Title of the Article
Authenticity in Feminist Research: A Researcher’s Account of Reflexivity

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Abstract
The paper discusses how anxieties and insecurities resulting from an assumed imperative of authenticity affect the process of reflexivity in feminist research. Drawing on the feminist poststructuralist inspired nature of her research; the author centres her analysis on her experience as a woman doing research focusing on women within a geospatial context of emotional and cultural familiarity. The paper is organised in six sections; after a general introduction, the first section discusses how reflexivity is used by feminist researchers as an authenticity tool with the aim of ‘being truthful’ to the commitment of exploring people’s lives, particularly women’s realities. The second section provides a brief description of the nature and objectives of her research. In sections three, four and five, the author reflects on the authenticity/genuineness concerns generated by her geographical positionality, her theoretical positionality and her locus of d(enunciation) and how these affected her thought and production process. This is followed by a closing reflection in the last section, where the author assesses the how reflexivity helped her accomplish authenticity in her own research.

Keywords: reflexivity, authenticity, feminist research, positionality
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“*If I let you,*  
*You would make me destroy myself*  
*In order to survive you,*  
*I must first survive myself*”  
*H. Rollins*

Authenticity is an interesting concept to think about because questions of authenticity are raised in different forms all across the spectrum of scientific inquiry. In feminism this question is both methodological as well as political. On the one hand, feminist research politics acknowledge the distortions that androcentricity generates in traditional approaches to knowledge; and on the other hand, they contest these distortions by focusing on women’s experiences and highlighting their systematic deprivation of power, resources and respect.

For the purpose of this reflection, I assumed the question of authenticity to be related to the feminist research aim of challenging knowledge and knowers (Harding, 1987; Haraway, 1991) within the dynamics of constructions and reproductions that systematically oppress, invisibilise and silence individuals and groups (especially women) through notions that are not inclusive of the inequalities and dilemmas surrounding their lives and experiences.

The context of my reflection draws upon my own problematisation of authenticity whilst conducting feminist-inspired research; having spent several years within a tradition of objectifying the subjects of study and trying to distance myself from them, choosing to conduct research framed by feminist principles was challenging mainly because objectified subjects became active participants in a process where I no longer saw myself solely as researcher but rather as a participant with a researching role (see Wasserfall, 1993). This paradigmatic shift generated a significant amount of anxiety and insecurity, mainly due to what I identified as the authenticity problematisation associated with feminist research, which is very linked to how we understand authenticity to be about validity (see Van Leeuwen, 2001).

In the particular case of my research, working within feminist poststructuralism implied problematising three aspects: *first*, the feminist aim to be ‘true’ to women’s lives; *second* the feminist poststructuralist aim, which as Lather (1993:673) suggests, is linked with anti-foundationalist feminism in exploring “what it might mean to engage in social inquiry without seeing this as a quest for ‘truth’ — whether truth is defined in terms of representation of external realities or in terms of consensual understandings sought in the process of discourse”. *Third*, the imperative of genuineness resulting from understanding authenticity as a concept associated with accuracy, veracity and relating it with the individual integrity “crucial to the preservation of academic credibility” (Marco and Larkin, 2000:691).

It could be summarised that this problem was framed by a three-dimensional question: How to balance speaking about, speaking for and speaking to. I will now move to discuss how reflexivity is used by feminist researchers as an authenticity tool with the aim of ‘being truthful’ to the commitment of exploring people’s lives, particularly women’s realities.

**Reflexivity as a methodological tool for authenticity**

Reflexivity is sometimes difficult to explain and therefore grasp because it is a form of reflection yet as Finlay (2003:108) suggests, “reflection… takes place after the event [whereas] reflexivity… involves a more immediate, continuing, dynamic and subjective self-awareness”. According to Mason (1996:6), reflexivity in research makes reference to how the researcher constantly examines
her/his actions and role throughout the research process and scrutinises them in the same way as the rest of the data.

As such, accountable positioning (Haraway, 1988) is an essential element in the process of reflexivity because within the process of self-scrutiny, researchers acknowledge that their social, political, geographical and ideological location affects the way in which they see, address, construct, interpret and present research (see Harding, 1896b, 1987a, 1991) and is therefore a fundamental element in identifying and recognising the limited and situated character of the knowledge they produce.

In feminist research, reflexivity is a fundamental tool used in order to ‘be truthful’ to the commitment assumed when exploring social realities. By scrutinising our role as researchers, we renounce the traditional advantageous position in which researchers look down on participants and choose instead to “break down the power barrier between researcher and researched” (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993:72) by exploring the different dynamics in which we engage in research through a collaborative and non-exploitative relationship with participants (see McDowell, 1997).

As a result of this, feminist strategies include openly addressing conflicting issues, particularly focusing on what is usually not commented in research reports because it is considered to fall outside of research reports protocol, such as “social/personal characteristics of those doing the interviewing; interviewees’ feelings about being interviewed and about the interview; interviewers’ feelings about interviewees; and quality of interviewer-interviewee interaction; hospitality offered by interviewees to interviewers; attempts by interviewees to use interviewers as sources of information; and the extension of interviewer-interviewee encounters into more broadly-based social relationships” (Oakley, 1988:31).

It can be summarised that being reflexive about the research experience implies a resulting body of knowledge that includes insights about participants, researchers, and the dynamics within and outside the research process. After having framed the theoretical grounds of my reflection, in the next section I will explain my research and its aims in order to contextualise how this all came about.

**How the problem came about: Researching gender construction**

My research was concerned with gender construction in the public sector in the Dominican Republic, particularly how it is articulated, embedded and reproduced within organisational culture. In order to achieve the aim of reporting on gender construction and unveiling gender dynamics, I interviewed women and men working in the public sector.

My methodological framework was designed drawing on feminist poststructuralism (Weedon, 1987) and I used discourse analysis (Baxter, 2003) framed within the processes defined by Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organisations to report my findings.

For a while, the ethics in research practice (see Guillemin and Gillam, 2004:264) seemed a good way to go about following research protocols. Being aware of the importance of ethical behaviour and reminding myself at every minute that I owed it to my research ethos to act within the boundaries of ethical practice made me feel very truthful to the ethos of emancipatory research.

However, ethics sometimes conflicted with interaction; feminist research in organisations aims to explore women’s lives and experiences from a perspective that considers the fact that they have a disadvantaged organisational status where not only aspects like social segregation (see Kanter, 1997), occupational segregation (see Siltanen, 1994) and lack of mobility (see Riger and Galligan, 1980; Blum et al., 1994) affect them, but also where their sexuality and bodies are problematised.
and oppressed (Braidotti, 1994; Burrell, 1984; Witz et al., 1996). As such, aspects like sensitive planning (Sieber, 1992; Lee, 1993) made me question whether I may have obscured the possibility of certain issues arising by keeping a safe discursive distance from them. For instance, on one occasion a participant revealed that she had been sexually harassed by a former line manager, was fired when she refused his advances and was later reinstated when the man left his post to move to another organisation. She then revealed that I was the first person she had ever talked to about this because “you can’t talk about these things [men’s sexualised behaviour] at work”. At the time of this comment, we were having a casual conversation while on our way to meet another contact that she had introduced me to. The comment came as a surprise considering the nature of our conversation at the time (we were discussing the number of female directors where she worked) and became more complex when her voice broke as she finished. There was I, thoughts storming through my head and struggling between finding the right thing to say or shifting to another role. Should I say anything at all? Was it OK to tell her that he was a low-life for abusing his position of authority? Should I advise her to seek professional help? I never expressed these feelings and she moved on saying, “it is all in the past now”. I will never know whether she identified my struggle in the situation and chose to or she genuinely felt that it was all in the past; in any case, her watery eyes suggested otherwise. I questioned for days the truthfulness in the way I handled this situation because I did not feel detached of this revelation and felt that I was not properly trained to handle situations like these because no matter how many times you read about emotional aspects of research (see for example, Gilbert, 2000), it is only when you are there, that you come face to face with not knowing what to do because “ethical competencies are learned in situ” (Barnett, 2005:5).

This realisation made me question these ethics and the truthfulness behind research ethics, as if I would betray true lives for the sake of academic correctness. Somehow, it was very difficult not to think that I was acting in a condescending manner or in a manner that disregarded what these women and men saw as important because in the end, I had a research plan and these people were a piece of my puzzle.

Many situations both during and after fieldwork prompted the reflective process, which remained as ongoing moments of research therapy, either in the solitude of my thoughts, whilst addressing issues with participants or even when making practical decisions about my research. I have summarised them within three dimensions, which I recognised as most problematic whilst conducting my research; namely my geographical positionality, my theoretical positionality and my locus of (d) enunciation. I will move on to address each.

**Geographical positionality**

I am Dominican woman doing research about the Dominican Republic. However, I am doing this research from a context that ideologically conflicts with both my own and possibly that of participants. In many opportunities this was highlighted by participants, by other people who facilitated contacts with potential participants and especially by the way dynamics around me developed, so thinking about its implications became a central part of my fieldwork experience.

Whilst finalising the arrangements pertaining to my fieldwork, I found myself carrying out rituals and behaving in a matter that seemed natural and appropriate to my role as a PhD candidate at a British university. Those rituals and behaviours somewhat fulfilled the expectations of that role; however, once I reached the Dominican Republic, it dawned on me how easy I had forgotten how different things in the Dominican Republic were to things in the UK.

Several days into the fieldwork, I realised that being in the UK had changed the way I perceived research altogether and also after having lived outside of the Dominican Republic for almost 9
years, my manners, interaction practices and the way I expressed myself had changed, which was noticeable to the people I interacted with and affected the way I responded to them, particularly after it was highlighted that I was ‘barely Dominican now’ ("you’re almost not Dominican") or that I was distant ("you’re so cold, you don’t greet anymore").

In that sense, I found myself spending a considerable amount of time trying to construct myself again as the Jenny people back home expected and adapting to social protocols I had long forgotten because I no longer used. For instance, it took me several weeks to be able to re-adapt to different styles of time management; in the Dominican Republic, time is elastic and the boundaries between work and social are not strict. In that sense, I struggled to come to terms with people repetitively standing me up, being late (sometimes 2 ½ hours late!) or with having to meet with people five or six times in order to finish one single interview.

I was troubled by all this because it put pressure on the schedule that I (had to) skilfully organised beforehand whilst planning my fieldwork. This generated intense feelings of insecurity as I had to struggle between my discomfort at being treated with careless unimportance and the idea that maybe I was academically alienated and was overreacting. Furthermore, I was afraid this would affect my interaction with participants; I felt I could not demand their attention because otherwise they may feel pressured and decide not to collaborate with me. At some point, I felt I had so much that meant so little in the Dominican context; one that I knew so well yet felt I had neglected to consider thoroughly. Two main issues are worth discussing in this regard, my status as a Dominican student studying the Dominican Republic in the UK and language.

First, the issue of being Dominican and going all the way to the UK to study the Dominican Republic seemed odd to many. Interestingly, although there is not a strong research culture in the Dominican Republic, the presence of ‘a Dominican researcher who is investigating the Dominican Republic in the UK’ seemed contradictory. Considering the strong migration presence of Dominican immigrants in the US; people generally assume that this is the logical place for Dominican students to go if they want to study abroad. As my case fell outside of this pattern, it may have been interpreted as strange; hence people felt the need to ask questions about it.

In several conversations, questions about why this was and whether it was necessary or even appropriate for me to go to the UK as opposed to the US to study the Dominican Republic were brought into discussion. Also, aspects like the fact that my research would be written in English and so nobody in the Dominican Republic would be able to read it were commented on several occasions; at times even implying that it was not practical as not many Dominicans come to the UK ("are there so many Dominicans in England anyway?")

Aside from the fact that I interpreted this as a lack of in-depth knowledge of academic endeavours, I still found myself justifying my decision of studying in the UK more frequently than having to explain the nature of my work. This affected my self-esteem in the early days of fieldwork as in addition to explaining what my research was about; I felt I had to come up with a ‘convincing’ explanation regarding decisions that I deemed too personal.

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1 These comments were made during initial interactions and refer to my greeting practices, where I initially greeted people by shaking hands instead of kissing them on the cheek. Aspects like greetings and terms of address (see Emerson et al., 1995) are a very important part of interaction discourses in Dominican society. Greetings generally include physical touch in the form of a semi-hug and kisses on the cheek, which women are expected to do with other women and men. Men usually shake hands with other men, and this can be accompanied by a pat on the upper arm. There seems to be no clear protocol as to physical touch in terms of differentiation between work and social events and people greet family, friends and acquaintances alike with kisses on the cheek. Hugs are usually reserved for family and friends. Nevertheless, not engaging in physical greeting can be interpreted as a cold sign that indicates refusal to interact or personal rejection.
Second, the use of language became evidently challenging. Though a native Spanish speaker, whilst in the UK and after all those months of reading and writing, it made sense to think that it was OK to think about the Dominican Republic as a developing country (‘país en vías de desarrollo’) or to talk about confidentiality (‘confidencialidad’) for participants.2

On several occasions, its use provoked different responses ranging from laughter to confusion; someone jokingly suggested that my discourse was alienated (“you’re already talking like them [the English]”). A couple of incidents later, I found myself re-phrasing the Spanish version of my statements and questions so that they would not only make sense to the people, but also so that they would not generate the idea that I needed a reality check because I had forgotten where I really was.

The previous section has highlighted how issues surrounding geographic positionality became a source of conflict in the relationship with people in the research context. I will now move to address issues pertaining to theoretical positionality.

Theoretical positionality

I am aware that feminist research is expected ‘to gear towards bringing about the emancipation of women and its ‘validity’ should be judged in terms of its contribution to this’ (Mies, 1993). In that sense, I recognised the limitations of my approach as the way my research problem had been posed represented part of the scientific problems generic to the feminist community (see Greer, 1969). As my research situated feminist knowledge in a particular social and intellectual context, I believed that as much as my findings could be neither universalised nor generalised, I was complying with some expectations of feminist inquiry.

However, things were not so smooth as to simply finding a justification and moving on. Whilst reading Judith Baxter’s Positioning Gender in Discourse (2003) I found myself identifying with the problematisation of how to make sense of an anti-foundationalist theoretical framework that conflicted with a research context where women in particular struggled in their search for an identity.

On the one hand, feminist tradition in the Dominican Republic is not so much an academic movement but rather one based on activism. As such, some feminists with whom I discussed the nature of my work questioned my approach because they found it accommodating (“Isn’t it an easy way out to think that there’s no need to categorise, to have an identity as women, considering we’ve never had one as a social group?” I was asked). Also, the issue of being at one of the hegemonic centres was brought into discussion; in particular, the issue of drawing on the work of so many ‘white women theorising like we were all the same’ (“Have they being here? It’s so easy to sit in their offices, sorted for life while here you can teach, but also you need other jobs to survive”).

On the other hand, as with many countries that are still struggling with the backlash of colonialism, in the Dominican Republic issues of blackness, social class and race are conflictive (Valdez, 2005).

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2 Terms like ‘developing country’ are used as part of official government discourses to talk about an ideal future for the country (see Fernández Reyna, 2006) and can be found on reports by international agencies; however, they are not part of social discourses. Dominicans do not refer to the Dominican Republic as a developing country, presumably because realities of poverty and social crisis make it unlikely for discourse to be articulated around what the term ‘developing’ implies. However, terms like ‘país tercermundista’ (Third-World-Like Country), ‘país subdessarrallado’ (underdeveloped country) and ‘país pobre’ (poor country) are commonly used. In the case of confidentiality, it is not a term of common use and it is associated with individuals but more with information (government information mainly). Instead, the term ‘privacidad’ (privacy) is used to indicate that things about individuals are not going to be publicly disclosed.
For instance; shadism\(^3\) is very common and differentiations are made between oneself and others as ‘blanquito/a’, ‘morenito/a’, ‘indio/a claro/a’, ‘prieto/a’, ‘indio/a oscuro/a’ or ‘negrito/a’; or in the case of social class, using terms like ‘los riquitos’, ‘los nuevos ricos’ and ‘los pobres’.

I chose to focus on gender construction; I still recall the many times one is told that good research needs to be both realistic in terms of scope and time. Yet at times I felt an urge to change my argument to one more inclusive of issues of blackness, not because they were brought up by participants, but because they were evident even in the way people interacted with me. For instance, on one occasion, I went to meet someone and was asked to wait for him at reception. When he finally came, he told me that someone had said to him ‘hay una blanquita preguntando por ti en recepción’ (‘there’s a Whitey\(^4\) asking for you at reception’). I am certainly not White but in a context tainted by shadism, that possibility apparently exists.

I believed I managed to bracket my own assumptions and constructions so that they were not imposed on the data (see Ahern, 1999); however, in light of the poststructuralist aim to de-centre the subject and the need I identified to re-centre the subject, contradictions between my theoretical positionality and my fieldwork experience remained.

The previous section highlighted the struggles surrounding my theoretical position and how my fieldwork experience made me question the theoretical foundations of my research. Following up on this, I will now move to address issues pertaining to my locus of (d)enunciation.

**Locus of (d)enunciation**

As feminist doing feminist research about women in the public sector where I had previously worked for ten years, obvious conflictive issues were present as I was researching aspects of working life and environments that I was familiar with. Several questions were prompted by thoughts about who I was and whether that was who I was supposed to be in the research context; was I doing the research for myself, for the academic community or for the participants?

Roberts (1988b) suggests that when doing research with powerless groups, the findings should focus on the individuals and be presented in clear way because they are the centre of the research practice, yet as I have chosen to speak in a (academically and linguistically) different voice than that of the participants, this remained a constant source of concern because as a researcher, I was presently bounded by the requirements of the academic community and as a feminist and as a woman I felt committed to respond to participants, and so I wondered… was I betraying anyone?

An important element of this problematisation was the issue of the woman versus the researcher. Even when I generally identified goodwill in all the people who participated, some incidents and comments made by some men I was interviewing prompted feelings of awkwardness as I felt my status and my credibility as a researcher were questioned, presumably because I was a woman. For instance, during my interactions, I identified that some men’s behaviour was guarded, formal or distant whereas I noticed a more relaxed approach with other unknown women (visitors, customers, public employees from other institutions). Prompted by this realisation, in follow-up conversations, I asked some male participants about this and issues pertaining to assumptions about my role were raised.

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3 Shadism relates to the categorisation of individuals or groups based on the degree of skin pigmentation (Macey, 2004) and consequent preferential treatment based on their closeness to white skin pigmentation (Goldstein, 2002). I am very thankful to Val Bernard (Newbold College, Bracknell) for pointing me in the direction of this debate.

4 I have taken a risk by translating the word ‘blanquita’ as ‘Whitey’ yet I am not sure whether this is the appropriate translation. ‘Blanquita’ would literally be ‘small White’ yet ‘blanquita’ implies among other things being White, from middle/high social class and or privileged background.
Some of the responses were: “you’re not a normal woman because we’re talking about things that we don’t talk about with the women here” and “women don’t come here very often because this is too specialised and they don’t understand what we do. People who investigate things here are usually men”. These comments only reflect how gender permeates thought processes and feelings (Hay, 1996) as the combination of a role assumed as masculine along with operating gender stereotypes created dissonance and determined the way in which these men interacted with me, presumably upon difficulties in perceiving a woman as a researcher (see Easterday et al., 1977; Burgess, 1982).

However, how my status as ‘non-standard’ woman created the awkwardness; where distance was used as a concealed power strategy, made me feel diminished. I needed information from these men and their distance reminded me that even when I was labelled as a researcher (someone who presumably has a level of knowledge that positions them in an intellectually advantageous position), they were in control. Incidents like mine resembled some of the stories that women (in positions of authority) shared with me. In that sense, I kept asking myself… as a woman, could I ‘play’ feminist research while distancing myself from the emotional aspects of asking women like me about their lives? How could I, in terms of accuracy, respect the voice of these women whilst hearing them repeat stories that mirrored my own?

I can realise now that this transformed my relational dynamics, especially with the men. At some point, the process of emotional involvement went beyond the theoretical limits imposed by methodology and academic protocols and bordered on the personal relevance of and significance I placed on the unedited thoughts about the research process. In some instances, for example, I found myself behaving in a submissive way with the men so that they would not feel threatened by me. At other times, I chose to disregard sexist comments (“do you talk to your husband about these topics every time too?” and “does your husband know that you’re a feminist?”), which even when made in a jokingly manner, revealed gendered assumptions about women and men. In particular, even when I do not recall self-proclaiming as a feminist, when discussing the nature of my research, some people assumed it to be the case (“so, you’re one of those feminists”). As such, I associated the sexist comments with assumptions about feminist women (see Edley and Wetherell, 2001), which resulted in a conscious effort to avoid using certain terminology; such as ‘women’s rights’ or ‘feminist’, when I interviewed some of the men.

However, as true as it may be that all social research has an inevitable attachment of subjectivities, emotions and unexpected responses inherent to human nature (Bellah, 1981), I asked myself: how truthful was I in situations like those ones, where I felt undermined as a researcher for being a woman? Or how could I, as a woman, put up with situations that were useful to me as a researcher?

Somehow the implications of invasiveness, embarrassment and stigmatisation crossed from participants to researcher and this made me question whether the researcher in me should draw a clear line between how responses helped my research and how they made me feel as a person and as a woman. Not only realising that my status as a female overshadowed my identity as a researcher troubled me (see Gurney, 1985:44) but re-visiting the events after they had happened and thinking about strategies and ways to respond in case they came up again, made me aware that I too was reading into participants’ comments through a ‘gendered filter’ (McKeganey and Bloor, 1991:206).

In between negotiating the unavoidable political aspects of the research whilst observing ethical practices (see Williams, 2003), the question of authenticity kept arising. On the one hand, the contextual, inclusive, experimental, involved and socially relevant nature of feminist research (Reinharz, 1983) means that feminist inquiry is usually centred around issues that are difficult to talk about, like sexuality, bodies and gender. On the other hand, as a researcher it was very hard to feel scrutinised through the same variables I was aiming at exploring. In the end, how to combine negotiating, ethics and authenticity was the big question for me.
This big question brings me to the last section in which I will reflect on how I perceived reflexivity to be a useful methodological tool for authenticity in my feminist research.

Final reflection

It is argued (see Phillips and Hardy, 2002) that by emphasising on reflexivity, participants, researcher and readers are included as active parts of my text. Using reflexivity allowed me to engage in an open dialogue with both participants and myself; I was able to capture their thoughts and ideas not only about the issues in discussion, but also about the process we all went through and the issues and dynamics we identified as troublesome. Both during our conversations as well as during follow-up conversations, I consulted them about the process, asked them for feedback about the interview, and encouraged them to ask me questions as well.

As a researcher, however, things were different. I felt very alone in my insecurities and anxieties and did not really feel I had anybody to talk to them about; for instance, I assumed the comments that had made me feel awkward as incidental as opposed to central to my relationship with the people who made them. Therefore, I did not see the point in going back on perceptions; some comments were sufficiently ambiguous to be simple rendered as misinterpretations were I to raise them again on a later occasion (see Gurney, 1985; McKeeganey and Bloor, 1991). I then decided to write an additional research log; one with personal accounts of particular events that made a noise in my head and in my heart.

Writing the log was problematic in the beginning because it felt like a personal diary that focused on negative aspects of my research experience. Nevertheless, it proved to be very useful as it has not only allowed me to recall particular events that I have addressed as part of my reflective written accounts but also whilst I did actively witness a complex process centred of unveiling the dynamics that construct and sustain social reality, I also gained significant knowledge of the relationship between discourse and power in the construction of versions of the social order (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004:237) within the research process, based on how it shaped my experience.

As a researcher, I think I feared scrutinising this relationship because the idea of “transforming the personal experience data into public and accountable knowledge” (Finlay, 2002:533) could unveil things that I considered embarrassing, such as feeling unable to find an appropriate response to innuendoes or getting the feeling that I had swallowed my pride in order to get the data I needed.

If we consider how discursive production is associated with power (Foucault, 1978, 1980); individuals find themselves within structures that determine for them the criteria of truth and the dynamics in relation to power allocation in regards to speaking, definition and location. These dynamics scared me; particularly the power that as a researcher I could have, based on my locus of (d)enunciation. In many ways, I was in a privileged position in relation to participants because even information was up to them to share; as I researcher, I could ultimately choose what to look at and the ways to analyse and present the information, which could have included to avoid the conflictive and embarrassing issues.

This aspect is of crucial importance as part of this last reflection because even acknowledging that attention must be placed to the impact of contextual, social and relational grounds on the way knowledge is constructed by researchers; when both participants’ and researchers’ grounds have similar if not the same roots, reporting on these situations has stronger emotional implications. For instance, my concern of betrayal had to do with participants whom I knew before the research, some for years and with whom I already had a relationship outside of my academic role as researcher.

In the end, this is where my quest for authenticity ended, after realising that because “what we notice and how we describe it depends to a great extent on our histories, roles and expectations as
individuals and as members of our society” (Hubbard, 1983:47) it is mandatory that we talk about it without awkwardness. Again, it is harder when you then have to re-look at things and see how your constructions are not value-free and determine many aspects of the research process, from crucial parts to minor things, from beginning to end.

Reflexivity complemented my use of discourse analysis as methodological approach, which meant that I stopped applying categories to myself but rather identified the ways in which us all actively constructed and employed categories in our discourse (Wood and Kroger, 2000:29). After all the insecurities and anxieties I have referred, reflexivity was a positive way to address these and come to terms with my fear of lack of genuineness whilst at the same time being true to my research ethos.

Coming face to face with reflexivity and discover some truths about myself was challenging. In the end, I guess we all want to think we are getting it right because after three years of PhD training, it is the least that is expected.
References


