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Self as Social Practice: Rewriting the Feminine in Qualitative Organizational Research

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Abstract

This paper offers a reflexive discussion of the paradox of researching others and offering to represent multiple voices whilst suppressing the voice of the researcher. Martin's (2002) injunction to repair research accounts by 'letting the "I" back in' is problematised by identifying four typically unacknowledged discursive subject positions which constitute the multiple nature of the "I" in such texts: the empirical 'eye", the analytical I, the authorial I and the I as semiotic shifter. It is argued that this shifting multiplicity is stabilised by the relationship between self and research text being corporeally grounded and gendered. From this discussion, three possible approaches to gender are considered: the discursive/textual approach (as developed *inter alia* by Foucault); the performance/social practice approach (as developed *inter alia* by Judith Butler) and the corporeal multiplicity approach (as developed *inter alia* by Elizabeth Grosz and Dorothea Olkowski). The paper concludes by suggesting a tripartite approach to writing self-multiplicity in research which extends the possibilities opened up by the social practice approach: *re-citing* (redeploying discursive resources in intertextuality*); re-siting* (changing the positioning of the self in power relations by reinscribing); and *re-sighting* (opening up new, virtual visions of possibility).

Keywords: self, gender, qualitative research, social practice

Introduction

This paper considers the importance of taking a view of gender as a social practice for the process of research and the production of research accounts. In seeking to find an alternative to objective scientific rigour for subjective qualitative research accounts there have been

increasing demands for reflexivity and self-reflexivity in recent years (e.g. Martin 2002; Clegg et al 1996). These calls however often underestimate the difficulties of knowing and expressing the "self", especially insofar as the self is socially constructed and even co-constructed and may be legitimately acknowledged as being multiple (Stone 1995). Additionally, the gendered nature of research and researcher identity is often under acknowledged. Beginning with a personal reflection on my own recent qualitative research, I identify four aspects of the multiple research self common to all research accounts. I then develop a model which identifies two approaches which may be taken to the conceptualisation of "self" and "gender" – the discursive/textual approach, which is characterised by the work of Foucault and early Judith Butler; and the social practice/performance approach, characterised by Sylvia Gherardi and late Judith Butler; and argue that these can be both bridged and augmented by an approach I term "corporeal multiplicity", which uses the work of Gilles Deleuze and Deleuzian feminists such as Grosz and Olkowski to reintroduce the body into the matrix. Finally I suggest three strategies to help operationalise this model in reflexive research texts. The first is *re-citing* which entails a deliberate playful strategy of redeploying discursive resources to expose the intertextuality of self-making*)*. The second is *re-siting*, which is a transgressive attempt to change the positioning of the self in power/knowledge relations by reinscribing, or writing power into self-narratives and the self into power narratives); and *re-sighting*, which is a creative opening up of new, virtual visions of possibility within the "findings" or "conclusions" of accounts.

Bringing the 'I' back in: An Autobiographical Reflection

To begin somewhere which isn't quite the beginning, in recent years my research has focused on changes in managerial subjectivities. The shift in its focus has been from how context has

influenced middle management behaviour, at individual and group levels, to the micro-processes of how middle managers come to identify as middle managers, or *become* (Linstead and Thomas 2002; Thomas and Linstead 2002; Linstead 2005 forthcoming). This research adopted a qualitative, interpretative methodology, employing interviews and some participant observation as methods for data collection over 15 organizations across a period of 3 years. The importance of methodology became more significant as I reflected on my own role as female researcher in predominantly male manufacturing organizations. The implications of these reflections for praxis – for a theoretically engaged practice which would seek to change these conditions - therefore became more significant as time passed, as a consequence of needing to find voice as a novice, female academic researcher researching mainly men's (and most often experienced and mature men's) identity construction. As a direct result of this, my interest in researching the *gender masks* of managers – the ways in which managers present themselves as men or women - emerged during data collection as the project developed. During this process a poststructuralist influenced feminist approach was adopted for me to find voice within a research process of which I could find little ownership. Perhaps somewhat ironically poststructuralist feminism became a mask behind which I could ignore the need to recast myself – recast the 'I' – into my research. Throughout the research, and not surprisingly given the emergent nature of the research, there remained a tension between my increasing awareness of the need to rewrite the feminine into accounts of management and to be politically sensitive to the abject nature of the feminine in organization, and the research sample comprising a large preponderance of men. As such, as I came to realise, the research was actually about masculinities and masculine processes in identity work albeit within a theoretical agenda to rewrite the feminine as a female researcher and author.

But there was also a sense in which this research was itself a masculinist project. There is a considerable literature which explores the historical connections between masculinity, rationality and bureaucracy (see Bologh 1989; Morgan 1996; Lloyd 1993). This has been extended to the examination of 'control' strategies in different forms of writing, with boundary-setting, prioritisation and marginalisation which centralize the consciousness of the 'author' as the holder of greater or better knowledge gradually revealed to the reader. Texts which adopt such strategies are termed 'writerly' or *scriptible* by Roland Barthes (1981), who argues that in such texts the reader is constrained to follow the path laid down by the author in order to understand the text properly. The extent to which the author 'controls' the text becomes the main criterion of success for certain forms of text – of which academic writing in social 'science' is a paradigm case. The text is successful insofar as it controls for the intrusion of the non-rational, non-objective or personal, as evidenced in first-person writing, 'confessional' remarks or the use of metaphor rather than measurement. Men do not appear as men in masculinist accounts, and women are certainly not allowed to appear as women. Thus under the guise of writerly neutrality, the specific insights possible from acknowledging the feminine are suppressed, and the rest is incorporated into a masculine voice which is gender-blind (see Wilson 1998 and Linstead 2000a for discussions of gender-blindness and gender-neutrality). In non-scientific writing, where self is allowed presence, it is *self-expression* which is given almost cultish status replacing objectivity with authenticity or spontaneity (Linstead S.2002).

Barthes also contrasts a style of writing in which control is very much handed over to the reader. Such a *lisible* (readerly) style involves acknowledging the author as a person, with a perspective, and allowing the reader licence to disagree, to feel differently, to challenge authorial perspectives – which are often presented as a multiplicity of possibilities rather than

a single ‘voice’ – to be in puzzlement and make their own meaning from the text. Postmodern literature does this – the reader is not given their role, but is allowed to discover and create it (see Banks and Banks 1998; Harju 2003; Westwood 2003). The author does not control, but plays, explores, guides and presents possibilities, allows the text to take unexpected directions and is happy to present fragments rather than a hermetic whole. This author is neither dominated by the need to express itself nor by the desire to impress the other, but by a capacity to be impressed, to receive and convey impression. The text is characterised more by a gentle negativity, an absorptive and expressive capacity, a being in play, rather than a positivity of definition, control and manipulation. This more ‘readerly’ text has also been characterised as feminine text – one in which the author is person-able, with all the paradox, contradiction, emotion and impressionability which this entails.

Turning specifically to texts about organization, despite attempts to develop one we still do not have an adequate language for talking about “process” or change (Chia and King 2001). Things that are fluid and in flux are very difficult to describe and account for in ways which do not in some way fix and objectify them. *Positive* language responds to the failure of expression to capture its object fully by seeking ever more precise and rigorous definition, identifying more variables with increased specificity. It characterises process as the action of one object upon another. It is subsumed by a realist ontology, which so informs the structures of language that it is difficult to shake off in its expressive forms even when the explicit content of the message is non-realist. This is evident in much qualitative writing and is one of the linguistic traps into which social constructionism (Gergen 1985; Schwandt 1998) often fall. In the end it produces *scriptible* research texts. Postmodern approaches found in such writers such as Derrida and Cixous for example are characterised by their attempts to explore negativity – to find a *negative* language that embodies process, that allows expression to be

nuanced and elusive which avoids as far as possible reifying ideas and objectifying phenomena. This produces *lisible* texts. But the frustration remains that it is difficult to get things done with such language. The more poetic it becomes the less socially efficacious it is (Linstead S. 2000b). So in my own research which attempts to move from objects to subjects and thence to collapse the distinction into objectivising/subjectivising processes, it is impossible and even unhelpful to explore a language of pure process. Indeed in the spirit of breaking down dualisms, content and process are not opposed in my work and they are treated as mutually emergent. I found myself rejecting realism whilst having no adequate alternative but to employ its expressive/constitutive forms, although acknowledging the need to seek more appropriate ones (see Westwood and Linstead 2001). However in writing and attempting to find some form of validation for my research, I became increasingly aware of the extent and consequences of my linguistic dependence on masculinist representations which constrained the representation and writing of the other, the feminine.

To write a readerly, more feminine text is therefore a considerable challenge. The most obvious attempt to write a research piece which is truly reflexive (or more accurately, self-reflexive) by Malcolm Ashmore (1989) did not, despite its success, render matters any easier for the future writer of such a "reflexive thesis" by demonstrating how profoundly problematic such an undertaking is especially within an institutional authority framework which anticipates and requires a writerly output. But self-reflexivity was not the priority of my research project, the writing of which was in fact fraught with managing and casting out 'me'. Ironically, it was a project about the gendered identities of others – research subjects as objects - and yet this was, acknowledged or not, inevitably a project about 'me' and my intellectual journey over its course. The "authority" with which I conducted the research process continued to reproduce the rendering abject of the feminine, a feminine that will

always be marginal in an academy that reproduces masculinity in the form of gender neutral procedures, processes, criteria and forms of output and evaluation. Surviving in such an academy which marginalises difference will always pose dilemmas for my identity as a qualitative, postfeminist researcher and as a woman. Whether we like it or not, our bodies are involved in the research methodologies we pursue (see for example Brewis 1999, 2003; Hughes 2001, 2002). Intellectual effort involves bodily stress; research which involves repeated encounters with others in unfamiliar contexts is as stressful as any similar social encounter. Combine the two, and recognise that not only is there a double hermeneutic in every research encounter but a similar emotional dynamic as well, a double *affect*, which of course can play its part in the acceptation of interpretation, and the relative neglect of the emotional dimensions of methodology seems remarkable. However, even where these matters have been intellectually addressed in qualitative research (see Fournier and Lightfoot 1997; Fletcher 2002 to some extent), we still tend to work under the shadow of researcher neutrality, objectivity and bias, where emotions are distortion and noise in the research process rather than part of its potentiality. If we are to seek a different way of relating experience more fully, then perhaps we need to address the media through which experience is translated.

My research has, whether I liked it or not, always been about returning to 'me' – a mythical place to which I, in common with some of the subjects in my research have ironically never been. My research positioned 'me' as author and researcher outside of the analysis within it albeit within a *discourse* of reflexivity. This central problematic of positioning self external to the project– of 'never having been to me' (Linstead 2003) – requires us as researchers to go beyond reflexive tales of doing research (see Fletcher 2002) in which reflexivity is, more often than not, processed instrumentally to question how rewriting the self - rewriting the

feminine - involves challenging authoritative frameworks which suppress difference and multiplicity and encourage *writing multiplicity*. Moreover the project did not seem to care *who* it was talking to, when I myself *did* care about the 'respondents'; the project did not seem to care *who* I was or was becoming when I *did* care; and the project said that incorporating such care for the other and care of the self into a research project was illegitimate and not scholarly. Bringing back a little of both the other and the self into the process and discovering ways to rewrite 'me' in relation to the dominant theoretical paradigms relies on three basic assumptions – moving beyond the fixity of dualistic thinking by exploring ontologies of becoming; finding more fluid forms of resistance to incorporation for achieving praxis and finding a negative language which enables multiple 'I's' to be revealed as immanent within the account rather than 'brought back in' (Martin 2002). Let us look further at these issues.

Rewriting the Feminine: the Multiplicity of the 'I'

The multiple nature of the 'I' is typically unacknowledged in reflexive research on gender in work and organization. To consider the rewriting of the feminine, we must according to Joanne Martin 'let the "I" back in' – reflexively returning to 'me' rather than externalising our identity projects**.** Martin seems not to go far enough in her attempts to alert us to the problematic status of the 'I', because insofar as this 'I' is textually constructed it has four dimensions rather than one:

First, of course, is the empirical "Eye", the experiencing subject who is situated in the field and within the data, collecting and inevitably sifting information and emotions and having those emotions themselves.

Second, there is the analytical "*I*", the way in which this experiencing subject is distanced from the data, often historically in time and space, in the "etic" moment of constructing categories, analysing features, and thinking itself in a different relation to the data, as outside rather than part.

Third, there is the authorial "I", the voice which emerges as either silently or explicitly organising the text, selecting which of the experiences of "Eye", or the constructions of "*I*" to weave into the account, and even commenting on these experiences.

Fourth and finally, there is what Roman Jakobson (1980) would have called the "semiotic shifter" I, the reflexive "me" that reads its own text, that is always outside of its own creation neither fully inscribed nor free of inscription, changing with time and every reading. Thus every time I use the word I, its subject is different.

This alerts us to the double nature of the problem for those of us that have 'never been to me' in our research. On the one hand, the researcher is obsessed by self which may be seen as being narcissistic (Linstead 2003) in the sense that they are driven by the idealised "ought" of the self that they want to be or feel they must be, being unable to take the fully reflexive position of the other and see that self as others see it, the "me". On the other, there is no internal more authentic self, no "real me" inside just waiting for expression. The "me" is not fixed but shifting through time, place and relationships, so there is no sense in which a journey to "me" could ever arrive at its destination. Traditional reflexive sociology, which still informs Martin's perspective and which is critiqued by Linstead, S. (1994), is nostalgic in its confessional aspects – it offers not a disclosure of self, but another line in textual intervention.

If, in attempting to raise questions about the assumed neutrality of the authorial voice in research accounts and to explicitly place the researcher within those accounts, we cannot avoid authorial intervention which treats as a positive and knowable phenomenon, the self, something which is far more ephemeral and rebarbative in the face of our accounts, is there any textual strategy we can take which avoids this tendency? Linstead and Brewis (2004) state that:

'For writers such as Cixous, Derrida and Kristeva, such a writing would need to avoid the masculine tendency to claim authority, to speak from a position of power, definitively and positively, including and excluding as it goes and silencing subtleties and ambiguities that threaten to qualify and undermine such authority. Such a writing would be a negative writing, an *écriture feminine* which reacts and responds to the Other with seduction, by being elusive, evocative and marginal. Such a writing would seek to express change and fluidity in its very style, rather than talk about change and fluidity in a manner which freezes it and renders it absent through différance' (360).

Yet there is no guarantee that such a language is possible. Our publishing projects are often met with constraints which are more often than not considerable and the demands of clarity and argument mean that stylistic experimentation runs a high risk of proving inappropriate and failing to meet the objectives of our work, the consideration must be entertained that language itself may not, in any context, be up to the task. As Kristeva confesses, neither the sign nor the sound can capture the *sigh*:

"My problem (in writing verse, and my reader's problem in understanding it) consists in the impossibility of my task: for example, to express the sigh a-a-a with words (that is,

meaning). With words/meanings to say the sound. Such that remains in the ear is a-a-a." (Mayakovsky cited by Kristeva (1977) in Moi (1986: 157)).

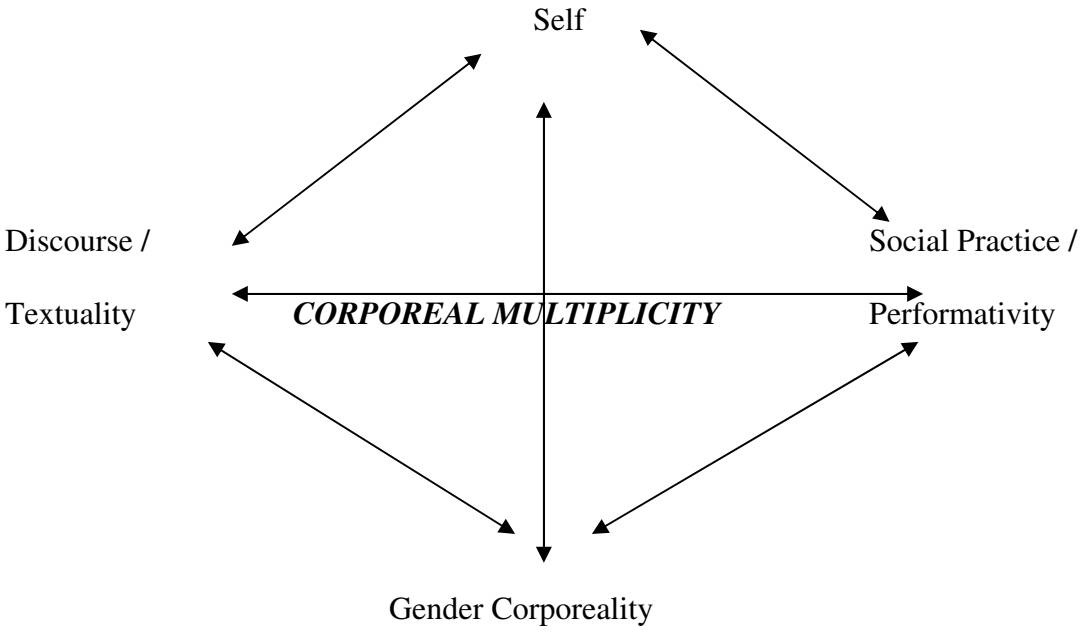
Writing is not a transparent medium through which experience is translated into writing. Indeed, whilst the material features of writing themselves act as a shaping factor on the representation of experience, so too does the conceptual lens placed upon that experience, such as gender. The interpretative lenses of identity work and the organising practices of writing act as layers in which new meaning is weaved: not necessarily anew, although experiment is possible, but from traces and fragments, memories and borrowings of other texts, mimetically. Kristeva rightly says that 'Every… text is the absorption and transformation of other texts' (cited by Gergen in Gergen and Davis 1997: 605). As such the researcher becomes part of identity work – an intertextuality of the research subject – the other - and the researcher which will further enable multiple ways of reading to emerge – and change across different readings. Furthermore this intertexuality is paramount for appreciating multiplicity. As Gergen (1997 cited in Gergen and Davis 1997) argues, we should not be focusing on identifying and sounding the *voice* of feminism but exploring the *silences* to reveal difference. Paradoxically, does the full appreciation of difference get lost in the alternate but monophonic noise of feminism? Identity politics, by virtue of its being a politics, and even in its willingness to move away from monadic definitions of identity, will always fall short of embracing the fluidity which the study of identity may set itself to do, as they are different identity projects. But the politics of identity are never entirely separable from its ostensibly disinterested study, as we know well. Furthermore to move beyond boundaries researchers need to start questioning the nature of validity that produces the *same* research – research which recognises identity as difference *from* the other but which renders difference *within* the same, multiplicity, abject. Having established the need to think of the

research self in terms of multiplicity, the next section introduces a framework within which this rethinking can occur.

Gendering the Research Self: The Textual, Social and Corporeal

Multiplicities of the self do not just occur at the textual level nor just at the level of practice, but corporeally as well. As such the rest of this section explores discursive, practice, and corporeal issues in writing self into "normal" qualitative research which is often divorced of corporeal experience. The connections are illustrated in Fig.1 and discussed in terms of the creation of my research autobiography – a requirement which was placed on me at the close of the research project.

Fig. 1 Corporeal Multiplicity



Self

During my PhD viva my examiners, two internationally recognised female professors, raised the issue of the problems of writing (or more accurately disappearing from) the thesis as a

woman and asked for me to insert a preface into the bound copy to write my-self back into the process. The paradox between writing about gender, and especially my quest to rewrite the feminine, and my realised strategy of casting myself out of the writing was a considerable tension that my examiners wanted me to address. As researchers we are constantly creating, recreating and representing the lives of others through narrative or stories (discursive practices and discursive artefacts retrospectively [after Gherardi 1996 in Gherardi and Poggio 2002]), and in doing so produce and reproduce our gendered lives as researcher, colleague, child, lover etc. within our phenomenological experiences. For my examiners my identity as woman mattered to the thesis, and to my life as a academic, but I remained troubled as to *why* being a woman mattered.

In writing my autobiographical account I crafted and presented an essentialist, unitarist and materialist representation of self as woman with all the fixidity and stability that being woman entailed. Going beyond the materialism of the subject that underpins many feminisms often remains a source of debate and tension amongst feminist scholars (Braidotti 1994). However challenging the unitary cognitive subject whilst appreciating our corporeal experiences requires us to explore self as social practice – which is why I introduced a little autobiography into this paper. Furthermore research is a social practice where researchers not only perform the customary research functions by constructing the field and representing the other, gathering, questioning, and interrogating data but also produce and reproduce the researcher – as self, as identity, as authorial voice, and even as research subject. Schutz's social phenomenology highlights how 'intersubjectivity' is an ongoing social accomplishment, a set of understandings sustained from moment to moment by participants in interaction' (Holstein and Gubrium 1998: 140). But the socially constructed nature of gender goes beyond its exploration in specific social situations. The very concept of

sociability – that we think of ourselves as social beings – has phenomenological relevance: even when we are not in interaction. Our consciousness of ourselves as social beings informs our thought processes and experiences and makes writing – even in solitude - an inevitably social practice. Constructing the self, and constructing a gender, then involves both textual and social practices, and Figure 1. represents this tension running in two directions as both the individual self and the socially constructed category of gender have discursive textual and social practice/performance dimensions to their construction.

The discursive/textual approach

The discursive/textual approach to both gender and power is strongly informed by the legacy of Michel Foucault. Foucault's contributions have been extensively utilised in management and organization theory (see for example McKinlay and Starkey 1997; Knights 2002 for a review of these) but these are not without debate. However these debates have continued largely without reference to the Foucauldian Feminists. In the gender field a greater awareness of the political and epistemological dimensions of language, and the inseparable relation (though not deterministic connection) between language, symbolic forms, social institutions and individual and collective behaviour has to a large extent arisen from the use of Foucault's work which explores how "the self is constructed in discourses and then re-experienced within all the texts of everyday life" (Parker 1989: 56). That said, long before Foucault, Feminism recognised the importance of the language of labelling paying particular attention to how language creates the object, sexist language reproducing sexist oppression. Foucault's work and how feminists have used Foucauldian concepts are explored here to illustrate the most significant aspects of this approach.

Foucault, throughout his work, is interested in the way in which the relation between power and knowledge is changed or sustained through language (and to a lesser extent by other symbolic forms). For example, powerful groups such as managers can use their power to ration and limit the distribution of knowledge about their field and also use language to define what counts as knowledge, and can police knowledge creation through accounting and disciplinary practices. Through such surveillance they can identify, capture, legitimate and incorporate new knowledge, and disadvantage, render illegitimate and suppress knowledge which they deem to be threatening or challenging to the existing order. Social institutions such as professional bodies may be set up to facilitate this. Individuals may be examined and tested, formally and informally, as a matter of everyday social practice and their positioning as social and even individual subjects – competent, significant, consuming, compliant citizens or otherwise – is affected by how well they pass these occasions of scrutiny under a gaze which may be that of the state, religion, education, professional superiors, co-workers, parents, partners, friends, subordinates, their own children and even themselves. In Foucault's later work he was particularly concerned with how people police their own self-identity against competing models of the ideal self, and how such internalised imperatives literally inscribe themselves on and affect the physical characteristics of the body (see Brewis and Linstead 2000).

Foucault argued that knowledge does not evolve incrementally, but according to a set of paradigmatic constraints which constitute a particular historical *episteme*, or regime of knowing. The pre-modern era, characterised by superstition, social heterogeneity and social power vested in the sovereign or his liéges, gave way towards the end of the eighteenth century to a modern regime of rationality and science, greater social homogeneity, and power vested in institutions of governance. Foucault does not account for why this change

happened, but seeks to understand the *genealogy* of how specific forms of modern institutions of social governance came to emerge to deal with pressing social problems. He is specifically concerned with the boundaries of social order, and how those boundaries are constructed. For Foucault, it is the epistemology of the boundary which is crucial to the functioning of the social practice, and the construction of the boundary relies upon the existence of a generic discursive form which offers the basis for its legitimation. Thus the nineteenth century featured the discourse of *progress*, which emerged in a variety of fields in different ways, whether the philosophy of Hegel, the industrialism of a Robert Owen, the gunboat colonialism of a Palmerston, or Social Darwinism. This discourse remains a characteristic component of modernism, though much changed in its forms, although it retains its dependence on the idea of progress being natural, insofar as it depends on the *revelation* of natural processes by the exercise of *reason*. Supported by a realist ontology which facilitated the development of positivistic, or observation and measurement-based social knowledge in the image of science, it enabled the division of the world up into particular problem fields and creation of social institutions, professions and bureaucracies with which to address them. Additionally, it also necessitated the production of laws and legal systems with which to regulate these new institutions and institutional practices, and the extension of democratic structures to bind more of the population into responsible citizenship which would ensure that the laws could be effectively operationalised and monitored. People were no longer individual subjects of a monarch, whose forms of discipline and punishment were most likely to be physically enacted on their bodies, but social subjects, scrutinised for their ability to fit in to a normalised social apparatus and disciplined through institutionalisation – i.e. temporary or permanent removal from society subject to their capacity to be normalised by the punishment process. Thus Foucault (1976, 1977, 1979a, 1979b, 1980) is able to examine the historical treatment of forms of "deviance" – such as madness, illness, criminality and

sexual behaviour – through the disciplines (e.g. medicine) and disciplinary forms (e.g. the clinic) which emerge to deal with them and demonstrate that the ways in which ideas of the normal and the deviant are constructed are subject to shifting historical understandings which are political, epistemological and linguistic.

Following Foucault, a *discourse* can be any regular and regulated system of statements, and discourse analysis then crucially examines the *relations* within the system. As Parker notes "not only are social relations stressed as social relations as they are embodied in discourse, but we may view these relations as power relations" (1989: 67). Although Foucault's earlier *archaeological* work looked in particular at the workings of language, how words had historically acquired specific acceptations and how the system of rules governing the discourse internally came to operate, his later work – in contrast to most of what we would understand as discourse analysis – examines the conditions of power and knowledge which have influenced not only the form of a discourse, but which have favoured its appearance at a particular point in time rather than an alternative, and its specific *relations* with other forms of discourse as it has changed over time. Foucault's view of power, therefore, is not deterministic but relational (see Clegg 1994). As Linstead, S. argues, what a discourse does is:

"…structure the rules and procedures by which different forms of knowledge are determined. Further, it defines different fields of understanding as legitimate objects of that knowledge …Within these fields, the discourse will also establish relationships between repertoires of concepts…Determine[s] criteria for the establishment of acceptable `truth' and the creation of 'truth-effects', and further delimit[s] what can and cannot be said, the normal, the abnormal, the standard and the deviation and hierarchies the field of these relations…" (2001a: 226).

A discourse, however, is also concerned with establishing the position of its authorship, usually so as to appear as naturally authoritative as possible. It creates and characterises discursive spaces or *"subject – positions"* to which it both tries to lay claim (in the case of authorial positions) and offers to recipients through *inter-pellation*, which is an implicit invitation to take them up (in the case of reading positions [Hodge and Kress 1988]). In other words, a discourse is already at the heart of processes of social structuring in seeking to position its readers in relation to an idealised reader, and establish its own authority accordingly. Discourse therefore is not dominated by language alone, and is far more than simply a linguistic phenomenon. Foucauldian discourse analysis is accordingly not trying to claim that words determine reality. What it does however recognise is that "practices which constitute our everyday lives are produced and reproduced as an integral part of the production of signs and signifying systems" (Henriques et al. 1984: 99). Practices and what is said about them cannot be separated in such easy terms, and accordingly discourse inevitably also relates to non-discursive practices which must be an important focus for discourse analysis. A *discursive formation*, which incorporates both linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena, can be identified by defining "the system of formation of the different strategies that are deployed in it", by showing "how they all derive... from the same set of relations" (Foucault 1972: 68).

What then is the difference between a discourse and a text? Fairclough (1992) argues that discourse analysis links the systematic analysis of spoken or written texts to systematic analyses of social contexts, taking into account formative contexts and extra-discursive effects, looking at "the particular configurations of conventionalized practices (genres, discourses, narratives etc) which are available to text producers in particular social circumstances" (Fairclough 1992: 194). In meeting their rhetorical, or persuasive, objectives,

texts will draw on a variety of linguistic features but will also draw on one or more discourses which warrant the truth of their arguments (Linstead, S. 2001a: 227).

A consideration of Foucault's work adds to our discussion here in that: First, it introduces *increased discursive heterogeneity which surfaces* contradiction, ambiguity and suppression and alerts us to the possible operation of a wider variety of discourses in tension within the discursive processes through which we establish our gendered narratives of self *Second, it expands the consideration of context.* It links discourse to texts and to organizational and social contexts which constrain and enable processes of subjective identity. *Third, it provides a broader understanding of the nature of surveillance and the variety of the "gaze" t*o consider a greater range of social technologies which may be internally operationalised by the individual (as self-surveillance) as well as externally occasioned (as inspection). *Fourth*, *it introduces the possibility of relational resistance.* It emphasises the importance of power relations and the political dimensions of knowledge formation by introducing a relational element to the consideration of power. Power for Foucault circulates, rather than passing down, or even up, a system, and is always two-way though not necessarily symmetrical. Actions of individuals may be prescribed by a discursive system, but there is always room for reinterpretation and manoeuvre. Resistance may arise and circulate from individual levels and itself become incorporated, or alternately institutionalised. Foucault does not theorise resistance, partly because his project is primarily one of subversion, but also because of his awareness that, as Gowler and Legge (1996) hint, that power is intimately connected with the unsaid, the secret, and that resistance, to be effective, must also organise, if it is to be organised, around its secrets. Foucauldian feminists drawing on relational forms of power to explore the multiplicity of gendered identities do not, I would argue, go far enough to explore the *ways in which men and women relationally resist* the discursive subject-positions

institutionally prescribed for them. *Fifth*, *it links the formation of selves and subjects.* It makes central to any consideration of rhetoric the processes of subjectivity and subject-formation. It underscores the part which individuals play in rendering themselves subject to a discourse, their potential complicity in their own domination. *Sixth, it draws attention to the significance and importance of boundaries.* Persuasive language is occasioned where existing social processes are themselves alone insufficient to render the need for persuasion unnecessary. This may be in policing the boundary between managers and non-managers or it may be regarding the boundaries between different levels of expertise. However, it may relate to a boundary dealt with in our final point. *Seventh, it emphasises the embodied and gendered nature of subject-formation.* Foucault's later work treats gender as a discursive category as much as a social or embodied one (see Moss 1998). Discursive effects inscribe bodies in terms of requirements for appearance, structure or conditioning but also leave the marks of the consequences of performing as a "good subject" in the managerial role (e.g. heart attacks, injury, stress related mental conditions). We will develop this dimension in our consideration of corporeality.

The influence of Foucauldian thought on organizational writings cannot go unrecognised. However in the gender field Foucault's negation of women and his neglect of the feminine, although conspicuous in his discussions of sexuality (see Sawicki 1991 for further discussion), have also been discussed and questioned extensively (McNay 1992; Weedon 1999). Feminists who have adopted Foucauldian notions of a decentred subject have challenged the gender-neutrality much organizational theorizing, even if this hasn't gone far enough to challenge the gender blindness of our research methods and lacks the reflexivity to explore the multiplicity and fluidity of self as researcher. For example, although Judy Wajcman is not a self confessed Foucauldian Feminist, her research investigates how

"gendering processes are involved in how jobs and careers are constituted, both in the symbolic order and in the organizational practices (discursive and material), and [how] these power relations are embedded in the subjective gender identity of manager" (Wajcman 1998: 3). This is clearly influenced by Foucauldian principles.

Most importantly for this paper Foucault shows how self and gender are embedded in and emerge from discursive structures and this initiates the appreciation of the multiplicity of lived experience (Linstead and Thomas 2002). But as I have noted earlier, Foucault's concept of a "discourse" extends beyond language and into practice, so in the next section I will turn to consider those approaches which have prioritised social practice and performance in their analyses.

The social practice/ performance approach

Gender as a social practice Building on our discussion of how selves become subjects within discourse, Gherardi, in both her sole authored work and her work with others, has argued that the processes of research production – the production of research subjects and the production of the researcher as subject - are not just social but gendered (Gherardi and Turner 1988; Gherardi 1994, 1995; Bruni et al 2004). Furthermore, after Gherardi and Poggio (2002), gender itself is a social practice:

'…gender may be viewed as a social practice, or better as a set of practices, which jointly help define the relations between men and women, and between male and female. By means of these practices, people *position* [emphasis mine] themselves by aligning themselves according to the positionings of others within situated discourses; that is, discourses which have a precise location in space and time' (247).

Drawing on Davies and Harré's concept of *positioning*, Gherardi and Poggio make a link to the discursive/textual approach we have discussed by emphasising that 'the production of self can be analysed as a linguistic practice within the dynamic occasion one encounters. A position is what is created in and through conversations as speakers and hearers construct themselves as persons' (2002: 247). They go on to comment on how gender is important in the positioning process:

'…gender identity is constructed by a comparison activity in which male and female are perceived and positioned as alternative categories, so that belonging to one necessarily entails a discourse which highlights nonbelonging to the other' (ibid.).

Gherardi's work thus raises our awareness of the more ambiguous and fragmented nature of gender, indeed its discursive fragility, and the fact that language and discourse need to be understood in terms of their use as practices. Gherardi and Poggio further state:

'Bringing out the ambivalence present in the rituals, riles and narrative devices of gender production serves to highlight not only the intrinsic ambiguity of the concept of gender but also the ambivalent and manifold nature of social reality, which cannot be understood by being reduced to dichotomous categories but instead requires interpretative keys and metaphors able to convey a plurality of differences' (2002: 257).

The idea that we need to move beyond dichotomies and recognise multiplicity is by now a familiar one, but the move which Gherardi and Poggio make is, as Steve Linstead and myself have argued elsewhere (Linstead and Linstead 2004) limited to recognising multiplicities of the same, where pluralities are varieties of masculinity or femininity, which multiply around the poles of the binary but preserve its essential dualism. A move beyond this would embrace

multiplicities of difference and dispersion, which derive from an ontology of desire as a creative exuberance which is motivated, not by lack or the need to resolve difference by various material and psychological ways of removing it, but by the drive for its own proliferation. Multiplicity therefore creates both overlapping and redundancy, excess of identity and difference at one and the same time and recognises in these overcrossings that the self always contains internal alterity – an inner otherness in which it differs from itself. Multiplicity seen as the dispersion of difference (rather than as the collection of different elements and their positioning into self-consistent "identities") performs its identity rather than simply expressing it or constructing it in language.

Judith Butler's (1990; 1993) work has moved from an early emphasis on the importance of discourse to a recognition of its limits. Butler notes that language makes things happen, often in complex, indirect and oblique ways, and that the performativity of language in the ways in which it combines to make certain types of gender positioning possible is critical to understanding gender and sexuality. But Butler also considers that we weave streams of this general performativity into specific gender performances, and it is to this consideration that I will now turn.

Gender as Performance As I have suggested practice and text mediate the gendered performance of self. Some organizational researchers on narratives of self and storying the self have gone beyond creating monologues of researcher identity (see Sims 2004 for example) to explore identity multiplicity but have not explored the fragmented and fluid nature of the subject. Where the fluidity of identity has been addressed (Grafton-Small 2004; 2005) these accounts have not explored the gendered experience of self. Conversely, in other disciplines such as women's studies and sociology, women's narratives are presented widely

(Hughes 2001; Byrne 2003) but the fluid nature of these narratives has been under explored. More importantly however this research raises the gendered problems of methodology directly. Feminist ethnomethodologist Dorothy E. Smith for example in her work on women's work as mothers argues that social science rules women because 'typical' research designs are insensitive to women's lived experiences (Holstein and Gubrium 1998: 151). Women researchers have to do and act in particular ways that run against their phenomenologies. Moreover, Spivak (1988: 104) iterates the problem that many researchers face:

'the desire to explain (through research is)… a symptom of the desire to have a self (the researcher) that can control knowledge and a world that can be known (i.e. converted to the same)'.

As such rather than challenging masculine discourses inherent in organizational research, under such an epistemology of collection and coherence research unknowingly reinforces the feminine as abject; gendered research subjects become *docile bodies* through the agency of the researcher. This is reinforced by specific modalities of validity. Spivak (1988: 105) argues that by 'explaining (through valid research), we exclude the possibility of the radically heterogeneous (the Other).' I would argue that a great deal of research on "women in management" could be critiqued on the basis of Spivak's claims. The multiplicity of the research subjects and the researcher's subject positions get lost playing the validity game. As Benjamin comments:

'If I completely control the (O)ther, then the (O)ther ceases to exist' (1988: 53 cited in Scheurich 1997: 86).

When the claim of much research on and by women is to challenge hegemonic masculinity

the paradoxical outcome is reinforcement of the dominant norm. As such we as researchers 'eat the other' – incorporate the other into our own agenda – and this reminds us that we need to appreciate not only the multiplicity of the other but the self as researcher too as we argued earlier. Moi reinforces this point, stating that:

'the subject is split, decentred, fragile, always threatened by disintegration. At the same time, this split and decentred subject has the capacity to act and make choices. Such choices and acts, however, are always over determined, that is to say deeply influenced by unconscious ideological allegiances and unconscious emotional investments and fantasies as well as by conscious motivations (2002: 177).

In this vein, some poststructuralist informed female writers in the work and organization have adopted a 'confessional' approach to rewriting the self into their research and this is becoming successful in redressing the imbalance of women's voices in research, bringing the body back in and reinstates an emotional response. We may however wish to question whether this confessional approach names, inscribes and further marginalises women as other – as abject. Furthermore Foucault raises the power of silence as:

'The limit of language, since it traces that line of foam showing just how far speech may advance on the sands of silence' (cited in Botting and Wilson 1998: 24).

In other words, you are forced to *confess* because you *transgress* and thus take ownership of the requirement to *con/*form to the rules as you *per/*form– although fitting into these rules continues to reproduce the feminist stereotype of the feminine as marginal. So do we as female writers play the marginal game by adopting autobiographical practices? Do we perform the institutionalisation of our own exclusion? Botting and Wilson urge us to recognise that certain 'experiences do not give themselves up to discursive meaning…

exceeding articulate speech, understanding, comprehension, certain experiences disclose an 'unknowing' at the heart of experience that denotes the limit of language, discourse, culture' (1998: 3). Thus the dimension of performance that remains in excess of language and the performativity of language may yet act as the resource for transgressive reinscriptions which promote positive change, which is where the idea of gender as practice and performance breaks away from the idea of gender as discourse and text. What facilitates this break is the fact that it is *bodies* which render the performances.

Before moving on, I could illustrate a key "performance" in my research by returning briefly to my autobiography. Although the act of producing the autobiography was aimed to incorporate the 'I' – a corporeally grounded I - into my research, the initiating request to rewrite the I through an autobiographical account was a response to an inscribed gendered position that my examiners created for me within the social setting of the Viva Voce. Indexicality is important in understanding how power relations are gendered within particular events and this one is no exception. To *belong* to – to fit *into* - the academy and to my role as a junior female academic I was expected to *write as woman*, but, after Virginia Woolf, I was forced to ask: 'what *is* a woman?' This request to write the I – as woman - into my research lost sight of the multiple nature of the phenomenological I through the performance of the hierarchical power relations of examiner-candidate. In what ways were my *female* examiners playing with their *feminine* gendered roles in requesting me to claim my work as a *woman*? Indeed was this request turned into a requirement by an implicitly *masculinist* use of authority? Accordingly, writing as woman reinforced the dominant hegemonic nature of the research and writing process. To write the feminine, *must* one write as woman?

I wish to argue here that my experiences were not unusual, but that much feminist research

has on the whole neglected the micro- or infra- politics of the everyday through which such identities are constructed. I would also add that researcher identities, whilst being increasingly recognised as multiple in the less essentialist versions of such research (Linstead and Thomas 2002), are rarely considered as being *fluid*, with the exception of the theoretical reflections of writers such as Olkowski (1999) following Deleuze. Baudrillard (1990) identifies the feminine with that which cannot be fixed or fixed upon – i.e. the feminine is always that which is and remains elusive, outside any system that tries to contain it, the essence of change. As such, the feminine is a response which may be adopted by males to create a fluid space in which they can avoid being inscribed in someone else's rules, which is quite different from the strategies of feminists who seek to enter into such systems with a redefined sense of power in order to reinscribe themselves within the system's new rules. As Friedman similarly notes:

"Identification is the rendering to someone of identity. Ethnography renders the Other's identity to ourselves, and, via the conditions in which it is executed, back to the Other. By speaking of him (sic) or for him, we ultimately force him to speak through our categories. This works adequately in conditions of empire, or stable hegemony and a clear hierarchy of identities. But where such conditions begin to disintegrate, its correlative discourses lose their authority, not only because we ourselves come to the realization that we can no longer simply re-present them, but because they will not let us do so. Their self-identification interferes with our identification of them" (Friedman 1992: 352).

Taking the short step from autobiography to autoethnography, Friedman's statement captures exactly what I experienced in trying to write my research account – I was being required to write "as a woman" as a result of the self-identification of my examiners (or at least the version of it that the examiners chose to play out through their institutional roles) which

produced an "othering" of myself. This was overlaid on top of the "othering" that had occurred through my earlier attempts to conform to a more traditional mode of research writing, and resulted in whatever "self" I might have identified with being doubly displaced. Of course, from a multiplicity perspective self is only stabilised by the deferral or displacement of multiplicity anyway, which renders such an identity project nostalgic rather than either authentic or transgressive.

The corporeal approach

Writing the self through autobiography raises the issue of how the construction of self is neither purely cognitive nor physically overdetermined. To problematise gender as either a purely phenomenological or materialist experience, corporeal feminists (Braidotti 1994; Grosz 1994; Olkowski 1999) recognise that self is constructed in relation to bodily experience – bodies *matter* but bodies are different – they are characterised by not only multiplicity but also fluidity (Butler 1993; Grosz 1995). Postfeminists therefore are not rejecting materiality as some feminisms, particularly radical and Marxist contributions, would argue (see Sims, S. 2000). However, despite the enormous contribution that feminism has made, some feminists have often regarded the 'female feminist subject' unproblematically, particularly in studies of work and organization (Braidotti 1994: 159). The unitarist and monolithic nature of this feminist practice affirms sexual difference with sexual politics and Braidotti, although taking on board some aspects of postmodern relativism, fails fully to come to terms with her feminist determinism. Braidotti's work is useful in exploring the potential usages of Deleuze and Guattari's work for exploring gender fluidity at the level of ontology (see Linstead and Linstead 2004) and she questions feminist materiality, offering a corporeal materiality to explore woman as a site of multiple and contested experiences which

is not ‘gender-centred’ (Braidotti 1994: 161). That said, she remains unresolved between her thinking of subjectivity as difference, as a desire to become, and her materialism and in doing so falls short of challenging perceptions of gendered identities as same-different. If we see identity as a ‘site of difference’ (Linstead and Linstead 2004) which rejects phallogocentrism then a nomadic vision that takes into account experiences of oppression, exclusion and marginality may rest on a corporeal feminism, after Grosz and Olkowski, who both draw on the work of Deleuze and Guattari to achieve a ‘nomadic, disjunctive self which evades oppression by avoiding being in any static sense’ entails that ‘rethinking the subject means rethinking the body’ (Linstead and Linstead 2004 forthcoming) which rejects a realist ontology and an essentialist account of the body. This as we have indicated earlier is subsumes desire not as lack or wish as found in Freud and Lacan respectively but as a property of ‘desiring subjects, but subjects of and subject to desire – desire’s desire for the proliferation of desire’ (ibid.). The body, sexuality and sexed identities are therefore deessentialised to move beyond the dualistic oppositions that conjugate the monological discourses of phallocentrism. To develop this argument, gender needs to be seen as a corporeal multiplicity.

Gender as Corporeal Multiplicity

Despite the importance of Deleuze and Guattari’s work for feminists in thinking nomadically and in non-logically, they have themselves been criticised by writers such as Irigarary for being phallocentric and patriarchical. Grosz (1994) acknowledges that these charges are not frivolous, but overcomes them in exploring ‘a becoming beyond the logic, constraints and confines of being, and a multiplicity beyond the merely doubling or multicentering of proliferating subjects’ (Grosz 1994: 192). Grosz argues that Deleuze and Guattari are this is

useful in rethinking gender as rhizomatic, a notion which goes beyond a pluralised notion of identity:

'… an ever-changing, nontotalizable collectivity, an assemblage defined, not by its abiding identity or principle of sameness over time, but through its capacity to undergo permutations and transformations' (ibid.).

Taking this notion of multiplicity further then we can see gender as a process, incorporating desire and bodies, which is 'driven by a formless desire beyond binaries and even beyond the multiple identities of individual subjects – multiplicities of the same, still in much feminism' (ibid). Grosz comments that the body itself for Deleuze and Guattari is similarly a 'discontinuous, non-totalised series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances and incorporeal events, intensities, and durations' (1994: 193-4). This transcends Cartesian mind/body dualism to reconfigure the subject beyond being as an entity or a relation between interior (mind) and exterior (body). The subject can be seen as a series of 'flows, energies, movements, and capacities, a series of fragments or segments capable of being linked together in ways other than those that congeal it into an identity' (1994: 198). The connective capabilities of the body become of central importance, rather than being defined and confined by its sexual and physical properties. This is liberating for rewriting the feminine without necessarily writing as woman. As discussed earlier this enables us to think of gender beyond seeing it as a linguistics or dramaturgical performance (Butler 1990, 1993) and gender as a social construction (Acker 1990) or social practice (Gherardi 1995) to seeing gender as a connective capability, a 'productive process whose productivity is pure, i.e. it rests in the creativity of effulgent desire rather than being defined and delimited by the product it creates'. As Linstead and Linstead state:

'Gender is not the construction or outcome of a performance but is immanent within those performances making them productive of new molecular connections in the meshwork of identity' (forthcoming).

This then completes the model, with corporeal multiplicity at the heart of a process which holds self and gender in fluid and creative tension, shaped directly by textual and discursive constructions and practices and performances of self and gender, and enforming the continually emergent relationships and overlaps between them.

Self-multiplicity in research: re-citing, re-siting and re-sighting[1]

If, as I have argued, the self is not just multiple but a corporeal practice of multiplicity, and we therefore need to explore fully what it means to write gendered research in the feminine, not just as woman, some specific strategies might be useful. To rewrite the gendered self into organizational research one approach we can take is to consider the self in terms of three textual practices – re-citing, re-siting and re-sighting.

From Reciting to re-citing

In any recreation of a narrative of self, we call upon previous narrative selves that we may have created, or have received from others in the form of attributions, archetypes or stereotypes. An autobiography is always a retrospective - prospective account, recreating who we were in terms of who we would like to be. As such, when we write we *cite* the various selves which may be wholly or partially available to us as we rewrite them into our self-story (see David Sims' work also here). At the level of representing voice through language

rewriting then is reciting – if the reciting is unreflexive it is a recitation – preformed, often rehearsed, a learned rather than lived performance, essentially reproducing others' recorded voices. In my autobiography the injunction to write as woman was partly an injunction to recite my womanly identity. On the contrary, I was trying to escape both womanly and masculinist recitations which had inscribed the research process and find a way to *re-cite* myself – through a process of multiple connections. *Re-citing* therefore entails a deliberate playful strategy of redeploying discursive resources to expose the intertextuality of self-making. One way to define feminine textual practice then could be as *contesting recitation through the process of re-citation.*

From Siting to Resiting

Selves are not just grounded in bodies but are also importantly located in places; part of geosubjectivity, as the new social geography recognises. But placing subjects is also about epistemological space (Knights 1992) – how you are positioned with regimes of knowing, where who you are is related to what you know or are recognised as knowing. Gherardi talks about being positioned in social practice, and how women are positioned in relation to the practices of hegemonic masculinity. Women are positioned as abject, with its attendant loss of power, because they are positioned outside the respected and legitimate sources of knowledge which are dominated by the explicit rather than the implicit and unexpressible. This reinforces the binary which literally dispossesses women through dis-placing feminine ways of knowing, feminine epistemology. Therefore to challenge this siting on the margin we need to we need to re-site. Re-siting, which is a transgressive attempt to change the positioning of the self in power relations by reinscribing, or writing power into self-narratives and the self into power narratives, as power and knowledge are inseparable. Gherardi ends

[1] Clegg and Hardy (1995) orginally used these terms in relation to subjectivity but as the ideas develop (see the

her recent piece in the Oxford *Handbook of Organizational Theory* with a related point, arguing that 'a gender perspective within organization studies that is ironic, nomadic, and eccentric cannot be integrated into the main/male stream, but it can forge tactical alliances with other perspectives critical of the mainstream politics of knowledge and of the social practices sustaining it' (2003: 232). Gender research, then, is always a critical practice of repositioning and reconnection. Feminine research practice here then involves *resiting non-hegemonic ways of knowing by combination outside and realignment within the existing epistemological spaces of research to destabilize, open out and reformulate those spaces*.

Resighting

The previous two sections have highlighted that feminine research needs to proceed by exploring new ways of speaking (re-citing) and new ways of knowing (re-siting). Finally, of course, it also demands new ways of seeing, ways of re-visioning existing practice rather than simply *revising* it. Feminism has been so heavily involved in revision that it has missed several opportunities for re-visioning, such as those which Deleuze and Guattari present (Linstead and Linstead 2004).

Such post-Deleuzian approaches deliver not just the functionality of a new vision but the virtuality and possibility a new way of seeing, and it is critical that we do not neglect the importance of this. Feminine research practice then needs to create new vistas through **re-sighting** *its object, constantly seeking new and multiple lenses to ensure that it escapes the incrementalist traps of revisioning by working to enable re-visioning.*

Conclusions

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chapter on representations in the handbook (1996)) they didn't use these terms. I use these terms with a slightly

This paper has attempted to theorise the paradox of researching others and offering to represent multiple voices whilst suppressing the voice of the researcher reflexive in terms of the reflexive and gendered production of researcher self-identity within research accounts. Its essential strategy has been to open out the compass of the idea of reflexivity towards that of multiplicity, beginning by extending Martin's (2002) approach of 'letting the "I" back in' by identifying four discursive subject positions which constitute the multiple nature of the "I". This instability or multiplicity, it was argued, is customarily and unremarkably attenuated by the relationship between self and research text being corporeally grounded and gendered. Using my own research experiences as illustrative, three possible approaches to self and gender were considered: the discursive/textual approach; the performance/social practice approach and the corporeal multiplicity approach. Building on the latter, and addressing the central problem of what it could mean to *write the feminine* in research accounts, I suggested a tripartite approach to writing gendered self-multiplicity in research which extends the possibilities opened up by the social practice approach: *re-citing*, *re-siting* and *re-sighting*.

Resighitng refers to the opening up of new, virtual visions of possibility within the "findings" or "conclusions" of accounts. So in conclusion to this paper in what directions for future research, of writing the self as corporeal and multiple, can this quest take us? I cannot offer any objectives for further research because gendering the research self is not really an objective at all, simply a trajectory, a direction which has no point of arrival, which will move off at tangents to itself and may never return from its diversions. It does not set itself the target of creating a new language, or a new genre, but of pursuing a new relation to language, one which might be called feminine but even that category is surely destined to disappear in the process of the journey's unfolding. So, ironically, at the very place where I

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different application to explore self as multiplicity in relation to gendered ways of knowing.

must offer a conclusion to this paper, all I can set out is another tentative beginning, with no surety about what it is that this small beginning shall struggle to become – but as I hope to have shown, in the gendered inscription of self-identity in research practice, it is conclusions and conclusiveness that have always been the problem.

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