to report their research in a thesis text.

I decided to talk to eight current doctoral students in our School of Education to find out how they were approaching writing their theses and why they were approaching writing in this way. I gained ethical clearance from my institution by conforming to the ethical guidelines of the British Education Research Association and I emailed all doctoral students in the school an information sheet and consent form. For those interested in participating in what I was calling a "one-hour semi-structured interview," there were some closed questions to answer which helped me to select a sample inclusive of a range of approaches to writing. I wanted to know whether or not they had started writing; whether or not they had generated data; the extent to which they considered their thesis to be traditional, non-traditional, somewhere between the two. Using open questions, I also asked the students about the focus of their study and their

chosen methodology. I had 12 positive responses and, as the majority were writing traditional theses, I excluded four who were writing in a traditional way, whilst also ensuring the sample included students who were focussing on different subject areas, employing different methodologies and writing their theses in different ways (traditional, non-traditional, somewhere between the two). I also had in mind the idea that because our School of Education is multidisciplinary, with students drawing upon the broad subject fields of sociology and psychology, as well as critical approaches including critical race theory and gender studies, the kinds of theses they would write could be interdisciplinary and already contain the potential for disrupting the traditional form.

For you, my non-superaddressee, who reads research journal articles, I tabulated this information below (see Table 1).

Table 1
Students' Theses and Approaches to Writing

Name	Research Focus	Methodology	Approach to Writing Thesis	Stage
Student 1	Informal digital learning in Higher Education	Phenomenography	Traditional	Data not collected; first draft of literature review complete
Student 2	Resilience in Further Education	Practitioner enquiry	Traditional	Data not generated; first draft of literature review and methodology complete
Student 3	Parents' experiences of transition in Early Years	Case study	Traditional	Data not collected; first draft of methodology and literature review complete
Student 4	Dramatherapy in a secondary school	Participant action research	Traditional	Data generated; first draft of thesis complete
Student 5	Assessing children with profound and multiple learning disabilities	Phenomenology	Mixed	Data not generated; first draft of literature review complete
Student 6	Lived experiences of autistic people	Autoethnography	Mixed	Data not generated; first draft of literature review and methodology complete
Student 7	Use of drama for inference in a primary school	Case study and practitioner enquiry	Mixed	Data not collected; first draft of methodology and literature review complete
Student 8	Writing young adult adoption fiction	Creative writing	Non-traditional	Novel published, writing first draft of exegesis

As I wanted to explore how and why the writing of the thesis might be linked, or otherwise, to theoretical, methodological and philosophical underpinnings, I felt it would be

useful for the students to think about these complex concepts before the conversation, so I emailed them some discussion points in advance. These points were structured into three parts: about your thesis; about the writing of your thesis; any other comments you have. The interviews took place online due to the pandemic and, wanting to loosen the framing of the interview to ensure it became a dialogue, I focused on the three parts more broadly so that the points themselves (e.g., Talk about your underpinning paradigm. How does this relate to the way you are writing your thesis?) became more of a checklist within each part of the conversation and the conversation became more open that the initial points for discussion would have suggested.

After the first two interviews, the process of analysis took place organically in my mind as I thought about a way of trying to make sense of what the students were saying. My "approach," however, was only partly inductive. I had already undertaken some reading, had established some keyways of seeing (e.g., Lyotard, 1984), was aware of findings from similar research projects (e.g., Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014). And with this prior reading in mind, something that I noticed in the interviews, particularly from those participants who were adopting a traditional approach to the writing of their theses, was the idea of writing in that way because that was what readers of a doctoral thesis, including supervisors and examiners, would expect.

So, "here's another beginning." I started to think about the concept I have already begun to explain - Bakhtin's superaddressee (1986). I asked myself for whom were the students writing? How were they constructing their superaddressees and why were they constructing their superaddressees in that way?

At the same time, I was aware that in thinking about the superaddressee, there were "other beginnings" that I was ignoring. I read a lot of contemporary fiction and Saramago's (1997) dystopian novel came to my mind. Here, people's inability to see in different ways is made literal as humanity is afflicted by a disease of blindness. What Bakhtin's idea of the superaddressee was giving to me in terms of insight was, simultaneously, taking away other ways of seeing. Blindness and insight. Those two uncompromising bedfellows. "I can't go on, I'll go on."

So for all of the students writing in a wholly traditional way, there was an articulation that the main superaddressees of their thesis was the academic community. This construction of the superaddressee was most starkly felt by Student 1 who identified her superaddressee as her "examiners" and "future Ph.D. students." This pragmatic view was also held by Student 4 who said that her superaddressee was ultimately shaped by her "end game": "My end game is to be awarded a Ph.D. and this (traditional) way of writing it seems like a solid way." For Students 2 and 3, however, writing for the academic community superaddressee was countered by the apprehension of a superaddressee more closely aligned to their work with their participants. That being said, as Student 3 identified, writing simultaneously for an academic community and her colleagues in a Further Education setting would be a difficult task and was a tension that she was yet to work through in her conceptual thinking: "I hope, in a way, I am writing for the participants, not that I expect that they'll read it ... Obviously the thesis itself has to be read by other academics and I think it's a very difficult thing to talk about."

For those writing their thesis in a traditional way, therefore, their apprehension of a particular type of academic community as their superaddressee seemed to be formative of them adopting this traditional writing approach. At the same time, I noticed how these students and the other four students who were adopting less traditional approaches all used the word "creative" to talk about ways of disrupting the traditional forms, whether they were intending to be "creative" in their approach or not. This made me think about why the students considered their approach to writing their theses to be not creative or otherwise. I read Kaufman and Glăveanu's review of creativity theories in which they identify models which have been

developed to "explore the underlying structure of how creativity is operationalised" (2019, p. 28). Thinking about what my participants were saying about their own use of creative forms of representation or otherwise, these models seemed relevant as most of the factors the students talked about in relation to how they approached writing were structural. One key model Kaufman and Glăveanu (2019) discuss is the Four P's (Person, Product, Process and Press); the other model is the 5A's (Actors, Audiences, Actions, Artifacts and Affordances). Capturing the structural dynamics which operationalise creativity by exploring the interrelationship of its elements, the 5A's model as conceived by Glăveanu (2013), is considered the more contextually sensitive of the two.

In the 5A's model Glăveanu (2013), the structural elements which operationalise creativity are more dynamic and interrelated than the elements of the 4P's model. Accordingly, creativity is operationalised through: an Actor, who has "personal attributes in relation to a societal context"; an Action, which is a "coordinated psychological and behavioural manifestation"; an Artifact, which is produced by the Actor and which includes the "cultural context of artifact production and evaluation"; and an Audience and Affordances, which are "the interdependence between creators and a social and material world" (Glăveanu, 2013, p. 71).

So, "here's another beginning" - using the 5A's model as a theoretical lens. For those students writing their thesis in a traditional way, their perceived Audience or superaddressee as the academic community is given as a reason for writing their thesis in a traditional way. This shaping of the text by a perceived Audience (superaddressee) is in turn shaped by the other interrelated elements of the 5A's. In referring to these other interrelated elements of the 5A's, most of the students who were approaching writing their theses in a traditional or mixed way saw these elements as restrictive and preventing them, to differing extents, from operationalising creativity.

Central to this were the past Actions of the students themselves as Actors in master's study where they had written for specific Audiences or superaddressees. Indeed, for the majority of the students, a traditional approach to writing their doctoral thesis had been informed by their experiences of Masters study and the way in which the writing at Masters level had constructed a particular superaddresseee. Student 6 said she had started to write her thesis in a traditional way "because I'd done the Masters before I guess I had in my head the structure I used for that." The power of this superaddressee had been so great for Student 6 that she "didn't realise you could even do it in a different way." For Student 3, the superaddressee who expected the traditional form exerted even greater power, permeating all levels of Higher Education: "it's how it's always been, from undergrad, to Master's to Ph.D. Everything has always been written in a very linear, very similar structure." This is in line with Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) identification of the thesis in the humanities as a stable form.

The perceived restrictions to creativity extended to other aspects of the students' doctoral experiences, including the Actions that supervisors undertook as Actors. Most of the students described how their supervisors restricted rather than operationalised creativity. Student 2, for example, said that their supervisor had advised them to write in a traditional way "because they want me to pass." Similarly, Student 1 recalled a conversation where her supervisor advised her to: "Make it simple. Make it traditional and recognisable." When thinking about her own identity as an Actor in the writing of the thesis, her supervisor advised her to view herself as a "Researcher" because this would mean the thesis would be "written in "third person." This elision of self as an Actor from the act of writing is interesting as it is in direct tension with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning Student 1's study where the researcher needs to write themselves into the text to acknowledge their own interpretation of the data. The elision of self as an Actor in the process of writing also captures how the

superaddressee who expects a traditional form becomes a powerful Actor in order to construct the student as a depersonalised researcher and author.

Another aspect restricting creativity were the Artifacts in the form of other doctoral theses and journal articles read by the students as part of their doctoral study. For Student 3, these Artifacts became templates for her own writing as "whenever I've read other people's literature and their theses, that's written in a similar way." Whilst the use of these Artifacts can be seen as restrictive of creative approaches to writing, for Student 4, who had been out of Higher Education for a "long time," the Artifacts were wholly positive, placating the uncertainty of how she was feeling: "I didn't know what to do. How to start. How to go about it. When you look for examples then they became my model."

The final aspects restricting creativity were the Actions of the supervisors and other University Actors in not putting on training sessions for doctoral students on how to write a thesis within the context of their work. This chimes with Starke-Meyerring, Paré, Sun, and El-Bezre's (2014) findings in Canada. For Student 5, who felt that the School of Education was very "progressive" in its thinking in general, there was the feeling that the school "don't back that up with any seminars on writing." Similarly, Student 7 articulated how they had had sessions on "methodology, on how to construct a literature, but not actually on the different forms of writing it up."

So, "here's another beginning…" What struck me as I thought about the 5A's were interacting to shape the ways in which the students were writing their doctoral thesis was how "the students were often lacking in agency." Indeed, I started to think of the students (Actors) as having limited material resources (Affordances) and as reading (Action) from scripts (Artifacts) written by other people (Actors with more agency) for a predetermined superaddressee (Audience).

Student 2 spoke of how the traditional approach to writing her thesis was due to "the imposter syndrome that comes with doing this type of education." As an Actor, Student 2 felt she had little control over her Actions as "somebody who's just learning" and she was concerned the other Actors, her examiners, when it came to adopting the traditional approach. This led her to feel that the way she was writing was "to try to fit it into a structure that other people are directing." As with Student 1, this structure involved the elision of herself from the act of writing as the writing would be literally depersonalised - "in the passive voice, definitely." Talking about her own elision from the act of writing, Student 1 explained how this was encouraged by her supervisor and how this elision "made it easier for me to live with the sentences I'm writing as I don't see myself as a researcher." For Student 1, therefore, adopting a traditional form using the third person provided her with a role as Actor which was other than herself and, from a psychological perspective, this helped Student 1 guard against her own personal insecurities: "I have this approach I've used during the whole study which is called fake it until you make it. If I have to make out I'm a researcher, I'm faking it."

Echoes of these low levels of individual agency as Actors were experienced by students who were planning to write their theses in ways which were not wholly traditional. Student 5, for example, spoke of writing a Literature Review chapter because he was "directed to." Student 6 spoke about how she started off in a more traditional approach because "that is what I feel the expectation is." And Student 7 felt that in intending to write in a more creative way was "even scarier (than writing in a traditional way), because I've got to do it really, really well, whereas if I did it in a more traditional way, it's easier."

As I had been reading Lyotard from the outset, I was reminded of what he has to say about the ways in which traditional forms are perpetuated through "performativity" with good performances "conforming to the relevant criteria" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 19). The idea of the traditional form is then passed on through the hegemonic functioning of language because "the narrator's only claim to competence for telling the story is the fact that he has heard it himself

… knowledge is performed not only by the speaker, but by the listener" (Lyotard, 1984, pp. 20-21). Seen in this light and given that these students had previously studied at different Universities, there is something about the power of the academy beyond a single University - its Actors (supervisors), its Audiences (examiners), its Actions (supervision meetings), its Artifacts (previous theses) - which can construct a specific Audience (superaddressee) and restrict the material Affordances given to doctoral students as Actors writing their theses. As a result, doctoral students can find it difficult to think about different ways of writing their thesis and, simultaneously, they can find it difficult to construct a superaddressee (Audience) who expects something other than a traditional form for their thesis.

Here's "another beginning" to help me think about why the structures in which these doctoral students find themselves offer them little agency as Actors when it comes to the writing of their theses. A lens I have used before to think about identity as participation in culturally specific contexts is "figured worlds" (Holland et al., 1998). A figured world is defined as "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Each is a simplified world populated by a set of agents who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). If we consider Doctoral Study in a post-1992 School of Education to be a figured world, then we can see that the traditional thesis is an outcome that is valued over others and that as agents (Actors), the students have low status "positional identities" in having to reproduce that valued outcome. In this light, these students in the figured world of Doctoral Study experience little agency in the act of writing as their participation in writing is prescribed.

However, adopting this positional identity in the figured world of Doctoral Study was not necessarily seen negatively by all the students who were adopting a traditional form. Student 4, who had been out of Higher Education for a "long time" was particularly keen to "learn" to write in a traditional way. For Student 4, writing in a traditional way "helped me to process" what was going on in the research field. This was because traditional writing for Student 4 was "a recognised way of helping people get clearer ways of thinking about it and how to capture" the processes she was analysing. Alongside traditional academic writing, Student 4 spoke of how "diagrams" and "pictures" were also effective ways of illustrating these processes. As an Actor in the figured world of Doctoral Study, Student 4 took on a low positional identity when it came to the writing of her thesis but then used Artifacts (readings) and other Actors (her supervisors) to improve her traditional writing style in order to increase her agency through representing to processes she was analysing.

In terms of the four students who were not writing in a wholly traditional way, three of these students were intending to take a mixed approach. As indicated above, these three students all experienced moments of low levels of agency when it came to writing their thesis and, accordingly, their starting point for writing in the figured world of Doctoral Study was to aim for the valued outcome of the traditional form. However, in constructing their Audiences (superaddressees) in this figured world, these three students apprehended a need to adapt the traditional form. Their superaddressees were the academy, but their superaddressees were also more directly related to their participants and the values underpinning their projects. Student 5 spoke of policymakers as superaddressees as he wanted to move from a deficit view of children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Student 6 spoke of writing for "autistic people, for queer people, people who have intersectional identities" as she wanted to value their life stories and challenge heteronormative discourses. And Student 7 felt that in writing creatively she was partially erasing her superaddressee of policymakers who would value more of an "evidence-based impact" approach when it came to change reading policy in primary schools.

The potential for disruption to traditional forms of writing for these students, therefore, was directly linked to their construction of superaddressees for their writing which were other than the academy. As Actors in the figured world of Doctoral Study, they were seeking out Artifacts which were also valued outcomes and would help them to find other forms of representation, giving them material Affordances to reach different Audiences (superaddressees). The adoption and disruption of traditional forms posited by these three students brought to my mind Lyotard's (1984, p. 61) founding principle about power and form: "research that takes place under the aegis of a paradigm tends to stabilise … someone always comes along to disturb the order of reason. It is necessary to posit the existence of a power that destabilises the capacity for explanation."

For these three students, the disturbance of reason did not particularly relate to the Literature Review or Methodology chapters but "the presentation and analysis of their data." This was because the students were taking a critical stance about the ways in which their participants were positioned within their respective figured worlds. For Student 5, who was investigating the learning experiences of children with PMLD, both the ways in which these children experienced their figured world of School and the ways in the figured world of School marginalised these experiences meant that a different form of representation was needed: "how they experience life is much more along the lines of what Deleuze calls intensities. So, you have these moments of intensity. That linear idea of learning doesn't exist." This led Student 5 to think about creative arts practice as research to capture the affective dimension of the experiences of children with PMLD: "I have done a poetry course with the idea that I might employ some of that. It's this thing that poetry expresses that academic writing just doesn't."

Similarly, for Student 6, who was wanting to tell the lived experiences of people with autism, the deficit model of dominant societal discourse and a deep understanding of the ways in which autistic people experience interaction, based her own experiences of being autistic, meant that the disruption of traditional forms in the data chapters was a necessity: "to author autistically is to author queerly and contrarily." As with Student 5, this led Student 6 to use poetry to express lived experiences to their superaddressee: "I was adopted, my birth mother, the first time she contacts me, wrote me an email and I've turned the email into a poem … to see it in that poem form gives that sensory feeling, that emotional feeling when you read it because it's really powerful."

Due to the fact that both of these students were currently engaging with data collection, what the representation of this data would ultimately look like was still uncertain, but it felt to me like both students were Actors adopting a "neonarrative" approach with a potential "bricolage of process" (Stewart, 2019, p. 124), including academic writing, personal reflections, poetry and narrative, to find an appropriate form to represent their data and the experiences of their participants for their Audiences (superaddressees).

This neonarrative approach to the writing of the data analysis chapters was also adopted by Student 7 who was focussing on using drama to teach reading inference in a primary school. For this student, however, the potential use of a more creative form was less about disrupting traditional forms to express the lived experiences of her participants and more about enacting the principles of reader response theory that underpinned her thesis. In line with reader response theory, Student 7 was aware that, "there are multiple constructs of this data, there are multiple voices to be heard, and I very much want that to be put across in the analysis of the data itself." Student 7 (undertaking a case study and practitioner enquiry) discussed how she was considering constructing a narrative with herself and her participants as characters - a use of a creative form to enact the underpinning theory which is an example of what Haseman (2019, p. 150) calls the "performative" paradigm. In the performative paradigm, the academic text itself is an Artifact used by an Actor to accomplish "an action that generates effects" – in this instance to lay bare the idea of multiple textual interpretations.

Whilst this student did not talk explicitly about her thesis as a performative Artifact, the student adopting a wholly creative form did. A published author of young adult children's novels, Student 8 was working on a two-part practice-based thesis: a young adult novel exploring the theme of adoption; and an exegesis. Interestingly, whilst the novel had a teenage superaddressee and the exegesis an adult superaddressee, Student 8 was keen to point the "similar techniques" he was using "within the fiction and then within the academic piece of writing" and how the superaddressees for his two texts were not necessarily mutually exclusive. This was because of the ways in which Student 8 viewed the practice of writing as research. For a start, he quoted Nelson (2013) in identifying creative writing as practice-based research which was always already "imbricated" within theory. The collapse of the theory/practice binary applied was then applied to his second component of the submission - the exegesis. Traditionally, the exegesis adopts denotative utterances (Lyotard, 1984) in seeking to name and explain the creative text. However, when practice is also theory, theory must also be practice. Student 8 seemed to embrace the full implications of the collapse of the theory/practice binary where "both practice and exegesis are narratives that resist complete explanation" (Goddard, 2019, p. 119).

As a result of this, the exegesis was written for a complex superaddresseee who as well as being part of the academy also just wanted to be "entertained." The exegesis text, therefore, becomes a performative Artifact where the superaddressee is "immersed" in their "experience" of the theory:

> When one of my characters is talking about Deleuze, rather than it just being a massive monologue, I'm interrupting it with what the character is doing, thumping the bench, or looking up to the sky or staring out to the river. Helping the reader imagine that scene as the theory is being unpacked is part of keeping them interested and entertained and that's a similar process to what you're doing when writing the novel.

Unlike Students 5 and 6, Student 8 is less interested in disrupting traditional forms for social justice through a neonarrative method; like Student 7, Student 8 is more interested in using narrative forms to perform his thesis's key underpinning theoretical concepts. For example, Student 8 took a Deleuzian view of knowledge as "rhizomatic, which is an underground root system where there's no particular beginning or end but where there is mapping." Student 8's exegesis becomes the process of mapping out the young adult novel: "The narrative is the reader being taken on a guided walk of the town in which the novel is set, so the reader is being taken through a map of the setting of the book and as they're taken on this journey, this guided walk, the different theoretical perspectives and processes and pieces of data are introduced through the narrative." Throughout the text, the reader is given some agency to decide where on the map to go next, and this serves to "perform" idea of experiences as non-linear and having "no particular beginning or end." As a doctoral student who views himself as an Actor who is a writer within the figured world of Doctoral study, Student 8 has the Affordances and positional identity to discover and embrace the implications of his underpinning theories and paradigm to construct a complex Audience (superaddressee) in the practice of writing itself.

Perhaps that is how I should have begun this article. Introducing my map, with different, interconnected pathways which my other reader, my other superaddressee could have explored. Honan and Bright (2016) would have encouraged me to do just that. But to use the way Honan and Bright (2016) discuss Deleuze, the "tracings," or valued outcomes, of traditional forms are still with me in this figured world of Academic Journal Writing. So maybe my approach is

more in line with Students 5, 6 and 7 than Student 8; more in line with someone like Weatherall (2018) in trying to disrupt linearity whilst still recognising the traditional form.

And so, here's an ending, which is just another beginning. It is interesting that four of the students in this study felt they had a lack of agency as Actors when it came to considerations about how to represent their thesis as an Artefact. It is interesting that the other four students felt that representation was linked either to the voices of the participants or to their underpinning paradigm. And it would be even more interesting, perhaps, to continue this research to explore at an individual level the reasons why the Actors write their doctoral theses in different ways. This would take into account biographical differences as well a close reading of the final doctoral theses to think about the relationship between the identities of the doctoral students and their texts. There were some interesting staring points here, at which my limited data generation method only allowed me to glimpse. Student 1 telling me her "creativity is zero," that it "comes from my childhood" …

And here's another. In a School of Education supporting doctoral students, I would like to see traditional forms of writing considered alongside creative forms of writing so that the apprehension of an Audience (superaddressee) who expects a traditional form as a valued outcome is weakened. I would like a School of Education supporting doctoral students actively encouraging their students to think about their superaddressees and what that might mean in terms of how the doctoral thesis is written. As the superaddressee becomes more complex and less aligned with the academy, I would argue, the doctoral thesis will be become a less stable and more interesting form.

And another. I would like to see the relationship between paradigms, theories, methodologies, and representation through writing explored through both training programmes offered to research students and within supervision meetings. This exploration would provide the missing link in some students' conceptualisation of their work. It would bring to the surface the metaprescriptive nature of the denotative utterances of the thesis text. It would encourage all students to think about their writing practice as research rather than a neutral, depersonalised activity. To consider appropriate forms for representation. To consider the performative paradigm.

And - here's the crucial beginning - it would change you, our reader, our non-superaddressee. Yes, first and foremost it's you, our reader, who must change if the construction of the doctoral student as writer in the figured world of Doctoral Studies is to change too. Because you are, after all, the "narrator" and your "only claim to competence for telling the story is the fact that you have heard it yourself."

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