LIZ HARRISON

2. A TINKER'S QUEST

Embarking on an Autoethnographic Journey in Learning "Doctoralness"

> As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be, so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it.
>
> (Cooley, 1902, p. 184)

INTRODUCTION

I think of myself as a tinker. Specifically, as an educator, I think of myself as a tinker-thinker. The word *tinker* refers to an itinerant, a gypsy, or one who enjoys experimenting with things or a travelling repairer of useful items. The word also refers to random unplanned work or activities. In my work and teaching, the more I engage with what makes learning possible, the further away from a well-defined occupational identity I seem to travel. In my forties, I discovered the possibility of "being an academic" after completing a master's degree and beginning to toy with the idea of doctoral study. I am asking what it means to be "academic," a doctoral candidate or student or graduate in territories opened by critical postmodernists where a central question is, "What is knowledge and whose knowledge counts?" This chapter is a tale of identity construction and finding a sense of purpose in South African higher education. It explores the contribution of knowledge construction to the potential selves that are available to me, and vice versa. Knowledge construction is considered in several senses: in the way being knowledgeable, as a characteristic, is put together and meaning made by an individual, a family, a social group, and institution, and a country, over time and space, in order to make sense of a lived world. In another sense, I am attempting to look at what processes occur as the valuing, judicial-political-economic-academic eye reconsiders and reconstructs the knowledge creation process. What does it mean and what value does it hold for humanity?

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Academic Autoethnographies, 19–32.

LEARNING "DOCTORALNESS"

> The temporal paradox of the subject is such that, of necessity, we must lose the perspective of a subject already formed in order to account for our own becoming. That 'becoming' is not simple or a continuous affair, but an uneasy practice of repetition and its risks, compelled yet incomplete, wavering on the horizon of social being. (Butler, 1997, p. 30)

A good teacher, I have come to believe, is the ultimate salesperson: She sells notions, aspirations, and ideas. She uncovers the need, sources a solution—maximising the benefits and minimising the costs. She negotiates. She persuades her customers to believe that she knows and is right about what is right for them. And they leave without any physical artefact to show for the transaction. Thinking about a teacher as a salesperson seems appropriate in the current context of globalisation and the increasingly managerialist policy discourses around governance in higher education.

Today I, as a tinker-thinker, am selling mirrors. Yesterday I sold cosmetics and tomorrow, perhaps, I will sell snake oil again. The mirrors I sell today represent ideas of self—stock that I have acquired on my thought-journey towards completing my doctorate: an autoethnography (Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2004; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Tedlock, 2005) about acquiring a doctoral identity. Does such a thing as a doctoral identity exist? Is gaining a doctorate simply about the next rung on the career ladder or does it represent more? If so what is that thing? Is it only a thing or many?

A doctorate gives an individual a "right of way" in most social contexts and "such people assume their privileged position, not realising that other identities might be silenced in their presence" (Burkitt, 2008, p. 4). When I started thinking about my doctorate, I had to deal with the question of why it would be a valuable and worthy thing to do. I was already wrestling with the notion of the value of being an academic in South Africa and, in the process, confronting ideas that had not even crossed my mind at the simplest level in 10 years of teaching in a higher education institution: Why is it important to read, critique, evaluate, and persuade in academic forms? Why is it important to teach others to do this and in this particular form? Who cares? And, more suspiciously, why do they care?

I have chosen autoethnography as the methodology through which I will try to answer my own questions about how a doctoral identity is constructed and why I have constructed it in the ways I have. Through this methodology, I will raise questions about what having a doctorate might mean in South Africa in the 21st century. I see autoethnography as a subset of self-study, in the same way that autobiography might be. Both self-study and autoethnography make lived experience central to analysis and require the researcher to be reflexively oriented towards social change. Whereas much of the current work on self-study has come out of the field of education and is "related to the idea of studying the 'self' of teaching as a specific activity of teachers focusing on their own teaching practices" (Mitchell, Weber, & O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2005, p. 2), autoethnography has its roots in sociology and social anthropology. Tedlock (2005, p. 467) suggested that autoethnography emerged

as researchers attempted to "reflect on and engage with their own participation within an ethnographic frame" in an "attempt to heal the split between the public and private realms by connecting the autobiographical impulse (the gaze inward) with the ethnographic impulse (the gaze outward)." In this chapter, I reflect on the process and the meaning of doctoral learning from my own insider perspective as a learner in the doctoral process. This chapter also serves as a preliminary part of the autoethnography that I am undertaking for my doctoral study.

Simply put, "autoethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to the culture" (Ellis, 2004, p. 37). As Heewon Chang (2008) pointed out, autoethnography has been defined in multiple ways by many practitioners, ranging from those favouring an attempt at objective analysis of culture (for example, Anderson, 2006), to those embracing more descriptive or performative storytelling. Bochner and Ellis (2002) showed how autoethnographies can vary in emphasis around three axes: the self (auto), culture (ethno), and the research process (graphy). My aim is to write an autoethnography "that is ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation" (Chang, 2008, p. 48). I am questioning the role of my culture in education and vice versa through my own narrative (the primary data), using ethnographic texts such as journals (which I started keeping in 2002 when I felt that I could possibly start exploring the idea of a "doing a doctorate"), photographs, the accounts of others, and e-mails. These texts are used as triggers to enable me to story my educational experiences and the context in which they occurred and are occurring. Methodologically, it is in my writing and self-analysis that I am able to see culture at work and to question implicit assumptions. My storying of the texts and artefacts of daily life gives expression to the discourses at play in doctoral education and insight into the cultural structures that sustain and are sustained by these discourses.

My account of learning to be a doctoral graduate, and therefore, of learning "doctoralness," or that level of knowledge work currently accepted as worthy of a doctorate, will enable the "back and forth gaze" inward towards the personal and outward to the social, marrying the private and the public realms (Tedlock, 2005, p. 467). My exploration is of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of interaction (personal/social), continuity (past, present, future), and situation (place) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50) in my experience of doctoral learning. The auto part of autoethnography, my story of becoming, provides access to a view of a culture (English and white) which, at face value, continues to dominate the operation of education in South Africa. This investigation includes an interrogation of linguistic and discursive agency (Butler, 1990) and also highlights class barriers to epistemological access to graduate status that may be compounded by other challenges (see Conolly et al., 2009). I believe my social position as linguistically and economically privileged whilst being part of a political minority in South Africa places me in a liminal space that makes it possible for me to make overt some implicit assumptions about doctoral education and to explore possible implications for African ways of knowing in higher education.

A TINKER-THINKER'S TALE

I am a member of a doctoral (PhD) support group called PaperHeaDs, established in 2001. The group has no direct institutional affiliation and its members range in age from early 30s to early 60s, and all are women academics. All of us could be considered "insiders" to the academic discourses (Gee, 1996) of higher education in South Africa because our work experience is so closely related to our doctoral studies. Our unique positions as both learners and educators within higher education offer a lens through which to look at how academic learning might be constructed.

Through my conversations with my fellow PaperHeaDs, I have come to see that the title of "Doctor" is valuable to me as providing weight to my voice and the opportunity to speak for change. In order to do that, to see myself as one who deserves the public acknowledgement of my ability to know; I have to tell a different story about myself. My discovery of my tinker-thinker self has come in the process of re-storying myself (Bochner, 1997; Richardson, 1997). The trigger for this chapter was a phenomenological interview, in which I was interviewed by one of my fellow PaperHeaDs. A phenomenological interview is a conversation that explores the meaning of a phenomenon by continually asking questions about its meaning as experienced. Claire[1] started by asking me what I thought a doctoral identity should mean:

> Liz: … I would think that, for me, part of it is an idea of wisdom, which is not the same as knowing. Um, and for me that seems to be more aligned with kind of Afrocentric ways of looking at the world. That people are honoured for their experience and their …
>
> Claire: Okay.
>
> Liz: … wisdom and hearing—I mean the latest stuff about Mandela's birthday and the reflection on his life and the sort of interrogation of that is almost making—highlighting that for me and I'm wondering why, given Africa and its problems and its brilliances, why our notion of a doctorate is not more aligned with that notion of a wise person, somebody who knows and who can mediate and arbitrate and strategise and do what's necessary for the common good, whereas the sort of stuff that I'm really quite comfortable with is an almost Eurocentric view of 'look after the individual,' 'go for yourself,' it's all about achievement, it's a status, it's the next rung on the ladder, that kind of discourse, so I'm wondering why we don't go there … and part of that is also then why—if I reject the Eurocentric view of what a doctorate represents as somebody who knows a lot … pretty much, an expert and therefore has the voice from what's known and their ability to apply a critical—particular critical frame to things—why—if—how I can take that notion and say it's valid in Africa, given the cultural basis of leadership and wisdom and so on and, in that case where does identity focus because identity is about individuality—one would

> think—in some interpretations of identity, so … does that answer the question? [giggles]—yadda, yadda yadda [self-deprecating].
>
> Claire: It's about what you're beginning to construct as what a doctoral identity should be about, or the purpose of a doctorate and maybe what a doctoral identity should look like and the purpose of a doctorate—are they two different things?

The conversation continued. Having had this 2-hour-long exploration with Claire, I needed to go back in my history to find out how, where, and why I had come to the positions I articulated in our deconstruction of the meaning of doctoral identity and what a doctorate might represent.

What Counts as Knowing?

My mistrust of "the academic" is genealogical. My family roots itself in the Cockneys of East End London—butchers and bakers, and the stolid artisans of Yorkshire. My mother was the first of her family to get a post-secondary education and to enter a profession, as a nurse. My father had 7 years of schooling before joining the army with the ambition of being a truck driver. He became one of the first computer systems engineers with IBM. When I went to university, an option that would not have existed without a bursary from IBM, I was the first-ever academic student in my family. To this, my grandfather, a recently retired CEO ("by the sweat of his brow") of a heavy engineering company, rolled his eyes, leaned back in his La-Z-Boy armchair, and made the gesture of pulling a toilet chain. "Students," he pronounced, "ticks on the public ox."

Doing well at school was praised in my family but individual initiative, hard work, and practical results drew the rewards of true regard and earshotted boasting. The mistrust of scholarly things and scholars haunts my work today. "What practical value lies in this idea?" I ask myself as I scrabble to find a cognitive tool to justify the hours of reading and writing. "Call a spade a spade, Liz," the voice of my family says, "you just have to look to see that such and such is true." (The *such and such* category contains politics, the nature of human beings, gender roles, capacities, recipes, and health advice to live by). I miss the blissful ignorance of the matrices of power and knowledge that governs their view of normality and what is real (Foucault, 1980).

My family understands teaching. "A teacher, eh?" they said as I announced my intention to study for a teaching diploma. "Nice job if you can get it—no heavy lifting." (For me this was an illustration of an unawareness of the physicality of teaching: of carrying stacks of books, of the irritation of chalk dust under one's contact lenses, of rearranging furniture for group work.) Something is done, activity takes place, products are created, and the "truth" of things is passed along. A recent e-mail from a close female relative, in response to my attempt to explain my

excitement about Judith Butler's theorising of gender performativity (Butler, 1990), testified to this:

> I suspect I'm being blinded by science, there is no way I would even attempt to read those books; I can barely manage three pages of a bodice ripper before drifting into the arms of Morpheus. However, my English teacher would be spinning in her grave; you are reading stuff of the Y generation, where due to their poor English grammar and vocabulary they make stuff up. Not that I'm so great, but you got a degree and are supposed to know these things! Expertness—try expertise. Performability—try performance, i.e. acting! Way back in the mists of time when I attempted to learn some psychology we had a lecture about integrity and congruence and getting them to blend into a whole that resulted in better mental health. Which I understood to mean that if you try to put on performances that are not how you really are you will go bonkers! After all the study and working in academia you have done, I can't see that you need to 'perform' anything, you just are. (Private communication with permission, name withheld, 2008)

The ironic tone of the communication makes me laugh now: "blinded by science," "teacher spinning in her grave" (the voice of a long-dead authority, one who knew the truth?). And how about the notion that I am "supposed to know" on the strength of a degree (or several) or even on the basis of my experience in academia? It seems that the more that I am supposed to know, the less I can claim "knowingness." What is interesting is that there is no questioning of the idea that people who *know* do exist. My relative's easy access to the world of words and text, albeit bodice rippers, to the idea of people who think for a living (however mysterious the work might be), to the ability to play with genres in English—the colloquial to the analytic, are symptomatic of middle-class access to the printed word.

Why Know?

Along the way, family cynicism has turned to the content of what I teach. When I was teaching in a programme that trained child and youth care workers, my family felt it ironic, that I, who had chosen not to have children, was educating youngsters in how to take care of children at risk. My own sense of the irony, or possibly a sense of fraud, led me to move into academic development work, specifically, inducting new lecturers into their teaching roles in a higher education institution. These were bright young people, successful in their studies, who to a person claimed that their biggest achievement to that date was being selected to teach at our institution. My job was to introduce them to the often arcane ways in which higher education operates, to flag the path through the micropolitical dynamics to the place of satisfaction in teaching well. I was selling snake oil: "Do it this way and you will thrive in the system. Set up your networks of collegial support, give to each other in order to get back and you will not regret the emotional credit you will derive."

It was comfortable for me to be giving practical support to new staff members, experienced and skilled in their occupations, in how to teach in a technikon. Technikons were South African institutions oriented to occupationally-directed higher education. The intention was to teach high-level skills and knowledge to add on to the more practical training offered in technical colleges. As such, we technikon educators did not engage or feel the need to engage with the philosophical frameworks that shape the way university disciplines construct themselves. As a young academic (in career terms if not years—I was in my late 20s) I rarely if ever encountered questions about the nature of knowledge and what it means to know.

The unvoiced justification for the technikon approach was the demand for the training of highly practically skilled "technologists." Indeed this discourse persists in the field of engineering where graduates of the 3-year diploma, the 4-year degree, and university BSc Engineering are registered with the Engineering Council of South Africa as technicians, technologists, and engineers, respectively. We boasted that technikon graduates would "hit the ground running" while university graduates would have to do a lot of site work to catch up. Science and technology obviously, then—despite Thomas Kuhn's (1970) work on the philosophy of science—had no space for perspectives or anything beyond facts and proven theory.

In South Africa, the descriptors that talk to the quality of knowledge required for a doctorate are:

> the candidate is required to *demonstrate high-level research capability* and make a *significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline* or field. The work must be of a *quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication*. A graduate should be able to supervise and evaluate *the research of others in the area of specialization* concerned. (emphases added; Department of Education, 2004)

Looking back at the time when I first started thinking about doctoral study, I see how my adoption of my family belief in "knowers" and the technikon orientation to indisputable facts and practices led me to believe that a doctorate—the proof of having created an "original academic contribution at the frontiers" meant discovering a single truth that would potentially change the way people thought about a phenomenon. I constructed "high level research capability" as related to complex machinery like photon canons and mysterious glassware in pristine laboratories—in terms of expense and responsibility, rather than in terms of complexity and clarity of thought. I did not understand how these criteria related to what I knew about, teaching: devising learning activities, questioning techniques, building and sustaining relationships with learners, advising, counselling, and transmitting facts.

I was then looking at doing a PhD—the next step on the job ladder. I thrashed around looking for a topic that would meet these criteria, having read several handbooks on how to get a PhD (for example, Mouton, 2002; Phillips & Pugh, 2000). These recommended a subject that would sustain my interest in the long term and suggested that my environment was the source of a suitable research question.

I believed in facts and "the right way to do things as a teacher" and so, what was left to research? What questions might I ask, the answers to which would change the way the world thought about teaching? The technikon I taught at was historically advantaged, having been constructed for white students by the apartheid[2] government. As part of the transformation of higher education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001) this formerly "white institution" was merging with the historically disadvantaged Indian technikon next door (physically separated by a wire mesh fence but psychologically by decades of apartness). I thought a case study of the processes of this first merger of higher education institutions would be the first of its kind in South Africa, and therefore, a useful topic to study. I abandoned this topic after a year of watching, reading, and thinking—it was too painful to write about the way my assumptions were clashing hourly with those of my future colleagues.

Rummaging through the Baggage

It is not possible to think about my potential doctoralness now without thinking of who I was as a teacher then. Thus, I think back to what it was like in my first teaching job. It was the 1980s in South Africa, when, under apartheid laws, teaching in a government school meant signing an oath of allegiance to the South African Teachers Council for Whites. For a woman, getting married meant losing one's permanent appointment and becoming "temporary." And if you were a married woman, you needed your husband's signature on every application and bank withdrawal form. Becoming pregnant while unmarried was a dismissible offence. White, Christian, and heterosexual were the default identities in the segment of the South African school system in which I worked; other races, religions, and sexualities did not exist. The same sorts of attitudes ruled the technikon structures when I started working there in 1990. The wearing of trousers by women was frowned upon. Closed shoes and ties were a requirement for males, while skirts (preferably floral prints), blouses, and pantyhose were the requisite "respectful" dress for women. I attributed these rules to the activity of the National Party government of the time, which I believe to this day (possibly erroneously) set up technikons in opposition to the liberal universities that were questioning and resisting apartheid on every level. Perhaps my paranoia attributes more strategic thought to that circumstance than is necessary; I wonder now whether the institutions we had were more a product of philosophical blindness and deafness.

As institutions of higher education, technikons were understood as being hierarchically above community or technical colleges (as they are known in South Africa and which offered the academic elements of trade apprenticeships) but below the universities. (I think we South Africans are strongly historically and culturally driven by hierarchies and taxonomies. Watching myself write, I recognise my predisposition to engage every subject with assumptions about status and power. I often wonder whose hierarchies I have embraced). Utilitarian rationales were the justification for everything enacted in apartheid South Africa; the practical ends

(for whites) justified the means. I watch some of the developments in post-9/11 education systems in the global west (Giroux, 2006), with horror, screaming silently, "Don't do that! Don't you remember what you protested about in the 80s? The laager mentality[3] serves no one! Remember who taught whom?"

I started at the technikon as a locum in the Department of Education, teaching future teachers of "practical subjects" (an inferior class of study as compared to science or mathematics). I found that the curriculum had not changed very much since I had spent 2 brief years teaching English in the high school from which I had matriculated. The young people who were allowed to study to be teachers of technical drawing, home economics, typing, and business studies were predominantly white, although I think I had three students of colour in my first tutorial group. A quota system existed which allowed a certain percentage of "non-white" students to be admitted to historically white higher education institutions.

What's in a Name?

Labels were important. I struggled mightily with the notion that at the technikon I had to be known as Miss Harrison, not Ms or Liz as I would have preferred (never Dr Harrison in the future). I could not understand why we (the technikon's Department of Education) did not treat aspiring teachers as young adults and potential colleagues but as if they were the children they were going to be teaching. Even more puzzling to me was why we never reflected on issues like this as part of the curriculum. My department head and dean battled to control his amusement at the first (and only) reflective report I submitted about the teaching I had done in my first year—everyone else submitted a list of courses and topics "covered." Apparently, this was not the space to reflect on learner development and what might be needed in future offerings. I was puzzled: Why should reflexive practice not be encouraged in teacher education? The large stationery retailer with which I had worked as a training manager in the interim years between teaching in high school and joining the technikon used first names. I knew the chairman of the group, one of the largest listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, as Doug. Unlike at the technikon, part of the routine business in our training programme at the retailer was reflecting on our practice, and trying to improve in it (Argyris, 1976). How could "good" ways of knowing not be common practice, particularly in an academic' institution?

My title as Miss was problematic in other ways. When the time for the Education Ball[4] came around, I was required to attend. The department would find me a date, they said with understanding and pity for my obviously single status. I could not tell them that I was in a perfectly satisfactory relationship with a lovely woman. Her gorgeous brother offered to attend with me, as I agonised about blowing my chances at a permanent post. In the end, I contracted a convenient "blue flu" to get out of going. Being seen to be the right person doing the right things was important, more important than dealing with the issues of diversity, privilege, disinheritance,

and the legacy of 40 years of apartheid in South African schools. I call this my time of selling cosmetics.

Mapping New Territory

I have gladly watched conservativism become subverted as university-trained academics have more recently moved into the technikons (now known as universities of technology) with their questioning minds and refusal to accept the status quo as good enough, with their visions of a better and brighter democratic future. The flip side of the coin of university-trained educators coming into the technikon zone is that now I worry that qualifications are becoming more important than skills gained from practice. As an academic developer, I am actively involved in providing curriculum development support. Part of my job has been to help staff come to terms with the new national policy of outcomes-based education. My clients, the people I serve, are no longer students and yet perhaps they learn from our relationship. As groups of educators and I examine curricula to identify the "exit level outcomes" and assessment criteria that are the goal of each diploma, I stand in the position of a "professional ignoramus," my task, I think, is to ask the stupid and naïve questions about what occupationally-directed higher educators are doing. I do this to help them articulate what it is that they value about the work they do. I am a stranger in a strange land, but I can speak enough of each language to translate and get by. In real life, it pays to be a tinker, yet, how does this mesh with the doctoral identity I am trying to acquire? How do I testify to the reality of my work and the contribution of thought I might make?

What to Sell in This New Territory?

The curricula of technikons were traditionally non-discipline specific in the sense of the disciplines acknowledged in more traditional universities. The social science that I taught to environmental health, residential child care, public relations, homoeopathy, and food service management diploma students was an eclectic mix of what is known as applied psychology, sociology, and anthropology in more Oxbridge style universities (see, for example, Becher, 1989). My choice of what to include depended on my assessment of what would be useful for the students. The only guidance was a list of phrases that constituted the syllabus, for example: introduction, types of personalities, motivation, cognition, groups. I aimed at theories and stories that I thought would help students understand people better with no thought that the theory that worked for me might not make any sense to my students and their lives.

The most enchanting time I have spent in academia was the 3 months leave I was able to spend reading into the subject of graduate education internationally as part of doing my doctorate. For the first time in my life since I was 12 years

old, I could legitimately spend days reading and being charmed by ideas. I wonder how many South African students ever have the luxury of access to libraries and time for reading for fun. During my study leave, I fought panic continually: What was I producing? How would I remember all this? Knowledge surely is a product, something you own and share. I concluded that the disciplinary frame provides a bounded area of operation, a safe space where the routine structures of thought allow for certain assumptions to be accepted. I realised that I would not be arguing for The Truth, but I would be taking a position and trying to convince others of its validity. Yet I find myself again on another boundary in my position on knowing—another irresolvable dilemma—that between thinking and practice.

As I sit with programme teams to fill in the required forms to meet policy requirements, I am aware of the tension between the young, enthusiastic university-trained scientists and engineers, and the experienced practitioners. The voices of the youth ring with confidence in the theory of their fields and excitement of sharing it. The voices of the experienced practitioners—the environmental health inspectors with their tough tanned faces and crude stories of rat infestations and salmonella; the crinkle-eyed land surveyors who can remember how to survey land using a ball of string and pegs, and the grey-haired street photographer with his stories of celebration and pain in the townships—are defensive.

This tension is playing out at policy level in South Africa with the recent formation of universities of technology as contrasted with the established universities. Someone noticed that technikon graduates did indeed start their working careers with confidence but seemed to hit a ceiling after about 10 years and that, in the end, university graduates held all the top jobs. Thus, technikons have recently taken on the name, university of technology, and my institution now battles with constructing this new identity. I too battle with this new identity. The easy solution to the problem would be for my institution to take on, wholesale, the conventions of successful universities (in terms of world rankings) in South Africa specifically related to science and technology. This would erase the craft and contribution of those who work with words and cultural symbols, in subject areas such as journalism, jewellery, and graphic design, and those who work with relationships, for example, in community nursing, environmental health and child and youth care—people like me. I prefer Chris Winberg's (2005) notion that the core of the work of South African universities of technology is technological criticality—understanding the epistemologies and assumptions that underpin the mechanisms we invent and use to solve problems in our society.

I see my role in this is to become critical of my own assumptions about knowledge and knowing, to think deeply about the potential consequences of how I construct and sell knowledge, and to gain an empathic understanding of the work that has gone into creating the knowings that I will critique as a paid thinker. Through questioning and answering myself, I can apply the same standard with integrity to the complex work of others.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

> I am so good a proficient in one quarter of an hour, that I can drink with any tinker in his own language during my life.
>
> — King Henry IV, part I. Act II, scene IV (Shakespeare)

Is a spade a spade or is it earth-moving equipment? I can sell both. The work in progress remains: What is this doctoral knowledge that is so prized that the lack of it can silence some and privilege others? My joy in autoethnography as a method of inquiry lies in the realisation that my reality is not the only reality. I can look at my life, as the discipline I know best, and in theorising my judgments and positions, I am able to inquire into the knowledges that I accept and those that I resist. In doing so I can make overt both the rationale and the story behind them, opening up spaces for a sharing of experience that will make possible the joint construction of knowledge that is both clearheaded and useful. The tension in academia between knowing for the moment (the economic imperative) and education for the future (social transformation) that Boughey (2007) described on a macro level, is enacted daily in my construction of something original. I am coming to value the ability to move between borders and to speak to the moment, to sell something different.

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NOTES

1. Names have been changed or disguised.
2. Apartheid was an official policy of racial segregation enforced by the National Party government in South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s.
3. *Laager* is the Afrikaans word for the defensive circle created when settlers drew their ox wagons around, forming a barrier against attacks. By *laager mentality*, I mean the withdrawal from creative problem solving that occurs when fear becomes the overwhelming collective emotion and anger its concomitant expression.
4. The Education Ball was an annual dance for all education students. It had the same kind of importance attached to it as South African Matric dances—equivalent to the prom in North America.

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