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DEVELOPING MY RESEARCH IDENTITY (EMBODYING THE *SELF*) THROUGH EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMAN- TO-WOMAN RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM/SURVIVORS: DOING, BEING, BECOMING, AND BELONGING

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose: Engagement in doctoral training is intended to lead to personal development, as well as – of course - the development of a person's skills as a researcher. Having engaged in the occupation of doctoral training, I aim to reflect upon how my identity as researcher developed throughout this process; that is, through doing, being, becoming, and belonging. The aim of my doctoral research was to explore the impact of woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault. Hence, the foundational themes explored in this paper are sexual offending, auto/biography, and the significance of identity.

Background: I commenced my doctoral training as someone who identified as an occupational scientist and who, therefore, understood that occupation is a means through which people can develop, express themselves, and achieve some sense of belonging. Having completed my training, I reflect upon my becoming an auto/biographical researcher.

Methodology: In this original paper, I use the sociologically-informed auto/biographical approach, which affords me with the rationale for writing from the first-person perspective. Auto/biography concedes the combined inclusion of my own voice – as researcher - and the experiences of my respondents.

Contribution: Little is known about the issue of woman-to-woman sexual offending, let alone the impact of researching this traumatic topic upon the researcher. Moreover, research has only relatively recently started to grow that explicitly uses an auto/biographical approach, in which researchers embrace their subjectivity and positionality within their work.

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Findings	Identifying as an auto/biographical researcher, I appreciate how my respondents – in terms of their identity and the stories they told me - were integral to my development. That is, I engaged in the process of developing and understanding the Self through exploring the perceived impacts of woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault.
Recommendations for Practitioners	I invite practitioners to share their awareness that woman-to-woman sexual offending is a very real phenomenon. Additionally, your engagement in or with research (which can include being the audience, or reader of research) is one way in which you can gain understanding of your Self.
Recommendation for Researchers	I invite others to reflect upon how embodying the Self can lead you to gain self-knowledge through direct experience. Good, moral research practice does not have to involve the researcher remaining objective, neutral, and value-free. Your subjective and personal experiences as the researcher may well support the use of an auto/biographical approach.
Impact on Society	Researching traumatic topics can have a varied emotional and professional impact upon researchers that warrants scrutiny. Use of an auto/biographical approach, in which the researcher's insider status is made explicit - has enabled this researcher (me) to manage this impact, whilst also developing my knowledge, experience and Self.
Future Research	Research that should follow on from this paper must continue to explore working auto/biographically when researching traumatic topics and biographical disruptions.
Keywords	woman-to-woman, rape, sexual assault, identity, occupation, occupational science, auto/biography

BACKGROUND

> "Two interviews today. A hard day. It would have been my mum's birthday today; one of the respondent's stories was about the covert sexual abuse she endured that was perpetrated by her own mother. As I have reflected on before, I don't want to be 'the one' to shatter the illusion for people that women aren't capable of this form of abuse. But some are" (Twinley, research diary entry from 2013).

The above is a diary entry taken from one of several (private and unpublished) research diaries I kept during my doctoral research journey; each diary was created with the intention of maintaining a record to acknowledge the significance of my auto/biography (identity) on my research. The aim of my research (for which full ethical approval was received from my Faculty Research Ethics Committee) was:

> To explore the perceived impacts of woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault, the subsequent experience of disclosure, reaction and support, and the consequences for victim/survivors' subjective experience of occupation.

As woman-to-woman sexual offending is an extremely under-researched issue, my research was an original venture to explore this traumatic and life-altering experience. The aim of this paper is to provide an auto/biographical approach to reflect upon how my identity as researcher of this doctoral work developed throughout the research process – an issue in doctoral studies that, in my experience, warrants exploration. Due to this, my writing for this paper does not follow the conventional academic format; by this I mean that I have intentionally chosen not to describe each aspect of the research process. Rather, I intend to share my reflections on how I acknowledged my insider perspective and how this contributed to the development of my *Self*; my hope is that this will encourage oth-

ers to engage in an auto/biographical approach to research that acknowledges the personhood of all involved (Brennan & Letherby, 2017).

Whilst actually doing this work, I wanted to – I intended to - reflect on my intellectual and personal auto/biographical processes. This involved keeping separate diaries so I could write from different perspectives, acknowledging the significance of my own identity as an occupational therapist, a researcher, a woman, a woman with same sex attraction, and as a victim/survivor of woman-to-woman rape. My diaries were used to record how I felt my identity impacted on the research process (including the data collection and analysis), how I reacted to this process, and how I reacted to the data itself. Having engaged in the occupation of doctoral training, I have since been able to reflect upon how my identity – particularly as researcher - developed throughout the process of doing the work. Today I confidently identify as an auto/biographical researcher, and I appreciate how my respondents – in terms of their identity and the stories they told me – were integral to this development (my development). It could be said that I engaged in the process of "… understanding the Self to understand the Other" (Roth, 2005, p. 15). Though I understand my development as more than this; I began with some understanding of my *Self* as I generated some understanding of the *Other* (my respondents), but, additionally, generating some understanding of the *Other* has led me to gain far more understanding about my *Self*.

My *Self* and my Identity

Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith (2012, p. 69) explain that identities are the "… traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is". The construct of identity, therefore, refers to the multifarious ways in which people define themselves. As I note above, I chose to keep research diaries that I could write from the prominent ways – or perspectives - in which I define my *Self* that were key to my doctoral research. Of these, my identity as a victim/survivor and as an occupational therapist are the two aspects of my *Self* which I feel are most crucial to explain for the audience of this paper.

As a Victim/Survivor

The following is a reflection from my thesis on my auto/biographical position as a woman-to-woman rape victim/survivor. This is intended to elucidate my most compelling auto/biographical motivation for conducting the research on which this paper is based.

> "I was raped by a woman; an attack that was extremely forceful and violent in both a physical and sexual way. Today I live with the aftermath of this traumatic event, often remembering, reliving, and/or experiencing the various effects it has had upon me, and my life, on a daily basis. The impact has been considerable and, in many ways, insurmountable. That is not to say I have not survived this victimisation, but its effects have proven to be complex and varied, with some becoming engrained to the point I have not been able to completely overcome them. Instead, I see myself as a victim/survivor who has had to find strategies to be able to live with the sequelae of being raped by another woman" (Twinley, 2016).

As an Occupational Therapist

I worked as a doctoral student alongside fulfilling my current role as a lecturer in occupational therapy. I am a registered occupational therapist, having worked in practice in the UK prior to commencing my role as an academic. Occupational therapy is an allied health profession that aims to promote the health and wellbeing of individuals, groups, and communities through the therapeutic use of occupation. Occupation is understood as the things that people need, want, and are obliged to do in their everyday lives. Occupational therapists use occupation as both means and ends, meaning it is both the intervention and the outcome of our work with people. Occupational therapists work with people at a point in their lives when they experience a disruption that creates a barrier to engaging in

their meaningful occupations (Wolf, Ripat, Davis, Becker, & MacSwiggan, 2010). I suggest that being sexually victimised is an example of such a disruptive life event, and one that can alter the victim/survivor's subjective experience of occupation.

AN OCCUPATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF IDENTITY

Occupational therapy has become increasingly informed by scientific research into human occupation conducted by occupational scientists. As an occupational therapist and scientist, I uphold the perspective that occupation – those things we all need and want to do – are a means through which people can develop and express their personal identities, and achieve a sense of belonging (Ikiugu, 2005; Wilcock, 2006). I view doctoral study and training as one such occupation, especially as participation in this occupation requires the student to have the physical and mental capacity to conduct the work required, as well as the ability to self-monitor how the process is going and whether any changes need to be implemented – all features of occupational participation described by the occupational scientist, Hocking (2009).

Taking an occupational perspective of identity involves considering the suggestion that occupation is implicated in the shaping of people's identities; that is, our identity is shaped – in part – by what we do. When people are occupationally engaged they are also engaged in developing their identity (Taylor & Kay, 2015). Indeed, commentators have long perceived occupation as the primary means through which people can develop and express their personal identities (Christiansen, 1999; Ennals, Fortune, Williams, & D'Cruz, 2016). As professionals that have an interest in the health and wellbeing of individuals, groups, and communities, such commentators link the significance of occupation and identity to people's health and wellbeing. For instance, the following excerpt from Christiansen's renowned (1999, p. 547) Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture encapsulates the occupational therapy perspective of these links between occupation, health, and identity:

> "… occupations are key not just to being a person, but to being a particular person, and thus creating and maintaining an identity… When we build our identities through occupations, we provide ourselves with the contexts necessary for creating meaningful lives, and life meaning helps us to be well".

In this way, people's identities are seen to "provide a meaning-making anchor" (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 69), meaning they contribute to an individual's conceptions of *Self* which, in turn, influences one's choices.

However, the 'biographical disruption' (Bury, 1982) brought about by unexpected life events (such as being sexually victimised, in the case of my research) has the potential to either disrupt a person's identity or to trigger a reassessment of the person's identity and conceptions of self (Whalley Hammell, 2004). Of course, Bury (1982) conceptualised chronic illness as a particular type of disruptive event in people's lives. Subsequently, biographical disruption has tended to be explained in the context of the onset of ill-health for an individual. However, importantly, some critics acknowledge that any unexpected life event can create a biographical disruption (see Ketokivi, 2008, and Davidman, 2000). Indeed, Whalley Hammell – a key occupational science commentator – (2004, p. 299) suggests that: "… the meaning of a biographical disruption is determined both by its consequences and its significance; and that occupation can change the meaning of a life disruption in terms of both its consequences and significance". I understand this to mean that, whilst a biographical disruption causes disturbance, it can also potentially be an important, and even life-changing, experience: one which might instigate a person's reassessment of one's norms, values, priorities, identity, and choices in relation to one's occupations.

DOING, BEING, BECOMING, AND BELONGING

One of the founding occupational scientists, Wilcock (1998) wrote a key text in which she theorised occupation as more than just doing. That is, rather than only understanding occupation as something

we do that is purposeful and goal-directed, it should be valued for its meaning and for how individuals feel when engaging in occupation. To understand meaning through occupational engagement, four dimensions of occupation were proposed by Wilcock (2006); from this theoretical perspective, occupation is understood as a synthesis of doing, being, becoming, and belonging. Hence, the things we do, our feelings about this, and our sense of *Self* interact and, as a consequence, our realisation of who we are evolves. I have suggested that these dimensions of meaning can contribute toward the formation of either individual, group, local, national, or sociocultural identity (Twinley, 2013).

My doctoral research was, in itself, an occupation, and one that contributed to the overall development of my researcher identity. Considering the aforementioned dimensions of occupation, I experienced meaning through engaging in this occupation, and I can identify the ways in which this process was more than just doing; through engaging in doctoral research I achieved the ability to feel like and to be an auto/biographical researcher; my becoming involved growing as a researcher and developing as a person; and through this process I felt part of a wider community – especially the auto/biography community, where I have experienced feeling like I belong. For my *Self*, in terms of my occupation of doctoral research, the things I did, how I felt about this, and my sense of *Self* interacted and, as a consequence, my realisation of who I am (and who I was) evolved.

AUTO/BIOGRAPHY AS AN APPROACH TO RESEARCH

It was my first Director of Studies – Professor Gayle Letherby – who introduced me to auto/biography when we first met to discuss my research proposal. During the primary stages in the research process we discussed the importance I recognised in being able to conduct research that would remain focused on my respondents as individuals and the associated opportunities to explore their subjective perceptions and experiences – just as use of an auto/biographical approach affords the researcher (Sikes, 2007). From the reading I have conducted, my thesis constitutes the first documented primary research endeavour to create a methodology that involved combining the sociological auto/biographical approach with an occupational science perspective. Doing so supported my belief that I could not divorce myself – my auto/biography – from any aspect of my research. It also helped to ensure my perspective remained occupation-focused, as I aimed to remain attentive to my respondents' subjective experience of occupation. Hence, as Stanley (1992) suggested, my use of auto/biography inserted the position of 'I' into my exploration of people's lived experiences that other methods artificially and purposefully remove (hence my use of first person in this paper). Furthermore, my use of an occupational science perspective was integral to focusing on the subjective experience of occupation, specifically following becoming a victim/survivor of woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault.

Working auto/biographically requires the researcher to consider the ways in which their respondents' individual biographies are mediated through their own auto/biography. To achieve this, I have confronted the significance of my *Self* on an academic, professional, and personal level. This process was gradual, as I reflected on my positionality (especially my insider status) throughout the research process. My use of reflexivity and critical scrutiny of *Self* has culminated in my choice to be explicit about my positionality within the research and where my loyalties lie (Letherby, 2013). It is suggested that one way to understand *Others* is to understand ourselves (Jauncey, 2010). To do so, Roth (2005, p. 15) advises auto/biographical researchers need to '… use critical methods together with inner subjectivity to bring about a maximum of intersubjectivity'. Through doing so, auto/biographical researchers become both the subject and the object of their research. Certainly, the acknowledgement of the 'auto' and the 'biographical' enabled me to identify that when I wrote about *Others* (as biographer of an aspect of my respondents' lives) I was always involved and, when I wrote about my *Self* (as autobiographer of my own life), my respondents and significant *Others* were always involved (Coffey, 2004).

Respondent Identity

To reiterate, my respondents and the stories they told me were central to the entire research process, and to my own researcher development. I agree with Reinharz (1997), who proposes that researchers '…both bring the self to the field and create the self in the field' (p. 3). Equally, I would suggest respondents bring aspects of their *Self* to field and have the opportunity to create their *Self* in the field. In the case of my respondents (and indeed of many sexually victimised people (see Boyle, 2017)), their experience of being raped or sexually assaulted triggered them to re-evaluate their identity and conceptions of *Self*. Indeed, rape itself can lead to a loss of identity (Campbell, 2002). What is more, their participation in my research required them to identify either as a woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault victim/survivor, or as someone who either knows or does not know of a woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault victim/survivor. I, therefore, anticipated they would bring this significant aspect of who they are to the field straight away, as they responded to the first phase of my research.

For the purpose of elucidation, my research comprised of two phases. In order to generate data regarding the experience and awareness of woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault I designed a web-based survey. This was accessible to anyone with internet access, and so those members of the general public who saw an advert or a link about the survey were directed to where they could complete the survey on-line. It was also my intention that the survey could be used as a sampling tool, meaning those respondents who were interested in sharing their story in more depth could provide an email address at the end of the survey for me to make contact with them. In the second phase of my research, I interviewed 10 respondents face-to-face, and an eleventh respondent chose to share her story with me through correspondence. For those respondents who identified as a woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault victim/survivor, this aspect of who they are – their identity – was crucial to protect, as in any ethical research that ensures either confidentiality or anonymity (Economic and Social Research Council, 2015). This had the potential to create a conflict between the need to report detailed findings, based on rich narratives regarding the issue being explored, and the necessity to protect my respondents' identities (Kaiser, 2009). Use of pseudonyms for all details – such as people's names, place names, and company or organisation names – meant I was able to remove major identifying information whilst maintaining the richness of respondents' narratives and descriptions of events.

The Significance of Identity: My Findings

The *Self* and identity was so prominent in the stories my respondents told that 'identity' became one of the final four key themes that emerged from my thematic analysis of the qualitative data. Within this theme, aspects of identity that were discussed by respondents included the subthemes of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, conceptions of *Self* (and two sub-subthemes: as victim/survivor; as daughter), perpetrator/s identity, and women as sex offenders.

For those respondents who were women with same sex attraction, many spoke about the impact of woman-to-woman rape upon their own feelings about their sexual and gender identity. Here, it is imperative to discuss what sexual identity is. Diamond (2006) presents a feminist empiricist perspective of sexual identity development, stating it:

> "… is conventionally defined as the process by which sexual-minority (i.e., nonheterosexual) individuals come to acknowledge and accept their same-sex sexual orientation and to develop a positive integration between their nonheterosexual identity and other aspects of selfhood". (p. 472)

Whilst Diamond's paper scrutinises the complexities with formulating models of sexual identity development, an implication of this definition is that it reinforces heteronormativity, because it separates identity into hierarchical binaries. In doing so, heterosexuality is assumed, that is, until a person self-discloses otherwise. Rather, I concur with LaMarre (2007), in that there needs to be an apprecia-

tion of the diversity of the experience and of the development, of sexual identity. The following useful definition from Haseldon and Joloza (2009) appreciates this:

> "Self-perceived sexual identity is a subjective view of oneself. Essentially, it is about what a person is, not what they do. It is about the inner sense of self, and perhaps sharing a collective social identity with a group of other people… A person can have a sexual identity while not being sexually active. Furthermore, reported sexual identity may change over time or in different contexts (for example, at home versus in the workplace)." (p. 6)

However, Haseldon, and Joloza's (2009) assertion that sexual identity is not about what people do conflicts with the widely-held occupational perspective that the subjective experience of occupation is a synthesis of doing, being, becoming, and belonging (Wilcock, 1998). Therefore, our subjective view of *Self* is shaped by the things we do – our occupational experiences – and the process in which they are done, in each present moment (Doble & Caron Santha, 2008). Hence, a person that is not sexually active still does things that contribute to their subjective view of *Self*, their sexual identity, and their sexuality. Acknowledging the fluidity of self-disclosed sexual identity, and the changeability in response to contextual factors, is important when striving to understand respondents' experiences. In the case of some of my respondents, Cailey, Kiera, and Simone's narratives were rich with discussion about the impact of woman-to-woman rape upon their own feelings about their (self-labelled) gay or lesbian sexual identity. Simone – who identified as a 31-year-old gay woman at the time of her interview – said: "I was wary of being with women… I was already feeling like: God! I know I'm definitely gay but can I, who can I trust?" Similarly, Cailey – a 23-year-old gay woman – explained: "I did not think I would tell anyone, or that anyone would believe me because I was not out as a gay woman. As the experience was ongoing over a few years, I feel the experience left me wary of other women". Clearly, their experience disrupted their ability to make sense of who they were, particularly in terms of their sexual and gender identity.

The significance of 'becoming' is immeasurable, and 'coming out' can lead to people feeling content, confident, and proud of their sexual or gender identity (AVERT, 2014). The necessity for people to disclose their sexual identity – specifically regarding their sexual orientation – or to 'come out', remains unique to the lived gay experience, even though it is acknowledged there is diversity within this individual experience (Plummer, 1992; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004, 2011). With the combination of doing, being, and becoming as essential for health and wellbeing (Wilcock, 1998), I recognise the biographical disruption my respondents endured affected their subjective experience of occupation (doing) and their ability to be true to themselves (being) and to be open about their sexual and gender identities (becoming).

Thus, significant biographical disruptions may be experienced as an assault on, or a threat to, a person's identity (Tembo, 2017). Moreover, in the case of some of my respondents, who they are and how they felt as a woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault victim/survivor was influenced by the identity of others. In particular, I remain mindful of the implications for Cailey that being a victim/survivor has upon her daily lived experience, especially for her interpersonal relationships and her daily interactions with others. Cailey continues to endure posttraumatic reactions to triggers that remind her of her victimisation. It was Cailey who really made me aware of my *Self*, in terms of who I am and how I look, as the researcher. After her interview – at that precious moment when the Dictaphone had been turned off and we continued to talk as we were packing up to leave – Cailey said she had a confession to make; she had googled my name to find pictures of me to check that I didn't in any way resemble her perpetrator. Had I have done so, there was no way – she explained – that she would have been able to come and meet me to talk about her experience, as there was a very real risk for Cailey that I – my *Self* – could have been a trigger.

Perpetrator/s Identity

Though I did not ask any of the respondents who had raped and sexually assaulted them, some first phase respondents included it in their survey responses, and each second phase respondent told me in their interviews or correspondence. From this data, it is apparent that the identity of their perpetrator, or perpetrators, categorically contributed to the overall impact upon each victim/survivors' subsequent experience of disclosure, reaction, support, and their subjective experience of occupation.

Amongst the 11 second phase respondents, a total of 13 cases of rape were reported. By cases, I mean either instances that were a one-time event or instances that occurred over differing periods of time. In each case, the perpetrator/s identity was either as acquaintances or friends, intimate partner, biological mother, or, in Sarah's case, the combination of acquaintances, friends, and strangers (the latter meaning Sarah did not previously know, or had never met, some of her perpetrator/s (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, 2009)).

In terms of biological mothers as perpetrators, with good reason, the issue of mother-daughter sexual abuse is a painful and uncomfortable topic for many people. Research into mother-daughter sexual abuse is limited. However, findings continue to have relevance, such as those from the now dated study by Ogilvie and Daniluk (1995) that explored three cases of mother-daughter incest; they found that the victim/survivors experienced shame and stigmatisation, feelings of betrayal and self-blame, and compromised identity development. In much the same way, my respondents – Eleanor and Tanya – reported such reactions:

> "I don't think I could ever be completely the person I would have been if none of this had ever happened". (Eleanor)

> "I have no family whatsoever. I feel alienated in so many ways and that is because I was raped by my own mother. It is because to my mother I was simply a doll and a sex toy to be used at her leisure. If I was just raped by my father I think I would find that easier to live with. I may still have a relationship with my mother." (Tanya)

Conceptions of Self

When it comes to respondent identities, every second phase respondent described having changing self-conceptions. In particular, two sub-subthemes that emerged were their conceptions of *Self* as victim/survivor, and as daughter. In terms of being a victim/survivor, the ability to understand and to name what has happened to the rape or sexual assault victim/survivor is believed necessary for any healing and recovery to occur (Klein, 2014). My respondents felt their conceptions of *Self* as a victim/survivor were undermined, or dismissed, by others. One of the heterosexual first phase respondents who named their experience 'rape' commented:

> "I have received a great deal of invalidation from some people ("friends", etc.) who have suggested that the rape I experienced by a woman was at least more 'gentle' and 'less violent' than rape by a man. I have experienced both, and this statement is not true and is very hurtful." (Respondent 156)

In terms of self-conceptions as daughter, a key reason for my own initial hesitance around a more public disclosure of the fact I identify as a woman-to-woman rape victim/survivor was that I was concerned how my dad might feel. Being a daughter, and no longer having a mother, were key factors that contributed to my feelings around how I should be and what I should do, as a daughter. Likewise, my respondents raised various issues related to performing their occupational role of daughter in the aftermath of being raped by another woman, or women. Many were conscious their performance of their role as daughter had changed through, for example, their determination to try and conceal aspects of their lives from their parents that had been affected by their victimisation. For example, Kiera intensely believed her heavy alcohol-use turned her into a different person, one

whom her friends and family would not understand and would not like, stating: "I wasn't a very nice person when I was drinking… I wasn't a very nice person to my family." Due to this, Kiera increasingly isolated herself from those she had been closest to. In turn, this contributed to her sense of isolation the woman-to-woman rape had caused, as indeed all types of sexual violation can trigger (Office for Victims of Crime, 2011).

Researcher Identity (the Self)

Returning to my identity as researcher, amongst other aspects of my identity that make up who I am, what I value, and what I do – such as being a woman with same sex attraction, being a feminist, being an academic, and being a victim/survivor myself – the process of engaging in doctoral training greatly contributed to the development of my identity. As I outlined at the start of this paper, I initially approached this research from the positions I felt most comfortable and self-assured in: as a well-practiced occupational therapist, and as a confident social scientist. In terms of my self-identity, I already felt that I belonged in each of these roles or positions. Even though I also labelled myself as an occupational scientist, I feel I have really established as one through having conducted research from an occupational science perspective. The main development of my identity and my *Self* was experienced through becoming and developing as an auto/biography advocate, through having conducted auto/biographical research and experiencing auto/biographical growth.

Findings Highlights

- The things we (my respondents and I) as victim/survivors have done (our doing), have had done to us, and our sense of *Self* and feelings about this (being) has led to a realisation of who we are (becoming) and our identity.
- In the context of being a victim/survivor, this has led to a heightened awareness of not always achieving a sense of belonging. Therefore, the formation of aspects of our individual identities (including sexual and gender) have been disrupted.
- Our conceptions of *Self* are influenced by the fact that our perpetrators were women, and this is confounded by the misconceptions of others (those we have disclosed to and the general public) regarding women as sex offenders.
- We each possess the strength and the ability to assess our conceptions of S*elf* – in consideration of their identity and that of our perpetrators – and to be able to articulate how we feel, and the sense we have made (or are making) of this.

Doing, in Order to Be, Become, and Belong

Doing this work was challenging, to say the least. It was emotionally exhausting and it compromised my own physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellbeing. But, of course, I had to do the work; I wanted to do the work. And doing it was necessary in order for me to arrive at a position where I have been able to reflect on the things I did and my feelings about this (that is, my being). In particular, my thesis concentrates on reporting and reflecting upon the understanding of my respondents that I gained. Consequently, my realisation of who I am (and who I was) evolved, that is, as I was becoming an auto/biographical researcher.

To return to the use of Wilcock's framework, doing refers to everything we do and so incorporates my active engagement in meaningful occupations. Doing is such is an important aspect of what it is to be human. With meaning, doing things (or engaging in occupation) has the power to enhance a person's self-perceived quality of life. My doctoral research was a richly meaningful occupation, as completing my doctorate fulfilled a goal and achieved a purpose that was both personally and professionally meaningful to me.

In my thesis, I explored my feelings about the work I had done. To document this, I included a section titled: Reflecting on my auto/biographical engagement in this work. In the introduction to this section, I write:

> "Having engaged in an auto/biographical research process, in which reflexivity is prominent when striving to re-present each respondent's subjective experiences, I now find myself arrived at a place, or a position, in which I can clearly identify with things that I will never do in future work." (Twinley, 2016)

I then discuss my key learning points, which I articulated as things I will never do in my future practice. I wrote that: I will never underestimate the power of silence, I will never generalize, I will never erase myself from my work, and that I will never fail to appreciate the impact of emotion work. As an auto/biographical researcher, I engaged in more than contemplation of *Self*; I critically scrutinised my *Self*, and my position within my research. This has led me to develop my sense of *Self* as an occupational and human being. So, in my position as researcher, I feel I have gained meaning from doing this work; I suggest this feature is key to being a researcher – especially one that strives to have an understanding of the *Self* in order to be able to understand the *Other*.

Realising who we are, and recognising the way in which our occupational identities have evolved, is key to our becoming. More than this, Hitch, Pépin, and Stagnitti (2014) suggest that becoming also automatically requires people to have a sense of future time. As a doctoral researcher this was vital; I held onto this sense of future time, particularly in terms of the temporal context of the research, and being able to envision the achievement of practically doing – or conducting – the research, as well as completing it. Along the way, I transitioned from being to becoming a doctoral researcher – meaning I went from feeling what I thought I should feel like and how I should act, to realising who I really was, in this role. As such, my *Self* has continued to develop during and beyond my time on the doctoral research path. I now realise I am a researcher with hopes and aspirations for future positive change, for the sake of my respondents, for other victim/survivors, and for my *Self*.

Belonging is understood as something we all strive for in what we do. In terms of my growth as a researcher, I now feel a great sense of connectedness, especially through my inclusion and participation in the British Sociological Association's Auto/Biography Study Group. Such group inclusion has contributed to helping me feel that I do belong as an auto/biographical researcher. I found a statement made by F. Scott Fitzgerald really helpful to support my thoughts about belonging in the context of reflecting on researcher and respondent identities. Though Fitzgerald talks about literature, I suggest that – in some instances – his statement could be applied to the researcher and respondent experience of engaging in research, in that: "You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong" (cited in Graham & Frank, 1958).

I suggest that my respondents and I each felt less alone through having engaged in research about the experience of being raped by another woman, or women. I don't just mean less alone in terms of our feelings about being a victim/survivor of this largely hidden crime, but less alone in terms of our longings (which we expressed as hopes) for the future. To summarise, the things my respondents and I (as victim/survivors) have done and have had done to us (our doing), and our sense of *Self* and feelings about this (our being) has led to a realisation of who we are and our identity (our becoming). However, in the context of being a victim/survivor of woman-to-woman rape, we have a heightened awareness of struggling to achieve a sense of belonging. That said, a strength we each possess has been the ability to assess our conceptions of *Self*, and to be able to articulate how we feel, and the sense we have made (or are making) of our sexual victimisation experience. The data from my research is, in itself, evidence of our ability to express, and to develop, our self-perceived personal identities in the sequelae of experiencing woman-to-woman rape. Aspects of our identity (including, for instance, our sexual and gender identity) have been disrupted, but striving to belong has involved renegotiating our identities, rebuilding our lives, surviving, and realising we are not alone or disconnected.

CONCLUSION

Discovering and understanding one's core or true *Self* is a demanding task (Kim, Seto, Christy, & Hicks, 2016) and one that may be achieved through multifarious means. I propose that engagement in research is one such way that people can gain understanding of their *Self*; research has the power to facilitate those involved to become re-connected with aspects of their sense of *Self* and to achieve a sense of belonging. This, indeed, is something that I consider my respondents and I gained from our shared participation in the occupation of my doctoral training. Experiencing a sense of belonging and connectedness is what allowed us all to share similar, or the same, feelings of hope about the future, for our selves and for others. Doing the work to explore the experience of woman- to-woman rape and sexual assault victim/survivors has developed my research identity (the *Self*). I confidently identify as an occupational scientist and an auto/biographical researcher: one who values the relevance of their own auto/biography and the auto/biographical processes they experience in their work. I appreciate how my respondents' engagement, as well my own engagement, in the research process has shaped the research, whilst simultaneously shaping who I am and have become.

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BIOGRAPHY

I am a full-time lecturer in occupational therapy at the University of Plymouth, UK. Prior to this, I worked as an occupational therapist in health and social care settings across the UK. In May 2016, I was awarded my PhD in which I explored the perceived impacts of woman-to-woman rape and sexual assault, and the subsequent experience of disclosure, reaction, and support on victim/survivors' subjective experience of occupation.