A Survival Kit for Doctoral Students and Their Supervisors

Traveling the Landscape of Research

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Chapter Eight

"Get a Life" or Simply "Live Your Life"

Abstract

Purpose: This chapter discusses questions related to academic life and identity during and beyond the doctoral studies. It addresses how apprenticeship relations continue, change, and end.

Central message: Learning to become a researcher cannot be considered a disinterested, neutral, and nonpersonal process. We are always developing as persons along the journey of becoming researchers.

Takeaways: It is pertinent during the research education to spend time considering what might happen after the study and how one can begin to plan a career during the PhD studies. Learning and identity formation as a researcher is a life-long process.

Keywords: Researcher identity, the doctoral journey, start before you are ready, entering the scene, finding the middle, trajectories of participation, abandoning the rules, stepping stones.

Putting an End to Uncertainty?

At the end of the peer group session described in Chapter 5, Charlotte complains: "It is anxiety-provoking to try and finish my dissertation,

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because I don't know if I can. I'm afraid that I cannot put an end to uncertainty. I'm afraid that I will never be able to finish." On a practical level, this kind of anxiety is tied to the intense, final sprint of writing the dissertation. Yet "putting an end to uncertainty" addresses epistemological issues far beyond finishing a dissertation. Wisely, peer group member Ninna, who recently passed her oral defense, reassures Charlotte: "I am still working with unfinished thoughts, and my writing is still in progress. I had hoped for a better feeling of closure. But, is this because my dissertation was not good enough? No, because the examiners said it was good enough." And this is merely what research is like: a never-ending and developing process (Wegener, Meier, & Ingerslev, 2014, p. 10).

Finishing the dissertation obviously does not put an end to uncertainty. This chapter discusses questions related to academic life and identity during and beyond the doctoral studies. In which ways may apprenticeship relationships continue, change, and end? How do we chart desired areas of future research life and make them feasible to reach? Questions of how to live a life as a researcher are relevant throughout the doctoral journey. We examine how we as researchers can mine our lives for inspiration, and what we can do in order to refuel and maintain the spirit. We also examine how, as a supervisor, helping your students plan for the future requires consideration as to whether the research life is a good fit for the student, and ways of inviting the student into the wider research community, as well as advice about other career possibilities. A doctoral study is not something to get done with before we can "get a life."

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Moving Fast or Learning to Live a Researcher's Life?

Questions of getting a life or learning to live a life as a researcher are often tackled in instrumental terms, as a matter of setting goals and moving fast. Many textbooks with advice in relation to doctoral training are based on the premise that writing faster and finishing quickly is a matter of acquiring new habits, as when students are advised to spend at least 15 minutes each day on their dissertation (James & Slater, 2014, p. 5). "We believe that you can finish your dissertation faster without sacrificing quality, but it's not likely to be easy. You will be up against several challenges. In our experience, some of the biggest obstacles include maintaining focus and persistence to reach your ultimate goal, finishing your research" (James & Slater, 2014, p. xix).

There will be challenges, and in this book we address how these can be tackled not only as tremendous obstacles facing each individual, and with goal setting as the ultimate solution, but as something larger that is dealt with in the communities of research at large.

Learning involves our lives, and dealing with our lives, even if we at times seem to act as if writing the next paper or finishing our dissertation will not demand too much energy or engagement from our side. The reality is that 15-minute recipes are mostly made up of dreams, and in fact, working on one's dissertation can cause quite of lot of (fun) trouble.

In Search of a Researcher Identity

From the apprenticeship perspective, the learning involved in becoming a researcher cannot merely be considered a disinterested, neutral, and nonpersonal process. In the process of learning, we are always developing as persons. From this perspective, cognition "is a complex social phenomenon . . . distributed—stretched over, not divided among—mind, body, activity and culturally organized settings (which include other actors)" (Lave, 1988, p. 1). And learning is "an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35). Packer and Goicoechea (2000) claim that to come to know or learn something is rarely an end in itself highly removed from everyday practice. The search for identity, for belonging, and to be a part of something is what gets people to "participate in communities of practice in many different ways (Greeno & The Middle School Mathematics Through Applications Project Group, 1998, p. 10), and this participation structures the learning opportunities and barriers.

The Purpose of Learning

Dreier (2008) clarifies the situative perspective by claiming that when we learn in one place, in one or more communities of practice, we are in the process of developing our potential to participate in a more competent, stronger, and more full-fledged way in other places. The purpose of learning is often simply to prepare us for another practice, such as the life after our time as research students. When we encounter problems with our learning, it is because we cannot engage more intensively in the practice where we are seeking to capture learning. Other times, we tend to develop a learning identity that is in conflict with the institutional perceptions of what is the important learning in the particular practice within which we are taking part. For a research student, problems with learning can arise when we are, for example, having a hard time seeing ourselves as part of the research life, when receiving harsh criticism or feedback, or when networking does not work, as described in the previous chapter.

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The Total Life

The learning process around a PhD study can play out within, and is dependent of, connections or conflicts between many different practices. Holzkamp (1998) emphasized, from a critical psychological perspective, this point in relation to conflictual participation. As a university-employed educator and researcher, he attempted for a while to create reading and study groups, where he, together with the students, could discuss texts. He quickly noticed that very few would participate. And while at first he was disappointed by the lack of engagement, he later realized, from speaking with his students, that many of them, either because of children or commutes, could not find the time for the study groups. Their total life collided with the good initiative, and it is important, as pointed out by Holzkamp, not to see this as a lack of intrinsic motivation. Rather, real conflicts may arise in terms of composing a complete life during a time when university life becomes a central focus of the student life. Holzkamp regrets that this conflict does not attract more discussion during instruction, counseling, and courses. We run the risk of privatizing the students' possible motivational problems, when we should instead discuss how to balance university life with the other parts of a student life.

Goal Setting as a Mutual Responsibility

Likewise, we intend to argue that learning in relation to the doctoral training is extended in time and place, and for that treason it is pertinent during the research education to spend time considering what might happen after the study, and how the student already during the PhD studies can begin to plan his or her career. It is not simply a question of the individual student setting his/her individual goals. It is a mutual responsibility in the research community to reflect on how ideas about the future can and should shape the current learning environment. This may influence strategies for publishing, the selection of research institutions, training opportunities, and more. Supervisors have, overall, considerable impact on how the individual research student develops a style and perception about what should happen after his or her training as a researcher.

Kundera on Slowness

When in need of alternative options to "moving fast" strategies and in search of a more poetic treatment of time and space, it might be worth reading Milan Kundera, the Czech author. In his novel *Immortality* (1999), he writes how a main route (*une route*) is only a line connecting two points,

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while a side road (*un chemin*) is a celebration of the space that it moves through. In the world of side roads, beauty is uninterrupted and forever changing. Kundera also celebrates the unexpected joys of the meandering road, which requires one to slow down. In *Slowness: A Novel* (Kundera & Asher, 1997) he describes the connection between slowness and memory, and between speed and forgetfulness. Our time, he says, is obsessed with the desire for oblivion, and it is in search of this desire that we fall captive to the demons of speed. Kundera's support for slowness is not just in support of imagination and the vision of future. It is also a support for an embodied and embedded memory that is otherwise impossible in the flight of speed. The novel is quickly read but can be digested slowly!

Always in the Middle

In many ways, finding a life as a researcher and facing the challenges and fun involved is a continuous process extended in time and space. The identity as a researcher is established through many kinds of identifications—with the research methods that you use, the community of which you are part, your peers, the papers and the texts you write, the lectures or performances given, and so on.

In his book *Identity*, Brinkmann emphasizes how identity is "a person's reflexive self-interpretation of his personal biography" (Brinkmann, 2008, p. 22). It is, in other words, a kind of self-interpretation, which people engage in, and which is about their sense of belonging. As another psychologist has put it, it is about the identity of the subjective experience that one belongs to certain places. Brinkmann also says that identity is a skill—a skill to maintain a certain narrative. Identity is the ability to maintain a special narrative about who we are, and whom we would like to be. Identity and identity narratives are precisely woven in time—from the past, which we always carry with us; to the present we live in; and to the future about which we have notions—notions that eventually structure who we are here and now.

Entering the Scene

What is it, then, that makes it worthwhile to become a researcher and identify with a research identity? Well, this identity is, first and foremost, not created in a vacuum. As Alasdair MacIntyre wrote so elegantly: "We enter upon a stage we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not of our making" (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 213). It is then on this scene that we have to take responsibility for and maintain our identity

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narrative. At the same time, we remain a part of other scenes in addition to the one where we are currently playing.

We will propose that getting a life as a researcher involves not only becoming a member of a research community, not only constructing knowledge at various levels of expertise as a participant, but also taking a stand on the culture of one's community, in an effort to take up and overcome the estrangement and division that are consequences of participation. Learning entails both personal and social transformation and decisions regarding what kinds of activities one wants to engage in as part of doctoral training. This is not merely a trivial issue of getting a life and enjoying it, as if it was secondary to doing one's research. It is the thing. As Kirshner and Whitson (1997) pointed out, situated cognition questions the "individualist and dualist . . . commonsense assumptions about thinking and being" (p. 2). It seeks to dispense with "the Cartesian dualism of our intellectual tradition" (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997, p. 26). When our book carries the subtitle *Traveling the Landscape of Research*, we mean it, not as something that will make your life easier as a doctoral student but because taking a stance in relation to how one wants to live a life is a vital part of learning and the research process as a whole.

Progressing Along Trajectories of Participation

From our perspective, learning to become a researcher involves the continuous construction of identities and in line with the apprenticeship perspective that "one way to think of learning is as the historical production, transformation, and change of persons" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 51–52). Learning and development can be viewed as a progression along trajectories of participation and the growth of identity. It is in these practices that students develop patterns of participation that can contribute to their identities as researchers (p. 9). Here, the helpful editors whom we celebrated in Chapter 7, Jonathan Wyatt and Ken Gale, recall their encounter with the doctoral program as well as their future supervisor—an encounter which inspired them to undertake their doctoral dissertation together (Gale et al., 2010). While doing so, they address the question of identity, memory, and the present. As Gale writes concludingly in the following dual account: "Something happened and keeps on happening."

Something Keeps on Happening for Jonathan and Ken

Jonathan: Here's a moment. It doesn't relate to the dissertation itself, nor to Ken. Not directly, though it does in the end.

The moment I have in mind took place during the taught part of our doctoral programme, the Doctor of Education (Narrative and Life Story Research). Our

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programme director was Jane Speedy. There were eight taught "units" before the dissertation. I did one unit a term (three a year) so it took about two and a half years to complete that part of the programme, before Ken and I embarked on the dissertation.

Students travelled to Bristol for each unit and they lasted two and a half days, Thursday through to Saturday lunchtime. I loved those stages of the doctorate and the routines that evolved: driving west from Oxford along the M4, staying with friends in Bristol, walking or cycling into the university each morning. I enjoyed the rich, vibrant, stimulating days. Ken was there each time, amongst a group of us who were heading through the programme at a similar pace. It was good to be part of something.

After each unit we wrote an assignment. The second unit, in the Spring of 2004, was "Auto-ethno-graphy." We read and discussed Carolyn Ellis, Ron Pelias, Laurel Richardson, Carol Rambo Ronai, Andrew Sparkes, and others. The assignment task for each unit was open; the exact wording escapes me but there was permission for us pursue an area of our interest, to pick up on ideas from the readings and the teaching days and write an assignment of our choosing. (At least, that was the freedom I felt I had. Now, as an academic, I am writing assignment tasks and assessment criteria and know how "tight" these have to be to get approval from Boards of Studies and the like, but my experience as a student—which stayed throughout my doctoral experience—was a sense of freedom and of being trusted.)

I wrote about the loss of my father the year before. I worked on it through the early summer, then sent it to Jane as a draft. I didn't hear back for a week or so, so sent her a prompt. And another. Then another. After some weeks, I had run out of hope that I'd hear (I got used to Jane's email "habits" in due course) when her response arrived in my inbox: a long, unedited (again, typically Jane . . .) letter that told the story of her reading the essay, and reading it again.

That was the moment. It was a moment when I understood that I could do this. I could write.

There were many other, equally significant, moments that followed: Ken's suggestion that we write an assignment together, travelling together to the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, reading our work to an audience at a conference in Bristol, and more. And with us, all the time, Jane. Giving us permission, challenging us, and, behind the scenes, making it all possible. This first moment, where Jane seemed to notice something that I hadn't seen, seemed to unlock a door, the first door.

Jonathan Wyatt

12 January 2014

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Ken: Jonathan sends this writing to me. It is always exciting and almost always a joy to receive an e-mail from him. The experience reminds me of receiving letters: sensing the materiality of the paper, noticing the postmark and the anticipation, almost the fervour, involved in ripping open the envelope. It is like that. It is to do with affect.

Our exchanges don't feel so frequent now but affect lives on a plane of immanence and is always shifting, transmutating, flowing in, moving out, and in this we are always "Good to go."[1] Since the moment of our first writing our movement in the writing has never been consistent and always been there, as Virginia Woolf so tellingly shows in the phrase, "The pen gets on the scent" (1985, p. 93). In our collaborations sometime the scent is pungent, stingingly hot and easy to follow and, at other times, it is nascent, teasingly mercurial, and tantalisingly present like the "compact of unctuous vapour" in Milton's "bogs and mires" (1960, p. 61).

And so, with this little piece of writing, I excitedly opened the envelope and began to read, quickly at first, to get the gist, my enthusiasm for the reading running away with me and then, again, in a more measured way, slowly, digesting, allowing the affect to take me, going with the flow and, with that movement, new moments of energy, allowing memory to emerge in the delicate touching of collaborative frisson.

There is such richness in those moments which I now return to and return again as I read and re-read in preparation for this writing. This plane of affect is constituted by people, Jonathan, of course, Clifford, Christine, Francine and Jane. Jane . . . Jane . . . . It is constituted by sense, a sense of these others, with whom I increasingly share this space, becoming friends, faciality, smell, a smile perhaps and always a funny look. It is constituted through the construction of memory, the emergence of sentiment, a feeling of fondness for a time that is passed and that is now, albeit briefly perhaps, encouraged into growing again.

Cixous (1992) talks about coming to writing. I remember a coming to writing and, like Jonathan, for me Jane was also always there; she always had something to do with it; there were always moments. And although I can never put a fix on a specific time, as Jonathan says here, "(there) was a moment when I understood that I could do this. I could write." I (too) could write. I resist the category of difference, writer, and I resist the category of difference, collaborative writer. I accept the differentiation that writing exists and in the always diffracting possibilities of these movements this (Deleuzian) sense of (always) becoming (collaborative) writer just about works for me. Something happened and keeps on happening in the "between the two" that we call becoming-Ken-Jonathan: it

[1] This was a phrase I enjoyed learning from Cindy Gowen, an American colleague and friend who was in the same doctoral program at the same time as Jonathan and me.

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started in the middle back then and keeps creeping up behind our backs like a refreshing summer breeze and starting again: right here, right now, in the middle.

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Ken Gale

20th January 2015

It Is Good to Be Part of Something

Jonathan here tells how his participation in the seminars involves several elements of human life. It is not only seminars with a predetermined content area. His experience and the importance these seminars come to play in his life involve the routine of the drive there, overnight stays with friends, and mornings on the way to the university. It involves the joint employment with texts and the freedom to choose assignment topic, linking literature to personal interests. "It was good to be part of something," he writes. The participation is central, and the sense of belonging and the relationships are strengthened through joint activities, such as the discussions at the seminars and joint participation in conferences. This is indeed the experience of the non-divided "mind, body, activity and culturally organized settings," which includes others as mentioned by Lave (1988, p.1). The experiences are suspended in time and space and continue to take place "in the middle" as Ken notes at the end.

When we accept this form of time experience and this integration of a life lived and the life as a researcher, the question about work-life balance, or what we want to do after the PhD, becomes more complex. It is no longer simply a matter of making plans, or remembering to take time off, or about developing a timetable for when you are at the office and how to finish in the shortest time possible. Still, some kind of time management is crucial for the creation of a rewarding, effective, and enjoyable research life. There is always more to be done. It can always be better. It involves hard work and

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also a willingness to let go and move on. Living and thriving as a researcher thus involves knowing when it is time to stop. It involves the ability to speed up and slow down. This however does not only apply to finishing the dissertation. Finishing the dissertation should never be regarded as the ultimate goal. Rather, knowing when it is time to stop—to take a break or to move on the other tasks, is a crucial researcher competency throughout working life.

There Is Always Work To Do

There is a saying that there are only two kinds of dissertations: the perfect ones, and the ones that are finalized. The dissertation has to be submitted. So do conference abstracts, papers, revised papers, teaching material, and presentations throughout a research career. In the words of Van Maanen (1988/2011, p. 120): "We know that our analyses are not finished, only over." A friend of ours, a professor in education, aptly told her husband when he asked if she would like to join him for a movie or if she had work to do: "I always have work to do." This was not a complaint, nor was it a decision of joining him or not. It was just a fact. Whether we go for a movie or to our office, we have to decide for ourselves. There is no right or wrong. As Becker reminded us in Chapter 7, we may work hard but accomplish little.

Watching a movie does not make a paper. However, going to the movies may be a good decision if you do not actually get any work done. Becker points to the self-imposed suffering that stems from the idea that we must at least not *enjoy* doing something else when we feel we ought to be working.

Becker on Hard Work

Equating time spent and quality may in fact be empirically false. Painting teachers encourage students not to over paint a picture, continuing to put paint on the canvas until an initially good idea is buried in a muddy mess. Writers can worry a piece to death, fussing over adjectives and word order until readers respond to the effort that went into the polishing more than to the thought the prose was supposed to convey. More work may not produce a better product. On the contrary, the more we think about it, the more we may introduce irrelevant considerations and inappropriate qualifications, insist on making connections that needn't be made—until we bury the thought in Byzantine ornamentation. "More is better" is no more true than "less it better." Yes, writing needs reworking and thought. But how much? The answer should be sought pragmatically, not in fixed attitude. (Becker, 1986/2007, pp. 131–132)

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We may even feel less guilty if we drag time, unproductively, in front of the PC or if we are caught up in distractions at the office.

Also, universities might not always be the best and most stimulating places to do the writing or to get things done—there may be other more creative places to write your dissertation, even if this is not the kind of message most university administrators would like to hear. In Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's book *Creativity, Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention,* we learn more about this through an interview with a professor of philosophy. The professor warns young people who wish to study philosophy at university that university is no longer a place where it is possible to be creative. To have the necessary peace and quiet for working, even the professor himself spends as little time as possible in his office because there he is constantly interrupted and never has the chance to flow. The point here is not to avoid social interaction and dialogues with students and colleagues. Rather, it is a matter of experiencing and learning to seek out the right company, time, and place for different research tasks. If the work does not flow, it is much more tempting to procrastinate. Yet, if we can only tell efficient time from idle time retrospectively, as suggested in Chapter 4, we can experiment with productive procrastination strategies. The trick is to look for ways of working that involve more joy—if the present way of working is not productive. It might involve a temporary letting go of goals and taking some time to do something else, such as reading fiction, going to the movies, or going for a run. It may also involve experimenting with different places to work. Remember that Hemingway produced some of his best work at Parisian cafes.

Always Heading Somewhere

Most PhD students put a lot of hard work and a good deal of life expectations into the doctoral journey. The doctorate is a rite of passage for most students and a pathway to new beginnings and opportunities. Some books about how to get things done and finish the dissertation underline that few doctoral students take responsibility for the dissertation and instead expect others to help them realize their goals and plans. The following quote comes to mind:

> Be aware of the journey and plan ahead: "You wouldn't go on a long journey without plotting your route ahead of time or programming your GPS, Also, while driving you would begin to look for the next gas station once you noticed your tank was below a quarter full. In a similar fashion, as a doctoral student you are responsible for your own path through the university, the defence of your proposal, your research, and then your final defence. Too many of my students put the responsibility on the university and never look ahead; this only slows them down and frustrates them." (James & Slater, 2014, p. xxiii).

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While we agree that a GPS, or some kind of plan, and taking responsibility for the kind of stance and identity you wish to pursue throughout is important, we would also argue that the need for collaboration is central. The GPS, or the plan, is not merely an individual responsibility. The ability to put your plan to use has much to do with the resources available in your research community, including pathways that might be mapped out for students to follow, feedback opportunities, and much more. And while the GPS shows specific goals in mind, as we learned in Chapter 7, those are often formed after action as a kind of "retrospective explanation for what people think they must have been doing" (Gioia, 2006, pp. 1713–1714). Certainly, we are always heading somewhere and it is good to attempt to reflect on the obstacles we encounter, and try and make the most of them, making relevant decisions along the way. In the end, this will help to make the trip easier and result in a more fruitful learning experience.

"Let's Start Before We're Ready"

As we have discussed, there is nothing wrong with goal setting and planning per se. But the act of setting your goals is never enough and should never just aim at finishing the dissertation. A publication plan, for example, can be valuable in the creation of a desired career beyond the "Dr." title (see Thomson & Kamler, 2012). The problems arise if this strenuous "GPS strategy" prevents us from paying attention to and relying on the kinds of inspirations that occur unexpectedly.

At the 2015 Berlinale press conference for Terrence Malick's movie *Knight of Cups*, the lead male actor, Christian Bale, commented on how the mantra throughout the film was "Let's start before we are ready." One of the producers, Sarah Green, explained that working with Malick for more than a decade has taught her to be light on her feet: "All the planning and organization that one might normally do, does not actually serve his style. We look like a student film: a couple of vans and people running around. So we are very much in the moment, aiming to capture what might happen. It takes a lot of trust, and looseness, and openness." Natalie Portman, the lead actress, said that working with Malick reminded her that the rules and rituals of filmmaking are not compulsory: "You have to find your own way, and to allow the mistakes, and welcome the problems," she said. "What others might consider a problem, Terry will approach as an opportunity." If it starts raining, Malick will shoot in the rain, rather than change the schedule, Portman said, commenting that "every day is a search for something beautiful . . . it is a great way to go" (Barraclough, 2015 and several other media between February 5 and 15, 2015).

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Abandoning the Rules

What these comments do not address, however, are all those rules every filmmaker must obey—technology, communication, financial, production, and advertising issues. The point is not that there are no rules; rather, the point is that opportunities might arise from temporarily abandoning the rules in order to see what might happen. This is obviously a strategy that applies to art practices such as filmmaking; yet, as researchers we can, much in the same way, question the rules and invite mistakes and imperfection into our work and life. It is often said that we *acquire* knowledge, *gain* insight, and *make* new discoveries. Rarely do we hear of scientific work being understood in terms of *dropping something*, *letting go*, or *getting lost*. Lather's (2007) "methodology of getting lost" in the landscape of knowledge or the landscape of science can, though seemingly contradictory, be helpful in this regard. Lather (2007, p. 136) argues that we should cultivate the ability to engage with "not knowing" and to move toward a "vacillation of knowing and not knowing." Wandering and getting lost become methodological practices.

Unpleasant Confusion

Most of the time, research seems to be occupied with "seeking out" a destination, making the "right" decisions, and "finding" answers. Based on Pitt and Britzman (2003), Lather calls insights attained through struggle "difficult knowledge" (Lather, 2007, p. 13). While "lovely knowledge" reinforces what we think we want, a "difficult knowledge" allows the feelings of lostness to become the very force of the research practice. Confusion can force us to act and think *differently* about what we are looking at, and what we wish to learn. Doctoral students invariably begin their work expecting to see certain events occur and may construct their research journeys around those expectations. However, if we too eagerly head for pre-designed destinations, that is, for lovely knowledge, we risk finding only what we intended to search for. By including unpleasant confusion, our research can become more sensitive to the complexity of the field and raise new questions (Wegener & Aakjær, in press). As researchers we may also inadvertently get lost and confused, but we can turn these experiences into a deliberate strategy. The trick is to avoid an instinct to regain control as quickly as possible. In Weick's words:

> When we are confused, we pay closer attention to what is happening in order to reduce the confusion. Later, all we remember is that this period of confusion was an unpleasant experience. What we often fail to realize is that we also

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> learned a lot of details while struggling with the confusion. Those struggles and their consequences comprise learning, even if momentarily they don't feel that way. (Weick, 2009, p. 20)

In this perspective, it is clear that we should not rush to the planned destination. This is not to suggest that we throw away the GPS. The point is that a gaze fixed at the GPS simply in order to find the supposedly fastest route results in a research style where we pay less attention to the landscape. Sometimes a fixed gaze at the GPS is necessary. We should not give in to every sudden impulse or walk down any beautiful path. Planning is necessary. Yet at times refraining from planning or abandoning a plan may be equally necessary. The GPS must be turned off to allow for the unpredictability of bodily and affective experiences and open-ended problems. This balancing act resembles the abduction process in research, in which researchers convert uncertainty into a novel (interim) certainty, which in turn generates new uncertainty. Self-consciously turning the GPS on and off (and curiously observing the effects) can thus be a metaphor for the dialectical movement between paying attention to the present and planning for the future.

Stepping Stones for a Future Career

This book is about to end. We hope it can serve as a stepping stone for the reader. The book is written to encourage many more students to enjoy the ride of the PhD journey and to get the most out of the obstacles met along the way. Before leaving the work to you, we will end with a story of apprenticeship and how this line of thinking about one's career can be liberating, because it relieves you of the burden of having to find your own style and be original. Furthermore, this story underlines how the role of mentors and gatekeepers cannot be underestimated when it comes to securing or exploring a future career in research. Even if apprenticeship can be accused of leading to reproductive learning, it is the basis for finding one's own style. The story goes as follows:

The Artist Andreas Golder

In 2011, Lene got the chance to interview Andreas Golder, a Russian-born artist who resides in Berlin and who has been hailed one of the greatest artists in 21st-century Germany. If you do not inhabit the art world, Andreas Golder may not exactly be a big name, but within the

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art world, he is widely regarded as a man who has renewed the art of painting. Golder was born in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 1979 and moved to Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. He has exhibited his work in Denmark on numerous occasions and has also appeared at the world-renowned White Cube gallery in London. Golder is commonly described as an artist who combines his training in realistic and representative techniques with more abstract elements—the physical and the metaphysical. What is interesting here: How does he work his artistic process, and what aspects does he personally regard as key to his success?

"I Do Not Know If I'm an Artist"

Golder is surrounded by smoke and steam when we interview him. One cigarette after another is ending its existence among its fellows in a plastic cup, while we take in and discuss the paintings on the walls and the sculptures in the room. Golder explains that he never precisely planned on being an artist but that it was more a result of circumstances. He says that he is just as happy lying down in front of the TV as he is painting but that he feels ill when he is not working on a painting in one form or another. The first thing Golder emphasizes in the interview is that he is uncertain whether he is truly an artist:

> It's the same every time people ask me, "How did you become an artist? When did you decide?" And each time, I'm just totally confused. How should I know whether I'm an artist at all? That's up to people to figure out when I'm no longer around. I just do what I do. Yesterday, I saw a good movie, *The Dark Knight*. There's a scene where the Joker says, "I'm chaos. I'm just a mad dog chasing after cars, and when I catch one, I don't know what I'm supposed to do with it." That's how I am when I paint.

Have you ever felt the same, the difficulties involved in answering how you became a researcher? As described by Golder, one relevant answer to the question might be to let others decide, or at least to pay attention to the importance of the audience in judging if you are on the right track. During the interview, we ask how Golder learned what he does, and he underlines how no specific method got him going: "It just came to me. In fact, there was no one who told me how I should do it, or what I should do. I think you need to find your own way. And there really isn't one correct method you can learn. It's quite individual."

> I went to art school in Russia and Berlin. In Russia, when I was a child—they have these special schools for athletes, ballerinas, and so on. They still do. I was just

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> there two weeks ago, at my old school. But now it's a very privileged school, only for the rich children. It was strange for me to see. In the old days, anyone could go there, but now it's about money, and it's horrible because a lot of children don't have the money, right? But yeah, they taught me all of the realistic techniques, and it was a very academic education. I could already paint as a nine-year-old. But you probably know this famous line from Picasso: "I could paint like Raphael when I was nine years old, but it took me another 30 years to learn how to paint a picture." [Andreas laughs.] I think it's the same for me.

The Craft of Finding One's Own Style

One thing is being able to paint; it is something else entirely to be able to paint pictures. Mastery of the technique is, Golder stresses, not enough. Making paintings involves entering a social practice—a sort of chain of other artists between whom one must make oneself a place and find oneself a style. How one gets there is difficult to say. Golder nevertheless reveals a bit of his "method" in our interview. Maybe it is an advantage to have access to a privileged school in which you learn to master the basic principles. And maybe this element of craft lies at the core of the quest for creativity, while the quest also requires that a person find his or her own style.

> Yeah, it all takes a long time. Learning the technique is pretty simple. It's almost a sort of copying practice. But I mean Renaissance artists and the great figurative painters became masters because they did more than just translate tradition. They added something to it. As a child, I also copied intensively. All of the old masters. It was part of our education. So when you talk about creativity, it's actually about stealing. Someone has done it before; you take it and continue. I mean, in the old days, we didn't even talk about artists but about masters and apprentices. Apprentices just continued their masters' lines, and that's why I'm so interested in the old masters. What's laughable is that there are so many young artists today who want to create something new all the time, and it's just "me, me, me." They just want to create something new without having any goal. And that's why all that "creativity" stuff has just a bit too much of a "housewife" whiff to it. They sit there and want to create something totally new. But it's more about doing something good and honestly. That's what I think.

Golder thus prefers the old apprenticeship tradition in which the apprentice, nearly by definition, is tasked with continuing the line that the master has already begun. He also feels that apprenticeship represents a correction to today's intolerable self-absorption. What we might learn from Golder's story is that finding one's own style and moving from being a doctoral student to

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becoming a complete researcher is really a matter of continuing a tradition and letting go of the quest for originality.

Good Advice for the PhD Student

- Keep challenging the premise that it hurts.
- Accept that, occasionally, it does hurt.
- Embrace confusion and uncertainty; and seek out ways to mine these feelings for research gold—keep a "confusion diary," get an "uncertainty pen pal," or invite people you like to a "getting lost study group."
- Give up the quest for originality and trust that your process of handling the material (theory, data, and academic writing conventions) with curiosity and persistence will produce worthwhile research output.
- Now and then, read page 176 in Howard Becker's *Writing for Social Scientists*: "Understand that the troubles you may have are not entirely your own doing, not the result of some terrible personal defect, but something build into the organization of academic life" (Becker, 1986/2007).
- Scan the research landscape for participation opportunities, and try out different relations and collaborations both inside and outside your institution and field of research. A diversity of involvement makes it easier to select and, just as crucial, to deselect people and activities that make you feel bad, sad, or bored. Set your GPS on destination "Encouragement."

Good Advice for the Supervisor

- Encourage the student to seek out both lovely and difficult knowledge. Embrace uncertainty together.
- Discuss with your student possible career trajectories, and together seek out work tasks and research outlets (conferences, journals) that support a desired trajectory beyond the dissertation work.
- If you want to keep the student in the research community, invite the student to be involved in your research endeavors, such as coauthorship, shared conference participation, or funding applications.
- If the student does not thrive, go into dialogue beyond goal-setting strategies. Do not accept the frequently used solution put forward by exhausted doctoral students that "I just need to pull myself together." If this was the solution, it would have been executed.
- Repeated dissatisfaction with the dissertation process may be addressed in terms of seeking out trajectories other than those the student anticipated. Dialogues about different career paths may be needed.
- Introduce the student to other masters.
- Ask the student to take responsibilities as a master for newcomers.

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Conclusion

Living a life as a researcher is a never-ending iterative process of becoming. It is processes extended in time and space, involving not only the acquisition of knowledge and skill but identity formation and a sense of professional self in the landscape of professional practices and resources available. The professional life as a researcher involves identity formation that is never fully accomplished, always in a process of learning and participation. Accordingly, the master, though an expert in her field, is not at the end point of a linear professional process, to which the student can or should solely direct her gaze or plan to head for. There are no endpoints. The dissertation is not an endpoint and neither is the title of Professor. Researchers, as most other professionals, must continually adapt to new knowledge and changing social practices; that is, learning and identity formation is a lifelong journey. Closure and putting an end to uncertainty are not reachable or desirable goals of this journey.

Sometimes, pushing the gas pedal to the metal on the highway makes you travel the journey. At other times, it can be a laborious walk. Many minor roads, that is, fringe thoughts and hunches, must be abandoned in order to move forward. Yet, what we have advocated are, now and then, to abandon planning and be light on one's feet. When we move slowly, maybe get lost, and take our time to notice the landscape we are traveling, we will discover an abundance of resources available to make the journey enjoyable and rewarding.

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