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# A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Awarded by the University of Huddersfield**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research takes a socio-cultural view of learning, which foregrounds the role of relationship. It argues that the ways in which learning is investigated in the extant literature mean that the actual processes underpinning learning and the role that relationships play in this are left unspecified. This means that the role of relationships in learning is under theorised in the learning literature in general and in the H.E. literature in particular, due to a discourse around independent learning which prevails in this setting. It sets out to plug this gap.

Taking an ethnographic approach this research used observational data, interviews, conversations and document analysis in order to study the role of relationships in learning in H.E. The work of Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger and Bronfenbrenner was drawn upon in order to analyse the everyday quotidian and implicit practices and processes underpinning learning in H.E. and the role that relationships play in this, using Thematic Analysis. A theoretical framework was thereby constructed to analyse these practices and processes and provide understanding of the role of relationships in learning in H.E. Findings pointed to students' need for relationship with both their lecturers and peers as an ontological imperative. Furthermore, that relationship formation and maintenance can be impacted upon by the ways in which individual identities interact. The importance of intersubjectivity for learning and also how contextual processes are able to influence the formation and maintenance of relationships were also highlighted. Findings allowed reflection upon emergent issues and current H.E. practice.

**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the many pupils, students and teachers I have worked with over the years. They have taught me the value of supportive relationships to learning in any setting and are therefore the initial inspiration for this work.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks must firstly go to the students and lecturers who very kindly allowed me to accompany them as they went about their everyday lives at university. Without them this research would not have been possible.

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Finally, enormous thanks to my supervisors Jane and Lynda. Your work and practice have inspired, guided, encouraged and supported me every step of the way along this research journey. I am truly thankful for our learning relationship.

## Copyright Statement

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# PREFACE

*RESEARCH JOURNEY AND AIMS*

The importance of relationships to learning became clear to me in my capacity as both a teacher and a learner in various settings throughout my life. I became interested in the specific nature of these relationships and why they were so important to learning. This led to research for my undergraduate dissertation which explored students' experiences of relationships when they leave home to attend university. Findings of this study highlighted the high importance that students place on their relationships with their peers and teachers and how this impacts upon their learning. I also undertook research which entailed an exploration of the role of a teaching assistant within a junior and infant school. This research shed light on the fact that relationships were important to help individuals of all ages to learn. For instance, as well as there being data illustrating the importance of the relationship between the children and their teacher and teaching assistant; the importance of the relationship that the teaching assistant had with the class teacher was another issue which emerged. The significance of this related to the ease with which the teaching assistant learned how to fulfil her role within the classroom alongside the teacher, almost akin to an apprenticeship situation. The way that the teaching assistant seemed to learn was at odds with how learning is traditionally viewed in the UK. That is, as being largely based on the supposition that it is something that happens within the individual separate from all our other activities (Sfard, 1997; Wenger, 1998; Gipps, 1999; Dalton and Tharpe, 2002; Matusov and Hayes, 2002). The way that the teaching assistant in my study appeared to learn to fulfil her role in the classroom was certainly not achieved alone and separated from her other activities. Instead, her learning seemed to occur precisely due to her taking part in activities alongside the teacher in charge of the class and the pupils. Furthermore, her good relationships with all those present in the classroom appeared to enable this process.

There was clearly scope for further investigation to specify the actual nature and role of relationships in the educational context. Given the 'independent learning' discourse (this is discussed later on in the thesis) surrounding learning at university, I was particularly keen to collect my data in the H.E. setting to explore how this discourse actually played out in reality. As well as investigating the role of relationships in learning in the H.E. context, I also needed to explore how the H.E. context may work to enable or constrain relationships. Having used Vygotskian theory, Communities of Practice and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory in my undergraduate research projects, I was very familiar with these three theoretical lenses and felt that they may also be useful in my attempts to understand and explain the role of relationships in learning in higher education. At the same time they could be used to challenge the traditional notions of learning underpinning current policy and practice. I had however, been disappointed in my previous research attempts since I had envisaged more information coming to light than actually transpired. I realized that interview studies such as my undergraduate research were unable to address all levels of reality. It was through this realization that my philosophical position as a researcher changed. Whereas once I believed that the only reality that exists is that which we experience, I came to the recognition of a reality independent of our knowledge of it which we should aim to uncover. However, at the same time I acknowledge that the only way we can come to know that reality is through subjective experience, so uncovering it is a difficult task.

My concern with the lack of insight from interview studies and my consequent change of philosophy required a change in methodology. Interviews in themselves were unable to address all three levels of reality indicated in the critical realist stance I was now taking (the real, the actual and the empirical all of which are explained in greater detail in chapter two). Tobbell and O'Donnell (2005) argue that ethnography is able to address all these layers and on reading the ethnography literature I felt that this would be entirely appropriate for my own research. In May 2008 I therefore submitted a research proposal and registered for the research degree Master of Philosophy, with the intention to transfer to Doctor of Philosophy. The proposal (Appendix A) gave the title 'An

Ethnographic Exploration of Relationships Following Transition to University' and listed the following aims:

- To observe the practices (enabling or disabling) which take place within the different communities of practice to which the students belong.
- To observe the practices which enable or disable the university tutors.
- To explore the different contexts which shape these practices.
- To explore the student's relationships and the impact of these on the student's transitional experiences.
- To explore the impact of the British Government's policy of widening access and increasing participation on the student/tutor learning relationship.
- To offer suggestions as to how issues identified may be addressed in order to help in the management of transition.

However, once my proposal had been accepted and I thought more about how I would go about fulfilling these aims I realized that they were quite naïve. The last aim which was to offer suggestions to address identified issues to help in the management of transition would have been impossible as I had not specified in my aims that I wished to construct a theoretical framework through which to understand and explain the processes underpinning the role of relationships in learning in higher education. Without understanding of these processes I could not hope to suggest how to make improvements. Furthermore, I also came to the realization that this aim was rather ambitious given that my data would not be generalizable to other university settings. In addition to this I was unable to gain access to the students before they came to university in order to accompany them on their transition. They came from schools and colleges from all over the world and therefore this was impossible to accomplish. The head of department also asked me to give the students a settling in period before I asked them to participate. I had to take his wishes into consideration, so decided to omit 'following transition to university' from my thesis title since I was unable to collect data which were sufficiently reflective of the student's transition experiences. My thesis title became 'A socio-cultural

study of the role of relationships in learning in Higher Education,' and the aims were modified to the following:

- To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.
- To observe and document the everyday practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning.
- To generate a theoretical framework for understanding how relationships can enable or disable students' participation and learning.
- To explore the implications of identified issues for teaching and learning in H.E.

**The underpinning argument**

Drawing on Wenger, (1998) the central assumption taken by this research is that rather than being situated within the individual, learning is instead achieved through engagement in social practice. Wenger (1998) argues that individuals pursue shared enterprises over time and in so doing form informal 'Communities of Practice' (CoPs). Wenger's theory of learning explores how issues such as community, social practice, meaning and identity interact and provides a conceptual framework in which to think about learning as a process of social participation underpinned by relationship. This is in complete contrast to characterizations of learning which present it as a linear and unproblematic process through which knowledge is transmitted from the expert teacher to the individual students. If there are problems with this process whereby the students do not or are unable to acquire knowledge, the problem is seen as located in the student themselves or sometimes in the teacher, but not in the process. My research challenges this over simplistic notion of learning and following Wenger reconceptualises learning as engagement in social practice.

This renders learning much more complex than is commonly acknowledged. The process of learning becomes a much wider phenomenon, one which is distributed across the person, their activity and the world. The failure to learn cannot from this perspective be seen as the 'fault' of an individual. Adopting this re-conceptualisation of learning as a process of social participation has far reaching (and one might say utopian) implications for the management of learning in higher education. Relationship becomes central and the formation and maintenance of relationships, their role in learning and the multiplicity of processes which enable or disable them are explored in this thesis using Vygotskian, CoP and Bioecological theory.

**Thesis Overview**

The thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter one begins by briefly defining relationships in the context of this thesis and then reviews a range of literature which purports to explore the contribution of relationship in learning. However, I will argue that in most cases the literature under theorises relationship in the learning context. The emphasis in chapter one is therefore on the under-theorization of the role of relationships in learning in general and in H.E. in particular. Chapter two introduces theory which I suggest may be useful in applying to my data in order to theorize this. It proposes the exploration of the mechanisms underpinning relationship formation and maintenance, their role in learning and how these can be enabled or disabled in the H.E. context through the use of Vygotskian, CoP and Bioecological theory.

Chapter three elucidates my epistemological position, discussing ethnography as a methodological approach in education. It also explores the principles underpinning the main ethnographic data collection methods, and ethics. The data collection process- how I went about my own ethnography is detailed in chapter four and a rationale is provided for the decisions I made around this. Chapter five then presents my analysis and also a rationale for the decisions I made about how to best represent my data. The analysis itself very briefly sets the scene giving background information about the context being studied. There is then an analysis of my data using interpretative themes in order to

begin to understand and explain the role of relationships in learning in H.E. or in other words in order to theorize them. This understanding then leads on to a tentative exploration of the implications of the identified issues for teaching and learning in higher education. Finally, chapter six reviews and sums up the thesis. It reflects upon its aims, the construction of the theoretical framework with which to explain and understand the role played by relationships in learning, the original contribution to knowledge it makes and suggests possible avenues of future research.

# CHAPTER ONE

INTERPERSONAL CULTURE IN EDUCATION

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the findings of the current literature on interpersonal culture in education, highlight the issues surrounding this and in so doing provide a focus for this thesis. Firstly, attempts are made to define relationship, although the difficulty of this is discussed. The chapter will then review a range of literature which purports to explore the contribution and power of relationship across settings and specifically in learning. It also reviews the literature which seeks to explain the process of learning itself in order to draw from this any information about the formation or role of relationship in learning. The review is critical in that it challenges the assumptions which underpin much of the existing research from a methodological and a theoretical perspective. I will argue that in most cases the literature under theorises relationship and whilst illuminating some aspects of the process of relationship formation and maintenance in learning, it fails to generate a sufficiently complex, context specific understanding. Moreover, the actual role of relationship in the learning context remains somewhat obscure.

## Defining Relationships

It seems apposite to consider what the term relationship means at the beginning of this thesis. In actuality defining relationship is not a simple endeavour. Whilst the term relationship is commonly used across theoretical disciplines there is little depth of discussion regarding what is meant by this, it seems to be a taken for granted term. Some psychological theories concern themselves explicitly with relationships. For example, Bowlby's (1988) attachment theory seeks to explore the relationship between carer and child and argues that early attachment relationships result in the formation of an internal working model of relationships which is used throughout life as a

framework for interpreting all future relationships an individual has. There is very little research which seeks to operationalize Bowlby's (1988) conceptions in adult functioning in an educational setting however. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) argue for an interdependence theory of relationship where satisfactory relationships are defined by rewards balancing or sometimes outweighing costs. This is further supported by a range of theories, commonly called equity theories, where it is claimed each member of the relationship assesses contributions of others and based on their assessment of fairness, manages the relationship accordingly (Miell and Crohgan 1996). Such models have been researched in various settings; however, there is very little research which uses them in an educational setting.

So, it is incumbent upon me, in this thesis, to identify what I mean by relationships in an educational setting. At this point this is a difficult proposition because in fact the literature (and by this I mean the education literature, as it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the term in other areas) whilst discussing relationships freely, is less specific about what the term actually means. Dale and Frye (2009) for instance suggest that educators and their students should recognize that vulnerability and love are essential relational qualities in learning and teaching. Whilst Coffield (2008) contends that effective relationships in the learning environment are based upon mutual trust and respect which allows for rich, warm personal exchanges. However, these researchers do not explain how these dimensions contribute towards a specific definition of relationship in relation to learning. There is the need for further exploration as to what these dimensions contribute towards the quality of the relationships which enable learning and also whether other dimensions are involved too.

Tobbell and O'Donnell (2013) are more specific in that they distinguish between interpersonal and learning relationships, arguing that the former must precede the latter. A learning relationship is defined as one which enables passage through the zone of proximal development (which will be considered later on in more detail). However, they do not explore in detail what an interpersonal relationship which leads to a learning relationship might look like. In the

absence of a clear definition of relationship in the context of learning in the literature it is necessary to provide definitions of the terms I will use at the beginning of this thesis so that the reader is able to understand to what I refer when I initially write about relationship. I will use the following terms:

- Relationship – the overarching term for the process of the negotiation and outcomes of human contact.
- Interpersonal relationship – the a priori condition between educator and educatee, who can only exist ontologically in relation to each other (Giles 2011); similarly, the a priori condition between students enrolled on the same course by virtue of propinquity.
- Learning relationship – the relationship, which results in the emergence of and passage through a zone of proximal development, between teacher and student (Tobbell and O'Donnell, 2003); furthermore the relationship which results in the emergence and passage through a ZPD between student and student.

It should be noted that these terms are a starting point and do not, independently, refer to the quality of that relationship. Indeed, this is what the present research is exploring. The definitions provided here may change upon collection and analysis of my data and generation of my theoretical framework through which to understand and explain the role of relationships in learning.

**Understanding the function of relationships in learning**

Largely the literature which seeks to explore relationships can be divided into two types:

- Theory and research which claims to explain the nature and function of relationships in human interaction across context;
- Theory and research which explores the nature and function of relationship within educational contexts;

**The nature and function of relationships across context**

Relationship is understood across contexts in various ways from the psychodynamic, where relationship is the product of parental behaviour in infancy (Bowlby,1988) which constructs an unconscious blueprint which underpins all succeeding relationship; to more rational social cognitive approaches, where relationship is seen as an almost conscious balancing of the books in terms of equitable contributions by all parties, which come under the general umbrella term of exchange theory; and finally as an interaction between person and environment, for example social constructionism and socio-cultural approaches.

The attachment model of relationship (Bowlby, 1988) has been applied across contexts, but there is very little research which uses this in the context of relationship in higher education. Waters et al., (2000) maintain that the establishment and maintenance of secure child-parent relationships will continue to influence social and cognitive development throughout the life span. Further, that this early bond is able to predict college student adjustment. However, there is a great deal of controversy with regard to the extent to which models for carer- child relationships are able to generalize to influence an individual's teacher and peer relationships in later life (Davis, 2003). If attachment style is indeed a stable characteristic as has been suggested by attachment theorists this would in all likelihood mean that individuals' relationships with their different teachers would all follow a similar model. Yet what of the student who perceives their relationship experience as negative with one teacher, but as positive with another? Davis (2003) sought to operationalize Bowlby's (1988) conceptions in the middle school setting using survey and interview data to measure relationship history. Her data suggested that parent and teacher internal models of relationship may not in fact be structured in a hierarchical fashion such that parent relationships are able to shape all future relationships. She argues that by middle school, models of prior parental relationships may have little role to play when considering students' abilities to interact with their teachers. Given Davis's arguments in relation to middle school it seems highly probable that by adulthood early internal models

of relationship will bear even less influence on individuals' relationships with their lecturers in the H.E. context. From the socio-cultural perspective that this thesis espouses, it is students' unique understandings of their relationships in their individual education contexts which are important. These understandings come from their ongoing processes of meaning making rather than from an internal working model of relationship which remains stable over time and context as purported from an attachment perspective.

Social exchange theories (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) of relationship have also been used across a range of settings for example in investigating the costs and rewards of becoming a parent (Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2004) and in relation to dimensions such as satisfaction, commitment and stability in the relationships of dating couples (Sprecher, 2004). The fundamental principle of the theory is that in social situations humans choose behaviours which increase their likelihood of gaining some advantage for themselves, (Chibucos et al., 2004). However, social exchange theories are rarely used in education settings and the only studies I was able to locate related to mentoring (Eagen et al., 2010) and postgraduate study (Schniederjans and Schniederjans 2012). Eagen et al. (2010) explored how social exchange theory relates to the likelihood of faculty members being willing to mentor students in research. They argued that many H.E. institutions adopt policies which reward faculty for research and publication and as a result faculty members focus their efforts in these areas rather than on teaching and mentoring for which they get fewer rewards. Further, that lecturers may not be encouraged to become mentors to undergraduates where there are few opportunities to establish meaningful relationships with students. Eagen et al. do not define what a 'meaningful relationship' would be in this context, but argue that the high student to faculty ratios in universities leading to large class sizes would make connecting with and mentoring individual students more challenging. Schniederjans and Schniederjans (2012) proposed equity theory as a guiding aid in overcoming problems in PhD programs in the relationship between supervisors and their students. They argue that doctoral students may be exploited by supervisors for their own interests leading to inequity in the relationship and the development of power relations. However, that if the supervisor treats the student equitably,

then their relationship can be mutually beneficial for them both in for instance gaining publications, contacts and research grants. However, they also argue that the graduate student and supervisor relationship may be such that the student is treated more like a colleague than a student and if this is the case then it is likely that this relationship is very different to the undergraduate relationships which are the focus of this thesis.

The underlying assumption of social exchange theory is that humans choose their behaviours in order to increase their likelihood of gaining some advantage for themselves, (Chibucos et al., 2004). Ontologically, this assumes a level of agency in human beings with is antithetical to socio-cultural theory. In this thesis I wish to demonstrate the utility of socio-cultural theory in understanding relationships in learning and the review will therefore focus on why these theories are relevant and powerful in this context. This is not to claim that the theories which have been used to explore relationships in other contexts have nothing to offer but that within the scope of this thesis it is not possible to include an extensive analysis of their utility.

**The nature and function of relationship within education contexts**

Socio-cultural theory is beginning to dominate the education research (Tobbell, 2006), and given the focus of this thesis on relationship, socio-cultural theory seems the more useful ontology to adopt. This is because from the socio-cultural perspective, relationship is affirmed as central to the learning process. For example, Vygotsky was the seminal socio-cultural theorist and comes the closest to defining what a relationship looks like in a learning context. It is useful to note that he is one of the few theorists who operationalize the learning – relationship process (Tobbell, 2006) through the emergence and passage through a zone of proximal development. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model posits that relationship is necessary for learning but is non-specific about its process in learning except to say interactions (which constitute the proximal processes of development) must happen regularly and increase in complexity in order for learning or development to happen.

Communities of Practice theory positions identity shifts as the centre of learning which happen as a result of mutual engagement in practice. Mutual engagement is suggestive of the need for relationship in learning, but again, the nature of mutual engagement is unexplored. Each of these theories are considered in more detail in chapter two, however, they underpin much of the research in learning.


**The empirical research**


There is a plethora of empirical research which notes the importance of relationships in learning, and it does so across a range of educational settings. For example, Merriam et al. (2003) maintain that social interaction is key to the learning and development of the adult participants in their study. Vaughn and Baker (2004) suggest that the interaction and interpersonal relationship between teacher and learner is especially significant in the clinical setting. Furthermore, Mishnaa, and Rasmussen, (2001) advance a relational perspective in the teaching of social work practice. They argue that social work students learn first hand through the instructor- student relationship and that this parallels clinical practice. Haidet, et al., (2005) also argue for the importance of learning relationships in the clinical setting. Furthermore, Bokeno, (2009, p.5) argues that the nature, extent and quality of the learning that occurs in mentoring practice is '*woven into the fabric of a relationship between two people.*' He argues that relationship and interaction are mutually defining and the quality of the relationship determines the quality and extent of the learning that occurs through it. Ramanan et al. (2006) set out to describe mentoring relationships among internal medicine residents and found that they particularly valued close contact with their mentors. These studies are suggestive of the importance of relationships to learning across a range of settings and illuminate some aspects of these, however, they do not tell us why they are important and under what conditions and furthermore they do not specify the actual nature and role of the relationships which enable learning.

Within the school setting, Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) applied a communicative systems approach to investigate teacher-student relationships in secondary classrooms. This approach conceptualises teaching as a form of communication underpinned by the assumption that every behaviour displayed by an individual in the presence of someone else is communication. This assumption stems from the premise that one cannot not communicate when there is another present. This is because no matter what an individual's intentions, when behaving in a certain way, those present will always infer meaning from their behaviour. However, Wubbels and Brekelman propose a model to describe teacher- student relationships in terms of teacher behaviour alone and do not account for student behaviours in their model. Teacher-student relationships require input from both teachers and students, so clearly student behaviour also needs consideration if a full picture of these relationships is to emerge. Furthermore, they used a questionnaire to collect their data and whilst this may have captured some of the students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships in terms of teacher behaviour it is likely that the teachers' actual behaviours were quite different to the students' reported perceptions of their behaviours. Observational methodology in which the researcher actually goes into the setting may be able to better capture this.

Gehlbach et al. (2012) investigated changes in the teacher-student relationship over the school year. Whereas Wubbels and Brekelmans only took the student perspective into account, Gehlbach et al. used parallel scales which they had developed previously which accounted for both the teacher and the students' perspectives on their relationships. Their findings indicated that change does occur over the year in these relationships, but that from the student perspective these tended to become less positive. They account for this finding by arguing that this corresponds with literature (Wigfield et al. 2006) which indicates that motivational and social outcomes for middle school pupils tend to decline. However, they also note that numerous teacher-student relationships did improve over the year. They argue that this finding reinforces the suggestion that these relationships are malleable and that there may be steps that both students and teachers can take to improve relationships. This finding contrasts with the research study above in which Wubbels and Brekelman's saw the

quality of the teacher- student relationship as influenced through teacher behaviours alone. It also highlights the complexity involved in relationships and the fact that it may be possible for some individuals to have positive relationships with certain individuals, but negative ones with others, since relationship quality is not soley dependent upon fixed internal models of relationship developed in infancy. It is important to note that this study is again measuring perceptions of behaviours alone. As argued previously, actual behaviour may be very different to that which is reported by students and teachers. Given their finding that relationships are malleable and are important for key student achievement and motivational outcomes, the authors of the study themselves actually advocate for the need for research to be conducted in which field work is prioritised in order to inform how to improve critical relationships in the classroom. Presumably they mean that observational data to capture actual behaviour in context is required alongside reported perceptions of behaviour in order to understand the complexities involved in relationships and learning.

There is a plethora of other research in schools which suggests that positive teacher-student relationships are associated with achievement and motivational outcomes. For example Murdock and Miller, (2003) argued that students who perceive that their teachers are more supportive and caring pay more attention in class. Lee and Loeb, (2000) and Blatchford et al, (2011) suggest that smaller class sizes have a positive effect on the quality of relationships that learners develop with their teachers and that this impacts upon their achievement. Tobbell and O'Donnell (2013) explored relationship formation between students and their teachers upon their transition from primary to secondary school. They concluded that construction of enabling transition contexts were necessary in order to facilitate the formation of interpersonal relationships which are a pre-requisite to the formation of learning relationships in the new school. Martin et al. (2007), Blatchford et al. (2011) and Lizzio et al. (2002), also note the connection between valued teacher- student relationships and academic achievement in schools.

The research also suggests that negative aspects of teacher-student relationships correspond with negative student outcomes. Murdock (1999) for example suggested that students who form weak bonds with their teachers tend to feel alienated and become disengaged. Negativity in the teacher-student relationship was also implicated in the decisions taken by students when considering dropping out (Fine, 1991). Hamre and Pianta (2001) also suggested that conflict in the teacher-student relationship was associated with lower grades. Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam (2013) argue that many schools' organizational structures actually disable staff and student interaction and that many students report feeling deeply disrespected by their teachers. They maintain that relationships between teachers and students tend to be discounted in policy as 'soft' or the result of uncontrollable variables such as teacher charisma and that as a result research has historically not tended to look at interpersonal relationships as crucial to student success. Furthermore, Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam contend that many high school teachers believe that social distance between themselves and their students is required in order to encourage independence in their students and to maintain discipline. This they argue means that students may be unable to connect with a supportive adult at school and may result in student alienation, disaffection and subsequent failure.

As well as the importance of teacher-student relationships to student outcomes; there is some research which posits that these relationships are also important to teacher well being. Split et al. (2013) explored the importance of the teacher-student relationship in relation to teacher well being and postulate that teachers have a basic need for relatedness with the students in their class. Furthermore, that their wellbeing is influenced by the ways in which teachers internalize their experiences with their students which in turn guide their emotional responses in their daily interactions with them. Johnson et al. (2005) maintain that the emotional involvement of teachers with their students is one of the primary explanations for teaching being ranked as one of the highest occupations for stress related outcomes. As Split et al. argue, it seems obvious that the formation of teacher-student relationships inherently demands the emotional involvement of teachers, which may impact upon their wellbeing. Vulnerability is

also suggested as a variable which may be involved in the teacher-student relationship. From the teacher perspective, Kelchtermans (2009) argues that teaching has emotionally and personally engaging consequences and because of its relational and ethical nature, it is fundamentally characterised and constituted by vulnerability. These feelings of vulnerability may also impact upon the teachers' well being and influence the way they interact with their students. Yet there is scant research which specifically addresses this. Veldman et al. (2013) studied job satisfaction in teachers and how this was related to the student-teacher relationship. Veldman et al. (2013) used a questionnaire in order to compare students' perceptions of the teacher-student relationships with teacher narrative- biographical data. They wanted to study the impact of teacher-student relationships on teachers' job satisfaction throughout their careers. Their findings indicated that positive retrospective teacher perceptions of relationships did not always coincide with positive student perceptions. Furthermore, that despite students perceptions of a poor teacher- student relationship, the teachers appeared to still have positive job satisfaction. Veldman et al's. findings are again indicative of the complexity surrounding the teacher-student relationship. Furthermore, the discrepancy between teacher and student perceptions in this research again highlights how self report data, (whilst being important to access participants' subjective experiencing of behaviours) may not be indicative of actual behaviours.

All these studies bring the importance of relationships in learning to the fore. However, with only a few exceptions, the existing attempts to understand learning in the research resort to separate analysis of the teacher or student roles or measurement of their personal characteristics, neglecting the analysis of the interactions between the two and with their context. Whilst this research illuminates some aspects of relationships in learning it does not allow a sufficiently complex, context specific understanding of these. Nor does it tell us what a relationship which enables learning may actually look like. We have a situation where much of the literature consistently notes, but does not sufficiently explain the importance of relationships to learning and Giles (2011) argues that the importance of relationships in educational settings is largely invisible. It is possibly due to the invisible nature of the role of relationships in

learning that much of the learning research tends to set out to investigate a number of other topics, such as how to engage students with their learning, or how to improve their academic performance rather than to examine the specific role of relationships in the learning process in itself.

**Learning in Higher Education**

The function of this section is to review the empirical literature which seeks to explore learning in relation to higher education. As argued above, the wider literature consistently notes the saliency of relationships in learning. As well as the connection between relationships and academic achievement in the school setting, Eames and Stewart, (2008) also note the importance of this in H.E. as do Vaughn and Baker (2004, p.1052), who argue that *'interpersonal relationships represent a potential pathway to increasing the success of the teaching and learning process.'* Astin's (1993) study about what matters to students in H.E. involved in excess of 27,000 students at 309 different institutions. The two factors that were found to be the most predictive of positive changes in students' satisfaction and academic performance were interaction amongst students and interaction between students and their teachers. The value of developing supportive teacher- student relationships has also been highlighted as an aspect of the teaching and learning environment that inspires students to work harder and longer in order to achieve high quality learning outcomes (Kember and Leung, 2006).  Foster (2008), argues that perceived teacher care can have a positive effect on students which includes increased academic achievement; lower drop out rate; higher attendance and increased time spent studying. Mahn and John-Steiner (2002) report on studies with accomplished adult learners and adult learners for whom English is their second language and argue that caring support from teachers can build confidence and enable performance. Whilst Sanchez et al. (2011) suggested that university students especially value teachers who are good communicators, easy to talk to and who have an open approach to the teacher student relationship. The promotion of a climate in which student-student relationships can be developed has also been argued to have positive

outcomes (Astin, 1993, Fass and Tubmann, 2002; Kember and Leung, 2006; Eames and Stewart, 2008).

Some of the literature (MacFarlane, 2009; Mainhard et al., 2011 and Curzon-Hobson, 2002) highlights trust as an important aspect of the teacher-student relationship in higher education. McFarlane furthermore argues that where trust is lost there are negative social, ethical and even financial implications for universities. Whilst Mainhard et al., maintain that lecturer behaviours such sarcasm, yelling at students or using coercive or punitive behaviour towards them may result in loss of trust leading to negative teacher-student relationships.

It is clear that there is much evidence in the literature mentioned so far that relationships matter in learning. They matter for students across educational settings; they matter across student outcomes, how positive they are matters and how negative they are matters. What is still unclear however, is how and why and under what conditions they matter and furthermore, how are these relationships formed and maintained in educational contexts. Given the importance of relationships to learning that the literature highlights, it is surprising that when it comes to the H.E. context much of the literature focuses upon how the individual learns. The Approaches to Learning model (Marton and Saljo, 1976) and the Learning Styles model (Kolb 1984) being the two main attempts in the current H.E. literature at understanding how students learn. On reading the literature encompassing these models it became clear that they do not account for relationships in any shape or form due to the individualistic view of learning they take. It may be that the dominance of this research in the H.E. context highlights a possible reason for the invisibility of relationships in this setting (Giles, 2011). However, since it does not posit a role for relationship in learning, space in this thesis does not allow for a full discussion of this. I will therefore go directly to other areas of the learning literature which my search through the literature has uncovered in order to draw out any information this may provide about the role of relationships in learning in the H.E. setting. Whilst there is a paucity of empirical work which specifically sets out to examine relationships (Giles, 2011) in the H.E. setting, wider work on retention,

transition and motivation do tend to illuminate relationship issues.  In addition, there is specific work which looks at peer assisted learning and collaborative learning, which is inherently relationship based. This will now be discussed.

**Relationships and Retention**

Student retention has been widely studied. Whilst student attrition was initially seen as a problem belonging to individual students, the role of relationships is becoming more and more recognised as playing an important role here too. Tinto's (1993, 2007, 2009 and 2012) claims that social integration is important if students are to persist with their studies is particularly pertinent and there is a range of research which backs up his claim. For example, Leach et al. (2005) claim that the quality of students' learning experiences and their decisions to persist with their studies is significantly influenced by their relationships. Furthermore, Dalgety and Coll (2004) found that where science students had a friend in a science field their intention to continue with their studies was increased and Scott et al. (2008) lists supportive peer groups and ready access to responsive staff as being particularly relevant factors in student retention. However, the view that interpersonal relationships were important to retention was not always seen as significant since student attrition was seen originally as a reflection of the individual student's attributes, skills and motivation (Tinto, 2007). This view shifted in the 1970s when the role of the environment and in particular the social systems of the institution began to be taken into account (Spady, 1970, 1971; Tinto, 1975). Research (Astin, 1975, 1984; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980; Pascarella and Chapman, 1983), began to note the importance of student contact (or what they term involvement) to retention and as a result, practice began to be focused upon helping students to become involved in their institution. Much of this work however, looked at students who were from majority backgrounds and resident at the university. They gave no regard to gender, race, ethnicity or socio economic background or the students who commuted to university nor to the complexity involved when investigating why students stick with or leave their course.

More recently, it has been recognized that the institution that the student studies in and the broader social, cultural, and economic issues also impact upon student retention (St. John et al. 2000; Braxton et al. 2000; Berger 2001; Zepke and Leach, 2010; Tinto 2012). Tinto (2012) argues that having admitted a student the university has an obligation to do what it can to help the student to stay on their course and graduate. Further, that this can be achieved by focusing not only upon the individual student but by focusing upon the institutions own behaviour and establishing conditions within its walls to achieve this, such as conditions which encourage interpersonal relationships.

Research has also lent us a greater understanding of how retention of students differs depending upon whether they are in residence at their institution or continue to live at home (Allen, 1992; Tinto et al. 1994; Borglum and Kubala, 2000). Tinto et al. (1994) and Tinto, (1997, 2007) studied retention in settings where students were non residential and this highlighted the importance of involvement in the classroom to student retention. The argument being, that the classroom is perhaps the only place where non residential students are able to come into contact with their peers and teachers and this contact is vital if they are to form relationships and become involved (Tinto, 2007). Involvement is seen by Tinto (2012) as perhaps the most important condition for student success.

According to Tinto, 2001; Gardner and Barefoot, 2005; Tinto, 2007 and Tinto, 2012, student involvement is even more critical to retention in the first year of university. Tinto (2012) also argues that first year students are more likely to succeed in settings which actively involve them with others in the actual classroom since a lot of students no longer live on campus, but simply attend their lectures and classes and then leave to fulfil other obligations. Their experience of university is therefore limited to the classroom or lecture theatre, which means that their success at university is dependent upon what happens there. There is however, a gap between research and practice; research tells us that involvement is all important, but there is then the task of making involvement happen and it is difficult for universities to know how to do this. Even if we knew how to make this happen, there may not be the resources to

provide this intervention. We will see in the later section on learning communities and peer assisted learning how research such as Tinto (1997, 1998) and Power and Dunphy (2010) provided interventions to help student achievement. This intervention also led students to form relationships and become highly involved in their course and university life which arguably, given the research previously discussed in this section, also leads to student persistence. Tinto (2007) argues that teaching staff are key to helping establish learning communities and institutional efforts to enhance student retention yet there are ever more limitations placed upon the time lecturers are able to be in contact with their students in order to encourage their involvement. So, although the retention literature appears to be providing insights into the importance of relationships in learning with one's peers and teachers, practice does not always reflect this importance. Furthermore, the actual nature of the relationships and how, why and under what conditions they are important to retention is again left unspecified.

**Relationships and Transition**

Another area of research in the H.E. setting which is important when exploring the role of relationships in learning is the transition literature. Students moving to university face a complete change of social environment which has far reaching effects in every facet of their life including their academic performance. Relationships have however, been shown to be important in the transition process across the full range of educational institutions and some of this will be briefly discussed here too as it provides some information which is also relevant to the H.E. environment. For example, research by Iruka et al. (2010) indicated that a close relationship with teachers predicted the development of social skills amongst kindergarten children which had enduring effects helping them in their passage through the education system. They do not however define what a close relationship is and this lack of a definition of what constitutes the different descriptions of relationship appears to be pervasive in the literature. Powell and Marshall (2011) for instance emphasize the need for supportive, positive relationships between at risk school students and staff when students return to their home schools after a period of being schooled elsewhere. Again the qualities of supportive and positive relationships

are not defined, yet Powell and Marshall recommend that teachers should receive training to enable them to form supportive learning relationships with their students and switch from the policing mentality they have towards them. This would be difficult to achieve if we do not know what these relationships actually look like. There is the need to more clearly specify what constitutes a supportive relationship if we are to understand the role of relationship in learning and how teachers can be helped to form them.

Tobbell and O'Donnell (2013) investigated actual relationship formation in the transition from primary to secondary school using ethnographic methodology. They more clearly specify the nature of relationship than other researchers. That is in that they actually define what a learning relationship is (as one between a teacher and student which enables the formation and passage through a zone of proximal development). They also argue that interpersonal relationships are different from learning relationships, but that the former are a pre- requisite for the latter. Their data suggest that to facilitate the formation of interpersonal relationships which may lead to productive learning relationships between students and their teacher, attention must be paid to the construction of enabling contexts during transition. Interpersonal relationships are not defined however, and there is a need to specify what these might look like too if teachers, lecturers and their various educational institutions are to work towards providing the contexts which will enable them.

De Wit et al. (2011) also investigated teacher student relationships in relation to transition. They furthermore studied student- student relationships. They found that as students transitioned through the different learning settings they perceived a decrease in the amount of time and support given to them by both their teachers and their peers. They maintain that this lack of support was associated with declining attendance and argue that policy decisions should aim to introduce practices that improve the quality of interpersonal relationships in the classroom to counteract this. Furthermore, Tobbell (2003) suggests that the importance of relationships is pivotal to school achievement but that when primary school children transition to secondary school, secondary school structure works against effective relationship formation. It seems reasonable to

suggest that the incremental lack of time provision for students to be in contact with their teachers as they advance through the education system might militate against the formation of learning relationships. By the time students make the transition from college to the H.E. setting, this lack of contact time reaches its peak and students are distanced from their teachers due to the largely lecture based delivery of the curriculum (Cameron, 2009; Turner, 2012). The students leave further education where they meet each subject teacher regularly in relatively small class sizes of around twenty students or less (Turner, 2012). However, upon entry to university they may suddenly find themselves in large lecture theatres and '*part of an anonymous mass*' (White, 2006, p.236) in which it may be nigh on impossible for lecturers to know their students' names, much less form learning relationships with them. This situation is unfortunate in the light of Tinto's (2007) argument that practice should focus on reinforcing the importance of student contact with staff in their transition to university.

Several studies have evaluated attempts to facilitate student contact with staff upon transition to university. For example, in the USA, Hermann and Foster (2008) used a reciprocal interview activity with small groups of students and staff members, with the aim of fostering approachability and participation during the first day of class. They maintain that this promoted positive attitudes about approaching the instructor and class participation. Vulnerability is again highlighted here as an aspect of the student-teacher relationship since Hermann and Foster argue that by placing themselves in a somewhat vulnerable position the teachers may have come across as more approachable. Further, that having an opportunity to size up their tutor promotes interaction and positive rapport between the students and their tutor. In such a climate it could be argued that positive interpersonal relationships might more easily be fostered. In addition, Hermann and Foster argue that the activity also provided an opportunity for the students to begin forming relationships with their peers. They argue that such relationships promote greater levels of commitment and participation in their course. Fass and Tubmann, (2002) also highlight the importance of students' interpersonal relationships with peers when in transition to university. Their research suggests that social competence and adjustment may be a protective factor cushioning key transitions in young adulthood and

enabling participation in university, also, that this may help with their academic achievement.

Barron and D'Annunzio- Green (2009) investigated the educational and social expectations of a cohort of students entering directly into the second year of an undergraduate degree course. They found that international students and those coming from a domestic F.E. college alone were particularly likely to be anxious about their relationships with other students and have feelings of isolation. Presumably feelings of vulnerability would also feature here if this was the case. They conclude that universities should offer more support to enable students to integrate socially and help them to feel that they belong. Yet research which suggests offering more support to students to integrate socially does not appear to impact to any great degree upon practice because other research highlights a lack of contact time available for students to interact with their tutors and their peers (Peat et al., 2001; Brinkworth et al., 2009; Turner, 2012). Peat et al. (2001) argue that increasing student numbers may mean that students have very few other students who share class time with them. This is because as numbers increase, lecture class sizes increase, there are more module choices available and timetabling becomes increasingly more complex. As a result they may be unable to form peer relationships and their feelings of isolation may be detrimental to their adjustment to university. Peat et al's. research (2001) evaluated a 'Transition Workshop' offered to all first year students in the faculty of science at the University of Sydney designed to assist students with their transition to university. Their survey data suggested that compared to their peers, students attending the workshop were generally better adjusted to university life, and recorded higher levels of academic performance. They argue that this was because the workshop facilitated the establishment of strong student-student relationships which enhanced the students' study, motivation and general enjoyment of university. The formation of peer groups and social networks was also associated with reduced likelihood of depression, anxiety and loneliness.

Furthermore, Brinkworth et al. (2009) examined first year expectations and experiences from both the student and the teacher perspective. They surveyed

233 Humanities and science students in Australia, six months into their first year about their teaching and learning experiences at university. They were then surveyed a year later, 18 months after they began their course to gain retrospective views of their transition. Teachers of both groups of students were also surveyed. They report that although the students responded that they acknowledged that studying at university would be different from studying at high school, a high percentage of them still expected ready access to their teachers as a crucial element of university experience. This was not however, a view reflected in their teachers' self reports of their actual practice. Issues relating to speedy feedback on returned work were also a point of discrepancy between what the student expected and their experience and that of their teachers. Brinkworth et al. (2009, p.169) argue that the issue of feedback is particularly important because regular and effective feedback '*remains a fundamental mechanism for making new university students feel supported, accustomed to and comfortable with the university environment.'* Further to this, Tett et al. (2012) also argue that feedback from staff is particularly important in the early transition stage. They argue that feedback may initially appear negative to the students when they first attend university and that they may experience this as a lack of care from the staff as a result. From all this, it could be argued that although students realize that they will be studying differently at university, they still expect a great deal of support from their teachers, yet this is not the case and the perceived lack of support together with their lack of ready access to their teachers may militate against the formation of learning relationships.

One study in the Netherlands (Torenbeek et al. 2010) in part challenges the claims in the rest of the literature since it indicates that as students in transition became better integrated in terms of more frequent contact with their peers, they do less well academically since they are less likely to attend classes and obtain fewer credits. However, in common with other studies, another finding indicated that the more students interacted with teachers, the more motivated they became, the more time they invested and the more credits they earned. However, it is difficult to believe that just simply interacting more with teachers resulted in all this. Regular interactions may be more likely to lead to a

relationship which enables learning, but there would presumably need to be other requirements too. It is arguably much more complex than this research would suggest. Akin to most of the other studies discussed, Torenbeek et al. (2010) used questionnaire methodology and there are of course methodological problems with the use of questionnaires in that they are unable to capture all this complexity. Further research to establish what constitutes a positive interpersonal relationship, the requirements for their formation and the value of establishing these in the context of transition is needed.


**Relationships and Motivation**


Motivation is another research area which is prominent in the H.E. learning literature, and within this, the importance of classroom relationships is again highlighted. Kember and Leung, (2006), for instance argue that teacher-student relationships and student- student relationships are important features of the learning environment which help the students to become motivated. Also, Martin and Dowson (2009) maintain that the greater the connectedness between individuals in an academic context, the greater the scope for academic motivation, engagement and achievement. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan's, (1985, 2000) self determination theory explicitly recognizes relatedness as one of the fundamental constituents of motivation. Relatedness here refers to an individual's need to have a sense of connection and belonging (Martin and Dowson, 2009), which provides them with the emotional security required in order to deal with the learning situation effectively.

Investigations into the impact of classroom relationships on motivation to learn have mainly, however, consisted of looking at the relationships between teachers and learners and have somewhat neglected the role that relationships between students and their peers may play. This appears to be because there is often the assumption of a linear relationship between the direct cause and effect of teacher expectations, attitudes and behaviours on student motivation and learning (Turner and Meyer, 2000) and that teachers are the ones that drive the relationship. Furthermore, research in this area usually involves self

report measures of individual teacher or student's values, goals, beliefs, effort and persistence. For example Meyer and Turner (2002) argue that teachers' actions are indicative of the values, beliefs and practices that help to regulate students' emotions, cognitions and motivation to learn. Also, Perry, (1998) and Turner and Meyer (2000) maintain that through embracing certain instructional contexts, teachers are able to influence the quality of both their interactions with students and their students' motivation to learn. Fleisher (2005) also draws on the motivation perspective in his work. He anchors his theoretical framework for looking at teacher–student relationships in the work of self-determination theorists and Ryan, (1985, 2000) which maintains that individuals seek relatedness, autonomy and competency from their environment and that autonomy support from their teachers helps students to become intrinsically motivated to learn.

Noels et al's. (1999) study appears to support Ryan and Deci's argument. They examined student perceptions of their instructors' communicative style and supportive role in relation to students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivational orientations. They found that perceptions of instructors' communicative style were attached to students' intrinsic motivation, arguing that the lower the students' intrinsic motivation the more their instructors were perceived to be controlling and less informative. However, Dahl and Smimou (2011) argue that the relationship between motivation orientation and students' perceptions of their teachers is the other way round than that described by Ryan and Deci. They maintain that students see their teachers as providing quality teaching when they are motivated, rather than it being support from teachers that helps the students to become motivated to learn. So for Dahl and Smimou, the students come to learning already motivated or not as the case may be and it is this motivation or lack of motivation which colours their perceptions of their teacher. This suggests that for Dahl and Smimou teacher student relationships are unimportant and whatever the teacher does in class is immaterial, since the students' motivation and the way that they perceive the quality of the teaching that the teacher provides is already set in stone.  In addition, Dahl and Smimou (2001) also took the students' preconceived ideas about the institution that they attended into account. They found that as well as the students' motivation

orientations impacting upon their perceptions, their general opinions and the reputation of the educational institution that they attended also had an influential role in them forming positive perceptions of their teachers and the quality of the teaching that they provide. This suggests that it is not just motivation which influences the way that students view their teachers, and their relationship with them, the situation is more complicated than that and situational influences need to be taken into account too.

Meyer and Turner (2006) place great importance on the emotional experience of learning on motivation and a concomitant salience for the role of relationships. They argue that in order for students to have the motivation to learn, they need consistently positive emotional experiences contributing to a classroom climate that provides a basis for teacher –student relationships and interaction. In their research Meyer and Turner, (2006) explored the nexus between students' reports and classroom measures of motivation and the interaction between teachers and students- that is what the teachers and students said and did when the goal was for the student to understand. In order to do this they observed classroom discourse, analyzed the emotions which were displayed and also interpreted the meaning of teacher-student interactions as to whether the particular emotion observed supported or detracted from the learning activity. During their observations they found that teaching which was associated with positive student motivation often involved an explicit display of emotion such as laughing at a teacher's joke or an expression of pride at understanding a difficult concept. Student self reports also confirmed these emotions and Meyer and Turner report that their findings have shown how instruction that is reported by students as more motivational correlates with teacher support, (within which they include positive emotional support and statements of caring). As well as the importance of individual interactions, Meyer and Turner (2006) argue that a general consistency in emotional support over time is an important contributor to the classroom climate. They claim that in their research it has been impossible to separate emotions, cognitions and motivations captured in both observations and student self reports and conclude that emotions are ubiquitous in classrooms and central to understanding instructional interactions. They have repeatedly

replicated their findings (Patrick, et al. 2003; Turner et al. 2003; Turner et al. 2002; Turner et al. 1998) and argue that both positive and negative affect are central to understanding motivation and motivational climates in classrooms.

There have been some other motivational researchers who have also acknowledged that emotional support from teachers is important in academic contexts (Patrick et al. 2001; Wentzel, 1997; Skinner and Belmont, 1993). Across these studies, the positive characteristics displayed by the teacher such as humour, enthusiasm and a passion for learning have been highlighted as central features of teacher-student interactions that correlate with reports of positive emotions and motivation to learn from the students. However, Roth et al. (2007) approached motivation from the teacher's angle. They examined whether teachers' thoughts and feelings towards their own motivations for teaching is related to students' self reports of positive teacher attributes in Israeli schools. They reported that autonomous motivation for teaching has positive outcomes for both the teachers themselves and their students since the students' perceptions of their teachers as supportive promotes autonomous motivation for learning among the students. This emphasizes the connection between students and teachers and how their classroom experiencing- their actions, perceptions and understandings of events are tasks they perform in synergy with one another in their every day interactions. It also hints at the complexity of the processes that take place when individuals interact with one another in the educational setting and in the formation of relationships in this context.

The studies discussed here add some weight to the notion that teacher student relationships are important to students' motivation to learn. However, most of the studies from a motivational perspective are unable to tell us why relationships are important and how they are formed, since with only a few exceptions, they rely on the measurement of intra individual psychological processes of individual students and teachers, rather than the processes occurring in interaction between them with their environment. The motivation research is furthermore unable to tell us anything about the importance of student relationships with their peers because of the blanket assumption that

motivation stems directly from the attitudes, expectations and actions of the teacher.

**Peer Assisted Learning and Relationships**

Much of the research already reviewed only allows us insights into the student-teacher relationship. This section reviews an area of the H.E. research in which student-student relationships come to the fore. Peer assisted learning is described by Topping (2005, p. 631) as '*the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions,'* and both the collaborative and cooperative learning literature is encompassed within this. There appears to be some overlap in the terminology used in the literature at times, and the difference between cooperative and collaborative learning is often brought into question. Both these are similar in that they rely on using peer group influence and the fostering of interpersonal relationships between students to help them to learn. There are however, some descriptions of the basic differences between collaborative learning, which tends to talk about learning communities; and cooperative learning which includes the peer assisted learning literature. Each of these sets of literature will now be discussed in order to draw out any insights they might provide into how relationships with one's peers might impact upon learning.

Firstly, collaborative learning which did not emerge in the H.E. domain until the 1980's (Astin, 1984; Boyer; 1987 and Tinto, 1987). Typically, collaborative learning classrooms are restructured away from the traditional lecture, towards small group work which requires intensive interaction between the group members and their tutor whilst they work through a particular task. Rather than being the source of knowledge the teacher takes a more facilitative role in helping the students to form collaborate relationships and to work together on tasks. It is claimed that classroom experiences such as this exert positive effects upon student's academic outcomes (Cabrera et al. 2002) and collaborative learning has been singled out by some as the most promising teaching practice in use (Cockrell, Caplow and Donaldson, 2000; Cabrera et al.

2002). Astin's (1993) longitudinal study argued that practices that promoted meaningful collaboration in the classroom helped students to achieve more and Tinto (1997) highlighted the role that collaborative learning plays in the quality of effort that the student puts into studying.

Collaborative learning is however, not just associated with classroom activity. Cabrera et al. (2002) argue that it has a long standing association with what goes on in the student's life outside the classroom too. Treissman (1998) noted the value of students' collaborative relationships outside the classroom. However, he had not set out to investigate relationships in their own right and his results were unexpected. Treissman (1998) had been trying to understand why African American minority students did not do very well in a calculus class whereas Asian students excelled. It was hypothesized that this may be due to lack of motivation, a lack of preparation before students went to university, lack of family support or that it was the low socio economic status of African American minority students that made it difficult for them to learn. Treissman and his colleagues actually moved in with the students and videotaped their lives. On trawling through all their videotaped data their '*hypothesis fell apart*,' (Treissman, 1998, p.365). What they found to be significant was that the way that the African American students studied compared with Asian students was completely different. The African American students worked longer and harder than their Asian counterparts, but they worked in isolation. The Asian students on the other hand, would get together in the evenings, make a meal together, go over homework assignments, check each other's work and quiz one another. The African American students very rarely worked together. This led Treissman to conclude that social interaction with one's peers is extremely important to learning and his work has gone on to inspire the Emerging Scholars Program (E.S.P.) in the U.S.A., in which students are encouraged to establish learning communities rather than study in isolation.

Learning communities have a long history of helping students to establish social support networks as well as academic ones (Tinto, 1997, 2003; Cabrera et al. 2002; Shapiro and Levine, 1999). In learning communities, as well as students being co-registered around a subject area, they may also be expected

to attend small discussion groups or interest groups usually led by a more senior student than themselves. Classrooms are also reorganized in order to promote interaction amongst the students and collaboration in which they are responsible for not only their own learning, but that of their peers as well. As well as block scheduling of students onto the same modules, they might also live close to one another in their halls of residence and go on field trips or to social events together. Shroeder (1994) argues that this helps to foster collaborative learning in the halls of residence because of the commonality, values and purpose that the students share. Students in learning communities usually have three things in common (Tinto, 2003). The students have a shared experience of the curriculum or '*shared knowledge'* (Tinto, 2003) which, it is claimed promotes higher levels of cognitive complexity than if the students were all attending different stand alone modules. Secondly, the students are engaged socially as well as intellectually in knowledge construction in ways that are claimed to promote cognitive development, so they are said to have '*shared knowing'* (Tinto, 2003). Thirdly, is '*shared responsibility'* which comes about when members of learning communities take part in collaborative groups in which it is a requirement of students to be mutually dependent on one another. Unless each member of the group plays his or her part, the group's learning is unable to advance (Tinto, 2003). Each student is therefore responsible to themselves and to each other.

Johnson et al. (1991) found that there were positive correlations between collaborative learning and achievement, personal development and social support among college students. Some researchers claim that the impact of collaborative learning is, however, diverse. They argue that white women and minorities learn better in collaborative settings because they learn differently to white men (Cabrera, et al. 2002). Levine and Levine (1991) comprehensively reviewed a series of college interventions for students at risk and found that collaborative settings were the most effective in helping minority students. Furthermore, Fullilove and Treisman (1990) compared African American students enrolled on collaborative learning courses and African American students enrolled on traditional courses. Those enrolled on the collaborative learning courses had higher retention rates and higher grade point averages

than their opposite numbers. Lundeberg and Moch (1995) studied women attending a single sex college in America and claim that their findings show that women prefer collaborative learning and furthermore that a collaborative setting encourages more intellectual risk taking and connected understanding of concepts. However, Tinto (1997) argues that collaborative learning techniques are effective for all students, especially when looking at their persistence in college and the last few decades has seen the establishment of learning communities across the entire spectrum of students irrespective of their gender or ethnicity. As well as the claim that collaborative learning has a connection with students' cognitive development it has also been posited as an effective technique to promote tolerance among college students (Vogt, 1997; Cabrera et al. 2003), which is clearly another quality one would require in order to form positive interpersonal relationships with one's peers.

Despite the abundance of research suggesting that collaborative learning has important benefits for the students, we should perhaps bear in mind that much of the literature on collaborative learning in H.E. is quite dated and with the exception of Tinto (1997) and Treissman (1992) has been correlational and cross sectional in design. It also relies on self report questionnaire data which only gives us insights into what individuals report about their experiences, rather than actual behaviours. Furthermore, apart from Tinto, (1997) there is no longitudinal research. This means that it is difficult to establish whether the students' learning is in fact due to the collaborative learning, or whether there is something else influencing it such as the amount of effort they put in or their past learning, or whether it is the result of the interaction of multiple factors.

Aufschnaiter (2003) investigated learning communities differently. She studied students' participation in communities and the interactive processes that occur within these. However, she argues that there is a distinct separation between the social learning environment and the learner's cognitive processes when investigating both the learners' development of meaning and the quality of the environment in which these meanings are formed. Aufschnaiter (2003) video taped university students' physics classes and transcribed any interactions that were thought interesting (those which were about physics). Her theoretical

framework used three dimensions; the content area, the level of complexity that is reached within single instances of learning and the time the learner takes to reach a specific level in a specific situation (Aufschnaiter, 2003). She applied this framework to investigate both the student's individual knowledge and the structure of their interactions.  Despite the distinction she makes between the individual learner and their environment, her findings suggest that social interaction is important in providing access to new practices and meanings. She maintains that without a socially based learning environment students are unable to '*get in contact with new practices and meanings.*' (Aufschnaiter, 2003, p.367). However, she also argues that students will only interact about what they already know and that learning therefore does not occur in the social space where interactions take place, but that this happens later instead when the student is on their own. For Aufschneiter, it seems new meaning is only developed outside of the interaction process. This is at odds with my own position as the Vygotskian within me would argue that it is possible for learning to occur within the actual social interactions in which students partake too. Furthermore, counter to Aufschnaiter's argument, I would also argue that it is possible for students to interact about what they do not yet know, with more able others within Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. We have already noted the distinction Aufschneiter makes between the individuals' cognitive processes and the environment within which they interact. However, if the environment and the individual are as distinct as she claims how can the same dimensions be used in her study to describe the structure of the environment and also the individual's development of meaning?

 '…the *structure of the learning environment and individual development of meaning were described using the same dimensions which could be easily matched'* (Aufschnaiter, 2003, p. 367).

There is no description of how Aufschnaiter managed to reduce all the complexity surrounding both individual meaning making and the structure of the environment down to just three conveniently matched dimensions and so we cannot be sure that these dimensions adequately describe them.  Further, it could be argued that despite Aufscheiter claiming to acknowledge that

participation within communities requires investigation if we are to understand learning; by reducing meaning making and the environment to this small number of dimensions, there are still missed opportunities to take account of the complexity involved in socially based learning. The role of relationships in learning and the processes which impact upon their formation and quality are again left somewhat obscure.

**Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is another intervention in which peer assistance and the student- student relationship is important. Like collaborative learning, the literature on cooperative learning originated in the United States. Cooperative learning interventions and the research surrounding this is however, much more in evidence in the recent UK literature than is the collaborative learning research. Johnson and Johnson (2009) argue that until the 1970s, there was cultural resistance to cooperative forms of learning due to the interpersonal competition amongst learners which prevailed at the time and furthermore because of the view that the strongest students were made through independent study isolated from and not interacting with other students. However, in the 1970s and 1980s the role of relationships and socialization in learning was pointed out by several researchers (Lewis and Rosenblum, 1975; Hartup, 1976; Johnson, 1980; Johnson and Johnson, 1981) and cooperative learning became more accepted (Johnson and Johnson, 2009).

Cooperative learning in same year peer groups is one form of peer learning sometimes termed the 'unconventional' mode in the literature (Ning and Downing, 2010). Another form of cooperative learning involves actual peer tutoring, or supplemental instruction which is referred to as the traditional mode (Ning and Downing, 2010). This is characterized by a more advanced student taking the role of tutor to the rest of the group. Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a global model which has been adapted for use in hundreds of higher education institutions around the world. It was originally developed in the 1970s in the USA as a way of reducing the high attrition rates amongst first year students

and also to support study strategies in a less resource intensive way than one to one tutoring (Wallace, 2003). The identification of '*Difficult courses'* (Wallace, 2003, p.9) where SI was needed were identified. This was a significant move away from any notions suggesting that poor academic performance was down to the students' themselves. The students were encouraged instead to see study skills sessions as an everyday and necessary part of challenging modules rather than as a result of their own deficiencies.

SI is claimed to have benefits for both the tutor and the tutees and research (Topping, 2005; Topping, 2001; Topping and Ehly, 1998,) claims that significant gains in academic achievement can be made. In the UK, Wallace (2003) described a peer tutoring scheme which had been running for almost two decades in a number of British universities. This SI scheme aimed to help the students to develop their skills of enquiry and critical thinking skills, and highlights the fact that students can be guided and supported by each other. The scheme used second year students to act as leaders to small groups of first year students. It relied on second year students still being able to remember what it was like to be new to the university and so to pass on their experience rather than to re- teach the curriculum. In 2003 the centre for Supplemental Instruction within the UK was based at London Metropolitan University. The centre had links with the USA and South Africa and also encouraged universities within the UK to be trained in SI techniques and to develop the model further (Wallace, 2003). Since then, several universities have taken up the model and adapted it to their own particular needs. For example the University of Manchester took the model and renamed it Peer Assisted Study Scheme (PASS) but the character of the PASS sessions is still similar to the SI model in that the focus is on cooperative and active learning centred on discussion and interaction facilitated by student leaders at a more advanced stage of their course (Fostier and Carey, 2007).

The University of Manchester first introduced PASS in 1995 in Chemistry and the initial research into this scheme (Coe et al., 1999) found that it had a positive impact on students' academic performance. In 2005, the university launched PASS in the Faculty of Life Sciences for its first year bioscience

students (Fostier and Carey, 2007). This was the first time that PASS had been introduced on such a large scale in the UK. Half the students were offered PASS in the first term and the other half were offered it in the second term. There was thus a randomly selected control group (the students who were not offered PASS until the second term) as well as a control group made up of students who either never attended PASS or only attended for less than 4 sessions. Twenty three percent of the 232 students to be offered PASS in the first term became regular participants, which was considered by Fostier and Carey, (2007) to be a good level of participation for the pilot year. To evaluate the impact of PASS on academic performance the group of regular participants were compared with both control groups. The performances of the two control groups were not significantly different from each other. However, the group which regularly attended PASS performed much better than the controls, showing a significantly higher mean mark than them both. Although 12 of the regular PASS attendees failed the unit, this group showed a 2 fold decrease of the fail rate when compared with the controls, and there was a threefold increase in the number of first class grades. Qualitative comments from the students who had attended PASS indicted that students had been able to engage in a meaning gathering approach to their studies rather than a strategic one in which they just attempted to retain information needed to pass exams.

Since this study, the growth of PASS at Manchester has been significant and by 2009 there were 400 student volunteer leaders working alongside staff to support the first year learning experience (Ody and Carey, 2009). Ody and Carey (2009. p.5) argue that over the years since PASS was introduced, the University of Manchester has '*continually observed its positive impact on people, groups and cultures across the entire institution.*' The University of Manchester was also recognised internationally as the UK national benchmark for PASS and is now the National Centre for PASS /SI. This was established in April 2009 to support H.E. institutions to further understand and develop programmes and share practice.

Bournemouth University also runs a similar Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PAL) which is well established and highly regarded at both national and

international levels (Green, 2007). At Bournemouth, PAL leaders receive accreditation for compiling a portfolio of evidence and reflection of their experiences of working with students in the scheme. Green, (2007) applied narrative analysis to 10 of the leaders' portfolios. These served as the primary source for her research which looked at empowering first year engagement with the curriculum though peer assisted learning. Green's analysis revealed that there was a consistent emphasis throughout the portfolios that group and team work provided a starting block for the development of independent learning skills. Furthermore, that the PAL leaders thought it essential that this independence was encouraged and that the students did not come to rely on them. Green also reported on a trend revealed in the portfolios which she described as worrying. This was the continuous reference by the students to the idea that whilst lecturers expected that their students understood what it was to work independently and that they were able to do so, few of the first year students had any idea of what the concept of independent learning entailed. This highlights the taken for granted independent learning discourse amongst the lecturers in this study and also that the students may have no idea what this actually requires them to do.

As well as speaking about encouraging independence amongst their students the PAL leaders in Green's study also spoke of supporting their group with adjusting to university life, guiding them through difficulties with accommodation, finding their way around or how to go about getting a part time job. From this, Green concluded that her study shows how central empathy and authenticity is in the affective support of new learners and new community members. In contrast to the notion of independent learning the qualities she mentions as central to the support of new learners here are arguably indicative of positive interpersonal relationships between herself and the students. It is important to note however, that the PAL leaders were given accreditation for their portfolios on the basis of competence based assessment. They would therefore need to show in their portfolios that they were competent in their role and would have been unlikely to write about any issues which portrayed the scheme in a negative light. The reason why the PAL leaders constantly emphasised the need for independence amongst their students throughout their

portfolios, may not therefore be reflective of their actual beliefs. If they felt that the notion of independent learning in H.E. was seen as desirable they may have written that they felt it important to encourage independence amongst their students as this may be seen as reflective of their competence.

Whilst there was much emphasis on the notion of independent learning in the portfolios of the facilitators in Green's study, in Power and Dunphy's, (2010) study, there did not appear to be any mention of this. This study took place in Australia and like Green's study, also took a qualitative approach to exploring the effectiveness of peer assisted learning in order to facilitate engagement. The study used the case study of a student facilitator to provide insights into the Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) model of learning support that they used with first year engineering students. The data gathered consisted of the student facilitator's insights into her experiences of running the weekly study sessions with students and comments from the students who took part in the PASS sessions. Further programme evaluation was carried out through comparing the grades and retention data of students who attended PASS with that of students who did not attend. The results showed that although only a small percentage of the students attended PASS sessions (five percent), those that did maintained their attendance and gained substantially higher marks on average than those who did not attend the sessions. The qualitative reflections of the PASS facilitator were extremely insightful. The facilitator was a second year student who had studied the same course as the one that the PASS group was studying in the previous year. She tells how because she struggled with the content of the course herself initially, she felt like she could empathise with the students on a level that the course lecturers could not. Furthermore, that seeing students struggle with the same concepts that she has previously struggled with, evoked a strong desire to want to help them in a way that she would have wanted to be helped when she was struggling. She also mentioned that whilst running the sessions her own understanding of the subject material had also heightened immensely. She achieved a pass grade in the subject when she studied it in her first year, but after running the PASS scheme she obtained a distinction grade, for a more advanced level course in the same subject. Qualitative comments from students attending the sessions were also very

positive, with some of the students claiming that PASS was instrumental to their success in the subject. This study provides lots of useful descriptive insights into the experiences of the students and the PASS facilitator and also indicates that the PASS sessions were beneficial to them both. However, there is still the need to understand how the social interaction encouraged in PASS sessions actually leads to the formation of a learning relationship and how this in turn facilitates the learning process.

Most of the other research in this area uses mainly quantitative measures. Stone and Meade (2012) obtained feedback for a peer assisted learning scheme from psychology students on a research methods module. They used a feedback form asking questions about the usefulness of the PAL sessions and its impact upon their understanding, confidence levels and learning. The students were also asked whether they would like to attend further sessions and whether they would recommend the sessions to others. Responses were measured using a Likert scale. There was also room on the feedback form for individual comments and suggestions. The sessions had relatively low attendance with just 35% (n=42) of those that had indicated that they would attend at initial sign up actually attending the sessions. However, of those that did attend and respond 80% of them indicated that the sessions had helped their understanding of research methods, with 60% stating that they had helped a lot. Equally 85% of respondents stated that they would recommend the sessions to others and 75% said that they would attend further sessions. Stone and Mead concluded that the data shows that the PAL sessions have been perceived as overwhelmingly beneficial. However, given that the students who did attend the sessions all reported positively about their impact, one wonders why so many students chose not to attend them. Stone and Meade argue that the students may have only been interested in session content that mapped directly onto assessments. Since some of the sessions were timetabled after the assessment hand in, the students may not have seen the value of attending. Furthermore, since the sessions were optional, it may be that the students felt that they were a good idea when they signed up to them, but subsequent pressures of work may have prevented them from attending. This suggests that to increase the benefits of implementing PAL schemes, making

attendance more attractive to the students is necessary. Maybe if they were time tabled in a way that took assessments into account for instance or if they were included on the curriculum timetable rather than presented as optional. Stone and Meade (2012) do not provide any data however, on how the PAL scheme impacts upon the students' academic achievement, so whilst the students report that the PAL sessions were beneficial; it is not known whether this impacts upon what they achieve academically.

Another study in the UK by Longfellow et al. (2008) reported on a pilot programme in the English department of Kingston University. This programme aimed to help first year students to develop academic writing skills using third year student facilitators in a peer assisted learning (PAL) scheme. The scheme was evaluated using a student survey consisting of Likert scale items as well as some open ended questions, to determine students' perceptions of how PAL contributed to the development of their writing skills. Assessment results were also included in the data set in this study. Longfellow et al. (2008) reported that qualitative comments indicated that PAL had a positive impact upon students' perceptions of their learning.  For instance, comments indicated that it helped with the clarification of new knowledge and helped to develop writing skills whilst at the same time reducing feelings of intimidation. Longfellow et al. (2008) claim that this may be due to the different nature of the student- student relationship as opposed to the lecturer-student relationship which the students often commented on in the survey. The students also said that they felt it helped to create a safe environment in which to learn. Less confident students commented on feeling able to speak up and ask questions in PAL sessions since they felt safe away from the lecturers gaze. The lecturers' perceived authority and power to assess the students and fail them if needs be, made them reluctant to speak up in their presence as they did not want to expose their ignorance and felt unable to seek clarification or help. The assessments that the students undertook for the module supported by PAL were designed to measure their reading, writing and editing skills. Longfellow et al. (2008) found that all students whether they attended PAL or not, tended to get lower assessment scores in the second semester than they did in the first. However, the mean decrease in assessment scores was significantly greater for the

students who did not attend the sessions. So, despite the drop in assessment scores between semester one and two, those students attending PAL sessions achieved better results than those who did not attend.

Longfellow et al. (2008) draw on constructivist and situated learning theories to conclude that one of the most important findings from their study is that in the specific area of writing skills at least, successful students may be better able to pass on these skills to novice students than lecturers. They claim that whilst the lecturer may be expert in a particular subject, other more advanced students are the experts at being a student and so are better equipped to enable the more junior students to develop their learning skills. The students commented on the usefulness of having a facilitator with a perspective close to their own and the ability of the student PAL leaders to explain difficult concepts in a clearer and more simplified way than lecturers are sometimes able to. Following Cuseo (1992) Longfellow et al. argue that the small group structure implemented through PAL provides the cohesiveness, mutual trust and emotional security needed for the students to be able to learn and that this is possibly one of the most fundamental requirements for learning. There is the strong suggestion here that trust, cohesiveness and emotional security provided through student –student relationships are what underpin the scheme's success. Further affirmation of this is required however, and research needs to also observe the actual processes that occur when the students interact, in order to see whether the students' subjective experience marries with what actually occurs in the learning situation. Such research may help to shed light upon how and why the student- student relationships underpinning these schemes appear to have a positive impact upon the students' learning.

Whilst the research reviewed here claims that it is advantageous to most students' learning to partake in cooperative learning; it could be argued that this is not the case for every student. There is much discourse in the cooperative learning literature around encouraging students to actively participate in cooperative settings, together with the assumption that if students do not do so they are not only not helping themselves to learn, but they are also freeloading or gaining advantage from the group without contributing to it themselves.

However, every student is different and some individuals may not want to or be able to participate in the way that is required of them in a cooperative learning setting. This does not mean they should be labelled as freeloaders and seen as lacking when compared with members of the group who find participation much easier. Gillespie et al's. (2006) work highlights this. They undertook a qualitative research program in which they interviewed 17 students about their experiences in cooperative small group learning situations. The students reported that they had worked in multiple groups but had had mixed and mostly negative experiences in them. Group dynamics were said to have gone awry and adjectives such as 'bossy, immature, deadweight and slacker' were used to describe their fellow group members. Their classmates were thus stereotyped and working together in small groups was said to sometimes provoke anxiety. Staff members were also interviewed and it was found that they assumed that students were gaining valuable experience in groups and that this experience alone would increase students' ability to learn in groups. They were unaware of the difficulties that students faced under cooperative learning conditions.

Having reviewed the literature on collaborative learning, it seems to provide some indication of the value of peer relationships to learning for at least some students. However, the studies undertaken are largely subjective descriptions of SI or PAL schemes at work, together with the perceptions of the participants about the impact that the scheme has had upon their learning. This means that all the complexity involved in learning and relationships has not been fully taken into account and we are still left asking how and why and by which processes the interpersonal interactions and relationships underpinning SI and PAL schemes impact upon learning. There are also further questions around whether cooperative learning techniques are useful or even appropriate for all members of a group, which also need addressing.


**E-Learning Communities and Relationships**

Encompassed within the collaborative and cooperative learning literature there is also a growing body of research which looks at how computer technologies can help in the establishment of learning communities. It is useful to briefly

mention this here since it provides some insights into how the increasing use of computer technology impacts upon the formation of learning relationships and the learning process. Furthermore, whilst most studies investigating learning communities concentrate upon the student- student relationship in relation to learning, e-learning tends to incorporate the teacher- student relationship too.

Eames and Stewart (2008) for example applied a socio-cultural lens to exploring the central importance of both the student-student relationship within learning communities, and also the teacher- student one. In common with my own search through the literature, Eames and Stewart's (2008) search through this brought them to the conclusion that there are very few studies which sufficiently reveal the contribution of relationship development to learning in H.E. and so they set out to inform this with their research. Following Wenger (1998) they argue that mutual engagement in an activity within a community infers that productive relationships between participants in the community are necessary for successful practice, and a major theme emerging from their research was the importance of the teacher-student relationship to learning. The importance of class size in influencing the opportunities for personal interaction and relationship building within a learning community was another major theme. The teacher participants in Eames and Stewart's (2008) study also reportedly worried that e-learning may impact adversely upon the personal contact that they have with their students. The increasing use of e-learning in H.E. further raises the issue of maintaining strong interpersonal relationships among staff and their students and between the students themselves. There are clearly challenges in maintaining personal contact with students if e-learning is the only contact that members of a learning community have with one another. However, it could be that computer technology may actually enhance contact where the only face to face contact that students would otherwise have with their teachers and peers is sitting in large lecture theatres with hundreds of other students. Further research encompassing computer technology and virtual interaction may be a useful avenue of investigation to provide insights into how interpersonal and learning relationships form and function across all settings.

**Chapter Summary**

This review demonstrates that the importance of relationships is widely emergent in the findings of research which investigates learning. There is indeed a wealth of empirical research amongst the learning literature which underpins the proposition that relationships are in no small way connected to learning. These studies are indicative of the importance of relationships to learning, however, since much of the literature does not specifically set out to investigate relationships in learning in themselves (rather they set out to investigate other aspects of learning and the importance of relationships is emergent in the findings) they do not specify the actual processes by which they are important to learning, Furthermore, the conditions which facilitate their formation and maintenance are also left unaccounted for. We have a situation in the literature where the importance of relationships to learning is consistently noted, but not sufficiently acknowledged or explained. The existing research also fails to ask whether our universities are actually able to provide an environment or the enabling practices through which student-teacher relationships and student-student relationships are able to form. So as well as paying more attention to relationships in their own right and the processes underpinning their role in the learning process, we need to undertake research which helps us to understand how and why they are either enabled or constrained specifically within university settings. In other words, there is a dire need to go beyond simply acknowledging or taking for granted that relationships make a difference, to understanding the actual role of relationships in the learning process and how they can be enabled in this process.

As well as all this, the predominant methodologies used in the pre existing literature means that although there are some important insights into students' and teachers' subjective experiences and perceptions, the studies do not move beyond these. They do not allow understanding of the processes inherent in relationships and how and why and under what conditions these allow learning to flourish. There has in fact, been little offered in existing research in terms of a theoretical framework for understanding the actual psychological and

sociological processes in play. This means that the role of relationships in learning is under theorised. The present research aims to plug this gap by going beyond the description of individuals' experiences to focus as well upon the inherent processes of learning as facilitated by relationships and to understand how and why and under what circumstances relationships are able to enable learning. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical perspectives through which I hope to gain understanding of these processes and build a theoretical framework with which to explain them.

# CHAPTER TWO

SEEKING TO THEORISE THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The previous chapter argued that relationships emerge as important in much of the contemporary thinking surrounding learning, yet the actual role they play in learning is not fully understood. In this chapter I will present my underpinning ontology surrounding learning. A discussion of socio-cultural ontology will demonstrate how this can be used to investigate and conceptualise student participation in higher education and that this is intrinsically underpinned by relationship. Socio-cultural understandings of learning challenge the pervasive transmission- acquisition model of learning in H.E. and reconceptualises learning instead as social participation, in which the presence of relationships are axiomatic. This renders any understanding of the learning process much more complex. It also foregrounds a role for relationships in learning in H.E. and allows for these to be theorised.

## Socio-cultural ontology

Socio-cultural understandings are underpinned by certain assumptions. The most prominent of which is that human behaviour is distributed over the social context. This means that in order to properly understand the learning process, attention needs to be given not only to the person, but also to the activities in which the person engages and the context in which those activities take place. The construction of the distributed life shifts slightly between theories. For Vygotsky, the emphasis is on the relationship and how that operates in the social world. For Bronfenbrenner, the distribution is conceptualised across proximal and distal systems which interact idiosyncratically to construct individual experience. In communities of practice theory, the context is the range of communities to which an individual belongs. The synthesising proposition though is that the individual cannot be understood as separate from their social worlds. It is therefore worthwhile using all three of these theories because each one contributes a different theoretical resource to enable a more

complete understanding of the complex social world of learning. Vygotsky's in the minutiae of relationship formation, ecological theory in the politicisation of the interacting systems which construct the learning environment and communities of practice with its emphasis on individual participation in social reified practice.

## Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory of Learning

Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach claims that individual development can only be understood within its social and cultural historical context and also that individual learning and development can never be separated from this. This is in stark contrast to theories of learning which focus on the individual as separate from the social or cultural context. According to Vygotsky, individual's efforts cannot be separated from the activities in which they engage and the institutions of which they are a part (Vygotsky, 1978, Rogoff, 2003). He furthermore maintains that individual development both constitutes and is constituted by social and cultural-historical practices. In other words, culture does not just affect individuals; individuals themselves contribute to the creation of cultural processes at the same time as the cultural processes are contributing to the development of the individuals within it. Individual and cultural processes cannot therefore be separated from one another.

For Vygotsky, higher mental functioning (cognition) originates in social interaction as newer members of a society interact with more experienced members of society. This could for instance be children interacting with adults, or students interacting with their teachers or other students who are more experienced than themselves. The form that this takes according to Vygotsky is in a dyad of interaction within which the less experienced partner of the dyad actively participates with a more experienced partner to solve a problem or complete a task. To facilitate the less able partner's participation and learning, the more experienced person lends their assistance by encouraging and supporting the less able person in using their current capabilities in order to extend their skills and level of competence.

*The Zone of Proximal Development*

Vygotsky argues that exposing the less able person to increasingly more complex problems and activities than they are capable of completing alone targets their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Whereas conventionally, a child's developmental level is assessed as their ability to solve a problem or complete a task unaided, for Vygotsky, the child's learning exceeds the developmental level and needs to be assessed as the problems the child is able to solve with assistance. This distance between what the child is able to achieve alone and what they are able to achieve with assistance is the common conceptualisation of what we know as the ZPD. However, I would agree with Chaiklin (2003) where he points out that there is a paucity of material written about the ZPD by Vygotsky available from which we could construe his true meaning of the term. Without an official definition the term ZPD is therefore open to several interpretations. In actual fact, the concept was not a main or central one in Vygotsky's (1998) theory of child development, but was generally used to focus on the idea that teaching should centre on the learner's maturing psychological functions, rather than functions which already exist in their mature form. These maturing functions are functions that are more or less developed, yet, are unable to support individual performance.

Where Vygotsky (1998) writes about the ZPD as taking the form of the learner's maturing functions it seems as though he is conceiving of the ZPD as something which belongs to an individual learner. He argues that these maturing functions are not created in interaction, but rather that interaction provides the conditions for identifying their existence and the extent to which they have developed.  However, he also maintains that the ZPD does not exist in any constant or fixed form as a property of the child. This appears to contradict his insistence that the learner must be in the possession of maturing functions if they are to be able to take advantage of interaction with more able others and adds to the confusion about the ZPD.

Central to Vygotskian thought on maturing functions is his technical concept of imitation (Vygotsky, 1997). For Vygotsky imitation is not just the mindless copying of another's actions since his conceptualisation of imitation

presupposes that the learner already has some understanding of the task in hand (Chaiklin, 2003) through the maturing functions. Imitation in Vygotsky's terms relates to situations in which a learner is able to engage in interaction with a more able person in order to perform a specific task which s/he would be unable to perform alone due to the presence of maturing psychological functions. Vygotsky, (1987, p.209) explains:

'*If I am not able to play chess, I will not be able to play a match even if a chess master shows me how.*'

Presumably he means from this that he would be unable to learn to play chess because he is unable to imitate due to the lack of maturing psychological functions for that particular task. He goes on:

'*If I know arithmetic, but run into difficulty with the solution of a complex problem, a demonstration will immediately lead to my own resolution of the problem.*'

Where Vygotsky says that he 'knows' arithmetic, then going on his arguments about maturing functions one could feasibly take this to mean that there are maturing psychological functions available which allow him to imitate the more able other's demonstration. However, in the next task that he describes, it would seem that these are not available (since he says that he does not know higher mathematics) and so he therefore cannot imitate or move on in his learning despite being given a demonstration:

'*On the other hand, if I do not know higher mathematics, a demonstration of the resolution of a diverse equation will not move my own thought in that direction by a single step. To imitate, there must be some possibility of moving from what I can do to what I cannot.*'

In arguing that the ZPD is made up of the learner's maturing functions, and that without their presence the learner will not be able to imitate and learn, it appears that Vygotsky quite clearly demarcates the ZPD as a concept

belonging to individual learners. Since from this perspective the ZPD would not be emergent in the relationship between the learner and more able other, this appears to go against my argument that learning and development is underpinned by relationship. However, Vygotsky also argues that maturing functions are different for every task the child performs in collaboration with a more able other and for every situation and this appears to mean that for Vygotsky the ZPD is more emergent in nature than his initial descriptions of the ZPD (as comprising the child's maturing functions) would imply. Furthermore, he also states that in collaboration, partners create zones of proximal development for each other '*where intellect and affect are fused in a unified whole.*' (Vygotsky, 1934/1987, p.378). What Vygotsky says here strengthens my argument that it is entirely possible to conceive of the ZPD as emergent in interaction. It could be as Levykh (2008) suggests that the way in which Vygotsky is interpreted as conceptualising the ZPD has been prejudiced by the difficulties in bridging between the English and Russian translations of his work. Certainly the importance of the social in his theory would suggest that ZPDs are more emergent in nature (through the interaction between the learner and more able other), than some interpretations would suggest. This is particularly true given Vygotsky's notion that different ZPDs can be created between the learner and the more able other for different tasks and also that different ZPDs can be created for the same task between the same learner and a different teacher or the same teacher and a different learner.

Indeed other researchers agree with the argument that the ZPD is created in interaction between the learner and the more able other (Davydov, 1998; Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2002; Levykh, 2008). Levykh for example suggests that a culturally appropriate ZPD is built through the cultural process of assistance through cooperation and collaboration. Despite the many interpretations and misinterpretations of Vygotsky's conceptualisation of the ZPD, my purpose for its use is to theorise the importance of learning relationships in higher education. In order to do this I therefore need to decide not which interpretation of the ZPD is the correct one (since this would be impossible without speaking directly to Vygotsky himself), but to decide which best represents the essence of Vygotskian thought to me and for the purposes

of my thesis. Levykh (2008, p. 91) in my view succinctly sums up what the ZPD represents for this purpose where he maintains that:

'*Functionally, the ZPD is a complex, creative collaboration among all of the participants with each other and through the environment.*'

This means that for the purposes of theorising learning relationships I take the view that the ZPD is a process which emerges in the relationships between learners and more able others for a given task at a particular time and place, leading to learning and development in all participants.

As well as deciding upon the best interpretation of the ZPD for the purposes of my thesis, there are other aspects of Vygotskian thought which have required consideration in ensuring that it is useful for theorising the role of relationships in learning. For example, Vygotsky talks about the use of intelligence tests to measure children's actual level of development and this is probably why he often refers to problem solving since a large part of standardised tests of intelligence is to do with various types of this. However, in more contemporary neo-Vygotskian discussions (Rogoff and Wertsch, 1984, Tobbell, 2003), 'problem solving' has been extended to mean 'performance' in other domains of competence (Tharpe and Gillamore, 1988).  This is a more useful term for the purposes of the present study, since as argued above, there is no single problem solving ability or ZPD for each individual. Rather, there are instead different ZPDs for each skill domain, as well as variations in the competencies that need to be acquired through social interaction in any given society or culture. As well as the ZPD being different for different people depending on the culture they inhabit, there are different ZPDs depending upon the domain of expertise within these cultures. After all, although Vygotsky's work mainly discusses children and relates to their maturation and development, developmental processes arising from assisted performance can also occur in adults and also when acquiring domain specific skills too.

Through his concept of the ZPD, Vygotsky provides an account of the way in which social, cultural and historical factors impact upon psychological

processes. In other words he accounts for how culture enters into our psychological processes, which is centrally important for my purposes in order to theorise how social interaction might lead to the formation of interpersonal relationships and learning relationships and enable the learning process. The following quote illustrates Vygotsky's (1978, p.30) thinking about how this occurs.

*'Any function of the child's cultural development appears twice, or in two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interspsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category.'*

However, again, there is very little written by Vygotsky about how this transition from the interspychological to the intrapsychological actually occurs. Leont'ev (1981) maintains that the process of internalisation (where that which is social becomes psychological) is not merely the simple transfer of an external activity to a pre-existing internal plane of consciousness. Rather, internalisation from Leont'ev's point of view is the actual process in which the plane is formed. He argues that the individual's 'plane of consciousness' (or in other words their higher cognitive processes) is formed in structures that are transmitted to the individual by others in speech, social interaction and during cooperative activity (Tharp and Gillamore, 1998). Furthermore, Tharpe and Gillamore also point out that the mental plane of the learner should not be considered to be isomorphic with the external plane of action and speech. Instead, they argue that learners reorganize and reconstruct their experiences as they internalise them and that this reconstruction results in transformations in both the structure and the function of them. This transformation is part of the developmental process, but there is never an end product of internalisation. For Tharpe and Gillamore, there is never something that we could label knowledge that has passed from one person's brain to another's. Instead 'knowledge' is a process - an ongoing process of reorganisation, reconstruction and transformation with the individual themselves playing an important role in the whole process. Participants are therefore not merely passive recipients of guidance and assistance from more able others or of 'knowledge' passed from the

psychological plane of others to their own. They are also active in the process.

The term 'guided reinvention' was coined to describe the process of internalisation and to acknowledge the role of the individual in transforming what is internalised (Tharpe and Gillamore, 1998). Guided reinvention acknowledges the centrality of social guidance for learning, which is such an important imperative of this thesis, but it also acknowledges that understanding involves a certain amount of reconstruction. Guided reinvention therefore tells us that cognitive development is a collaborative process between the individual and the environment and not something that individuals are able to undertake alone. If we accept the aforementioned arguments about internalization, this means that in order to explain psychological processes we cannot therefore just look at the individual; we also need to look at the external world in which they are developing. This is not just the immediate environment; it also includes the social and historical aspects of the environment, not only from the time in which the individual is developing, but including those that have been passed down through the centuries. These can, Vygotsky argues be represented to the individual by the people who assist and guide them. Tharpe and Gallimore (1998, p. 95) clarify this, they argue that:

'*through guided reinvention, higher mental functions that are part of the social and cultural heritage of the child will move from the social plane to the psychological plane, from the intermental to the intramental, from the socially regulated to the self-regulated.*'

In other words, if we take the example of a developing small child, the regulating actions and speech of others help the child to engage in independent action and speech. Through interacting with others, the child is able to perform at developmental levels beyond what they are able to achieve alone. In the beginning of this interaction whereby the intermental is transformed to the intramental, the child does not necessarily need to understand the activity in the same way as it is understood by the more able others around them. Tharpe and Gillamore argue that all that is needed for development to occur is performance through assisted interaction. By simply partaking in this process, the learner is

able to acquire the plane of consciousness of the culture in which they are born which has been passed down over the centuries to the more able others that are assisting their performance in the present day. By extension, this process of guided reinvention can be applied to other developing individuals in different domains too.

The way in which learners move to being able to complete tasks or solve problems, (or perform in a particular domain) unaided from previously requiring assistance by a more able other is however, a gradual process. At first this process is mainly driven by the more able other, but eventually s/he will do less and less as the learner no longer requires any assistance. Initially, as the learner gradually takes over the task for themselves, they may have to 'talk themselves' through the different strategies they can use to perform a task as the more able other used to do for them. But eventually, this self talk will not be necessary as it becomes automatic and the learner will not even have to think about how s/he is going to accomplish a task. The process by which learners gradually move to being able to complete tasks alone after previously requiring assistance relates to their passage through the initial three stages of the ZPD. Tharpe and Gillamore add a further stage to this in which a recursion through the initial three stages is sometimes required, giving a total of four. These four stages of the process are illustrated in figure one overleaf.

**Figure 1: Diagram representing the four stages of passage through the ZPD**
**Illustration by Tom Hirst (adapted from Tharpe and Gillamore, 1998).**
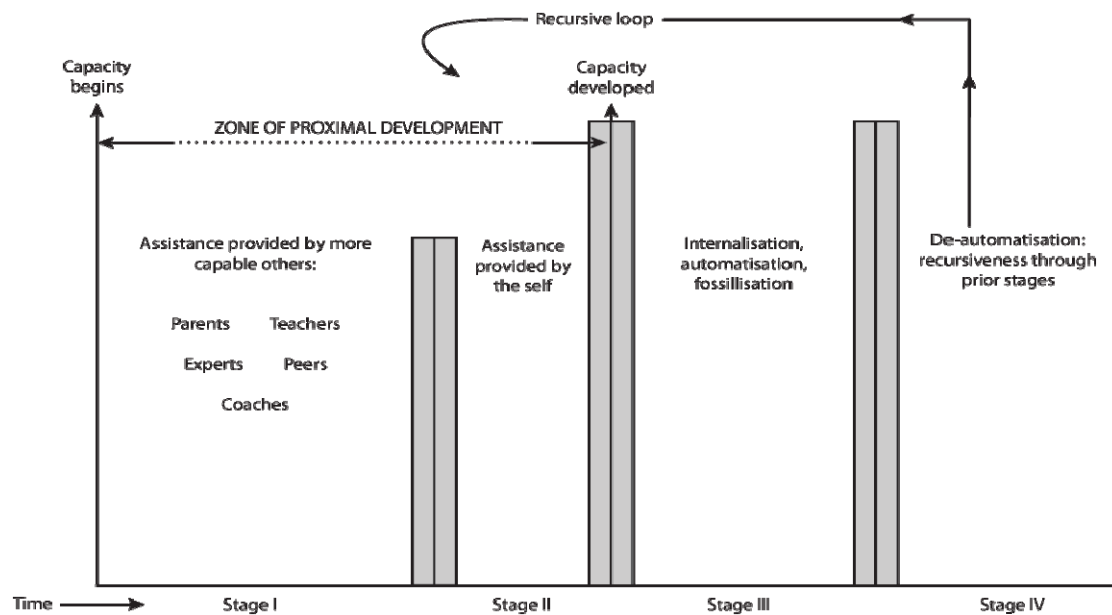


Stage one of this diagram represents the stage where performance is assisted by more able others through scaffolding, which is a term first introduced by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) as a metaphor for the process by which a more able individual assists a less able one to carry out a task which is beyond their capabilities alone (Stone, 1998). So, for a child learning to read for example this first stage would represent the phase during which assistance by the teacher is required in order to regulate the child's performance. As already stated however, this phase involves quite a lengthy process and also, the amount and kind of regulation required will depend upon how far the child has progressed through the ZPD for the particular task in hand. For a very beginning reader, the amount of regulation would be very intensive, whereas when a reader has several months or a year of experience, less regulation would be required. It is important to note however, that scaffolding does not alter the task by simplifying it, instead it simplifies the learner's role by providing assistance which gets less and less intensive as they progress in their skill level in that domain. However, this is not to say that scaffolding is necessarily a quantitative matter, as Tharpe and Gillamore point out, its effective use is not just down to how high the

scaffold is or how many levels it is provided on, or how long it is kept in place. The qualitative differences in the type of assistance provided is what is most important. So, for instance at some points the more able other will direct attention, at other points they will prompt the learner to remember useful strategies they have previously employed, or they may just need to provide encouragement to the learner to bolster their confidence (Griffin and Cole, 1984; Tharpe and Gallimore, 1998).

The emphasis given above to the qualitative rather than the quantitative nature of the assistance given is another indication of the importance of the relationship between the learner and the more able other. The more able other would presumably need to know the learner very well in order to know how much support to give and when to withdraw some of this depending upon the extent to which the learner's skills have developed at any given point in the process of the passage through the ZPD. Since these skill levels are changing dynamically all the time the more able other would have to be very attentive to the ongoing process of the learner's development in order to readjust their own input to the scaffolding process to accommodate these changes.

I am aware however, that description of assistance through the first stage of the ZPD could be construed as being very one sided and led by the more able other in the relationship. This is problematic considering that I am arguing that learning emerges through interaction between the participants. To counter this I would suggest that since the more able other has to constantly readjust to accommodate the learner's development, the learner must also be active in the scaffolding process. If the learner was not active, then no adjustment would be needed. It is also useful at this point to look at the mechanism of scaffolding more closely in order to consider how the transfer of responsibility for the task in hand is transferred to the learner through increased the communicative mechanisms involved in the interaction between the dyad within the ZPD. However, again, these are not specified in detail by Vygotsky, even though these mechanisms are so crucial to his theoretical framework (Stone, 1998). Their nature also underpins my own thesis, since it is possible that the effectiveness of these interactions (and therefore the potential for new learning)

within the ZPD may be dependent upon the quality of the relationship between the learner and the more able other. It is therefore vital to attempt to specify these communicative mechanisms more precisely to illustrate how the ZPD could be considered as emergent in the relationship between the more able person and the learner.

Stone (1998) argues that a process known as prolepsis can be used to explain these communicative mechanisms or in other words how the intermental is internalised to the intramental plane, within the ZPD. Prolepsis is a term coined from psycholinguistics (Rommetveit, 1974, 1979) and refers to the process through which meanings are implied or presupposed as if they had previously been shared between a speaker and a listener, even if they have clearly not been. In other words it is a communicative device through which the speaker (or the more able other if we are to apply this to the ZPD) presupposes some as yet unprovided information. This creates a challenge for the listener (the learner) which forces them to construct a set of assumptions to make sense of what the speaker has said. The construction of assumptions by the learner provides them with an active role in the ZPD; they are actively seeking meaning from the speaker's utterances. This further supports interpretations of the ZPD as emergent in the relationship between the dyad. That is, rather than being constructed solely by the more able other, or seen as a property of the learner as some other interpretations would suggest, the ZPD emerges in the two way interactions of the participants. Stone (1998) goes on to say that if the communication between the speaker (more able other) and listener (learner) is successful, the set of assumptions that the listener constructs closely recreates the speaker's presuppositions and the listener has therefore created (and so understands) the speakers perspective on the topic in hand. In other words, intersubjectivity in which both speaker and listener come to similar understandings is achieved. (Although, one would imagine that the learner's and speaker's own interpretations and meanings would also be incorporated into this understanding too, so the listener's interpretation of the speaker's meanings and understandings and vice versa may be similar but not identical.)

An utterance would be seen as proleptic therefore, if it asks the interpreter to fill in some information about the speakers intentions. Rogoff and Gauvain (1986) give the following example of a proleptic exchange between a mother and her child. A mother was asked to assist her child to place pictures of everyday objects into groups according to their function. She initially picked up a picture of a bucket and asked the child 'What's that?' The child responded 'It's a bucket and it helps you carry things and…' At this point, the mother interrupted saying 'Yeah and it helps you clean.' By saying what the function of the bucket was, the mother was trying to help her child to understand that the bucket belonged in the pile of pictures classed as cleaning equipment. Where the mother said 'and it helps you clean' this is proleptic in the sense that it assumes understanding on the part of the child of the significance of being given information on the function of objects in this task. She was attempting to force her child to construct a set of assumptions to make sense of what she had said (or in other words to seek meaning in her utterance). However, the child could not actually understand the meaning in what the mother said since s/he could not see the significance of the information on the bucket's function and the child paused. So the mother asked 'OK, what else, do you see something else that helps you clean?' whilst at the same time adjusting the picture of a broom in the cleaning equipment pile. By doing this the mother was helping the child to see the connection between the information about the bucket's function that she had given earlier. The child was thus led to place the bucket in the correct place and at the same time helped to begin to appreciate the significance of information about an objects function in the context of this task. Placing subsequent objects into the correct group might from then on be more easily accomplished by the child, with the mother readjusting her interaction with the child on the task as the child's skill level increases. Rogoff (1986) stressed the importance of proleptic like processes such as this in scaffolding interactions. She argued that successful communication between a learner and a more able other is only achievable where they have found a common ground of knowledge and skills between them which can be achieved through proleptic exchanges such as the one described. The child needed to be helped to see the mother's point of view. Without this, they would be unable to share a common reference point, nor would the child achieve understanding. Nonverbal

communicative devices such as silences, pauses, pointing, gestures and eye movements have also been implicated as crucial to the scaffolding process (Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch et al., 1980; Wood et al., 1976). Stone (1998) argues that the dynamics involved in non verbal proleptic exchanges such as these may provide a means of understanding instances of learning by observation noted by cultural researchers such as John-Steiner, (1984); Rogoff, (1990) and Tharpe and Gallimore, (1988).

Clearly, the communicative mechanisms involved in scaffolding are complex and more research needs to be done in order to provide a full picture of how these interact to provide effective scaffolding. However, prolepsis provides one way of understanding these and is also able to account for scaffolding as a two way process. That is, it can be construed as not simply being teacher led, since prolepsis highlights the fact that in seeking meaning the learner is also active in the construction of a common reference point from which intersubjectivity can emerge between the dyad in scaffolding exchanges. According to Rommetveit, (1979) the construction of a common reference point involves a process of inference and mutual trust in which the two participants must respect each other's perspectives. This brings to the fore another important aspect of the scaffolding process which is the affective dynamic of the relationship between the participants in a scaffolding situation. It was suggested by some researchers mentioned in chapter one of this thesis that vulnerability and trust may play a part in the affective dynamic of the relationship between teacher and learner. Rommetveit (1979) furthermore argued that the more trust and respect that there is between the dyad, the more effective is the scaffolding. Giles (2011) also touches on this where he talks about teacher-student relationships mattering. Giles maintains that the relational experience of being with others, experienced by those involved as 'mattering' is so important to learning. Teachers and students are he argues, always in relationship and how this relationship matters to the student and to the teacher is integral to the experiences of being in relationship and to learning. This means, that all teaching (and also learning) is emotional in nature. Relational experiences influence each person's becoming, how they view the world and by extension therefore, their participation in it and their learning.

Mahn and John-Steiner (2002) used Vygotsky's theoretical framework to examine the role of affect in learning in order to gain a deeper understanding of the ZPD. They claim that the role of affect is very important; arguing that lending caring support to others can build their confidence and facilitate learning. According to Mahn and John- Steiner, in instances of reciprocal emotional support provided by partners in collaboration, there is dynamic interplay between their interactions and the ways in which they appropriate emotional support. They suggest that there is a complimentarity between the elements which play a role in the construction of the ZPD, but that sometimes there may be a breach in this. For example, the task may be too far beyond what the learner is able to cope with, or there may be negative affective factors such as anxiety, feelings of vulnerability or fear present and the ZPD is diminished. Some authors (John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996; Wells, 1999; Moll and Whitmore, 1993) posit that the degree of complimentarity is an underpinning factor in the success of the interaction between the participants within the ZPD.

To return now to the diagram illustrating passage through the ZPD. As explained above, the learner initially requires direction from the more able other, after which there is the construction of a common reference point between the more able other and the learner through which they achieve intersubjectivity (as could be explained through the process of prolepsis). Subsequently, the learner eventually takes over the responsibility for their own assistance and transfers the performance of the task itself to themselves. At this point the learner is said to be at stage two represented in the diagram. This hand over is however, a very gradual process and responsibility may still pass back and forth for a time between the more able other and the learner. So the line between the two stages should not really be seen as a strict divide, but rather as a zone in itself. This suggests that the passage through the ZPD is a continuous process therefore, not a series of set stages, which would seem to make more sense. Nevertheless, stage two is represented in Tharpe and Gallimore's diagram separately and this is seen as the stage where performance is assisted by the self. However, the learner's performance is not yet fully developed at this stage, nor has it become automatic to them. Rather,

control is passed from the more able other to themselves, because whereas the more able other was once responsible for using language to guide the learner, the learner is now responsible for directing themselves through their own use of language. Whereas the more able other was previously responsible for verbally prompting the learner, the learner now takes over responsibility for this guidance through their own self talk. Later, once the learner no longer needs to talk themselves through tasks like this and evidence of self-regulation has vanished the learner is said to have emerged from the ZPD into the developmental stage for that task (Tharpe and Gallimore). They are now at stage three of Tharpe and Gallimore's diagram in which performance is said to be developed, automized and fossilized (Tharpe and Gallimore, 1998). Assistance from the more able other and from the self is no longer needed and indeed if this assistance was provided it might disrupt the learner's performance and irritate them. The learner no longer needs to 'think' about their performance and if they did, this too would be disruptive and affect their smooth performance. Stage three is now said to have been completed and this is the stage which Vygotsky described as the 'fruits' of development. However, a learner may sometimes find that they forget a piece of information required for their performance and again seek out assistance from either themselves or a more able other. Furthermore, maintenance and improvement of performance may mean that the learner has to go back to self assistance or assistance from more able others once again. This recursive loop back through the ZPD where performance has become de-automized is referred to in Tharpe and Gallimore's diagram as stage four. It should be noted however, that because movement back thorough this recursive loop occurs so regularly, this stage is seen as part of the normal developmental process of learning and not a backward step.

### Can the ZPD account for all instances of learning?

Notions of scaffolding within the ZPD can in most circumstances provide a neat explanation of how individuals learn through support from more able others on a one to one basis. However, to reduce all classroom life to simply the interactions between one student and one lecturer at a time would mean that we are ignoring the complex web of everyday interactions that take place

between students and students and students and tutors in a classroom or lecture theatre. We need to therefore address this complexity of interaction in the classroom and the relations between the individuals in it if we are to fully understand how or indeed if, it is possible for ZPDs to emerge in the classroom and how the university student actually processes information. Brown and Campione (1994) argue that it is possible for a classroom to be comprised of multiple zones of proximal development.  That is that the meaning making process is not simply reliant upon individual lecturers and students interacting in a dyad in which one single ZPD is constructed at a time. Instead, the students and lecturers at various levels of expertise as well as the cultural tools that support learning are seen as all contributing to the meaning making process. This may provide one explanation for how students learn within lectures where there is insufficient opportunity for individual support since it seems inadequate to use traditional notions of scaffolding (as a dyad of interaction within the zone of proximal development in which there is intense one to one interaction) to explain the way that students learn in this instance.

As well as the notion of multiple zones of proximal development being a possible way in which individuals learn without direct one to one interaction with their lecturer, another way in which students could learn may be accounted for by another aspect of Vygotskian thought. Daniels (2005) points out Vygotsky's insistence that actual physical presence is not necessary for a learner to be supported within the ZPD and the following quote from Vygotsky introduces the possibility of assistance within the zone of proximal development and therefore learning when a more able person is not even present:

*'When the school child solves a problem at home on the basis of a model that has been shown in class, he continues to act in collaboration, though at the moment the teacher is not standing near him. From a psychological perspective, the solution of the second problem is similar to this solution of a problem at home. It is a solution accomplished with the teacher's help. This help- this aspect of collaboration- is invisibly present. It is contained in what looks from the outside like the child's independent solution to the problem.*
(Vygotsky, 1987, p.216).

This quote points to the possibility that a child (or as is the case in the present research a student) is able to take the solutions to problems they have seen in class demonstrated and talked through by a teacher and then later whilst alone, use the same solution to talk themselves through a similar problem themselves. The language that the student uses to talk themselves through the solution to the problem is used as a tool to structure and guide them through the problem. Vygotsky argued that cognitive skills are reliant on cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978, Rogoff, 2003.) These, according to Vygotsky are strategies used in order to master mental processes, for example language, counting systems, writing, diagrams, maps (Vygotsky, 1981) and we could perhaps include here for the purposes of the present research, lecture notes, handouts, PowerPoint presentation printouts, books, laptop computers, digital voice recordings and so on. Vygotsky held the view that as well as human beings (more able others), material tools, and psychological tools could also act as mediators in learning and development. Further, that as well as human beings, psychological tools and material tools are themselves the product of human cultural and historical activity and Pea (1993) describes what he sees as the sedimentation of cultural and historical legacies in tools. He remarks that it is as though the tools themselves actually carry some intelligence in them since they represent either an individual's or a community's decision to reify them in some kind of enduring form. He warns though that this process of reification may mean that the tools themselves appear invisible or natural, so that instead of seeing the tools themselves as bearing intelligence, we see intelligence instead as located in the mind of the individual who is putting the tool to use (Pea, 1993). Vygotsky's notion of tools and symbols as mediators to learning could thus be another useful way to theorize the way that students learn at university. Using Vygotskian theory around tool use, the ZPD is still in operation even in instances where there are scant opportunities for one to one assistance in dyads, since the student is able to take the culturally available tools and symbols in order to scaffold their own learning.

The invisibility of cultural tools as suggested by Pea above could be seen as perpetuating the common discourse around learning at university which positions the students as 'independent learners.' This discourse relates to how

when students come to university they are expected to manage their learning and acquire academic literacy independently (Wingate 2007). Yet, whether students actually learn 'independently' is questionable, since even in the absence of direct one to one intentional instruction from others there are still the cultural tools that are available to them which have been produced by others. It is easy to assume that the individual using these tools is working independently however, since the tools of academia are thought of as 'natural' within the culture. But in actual fact, when using these tools individuals are working alongside and being supported by their cultural and historical ancestors from years back as well as their present day peers who may have passed on these tools to them. Consequently, although the student may be autonomous or self directed in their learning, the use of cultural tools means that the learners are far from 'independent' since they are still learning 'in relationship.'

However, there is still the problem of how the student actually comes to know how to use the culturally available tools in order to scaffold their learning in the first place. This question is especially pertinent given that the independent learning discourse means that many university teachers believe that their role is to simply deliver subject knowledge, not to support student learning (Wingate, 2007; Bennet et al., 2000; Biggs, 1996). Tharp and Gallimore (1998) maintain that in order to understand how humans learn to use cultural and historical tools, we need to examine the informal pedagogy of everyday life. They argue that long before they start their schooling, children learn higher order cognitive and linguistic skills through their everyday interactions in domestic life. Within this setting, there are opportunities for the more capable or experienced members of the household to assist and regulate the child's performance on goal directed activities and through these interactions the child is able to learn the collective knowledge of their culture and about its tools and symbols. They learn to communicate and think without any direct instruction (Tharpe and Gallimore, 1998). What Tharpe and Gillamore seem to be describing here is an understanding of learning as participation in the everyday practices of their community similar to what Lave and Wenger describe in the Communities of Practice literature. This will now be discussed in order to explore how it is able to help me to theorise how students come to understand the everyday practices

of university and the use of the cultural tools available to them, even in instances where there may be a paucity of direct one to one intentional teaching.

## Communities of Practice

Commensurate with  Tharpe and Gallimore's (1998) description of learning as participation in the everyday practices of a community, Lave and Wenger (1991) use communities of practice and its central concept of legitimate peripheral participation to reconceptualise learning as experience rather than the acquisition of knowledge. As discussed above, generally speaking, the way that learning is understood within the structure of the UK education system is as the acquisition of knowledge by the students from a tutor who transmits it to them. Further, that this occurs in the main in an unproblematic manner.  Lave and Wenger's communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation literature challenge traditional transmission/acquisition models of learning. In contrast to this model they suggest that to understand learning we need to see it as participation in social spaces and that the students' performance in these is linked to their level of participation.

### *What is a Community of Practice?*
Since there are rarely set boundaries between different communities of practice, a community of practice (CoP) is difficult to define and Lave and Wenger actually do not offer one in their writings. They point out that in their use of the term:

 "…we *do not imply some primordial culture-sharing entity. We assume that members have different interests, make diverse contributions to activity, and hold varied viewpoints. In our view, participation at multiple levels is entailed in membership in a community of practice. Nor does the term community imply necessarily co-presence, a well defined, identifiable group, or socially visible boundaries,"* (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) argue that it is more important to focus on the actual participatory practices and relationships that are observed within communities, rather than upon a reified list of criteria to determine whether or not a CoP has formed. Indeed, the analytical opportunities that CoP theory provides me with in the present research make it a useful part of my theoretical toolkit, even though the lack of a precise definition of what a CoP is may not allow me to establish definitively whether CoPs have actually formed. Following Hodkinson and Hodkinson, I feel that the ability of CoP theory to allow analysis of the participatory practices and relationships within the setting outweighs the need to pin down the exact criteria as to what a CoP is. However, I realize that there is the need to communicate to the reader what I mean when I write about CoPs, so I therefore offer the following broad explanation. A community of practice is a collection of individuals who have certain things in common. This could be their location (but not necessarily), a particular activity, an interest, a purpose or a common goal. Members of a community of practice participate in a system made up of certain practices about which the members share understandings about what they are doing and the meaning of this to their own lives and that of their community. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) argue that there is strength in the lack of a precise definition of a CoP or of clear identifiable boundaries since there is often overlap in such communities. For example a lecturer can be seen as belonging to several overlapping CoPs. The lecturers in a particular subject area could form a community of practice since they are located in the same department in a university; have a common interest in a particular topic and (ideally) the shared goal of teaching this subject to their students. At the same time, all the lecturers at a university as a whole could also be a CoP, they are all located within the same building or collection of buildings and (again, ideally) all have an interest in teaching students. Furthermore, all the psychology students in a university could be seen as a CoP, but so could all the social science students as a whole and so could all the students in a university as a whole. It is important to note however, that a CoP does not always entail the individuals within it to be physically located in close proximity to one another. Members of a CoP may be distanced by thousands of miles, but still have things in common which they share in their community of practice. For example bricklayers in England might share a

purposive connection with bricklayers in Australia through which they share practice, which may mean that they would be more likely to share a CoP with one another than they would with dentists or farmers who lived or worked in the some location as them. Also, virtual CoPs in which the participants interact online can also be physically distanced from one another, but still form a CoP around a common interest or goal. The essential element of the community of practice then is the common interest or goal, not their location. All of these groups or communities are separated from other groups, not by their location, but by the practices in which they engage and the type of practices which are valued in that particular community. Although Wenger (1998) argues that there is no prescriptive definition that can be applied to the concept of a CoP and furthermore that CoPs are usually not identified as such (or reified) in the discourse of its members, there are certain indicators that a community of practice has formed. He lists these indicators as:

- *sustained mutual relationships-harmonious or conflictual*
- *shared ways of engaging in doing things together*
- *the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation*
- *absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process*
- *very quick setup of a problem to be discussed*
- *substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs*
- *knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise*
- *mutually defining identities*
- *the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products*
- *specific tools, representations, and other artefacts*
- *local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter*
- *jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones*
- *certain styles recognized as displaying membership*
- *a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world.'* (Wenger, 1998, p.125).

So, although I have argued that we cannot apply a universal definition to the term a community of practice, and that it may not be useful to do so in any case, I hope that this gives the reader some idea to what I refer.

### *Practice and Participation within a Community of Practice*

As community of practice theory developed the term practice emerged. This derived originally from research with apprentices. Lave and Wenger (1991) give numerous accounts of apprenticeship, some of the ones they describe are the apprenticeships of Yucatec Mayan midwives in Mexico (Jordan, 1989) and Tailors in Liberia (Lave, 1997). The Yucatec midwives provided services such as healing, massage and rituals which used herbal medicine; they also had knowledge of birthing techniques. The specialised practices involved in midwifery were passed down within families, since the apprentice midwives were almost always the daughters of experienced midwives. Jordan (1989) described the process by which the apprentices moved over the years from being a peripheral participant in midwifery practices to full participation. Of note is that direct teaching did not appear to be of central importance here since apprenticeship happened in the course of the midwife's daily life. The young Mayan girl who was to eventually become a midwife would probably have had a mother and grandmother who practiced as midwives before her and as a child she may have had to go along with her mother to administer treatments such as massages. She may have also heard many stories about delivering babies too. At this point she would not have actually been involved in doing anything, but was becoming party to the valued practices of midwifery and learning of and how to use the cultural tools used in this practice. She was what Lave and Wenger (1991) term a legitimate peripheral participant. Although she had no actual involvement, as a legitimate peripheral participant, she was in an enabled position which had the potential to lead to full participation. This would be a gradual process and as she grew up she may have participated more and more. As her interest in midwifery deepened, Jordan (1989) tells us that the girl may have started to pay more attention to her mother's work, but that she would rarely ask her any questions. The mother would not take on an actual teaching role; she would just see her daughter as someone who could help her in her work. In this way, over time the daughter apprentice would take on more

and more of the work, starting with the easy uncomplicated tasks until she was trusted to deliver the babies herself. At this stage she would be said by Lave and Wenger to have achieved full participation. Similarly, Liberian apprentice tailors (Lave 1997) move over time from legitimate peripheral participation where they have no actual involvement in tailoring, but just sit and watch the more experienced tailors, to full participation where they are able to tailor the most complex garments.

### *The Negotiation of Meaning*

Wenger (1998) argues that the mere act of living is a constant process of negotiation of meaning. Every experience we have, although we may be very familiar with the situation, is an opportunity to produce new meaning with the potential to extend, reinterpret, or modify our historical meanings of the situation thereby negotiating the meaning we take from it. For the Mayan midwives no two deliveries are the same. Of course there will be set procedures or routines and culturally available tools that the midwife will draw on for each delivery, but there may be occurrences at each which go against familiar routines which she has to adapt to and manage, adding to her repertoire of skills. Similarly, for a university student writing an essay, there may be some aspects of this which are very familiar and routinized to him/her, but at the same time there will be subtle differences between each essay s/he attempts resulting in an experience of meaning or learning. The routinization of the procedure of delivering a baby or that of writing an essay will therefore be achieved anew each time as will every experience we come across in life no matter how familiar the experience is to us. Whereas there may be certain patterns to our engagement in practice, it is the production of these patterns anew that gives rise to an experience of meaning or in other words, learning (Wenger, 1998). Wenger argues that although meaning is always the product of its negotiation it does not exist as a static object within us, nor in the world. Rather that it exists in the dynamic relation of living in the world, which again suggests that meaning making is an ongoing process that goes on and on and is never complete. This again renders the notion of the learner as independent problematic, since from this perspective, how could a learner negotiate

meaning or in other words learn if they were separate from and unable to relate to the world and the other individuals that reside within it.

Wenger (1998) tells us that it is in the dual process of participation and reification that the negotiation of meaning takes place. Participation is the term Wenger (1998, p.55) uses to denote '*the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises.*' As well as being a social process, participation is also a personal one combining doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging. It involves our bodies, minds, emotions and social relations (Wenger, 1998). Of particular importance to the argument I am making about the notion of the 'independent learner' being problematic (and to this thesis as a whole), is Wenger's claim that participation is social even when it does not involve direct interaction with others. The situation of a student in their bedroom alone writing an assignment may seem like a solitary activity, but fundamentally Wenger argues that its meaning is entirely social. The sources of information that the student is drawing on when seemingly alone which enable her/him to understand and make meaning will have come from historical meaning making instances with or by others who are therefore also implicitly in the room with her/him. Furthermore, the assessor to whom the student is attempting to make their points understandable or meaningful is also implicitly present in the bedroom with the student. Wenger maintains that the meanings of anything we do are always social, since as shown in the student example above; all our activities implicitly involve other people even though they may not be physically present.

In conjunction with the term participation, Wenger uses the term reification to describe our engagement in the world as productive of meaning. He uses the concept of reification to refer to the objects and procedures which are privileged in any given community of practice**.** (Wenger, 1998, p.58) So, for instance, the production of a tool, or establishing a procedure or creating a set of rules can all be examples of this. Once produced, individuals can use the tool to help them perform a certain action, or follow the rules and procedures to know how to attempt an activity. Reification can therefore shape our experience in very concrete ways since having a tool or a procedure to help us perform an activity

profoundly changes the nature of the activity. The negotiation of meaning is constituted therefore by this dual process of participation and reification. Some of the task in hand is reified and some is left to participation. The point is that participation and reification need to be in such proportions and relation to each other to compensate for each other's shortcomings in the negotiation of meaning.

### *Identity as a social process*

Legitimate peripheral participation is the term coined by Lave and Wenger (1991) concerning the process by which newcomers to the community become part of it. For instance, as a legitimate peripheral participant the young Mayan midwife is in an enabled position which under most circumstances allows her to take on the valued practices of being a midwife until she eventually becomes a full participant. Becoming part of the community entails certain identity changes for the newcomer as they participate more and more and move towards full participation. Wenger argued that identity in practice comes about through interplay of the processes of participation and reification discussed above. Identity is therefore not an object, but a constant process of change, something which we constantly negotiate and renegotiate throughout our lives – a constant becoming. As we go through successive forms of participation throughout our lives, our identities according to Wenger form trajectories, or paths, both within certain communities of practice and across them. Wenger (1998) identified several trajectories in the context of communities of practice:

- Peripheral Trajectories. Some trajectories never lead to full participation and this can be through choice or through necessity. However, they may still provide some access to a community and its practice which can be sufficiently significant to contribute to a person's identity.
- Inbound Trajectories. Typically these belong to newcomers joining the community with the prospect of becoming full participants. These identities are looking towards their future participation, even though they may presently occupy a peripheral position.

- Insider Trajectories. Formation of identity does not end with full participation. The practice continues to evolve; new demands, new events and new generations all create occurrences through which identity may be renegotiated even for old timers.

- Boundary Trajectories. Spanning boundaries and linking communities of practice is what some trajectories do best. Sustaining an identity which crosses boundaries can be quite challenging and a delicate balancing act according to Wenger.

- Outbound Trajectories. These trajectories lead out of a community. What becomes important is how the form of participation in the present community enables what comes next. For an individual to be on their way out of a community this involves finding a different position with respect to a community, developing new relationships, and seeing themselves and the world around them in new ways. An example of this being when a student leaves university and enters the world of work.

Viewing our identities as trajectories in this way helps us to understand how they incorporate the past and the future in the process of negotiating the meaning of the present. Significance is therefore given to present events in relation to what has gone before and what is to come for the self, and meaning is made. For Lave and Wenger, meaning making or learning occurs through the processes of identity change in ongoing participation in the socio-cultural practices of the community.

Legitimate peripheral participation is however, a complex concept. Taken to mean a way of belonging to a community, legitimate peripheral participation can be an empowering process through which one moves towards more intensive participation as in the case of the Mayan midwife apprentices who usually (although we have no way of actually knowing how competent they become in this) achieve full participation. Peripherality when it is enabled, suggests an opening or a way in, or a way of gaining access to sources of understanding through more and more involvement in the practices of the community. Viewing peripherality as an opening in this way does not mean that

we should assume that all students' peripheral positions are enabled however, despite the fact that Lave and Wenger sometimes appear in their writing to say that participation is inevitable for a legitimate peripheral participant. I would in fact critique the notion of participation as a given, since, according to Wenger, (1998) the participant also needs to generate new practices and have them adopted by the community if they are to have an insider trajectory. Yet the world and people are complex, we are not all the same nor is the extent to which we are able to participate or generate new practices in any given circumstances. Even if an individual was able to generate new practices in a particular community that is not to say that these will automatically be adopted by it. Given this argument, as well as the potential to be empowering, legitimate peripheral participation can also possibly be disempowering if the participant is unable to participate more fully for one reason or another. In point of fact, Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 36) themselves argue that:

'*As a place in which one is kept from participating more fully- often legitimately, from the broader perspective of society at large – it (*peripherality*) is a disempowering position.*'

If we take what Lave and Wenger say here, it would be reasonable to ask what it is that keeps such individuals from participating more fully. Walkerdine (1997) critiques CoP theory, arguing that pedagogical models which assume a community model produce covert controlling or regulating relations which centre on ideas of what is normal in that community. As Linehan and McCarthy (2001) point out, not all members of a community will conform to a single set of standards or norms. Instead, they will participate in communities in many different ways. Some might accept the standards, norms and practices, but some might reject them. Others may conform to some standards but not others and so individual identities develop in which they relate to the community standards and norms in a variety of complex ways. We cannot therefore assume that all individuals entering a CoP will become legitimate peripheral participants and that their identity process will follow a smooth trajectory to full participation. Indeed, Hodges (1998, pp.279) maintains that there is "*agonised compromise*" in becoming a member of any community. Existing members of

the community will clearly be the power brokers as to what is considered a norm when an individual first enters a community. The controlling or regulating relations which Walkerdine speaks of as centring on what is seen as a norm in their community may mean that the newcomer may become marginalised if they are unable to accept these norms. Whether a student is enabled or disabled in their participation in a certain CoP is clearly therefore largely dependant upon the actual practices that are valued in that community by the existing members and furthermore by the other CoPs which the student belongs to. As well as this, however, there may also be a multitude of other mediating processes for certain individuals which mean that participation is not straight forward for them and we cannot therefore just take it as a given. Bioecological theory will be employed later to examine these mediating processes and the role they play in enabling or disabling participation. Clearly, all these aspects need to be explored too if I am to present a full picture of the role of learning relationships.

### *The situated nature of cognition and discernment: Introducing Rogoff's ideas.*

When considering how a student's participation in a particular CoP may be impacted upon by the other CoPs that they inhabit, it is useful to briefly explore the nature of cognition and also to consider some of Rogoff's ideas. A range of research (Lave, 1988; Carraher, 1986; Carraher et al., 1985; Nunes et al., 1993) contests the dominant models of learning which assume knowledge is an abstract entity which we can carry with us internally, transmit and acquire unproblematically, and transfer across contexts. In particular it has become increasingly more accepted that the learning of mathematics is not simply an intellectual activity which can be separated from social, cultural, historical and contextual factors (Lave 1988; Cobb, 1994; Confrey, 1995). There is the acknowledgement that learning takes place within embedded social contexts that do not simply influence the learning, but actually underpin the kinds of knowledge, skills and practices that emerge (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990).

Nunes, et al's (1993) research neatly highlights this argument. They found that Brazilian street children showed considerable prowess in mathematical skills when extorting money from tourists on the street. The skills they displayed on the streets however were not transferred to classroom mathematics despite the children appearing to have the understanding and ability to solve complex mathematical propositions in their street setting. Rogoff (2003) argues that whilst we cannot reify knowledge as an abstract internalised entity which can be applied across all situations we encounter, sometimes skills developed in one setting may be relevant in a new one as in the example of the Brazilian street children. That is, mathematical skills that the children were so adept at on the street could also have some relevance in the classroom. However, because the children were newcomers to the classroom situation they could not necessarily see this. Of course there may be instances also where the appropriateness of tasks to different settings can widely differ, but Rogoff argues that where there is some relevance of past experiences to the new setting the newcomers need to be helped by others in the situation to realize this. The notion that newcomers need help from others in this way again points to a role for relationships in learning.

According to Rogoff, the appropriateness of tasks to different settings largely depends upon the ways that development and 'intelligence' is conceived of in different communities. So, for the Mayan midwives intelligence may be seen as the ability to deliver healthy babies, whilst for the university student it may be conceived of as the ability to pass assessments. Skills appropriate in one setting are therefore clearly not relevant across every setting. Furthermore, even when settings are very similar for example when comparing the 'intelligence' required for writing essays in college exams with writing essay questions in university exams, the contexts in which the exams take place and the requirements of each type of essay question may still be so different that the practice of taking exams in college does not necessarily help the student to participate effectively in university based exams. It can be seen from this that not only are skills not always transferable across contexts, the  generalization of skills is not necessarily a good thing either, even though there is often the

assumption that broad generalizations of the thinking processes are the ultimate goal of learning (Rogoff, 2003).

The realisation that skills are not always transferable across contexts means that we should be open to thinking about cognitive development in a different way. Attention should be given to the specific nature of thinking as situated in the cultural practices of a particular community as is described in the CoP literature. This means however, that we are left with the problem of explaining how skills learned in one context can in some circumstances be applied in another. Although I have argued that generality of skills cannot be assumed across contexts, understanding gained in one situation must also relate to other situations sometimes. Clearly, we cannot argue for total specificity since otherwise we would not be able to ever handle anything new such as in written and spoken language for instance. Instead of thinking in terms of absolute specificity on the one hand or of the broad generalisation of skills on the other, we need to instead explain the ability of humans to use some of the skills from one context in another by thinking more in terms of 'appropriate generalization' (Rogoff, 2003, p253).

Appropriate generalisation is the term Rogoff (2003) employs to describe the way in which individuals are able to discern which strategies are helpful in what circumstances. However, even when a student fully understands the principles underlying a particular skill in one situation, this does not mean to say that they will automatically transfer them to a new situation in which they might also be relevant since so much of what they have learned is wrapped up in the situation in which they learned it. They may not therefore be able to discern that their previous experiences have any relevance in new situations. Rogoff (2003) argues that to be able to automatically transfer their skills from one situation to another the individual needs to be able to discern whether the skills or principles are relevant to the new situation by relating the goals of the new situation to those of previous situations. However, whether the individual is able to do this will depend upon the multiplicity of processes impacting upon the individual and the community and also upon which practices are adopted in the new situation. Rogoff (2003) notes how relationships are part of this,

maintaining that they are central to helping individuals new to a situation to see the significance of the skills they have developed in prior situations and how they might be applied in a new one. She argues that seeing connections between the old and the new community or situation is often dependent upon the support of other people.

If interaction with others is so centrally important in enabling newcomers to discern what is relevant in their new situation, it follows that the practices of communities which impact upon this interaction are also important. Practices that facilitate interaction and the formation of positive interpersonal and learning relationships are from this perspective vital, since the extent to which other people are able to provide discernment support will be dependent on the practices of the community. A student at university needs to be able to discern how to behave in contexts new to them and to understand which of the skills they have learned from previous settings or other CoPs that they inhabit relate to the new one and which ones do not. They may need help from others in the situation to be able to see this, but the extent to which this can be provided will be dependent upon a multiplicity of proximal and distal processes impacting upon the specific practices in place in any particular community. Linehan and Mccarthy (2001) argue that the concept of CoP is unable to account for the importance of the multiplicity of proximal and distal processes which may shape participation however. Furthermore that a clearer conceptualisation of the complex and messy relations between individuals and between individuals and their communities (which shape the practices in which learning is situated) is necessary if a relational account of learning is to be advanced. In order to account for these distal processes as well as the multiplicity of proximal processes which impact upon the particular practices of the focal university and the students and their learning and relationships, I turn now to Bronfenbrenner's (2001) bioecological model of development.

**Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Development**

This model is able to provide a framework to understand how the interacting processes which construct individual experience enable or disable student's participation in CoPs and therefore their learning. The bioecological model is furthermore especially useful for this thesis and its concern with how relationships shape learning and development, since it places the individual at the centre of a set of interactive systems which represent the relationships they have with other people and the developmental processes that influence their life. These developmental processes are dynamic and idiosyncratic to the individual and are dependent upon the ongoing interaction of the person and the environment. The environment affects the individual, but the individual also acts upon the environment too. This means that development is an extremely complex and messy process and Bronfenbrenner's original conception of the model accounted for this through two propositions.

*Proposition 1*

The first proposition relates to proximal processes and has particular relevance to the study of relationships. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) proximal processes are the enduring forms of interaction through which an individual develops. Bronfenbrenner, (1999, p.5) states that throughout the life course, but especially in the early years, development:

'*takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate external environment.*'

One thing which Bronfenbrenner appears to be saying here is that the progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between the human organism and persons in their immediate environment are a requirement of development. It seems reasonable to suggest therefore that these progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between persons are necessary for the formation of positive interpersonal relationships and from these to learning relationships. If interactions were not reciprocated however,

then we might expect that it would be difficult for these to form. Bronfenbrenner goes on to argue that this interaction (the proximal processes) must occur on a regular basis over extended periods of time for them to be effective as developmental processes. So, for example, if a student at university was only given the opportunity to interact with their lecturer once a month then this would not impact upon their development to any great extent. In this situation a positive interpersonal relationship, (leading to a learning relationship) may not have had sufficient opportunity to develop. If however, the student had opportunity to interact with her/his lecturer on a daily basis over a period of a year, (and the interaction was also reciprocal and increasing in complexity), there may be more opportunity for a positive interpersonal relationship leading to a learning relationship to develop and the interaction would count as a proximal developmental process since it would impact upon the student's learning and development. From this first proposition we can therefore take regularity, reciprocity and increasing complexity as requirements of the interactions between individuals if they are to go on to have a relationship which promotes learning (or development in Bronfenbrenner's terms).

*Proposition 2*

The second of Bronfenbrenner's propositions relates to the effect of distal processes in interaction with the proximal processes on development. He states:

'*The form, power, content and direction of the proximal processes affecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person, the environment- both immediate and more remote-in which the processes are taking place, the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration and the social continuities and changes occurring over time during the historical period through which the person has lived.*' (Bronfenbrenner, 2001, p6).

The more remote environment and the social historical changes and continuities Bronfenbrenner refers to here would constitute the distal processes. So the basic processes of human development according to

Bronfenbrenner's propositions are therefore constituted from the proximal and distal relations between the active individual and the active context in which they reside. If we are to understand development and learning and the impact of relationships upon these in the H.E. context it is therefore imperative to examine not just the proximal processes but also the distal processes impacting upon participants. Otherwise we will only ever achieve a partial understanding of the role of relationships in learning.

As stated above, these two propositions come from the original conceptualization of Bronfenbrenner's model, but nevertheless, still have much relevance for this thesis. Later formulations of the bioecological systems model evolved largely because of Bronfenbrenner's own criticisms of himself. Bronfenbrenner commented on how ecological theory had enabled the examination of context to such an extent that the developing person themselves began to be overlooked in research. Newer formulations of the model therefore stress the individual's own experience as playing an important role too. In other words it is not just the objective properties of the environment that are important to development; the way that these objective properties are subjectively experienced by developing individuals also have a marked effect. Although the proximal processes of development are the primary engines of development according to Bronfenbrenner (2001), the energy that drives them comes from the experiential world of the individual. There is therefore the need to access this experiential world in my data collection.

Another additional component that was later included in the ecological model was time (or the chronosystem), and this relates not just to the changes and consistencies in the environment over time but also those in the developing person. Elder's life course development has a complementary relation to bioecological theory and Bronfenbrenner (1999) summarizes this in his work. Two of these life course principles have particular relevance to the present research. These note how powerfully important the historical period in which an individual lives is upon their development. For instance, students attending university in 2009 will have a very different experience from those attending in the 1980s due to issues such as the government drive to widen participation

and the funding differences between the thirty year gap. They also stress that the culturally determined timing of biological and social transitions are a major factor influencing the course and outcome of an individuals' development. For example, generally the cultural norm for students to attend university is age eighteen and the experience of leaving home to attend university at this age will have a very different effect upon their development than if they attended in their thirties.

The addition of the person and time to Bronfenbrenner's original model means that new formulations of the bioecological model have process, person, context and time as constituents (PPCT model). This stresses the influence of the multiple factors that shape development, that is, the person's own experiencing, the proximal relations in the immediate environment, more distal processes in the environment in which the person is developing and the historical and cultural temporal context (the Chronosystem). Of these, as described earlier 'proximal processes' are seen by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998, p. 994) as the most important, and the 'primary mechanisms producing human development.' However, the original formulation of the model which conceptualised the environment as a series of nested systems like a set of Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) continues to play a key role in the PPCT model of development. The original formulation constitutes the context and the processes of development and this is represented pictorially as a set of concentric circles as in figure two overleaf with the person at the very centre of these.

**Figure 2: A student at the centre of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system**
Illustration by Tom Hirst (adapted from Rogoff, 2003)
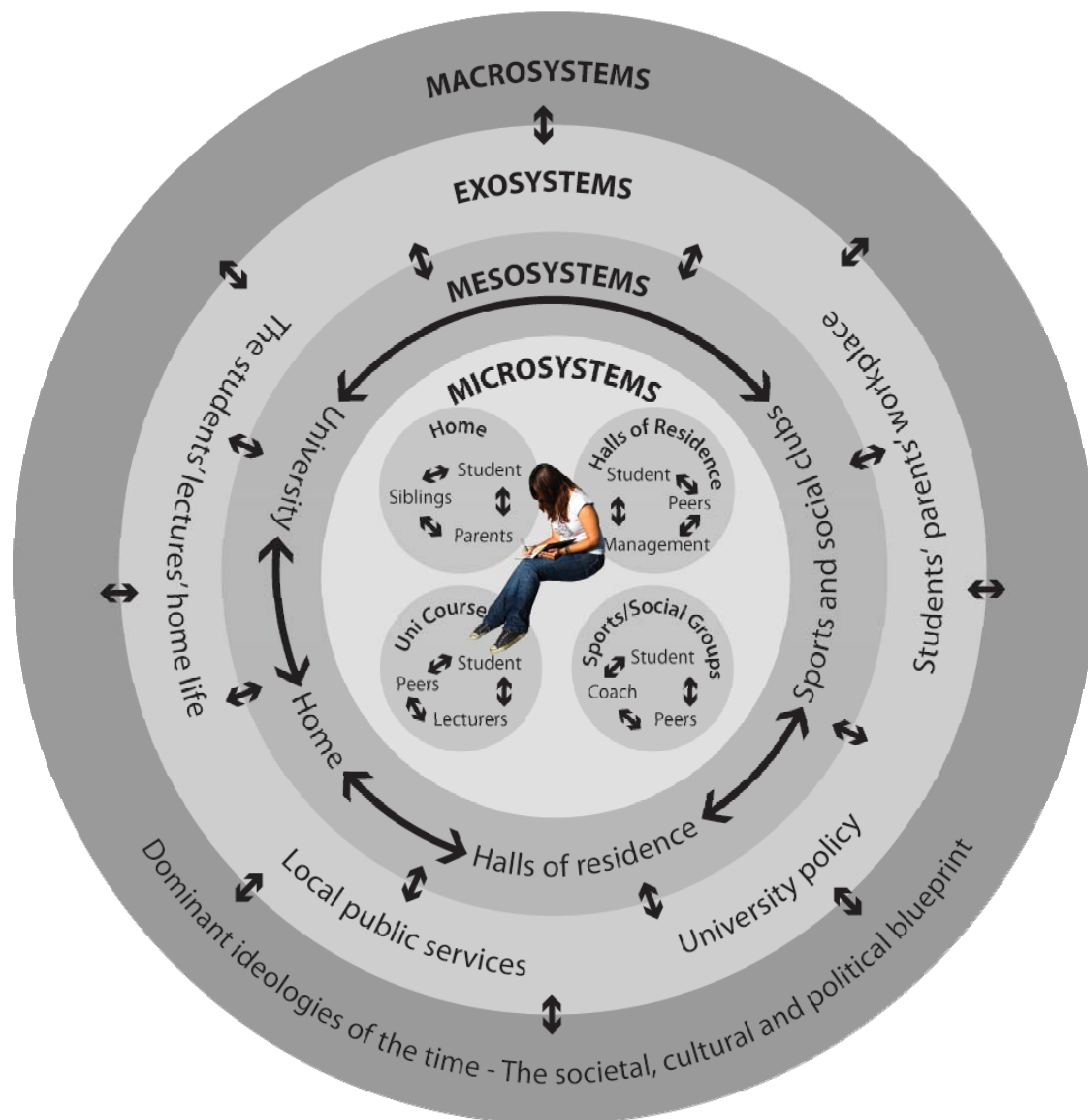


- The smallest inner circle in the diagram is referred to as the **microsystem** and these are the individual's immediate experiences or settings which include the individual and their immediate relationships with others. For the student participants in this study, their microsystems could include their home setting and their halls of residence, their teaching group at university, any part time jobs they undertake, as well as any sports groups or social clubs they belong to.

- The next circle represents the **mesosystem** which relates to the relations among the microsystems in which an individual is involved. Any one setting such as university involves relations with other settings such as home or social groups and there are overlaps and communication between them, so that information from one setting can also be found in another. For the student participants in the present study this could be the complimentary or conflicting practices between their social circle and university. By examining mesosystems and the overlap between them we can ask questions such as whether the student new to university already has some information about university practices before they enter university and then explore the impact of this.

- The **exosystem** is the next concentric circle, and this relates the microsystems in which the individual is involved to settings in which they do not have any direct participation. So, for instance university policy may be influential on the students' development. Or the students' parents' work place since although the student is unlikely to ever enter the parents' workplace, the demands placed upon the parent through work schedules may mean that they have little time to be available to the student at times when they may have benefited from their input. The quality of public services in the area in which the student lives is another exosystem influence, as are the relationships that the students' lecturers have in their own lives. All these things affect the student, albeit indirectly.

- The final concentric circle is representative of the **macrosystem** which relates to the ideology and organisation of the social structure and institutions of the time. In other words, the societal, cultural and political blue print in which the student is immersed. Bronfenbrenner (1979) points out that this blueprint has the ability to change over time and that the structure of society can therefore become very different to what it was before. This can lead to corresponding changes in human behaviour and therefore to development.

This diagram is said to represent the person in their contexts and the processes of development. However, I would question whether it is actually able to

adequately represent the development process as a mutually defining process where the environment acts upon the individual, but the individual also acts upon the environment. Arguably Bronfenbrenner shares the same concern, since in representing his model as a set of nesting dolls, he made sure that he emphasised that individuals and their contexts were related through progressive, mutual accommodation. We cannot see this however in the diagram of the model since we are limited in the ways we can represent process pictorially, or indeed the final component of the model, which is the passage of time. The aspect of time or the 'chronosystem' is important in Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model as major social, economic, or political changes over historical time can impact greatly upon society as a whole and the various microsystems that reside within it. It therefore needs careful consideration despite it being insufficiently represented in diagrams provided in the extant literature and also in my own diagram above.

Rogoff (2003) furthers the argument about the ability of diagrams to adequately represent concepts. She states that the representation of Bronfenbrenner's model as nested-circles appears to separate the person and culture into stand alone entities with culture influencing the individual who stands at the centre of the nested systems and is 'subjected to' their influences. If the individual is seen as separate to the environment and therefore "subject" to its influences, development could arguably be seen as an outcome of independent cultural variables which can be measured. So, whilst Bronfenbrenner's theory is frequently invoked to address the role of context in development, it is also important to stress that context is only one aspect of the PPCT model. As Elliott and Tudge (2012) point out, it is the proximal processes referred to in the model which are seen by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) as the most important aspect of it and subsequently how these processes are influenced by the characteristics of the person involved (person), the multiple levels of context in which the interactions occur (context) and also by what is happening in the historical period during which the development is taking place (time).

Elliott and Tudge (2012) also take up the argument that context is all too often treated as a single construct, maintaining that little empirical research has paid

attention to the mechanisms (the proximal processes) through and by which individuals interact in the varied contexts of which they are a part in order to develop. This is due they argue to the lack of consideration of context as an interwoven range of contexts made up of for example teacher style, classroom layout, peer group, family, social class, ethnic identity and culture. Rogoff (2003) echoes this argument, maintaining that the influence of culture on individuals has often been studied by measuring an isolated cultural characteristic against individual characteristics and correlating them or picking out the influences of one of the systems and then looking for normative effects which vary between groups rather than between individuals. However, measurement of specific characteristics or the isolated influences of one of the systems will arguably tell us very little since individual and cultural processes are things which function together as mutually defining processes.

Bradford Brown's (1999) research which claims an ecological perspective highlights this argument. He attempted to measure the peer environments of adolescents by simply placing them in the centre of their different friendship groups and discussing the influence of distributed youth culture on these. He gives no detail about his specific data collection methods but argues that self report methodologies can be effective in charting the diversity of peer group norms. This presumably suggests that he could have used surveys or questionnaires, but these, together with his lack of consideration of context as an interwoven range of contexts, will not allow us insights into how individual and cultural processes interact and impact upon development.

Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) also used an ecologically informed approach to studying and conceptualizing the transition of small children to Kindergarten in the U.S. They acknowledge the role of early school transitions in later school success and argue that a full understanding of a child's competence can only be achieved by examination of the relationships among child characteristics and home, school, peer, family and neighbourhood contexts. In addition they argue that the way in which all these relationships change over time is vitally important to this understanding. At first, this all seems to fit with an ecological model of development in which all the different contexts in which the child

interacts are taken into consideration. However, the authors then go on to say that research informed by these principles may have the ability to inform policy and practice on transition in normative and high risk populations. It appears therefore that they are seeking a one size fits all solution to fit particular groups rather than giving importance to the individual child and their own subjective experiencing. It could be argued however, that there are no typical children; rather each one is unique with their own particular sets of circumstances. That is not to say that if we use ecological theory to gain insight into the complexity of university students' learning relationships we may indeed find that some of the processes within their micro, meso, exo, macrosystem and chronosystem are common to all or some of them. However, the way in which these are actually experienced by each student may be markedly different and will therefore impact differently upon each of them. Accordingly, we cannot therefore use ecological theory to suggest that there are one size fits all explanations for particular groups within the population as Rim-Kaufman and Pianta appear to.

In view of the preceding argument, I will reiterate the importance of examining the subjective experiencing of individuals and their contributions together with the cultural processes in interaction with one another as they function together in a mutually defining way. This also takes us back again to Vygotskian thought and socio-cultural theory which tells us that culture is not static since  cultural tools and symbols are both inherited and transformed by successive generations. Individual's experiencing of culture and their own contributions to it, together with the cultural processes themselves function together. To represent development as constituted through cultural and personal processes which are each constitutive of the other diagrammatically however, would be impossible. We could never quite capture the developmental processes since the constitution and occurrence of these processes will be so fleeting in time and then instantly changed again in an ongoing process of reconstitution. We are confined to representing our ideas on paper however, and the representation of the Bioecological systems model above is all I am able to offer to represent all the complexity involved.

Given the research described above it seems that researchers maybe sometimes do not take these constraints of visual tools in communicating Bronfenbrenner's ideas into account. Because of the constraints of diagrammatic representation, the individual and the contexts they inhabit are it seems sometimes mistakenly seen as separate entities and the interaction of these is not examined. Furthermore, if the individual is seen as separate to the environment and therefore "subject" to its influences, development could arguably be seen as an outcome of independent cultural variables which can be measured, rather than the complex interaction of a multiplicity of contexts and processes. Encouragingly, I came across one empirical research programme which does appear to take these constraints into consideration. Elliott and Tudge's (2012) research examines motivation and student engagement across contexts. The origin of their research was multiple observations undertaken in classrooms in St. Petersburg Russia and Kentucky in the USA, and also a series of interviews and surveys with students, teachers and parents. The St. Petersburg children reported that they thought that their peers helped to influence them to behave in the way that their teachers and parents would want them to behave (or pro-school). In contrast, the Kentucky students reported a relatively even mix between those that felt that their peers influenced them to be pro-school and those that felt that they were influenced negatively against school by their peers. However, these were findings from the surveys that were conducted, and when the observational and interview data from the Kentucky students was also taken into account, diverse peer relations were revealed. These diverse relations reinforced the authors' views that there were subtle, but powerful influences operating in the US context that prevented the students from wanting to display high levels of academic engagement, (presumably there were subtle influences impacting in the Russian context too in different ways, but there is no mention of this). The Kentucky students may well have believed that they were reporting accurately and honestly about the forms of peer approval or disapproval that were explicit in the context and impact upon their behaviour. However, they may not be aware of implicit forms of this – the subtle influences of proximal processes which also impact upon their behaviour; these were only brought to light through the observations.

Further to this, Howley et al., (1995) note that there is an air of anti-intellectualism in US high schools with more importance sometimes being placed on sporting and social success over academic achievement. If we examined school based peer culture in isolation, we might find that there was some influence from this on the students which made them behave anti-intellectually. On the other hand, as Elliott and Tudge (2012) point out, such orientations may be more to do with young peoples' socialization at home if sporting and social achievements are prioritized there, or in the broader community. If we apply a bioecological theoretical perspective to this and examine particularly the mesosystem which is the interaction between the different microsystems, it becomes clear that it is vitally important not to focus on single microsystems in research. This is because what occurs in one will also have a bearing on the others inhabited by an individual. Elliott and Tudge's study, highlights how home attitudes and values can impact upon what occurs in school, just as school can impact upon home. They maintain that adult support and encouragement of sporting and social achievements from the home environment provided powerful yet subtle messages to the students that these should be prioritised over academic achievement in school. This is despite the fact that students, parents and teachers in Kentucky emphasised how important education was to them when surveyed. Observational data did not however back up the survey data, since learning and studying did not appear to feature as heavily in observations as reported attitudes may suggest, either at home or school. As well as highlighting the importance of considering all the different microsystems and their interactions, this also points to the methodological problems of conducting surveys in isolation from actual behaviour.

Despite the vast majority of the research from an ecological perspective being quantitative in nature and my concerns about not taking the constraints of visual tools in communicating Bronfenbrenner's ideas into account, the qualitative application of Bronenbrenner's ideas in Elliott and Tudge's research reinforces my belief in its use as a powerful analytic tool for the present research. This is because it will allow the exploration of the different overlapping contexts, both spatial and temporal, which influence student

learning through their typically occurring interaction and engagement with others. Bioecological theory allows this exploration since it accounts for the relations among the multiple settings that the individual is directly or indirectly involved in and the complex processes taking place between these and the individual. The incorporation of Bronfenbrenner's ideas alongside the Vygotskian and CoP perspectives already discussed provides a useful framework with which to explore and understand the role of relationships in learning in H.E. and the proximal and distal processes which impact upon this.

## Philosophical Underpinnings of my Theoretical Choices

Given my critical realist stance, in undertaking this research I am basically arguing that there is an ontological reality which we need to investigate if we are to understand the role of learning relationships in higher education. I am furthermore arguing that it is possible to achieve this using the perspectives described above in combination. In synthesising these perspectives I am taking the position that participation in practice is an ontological imperative as far as learning and identity is concerned. Furthermore, that proximal processes (such as are entailed in Vygotskian notions of the ZPD and tool and symbol use), together with more distal processes are all mechanisms operating together in an open system which result in the tendencies contributing to the ability of relationships to either enable or disable this participation and therefore learning in H.E.

It may seem that I am making ambitious claims for the ability of the theoretical perspectives described to explain and understand reality. However, my critical realist position means that I would maintain that an ontological reality exists and furthermore that although it may be difficult to achieve, we should still seek to uncover this. Relativists may take issue with the notion of a reality separate to our knowledge of it and our attempts to uncover it, however, I would agree with Sayer (2000) where he argues that the fallibility of our knowledge, our getting things wrong, justifies us in the belief that the world exists no matter what our beliefs about it are. After all, if the world was a construction of our knowledge as relativists would argue, we would never be wrong about anything - our

knowledge would be infallible. In taking this critical realist stance however, and stating that there is a reality independent of our knowledge of it which we can investigate, I do not mean to claim that I have unmediated access to the truth, nor do I claim to guarantee the production of 'true' knowledge. After all, the independence of the world from our knowledge of it means that this would be impossible. What I would say is that I acknowledge that open systems are complex, messy and ambiguous and that our theories of them, including my own can never quite capture this messiness. However, just because we cannot ever hope to capture the reality out there in the world in its entirety, this does not mean to say that we should reject hopes of making progress with our knowledge claims. There is still the need to pursue explanation of the different phenomena that make up our world; otherwise our knowledge about it would never advance. Instead we need to acknowledge that our knowledge claims can never be absolute and that we can only know the world through particular descriptions of it. This research is therefore just my attempt to give one particular description of reality.

Following on from the basic realist tenet that the world is separate from what we think about it, is the distinction that Baskhar (1975) makes between the 'intransitive' and 'transitive' dimensions of knowledge. The intransitive dimension is the 'realism' aspect of critical realism and is composed of the objects of science, the things we study, whether these are physical objects or processes or social phenomena. On the other hand, the theories and discourses which are used to describe the intransitive dimension (the media and resources of science) are part of the transitive which constitutes the 'critical' aspect of critical realism. When there are changes in the transitive dimension (the theories) this does not mean that there are concomitant changes in the intransitive (the objects of study that the theories are about). When a researcher changes their theory about an object of study, this does not mean to say that the phenomenon under study has undergone any significant change in itself. It just means that the way in which the researcher is construing the phenomenon has changed.

As well as distinguishing between the world and our experience of it, critical realism proposes a stratified ontology separated into the real, the actual and the empirical (Bhaskar, 1975). The real is whatever exists, whether this is natural or social and regardless of whether it is an empirical object for us or whether we have an understanding of its nature. So, the real includes physical and social objects as well as their structures and causal powers. These causal powers constitute the capacities of the objects to behave in certain ways and their specific susceptibilities to certain kinds of change. In the transitive dimension (with our theories) we attempt to identify the structures and powers of the intransitive objects, and the possibilities and potentials that these open up in the world. The possibilities and potentials are always contingent however, on a certain set of circumstances at any particular time; furthermore, the circumstances are also contingent upon the possibilities and potentials supplied by the powers of the intransitive objects. So critical realists need to examine these specific circumstances or in other words, what things must go together and the possibilities of what could happen given the nature of the intransitive objects.

The real then, refers to the intransitive objects and their structures and powers. The actual in this stratified ontology refers to what happens to those powers when they are activated to do what they do and what happens when they do what they do. If we take the example of the students' capacity to study as compared with the actual studying itself, the physical and mental structures from which the capacity to study  is derived (they have hands to pick up books, eyes to read information and the mental equipment to process the written word and gain understanding from it), would reside in the realm of the real, whilst the actual studying, which is the exercise of these structures and powers, and the effects of this (the results of studying) belong to the actual domain.

The final layer of the stratified ontology is the empirical which Sayer (2000) defines as the domain of experience. This experience can be of either the real or the actual. For example, we may be able to witness something like the structure of a particular organisation (the real) as well as what happens when this structure acts (the actual). However, some other organisation structures

may not be observable; we may have no experience of them. Our ability to observe certain structures may mean that we can more confidently say that they exist, but the existence of objects is not dependent upon our experience of them. Collier (1994) argues that because of this, realists do not just rely on observable criteria for making knowledge claims; they also accept a causal criterion too. That is to say that the case for the existence of unobservable objects can plausibly be made by examining the observable effects of these objects, since we can only explain these effects by referring to the products of the unobservable objects. The observable effects could not possibly occur without an object to cause them.

One imperative of critical realist ontology is therefore possibility. That is to say, that the powers of objects may exist unexercised, so that what has previously been known to happen does not represent the totality of what could possibly happen in the future. This makes it possible to understand how individuals can change to become something different to what they are not currently. Sayer gives the example of a previously unemployed person who could become employed, or we can learn things where previously we have had difficulty learning. It all depends upon the nature of the real objects present at any given time, since although these do not predetermine what will happen, these and their powers do have the ability to enable or constrain what happens. The critical realist world is therefore one of emergence in which the convergence of different features gives rise to new phenomena which has properties which cannot be reduced to its component parts. For example in the social world of university, people's roles and identities are very much interrelated, so that what one individual can do is dependent upon their relation to others. Therefore, a lecturer cannot be a lecturer unless s/he has a student or students to lecture to. What it is to be a lecturer cannot be explained at the level of the individual lecturer, but only in relation to other people, namely students. The powers that lecturers can draw upon are partly dependent upon their relations with others and partly in relation to the context, which has been my theoretical argument throughout this thesis.

Positivism on the other hand, 'systematically misrepresents society' (Sayer, 2000, p. 13) since it argues that it is possible to reduce social phenomena to its independent component parts. Unlike in the natural sciences where the objects of study such as metals or minerals stay the same, human being's sensitivity to their contexts due to their ability to interpret situations rather than being passively shaped by them means that social phenomena are constantly changing and evolving. For me, this makes critical realism a very positive and hopeful ontology since it means that a student who has previously been unable to learn and develop, due to the powers of the social structures present disabling them, could become better enabled if different social structures were in place or if different powers were activated from existing social structures. This points to the emancipatory power of critical realism which is possible according to Scollon (2003) precisely because it enables us to identify the a priori conditions which account for reality (the intransitive objects).

**Chapter Summary**

To summarise; given my philosophical leanings, my theoretical position can be elucidated as follows. My ontological assumptions in this research are firstly that learning can be accounted for as participation underpinned (can be enabled or disabled) by relationship. The specific nature and function of relationship which enables this participation and therefore learning is what this research sets out to explore. Secondly, that the process of participation and the relationships which underpin it are mediated by a multiplicity of mechanisms operating in an open system represented by the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological system, all of which interact in complicated and none predictable ways. Vygotskian, Cop and Bioecological perspectives are considered as to their ability to construct a framework for understanding the role of relationships in learning and the processes that impact upon this. Applying a critical realist perspective means there is furthermore the need to account for Sayer's three layers of reality. That is, the empirical (or that which the students themselves experience), as well as the real (which is that which exists, and their powers and tendencies which impact upon the students and their relationships in none predictable ways); and also

the actual (which is what happens when these powers are activated). Or in other words is the student enabled or disabled in their relationships and learning by the activation of the powers of the real objects (including objects like social structures) in the world. Only certain epistemological approaches are able to  address all three layers of Sayer's stratified ontology however and following Tobbell and O'Donnell, (2005), the next chapter goes on to argue that ethnography can fulfil this requirement.

# CHAPTER THREE

EPISTEMOLOGY

In this chapter I will discuss my epistemological approach and demonstrate how this follows on inexorably from my ontological arguments above. I will discuss the principles of ethnography with particular emphasis on the contribution of educational ethnographies. I then discuss the main methods and the ethical considerations of the ethnographic approach.

## Connecting ontology to epistemology

I have argued above that as well as the requirement to understand the nature and role of interpersonal and learning relationships, it is also necessary to understand the complex and messy ways in which processes in the environment can facilitate or restrict these. Accordingly, as well as looking at the interactions taking place between individuals at a micro level we need to also look more widely at the influences which impact upon the formation and maintenance of relationships and the ways in which it is possible for individuals to interact. This complexity demands a broad approach to data collection.

Furthermore, my philosophical leaning towards Critical Realism means that I realize that as well as the students' own experiencing there are also very real processes making important impacts upon their lives even though they may not have any direct knowledge of these. I believe that these processes need to be uncovered in research. In other words, it is the purpose of research to address the real and the actual as well as the empirical from Sayer's (2000) stratified ontology. Just because we cannot always observe the real and the actual, this does not mean that they do not exist. Since my aim in this research is to go beyond the subjective experience of students' experiences of learning relationships, to an understanding of why and how they experience them as they do, I need to use a method that will take into account of all three of Sayer's layers. I still need to address the empirical, but also importantly, the social

objects and their capacities, as well as what happens to these capacities when activated, which relates to the real and the actual. I need to understand how the capacities of the social objects impact upon students' relationships in the H.E. setting and how these in turn impact upon the students' participation and learning. I also need to address the complexity involved in relationships between students and students and between students and teachers and it is essential to use methodology which will capture all of this. A mixed method, ethnographic approach to data collection is required in order to achieve this, in which the researcher is also located in the context of the research (Tobbell and O'Donnell, 2005).

Ethnography is the prominent approach in the communities of practice literature of which I am making use in this research. Lave (1997) argues that ethnography is useful since it can provide insights into the practices of the research context because at the same time as the reported experiences of the participants and the observed experiences of the participants are being studied, ethnography also studies the context in which the practices are occurring. An ethnographic approach is particularly important in the present study, since learning relationships are complex and dynamic and applying too narrow a methodological approach to studying them could be seen as an attempt to constrain the phenomenon. As well as enabling access to all of Sayer's three levels of meaning, thereby addressing the complexity involved in relationships, ethnography will also usefully construct a framework in which individuals' behaviour is situated, (as demanded by the socio-cultural perspective this research takes) rather than analyzing this in isolation.

**Exploring Ethnography**

On reading the literature, it became clear that ethnography means different things to different people at different times and there is therefore little point in drawing strict boundaries around its meaning. However, Atkinson et al., (2001) argue that the two most common features of ethnography are a commitment to first hand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting. Wolcott (1997) argues that the term ethnography refers to both the research process and also to the product of the research, that is, the written

ethnographic account. Whilst Bryman (2001) lists five key features of ethnography:

1. Immersion of the researcher in a society;
2. The collection of descriptive data via fieldwork;
3. A concern with the culture of a society's members;
4. Seeking the perspective of the meanings that members of the society attach to their social world;
5. A commitment to representing the collected data understandable and significant to whoever reads it.

The fifth feature listed by Bryman also moves us beyond the research process to the end product of it.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p3) give a little more detail. They describe ethnography using the five points below:

1. *People's actions and accounts are studied in everyday contexts, rather than under conditions created by the researcher- such as in experimental setups or in highly structured interview situations. In other words, research takes place 'in the field.'*
2. *Data are gathered from a range of sources, including documentary evidence of various kinds, but participant observation and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones.*
3. *Data collection is, for the most part, relatively 'unstructured,' in two senses. First, it does not involve following through a fixed and detailed research design specified at the start. Second the categories that are used for interpreting what people say or do are not built into the data collection process through the use of observation schedules or questionnaires. Instead they are generated out of the process of data analysis.*
4. *The focus is usually on a few cases, generally fairly small-scale, perhaps a single setting or group of people. This is to facilitate in-depth study.*
5. *The analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these*

*are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider, contexts. What are produced, for the most part, are verbal descriptions, explanations, and theories; quantification and statistical analysis play a subordinate role at most.*

In considering how (or indeed whether) ethnography in educational settings differs from that completed in other contexts, I looked specifically to the journal 'Ethnography and Education' for guidance. In the editorial of the first issue of this, (Troman, 2006, p1) lists the key elements of ethnographic research applied to the study of educational contexts as:

- *The focus on the study of cultural formation and maintenance;*
- *The use of multiple methods and thus the generation of rich and diverse forms of data;*
- *The direct involvement and long term engagement of the researcher;*
- *The recognition that the researcher is the main research instrument;*
- *The high status given to the accounts of participants' perspectives and understandings;*
- *The engagement in a spiral of data collection, hypothesis building and theory testing- leading to further data collection; and*
- *The focus on a particular case in depth, but providing the basis for theoretical generalization.*

It can be seen from the lists above that there are some differences between the sets of criteria that the various writers argue should be met in ethnography. However, there are also many similarities and ethnography in educational settings appears to possess much the same features as ethnography in other contexts. In the main, it seems that for a study to be described as ethnographic there needs to be long term engagement in the field, the use of multiple research methods and the generation of rich data (Walford, 2009). Ethnographers typically employ a relatively open-ended approach beginning with an interest in a particular aspect of social life (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Their approach is an exploratory one and it is sometimes the case that

the questions that the researcher starts out with may be refined or even transformed during the course of the research.

There is the need to acknowledge however, that there are a variety of ways in which the term ethnography is used. In approaching this research I need to make clear to the reader the way in which the term is being used in this thesis so that they can see from which point of view the claims that the research is making comes. I needed to at least decide upon an approximation of what the term ethnography means to me from my own ontological and epistemological position in order to make decisions for my own research. I therefore engaged with the various schools of thought around ethnography and upon reading the literature surrounding this, it appears there are many debates between them. Space in this thesis does not allow a detailed account of all of these, nor of the entire history of ethnography. Therefore, in order to explicate my own position I have decided to discuss the school of ethnography which best reflects my own views on meaning making. This discussion will also give insight into why this school is appropriate to my research.

## Ethnography and Meaning Making

The development of ethnographic fieldwork is historically inextricably linked with the Chicago school, and as will become clear in the following discussion, it is the symbolic interactionism which came out of this school that is most applicable and useful in my own investigation. The Chicago ethnographers were interested in the everyday life of communities and the symbolic interactions that were characteristics of those communities (Deegan, 2001). Their ethnographies spanned the years between 1917 and 1942 and generally studied face to face everyday interactions in particular settings and generated an important picture of urban life (Deegan, 2001). This parallels my research interests into learning relationships in H.E. since everyday interactions between individuals together with the particularities of the university practices which either allow or impede these interactions are two of the significant foci in which I am interested. This is because it seems plausible that these foci may have a significant part to play in the formation of relationships in the learning arena.

The common world view of the core Chicago ethnographies was influenced by Dewey and Mead who had connections with the Chicago school community. Importantly, from my point of view given the importance that I am placing on investigating relationships and the interactions between individuals which facilitate or disable these, Mead's (1934) writings emphasize the social nature of the self, arguing that we become human through our interactions with others. Blumer, (1969) coined the term 'symbolic interaction' for Mead's social psychology but this was just one of the intellectual schools of thought coming from the Chicago school. Symbolic interactionism's commitment to openness means that it is difficult (and some might say undesirable) to define it or pinpoint what it actually consists of. However, Blumer, the man who gave symbolic interactionism its name, actually makes quite a detailed statement about what he believes a symbolic interactionist approach consists of. He states:

'*The symbolic interactionist approach rests upon the premise that human action takes place always in a situation that confronts the actor and that the actor acts on the basis of **defining this situation** that confronts him.*' (Blumer, 1997:4, emphasis in original).

Gray (2004, p. 21) also attempts to define symbolic interactionism, arguing that '*the essential tenets of symbolic interactionism are that:*

- *People interpret meaning of objects and actions in the world and then act upon those interpretations.*
- *Meanings arise from the process of social interaction*
- *Meanings are handled in, and are modified by, an interactive process used by people in dealing with the phenomena that are encountered.*'

These definition attempts suggest that from a symbolic interactionist perspective, the individual is always endeavouring to interpret the meaning from the situation in which they find themselves, in order to make sense of it. The emphasis on meanings arising from the process of social interaction is

central to my ontological belief in undertaking this research in that it is argued that the interaction between individuals in the H.E. context may impact upon the relationships which emerge and the extent to which these are able to underpin participation, learning and the emergence of identity.

Rock (2001) argues that there are several discursive themes underpinning symbolic interactionism and these all chime with my own ontological beliefs in undertaking the present research. The first one of these is *idealism* which maintains that our consciousness is interpretive and experiential. This means that when we react to a situation, it is our consciousness of facts rather than the facts as they really are that we react to. However, since interpretation of meaning is a dynamic process, this means that an individual's consciousness is not fixed, it is constantly in flux. So, although people might be conscious decision makers and active participants in their own world, they are also constrained by processes in the world which individuals may not be consciously or empirically aware of (see above regarding Sayers three ontological layers). That is to say that, in dealing with the world, people act upon it. Acting upon it helps them to learn about the world and reformulate their ideas. Reformulating their ideas will mean that they then have more questions to ask of the world, which can then lead to yet newer ideas and so on. The world that people experience will appear therefore to be constantly evolving and changing, but so will the person as they ask more and more questions of the world and work out how they fit into this. In other words, they are learning and their identity is in a constant state of evolution. As the person asks questions of the world and acts upon it, there will always be a part of it that the person is as yet unaware of. However, this does not mean that this part of the world does not exist, rather that their unawareness of it may mean that there are constraints put upon them about what it is possible for them to know.

The idea that people are constrained in what they are able to know in this way and therefore not quite free comes from empiricism which is another discursive theme around symbolic interactionism which Rock describes. Formalism is the third of these themes and this argues that research should focus upon the more general *forms* that consciousness uses to interpret experience rather than

attending to the unique contents of experience (Rock, 2001). Although we never face the exact same situation twice, as conscious individuals we do use general language *forms* and *forms* of logic in order to help us to work out what type or *form* of reaction is appropriate for us to make in response to a situation.

In claiming that symbolic interactionist ethnography is appropriate for the purposes of the present research however, we need to acknowledge that there are also problems for researchers assuming this epistemological position. For example, to what extent is it possible to understand our participants' behaviour if they are always in a state of flux since as soon as our data are recorded any meanings that we extrapolate are superseded by their ongoing thought processes, actions and meaning making. Not only are the participants in a state of flux, but so are we too as researchers and our own renegotiation of meaning may result in a constant repositioning of our research. The research field is constantly changing and so is the researcher who is also continually responding to emerging questions. It is clear that ethnography from a symbolic interactionist perspective is a messy and non predictable process and one could wonder about the value of the knowledge gained from this. However, all the researcher can do is attempt to explain what is happening at the time in which their data are collected in any given setting. Furthermore, at the same time, acknowledge that symbolic interactionist ethnography is a process and that it is precisely because of the constant flux of changing meanings and identities that one is able to uncover the complexity and the very real processes impacting upon individuals of which they are unaware. Symbolic interactionist ethnography therefore has an emancipatory function since not all processes which impact upon the participants in the context will benefit them. Processes may in some instances actually impede participants' development, so throwing light upon them and reflecting on them can be helpful to participants' lives.

Having explored the issues surrounding ethnography and the role of ethnography in meaning making, I am satisfied that this is the avenue upon which I should embark. However, I am still no further forward when it comes to knowing how to actually do ethnography. I therefore turn to the extant

educational ethnography research in the hope that this will throw some light on this.

**Educational Ethnography**

Searching through the educational ethnography literature, it appears that much of this has been conducted in mainstream classes in state schools with students from the age of 7-16 years. For example, Hammersley's (1990) study used social interactionist ethnography to highlight the structure of interaction in the classroom between teachers and their pupils. He shows how the teacher student relationship is symbolized and reinforced as one in which the pupil is subordinate to the more powerful teacher, who is often faced with having to make a classroom full of students behave as one subordinate individual who stays quiet and  listens whilst the teacher talks. Another example of the pupils being subordinate to the teacher highlighted by Hammersley is where the teacher demands and is given the right to routinely expect answers from pupils and interpret and judge their answers. The subordination of the pupils is also brought to light in an ethnographic study in schools by Hirst and Cooper (2008). Drawing on Wenger (2000) they argue that space is fundamentally involved in the construction of social formations such as CoPs. They explore how teachers sometimes '*choreograph'* (Hirst and Cooper, 2008, p. 431) the classroom space in such a way that  there are negative implications for the students' participation in their CoP and therefore for their identities. They suggest that teachers could think about choreographing the classroom differently in such a way that divisions between the teachers and students are broken down. These studies demonstrate how ethnography can be useful in highlighting power relationships, however, they do not provide me with any insights into the actual data collection process since they go directly into an analysis of the data, giving no description whatsoever of how this data was actually collected.

Woods' book (1979) The Divided School, also describes ethnographic research in a mainstream state school. His research stems from questions around interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal processes in the secondary school setting. Like Hammersley, Wood also describes his research as derived from symbolic interactionism. Pupils and teachers within a school he argues are

constantly interpreting, adjusting, evaluating and changing and Woods sets out to investigate the processes and interactions between them. Wood's research involved him '*living*' (Woods (1979, p. 3) in the school for a year in which he shared in the everyday activities of the school as a participant observer. He observed the events as they occurred and took note of informal conversations he had with individuals in the setting. The overall connecting theme arising from Woods' research is that of *division.* There are two points of division which Woods refers to, firstly, the divisions between groups of people such as parents, pupils and teachers and secondly, the division which arises through the compartmentalization of school and learning from the outside world. Woods argues that some of these divisions arise through external factors and others by institutional factors themselves. The strategies and adaptations adopted by teachers and pupils within the school in order to negotiate their role and identity within the setting are expressions of these divisions, Woods argues, which in turn consolidates and promotes them even further. However, Woods maintains that some of these divisions are not so deep rooted as others and whilst there are powerful societal forces imparting their influence on these divisions, this is in part tempered by individual teacher choice. It is noteworthy that although teacher choice is spoken about, pupil choice is not mentioned here, so one is led to believe that they are not afforded any in the setting that Woods studied. Despite the fact that he makes the point that some of the divisions in the school are not deep rooted; Wood's overarching conclusion is that school serves the interests of a stratified society. This school ethnography also brings to the fore the fact that the teacher is more powerfully positioned in the school environment than the pupils and by highlighting power relations in this way it could be  argued that research of this nature can have an emancipatory function relevant to my own aims. However, apart from a very brief discussion about participant observation being the appropriate research style for symbolic interactionism and a few paragraphs about gaining understanding through 'naturalistic' talk rather than interviews, there is nothing to enlighten me as to how Woods himself actually observed and took field notes or how he noted the information he gathered from talk.

Corsaro (1981, 2003) entered into both the American and Italian pre school setting over a period of almost 30 years to investigate peer culture and interaction. He noted the complexity of children's social structures and his understanding of this permitted him acceptance from the children he studied. This allowed him access to the processes of the children's peer culture through interacting with them on their level and becoming 'one of the kids.' Corsaro criticizes developmental psychologists who portray young children as self absorbed and ego-centric, since in his observations he saw very little solitary play over many years and this and other observations led him to assert that children are in fact highly social. Psychologists, he argues should therefore not simply focus on the child's concept of friendship, but should instead attend to the friendship processes which he claims are far more complex than would ever be predicted from descriptions of children as egocentric. Corsaro argued that research should view the child instead as embedded in the context of peer culture which is by turn embedded in adult culture. He uses his work to argue for a better life for children asserting that research which has the tendency to under estimate children means that we do not see them as fully developed humans and so we are dismissive of their voice and they are denied the same rights as adults.

Reading Corsaro's study reassures me that ethnography is the way for me to explore relationships since it highlights the need for us to concentrate on the complexity of processes underpinning relationships and that individuals should be seen as embedded in their contexts. Additionally, it again highlights how ethnography can be emancipatory and used to argue for a better life for the group studied. It furthermore provides some insights into data collection, since it gives very detailed accounts of how Corsaro gained access to the children's cultures in both Italy and the USA through ensuring that he became accepted by them. However, the way that he did this was particular to each school. He had to find different ways of achieving acceptance depending upon the individual setting and so it seems there is no one formula for becoming accepted and immersed in a particular culture. It all depends upon the individuals in that setting and the relationships that the researcher is able to negotiate with them. The implications of this for my own research meant that I

became aware that I was just going to have to go in there and 'feel my way around' when it came to negotiating my acceptance into the culture. Apart from the different physical setting in my own research compared with Corsaro's, I would be dealing with adult students and university lecturers who are very different to the children and pre school teachers in Corsaro's research. On taking field notes, there is very brief mention of Corsaro observing episodes of peer interaction and then slipping away to a secluded area of school to jot down a few notes to be expanded upon later (suggesting that Corsaro did not take notes in front of the children). But, this is not expanded upon and Corsaro does not explain his reasons for doing this so I am again left with little to go on for my own data collection.

There are very few ethnographic studies in the H.E. setting itself to draw upon. However, one ethnographic study which neatly provides a rationale for the further exploration of the role of relationships in H.E. is a study by Tobbell et al., (2010) which explored university practice and participation in relation to the transition to postgraduate study. Data were collected from five UK universities where the researchers conducted one to one interviews with students at the commencement of the academic year and then again at the end. They also conducted focus groups with students at different stages of their study; asked students to keep email diaries over the academic year; conducted classroom observations, one to one interviews with staff and document analysis of university and degree handbooks, and module handbooks. One important finding of this research relates to university practices which emphasise independence of postgraduate students from other students and staff. This practice of independence means that postgraduate students are expected to be responsible for their own learning. There were inevitably tensions complicating their transition therefore, because this increasing emphasis on independent study was found to engender feelings of isolation and lack of competence amongst students as they attempted to negotiate and understand the meaning of university practices which it could be argued involves very social processes and so cannot be easily accomplished alone. This finding provides a rationale for my own investigation of relationships in the university setting and their role in the learning process. The study also provides some detail about the different

data collection methods used such as the one to one interviews with students and focus groups and longitudinal email diaries designed to enable collection of personal experience and reflections of experiences overtime. The focus of the study was however, on the subjective student experience, so although observational methods are referred to in the study in which they are used in order to elucidate student experience and staff perceptions of post-graduate teaching there is less detail about the use of these for me to draw on.

In my search through the H.E. ethnography literature I also came across Gaye Tuchman's (2009) book, Wannabe u: Inside the Corporate University. This is an ethnographic account of how a particular research university in the US transformed itself into a university that is ranked more highly in the league tables by taking on corporate values. It tells however, how in the process of climbing the league tables, the staff members lost power, were required to work longer and harder with less and were constantly assessed against accountability measures which were akin to business strategies such as quality control rather than a real desire to offer the students a better teaching experience. The students themselves, benefited from better facilities on campus, but their class sizes increased and their education suffered as a consequence. Again, this provides a rationale for studying relationships in the higher education setting. If staff are having to work longer and harder and are constantly assessed against accountability measures, then they could arguably become demoralized, which might in turn impact upon how they relate to others in the setting. Furthermore, if larger class sizes are shown to have a detrimental effect on the students' education despite the improved facilities, then the reasons for this too need to be explored. For example, one could reasonably speculate that larger numbers of students means that there may be less opportunity for regular interpersonal interaction, which means that relationships are not given the time and opportunity to develop. The book carefully situates the research, describing the setting in great detail and then going on to give an in-depth narrative about the transformation of the university to a more corporate model. When considering the actual data collection methods however, there is no description of how Tuchman set about doing this and so again I am unable

to gather any information to help me to decide how to go about my own data collection.

Player-Koro (2011) undertook ethnographic study of mathematics teacher education at a Swedish University. She drew on 30 hours of participant observation from lectures and conversational interviews with the students who attended these. Player-Koro's intention in undertaking the study was to understand the complexities of the social situation in which the lectures took place and explore what actually forms the communication process in these. Player-Koro concluded that the teaching of subject theory was demonstrated to have been based upon traditional and highly structured lectures.  She furthermore uses her data to problematize the suggestion that teaching of mathematics in teacher education is related to general competencies in mathematics that are needed for school teaching practice. This assumed link means that there is the concomitant assumption that improvement of maths competencies in teachers will result in improved maths skills amongst school pupils and she points out that this is not always the case. The need to question this assumption is not she argues visible through research on mathematics learning within the framework of what is termed the didactic triad, (which is the relationships between teacher, learners and mathematical content) which is the usually privileged space of enquiry. Player-Koro argues that this assumption only becomes obvious through ethnographic research and analysis. So, when researching learning, relationships and the complexity involved in these we are again provided with a validation for the use of ethnographic methodology for the purposes of the present research. Yet, again we are not told how to actually carry this out. Just a few sentences of the paper relate to the data collection methods used.  Player-Koro states that data collection consisted of participant observation of lectures, conversational interviews with students, document analysis and video and audio recordings, yet no detail is given as to how she went about this.

So, my search through the literature has led me to the conclusion that there is a general lack of educational ethnographies and that this is particularly true for

H.E. Furthermore, the few studies that do exist do not go into very much detail about how they collected their data for me to draw on for my own work.

**Doing Educational Ethnography**

In doing ethnographic work, the usual task is to make the strange familiar (Goodley, 2001). However, in educational settings such as the one in which I am undertaking my research we are faced with an environment that is very familiar to us, since typically, we spend the years between our fifth and sixteenth birthday in the education system and many of us may continue our education way beyond this. Educational ethnography therefore has a different task, in that the ethnographer is required to make the familiar educational setting strange. This is so that the everyday taken for granted goings on which may otherwise seem unremarkable because of their familiarity can become more obvious. This positioning of the researcher with regards to the research setting has given rise to various debates with discourses around both insider and outsider myths surrounding these (Manay, 2010). Since I find myself in a position where I am a researcher in an extremely familiar setting, given that I have both studied and worked at my focal university, I need to engage with these debates.

It is sometimes considered that insiders will portray their group in an unrealistically favourable light. Furthermore, that because what they are studying is so familiar to them, their research may be clouded by common understandings so that events which would appear important to an outsider seem unremarkable and unworthy of mention to the insider (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). Outsider myths therefore position the outsider as the ideal researcher, since only they are deemed able to have the emotional distance and objectivity required to conduct valid research of a particular group. Whereas, conversely, insider myths would assert that the attributes of objectivity and emotional distance would mean that the outsider was incapable of a full appreciation of the workings of the group. By extension, this leads us onto issues of epistemic privilege where it is considered that only those researchers who have something in common with the group to be researched are actually capable of researching and representing them. Epistemic privilege

is usually claimed in research looking at groups who are traditionally seen as marginalized due to for example ethnicity, class, gender or sexuality and such research is seen as emancipatory (Hodkinson, 2005; Mannay, 2010). However, the emancipatory nature of such research could be questioned since a claim for epistemic privilege for one particular group grants a certain authority and hierarchy to that group, but as Skeggs (1997) points out, this is at the expense of other groups as by privileging one group, other groups are inevitably silenced. For example in feminist research, Manay (2010) asserts that only women are able to truly represent the lives of women because they have a shared gender. However, this discounts the many differences between women. What about those of different socio- economic status, different class, ethnicity or marital status?

It could be argued that all research relationships are highly complex and that dichotomies such as male/female, working class/middle class and insider/outsider for example are insufficient descriptions of these relationships (Manay, 2010). Therefore, that instead of considering whether we are an insider or an outsider with regards to the research context we inhabit, it is more important to reflexively acknowledge all the subjectivities we bring to our research and our own unique position. My own position in the present research context is a complex one. I am undertaking research in an establishment where I studied for my undergraduate degree, where I am now a graduate student and in which I am also occasionally employed as a part time hourly paid lecturer. Therefore, it could be argued that I am an insider. However, I am not actually collecting data within my own department, instead I am collecting this in a department which is in the same school as my own department, but is a completely separate subject with different lecturers and different everyday practices to my own department. So, does this make me an outsider? In actual fact, I find myself completely unable to define whether I am indeed an insider or an outsider. I view the position I actually inhabit as neither one thing nor another. However, this affords me some advantages of both the insider and the outsider positions. For example, since I am undertaking research in a familiar institutional setting, this means that I am somewhat of an insider and do not have to waste time finding my way around and understanding the fundamentals

of the way that the university is run. Manay (2010) argues that researchers working in familiar settings are at an advantage since cultural and linguistic barriers do not have to be overcome and that this shared understanding can offset the power balance between researcher and researched. I feel this was true of my research since participants appeared to take it for granted that I knew what they were talking about. Also, that I already had some understanding and therefore empathy with them. This meant that in interviews, conversations and during my observations they were extremely open with me. I also had the advantage of being able to more easily gain access to participants. Furthermore, even though the specialist knowledge of the department was different to my own area of specialism, it was not so far removed that I was unable to on the whole understand the interactions about it that were taking place.

One advantage of being an outsider on the other hand (in respect of the fact that I am undertaking my research in an unfamiliar department within the university), is that the familiar everyday happenings which I may have taken for granted if researching in my own department had the potential to appear more remarkable and important for me to report than would have otherwise been the case. This meant that I was able to make the familiar strange, especially because there was so much difference between the practices of the department in which I was a student and have taught and the department in which my research was couched. Another way in which I was able to make the familiar strange was (as will be discussed in more detail in the data collection chapter) by having no preconceived questions in the interview part of the ethnography. On balance it could be argued that there were advantages to being both (or neither) an insider or an outsider in this research.  I hope that by making clear my actual positioning in this research context the reader becomes aware of this in relation to any knowledge claims I make since they come from a perspective underpinned by the position described. I will now engage with the issues surrounding the actual data collection methods entailed in ethnography.

**Ethnographic Data Collection Methods**

Ethnography is not simply a collection of research methods, it is also a way of approaching knowledge and understanding the world- it is an epistemological position. However, the ethnographer needs to engage with the context they are studying, interact with participants in the field and gather data. There are specific collection and recording techniques that are consistently referred to in the literature, but little detail as to how these techniques are actually carried out. As argued above, the studies tend to omit discussion of this and prioritize giving detail about decisions around data analysis and the researcher's own personal reflections. There is still the need for me to understand the specific techniques involved and the issues around them. The following discussion is an attempt to reach some understanding of the main techniques involved and describe these to the reader.

*Participant Observation and Ethnographic Field Notes*

Participant observation emerged in the literature as the core ethnographic technique used by ethnographers to collect their data. Participant observation involves the ethnographer immersing themselves in a particular social world, usually on a long term basis, in order to observe, experience and represent the social processes that occur in that setting (Emerson et al, 2001). Ethnographers record their observations and experiences in field notes. These are representations of the people, places and observed events in written form so that events happening in their own moment can be recorded and returned to by the ethnographer at a later date. However, since field notes are representations, we should acknowledge that they are therefore selective. The individual researcher will have chosen significant features of the field and events to record and will have ignored other features which did not seem note worthy. They are also selective in the way that the events are written about or framed. So, the ways that field notes are written is idiosyncratic to the particular researcher and another researcher may feel that different events are more remarkable and noteworthy. Consequently, findings offered by one researcher may be different to the ones offered by another in the very same field and we could therefore question their value. However, it could be argued that all

research (even that which makes claims of objectivity) is selective in that which it chooses to notice and that which it chooses to ignore and also in the way in which it frames its findings. In addition, we could argue that at least when field notes have been used in a research study; we are made aware that there are limitations due to the individual researcher's subjectivities. Furthermore, ethnography utilizes multiple data collection methods, so triangulation of the data from all the different methods will help support its authenticity. Despite the selective nature of field notes, they are in any case according to Walford (2009) the basis upon which ethnographies are constructed and the main record from which the ethnographer tests their developing ideas and theories. Atkinson's (1992, p.5) characterization of ethnography as '*a double process of textual production and reproduction*' also suggests an important role for field notes since it is these initial everyday notes which contemporaneously record observations and reflections about the field of study that enable the ethnographer to complete the final ethnographic account, or the reproduced account of the happenings in the field. However, despite all these suggestions that field notes are so centrally important in ethnography, there is little detail in the research literature about how the various researchers have approached this data collection method and there is no one set method which one can follow.

Walford (2009) actually spoke to four prominent ethnographers about how they produced field notes. He found that each had their own way of working in this regard and argued that field notes are idiosyncratic in nature and personal to the individual researcher. It seems that it is incumbent on the individual researcher to decide upon the best approach for themselves and their own study. Walford's paper is exceptional in the literature in that it presents quite detailed information about how the four ethnographers he interviewed, write and make use of field notes in their own research. One of the clear findings from Walford's research was that as well as the differences in writing and using field notes, the ethnographers interviewed also showed some similarities in the ways that they constructed them and in some of the terminology in which they described how they wrote them. There was however, no consistent terminology used by the four ethnographers to describe the stages that they go through when recording what they have seen in the field. All four of them take a

notebook to write in, however, what the initial jottings completed in the field were called, varied between the researchers. When it came to what the researchers actually recorded, some of them recorded whatever occurred to them and added times to the record as they went along. One drew a map of the room and recorded her position in relation to the participants. Sometimes priority was given to whatever was said publicly to the whole class rather than noting individual conversations between say the teacher and one pupil. Another of the ethnographers was looking specifically for creative teaching and the ways that the teachers were teaching to record in his field notes.

The amount of writing that the various ethnographers wrote in the field, depended upon the actual setting in which they were involved. When the particular observation involved moving around a lot it was not practical to write anything more than very brief notes in the field. Whereas, the ethnographers whose research was set in classrooms could sit at a desk, blend into the background and had more opportunity to write quite extensive notes. In this situation the ethnographers did not feel the need to even expand on their notes later when they left the field. Taking notes in staffrooms posed more problematic however, since some of the researchers said that they felt conspicuous as the staff were sometimes suspicious of them and what they were writing. One researcher had had people grab his notes to read them and so was always careful what he wrote in a non judgemental way. So, it appears that what ethnographers do depends upon the context they inhabit and their personal preferences. Some situations make it difficult or uncomfortable to take notes, while other situations lend themselves more readily to openly taking quite extensive ones. Emerson et al. (2001) note similar differences and similarities to Walford's ethnographers, arguing that ethnographers have in mind different things that they describe as field notes. However, as Walford argues, the basic task of field notes is the same for them all. That is that whilst taking the limitations of memory into account they need to record as much as possible of what researchers perceive as relevant to their research project in order to form a record which can later inform their analysis and writing.

As well as the different approaches to recording details in the field, there are also, according to Van Maanen (1988/ 2011) different styles of writing these too. These styles reflect the extent to which the researcher's self is revealed in the field notes. According to Van Maanen (1988) there are three major styles used to write up fieldwork accounts. The first of these is '*realist tales*' which is marked by '*almost complete absence of the author from most segments of the finished text*' Van Maanen, (1988, p.46.) In these accounts there is the description of concrete details of daily life and routines in addition to descriptions of what people say and do, depicting events through the '*native point of view.*' There is an absence of self- reflection and doubt in the account, in what Van Maanen describes as '*interpretative omnipotence*' (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 51). The researcher takes an all knowing, almost divine view. A realist approach such as this implies that notes are taken contemporaneously in the field as they actually happen.  In contrast, the second style described by Van Maanen (1988,) is '*confessional tales*' in which the researcher's experience becomes all important. Field notes written in this style describe the research process itself from the ethnographer's point of view. These personal and methodological descriptions are clearly separated in the writing from the social and cultural life depicted in the final ethnographic account. The final style described by Van Maanen, (1988) is impressionist tales. These tales describe striking stories and are intended to draw readers immediately into the story which is told to them from beginning to end. The writing of these tales suggests that events are actually recorded after leaving the field. Field notes usually however, according to Emerson et al. (2001)  consist of a mixture of these and other styles in what they describe as an unruly mix which is often quite idiosyncratic to the individual researcher.

Also in relation to the extent to which the researcher's self is included in the field notes we should consider the point of view from which we are writing too, since different points of view give different perspectives to a researcher's reporting which inclines the researcher to write in certain ways. For example we could write from a first person perspective which would limit the point of view to that which the researcher knows experiences, infers or can find out by talking with the participants in the scene. So in field notes from this point of view the

researcher writes only the events she/he witnessed, experienced and remembers and this is from her/his own perspective and in her/his own voice. This is particularly useful if she or he is immersed in the setting as a participant since it allows her/him to give a naturally unfolding account of experience as seen through the participant's viewpoint. Conversely, if we write from the third person point of view, the researcher writes as though detached from the situation which gives a sense of objectivity in which the writers attention is focused on others actions and voices rather than their own. As Emerson et al. (2001) point out however, there is the danger here of slipping into an omnipresent point of view in which there is a tendency for the researcher to write as though they have privileged access to the participants thoughts, feelings and motives as well as to their overt behaviours. This can reduce the multiplicity of perspectives into a single one which could conceal the complex processes and varied understandings involved in the meaning of events (Emerson et al., 1995). This is something I would wish to avoid given my concern with revealing the complexity of the processes underpinning the role of relationships in learning.

We also need to consider the stance we assume towards the people we are actually studying and the way in which they live when writing our field notes. Our stance towards our participants and their way of life will shape how we observe and participate in the scene and this will in turn shape the content of our field notes, (Emerson et al., 2001). For example, are we able to identify with our participants so that we might write about them sympathetically? Or, do we feel distanced from them in which case we might write less kindly about them, perhaps prioritizing and framing certain incidents in ways that may present the participants in a less favourable light. Our stance towards our participants and the way they live their lives is reflected in our choice of words and the tone of our descriptions and we should be aware of this and the implications it has for our research when making our field notes.

Another aspect of how much of our selves we reveal in field notes is that we need to consider whether personal feelings and emotions have a place in them. Emerson et al. (2001) maintain that early anthropological ethnographers tended

to separate descriptions of others' actions from their writing about their own reactions and emotions using personal journals and diaries. However, from the 1960's the value of including accounts of personal feelings and emotions has been recognized (Emerson et al., 2001,) and Lofland and Lofland (1995) describe three purposes for this. Firstly, they argue that the ethnographer's response and feelings towards a situation may reflect the naturally occurring feelings of participants in the setting. Secondly, our feelings and emotions towards a situation in the field may provide us with important analytic leads. Finally, they argue that documenting our emotions and feelings over time will help to highlight any of our own biases or prejudices and our changing attitudes towards people and situations. We could argue however, that emotions are idiosyncratic and that each participant in the field will display emotions unique to themselves depending upon their own personal history and reaction to events in the field. So, it is unlikely that the emotions of the researcher in the field will reflect any other persons in the field apart from their own. The second reason Lofland and Lofland give for documenting the researcher's emotions seems more constructive in that our emotions can sometimes alert us to things that we need to consider and may therefore help us to identify analytic possibilities. Also the documentation of personal emotions in order to highlight researcher bias seems a useful tactic, but I am still unconvinced about the inclusion of my own personal emotional responses to situations in my field notes.

Walford, (2009) speaks out against a movement in ethnography which seeks alternatives to what he calls the '*traditional form of ethnography*.' He criticizes the work of Ellis and Bochner (1996) within this movement even though he concedes that their work is widely popular and well cited. Walford argues that the driving force behind Ellis and Bochner's work is that narratives in the humanities and those in the social sciences should see continuity, so that ethnography '*is seen as story-telling where the researcher is centrally involved in the process and the product,'* Walford, (2009, p.275). The boundaries are therefore blurred as to what ethnography is in what is seen as a democratic process in which all voices can be heard and everyone can join in. The texts produced are seen as open to a multiplicity of interpretations where the

emotional response is seen as all important and sometimes more important than the analysis. The only details of how Ellis and Bochner actually conduct their work are elucidated in the form of imagined (or maybe real) conversations between the two authors (Walford, 2009). The emphasis that their work places upon emotional experience can be seen in part of one of these conversations in which Ellis states:

*'I don't know, sometimes I think analysis becomes an unnecessary diversion from the emotional experience of the story.'* (Ellis and Bochner, 1996, p.30.)

This conversation between Bochner and Ellis sits uneasily with me since it appears to privilege the researcher's and readers emotional experiencing over the real life experiencing of the participants. The participants' experiencing may furthermore, be underpinned by processes which are detrimental to their lives although they may be unaware of these. I would argue that these processes could not be brought to light without some form of analysis and that it is therefore unfair on the participants to place more importance on the emotional impact of the story rather than upon analysis.

All things considered, my review of both empirical studies and writings about ethnography still leave me with many uncertainties surrounding participant observation and the compilation of field notes since the authors of the literature reviewed do not invite the reader into their decision making processes as to why they made the choices they did. My epistemological position is therefore perhaps the only thing left to fall back on to provide me with some decision making guidance. Accordingly, drawing on this I would argue for a contested reality which requires some reflexivity on my part to make my position clear. This reflexivity may also require the inclusion of some of my emotional experiencing. However, at the same time I feel that it is the lives of my participants that are all important and I should try to represent them as faithfully as possible or to write mainly in the style of what Van Maanen describes as *'realist tales.'* Whilst I acknowledge that all writings are selective and distorting due to the difficulties of representation and also recognize that there are multiple realities available to us, I feel that research should at least attempt to

reduce the distortion as much as possible in order to do our participants justice. I firmly believe that the ethnography is about them and for them and not something we do because it 'provides *an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself …'* (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 738).

### *Ethnographic Interviews and Conversations*

The vast majority of ethnographies also include interviews as part of the data collection process. It seems that whilst there are many text books which discuss interviewing technique and transcription, the actual process of interviewing appears again to be very personal and unique to the individual researcher and their research project. As with observation and field notes, there is little detail about how they set about actually doing interviews in published studies. Sherman Heyl (2001) argues that ethnographic interviewing is seen as different to other types of interviewing since in any definition of the ethnographic interview there will include the establishment of respectful on-going relationships with participants where enough rapport has been built for there to be a genuine exchange of views. In addition, that there should be enough time and openness in the interviews for a purposeful exploration of the meanings that the participants place upon events. Sherman Heyl argues that it is the time factor, the duration and frequency of contact and the quality of the emerging relationship which helps distinguish ethnographic interviewing from other types of interviews. Allowing this time for the development of relationships empowers the participants to be able to shape the questions that they are asked and even the focus of the whole research study (Sherman Heyl, 2001).

Spradley (1979), notes that the essential element of the ethnographic interview is a concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people whom we are trying to understand. In which case, the role of the ethnographic interviewer is to communicate to the interviewee that '*I want to know what you know in the way that you want to know it,'* (Spradley, 1979, p.34.) Sherman Heyl argues that researchers employ ethnographic interviewing due to their recognition of the complexity of human experiencing. This is also relevant to my own research since it is this complexity that I aim to understand through hearing directly from my participants how they interpret their experiences and what these mean to

them. Sherman Heyl notes that debates around the nature of knowledge and what we can know bring to the fore different positions about the important considerations when interviewing. Yet, she argues there is still agreement of the goals of ethnographic interviewing in which she says we should:

1. *'Listen well and respectfully, developing an ethical engagement with the participants at all stages of the project;*
2. *acquire a self awareness of our role in the construction of meaning during the interview process;*
3. *be cognizant of ways in which both the ongoing relationship and the broader social context affect the participants, the interview process, and the project outcomes; and*
4. *recognize that dialogue is discovery and only partial knowledge will ever be attained.'* Sherman Heyl (2001, p. 370.)

These appear to be sensible goals and useful guidelines to follow. However, a reading of these goals highlights the problematic nature of the data obtained through interviews in the same way that there were questions with field note data. The questions this time are in terms of meanings to different people in the field; the context provided by the interview situation and the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. Accordingly, we need to ask to what extent interviews can help the ethnographer to faithfully represent the research context and we should be cautious in our use of interview data. The interview is co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee and furthermore any responses given to questions are produced for that particular interview event and in those particular circumstances. Interviewees will only tell the interviewer what they want them to know about them and through careful choice of words may temper their version of events to make the interviewer look upon them favourably or sympathetically. Even if we were able to side step the epistemological question of whether there is a reality which can be communicated through interviews, the interviewee may not have a very good recall of events, incomplete knowledge about a situation and their own subjective view and opinions about situations depending on their past and present circumstances.

Hammersley (1990) also engages with similar arguments around interview data, noting that there are concerns around the discrepancy between what people say and what they actually do. Also, that the interview context itself constructs the talk which is produced.  We can only ever hope to gain the interviewees subjective perceptions of events and opinions and this is further tempered by how much they are actually prepared to reveal so these may be quite far from any form of reality as we or any other person for that matter sees it. Even then, from a symbolic interactionist point of view, the interviewees' perceptions and opinions will change over time, the more they interact with and in their world. So we are again faced with the question discussed above in the section about field notes, of whether we should even contemplate doing research if the minute we write it down (or even sooner) it is obsolete.

Walford, (2007) justifies the use of interviews however in ethnography where there is not a sole reliance on interview data and where there are other data sources available too.  Walford (2007) interviewed and engaged with the work of several ethnographers in order to explore the way in which they use interviews and conversations in their ethnographies. He described a type of interviewing by one researcher in which the form of the interview was only loosely distinguished from observational methods. His observations evolved into listening to conversations and then into asking questions of the children he was working with. Walford also described another study in which information generated through everyday conversation with participants was frequently noted down. In this study there were also times when the interview was more clearly demarcated. This demarcation came about where the interview took place on a separate occasion and usually in a separate place to their observations.

Drawing on Bernstein (1971, 2000,) Walford attaches the terms 'loosely classified' to the interviews that take the form of conversations   during observations and 'highly classified' to the ones that are clearly separate from the observations. Walford also talks about the balance of power between the interviewer and the interviewee using the concept of framing. An interview is

strongly framed (and therefore there is maximum control with the researcher), where for example a researcher has a set of pre formulated questions and does not detract from these. In contrast an interview which is more loosely framed would give more control to the interviewee by the interviewer perhaps asking a loosely framed opening question in order to get a discussion going. In this situation the interviewer has much less control over the direction in which the interview might proceed. However, by allowing the interviewee more control in framing the situation their own world view might more easily be exhibited. There is of course the danger that by allowing so much control, the data that is gained has no relation to the initial research question. Research is however an organic process and it is sometimes possible to allow it to evolve to some extent. With my own research, this may not be too much of a problem. However, particularly in situations where there are time limits to the research project and very particular issues to be addressed, then there needs to be consideration of the implications of framing in this way.

Notwithstanding all the critiques around the utility of interview and conversation data Sherman Heyl argues that ethnographic interviewing is a way of shedding at least some light on the personal experiences of participants and the interpersonal dynamics and cultural meanings of their worlds. This focus on meanings, personal experience and interpersonal dynamics, convince me that interviewing could play a useful part in my own research despite the methodological concerns. I will after all be using interview data alongside other data collection methods and am not depending upon this method to provide access to all of Sayer's levels of reality. Although there is a need to move beyond descriptions of students' experiences to an understanding of why and how processes impact upon each student's ways of relating and how this impacts upon their learning, I still firmly believe that interview data can provide useful information. I acknowledge that it may be entirely possible that there are very real processes making important impacts upon individuals' lives which they are unaware of and therefore interviews are unable to gain access to information about these. However, at the same time, the meanings that individuals give to their experiences from their own subjective viewpoint in interviews are important data. These will be viewed in my research within the

context of the wider study and the data collected by other methods and will contribute collectively to the understanding of the role of relationships in learning.

### *Documents and Artefacts*

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note how it is not just the face to face interactions which ethnographers should study since another key feature of the social world is documentary evidence and material artefacts. Given my previous arguments about the inherently social nature of cultural tools and artefacts, these types of data have particular relevance to my study. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that many of our social settings are self documenting from the point of view that the participants in these settings are actively producing and distributing various kinds of written documents. In the university setting for example, there are many sources of documentation produced and distributed, such as handouts, course handbooks, power point presentation print outs and so on. Atkinson and Coffey (2004) argue that documents produced in social settings relate to constructions of reality in that setting in document form. Collection of these types of data during my ethnography was therefore essential if I was to understand the role of what was produced and reified in the particular H.E. setting that I was studying and also why these might be important to relationships and learning. Details about the documents I actually collected in my study and the reasons for collecting these will be given in the data collection chapter.

### Ethics in Ethnography

I have argued above that a symbolic interactionist perspective is particularly useful to my research. This is because of the emphasis on meanings arising from the process of social interaction and also because of the emancipatory nature of this type of ethnography due to its ability to uncover the processes of which the individual is unaware, even though they may be impacting negatively upon their lives. The ability of research to throw light on issues that may be hindering an individual's or a group's development means that it could benefit the people that it studies. This brings us around to the ethics of research and assumptions as to whether any research really has the ability to do this given

the partial nature of all knowledge and notions of whether we can truly ever adequately represent our participants' point of view. Whether research should or is even able to improve the lives of those it investigates is not the only ethical question we have to deal with however. There is the issue of what right the outsider has to go into a setting and represent the people there and also what precautions does the outsider take with regards to caring for the participants' well being and respecting their wishes.

Murphy and Dingwall (2001) use the terms consequentialist approaches and deontological approaches to address these ethical questions. They describe consequentialist approaches as focusing on the outcomes of research and if there has been any harm inflicted upon the participants as a result of the research, whether this is outweighed by the benefits to them. In contrast deontological approaches focus on the inherent rights of the participants. They have for example, the right to privacy, right to respect and the right to self determination and should not be subject to research where they are seen as a means to an end. This concern with outcomes and rights is translated into guiding principles such as those suggested by Beauchamp et al. (1982, p.18) below:

- *'Non-maleficence: researchers should avoid any harm coming to participants.*
- *Beneficence: research should not just be carried out for its own sake, but rather to produce some positive and identifiable benefit.*
- *Autonomy/self- determination: the participant's values and decisions should be respected.*
- *Justice: that one group of people's rights should not be promoted over another groups, they should all be treated equally.'*

The first two of these guiding principles relate to consequentialist views and mean that in relation to my own research, I should avoid harming my participants (which could be lecturers, students or support staff) either physically or psychologically through my research. We do not set out of course

to harm our participants, and use ethical guidelines (see data collection chapter) to avoid this. This includes seeking informed consent from our participants, however, we do not know what will emerge during the course of the research and there are particular problems around this in education when we consider the notion of personal rights. It may be that during the course of research, processes which are detrimental to one group within the setting may be highlighted and it is felt that this needs speaking about in order to benefit that group, thereby privileging their rights. However, the processes highlighted may reflect negatively upon another group in the setting, so that they are seen in a less favourable light. If this is the case how is the researcher to come to a decision about which group's rights they should privilege over the other?

This is one particular issue that I have given a great deal of consideration to. In deciding to use ethnography in the university in which I completed my undergraduate degree, I was acutely aware that this research would be a little close to home. Also, that it may sometimes become uncomfortable for myself or my participants if I was to uncover any behaviours or underlying processes which were concerning due to their impact upon one group in the field, thereby placing another group in a negative light. However, after careful consideration, in order to counter the notion that it is problematic to uncover concerning behaviours or underlying processes in one's own place of learning and work I put forward the following argument. I would maintain that ethnographic research, by its very nature is naturalistic, in that the behaviours observed will only be those behaviours that are in the ordinary everyday repertoire of the participants attending university in their everyday capacity. These behaviours will be in public view every day, so if inappropriate behaviours or conduct did come to light, then it is reasonable to argue that these might come to light eventually in any case, not just through my research. The only problem then that I can see is that there are issues for myself as to how I should react if I happened upon any concerning behaviours in the course of my research. In other words would I and should I intervene and/or report on these and if I did, in what ways?

Dennis (2009) wrote about the sensitivities of having to deal with issues such as this and also the ethics of deciding whether to intervene in ethnographic research if concerning behaviours are uncovered. She tells of instances where she has needed to do this not for the purposes of her research, but because she cared about the people in whose lives she was becoming involved. However, she argues that as a human being she holds certain commitments regarding her behaviour which remain the same whether in the field or in her everyday life. Along with Dennis, I would maintain that because of the naturalistic character of ethnographic study, researchers will face complicated ethical dilemmas that we cannot always anticipate in advance despite careful planning. Also, however, that these dilemmas are similar to the ones that we face in our everyday life. With this in mind, like Dennis, I would argue that I too have certain commitments regarding my own behaviour which hold for both my time in the field and also in my daily life. What this means for me, is that I would do my utmost to care for all people in all situations both in the field and out.

So, any concerning behaviours uncovered during either my time at the university as a student or when in the field as a researcher would have the same meaning for me and any uncomfortable feelings about uncovering these in my own place of study and work would be just as likely in both my capacities. I would nevertheless, feel the need to report on the issues uncovered even though this may be seen by some as privileging one group over another. However, I would argue that harm to the other group of participants, (those not privileged) would be alleviated due to the fact that if concerning aspects surrounding them were uncovered during the course of my study, the nature of ethnographic research means that it can usefully construct a framework in which to situate behaviour and explain it. This means that the individuals themselves are less likely to be blamed or criticized for any concerning aspects that come to light. Furthermore, that it may even be possible that through ethnography, concerning behaviour comes to be better understood and that if this is the case, steps can then be taken to overcome it. So, even though on the face of it, the research could be construed as having harmed one group due to the negative connotations it may have highlighted as surrounding them, they may actually benefit from the research since they are seen as victims of their

contexts whose behaviours may in part be products of certain institutional and government power structures impacting upon them. If the research also highlights these, then this group too could gain some beneficience from being involved (which you may recall is Beauchamp's second guiding principle for ethical research).

There is of course also the issue of partiality of knowledge here and what right does the researcher have to privilege one group's rights over another. This issue has been discussed previously and the issues raised are also relevant here. There are no easy answers about this and no firm conclusions to draw since until we actually collect our data we do not know what is going to arise. All we can do is perhaps decide that from a consequentialist approach and taking non- maleficence and beneficience into consideration, it seems it is incumbent upon the individual researcher to assess the impact of any benefit on all the different individuals and groups within their own research context and furthermore, decide whether and to what extent that context is able to situate any concerning behaviours or processes in such a way that harm to individuals or groups is lessened.

From the deontological perspective there is also the issue of informed consent. Researchers are bound by the British Psychological Society Ethical Guidelines concerning this. However, in ethnographic work there are problems in that we do not always know what will arise in research. Furthermore, there may be power relations which may oppress certain groups studied and ethnographic research has the ability to expose these even though we did not anticipate doing so. We need to ensure that our participants are aware from the outset that this may occur and furthermore pay attention to how their feelings towards the research may change over the course of the data collection process. For instance a lecturer who has previously been happy to have her teaching observed may decide one day that she does not want to be involved in the research anymore for her own personal reasons. It is the researcher's job to be sensitive to changing wants and needs throughout the course of the research and to act upon them, withdrawing from certain observation sites if necessary. With regards to this, I made a commitment to only observe in those lectures

where staff members were completely happy for me to be present and I routinely checked with them several days beforehand whether it would be a problem for me to attend. I was aware that it may be socially uncomfortable for them to tell me not to come along, but I hoped that I had built up a good enough relationship with them for them to be able to tell me they did not want me present and gave them every opportunity to do so should they feel the need.

Ethnography raises significant ethical concerns precisely because of its organic nature. We do not know where it will lead us and we will sometimes have to make decisions on the hoof. However, we have a responsibility of care for our participants and should at all times have their best interests at heart. Reflecting upon the four guiding principles above when we are considering how to handle a particular ethical dilemma may help us to achieve this. Furthermore, seeking the views of a mentor or supervisor who is more removed from the situation and able to see the problem from a different perspective may be a sensible course of action to help our decision making process.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter briefly discussed how from a critical realist perspective, ethnography is an entirely appropriate epistemological choice able to address all three levels of reality, that is the real, the actual and the empirical. It gives a very brief history of ethnography and discusses the 'school' of ethnography most appropriate to this research. It explored the main methodological choices open to the ethnographer when completing their data collection. It emerged that these are largely down to the individual researcher, and so I had to draw upon my epistemological position in order to make choices for my own research. Ethical considerations have also been discussed and it has been noted that due to the organic nature of ethnographic research we do not know the ethical dilemmas we might come across in advance, however, that there are principles that we can be guided by when making ethical decisions. The next chapter will describe my own ethnography and data collection.

# CHAPTER FOUR

DATA COLLECTION

This chapter will detail the choices and decisions I made about how to collect my data and describe how I actually went about this.

## Previous Research and Pilot Work

Previous research for my undergraduate project explored learning relationships from the students' own subjective experiencing using interviews. On reflection, I believe that my data collection method reflected my philosophical leanings at the time which were more relativist than at present. I came to realise that there is the need to move beyond descriptions of student's experiences to an understanding of why and how processes impact upon each student's ways of relating and how this impacts upon their learning. My research ambitions are now wider than they once were in that I aim to attempt to access levels of reality beyond those possible from a relativist position. My shift in philosophy and the realization that interviews alone have limits to the layers of reality that they are able to uncover, led to my decision to use a mixed method, ethnographic approach.

I realized that there was still the need to interview the student participants in the present study in order to obtain data providing insights into their subjective experiencing, however, I was not satisfied that the interview method I had used in previous research gave the depth of information I required. I had gained rich insights into the students' present microsystems and mesosystems, by asking my participants to reflect on diagrams of their bioecological systems, but little data was collected about exosystem or macrosystem influences, nor the part of the chronosystem relating to the students' historical experiences. I therefore devised a new interview format for the present research which I hoped would provide greater insights into some of these systems. These interviews were structured around reflection on a time line of each student participant's learning experiences, (whether this was in a formal learning situation or an everyday

setting), from their earliest awareness to the present. Since participation and its link with identity is so centrally important to the CoP perspective on learning, I hoped that basing the students interviews around their experiences in the different CoPs they have historically inhabited as well as the ones they presently occupy may give some clues to how their identity and learning trajectories had been shaped.

I piloted the new interview technique with a male multi-media and communication design student and a female applied arts student and found the format of this very productive. Helping participants to draw a time line helped them to think and talk about their learning and how their relationships with their peers, teachers and significant others at the time impacted upon it. I did not need to use pre-planned questions other than prompts to participants to describe their time line and the people who were important to their learning at the time and then to ask what happened at certain points in their learning career. I responded by picking up on any relevant issues that arose and by asking the participants to expand on them. This method gave lots of rich data detailing the students' own subjective experiences of the processes that have impacted upon their relationships, participation and learning so far. It also gave clues into how these have shaped their identity (which they carry with them to their present higher education setting or community). These past experiences will all have had an impact upon the ways in which the students were able to relate to people in their present setting and therefore, upon their identity, present participation and learning. Copies of some of the students' timeline diagrams can be found in Appendix C.

## Identifying the Focal University and Department

I decided to conduct my study in the university I had attended when studying for my undergraduate degree. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, since my argument throughout has been that there are multiple systems impacting upon students' learning relationships, I was aware that it was not enough to simply observe them in the classroom or lecture theatre and hope to access all these systems. A much broader perspective of what goes on in the daily routine of the university was necessary in order to access what happens

in the exosystem and macrosystem for instance. I felt that since I had been in and around the university for a number of years as both a student and a part time lecturer, I already had a broad perspective of the everyday life of the university, its policies, practices and rules. I felt this perspective would benefit my research in that I would already have some idea of the practices in place. However, at the same time, I was aware that being too familiar with the everyday life of the university might mean that I took this for granted and therefore that it might appear unremarkable to me. So, whilst able to use my familiarity with the university to enable me to access understanding of practices, practices also needed to appear strange to me from the point of view that I needed to feel that they were noteworthy. I therefore decided that it would be too familiar for me to collect data in my own department. I needed to be able to see university practices in a new light at least to some extent and felt that collecting data in a department other than my own would better allow for this. Having said that, an exploration of learning relationships meant that it was necessary to understand the interactions in a classroom which might be constitutive of learning and I therefore needed some understanding of the subject matter too. It would have been no good for me to collect data in the chemistry department for instance, since I would have so much difficulty understanding what was being taught that the interactions between the individuals would be totally meaningless to me. I needed to collect data in a department where the subject area was not too dissimilar to my own. My supervisor suggested a department within the same school as my own department, which had a reputation as being very student centred and which also had a commitment to small group teaching. I felt this would be ideal since although I acknowledge that this department may not be typical of most other departments in most other universities (given how student centred it was reputed to be) and therefore that I cannot make any claims beyond this setting, I felt that it would provide good opportunities to observe the role of relationships in learning in operation.

I approached the head of department to ask if he would be willing to allow me to collect data in this department. He was really keen to allow this and put me in touch with a course leader who was equally keen and supportive of my

research. They both agreed with me that learning relationships are important, and there was also the sense that they were proud of their department and its practices. I was granted access to all the classrooms and lecture theatres whenever I wanted for as long as I wished for all the courses in the department as long as I waited until a few weeks after the beginning of term to ensure that the new students had settled in. I was also given clearance to approach the students to ask for their participation in the interview part of the study. Although the head of department and the course leader had granted me access in principle to all the lecture theatres and classrooms, I did of course also ask permission separately of the individual lecturers as detailed in the ethics approval form in Appendix B and mentioned in the ethics section below. I did not feel it appropriate to go into individual lecturer's classrooms if they did not want me there and so only attended those lectures or classes where the lecturers had agreed in advance for me to attend.  Having chosen to collect data in my own university, and my own school (albeit in a different department), and being granted open access, there were inevitably dilemmas that this threw up which I had to consider along the way. These will be discussed below in the section on the dilemmas of data collection.

**Ethical Clearance**

My research gained ethical clearance prior to collecting my data from the ethics committee of the university. The application for ethical clearance which I submitted can be found in Appendix B. This Appendix also contains all the letters, information sheets and consent forms used. My research follows the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Guidelines and the ethical precautions followed are clearly set out in my submission in Appendix B, but in summary these included:

- Informed consent from staff and students: all individuals were given information sheets appropriate to their role in the research and the opportunity to ask questions about it. They were then asked to indicate that they understood what was required of them and to sign a consent form.

- Anonymity of students and staff: measures were taken to disguise the identity of the university, the department and all the individuals involved in the research. Pseudonyms were given for the individuals involved and whilst the university and department were not mentioned by name it may be possible that they may be identified by some descriptions of it if someone reading my thesis knew the university very well. This was however made clear to participants prior to them giving their consent to participate and they were not concerned about this. (There was however, one aspect of data collection which I felt raised quite concerning issues around protecting the students' anonymity, so this aspect of data collection was removed from the study. This is discussed further below in the dilemmas of data collection section).

- Confidentiality: Whilst every effort was made to keep the data confidential between only the researcher and her research supervisors, it was made clear to participants that this may not be possible since the research may in the future be read or discussed in various other arenas. Furthermore, I made it clear to them that if concerning behaviour came to light during the data collection process, then I may need to discuss my data with my supervisory team in order to decide whether the concerning behaviour should be passed on to other parties who may be able to help in the situation. Again, participants were not concerned about this.

- Data Protection: Throughout the research process all electronic data was password protected and paperwork such as interview transcripts and field notes were locked in a desk either at university or in my own home. All tape recorded interviews were wiped once transcribed and paperwork will be shredded once this research is completed.

- Right of withdrawal: All participants were briefed about their right to withdraw themselves and their data from the study at any time during the course of the research. They were asked to sign a consent form to indicate that they understood this. Once their initial consent to participate had been given, I was however vigilant throughout the research process in order to ascertain whether the participants were beginning to feel uncomfortable with their inclusion in the research. I explained to the participants however that

once I had begun writing up the research it would be difficult to exclude their data for practical reasons and so I emphasised that if they wished to withdraw their data they must inform me before I had begun to write my analysis.

- Debriefing: All participants involved in the research were offered a copy of this thesis once finished. Although four years have passed since I collected my data, I intend to approach them again to offer a copy or a summary.

## Dilemmas of Data Collection

Despite closely following the BPS's ethical guidelines, every research study has its own particular dilemmas to deal with and this research was no exception. One dilemma emerged because of my own complex position in the research context. I was undertaking research in an establishment where I had studied for my undergraduate degree, am now a graduate student and in which I was also employed as a part time hourly lecturer, but I actually collected my data in a different department to my own.  I therefore had to engage with the various insider/outsider debates and ended up viewing the position I actually inhabited in the research setting as neither (or indeed both) an insider and an outsider. I discussed in the epistemology chapter what I meant by this and also how this afforded me several advantages in my research, so I will not explain it all again here.  However, linked to this and the dilemmas surrounding the ethical sensitivities of undertaking research in my own place of work is the issue of concerning behaviour and what would I do if during the course of data collection, I observed any? I am well aware that there are particular sensitivities in observing colleagues, not least because I have been in the position where my own teaching has been observed numerous times in various contexts. I set out therefore to observe as unobtrusively and respectfully as possible and took note of the Peer Observation of Teaching Guidelines from the University's Teaching and Learning Website. I utilized these principles throughout my observations and in addition only observed in those lessons where participants were happy for me to be present.

Despite following these principles the fact remained that some of the behaviours I observed might prove to be concerning to me and that these might come from people who I counted as my colleagues. I felt I needed to decide what to do if this happened in advance of going into the field. I went back to the literature and found an article by Barbour (2010) which explored the dilemmas that he encountered when undertaking ethnography where he worked. When he witnessed what he felt was poor pedagogy from his colleagues, he had to weigh up his obligations to the students whose learning was suffering, against his obligations to his colleagues who were also the gatekeepers who had granted him access to their classrooms. He decided that for the sake of his research he had to keep quiet whilst collecting his data so that he could continue with it, but then gave voice to the students in his subsequent writing.

I also discussed Dennis's (2009) work in the ethics section of my ethnography chapter. I discussed this in relation to the sensitivities of having to deal with issues such as the ones Barbour described and the ethics of deciding whether to intervene or not in ethnographic research. I argued that because of the naturalistic character of ethnographic study, researchers face complicated ethical dilemmas that cannot always be anticipated in advance despite careful planning, but that these dilemmas are similar to the ones that we face in our everyday life. Accordingly, this means that I would do my utmost to care for all people in all situations both in the field and out. This may lead to my intervention if I felt that someone's observed behaviour was concerning to me, but I would take the matter to my supervision team for discussion first to help me with the decision as to whether the matter needed to be taken further. The possibility that this might happen was, however, pointed out very clearly to my participants beforehand, so they were well aware of the action I would need to take in circumstances where behaviours were concerning. None of the participants had a problem with this when I explained it to them. Intervening in this way would have been very difficult for me however, since I had struck up good relationships with both the staff and students in the research setting, and it may seem as though I was being disloyal to a particular party if I reported on their concerning behaviour. It may also mean that they no longer wanted me to observe their behaviour in the future and my research might suffer as a result.

In the event however, there were no behaviours observed which were so concerning that I felt the need to take these to my supervisory team or intervene.

Although there were no behaviours that were immediately concerning, there were instances where behaviour of certain lecturers was such that my subsequent reporting of this behaviour in my final ethnographic account might appear to show the lecturers in a somewhat negative light with regards to their teaching practice. This was a dilemma which I thought about long and hard. I owed it to the students to report on the behaviours that I had uncovered in the hope that once brought to light issues around the lecturers' behaviours might be addressed to make the students' lives better. However, at the same time I did not want to cause embarrassment to the lecturers who I saw as my colleagues. In order to address this dilemma, I went back to my beliefs about how ethnography is able to construct a framework for situating behaviours in such a way that individual blame cannot be assigned. This meant that the behaviours which may be seen to present the lecturers concerned in a bad light could be seen as emergent from the multiplicity of processes impacting upon their lives. For instance university or political policy processes may impact upon the lecturers' behaviour. Hence, blame could not be personally assigned to them. Furthermore, bringing these processes to light may also mean that policy is reviewed in such a way that the lecturers themselves as well as the students may benefit. I also weighed up the chances of the lecturers actually being identified in a reading of my thesis and after careful thought decided that the chances of this were very slim. I did actually make it clear to all my participants that although I would try my utmost to ensure their anonymity by changing all names, there was the slim chance that this may not be entirely possible to maintain given the fact that my findings may be disseminated in the future. Despite being aware of this, they were not concerned however, and were still happy to participate. Furthermore, although I offered to debrief my participants and have also offered to provide a copy of my thesis to all the individuals involved in my research, they have not actually taken me up on this at the time of writing and it is possible that they are unlikely to do so in the future. I intend to also offer them a brief report on my findings too, which would mean that the

chances that my entire thesis will be read by them or individual lecturers identified are extremely small. Reassured by this and the ability of ethnography to situate behaviour, I decided I must report on behaviours I had uncovered despite the possibility that some readings of them might show the individuals concerned in a negative light, in order to hopefully gain some eventual benefit for all my participants.

One issue arising around student anonymity however caused me considerable concern. This arose because I had originally planned to write a composite narrative of the students' experiences to show to the lecturers for them to reflect and comment on as another strand of data. However, when I was actually in the field I realized that I would be unable to preserve the students' anonymity given just how well the students and lecturers in this particular department knew one another. I subsequently decided to omit this aspect of my intended data collection.

Finally, another ethical dilemma arose during my interview with Sally. During our interview I realized that I could identify with Sally on many levels, particularly around a certain situation with her parents. I shared this realization with her, but then felt that it had been unfair of me to disclose this to her as it may mean that she would feel obliged to disclose more to me than she wanted to, or intended to. So at one point during the interview I stopped the tape because I felt that the information Sally was giving me was of a highly personal nature and it would have been unethical to continue for the purposes of my research. It was as though she was talking to "me the human being", not "me the researcher" and although I realized I could not divorce one from the other completely, I wanted to ensure that Sally herself was aware of the distinction and comfortable with the way that the conversation was going. I did not want to exploit the trust that had developed between us. However, Sally assured me that she knew what she was saying and again insisted that she was happy to have her information included in the study. I reiterated her right to withdraw the information at a later date when she had had time to think about what she had disclosed but she did not wish for this to happen even after she had had time to reflect.

## Recruiting Participants and Obtaining Informed Consent

After gaining ethical approval and obtaining permissions from the departmental head and course leader to approach the students I emailed all the students on the focal course to ask for their participation in principle in the research. I had intended that the first six students to respond from each of the three year groups would be the ones that I interviewed. However, there was very scant response from the students and even after several months of trying to recruit participants I only had seven that responded to me and some of these were ones I had actually approached face to face in the lectures I had observed. On reflection however, because of the multi method nature of my data collection and the vast amounts of data that this has generated, it would have been far too ambitious to have to deal with a total of eighteen in depth interview transcripts alongside all the other data I collected. The fact that I had fewer interview participants than I had originally intended has meant that I have been able to gain a more in depth analysis and honour each individual's uniqueness. On the other hand, if I had had more this may have meant that my analysis was too broad and tending to generalise more than may be appropriate. The seven student participants who were interviewed are listed overleaf in table one and a little background information given for each. The names are pseudonyms to protect the student's identity.

**Table 1: The Interview Participants**

| Name of Participant | Background Information |
| --- | --- |
| Lee | A first year student in his thirties. This was his fourth attempt at higher education having dropped out of three previous courses at different universities. |
| Sally | A second year student in her forties. Sally had young children at home and had decided to come to university when made redundant from her job. |
| Maya | A nineteen year old student in her first year at university. |
| Rose | A twenty year old student in her first year. Rose was recently diagnosed as having dyslexia whilst studying for her A levels. |
| Will | A student in his mid fifties. Will had recently lost his successful business after a lengthy legal battle. |
| Philip | A nineteen year old student in his second year at university. |
| Kathy | A twenty two year old student in her third year on her present course. Kathy had come to university to study English, but had dropped out of that and was now doing well on the focal course. |

Once they had volunteered, these seven interview participants were given a letter asking for their participation. They were also given an information sheet 1 and asked to sign a consent form. The participants who were not being interviewed - that is, those that were simply being observed in classes and lectures were given a different letter and a different information sheet detailing what would be required of them in the study and a consent form to sign. Individual staff members were also emailed in order to request their permission to attend their lectures, given a letter asking for their participation, an information sheet and asked to sign a consent form (included in Appendix B). The lectures and seminars which I actually attended to observe were the ones taken by the lecturers who responded to my email and who were happy to participate. They were therefore an opportunity sample, since although I had been given permission in principle to attend all lectures by the head of

department I felt that it would be discourteous to the lecturers to turn up unannounced. The pseudonyms for the lecturers who responded (and whose lectures I observed) are Dave, Steve and Alan, who were all full time lecturers and Ralph and Sid who were PhD students lecturing on a part time basis.

All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the research even after they had given their consent and I tried to be vigilant in terms of the participants becoming uncomfortable about their participation in order to offer to withdraw their data from the study if necessary. Copies of all letters and information sheets can be found in Appendix B.

**Collecting the Data**

The data collection took place over a full term, during which time I collected data from a number of sources, these were:

- Interviews
- Observations
- Conversations
- Document analysis

*Interviews*

After engaging with the arguments described above concerning the use of interviews, I came to the conclusion that they still had a valuable place in my research alongside other data sources. This was because I needed to shed at least some light on the personal experiencing of my participants and the meanings that they construe from their worlds. I acknowledge from a critical realist point of view that my own previous interview study was unable to access some levels of knowledge and that there are very real processes making important impacts upon individuals' lives even though they may not have any direct knowledge of these. However, I still firmly believe that interview data can provide useful information about the meanings that individuals give to their experiences from their own subjective viewpoint. So, with this in mind, I carried out in depth interviews of the type described in the pilot work section above with

seven of the students. The interviews took place in a private interview room on the university premises which was ideal since this meant that there were no disturbances. The interviews were tape recorded with each participant's permission and then transcribed as soon after the interviews as possible.

As well as providing the students with a way of reflecting on their past learning experiences, structuring the interviews around a timeline from their earliest memories to the present meant that there were instances where participants could talk about their present educational experiences too.   This was particularly useful since I could compare my own observations with their descriptions of events. Having no preconceived questions in the interview part of the ethnography was also a way in which I was able to make the familiar strange. This was because I was not providing questions about the issues that I felt were likely to crop up in the familiar setting, instead I was waiting for the issues to emerge from the students themselves and these were at times quite unexpected, strange and therefore extremely noteworthy to me. Interviews were used to address the following aims of my study:

- To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.
- To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning.

### *Observations*

In order to observe the experiences of the students I also undertook classroom observations. The lessons, seminars, workshops and lectures observed were the ones which I was invited to attend in response to my emails to all the lecturers who taught in the department. Although I had permission in principle to go into any classroom or lecture theatre, I felt it would be discourteous to just turn up to observe without the particular lecturer's invitation. In the classrooms and lecture theatres I observed and recorded the actual practices which

impacted upon the students' interactions, participation and therefore learning as they occurred in field notes. Observations were an important part of the study, since (although I acknowledge that I was observing these practices through my own subjective lens) the actual practices and processes observed, could be compared to the students subjective experiencing of them. Observations were used to address the following research aims:

- To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.
- To observe and document the everyday practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning.

### Taking Field Notes

I discussed in the ethnography chapter how with regard to taking field notes there appear to be no descriptions of the best way to do this and that it seems incumbent on the individual researcher to decide upon the best approach for themselves and their own study. However, looking at the ways in which others work has helped to inform the decisions that I have made for this study and how I took notes in the field. This meant that initially whilst in the field I took note of the surroundings both verbally and in diagram form in a note book. I also noted the numbers of students present, the room layout, my proximity, the teacher and students' relative proximity and the time of day. I noted what the teacher was doing, what the students were doing and any interactions between the students and the students and teacher. Where I felt it was relevant I also made a note of any affective components that occurred to me as impacting on the context. Later, when I had left the field I word processed my handwritten notes as soon as was practically possible after each observation, expanding on details as necessary whilst they were still fresh in my mind.

With practice, I became quite adept at taking notes quickly and developed my own shorthand for certain terms that were in common usage. Nonetheless, of course my notes can only ever reflect what was in my immediate attention at the time and I will no doubt have missed lots of occurrences and behaviours. Furthermore, there were times when the interactions between individuals were so rapid that it was physically impossible to note the entire exchange. I could only attempt to record as much of the interactions as possible in my field notes and would not claim that they reflect the entirety of what happened in the lectures I observed in any way. The form that my word processed field notes took can be seen in Appendix D where they are included in their entirety.

### *Document Analysis*

Documents were an important part of my data collection since they were able to provide a great deal of information about the H.E. setting being studied and also the wider social and political context.

In the university I collected documents such as:

- Module and course handbooks
- Print outs of the power point slides used in lectures
- Handouts
- Artefacts produced in the classroom

I was able to collect handbooks for all the modules that I attended lectures for and also samples of the power point slide print outs from those lectures where the lecturers provided them and there were enough for me to take one. I was also able to collect artefacts such as the large sheets of paper that students had used in group work to document their ideas and handouts that the lecturer gave out to the students.

I also gained access to some documents through the internet, these were:

- University policy documents

- University performance reports
- Local government documents
- Central government policy documents relating to H.E.

The documents collected in the lecture theatre and classroom helped with analysis at the microsystem and mesosystem levels. Whilst the documents collected from the internet were particularly useful in providing insights into both the exosystem influences and the wider social and political imperatives of the macrosystem. This was important since some of this information was inaccessible from any other source. I could not hope to access this information through observations for instance or through interviews with students. Moreover, the students were totally unaware of some of the processes in their exosystem and macrosystem yet nevertheless these processes exist, impact upon their interactions, learning and relationships and therefore needed bringing to light. Document analysis was used to address the following research aims:

- To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.
- To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning.

I have decided not to provide copies of some of the documents I collected in my appendices since this would compromise the anonymity of either the course, the lecturers or the university and in some cases all three of these. However the central government policy documents I used are listed in my reference section.

### *Conversations*

When deciding on the data collection methods for this study prior to going into the field, I did not consider that I would also be collecting data from

conversations. Given that ethnography requires immersion in the everyday life of whatever is being studied, I now believe it was rather remiss of me to overlook conversations since as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note, in everyday life, individuals continually give accounts of happenings to one another. When I actually went into the field as well as gaining information from interviews with some of my participants, I also found that I was constantly in conversation with them all too. These conversations were unsolicited, but provided a wealth of information that I could not have possibly obtained by any of my other data collection methods. In particular, my many conversations with lecturing staff provided data which helped to give glimpses of their perspectives even though I had not formally interviewed them as I had with the students. Since the conversations I had were unplanned, I was unable to note these down whilst they were occurring and indeed if I had, this would have been disruptive to the flow of the conversations. I therefore had to try to remember as much of the conversation as I could and in some cases (but not always) managed to note down the basics of it. Therefore, there may be data included in my analysis which is simply from my memory of events where I did not get chance to write everything down. When reading this analysis the reader should therefore again bear in mind how my memory of events may be influenced by my subjectivities (which I have tried to openly acknowledge throughout this research) and the lens through which it is consequently written.

The collection of conversational data helped to address the following of my research aims:

- To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.
- To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the data collection methods I used and states which research aims each of these methods help to address. Through the combination of the data collection methods used I aim to not just describe that which is explicit, but also to uncover the implicit, or in other words the generative mechanisms and tendencies that correspond to Sawyer's third level of meaning which constitutes the very real imperatives that can impact upon individuals even though they may not have any awareness of this happening. Table 2 below summarizes the data collection methods, the types of data collected, the form that these data take and the aims of the research which each method addresses.

**Table 2: Summary of Data Collection methods.**

| Data Collection Method | Data Type | Data Form | Aims Addressed |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Interviews** | In depth individual interviews with students (n=7) | • Taped interviews<br>• Transcripts | • To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.<br>• To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.<br>• To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning. |

| Observations | • University location<br>• University building<br>• Classroom/ lecture theatre design and layout<br>• Use of technology<br>• Use of artefacts<br>• Lecturer movement around classroom<br>• Student movement around classroom<br>• Lecturer general behaviours<br>• Student general behaviours<br>• Particular focus on lecturer-student interactions<br>• Particular focus on student-student interactions | • Drawings and diagrams<br>• Written field notes | • To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.<br>• To observe and document the everyday practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.<br>• To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.<br>• To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conversations | • Students<br>• Staff | • Written notes<br>• Memory | • To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.<br>• To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon |

| | | | relationships; participation and learning.<br><br>• To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Documents** | • Power point slide print outs<br>• Artefacts produced in class<br>• Course handbook<br>• Module handbooks<br>• University policy documents<br>• University performance reports<br>• Local government documents<br>• Central government policy documents relating to H.E. | • Photocopies<br>• University Web site<br>• Central government web sites<br>• Local government web sites | • To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.<br>• To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.<br>• To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning. |

# CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS

This chapter will provide an analysis of the data that I gathered during my time at the focal university. Coming to the decisions on how best to represent my data has not been an easy task. There are multitudes of analytic opportunities open to the qualitative researcher in order to make sense of their data, but space in this thesis does not allow for an in-depth discussion of them all here. Accordingly, since there is the need for analytical choices to be driven by the aims of the study and the philosophical position of the researcher, it seems sensible to confine myself to a very brief discussion of the ones which I have considered in relation to my own research.

## Narrative Analysis

Cortazzi (2001) notes the increasing recognition of the importance of narrative analysis as a central element of doing ethnography. He argues that narrative analysis has the potential to develop an understanding of the meanings that people themselves give to themselves, their lives and the settings in which they live. Furthermore, very early on in my perusal of the ethnography literature Wenger's use of Vignettes to illustrate his theorizing struck a chord with me due to the way it immediately drew the reader into the context of the study and highlighted the meanings of the everyday participation of the members of the community in which it was based. This meant that I began to consider narrative analysis as a useful way to analyse and represent my own data. There seem to be some debate around narrative however, with regards to the utility of storied accounts as compared with a more rigorous analysis of the data in which it is deconstructed and interrogated. Whilst narrative analysis in the first instance seemed relevant to my research because of its ability to organize my data in a logical form which would be accessible to the reader and also due to its focus on understanding the meanings of experiences, I was aware that narrative would be unable to achieve my fifth aim for this research. This aim (to generate

a theoretical framework for understanding how relationships can enable or disable students' participation) was only achievable through the explicit application of theory to my data I therefore needed to consider other methods of analysis rather than narrative to achieve this.

**Content analysis**

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe content analysis as a collection of analytic approaches which range from intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses. The theoretic position of the researcher and what is being studied, determines the specific type of content analysis chosen. However, by and large, content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication and attends to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Hsieh Shannon, 2005; Lindkvist, 1981; McTavish and Pirro, 1990; Tesch, 1990). Qualitative content analysis examines text in order to classify large amounts of it into a number of pre-defined categories that represent similar meanings (Weber, 1990). The number of occurrences of each category is logged and the frequency with which each appears or does not appear in the text is used to substantiate theoretical claims. For my own research however, this would be problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, I have already argued that learning relationships in H.E. are under theorised and so the identification of categories a priori that would confirm or deny theory would be impossible- such theory being none existent. Furthermore, although my critical realist position means that I do believe that there are elements of reality that exist without our knowledge of it, so that ontologically I am a realist, when it comes to attempting to capture that knowledge, (epistemologically)  I believe that it can only be achieved from a relativist position. The use of closely predefined categories with which to analyse my data would for that reason not fit with my epistemological position and I feel that the actual categories used to explain my data should emerge from the data itself. They cannot be set in stone before we have even examined our data because how do we know what we will find? However, although existing theory is not directly applicable to the theorising of learning relationships in H.E., there is of course theory that I have come across in my reading which could be used to explain certain aspects of them and I will inevitably have these in mind when conducting my analysis. This

means that such theory will inescapably play some part in the emergence of categories and themes, I cannot after all bracket off all my knowledge of these completely. However, I firmly believe that categories and themes should in the main emerge from my data and so need a method of analysis which is more inductive than content analysis.

**Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is more inductive than content analysis in that the identification of themes actually comes from the data and it is the recognition of these that allows for the identification of emergent theory. Although there are different approaches to thematic analysis in the literature such as phenomenological approaches (Smith and Osborn, 2003) and grounded theory approaches (Glasser and Strauss, 1967), Merriam (2009) argues that all qualitative data analysis should be inductive and comparative and she offers a framework for this which seems useful for my purposes. Her framework will allow for the emergence of categories or themes from my actual data and also for me to think about these and their interrelationships in order to develop theoretical models to explain the data's meaning. Thematic analysis will help to address the following aims:

- To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.
- To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To generate a theoretical framework for understanding how relationships can enable or disable students' participation and learning.
- To explore the implications of identified issues for teaching and learning in H.E.

What follows is a discussion of the considerations I took into account about how to construct the themes and the actual process I followed. The scene is then very briefly set so that the reader is able to place my thematic analysis in the context of the focal university and the wider H.E. environment in the year 2009.

I then present the themes themselves, discuss my analysis and explore the implications of identified issues for teaching and learning in H.E.

**Interpreting Learning Relationships**

Merriam's (2009) framework for thematic analysis draws heavily upon a constant comparative method of data analysis. The challenge, she argues is to construct categories or themes that describe recurring patterns that cut across your data. She describes the actual process of this as beginning with reading the first transcript or set of field notes or document collected and jotting down notes, comments or observations in the margins against anything that strikes you as interesting or relevant to your study. Merriam refers to this process as open coding. Once the whole of the first piece of data has been open coded in this way, she recommends going back over the margin comments and trying to group those together that seem to belong together. She refers to these comments as codes and a list of these codes can be made as a memo as you move on to your next set of data. This next piece of data is then worked through similarly to the first piece, but this time keeping the list of codes from the first piece of data in mind and checking to see if these are present in the second piece. A separate list is also made of the notes and comments from the second transcript and this is then compared with the list from the first piece of data. The two lists are then merged into a master list which constitutes an outline of a classification system reflecting the recurring regularities in the data. These then become the categories or themes into which subsequent pieces of data are sorted. Once all the data has been worked through in this way, the themes may be condensed down as one theme is incorporated into another, or may be renamed to more precisely reflect the data that it contains.

*Constructing the interpretative themes*

My interpretative themes were basically derived using a framework similar to Merriam's, although in actual practice, it was not quite the straight forward linear process she describes. Thematic analysis is an inductive approach (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005), so despite having the theoretical perspectives which I felt were most pertinent to this research in mind (as described in chapter two), as I was going through my data I was nonetheless very keen to

allow the issues to emerge naturally from the data as much as possible. I did not wish to constrain this process by constructing a systematic framework or template in which to slot pieces of data, since I felt that this would be forcing the issues in order to fit the theory. Instead, I used my research aims and the following three questions to decide which pieces of data were interesting:

- What does this information tell me about the role of relationship in learning in H.E.?
- What does this information tell me about the practices which enable learning relationships in H.E.?
- What does this information tell me about the practices which disable learning relationships in H.E.?

This meant however, that the actual construction of the themes was far from an orderly process and although I am attempting to describe it here, it was much more messy and complex than my descriptions of it. However, initially, I went through the interview transcripts, field notes, conversational data and the documents I had collected at local level, (course handbook, module handbooks, handouts and power point presentation printouts) looking for specific foci relating to my research aims and the three questions above.

Once specific foci had begun to emerge from this data, using my research aims and the three questions above; I tried to organize these foci (or initial codes) into groups to reflect my interpretations. I did this by highlighting the pieces of data with different coloured marker pens according to which group they belonged to and gave each group a name which best reflected what the group represented. These groups became the merged codes which were then condensed down for example where two merged codes were very similar they were combined and sometimes they were renamed to reflect the bulk of the data that was now contained within them. This process continued until I had the final themes. Throughout all this there was a constant going back to the data, then to the themes to ensure that the names of the themes best reflected the data it contained and also that the data contained within the theme best

represented that theme. I also needed to make sure that I had not missed a valuable piece of data.

Eventually, after a long, complex and messy process I arrived at my final themes. These were:

- The need for relationship
- Interaction of identities
- Achieving intersubjectivity
- Context and relationship

Appendix F sets out the coding procedure and how the themes were arrived at. This entire process was clearly achieved with the theoretical perspectives described in chapter two in mind; however, the theoretical interpretations proper were applied after the issues had emerged from the data. The names of the themes are therefore mainly reflective of the issues emergent from my data, rather than from theory per se. In writing about these themes I describe them, give examples from the data which to my mind best illustrates the meaning of the theme and give my analysis, thereby underpinning my data with theory in order to develop my theoretical framework. I discuss how the meanings underpinning each theme may influence the mechanisms and experiences of relationships in the focal university department and how these can impact upon the students' participation and learning. The extracts I provide to illustrate the themes come from my raw data, that is the field notes, interview transcripts, conversational data and the documents that I collected at local level during my time in the field. The documents I collected which related to wider societal and political policy (at macrosystem level) were collected mainly from internet sources. These were extremely lengthy, complex and consisted in the main of numerical data in table form which did not lend itself well to a thematic analysis in which verbal extracts of data are used to illustrate themes. For this reason, documents pertaining to wider societal and political policy were not included in the actual construction of themes; only the documents actually collected in and around the university were used in these. However, data from the internet

sourced documents was extremely useful given my aim 'to explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning' and in order to give background information about the focal university and to situate it in historical and political time. I decided that a short narrative introduction to my themes would provide the best interpretation of this data to provide an overview of the wider societal or macrosystem influences upon the focal university and its students and their relationships. This narrative also contains a small amount of the data from documents collected at local level and from observations and conversations too. The inclusion of this was necessary in order to create a logical, flowing narrative which was able to set the scene for the thematic analysis.

**Setting the Scene**

The focal university was situated in the centre of a large market town in the North of England. The campus consisted of a mix of new and old buildings, some of which were mill conversions and there were a range of nightclubs and pubs close by for the students to patronize.

The university maintained a commitment to increasing its research profile in all its subjects and there was evidence of this on campus. The institution had for instance recently invested nearly £1.4 million in information provision in 2008/09 and a further £2.75 million in extra computing resources and there was building and renovation work going on all around campus as I collect my data. The University had been included in the 2008 national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). There were two subject areas entered for this which achieved the 'internationally recognised' category. This category was just one down from the top category which was the 'internationally excellent' category. The department in which my data was collected was one of these two subject areas.

In July 2009 the numbers of students on roll at the university were 24,640, made up of 10,068 full time, 10,310 part time and 4,262 on sandwich courses. The student to staff ratio (SRR) at the focal university in 2009 was 1:19.9, (HESA) which was above the national average at the time of 1:17.2 (HESA). Compared with universities such as Oxford (1: 11.7) (HESA) and Cambridge

(1:12:2) (HESA), the focal university's SRR appears quite high, and suggests that student contact time with staff may not be as good compared with that of Oxford and Cambridge. In the academic year in question (2009-2010), there were two Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) reports available for the focal university. These were an Audit of Collaborative Provision in 2007 and an Institutional Audit in 2010. The Institutional Audit report stated that confidence could reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards and also in the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

The student handbook for the focal course emphasized the amount of support in place for the students, stating that the course leader, personal tutor and module leaders were all there to support the students in their studies and in addition that their personal tutor would help them with any personal difficulties that arose. All first year students were expected to have regular meetings (personal tutorials) with their personal tutors. These tutorials were scheduled into the timetable and attendance was compulsory. In addition to tutorials the handbook stated that the students were able to contact staff at other times if they needed help dealing with any problems. If these were academic problems relating to a particular module, then the module leader would be the one to contact, but for more general problems, the personal tutor would be the one that the students approach. When it came to actually contacting the staff outside of scheduled personal tutorials, voicemail or email was the way in which the handbook stated that students were expected to get in touch with the lecturers. Advice about how to contact individual members of staff was displayed on their office doors. There was also a request in the handbook that students keep to the times advertised on the staff office doors if they wished to contact them. This appeared to emphasize to the students that the staff were unavailable to them at certain times and that they should not just turn up at their office door expecting to be seen. However, in practice, for the department in which this research took place the availability of staff to students varied enormously depending upon the actual lecturer themselves. The course leader for example told me in conversation that there was an open door policy, but this

seemed to be contrary to the messages sent out in the student handbook and by some of the staff and was therefore confusing to the students. The open door policy appeared to hold for some lecturers but not others.

The university had been providing BA (Hons) degrees in the focal subject since 1994 and in November 2001, the subject area underwent a review by the government funded Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The subject area involved in this research was awarded 23 out of 24 points and officially rated as excellent. At the time, this meant that the delivery of degrees in this subject area was deemed by QAA to be one of the best in the country, beating universities from the new university sector and also those from the older traditional universities including the London School of Economics and Durham University. However, only one of the lecturers that were in position when the review took place was still in position at the time of data collection and this lecturer had only been in position for a couple of months when the QAA review took place. Furthermore, at the time that I was collecting my data this particular member of staff took up an appointment at another university and left the focal university mid term. All the other lecturers in situ at the time of data collection joined the department more recently so would not have had any input in the 2001 QAA review.

The majority of the lectures that I observed took place in a listed building with ornate Gothic Victorian styling, high ceilings and dark corridors. The teaching rooms themselves had large solid dark oak doors but the furnishings were in stark contrast to the fabric of the building since these were very contemporary. There was modern lighting, blinds at the windows, contemporary seating with attached desks and various up to date technological items such as projectors, screens and computers. There was also a lectern in every teaching room throughout the building which was suggestive of the lecture still being a dominant feature of H.E. pedagogy. The building was in full use while refurbishment work commenced, but this did not seem to be too disruptive to lectures. A few of my observations also took place in a one storey modern building with large rooms and lots of large windows screened with white roller

blinds. The contrast between these two buildings highlighted the very diverse nature of the architecture on campus.

**Themes**

Whilst there are many analytic opportunities presented in my data which could provide insights into numerous aspects of university culture, it is not my intention to discuss all of these here. Instead my focus will be limited to the discussion of university culture specifically as it relates to the role of relationships in learning.

*Theme One: The Need for Relationship*

Giles, (2011), argues that once a student is enrolled on a course, ontologically the teacher and student cannot exist in any other way but as in relationship. However, he maintains that in the educational process, the ontological nature of this relationship is often taken for granted. He argues that relationships are essential to the experience of education whether they are recognised or not. As discussed in chapter two, theory also points to this need. For example, the Vygotskian notions that different ZPDs can be created between the learner and the teacher for different tasks and also, importantly, that different ZPDs can be created for the same task between the same learner and a different teacher or the same teacher and a different learner, suggests that ZPDs are entirely emergent in the very relationship between the teacher, the learner and the task in hand at any particular time and in any particular place. In addition, the emphasis in the communities of practice literature (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in which learning is seen as a process of changing participation in the practices of the community is on communication. Communication is viewed as a key aspect of how individuals develop, with mutual understanding or intersubjectivity occurring between people in interaction. Since relationship is crucially entailed in communication which allows intersubjectivity to emerge the need for interpersonal  relationships is again implicated as essential if the student is to be able to participate in the practices of the community- or in other words to learn. The need for relationship is also highlighted as an important aspect of learning and development by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) who see proximal processes as the most important aspect of the bioecological model.

Proximal processes are the progressively more complex reciprocal interactions through which an individual develops. If interaction is to be reciprocal and to become progressively more complex, then it seems plausible to suggest that relationship is entailed here. Therefore, theory suggests that in order to learn, relationship is paramount. The need for relationship in learning in H.E. was a theme which cut across my data. However, it will be argued below that relationship needs to be understood in terms of the specific context it is formed and maintained in, since relationships can only be as enabling as any context will allow.

Many of the documents collected in the focal context highlighted the fact that student- lecturer relationships were considered necessary to the students' learning and experience of their chosen course. The following extracts from the course handbook are indicative of this:

*'We* (the academic staff) *are not trained counsellors, but we can lend a friendly ear,'*

'*You should inform your personal tutor if you have problems which affect your study. If you find another member of staff more appropriate, you may be able to talk to them instead.'*

*'You are joining a very successful and friendly division.'*

*'We have also retained a commitment to small group teaching, including individual supervision of research projects.'*

Implicit in these extracts is the fact that on this particular course face to face positive interaction with others and the relationships which develop through this are considered important. This may not be expressed explicitly (and we are reminded of Giles's (2011) comment about relationships being taken for granted or invisible in the educational context), however, the mention of friendliness, the commitment to small group teaching and the acknowledgement that the student may have better relationships with tutors

other than their personal tutor with whom they can share problems implies that relationships are important in the focal context.

My field notes also highlight instances of positive interactions between students and lecturers where we could construe (albeit within the confines of what the H.E. context will allow) that relationships matter to the students' experience and therefore to their learning. For example:

'*Some students go up to talk to Dave to ask him about points that came up in the lecture and to voice their opinions on what Hobbes has to say. Dave listens and makes comments on what they are saying and both he and the students keep smiling and laughing.*'

'*Dave moves to the front and starts interacting with the students on the front row. There is a conversation about smoking and health and the students are laughing and talking to him.*'

The students interact easily with this particular lecturer and feel free to ask him about points which they do not understand. It seems reasonable to suggest that their positive interactions with him may have led to positive interpersonal relationships from which learning relationships may more easily develop.

As well as the importance of relationships between staff and students the importance of relationships between the students themselves was also brought to light in my data. There was observational data for instance which showed the importance put upon student-student relationship by one particular lecturer where he provided a workshop with the aim of getting the students to form relationships in order to  work co-operatively together on a task:

'*Dave says that today they are going to be doing preparation for group work and their presentation. The workshop is actually to give guidance about working in groups….*'

 Headings from some of the slides from a print out of the power point presentation for this particular workshop furthermore highlighted aspects of relationship formation and maintenance. Headings were:

"*Working together as a group"; "Group problems"; "Group grading and dynamics"; "Types of people" and "Don't expect people to be the same."*

All these headings imply that it is important for the students to smooth out any interpersonal difficulties between them in order to interact positively with one another if they are to learn anything from their group task. If they are to learn from their group task, then from the Vygotskian perspective ZPDs will need to be formed between the students and passage through these is also required. Tobbell and O'Donnell (2013) argue that this passage through the ZPD is what is entailed in the formation of a learning relationship. Since the aim of the group task that the students have been set is to learn, we could theorise here that if positive interactions were able to develop (as encouraged by the workshop described in these extracts), this may lead to positive interpersonal relationships between the students, which may then lead to learning relationships through which the students are able to learn from their group task. The importance of student-student relationships is also highlighted in the following extracts from field notes:

*'Five students stay in the room during break and most are in conversation with one another. The Vietnamese student is still sat on her own at the front. Occasionally she turns round as though she is going to join in with the conversation going on behind her, she never actually says anything but keeps looking at each of the students participating in the conversation. I can't help feeling sorry for her as she seems excluded. The conversation going on behind her is about an assignment.'*

The overseas student in this extract had some difficulty with the English language and was unable to participate in a conversation with other students about university assessment practices. Arguably, she was unable to interact positively with her fellow students in this instance and so was unable to build either positive interpersonal relationships or learning relationships with them. However, the student Kathy (one of the students who I interviewed) told me that she had built up a good relationship with this particular overseas student and I saw evidence of this in my observations one day where Kathy went to great lengths to explain a conversation that was going on amongst the students about marks for an essay. She also helped the overseas student to interpret her assignment feedback:

*'a female overseas student comes in with her essay and she is really pleased with her marks. She is smiling and shows it to the girl sat in front of me* (this girl is Kathy who I interviewed) *and she explains to the overseas student that the other students have worked out that there is a lenient marker and a strict marker.'*

*'The girl in front of me tells the overseas student that she has done well. The overseas student shows the girl* (Kathy) *some of her feedback; she underlines a phrase with her finger and reads it out as though she is asking the other girl* (Kathy) *what it means. She has a quizzical look on her face. The girl* (Kathy) *says something which I do not catch, but the overseas student starts smiling again.'*

These extracts show how through her positive interactions and positive interpersonal relationship with Kathy, the overseas student was enabled to understand the significance of her own mark in relation to the information that was being discussed by the other students about marking and that in the light of the conversation that the other students had been having, she had 'done well'. From a CoP perspective what these extracts show is that Kathy has helped the overseas student to understand and participate in the practices in place in this particular context. It may be that the positive interpersonal relationship between Kathy and the overseas student had allowed for the emergence of a learning relationship between them which had facilitated this. This again points towards the importance of relationship to learning in this particular H.E. context. It could be suggested that where the context militates against the participation of certain students as it clearly did for the overseas student because of her limited grasp of the English language, positive interaction, leading to positive interpersonal relationships and maybe learning relationships may be able to help to overcome this. The learning relationship between Kathy and the overseas student was not simply one way however, since Kathy in her interview told me how she was able to learn from the overseas student too:

*' Like there's a girl on our course she is Vietnamese…She is lovely her, and I am always saying to her what does it mean in your language and she's teaching me, I love to learn languages,'*

Since both Kathy and the overseas student appear to be learning from each other here, it seems plausible to suggest that it is possible for ZPDs to emerge through their positive interpersonal relationship, in which each of their understandings moves on from what they were originally through incorporation of meaning from their partner with that of their own. Or in other words they are able to reach intersubjectivity with one another and through incorporation of each other's understandings with their own, to learn. There were many other instances in my field note data where the importance of student- student relationships to their learning was highlighted. For example:

*'They* (the students) *come back talking and laughing with one another. The two girls come back with their coffees and start another conversation. I hear a conversation about the 19$^{th}$ century and another one about how to go about writing a particular essay.'*

*'I notice two students at the back; one seems to be explaining something to the other. He is pointing with his pen and the other student is nodding.'*

*'A mature female student at the front has a laptop which she takes out and a male mature student who is sat with her plugs it into a power point for her. I hear another conversation from the two females to the left of me. They are talking about how many exams they have and what exams they are doing. One woman says something which I can't hear and then the other one says "I am trying to get that in my head…I don't want to think about it."'*

These extracts show how through their positive interpersonal relationships with one another, the students support one another in their understanding of both subject matter and university practices such as assessment. The following field note extract also illustrates how the students help one another's understandings. It is taken from a seminar which involved small groups of students working together to decide on answers to certain problems set by the lecturer:

*'The male student who had been scribing* (for the group) *reads out the points from the sheet of paper that they had noted down. He elaborates a little on what has been written also and when he has finished Dave asks "Who should have ultimate control?" the other students in the group say "The government." They have all reached a consensus on this although I heard in their discussions*

*that they had slightly different views on this in the beginning and some members of the group had to be persuaded to view things this way.'*

Through their positive interactions as a group the students had all come to a similar understanding of the problem even though they had different opinions at the beginning of their discussion. Arguably, this illustrates that they have learned from one another and we could theorise that their positive interactions have enabled the formation of positive interpersonal relationships. Further that for them to gain meanings from one another in order to come to similar understandings a ZPD would have had to form and be passed through, which would indicate from Tobbell and O'Donnell's perspective that learning relationships had formed between the students too.

In their interviews each of the student participants individually elucidated their need for relationship with others in order to learn. However, again, I will reiterate that relationship can only be as enabling as the context will allow, so relationship as discussed here needs to be understood specifically in terms of the H.E. context which this thesis explores. Furthermore, the students all experience this context differently and as such what may be enabling for one student may disable another.

Lee gave several examples of where relationships either enabled or disabled his learning. In his interview he told me that at school his relationship with his Latin teacher was problematic, but how with another teacher their special relationship helped to foster his love of all things French. He told me:

*'French teacher, brilliant, in fact he became quite a close friend. My A level French teacher…a guy called Mr. McGuiness…he really instilled in me a passion for the country as well the language. His wife was French and all his children were brought up bilingual I used to go around to his house for tea.'*

Furthermore, he credited his present enthusiasm and engagement on his course in part to the relationship he had formed with the lecturer Dave. However, a fundamental question emerges about the nature of relationship at H.E. level. The staff student ratio in this university is 1:20, but it was not uncommon for students to be in lectures with one lecturer to 150 or more

students, since teaching is but one of the tasks university lecturers undertake. Therefore, sustained face to face contact is rare at undergraduate level. This calls for a different understanding of how relationship might enable learning. The relationship needs to be understood in terms of this particular context. Below Lee outlines how he engages with Dave in the context of the lecture. He talked fondly about him and his experience of him. He said:

"*You know it's weird isn't it. I have only known him six weeks and I feel like I could talk to him about anything…AND have a laugh with him…about the subject you know….*"

"I *mean this morning you will hear him. He will most likely mention the (cartoon series), he has published he's published on policy and the (cartoon series) hasn't he so I'm sure he will be able to link that in again. He will get something in about (Dave's home town) because he is obsessed with his own town and he will say I'm sorry I have digressed about 4 or 5 times because he just goes off…yeah but not only that I love it, it just widens the whole experience for me it's not just right we are going to have a 2 hour lecture on Thomas Hobbs and that will be it there will be other bits and pieces as well…"*

In these quotes we can understand a number of features of the relationships in the context of this department and this lecturer. Dave and Lee assume a relationship by virtue of the institutional structures which put them together – Lee cannot exist as a student without Dave being there as a lecturer and vice versa, ontologically according to Giles, (2011), they are in relationship. However, Lee's quotes suggest more than mere propinquity. In fact, he responds to Dave's warmth and from that feels enabled to participate. We therefore see here, that relationships can only be understood in terms of the context in which they exist. Perhaps Lee's present engagement on his course was due to the practices in place in lectures taken by Dave, which as the extracts show appeared to generate positive interpersonal interaction which it seems reasonable to suggest may enable a positive interpersonal relationship which may develop into a learning relationship. Of note is the fact that in his interview Lee did not describe any relationships he had formed with lecturers on his previous three university courses. We could theorise that the lack of noteworthy relationships may have been significant to his non participatory identity and lack of engagement on these past courses. Lee appeared to

become engaged where he was able to form positive interpersonal relationships such as the one he described as having with his French teacher and with Dave and this seemed to give him a sense of belonging. On previous university courses Lee was unable to participate. His interview transcript (Appendix E) shows that he had attempted higher education several times but had never completed a course. His identity had clearly for these courses followed marginal and then outbound trajectories. However, it may be that the practices which enable relationship in Dave's lectures and his subsequent seemingly positive relationship with Dave had more recently enabled a shift in his identity. Or in CoP terms he had now moved from the marginal and outbound trajectories he occupied on previous university courses to an enabled peripheral position with a more inbound trajectory, which was finally allowing him to participate. As already mentioned, Tobbell and O' Donnell (2013) maintain that interpersonal relationships are a pre- requisite for learning relationships and it could possibly be that Lee's positive interpersonal relationship with Dave may enable the formation of a learning relationship with him too which may account for his seemingly enabled participation and his concomitant shift in identity. Other research (Mainhard, et al. 2011; Freeman et al., 2007 and Woolfolk Hoy and Weinstein, 2006) has shown that the more warm and supportive a teacher is, the more students are able to engage and report a sense of belonging to their course. In CoP terms, engagement is essential for the students to accept the practices in place and participate in them. If this engagement does not occur then the students are unable to participate and their identity does not shift. In other words they are unable to learn as may possibly have been the case with Lee on previous courses which as his interview transcript shows he was unable to engage with, and this may account for his subsequent marginalisation where he dropped out.

So far so simple in accounting for Lee's relationship needs in relation to his learning and identity. However, despite him telling me that he had finally found his niche this time, a while after my interview with him it appeared that he may have dropped out of university again as I did not see him around university as I usually did. If this was the case, Lee's identity may not as I had theorised above shifted to a more inbound trajectory after all. Although he appeared to report a

positive relationship with Dave, this may have on its own been insufficient to keep him engaged. Furthermore, just because Lee described having a positive interpersonal relationship with Dave, this does not mean that he would necessarily go on to have a productive learning relationship with him (in which by Tobbell and O'Donnell's (2013) definition he is able to move through the ZPD). If Lee had begun to feel that he was unable to accept and participate in the practices in place again his identity might in all likelihood have embarked upon an outbound or marginalised trajectory resulting in him leaving his course once again. As mentioned in chapter two, Linehan and McCarthy (2001) point out how members of a community will participate in many different ways. Whilst some will accept the mainstream standards, norms and valued practices, others may reject them. Others may conform to some standards but not others and so individual identities develop in which they relate to the community standards and norms in a variety of complex ways. We cannot therefore assume that all individuals entering a CoP will become legitimate peripheral participants and that their identity process will follow a smooth trajectory to full participation. Existing members of the community are clearly the power brokers as to what is considered a norm when an individual first enters a community. As Walkerdine (1997) suggests, these norms can be seen as having covert controlling or regulating relations which means that the newcomer may become marginalised if they are unable to accept these norms. Lee's past experiences point towards a problematic identity. For instance, he spoke about '*intellectual cachet'* as being desirable, and being intelligent enough to get a degree, but at the same time he also appeared to want to reject academia and not appear intellectual amongst certain friends as illustrated in the quote below from Lee's interview:

"*I did try really hard not to come across as too intellectual and I think that was social pressure. From the people around me…who…weren't as academic so I think I was trying to fit in with them…you know taking your tie off at lunch time and going to the pub and trying to get served.*"

It was as though Lee did not quite know where he belonged in the world and had difficulty reconciling the differences in the valued practices of the various CoPs he inhabited. This may have resulted in Lee's interpersonal relationships with lecturers or the other students becoming problematic and he may have left

his course because of this. Or, his interpersonal relationships may not have led to productive learning relationships through which there would be passage through the ZPD, enabled participation and a shift in identity for Lee, and this may have led to his lack of engagement. Alternatively, it could be that no matter what practices were put in place by any lecturer or university that Lee attends; he may not remain engaged and go on to form productive learning relationships. He reported feeling "*exposed*" for instance in small classes when taking A levels, but then said that the size of large lectures disabled his engagement on his first university course.

More broadly, Lee's experiences highlight how difficult it is for institutions to cater to every student's needs. The students are all so diverse, so whilst the learning context and pedagogic practices in place are indeed vitally important to students relationships and learning, what the student themselves brings to the situation- their own identity is also a central issue. From a CoP perspective, identity is a constant process of change, something which we constantly negotiate and renegotiate as we go through a succession of forms of participation throughout our lives. Lee brought with him to his present university CoP a personal history of involvement with his other university courses, workplace, family and other social groups in which his participation will have varied. Lee's previous H.E. encounters were all characterised by marginalised and outbound trajectories, in other words he was trailing a failure to participate when he came to his present course and will have brought this with him. Furthermore, Lee's participation in other groups or CoPs will have depended upon the particular practices and norms which were valued in these CoPs and these may conflict with his present university course. This is highlighted by Lee's need to not appear intellectual to some of his friendship groups for instance. These conflicts need to be negotiated and reconciled in order for an individual to achieve a coherent sense of self (Handley et al., 2006). It may be that Lee had been unable to do this resulting in a problematic identity in which he was unable to accept the practices in place and engage in H.E. He would in all likelihood present as a challenge for any university to retain since his need for relationship appears so complex it may be difficult for anyone to fulfil all his needs.

Sally on the other hand told me she felt entirely at home at university. Her identity appeared to be in CoP terms much more inbound than Lee's, she enjoyed feeling included and a part of something. Positive interpersonal relationships for Sally were essential to her learning. At primary school her relationship with Mrs. Pollock her music teacher clearly enabled her learning. Sally described how Mrs. Pollock made her feel:

"…*like I was achieving...as a child I felt brainy because I felt included*"

This extract highlights how in CoP terms Sally was enabled and her identity on an inbound trajectory. Sally told me that her relationship with her guitar teacher Mr. Price also brought out the best in her and how when she went to work on the Youth Training Scheme, the staff's 'mothering' of her had helped her to feel a part of it all and to learn how to do her job. Clearly, relationship helps Sally to feel that she is being given the recognition she deserves and that she belongs, which in turn enables her participation and a shift in her identity which in CoP terms means that she is learning. Sally's experiences are again evocative of Mainhard, et al., (2011); Freeman et al., (2007) and Woolfolk Hoy and Weinstein's, (2006) research since the more warm and supportive a teacher is (or the more able other if we are considering Sally's experiences with the more experienced staff at her YTS job), the more she seems able to engage and report a sense of belonging. Sally also seemed to feel enabled at university. She told me:

"…*like I feel now, I feel like I am am part and parcel of the whole package here, I feel quite at home.*"

Sally certainly appears enabled to participate on her present course and her identity has shifted to a point where she feels included and '*part and parcel*' of it. Identity shifts such as the one described by Sally are indicative from a CoP perspective of learning taking place and so we could further theorize that Sally's interpersonal relationships at university have been positive and may have developed into learning relationships through which there would also have been passage through a ZPD. For Sally it appears that the university practices

in place are sufficient to facilitate her in the formation and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships leading to productive learning relationships. This may be due to the fact that Sally is now a second year student which means that she has been in the CoP for longer and may therefore have become more accustomed to negotiating the university practices successfully. In other words her identity is now following a more inbound trajectory.

Practices which enable or disable relationship also appeared extremely important to Maya. She reported many instances where relationship had in previous settings actually enabled her participation in learning, for example with one of her Arabic teachers:

*'we had a teacher that used to come to our house to teach us and that was really good, it was like a personal thing you know because it was just one teacher and us, that's nice'*

*'we reaaalyy liked him so much he was like a he he I remember he taught he remember like him teaching us specifically like I can remember his lessons more I can remember the stories he used to tell us and teach us about our religion more and stuff…I think I was his favourite (laughing) we got on quite well together.'*

Relationships with her teachers were also significant to her engagement in her studies at college. She compared how she felt about participating in class at college with how she felt about it at university:

*'… it's very much like they sort of talk at you and there's not much interaction* [at university] *and the classes are sssooooo much bigger so it's not like when you are in your classroom* [at college] *and you know everyone and you know it's alright to speak out without putting your hand up because erm and each person knows each others personality you know. Whereas here you I'm always unsure whether to put my hand up and do it before I speak and you know things like that.'*

This last quote also illustrates how Maya who was a first year student was still unsure of university practices and we could theorize that her identity is still peripheral in CoP terms at university. All three quotes show how she felt comfortable with her teachers in other settings however, which suggests that she had positive interpersonal relationships with them. Further, that these

positive interpersonal relationships may have developed into learning relationships which enabled her participation and shifts in her identity such that she was on an enabled inbound trajectory. However, learning relationships are not inevitable in every context as illustrated in the following extract which further displays Maya's relative unease at university as compared with her previous settings:

"*I might feel a bit more comfortable approaching my school teachers about work than my lecturers. Don't get me wrong, I do approach them, but I might be a bit shy about going back to them. I would prefer to ask my friends or something like that. Whereas in school I knew I could go back as many times as I want and they would always be there. I'm sure these lecturers would be as well, it's just that…you know….it's not like having the same relationship with your* [school] *teacher they know you…*"

Maya had clearly found coming to university daunting and as well as being unsure of her new lecturers, she was unsure of the practices in place. However, she mentioned in her interview that the lecturer Dave bridged the gap between college and university practice a little whereas other lecturers did not:

"*…well I think A levels, erm even though they are much more difficult than GCSEs, the teachers, they give you everything they cover everything you need whereas in the lectures some people for example Dave will give you the handout otherwise you have to get it yourself with other, other lecturers.*"

Generally however, Maya did not appear to have the same positive interpersonal relationships with her lecturers at university as she did with her teachers at school. Maya's unease at university may be due to there having been insufficient opportunity as yet for her to establish positive interpersonal relationships with her lecturers from which learning relationships could develop. As mentioned in chapter two, one aspect of the chronosystem (time) in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory relates to the frequency and duration of the proximal processes in the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner argues that these are the primary drivers of development and that they must be regular and increase in complexity in order for development to occur. It may be that for Maya interaction with her lecturers (which would constitute proximal processes) had not as yet been frequent enough or of long enough duration to enable her learning and development. Following Giles (2011) I have argued that once a

student is enrolled on a course, ontologically they cannot exist in any other way but as in relationship with their tutor. So, by extension, by virtue of being present on the course Maya has some form of interpersonal relationship with each of her lecturers. However, that is not to say that learning relationships would necessarily ensue from these interpersonal relationships. Following Bronfenbrenner we could theorize that there would need to be frequent and regular interaction which increases in complexity between Maya and her tutors (Bronfenbrenner's proximal processes) for her interpersonal relationships to develop into learning relationships. Maybe once Maya has had more opportunity for interaction with her lecturers on a regular and frequent basis then trust may be established between them and the interpersonal relationships which she had with them may develop into learning relationships. These would allow passage through the ZPD, whilst at the same time enabling her participation in the practices in place. In CoP terms, this would come with the concomitant identity shifts, learning and development that participation entails and Maya may then hopefully become surer of herself in the university environment and her place in it. However, as well as the need for interactions to be frequent and increasingly more complex, presumably, for trust to be built between Maya and her lecturers, these interactions would also need to be of a positive nature to allow for this. MacFarlane (2009) points out that students entering H.E. must do so largely on the basis of a 'leap of faith' or trust and that trust is particularly important where students feel vulnerable and ignorant (as they most likely would when first coming to university). The need for university practices which provide the time and opportunity for increasingly more complex and frequent positive interaction with lecturers (the proximal processes of development) therefore seems imperative for students such as Maya to begin to trust her lecturers and for her basic interpersonal relationship with them to develop into a learning relationship. Sally who had been at university for a year longer than Maya had had more opportunity for positive interaction (the proximal processes of development) with others at university, and so had become more accustomed to the practices in place. The insecurities which Sally described in her interview (Appendix E) about first attending university had subsided and she said that she now felt part and parcel of university life. Her identity appears to have shifted and this may be as a consequence of her

having had more opportunity for increasingly more complex positive interaction on a regular basis, resulting in the building of trust between herself and her lecturers and peers. This may have subsequently enabled the formation of positive interpersonal relationships and the learning relationships that derive from these. Conversely, if the interactions had been frequent and increasing in complexity but of a negative nature, then it seems reasonable to suggest that it would be unlikely that trust would be built. The issue of what constitutes positive or negative interaction is developed further in the next theme 'Interaction of Identities.'

Like Maya, it was also Rose's first year at university. However, for Rose there was the sense that her relationships with some lecturers had already become more established than Maya's had. Consequently, she felt more at ease with the university practices in place and where she herself fit into university. However, Rose also reported feeling very unsure in certain instances in previous settings, but told me that relationships with others helped her to overcome this. For example she told me about the experiences of being bullied and about having dyslexia and how certain teachers had helped her:

*"…looking back on her encouragement and she gave me a way out of the bullying because she ran an art club and there was a long list to join the art club but she pushed my name forward, so that gave me more friends because we all had an interest in art and that was different years as well so the older children would look out for me as well so it was definitely an influence."*

*"…again I seem to get on better with creative people and I had a brilliant English teacher called Miss Hart who was extra encouraging because I got, even in the practice GCSE paper I got a C and a D and she said we can get it up to 2 Cs and she gave me lots of extra help and I ended up getting an A and a B."*

What had helped Rose to feel surer of herself in these settings, or in CoP terms for her identity to shift, were positive interpersonal relationships. Also at university on her present course, her relationships with her lectures were important to Rose as shown in her descriptions of them in the following quotes:

*"Oh, my course, I absolutely love it… because I have got great lecturers. The lecturers are fantastic…"*

*"I mean Dave definitely is one of the ones. He definitely takes an interest in both academics and any personal problems you are having and he's really good at sorting them out really quickly which I thought was really good. Sally is very good at going above and beyond."*

Prompt responses to requests for help from her lecturers were also important aspects of Rose's relationship with them. Rose told me how Dave for example would respond quickly to requests for help:

*'Whereas Dave would be back to you within half an hour. And you have him on facebook, you can message him on facebook if you are stuck and again he would respond whatever… Yeah, I had that because we had to do portfolios and there had to be an article and I kept going over and I was like does it have to be exactly 500 and within 2 minutes he had emailed me back and answered it.'*

However, she told me that other lecturers such as Alan were more unavailable to the students:

*'Trying to find Alan was part of the problem…Yeah I think because he taught another department as well and he was head of something, so he did have a lot on but it was trying to find Alan that was an issue. If you emailed him, you did get a response eventually but it didn't help if you had an immediate question.'*

Scott et al. (2008) list ready access to responsive staff as being particularly relevant to student retention, yet Rose's experiences highlight how this was not always possible. Furthermore, the course handbook advised that students should only try to seek out lecturers at certain times:

*'We all put a list of times on our doors indicating when we normally expect to be available, and you should try to keep to these office hours.'*

The handbook furthermore mentions that certain methods such as 'voicemail', 'leaving a message with the school secretary', or 'emailing' was the preferred method of contact. These preferred methods of contact suggest to the students that face to face contact is not encouraged by the teaching staff and this may place barriers between them and the students which may be detrimental for the

formation of relationships. We see here that despite the university being keen to present a friendly image in some of the extracts from documents discussed in the previous theme, further analysis of these documents and of reported and observed practice, reveals that the quotidian practices in place may actually disable face to face interaction and create a culture where the importance of interpersonal relationships is undermined.

Rose's access to her lecturers and her assessment feedback appeared to be a particularly important aspect of her relationship with them because of her dyslexia diagnosis. She told me that dyslexia meant that she questioned her ability to do things:

*"Yeah, because I know dyslexia's not a bad thing as such, but it does knock your confidence and you do question your ability to do things…And so I wanted to and like I said, it's a lot of reading, lots of essay work, lots of exams I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of doing it, capable of getting the degree I wanted to get."*

She needed to be reassured that she was on the right lines and that her work was "good enough" and relied on the lecturing staff's opinions to reassure her that she was producing what was required of her:

*Well, it* (her essay feedback) *got emailed to me… it came up and it was 65 and I was just YES!!!! Like that and my flat mate was like this betta be worth it you have just woke me up (laughs) I was like you can go back to sleep it's fine… I was, I was dancing around the living room.'*

Brinkworth et al. (2009, p.169) argue that regular and effective feedback '*remains a fundamental mechanism for making new university students feel supported, accustomed to and comfortable with the university environment.'* We could argue that the support and reassurance that Rose and other students might gain from lecturer feedback means that regular feedback is an important aspect of the relationship between the student and their lecturer in the university context. However, university practices may not always allow for feedback to be regular. Information gathered from the student union annual report for the focal university highlighted how the student union felt that there was room for improvement in the areas of assessment and feedback given to

students and represented this to the university on the students' behalf. Consequently, the university developed a revised feedback and assessment strategy in 2010. One aspect of this strategy emphasised the importance of providing feedback within three weeks of students submitting coursework. I was unable to ascertain how much longer than this it had taken to provide feedback before 2010, but even three weeks still seems a long time to have to wait for students, especially to those such as Rose when they are new to university and still trying to gauge what is expected of them in their work.

Rose's relationships with her peers were also important to her. She ended up with lots of friends at college and also mentioned that there was lots of peer learning on her present course. She told me:

*"…on a Friday we have 3 hours between research and human rights and so we spend that 3 hours in the SU. And we talk about like especially because Dave like says you should read a  newspaper every day, we all read a different newspaper, not by choosing, we just do because we all have different political leanings and like different newspapers. So we are all debating the things we have read in the newspapers and what we think. And that helps with our essays and stuff because something that we debated about a couple of weeks ago, I have an essay on policy and society and I can take their opinions and also use like the newspapers they have read."*

Clearly, interpersonal relationships at university are not based solely upon a lecturer and student dyad. Relationships with peers can be important to the students' engagement at university too. Tinto (1993; 2007; 2009; 2012) claims that social integration with peers is important if students are to persist with their studies. This claim is backed up by Leach et al. (2005) who showed that the quality of students' learning experiences and their decisions to persist with their studies is significantly influenced by their social relationships. Furthermore, Scott et al. (2008) claim that supportive peer groups are particularly relevant to student retention. Tinto (2003) claims that  where students know each other well and also have a shared experience of the curriculum as the students on Rose's course appear to, they are engaged socially as well as intellectually in knowledge construction in ways that promote higher levels of cognitive development, (Tinto, 2003). This means that for Tinto, not only are students'

peer relationships important to their engagement and retention, they may also help them to learn, which is what Rose appears to be describing in the extract above.  It may be for Rose  that the positive interpersonal relationships that she describes as having with her peers have led to the formation of learning relationships with them too which have enabled her learning, participation in the setting and her identity shift.

Rose appears to have quickly engaged with and accepted the valued practices of university and is therefore enabled to participate in them and to learn with the concomitant identity shifts this entails. We could theorise that despite some practices at university not being particularly enabling to relationship formation and maintenance, Rose has managed to negotiate these in such a way that she has nonetheless managed to form positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships with staff and students. So again, whilst the university context and practices are important to students' relationships and learning, the students' own identity is also implicated in how they negotiate these practices as to whether they are either enabling or disabling for them. Lee had trailed failure to participate in previous CoPs and furthermore had difficulty reconciling the differences in the valued practices of the various CoPs he inhabited. Despite being a little unsure of herself in some settings, Rose generally had a history of successful participation in other educational settings which I have suggested may have been brought about through positive interpersonal relationships which led to learning relationships. Unlike Lee she had furthermore appeared to be able to reconcile any differences in the valued practices of the other CoPs she inhabited with those of her present university CoP. This meant that Rose's sense of self was more coherent than Lee's and her identity was enabled and following an inbound trajectory in the university setting.

Will was a mature student in his fifties. He told me that relationships with both his peers and his lecturers were extremely important to his engagement and learning. With regards to his fellow students he would have liked even more opportunity to work cooperatively with them. He told me:

*"I think more could come from if if we were all erm erm …we have done it once or twice where we have been taught something and you absorb that information in a certain way then someone else has taken it in in a different way. But when you share how you have taken it on its* (inaudible) *and it starts to balance what you think and I say we should have some political debates when we discuss things and it's not because you want to catch up with them especially me 'cos I will probably come from a different angle and they will say that's interesting, they won't they won't .."*

*And:*

*"…it's got to add value and I don't mean from an economic point of view it's got to bring us on, but there's this I have got to win, it's a shame and that's a very difficult thing to break down. It's difficult to break down when there are groups of people trying to outdo one another cos it might be for jobs …there's a reason…to get a job you know and that's the case er it's not how we were meant to be ."*

These extracts show that Will saw the value of forming both positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships with his fellow students. Furthermore, that he felt debilitated in his learning by what he felt as competitiveness between the students, of whom he said:

*"They are friendly and they're funny humorous, witty, but they are very individualised, they are hard, they're hard it's the hardness that is quite shocking."*

For Will it seems that university practices which facilitate relationships between the students and discourage competition might enable his participation. However, the culture of competition was very much in evidence. For example, data obtained from document analysis (module handbooks in this case) and observations showed that there was only one assessment out of all the modules I observed that required the students to collaborate with their peers. All the other assessments required the students to work alone in competition for grades and any collaboration would have been seen as cheating. Whilst this form of assessment may be fine for the students who are good at passing exams, Will told me that he feels disabled by exams since he failed his 11 plus exam. He was also apprehensive about the exams coming up at university, he told me:

*' but erm we have exams coming up and I won't feel comfortable with that. I don't think it is a good measurement of education at all erm its its whether you are good at memory, its whether you are good under pressure and erm its er is it for the university's convenience …who knows.'*

If learning institutions provided assessments which were not reliant on the competition for grades between individuals, but rather relied more upon collaborative techniques, this may mean that students such as Will would be more comfortable with them and he may be better enabled to participate. However, despite Will not being comfortable with some of the assessment practices at university, he was clearly engaged on his course, since he told me:

*'But I'm really pleased with myself for standing out and saying I am a good student, I am a very good student this might not reflect in essays or even the exams, but I know I am good and that's not in an arrogant way, I know I am good and I'm not going to be dumbed down by it.'*

And:

*'I will struggle through, but I will get the degree, I will pass and I am alright with that and I know I will be better because of it.'*

In CoP terms, although Will struggles to participate in the assessment practices he nevertheless appears to have accepted some of the university practices in place and is enabled to participate in these to some extent. We are again reminded of Linehan and McCarthy's (2001) point that members of a community may participate in many different ways, rejecting some standards, norms and practices whilst accepting others. Hodges (1998, pp.279) argument about there being an "*agonised compromise*" in becoming a member of any community could also be significant for Will. His acceptance of some of the practices in place have meant that his identity appears to have shifted somewhat, since whereas he told me that he felt '*written off at age 11'* due to failing his 11 plus exam, he now sees himself as a "*good student.*"   It seems that his learning and identity shifts are not solely based on the outcome of his

assessments since he believes that he is learning and achieving despite his results for these. It could be that the relationships he has formed have enabled his participation in some of the university practices sufficiently to move his identity on to a more inbound trajectory than he was following previously when he felt that he was 'written off' academically. Indeed, Will really appeared to value some of the relationships he had with his tutors and believed that the teaching he received on his course had been absolutely vital to the learning process for him. He told me that:

"…the lecturers we have got we couldn't ask for better really. They are demanding, good, thoughtful. They will call you in if you are struggling. They are just…spot on really…I I  can't er I have gauged that we have probably got the cream er where we are er not just in terms of their ability which has astounded me anyway, but they are passionate, absolutely passionate about their teaching. You can tell they are passionate…one in particular he's pathetically passionate and I love passionate people I think wow, he needs something to calm him down, but that sort of enthusiasm draws you in, it makes you want to learn it and I think you then you want to be accepted by them or respected by them. That's an important facet to it so that's …what…helps me erm get through it."

However, he did not feel enabled by the relationship he had with the lecturer on the research methods module which most of the other students also complained to me about. As he put it:

"…that connection didn't happen because the pupils weren't interested in, they didn't give anything to the teacher so the teacher like well why should I be bothered that's how it goes…didn't turn up or when they turned up you know, and it's a pity because I think they were actually…very able, but they didn't get that rapport with the students, that that connection didn't happen. That connection where that respect for each other, where you want to do well for them and they want to do well for you and and that fusion that happens in any relationship I think."

This last extract clearly illustrates as in Tobbell and O'Donnell's (2013) research that where positive interpersonal relationships are lacking, learning relationships are unable to form. Most of the other students also told me that they did not learn anything from the tutors on this module and simply became instrumental about just getting through it. I took this to mean that they negotiated the practices in place on their course in such a way that they were

able to pass their assessment for this module despite any deep engagement with or understanding of the subject matter. Without the initial formation of a positive interpersonal relationship, the students were evidently unable to form a learning relationship with the tutors on this particular module. Interpersonal relationships are clearly essential to all students if they are to go on to have learning relationships through which they are enabled to pass through a ZPD and participate in their course in such a way that their identity shifts follow an enabled trajectory. Perhaps, for the students who described becoming instrumental in just getting through this module, identity shifts which follow an enabled trajectory for this particular subject area were unnecessary to actually passing the module. This appears at first to undermine my argument that relationships are necessary in order to learn. However, it may be that to gain enough marks to pass the module, all that was entailed was to negotiate the assessment practices in such a way that they were able to complete the assessment. Further, that it was possible to achieve this without the formation of a learning relationship with their subject lecturer which may involve a deeper understanding of the subject matter in itself, because they may be sufficiently enabled in their negotiation of assessment practices by relationships they have formed in previous contexts, or with their present peers.

Whilst some of the students may be satisfied with just getting through a module and passing, this did not seem to be enough for Will however. He told me that his reasons for coming to university were completely different to most of the other students. For him, coming to university entailed changing the way he saw himself, or in other words, transformative learning in which his identity shifted. Relationship was therefore particularly important to him and it may become difficult for Will to remain engaged on his course if he was to experience further difficulty with regards to relationships with his peers or lecturers as illustrated in what he said about the research methods lecturers:

*"…erm believe me if that was the level that everybody else was at I would have asked for my money back, it was appalling. Erm I didn't like it at all."*

Philip was a second year student in his early twenties. In stark contrast to Will's obvious need for relationship with his peers, Phillip initially appeared to be telling me in his interview that he did not want or need relationships with his fellow students:

'*I also had a module which held a bit of group work and I'm not sure about group work because I usually end up dominating it and I don't know whether that's good and I usually end up getting frustrated with people, I am a bit of a control freak,… I don't like anyone holding me back from achieving what I can achieve without them.*'

However, he went on to tell me how he had worked well together with one of his friends with whom he had a good interpersonal relationship.

'*I I respected the very shy friend I expected to have to carry through it a lot but he he put in the most time than anyone else besides me…he he we did all the data entry and data analysis together because which he is better at that than me so we are able to bounce off each other and we ended up being able to do an adequate if clumsy way I think…*'

Arguably, Philip's positive interpersonal relationship with this particular student may have developed into a learning relationship through which both parties were able to move through a ZPD for the particular task that they were set and to learn.

Furthermore, Philips' transcript also showed that he also needed relationships with others so that he could measure how well he was doing compared to them:

'*We have, me and a few friends from the course have a sort of friendly rivalry where we'll sort of compare results and ….. It's not it's not to sort of gloat or anything I don't think, I don't approach it like that but I feel that it pushes you that bit more. It's not that I am doing it to beat them, it's just that if you beat someone who's intelligence you respect anyway, you feel good yourself.*'

It seems reasonable to suggest here that from a CoP perspective Philip's need for comparison with others in order to feel good about himself is indicative of an identity shift and therefore learning. Corcoran et al. (2011, p.119) argue that comparisons with others are '*a fundamental, ubiquitous, and robust human proclivity.*' Further, Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparisons postulates that people have a basic need to have a stable and accurate view of

themselves and so they compare themselves with others in order to achieve this in the absence of any other objective measure. However, researchers since then (Wills, 1981; Corcoran et al. 2011) maintain that rather than seeking an accurate evaluation of themselves, individuals may try to create and maintain a positive self image. To this end, individuals may engage in downward comparisons (Wills, 1981) which are comparisons of the self with others who one outperforms. It could be that this is what Philip is doing here since the extract shows that to feel good about himself, (or for his identity to shift in order to see himself in a positive light) he needed to compare more favourably than his peers in the setting.

Like Rose, measuring how well he was doing and having assurances of his ability was also an important aspect of Philip's relationships with his lecturers. He gained a lot of confidence through the feedback he received from them as shown in the following interview extract:

*' I think I'm more confident, (now at university)… at college I was very very very very shy erm…I'm definitely more confident….more assertive …but I don't think, I mean I have always been very friendly and made friends really easily. No matter what kind of person they are I sort of adapt to the group erm but I think I'm a bit more egotistical …erm which I don't think is a bad thing really (laughs) yeah…I feel a lot more confident…I mean that first essay I wasn't expecting that (to achieve 85 percent) I didn't know what was a good essay. And still, I hand in an essay and I think it's bad and it still comes back as a first. Erm, which is sort of a good situation to be in (laughs) but erm I think that first essay had to be the thing that really gave me the confidence to go for it…and…sort of assert myself and be confident in what I was saying about things erm. Also, my level of confidence has got a lot I think to do with my opinion of other people and this sounds a bit bad but … (laughs)'*

Doing well in assessments is in CoP terms a valued practice of university. Clearly Phillip was enabled to participate in essay type assessments and his identity was in part driven by feedback on his performance in these and also by how well he compared in these assessments with his peers. Phillip actually told me that his feedback boosted his ego:

*"it really inflated my ego which is kind of good but kind of bad at the same time obviously.."*

Philip's mention of his ego inflating here is clearly indicative of his changing identity and therefore from a CoP perspective his learning and development. So despite Phillip appearing to prefer individualistic learning and assessment practices, he also has a need for relationship in his learning in order to assure him that he is doing well and for his identity to shift as indicated in his change in confidence since coming to university. Philip's experiences show how relationship is important to students in their learning even where they appear at first to shun them.

My final interview participant Kathy told me that she had had some difficult relationships at school with her teachers and also that she found it difficult to make and keep friends with other students. Since coming to university, it seems that relationships had either the capacity to enable her participation or disable it. For example the following extracts illustrate how she was disabled in her participation when she first came to university to do an English degree and how the negative interpersonal relationship she had with one particular lecturer may have contributed to this:

*'…and I've actually not written anything since I did that course. It's completely took my inspiration away from me and 'cos the creative writing lecturer…I probably shouldn't say this…But he basically, he was marking all the poems and saying that's a good poem or that's a bad one and I don't think you can do that… We sort of stood up against him and refused to speak in his lectures (laughs) basically. We rebelled. Cos yeah I failed because basically I wasn't interested in it at all.'*

*'I failed my English was because erm I was ill and couldn't get into uni to give in an essay so I emailed it to one of my lecturers even though I knew it wasn't allowed, but he never got back to me. The first I found out about it was at the end of the year when he said you have failed 'cos I couldn't mark that essay and I was like but well you never got back to me,'*

However, Kathy had since switched from English to the course which is the focus of this research and she told me that she had better relationships with her lecturers on this course:

*'Whereas with (*focal course) *you have got more of a relationship as well…. I think it's easier to as well because there is more debate goes on in the lessons, as well you are more likely to form a relationship.'*

In contrast to her English course Kathy now appeared deeply engaged with her present one. The positive interpersonal relationships Kathy reported with lecturers on her present course appeared to have facilitated the formation of productive learning relationships which had enabled her participation, since she was engaged and achieving well academically now and predicted to achieve a first class honours degree. Whereas, with her previous course the negative interpersonal relationship she had with her lecturer meant that a learning relationship was impossible and Kathy was unable to participate, became marginalised from the course and dropped out. Wenger's argument about needing to accept the practices in place in a community in order to be able to engage and participate seems particularly pertinent in Kathy's case. The poor interpersonal relationship with her English teacher led to her lack of engagement which meant that she was unable to accept the practices in place or therefore to participate. Her identity was consequently on an outbound trajectory and she was unable to learn. Whereas on her present course she had positive interpersonal relationships, accepted the practices, was engaged and enabled to participate. Her identity had shifted; she was now on an inbound trajectory and was much more successful in her learning.

As well as the relationships with her lecturers being important to Kathy, she also described instances when relationships with her peers at university had helped her to learn. She told me:

*"… I know I have quite a few debates, people disagree with me obviously. I disagree with them too, it's just the way it is but I think that you learn from other people's ideas as well. So, hopefully that will mean that other people can learn from me too. I have learned, I have changed some of my opinions, but some of my opinions I have kept specifically. But some people have changed my mind and helped me grow as a person because I think you do have to work together, because if you have a good idea and then someone else has a good idea, you need to share them."*

Kathy's description of changing her mind and growing as a person is indicative of her identity shifting, which from the CoP perspective means that she was learning. If this was the case, this means that as well as forming positive interpersonal relationships with her peers she was also forming learning relationships with them. Tobbell and O'Donnell's (2013) definition of learning relationships as those relationships which enable the emergence of and passage through the ZPD means that we could also argue that Kathy's extract above describes her passage through the ZPD with the assistance of her peers. By extension, it might be possible that her fellow students are also passing through the ZPD when they debate with Kathy and each other. The debates could therefore be described as multiple zones of proximal development (Brown and Campione, 1994), in which the students help one another to move beyond their present understandings and come to new understandings and therefore learn from one another.

It appears that some of the practices on Kathy's present course sufficiently facilitated the formation and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships for Kathy, which in turn enabled her participation and learning. On the other hand, practices on her English course did not appear to facilitate relationship formation to an extent to which Kathy was enabled to participate. Kathy's experiences demonstrate how altering the context is able to make participation possible for some students, since some that are unable to participate in one setting are able to thrive in others. Her experiences are in sharp contrast to Lee's whose identity (or what he brought to the situation himself), meant that no matter what the practices in place in any particular context, he may be unable to participate. These nuances in my data highlight the complex interplay of context, participation, learning and identity, thereby emphasizing the extremely distributed nature of learning and how difficult it is for universities to meet all students' learning needs.

This theme has attempted to theorize how and why students have the basic need for relationship to enable their participation in the H.E. context. However, as I highlighted at the beginning of this theme, the analysis shows that their relationships existed and were constructed by the context. What each individual

themselves brought to the context (their identity) and how this interacted with the identity of others in the context also had an impact upon whether the students were able to form positive interpersonal relationships with another person (and from these learning relationships). The next theme will look at this interaction of identities in order to understand how the formation and maintenance of relationships can be enabled or disabled by this.

***Theme Two: Interaction of Identities***

Identity is central in the CoP literature which states that meaning making or learning occurs through the processes of identity change in ongoing participation in the socio-cultural practices of the community. This means however, that identity is not fixed but is a constant process of change, which applies to both students and lecturers alike. Identity is therefore a very complex process and when identities interact in the process of relationship formation the picture becomes even more complicated. Glimpses of student identity were provided through their interviews and my observations. Likewise, my observations of lecturer behaviours in the classroom and my ad hoc conversations with them give some indication of their identity particularly in relation to their conceptions of what it is to teach and to learn and how they viewed their own role in this. This theme will address the complex processes involved in the interaction of identities in order to understand how and why some individuals' identity processes in combination appeared to make for positive interpersonal relationships from which learning relationships were able to emerge, whilst some were unable to.

*Interaction of Student and Lecturer Identity*

The importance of lecturer identity is plain in Mainhard et al. (2011), Freeman et al. (2007) and Woolfolk Hoy and Weinstein's, (2006) work who all argue that the more warm and supportive a teacher is, the more students seem to engage and report a sense of belonging to the class. Where student and lecturer identity is able to interact in productive ways the students are able to accept the practices in place and become engaged in their learning. Engagement is essential in CoP terms in order for the students to be able to participate. If this engagement does not occur then the students are unable to participate and

their identity does not shift, or in other words they are unable to learn. This chimes with Tobbell and O'Donnell's (2013) work, where they argue that interpersonal relationships are a necessary precursor to learning relationships, since it appears that Mainhard et al. (2011) and Woolfolk Hoy and Weinstein (2006) are arguing that for learning to take place there must first be the warm, supportive interpersonal relationships in existence. From the Vygotskian perspective, we could also argue that where students are participating and learning, enabled by the warm supportive (or we could say positive) interpersonal relationships, there is furthermore the formation of learning relationships which entails emergence of and passage through a ZPD.

The students related many instances to me where they were able to form positive interpersonal relationships with their lecturers. One lecturer who all the students invariably tended to do this with was Dave. My data give many glimpses into Dave's identity and what it meant to him to teach and to learn. For example, Dave would often make jokes at the expense of himself, as in the examples below:

*'and then* (Dave) *makes a joke about himself playing five a side for the staff team and going down like a sack of potatoes'*

*'he made a joke about himself being socially embarrassed once when he came across the name St. John and pronounced it wrongly in front of people.'*

By portraying himself either in a situation where he had made a mistake or in which the students were able to laugh at his expense Dave shows himself in a vulnerable light in which his status is reduced from one of authoritative lecturer to 'vulnerable human being'. We could theorise that this might reduce the psychological distance between the students and himself, since a lecturer who engineers a situation in which he appears vulnerable in front of the students has no fear of being open and exposing his shortcomings to them. His concepts of what it is to teach and learn and his role in this, in other words his identity would presumably be very different to a lecturer who feels that s/he should have power or control over the students and is therefore uncomfortable exposing their vulnerabilities. Kelchtermans (2009) argues that because of its

relational and ethical nature, teaching is fundamentally characterised and constituted by vulnerability, furthermore, that the actual emotional experience of vulnerability can trigger intense emotions. It may be that some lecturers such as Dave are able to recognise that vulnerability is a necessary constituent of the profession and that displaying it has the ability to close the psychological distance between lecturers and students and enhance mutuality. The emotional experiencing of it may in such a scenario therefore not be too uncomfortable. Alternatively, Dave may expose his own vulnerability as a way of managing his vulnerability, since making jokes at his own expense means that he is in control of it.

However, my data also revealed instances where interpersonal relationships between lecturers and students were problematic. For instance, in complete contrast to Dave who walked amongst the students, chatted with them and was open and unafraid to show his vulnerabilities, the lecturer Steve, kept his distance from the students as in the following observation which was typical of his positioning for the most of his lecture:

*'Steve is behind the lectern and keeps looking at his watch.'*

He even tried to wield power and control over the students by reprimanding them about rules which other lecturers did not appear to see the point of upholding.

*'Steve says "by bringing that sandwich in you are contravening university law clause 4, 768. It is a good job that I have had my lunch otherwise I would have upheld that law. Put the packet in the bin otherwise I will." I thought he said this jokingly at first, but then realised that he was annoyed, especially when he then went on to say "You should not bring sandwiches into lectures… ok."'*

As the extracts above and my other observational data shows (Appendix D) Steve appeared very closed towards the students and guarded as though he wanted to keep the students at some distance from him psychologically. His management of the vulnerability of teaching was very different to the way in which Dave managed this. It could be that for Steve, the exposure and

vulnerability that lecturing entails may trigger a more intense emotional (Kelchtermans, 2011) response for him than it does for Dave. This may mean that he tries to protect himself from feelings of vulnerability by keeping the students at a safe psychological distance. This psychological distance may be why the students did not react well to him. For example they rarely laughed at his jokes and were unresponsive to his questioning as illustrated in my fieldnotes (Appendix D) and the two examples from these below:

'Steve asks "What does reverence mean?" There is no response from the students. He goes on "Have a guess" Two more students come in late the door squeaks again and as they sit down they turn round and start talking to some students behind them. Steve stops waiting for a response from the students and says "I was looking for..." and goes on to explain what reverence means.'

'Does anyone want to say anything?" There is no response.'

Whereas in contrast, as my fieldnotes show (Appendix D) the students reacted much more favourably to Dave, finding his jokes hilarious, being really responsive to his questioning in lectures and chatting to him at every available opportunity.

Some of the students had expressed feelings of vulnerability of their own to me in their interviews. This was especially the case when they were relatively new to university and the valued practices of university were still a mystery to them. Maya for example told me how she was really fearful of making mistakes since she did not know what was expected of her. In CoP terms this indicates a fragile peripheral identity. An identity such as Maya's (which one might expect reflects the majority of student identities when they first come to university since they are unfamiliar with the valued practices in place), may not interact favourably with a lecturer who has an identity such as Steve's. His conceptualisations of what it is to teach and to learn and his role in this renders him psychologically distant from the students. For new students to become enabled to participate in the valued practices of their new CoP, positive interpersonal relationships between lecturers and students need to be established so that  learning relationships, which entail passage through the ZPD and the concomitant identity shifts brought about by their participation are

all possible. It seems unlikely that Maya and Steve would form a positive interpersonal relationship or a learning relationship because of the psychological distance he places between himself and his students. Maya may not therefore be enabled to pass through a ZPD alongside Steve nor be enabled to participate in the unfamiliar practices of university. Her identity in this situation would in all likelihood remain very peripheral or marginalised. However, interaction of her identity with Dave's who openly exposed his own vulnerabilities and was warm and psychologically present with the students might lead to a more favourable outcome. A positive interpersonal relationship and a learning relationship may then be more likely to ensue, allowing passage through the ZPD, enabling her participation and the concomitant identity shifts this entails.

Dale and Frye (2009) also argue that vulnerability is an essential relational quality of teaching. Furthermore, that teachers who are open and display their vulnerability towards their students have an awareness of how they personally confront difficult situations and communicate this to their students in order to support them as they themselves reason through situations. It is almost as though by exposing his own mistakes and vulnerabilities Dave is letting the students know that it is alright for them to also make mistakes and they therefore feel safe to do so without fear of displaying their own vulnerability. In other words they trust him and this makes for greater mutuality, whereas as the field note data (Appendix D) show, trust and mutuality were plainly lacking between the students and Steve. Steve tried to avoid displaying any emotional connection, yet Vaughn and Baker (2004) argue that perceived emotional connectedness (or the psychological proximity) between teachers and students is essential to students' learning. As my data show in the contrast between Dave and Steve's interaction with the students, this connection is crucial if identities are to interact in such a way that positive interpersonal relationships are able to form through which learning relationships can emerge.

Another way in which Dave displayed his emotional connection to the students was by appearing to understand their position and displaying empathy towards them. For example, in one lecture he asked the students the following question:

*'Dave asks "Who here has no idea how to use power point?" No one puts their hand up. Dave says "Sorry I shouldn't have asked you about this, you won't want to say…"'*

It was as though he quickly seemed to realize that his question may make the students feel awkward and so corrected himself. My field notes (Appendix D) also highlight the conversation he had with me one day when he told me about a student who was reluctant to speak up in class, who he had tried to include into the class conversation. Dave said that he was wary of making the student feel too exposed. He clearly displayed empathy for this student and an understanding of his position. On a general level the interview transcripts (Appendix E) and field notes (Appendix D) show how he was also considerate towards students with learning differences as well as showing quite considerable consideration and empathy to the new first year students who he routinely printed off a copy of the power point slides for. The other lecturers did not do this. Maybe he better understood how difficult it was for the students to understand all the new practices that they needed to come to terms with when first starting out at university and so tried to lighten their load a little.

As my field notes (Appendix D) of lecture and seminar observations shows, it appears that where the interactions between the students and their lecturers were underpinned by empathy and caring for the students, the psychological distance between the lecturer and student was lessened and there was warmth and trust between them that could almost be felt in the classroom. Such lectures were characterized by far more willingness on the part of the students to take risks in responding to questions, to ask for help in the answers they were formulating, or to contribute generally to discussions. In other words, where interactions between the students and their lecturers were positive, this enabled their interpersonal relationships to develop into positive interpersonal relationships in which there was trust built between the pair. This in turn enabled the formation of learning relationships, the students' participation and therefore from the CoP perspective the identity shifts that this entails.

MacFarlane (2009) argues that trust is an important aspect of the teaching and learning relationship in higher education. If trust can be built through positive interactions between individuals, presumably, negative interaction would have the opposite effect and destroy trust.  Mainhard et al., (2011) maintain that sarcasm, yelling at students or using coercive or punitive behaviour towards them could lead to loss of trust. This would presumably also significantly reduce the tutor's psychological proximity to the students, immediately disrupting the relation between them and the students. Further to this it could be suggested that behaviours such as these would render the interaction of lecturer and student identities problematic and positive interpersonal and learning relationships may be unlikely to be established. This could have been the issue where Steve upheld the university rule about food and drink in classrooms, mentioned above. My field notes (Appendix D) show that he also reprimanded a student about mobile phone usage in the same lecture. By enforcing rules which none of the other lecturers enforced (and indeed openly flouted themselves without exception) and making the comments in the way he did, Steve may have come across as coercive, punitive or offensive to the students. This arguably destroys trust, puts psychological distance between him and the students, and the formation of a positive interpersonal relationships or learning relationships is unlikely. Further, studies such as Lewis et al., (2005) and Miller et al., (2000) support Mainhard (2011) arguing that coercive teaching strategies in schools are associated with more student misbehaviour. This certainly appeared to be the case in the present study, since (although I would not label the students' behaviour in Steve's lecture as misbehaviour but rather as uncooperative); my field notes (Appendix D) show that their behaviour indicated that Steve did not appear to have any influence over them. They were unresponsive to his questions and jokes and for much of the time they did not appear to be paying much attention to what he was saying. Furthermore, even his immediate reprimands about eating and phone use had little influence upon the students as there was still phone usage and eating going on amongst the students afterwards. Steve's reprimands were clearly ineffective since they did not influence the students' behaviour. His power over them was very limited, or in other words he lacked authority.

Bingham (2004) argues that educational authority is generally treated as something that one person has over another, neglecting the relational aspect of it. However, individual assertion of authority over another individual is dependent upon the latter's participation in that authority. The individual who is the target of the authority has to be willing to accept the authority in order for the one asserting the authority to have any influence over them. It seems that in the case of the authority exerted by Steve when he variously reprimanded his students, the students were not willing to participate in his authority and he was therefore unable to influence their behaviour. Bingham (2004) also argues that in the learning process there is the question of whether the student is willing to accept that there are important insights to be gained from their teacher. He argues that when a student learns from a teacher they must either consciously or unconsciously acknowledge that what the teacher has to offer to them is superior to that which they know already. Sometimes the student who refuses to accept the general authority of the teacher will also write off the academic authority they have. This appeared to be the case in my data, since my observations of Steve's lecture (Appendix D) highlighted that the students did not seem to engage in the lecture. They did not seem interested in listening to what Steve said and did not ask questions at the end of the lecture when he offered them the opportunity. They may not have felt that he had anything to offer them that was superior to their own knowledge and this may be because of the way he attempted to use authority over them generally when reprimanding them. In CoP terms, the students did not accept the practice of Steve asserting his authority over them; they therefore did not engage in his lectures and participate. All this points to how the interactions between the students and their lecturer can be so problematic that the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships between them is very unlikely.

My data also highlighted other instances in which the interaction of student and teacher identities was such that interpersonal relations were very poor. If we consider the following extracts from my field note observations of a lecture given by Alan and from Rose's interview respectively:

*'He (Alan) says that after the lecture he only has enough time to run to the train station to catch a train to Aberdeen and therefore will not be able to stay at the end to answer questions. He advises the students to drop him an email instead if they have any queries'*

*'Sally is very good at going above and beyond. Alan wasn't as much. Trying to find Alan was part of the problem.'*

These extracts are typical of other observational and interview data (Appendix D and E respectively) which all indicated that Alan was not very available to the students due to his research commitments. The extracts above are just two examples of this lack of availability. MacFarlane (2009) and Becher and Trowler, (2001) argue that since the university lecturer is likely to be a researcher too they may sometimes not regard teaching as their principal or preferred occupation. This means that some lecturers may see themselves primarily as academic researchers rather than teachers and we could theorise that Alan's identity may be more consumed with his other duties such as research than his role as a lecturer. As the data show he was regularly unavailable to the other students because of his other commitments and did not appear to think there was anything wrong in this as I did not hear him apologise to the students. Rather he just appeared to take it for granted that they should accept it as a norm.  However, making himself unavailable to the students appeared to place psychological distance between him and them. The lack of connection was most evident where the students were talking about Alan leaving and one of the student's remarked:

*"He can go, I won't miss him."*

Clearly there was no warmth between Alan and this particular student and a positive interpersonal relationship has not been built between them. Given my previous theoretical arguments suggesting that positive interpersonal relationships are a necessary precursor to learning relationships (Tobbell and O'Donnell, 2013), this would mean that it would be difficult for the student to learn from or alongside Alan. Banfield et al. (2006) highlighted how teacher's inadequate (sic) behaviour interferes negatively not only with learning, but also with student perceptions of teacher credibility and care. Maybe by rushing off

and not being available to them the students interpreted this as inadequate behaviour on Alan's part and this in turn meant that their perceptions of his credibility and care for them were poor. When considering teacher care for their students, Davis (2003) introduces the notion of mattering which seems to be another feature of the interaction of identities between students and teachers. Where students perceive that they do not matter to their lecturers such as where they rush off and are unavailable to them this may in all likelihood result in a problematic interaction of their identities and positive interpersonal and learning relationships may be unlikely to form.

There were several other examples revealed in my data of instances where the students may have reasonably construed a lack of lecturer care or in other words that they did not matter (Davis, 2003) to their lecturers, indicating a problematic interaction of identities. For example Kathy's experiences of failing her English course , (see extracts above in relation to Kathy's experiences of this and also Kathy's interview transcript in Appendix D) which she need not have failed had the lecturer  cared enough about her to notify her that he could not accept her assignment in the way she had submitted it. Clearly, it was the university rules and the practice of submitting assignments in a specified manner (which would relate to exosystem influences) which actually led to Kathy's failure to participate. However, the fact that Kathy insisted that she would certainly have been given more consideration in the same circumstances from her present lecturers, leads me to postulate that there may also be some element of choice surrounding the upholding of university rules and practices for lecturers, depending on their own identity and how they see their role as a university lecturer. It may be that Kathy's English lecturer saw himself as a power broker of the university itself and that this mattered more to him than his teaching role and his relationships with students. In other words, his identity was such that he felt he must strictly uphold the rules of the university, and in doing so, disabled Kathy's participation leaving her feeling marginalized. The university practices which reject submission of assessments in certain ways are of course the main issue here. However, the fact remains that the lecturer concerned would not have had to actually break any rules to send a short message to Kathy asking her to resubmit in the correct way and this would

have prevented her from failing. So I would therefore argue that upholding the rules and adhering to certain university course practices so strictly is indicative of this particular lecturer's identity as a lecturer and his conceptualisations of what it is to teach and to learn. The interaction of student and lecturer identities was clearly problematic as indicated by his use of the university's power in a particular way such that it effectively marginalised Kathy.

The students' experiences with their research methods module is another example of where interaction of student and lecturer identities was problematic. The lecturers sometimes did not turn up for lectures for this module and when they did it seems that the students were unable to engage with them as illustrated in the following interview extracts:

*'a module on research methods partly on qualitative and partly on quantitative methods and it wasn't very well done I don't think and erm yeah, so no-one engaged with that'*

*'in the first year with the research. We used to take bets on whether the teacher would turn up.'*

*'…that connection didn't happen because the pupils weren't interested in they didn't give anything to the teacher so the teacher like well why should I be bothered that's how it goes'*

*'Didn't turn up or when they turned up you know, and it's a pity because I think they were actually …very able, but they didn't get that rapport with the students 'that that connection didn't happen. That connection where that respect for each other where you want to do well for them and they want to do well for you and that fusion that happens like in any relationship I think.'*

The students here may have perceived a lack of care or that they did not matter to the lecturers on this module because of them not turning up, resulting in psychological distance between the students and their lecturers. This made it difficult for the students to engage and form positive interpersonal relationships with them, let alone learning relationships.

On the other hand, there were of course many other instances in my data where lecturers appeared to communicate to the students that they did matter. At these times interaction of lecturers' and students' identities usually resulted

in the formation of positive interpersonal relationships and productive learning relationships. For example the students all appeared to have good relationships with Sid and observational data (appendix D) showed how he would go out of his way to show the students that they mattered to him as in the extract below:

*'Sid looks at the male student who mentioned Rupert Murdock earlier and asks "What were you going to say about Rupert Murdock?"*

In this extract he is letting the student know that his opinion matters to him. Furthermore, when Dave went to the time and trouble to give the students print outs of his power point slides, or when Ralf asked the students how they were getting along with their dissertations (see field note data appendix D); these instances clearly indicated to the students that they mattered, and it is possible that interaction of student and lecturer identities may in these circumstances be unproblematic. Overall my data indicates that where interaction of student and lecturer identities was problematic, interactions between them were also problematic and positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships suffered as a consequence. However, where interaction of identities was unproblematic, interactions between students and lecturers was positive and positive interpersonal relationships leading to learning relationships were more easily formed.

*Interaction of PhD Student Lecturer and Student Identities*

My data highlighted that students appeared extremely responsive to the PhD student lecturers as the following extracts from field notes demonstrate:

*'Ralf says "Transcendental courage…what do we say about heroes…villains?" A student responds "You can't have one without the other." Ralf asks "Why not?" There is lots of interaction here that I cannot catch with Ralf posing questions and the students responding and then Ralf stretching the point to get them to think more.'*

*'...did anyone hear the term Father of the Nation?" The students all nod, but don't say anything. Sid asks "Would anyone like to pull it apart?" A student says that they heard the term and tries to explain what was meant by it in the clip. Sid asks "Anyone else?" Another student says that democracy is necessary to follow on from colonialism. Sid looks at the students and says "Yes" and then gives further explanation and asks another question. A student responds to the question and Sid says "Yes, yes, yes,'*

There furthermore appeared to be considerable warmth between the students and the PhD student lecturers as illustrated in the following extracts:

*'One of them said "I like Sid, I feel like I have learned something.'*

*'He goes back to the front and starts talking to a female student who he knows by name. She is talking about a forthcoming presentation she has to do for another module and tells Ralf that she is really scared. She calls him by his name as she tells him this. He talks encouragingly to her.'*

*'A female student enters and Ralf puts his thumb up to her as he says "Did it go ok?" he is referring to her presentation that she has just been giving for another module. He continues "Is it dissertation presentations today? Has it gone ok?'*

*'I think that was what I wanted to cover in the first half." He says "How many minutes again?" He is referring to the fact that it is break time and he has a usual amount of time that he allows for this. The students are well aware of what he means and they say together "Seven and a half." Sid says "Yes, seven and a half," and smiles as he does so.'*

Interaction of the student identities with those of the PhD student lecturers therefore appeared unproblematic. When trying to account for the apparent warmth and responsiveness between the students and the PhD students one could theorize that this may be partly due to the different positions that the PhD student lecturers occupy in the university CoP as compared with those of the full time staff. Or in other words, due to the different identities that PhD students might have as compared with full time lecturers. The full time lecturers may have participated in the valued practices of the community over time and this participation may have increased in complexity. Furthermore they may have changed these valued practices through their participation in them and these changes may have been adopted by the community, in which case they would be considered full participants in the CoP. On the other hand, the PhD students' identities may still be peripheral. They may have engaged in the valued practices for a while and so be in an enabled position on an inbound trajectory. However, for them to be full participants from a CoP perspective they would need to have altered practices through their participation and also have these changes adopted, which is very unlikely to happen for a PhD student lecturer.

PhD student lecturers may therefore occupy a position in the community which is closer to that of the students and this may enable the ease of interaction of their identities as compared with that of some of the full time staff.

Green (2007) pointed out that full time lecturers appeared to expect that their students understood far more than they actually did. When they were tutored by near peers however, these were more able to understand the first year students' position and help with their adjustment to learning at university since they had recently gone through the same experiences themselves. It could be that near peers such as the PhD students in my study were more easily able to empathize with undergraduates than some lecturers could because of their more peripheral identities. This may mean that their identities were able to more easily interact with those of the students, enabling positive interpersonal relationships and the formation of learning relationships through which the students were enabled to participate.

In addition, Longfellow et al., (2008) found that students felt that being taught by near peers reduced feelings of intimidation, since they did not feel looked down on or made to feel stupid as they sometimes did with full time staff. Longfellow et al. argued that this was because of the different nature of the student-student relationship as opposed to the lecturer-student relationship. The students commented upon feeling that they were in a safe learning environment in which they felt able to speak up and ask questions away from the lecturers gaze. The lecturers' perceived authority and power made them reluctant to speak up in their presence as they did not want to expose their ignorance and felt unable to seek clarification or help.

As stated already, my own observations (Appendix D) showed that the students in my study were very responsive to the PhD students and interacted readily in lectures with them compared with lectures taken by some of the full time staff in which they were often reluctant to speak up. It could be that since they were further on in their careers, the full time lecturers were perceived by the students as having more authority and power over them than the PhD student lecturers. This may place psychological distance between the lecturers and their students

giving rise to the feelings of intimidation described by the students in Longfellow et al's. study. If my student participants felt like this in some of their full time lecturers' classes, they may have been reluctant to speak up for similar reasons. There was however, an exception to this since in observations of lectures and seminars taken by the lecturer Dave, the students were perhaps even more responsive and open to him than they were with the PhD students. This appears to go against what I have argued above about the authority and power that lecturers have over students increasing the psychological distance between them. However, whilst technically, Dave does have the same authority and power over the students that the other lecturers have, as mentioned in the points above, he took frequent measures to show his vulnerabilities and had empathy with the students which may have reduced the psychological distance between them and himself and enhanced the mutuality between them. It could possibly be that the students therefore felt as at ease (or even more at ease) with him as they did in the lectures taught by the PhD students and therefore, able to speak up and be responsive in his lectures without fear of being looked down on.

*Interaction of Student Identities.*

My data also indicated that whether students were able to form positive interpersonal and learning relationships with their peers was also influenced by how their individual identities interacted. The diversity amongst student identities is perhaps most prominent if we consider two very different students, namely Will, and Phillip and their different ways of experiencing university. They both spoke to me about the competition culture at university. Will the mature student in his fifties for instance felt shocked by what he termed the "*nasty competitiveness"* of his fellow students. He said:

*'I think these guys are different, they are not warm. They are friendly and they're funny humorous, witty, but they are very individualised, they are hard, they're hard it's the hardness that is quite shocking.'*

Clearly, if this is what Will feels about his fellow students, this would not be conducive to him forming positive interpersonal relationships with them. Philip a younger student also experienced the competition amongst students that Will

spoke about, but in a completely different way. He talked in terms of '*friendly rivalry*' and '*feeling good*' about himself when he beat someone else whose intelligence he respects. It could be that the difference in each of these two students' experiencing of the competition culture was down to them having very different identities. For example, whereas Phillip was completely driven by his academic ability and described this in terms of his ego inflating when he was given good marks, Will's identity did not appear to be reliant on gaining good marks in assessments whatsoever. Since Philip was able to be successful in assessments and therefore "do well" at university he saw himself as academically more able than others in his group. In contrast to Will, he conceived of learning and assessment as something best achieved alone and was content with the university practices in place which were underpinned by the transmission and acquisition model of learning. In CoP terms, he was in an enabled position in the CoP with an inbound trajectory. Philip did not appear to mind competing for marks with his peers since in this competition he always came out on top. Will, on the other hand felt that he had been written off at age eleven when he failed his eleven plus exam. He was not as successful at individual assessments as Phillip and disliked competition, putting more value onto group work. In CoP terms, he was unable to participate in assessment practices which were one of the valued practices of the community and it is likely that his position was more peripheral in that community than Philips.

Will and Philip's different experience of the competition culture may be influenced by their individual conceptualisations of what it means to learn and also by the positions they occupy in the CoP (or in other words by their identity). Their very different identities may mean that it may be extremely difficult for either of them to come to an understanding of each other's point of view, or form positive interpersonal or learning relationships which would allow them to work successfully alongside one another in group tasks. Social interaction does not have uniform effects and some evidence indicates that under some conditions collaboration on tasks may in fact have detrimental effects on learning (Tudge, 1992; Levin and Druyan, 1993; Tudge and Winterhoff, 1993). For example, regression in thinking was shown in Tudge's (1992) research to be as likely a consequence of social interaction as

improvement. The assumption that all social interaction is beneficial to learning may therefore be untenable since this clearly depends upon a complex set of factors. As can be seen in the experiences of the individual students I interviewed, although the context is vitally important, it is also crucial to consider what the individual brings to the learning situation themselves. It is the individual and contextual factors in interaction which mutually affect each other and determine the process and outcome of collaborative learning.

Philips interview transcript (Appendix E) details how Philip had problems relating to the majority of the other students too. He particularly disliked a module which held a group task since he felt that the other students were below him academically and that he therefore could not achieve marks as good as he could gain alone. Unsurprisingly the interaction of his identity with that of most of the other students appeared problematic. He described several instances in his interview (see Appendix E for transcript) where this was the case and in one of these where he was answering questions in class, the students were talking about him under their breath as shown in the extract below.

*'But, I still end up talking a lot in the class because in seminars it usually consists of me talking a lot which er I like but er probably doesn't go too don't go down too well with everyone else (makes low level mumbling noise as though to sound like the other students mumbling about him) that's fine.'*

Clearly, interpersonal relationships and therefore learning relationships with most of the other students were difficult for Philip to establish. However, despite this and despite Philip's insistence that he did not enjoy group work, as mentioned above, Philip had worked well together with one particular friend on a task. I did not interview this student, but it seems that his identity and that of Philip were more aligned and they were able to interact in such a way that it was possible for them to form a positive interpersonal relationship, build trust between them and through this form a learning relationship.

The experiences of the overseas student mentioned in the theme above also highlight how interaction of student and student identities can sometimes be problematic but can also be productive depending upon with whom the

students are interacting. For instance where the overseas student could not understand the conversation between the other students in the extract above, we could postulate that interaction of her identity here with that of the other students was problematic since she was unable to participate. It could also be suggested that neither positive interpersonal relationships, nor learning relationships had developed between the overseas student and the students in conversation because positive interactions between them were not possible. However, (as can be seen in the extracts quoted in the last theme concerning Kathy's interaction with the overseas student), with Kathy's help, the overseas student was enabled to understand and participate in the assessment practices in place and what these meant for her. We could theorize that the interaction of Kathy's and the overseas student's identities was unproblematic therefore and that Kathy and the overseas student had a positive interpersonal relationship which was able to develop into a learning relationship.

As these examples show, the ways in which individual identities interact are instrumental in the quality of the interpersonal relationships which are able to emerge between students and students or students and lecturers and whether learning relationships are able to emerge from these. Learning relationships entail the emergence and passage through a ZPD (Tobbell and O'Donnell, 2013) in order for the students to be enabled in their participation in the practices of a particular context. This requires a level of understanding in which the individuals in relationship take on each others' meanings alongside their own. In other words it requires the formation of intersubjectivity between the individuals in relationship. The next theme will examine the mechanisms of intersubjectivity revealed in my data which it is argued allow for the formation of learning relationships, passage through the ZPD, and participation in the H.E. context.

### Theme Three: Achieving Intersubjectivity

From a socio-cultural perspective, joint participation in collective practices is the only way in which individuals can make sense of experiences and share meanings with others in their community (Ligorio et al., 2005). Making sense of situations and sharing meanings occurs through a process of constant

negotiation and an understanding of each other's emotions and cognitions. Ligorio, (2005), Grossen, (1998) and Rommetveit, (1976) all argue that being able to go beyond one's own views and understandings and include an understanding of another's thoughts and feelings is the foundation for the construction of intersubjectivity. From this point of view, achieving intersubjectivity is reliant upon a speaker's ability to take their own thoughts, feelings and understandings and to incorporate their interlocutors' thoughts, feelings and understandings within their own. This is reminiscent of the process of scaffolding which I argued in my theory chapter is a two way process. Rather than the more able person simply constructing a scaffold around the learner, scaffolding is a mutually negotiated process. The more able other attempts to understand the learner's thoughts, feelings and understandings at the same time as the learner is attempting to take on board those of the more able other in order to construct and allow movement through a ZPD. It is therefore not just the learner who is learning, since at the same time the more able other is required to take on the learner's perspective too.

*Lecturing Style and Intersubjectivity*

Some may argue that it is difficult to understand how a ZPD could emerge or how intersubjectivity could ever be achieved in lecture theatres with large numbers of students and only one lecturer. Indeed, my data provided examples of lectures where I would argue that achieving intersubjectivity between the individuals in the lecture theatre was impossible as in the extracts below:

*'He goes on to talk about extremism and subjectivity and that also it depends on peoples' mood as to whether they will tell people with other beliefs to their own to bugger off or not on any particular day. He mentions the Greenham common women being arrested under the terrorism act. The students are taking notes, mostly hand written, but the mature student at the front is using her laptop for this. A female student in the row in front of me is texting.'*

*'Some students are intently taking notes; others are just listening and have no writing materials out. Alan uses big hand gestures and is looking around the room giving all the students eye contact in their turn. He makes a joke about white collar workers. The students don't show any response.'*

The lecturing style in these extracts was reflective of the wider exo and macrosystem influences in which learning is seen as an individual endeavour where students are simply required to sit and listen to the lecturer and acquire knowledge rather than participate in the meaning making process. Such lectures were characterized by high levels of teacher talk with little time if any allocated for students to speak or to respond to questions as is shown in the examples below:

'*He says that using religion as justification galvanizes people against others. He asks the question "How many wars in the name of religion are actually about religion? Or, is it really about territory?… religion is used as an excuse… a smokescreen. Look at the IRA was that religion or economics and Hitler… he justified the killing of Jews because he said they killed God."*'

'"*The question is or the question I pose is, was it about religion or social injustice or land? I recently went round Belfast in an open top bus and there is this wall called the peace wall that was used to segregate the Catholics and the Protestants and it was frightening…awful*"'

Even though the lecturer here asked questions, the students were not given any time to answer, or any help to formulate an answer. The lecturer asked the questions but it was not really his intention to give the students time to think and respond and so participate in the meaning making process. He did not give them the opportunity. Similarly, the lecturer below asked a question but did not allow the students the opportunity to contribute. He asked a question and when the students were unresponsive, instead of recasting the question and supplying a little more information to allow the students to think and come up with an answer, he simplified the question so much that it took away the need for them to do this as is shown in the extract below:

'*He goes on to make some further teaching points, and then asks a question about whether the students think that class is the key to African politics. He relates this to the essay that is due for assessment. None of the students have responded to his original question, so he now says "Hands up if you think class is useful." Three students put their hands up. He says that it is now the break and tells the students to come back at twenty past three.*'

Presumably the lecturers in the extracts above only invited students to participate in so much as they wanted them to supply a quick and correct response to their questions which would not interrupt the flow of their lecture (their own performance) too much. They did not seem to want the students' cooperation in class discussion, preferring to simply pass information on to the students (which presumably they were supposed to retain) instead of inviting them to take part cooperatively in the meaning making process. This is indicative of the lecturers conceptualizations of what it is to teach and to learn, since by keeping student participation to a minimum as in the examples here, it seems as though these lecturers believe that it is their job to transmit knowledge to their students rather than to facilitate the meaning making process in interaction with all the members of the class. I would argue that individuals in such lectures are unlikely to achieve a level of intersubjectivity which would enable passage through the ZPD, participation in the meaning making process, nor form positive interpersonal relationships through which learning relationships are likely to emerge.

Clearly, the lecture format is not the ideal forum for inviting student participation and achieving intersubjectivity; given that these generally require students to sit and listen to a lecturer speak. However, in some sessions I observed, students were actively encouraged to participate despite the session being billed as a lecture. In contrast to the extracts above, the lecturers in the following extracts used questioning to facilitate student interaction with themselves and with the rest of the class, thereby inviting their contribution to the meaning making process:

*'Sid asks "Would anyone like to pull it apart?" A student says that they heard the term and tries to explain what was meant by it in the clip. Sid asks "Anyone else?" Another student says that democracy is necessary to follow on from colonialism. Sid looks at the students and says "Yes" and then gives further explanation and asks another question. A student responds to the question and Sid says "Yes, yes, yes," The students who are not responding to questions are all sat listening intently. Sid says that the student made an interesting analogy with Tony Blair and asks if anyone else wants to define democracy. A student attempts to give his definition. Sid nods and then asks if there are any other ideas and looks pointedly at a girl who has not spoken before. She responds*

*and gives quite a lengthy explanation which I am unable to catch. Sid says "Anyone else?"'*


*'He asks the students what they think of when they think of heroes. A female student says "Strong" another one says "Masculine." Ralf asks what the definition of a hero is. A male student responds saying "The better man." Ralf asks "How is he the better man?" A female says "Because he does the right thing morally." Ralf asks "How else?" A female says "Villain or baddy." Ralf says "Go on."'*

Sid the lecturer in the first extract above tried to ensure as much participation from the students as possible, even looking directly at one female student to encourage her to speak up. Ralf similarly encouraged the students' participation too as illustrated in the second extract. The extract below illustrates how Sid also got the students to think beyond their initial comments by asking a series of further questions. The students in this extract were initially in disagreement with one another, but eventually reach a consensus of thought on the topic in hand:


*"If we have democracy is that enough?" A student picks up on this and gives her opinion. Sid says that if he did not know through experience he would probably think that himself but asks "What about the citizens themselves or is it all about leadership? What about the participation of the citizens?" A student says "Well, crime was on the increase, so they are not interested in leadership." Another student chips in saying that it said in the clip that the cars were breaking down so this was not the case anymore. The first student says something in response to this, giving the opposite view. Sid says "Yeah, why would that change though?" The first student gives his view of why this may be (I do not catch it all) and then the other student who was debating with him expands on the point that the first student made. Although they were in disagreement initially, they now appear to have reached common ground."*


By encouraging the students to think beyond their initial responses to questions and drawing the other students into the discussion Sid was facilitating their participation in the meaning making process in these extracts. Furthermore, intersubjectivity between the students and Sid and the students and other students in the classroom was arguably facilitated, since the students in the extracts were taking on one another's meanings and understandings and incorporating them into their own. The lecturer is also taking on the students' viewpoints and this is necessary to know where the students are in their

understanding, so that he can help move them on from there. Equally at the same time the students are taking on one another's viewpoints and also those of the lecturer in a dynamic and ongoing process of meaning making. Since the students in the extracts are being encouraged to come to new understandings of the topic in hand on a higher level than their initial understandings with the help of a more able other, we could theorise that scaffolding is the process which they illustrate. The more able others here appear not only to be the lecturer who is facilitating the discussions, but also the other students at times, for example when the students were chipping in with comments one after another, sometimes in opposition to one another with only the odd comment from Sid. Furthermore, after initially disagreeing with one another, the students appeared to come to a new understanding where they were in agreement with one another as though they had reached intersubjectivity with one another, that is to say they all took on each others' meanings and incorporated them into those of their own. The students were therefore clearly also helping one another to move beyond their present understandings and come to new understandings of the situation through the discussion. This again brings to mind Brown and Campione's (1994) notion of a classroom as comprised of multiple zones of proximal development. Within such classrooms the meaning making process is not simply reliant upon individual teachers and students interacting in a dyad in which one single ZPD is constructed at a time. Instead, the students and lecturers at various levels of expertise as well as the cultural tools that support learning are seen as all contributing to the meaning making process. Clearly by cooperating in the discussion together the students' understanding of the topic was enhanced since this gave rise to new meaning for them. It is arguably entirely plausible that this new meaning may have been gained through multiple zones of proximal development within the lecture as the students and the lecturer all interacted together.

*The Mechanism of Intersubjectivity*

However, as argued in my theory chapter the mechanisms by which scaffolding occurs have not been entirely specified. It was however, posited that a process known as prolepsis (Stone,1998; Bakhurst,1991) could go some way to explaining these mechanisms and it is possible that this process plays a part in

understanding how it is possible to achieve intersubjectivity in the lecture theatre. Bakhurst (1991) used the term prolepsis in reference to the scaffolding process to explain how understandings between people (in the intermental plane) are internalized (passed to the intramental plane). In other words it describes how individuals take on each other's meaning and reach intersubjectivity. According to Stone (1998) and Bakhurst (1991) during proleptic exchanges the speaker (or the more able other if we are to apply this to the ZPD) presupposes some as yet unprovided information. This creates a challenge for the listener (the learner) which forces them to construct a set of assumptions to make sense of what the speaker has said. Incidentally, this again supports interpretations of the ZPD as emergent in the relationship between the dyad since it means that the learner is not passive as some commentators have suggested, while the more able other constructs a scaffold around them. Instead, they have an active role because in constructing a set of assumptions they are actively seeking meaning from the speaker's utterances. If the communication between the speaker (more able other) and listener (learner) is successful, the set of assumptions that the listener constructs closely resemble the speaker's presuppositions and the listener has therefore created (and so understands) the speaker's perspective on the topic in hand. Of course, the learner's own interpretations would presumably also be incorporated into this perspective too, so the listener's interpretation of the speaker's perspective may be very similar to that of the speaker's although never exactly the same.

There are many clear examples of proleptic exchanges in my field notes whereby through asking questions the speaker (the more able other) presupposes meanings as if they have already been discussed and ask the listeners (the learners) to fill in these meanings such as in the example below:

*'Ralf says "What else? What about the pet shop?" A student says that the character was looking at the animals in the pet shop window and that this showed that he had a soft side. Ralf says "Yes, that was in there for a purpose?" Another student says "Also that he can be lonely…he has got no one. Ralf says "brilliant…we are already empathizing with him…'*

In asking the students about the pet shop Ralf is making the assumption that they will know what he means, whereupon the students are forced into constructing their own sets of assumptions to respond to the question. They keep voicing these until Ralf is satisfied that their meanings are close to his and he says 'brilliant…we are already empathizing with him…' which is what he was wanting the students to do by asking his initial question. The students had kept on vocalizing until Ralf indicated that he was satisfied that the meaning they had arrived at was close to that of his own. There were some instances in my data where it was obvious to the lecturer that the students had not yet arrived at a similar meaning to what he had intended after his initial question. At those times he would ask further questions, forcing the students to think again and construct further sets of assumptions until the students responses satisfied the lecturer that meanings close to what he had intended had been arrived at (or in other words that they had achieved intersubjectivity with him) as in the extract below:

*'Ralf asks what the definition of a hero is. A male student responds saying "The better man." Ralf asks "How is he the better man?" A female says "Because he does the right thing morally." Ralf asks "How else?" A female says "Villain or baddy." Ralf says "Go on." The female student explains further but I am unable to get it all down and then Ralf reiterates what she has just said saying "Yep, so the villain…" (I don't catch it all).'*

In asking what the definition of a hero is Ralf presupposed that the students knew what one was and this forced the students to think about what being a hero means, prompting one student to respond that a hero is a better man. However, Ralf was not yet satisfied that the students understandings of a hero were close enough to his own understandings. He therefore asked further questions, forcing them to think and construct further assumptions and come to further understandings until he was satisfied through the responses he got that the students' meanings surrounding the term hero were close to what he wanted to convey. In other words they had achieved intersubjectivity with him and also possibly the rest of the students who were contributing, since although all these examples show that the exchanges are led by the lecturers asking the initial question, that is not to say that the students were not all contributing to the proleptic exchanges. When the lecturer asked the initial question, the

students may have all constructed their own sets of assumptions about what the lecturer said according to their own subjectivities. Then, if or when individual students vocalized the assumptions and understandings they had arrived at, the lecturer and other students may have taken these into account and constructed a further set of assumptions. In this way, the students and lecturer could help each other to add extra meaning to their initial assumptions and understandings and this process would be ongoing for every utterance from any of the students or the lecturer, so that the students' actual understandings and the meanings they were arriving at and also those of the lecturer were in constant flux. Through this process, the students are all participating and cooperating with one another and their lecturer in the making of meaning. It could be suggested that this interpretation of the data extracts as underpinned by the process of prolepsis renders the notion of the classroom as multiple zones of proximal development (comprising of scaffolding relationships between students and students as well as lecturers and students) entirely plausible.

### Theme Four: Context and Relationship

The contexts in which individual identities interact play a central role in the formation and maintenance of relationships. That is, in the specific goals of the context (for example the specific goals of learning establishments would be to learn) and also due to the fact that these relationships need time and opportunity to develop and the context needs to provide these. This theme examines context and the micro through to macrosystem processes which impact upon relationship formation and maintenance in the H.E. context.

#### The Impact of Context on Lecturer Identity

Although I have argued that there may be some element of personal choice about how a lecturer sees their role within teaching and academia, it may also be that university policies (or exosystem processes) also have an impact.  For example as already discussed, the lecturer Alan in particular seemed to place particular importance on his research which took him away from time spent actually teaching the students. Turner (2012) and Brew (2003) argue that the separate funding of research and teaching encourages academics preference

for research based activity over their teaching. Furthermore, that this focus on research has led to a general reluctance amongst academics to engage in the development of student learning (Turner, 2012, Wingate, 2007). University practices which privilege research over teaching may mean that Alan's identity is more aligned with the research element of academia rather than teaching. As previous extracts show Alan always ensured that the students knew how busy he was and that he was going to be unavailable to them. I had also heard the students having conversations between themselves about Alan and how he was often rushing off to be somewhere other than with them.

Clearly, the amount of time lecturers are actually physically present with their students may be beyond the individual lecturer's control, since university policy (exosystem processes) may demand that as well as their teaching duties, the lecturer may also have considerable administrative duties or research interests which need to be attended to as well. The tensions between time for research and teaching  is evident in the following extract from my field notes in which a lecturer from the social sciences department at the focal university came to speak with a group of us postgraduates about academia:

*'She* (the lecturer) *thinks it is important for academics to also do research, but said that a lot at (focal university) do not, as they say that they haven't got time due to all their teaching duties. She was making the point that as an academic one should make the time. Lecturers she said only get one research day and even if they get funding for research, recently they are no longer able to buy themselves time out of their teaching duties in which to do the research, but are instead expected to do everything on their one day for research.'*

The recent change in the research funding rules that the academic refers to here relates to macrosystem influences (the wider political and cultural climate) which in turn impact upon the exosystem (university policy). After the 2008 RAE which the university took part in, the HEFCE had introduced a new set of arrangements to assess the quality of research output and to allocate funding. This was known as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) which was introduced as a follow on to the 2008 RAE. This change in the macrosystem was clearly impinging at the exosystem level if the change in funding meant

that lecturers had less time to fit their research around their teaching as the academic in the extract had maintained. The actual microsystem processes of interaction in the classroom between the lecturer and the students may in turn be impeded through this as seen in the example above in which Alan had to rush off at the end of lectures or be unavailable throughout breaks as shown in observations of his lectures (Appendix D).

The requirement for lecturers to perform duties other than to teach meant that sometimes PhD students were asked to take over some of the teaching duties. Conversations with staff told me that Sid frequently did this for Alan and that Ralph did this for another lecturer who did not participate in this study. When PhD students filled in, the contact time that the students had with their main lecturer became less and less and it was inevitably more difficult for positive interpersonal or learning relationships to develop with them. This is illustrated in the following extract from my field notes where the students were discussing the benefits of having Sid to teach them instead of Alan who he frequently stood in for:

*'The male students talk about a seminar that they had this week on Alan's module which was taken by one of Alan's PhD students Sid. One of them said "I like Sid, I feel like I have learned something." Sid is the PhD student that Alan told me was taking the seminar the following week after I had been to his African Politics lecture. I ask the students if they do more seminar type work with Sid. One of the male students says "Yes, it's more discussion. All Alan does is do a lecture and then rush off to (place name). "They laugh and so do I and I say "He was going to (place name) when I observed last week." One male student says "How's he got a job at (different place name) when he's always at (place name)?" Someone says "He can't just leave half way through a module…when will he be going, will it be at the end?" One of the others says "He can go, I won't miss him."'*

As mentioned previously, Bronfenbrenner maintains that the primary drivers of development are proximal processes which in this case would be the face to face reciprocal interactions between individuals at the microsystem level. Bronfenbrenner argues that this interaction (the proximal processes) must occur on a regular basis over extended periods of time for them to be effective as developmental processes. Clearly, if the lecturer is rarely physically present with the students, interaction between them would not be frequent enough to

actually drive development and so could not count as a proximal process. Bronfenbrenner also proposes that proximal processes vary depending upon their interaction with more distal processes for instance those in the exosystem and the macrosystem. This seems to be the case in the extracts above where macrosystem and exosystem influences place distance between the lecturer and the student which then impacts upon their face to face interaction in the microsystem. Due to his other commitments the students rarely see Alan and their interpersonal and learning relationship with him has evidently suffered, whereas they are in regular contact with Sid and their interpersonal and learning relationships with him have benefited as a result.

However, as alluded to previously, it may be that university policy (exosystem influences) is not solely responsible for the way that the students in their microsystems are impeded by the lecturer not being available to them. This is because the distal processes of the exosystem which dictate that lecturers should do research and administration duties as well as teach did not appear to impact so greatly in some other lectures observed where the lecturers concerned would presumably still have the same or similar commitments to Alan. This again points to the possibility that there may be some element of choice with regards the importance that lecturers place upon the amount of time or effort they give to their administration duties and research as compared to being available to their students. For example, as the extracts below show, some of the lecturers gave more time to the students, would stay to talk to them throughout break or after class and appeared to enjoy interacting with them:

*'During break Dave walks around talking to groups of students. He asks one group at the back (which includes the mature student who gave an answer to the civil war battles but got the answer wrong) "How are the historians?" He stays and has a joke with them. Then moves on to a student sat alone.'*

(At the end of the lecture) *'Some students go up to talk to Dave to ask him about points that came up in the lecture and to voice their opinions on what Hobbes has to say. Dave listens and makes comments on what they are saying and both he and the students keep smiling and laughing.'*

These are just two examples of the lecturer actually staying in the same vicinity as the students at break times and after class. The field note data (Appendix D)

reveals many more instances where this particular lecturer and a couple of the others made themselves more available to the students. The lecturer in the extracts appeared to be able to provide time and opportunity for interaction with students whereas some other lecturers were not. The fact that he is able and willing to do this whilst others may not be able or willing to do so may as suggested above be down to personal choice, depending upon the particular lecturer's identity and how s/he views their role in academia. We therefore see that the behaviour of individuals relies on a complex interplay of contextual factors and individual factors. Furthermore, that the ways in which these interact in synergy with one another is able to impact upon the relationships that it is possible for them to form. Context cannot be separated from individual factors and studied in isolation which renders the situation extremely complex and difficult to untangle. However, my data suggests that availability (and therefore the opportunity for interaction and relationship formation) appears at least in part to be influenced by the wider macro and exosystem influences impacting upon the microsystem.

*Context and the Reification of the Transmission/Acquisition Model of Learning*
Other processes revealed in my data as impacting upon the students interpersonal and learning relationships in their microsystems are to do with the individualized notion of learning evident in the policies of the focal university and in wider political policy. Data relating to university wide practice (exosystem processes) indicated that this clearly impacted on the students in their microsystems. For example, classrooms were invariably set out to facilitate a model of learning whereby an individual was expected to acquire knowledge from the expert lecturer who was supposedly able to transmit it to them. That is, they had rows of desks facing the front with a whiteboard, overhead projector screen and a lectern at the front. Importantly, the university was in the process of being refurbished when I collected my data and yet even the classrooms that had already been modernized were set out in this configuration too. I could therefore be fairly certain that the room layouts were a product of the up to date policy of the time. The following field note extract is typical of all my class observations:

*'The desks are all set out in neat rows of four either side of a central aisle. They all face the front where there is a large screen on which the power point presentation slides are shown. To the left is a light wood coloured lectern and to the right a whiteboard. The desks, chairs and lectern are quite modern in appearance and in contrast to the rest of the room.'*

Presumably much thought would have been put into room layouts and furnishings for the classroom refurbishments by university decision makers. For them to decide upon this particular configuration of furniture shows that even recent thinking on how learning occurs by the university policy makers is as something that individuals do. That is, whereby one individual (the lecturer in this case) will stand at the front of the class, at a distance from the students, in all likelihood behind the barrier of the lectern and transmit knowledge across the divide to the individual students who will then unproblematically individually acquire it and store it in their heads. This aspect of university practice and policy places physical barriers between both the students and other students and particularly (because of the positioning of a lectern on its own at the front) between the lecturer and the students, invoking the notion of separateness between them. This arrangement of furniture suggests that the transmission/ acquisition model of learning is still reified and deeply embedded in the focal university's culture.

The issue of separateness or division through physical space or distance is taken up by Hirst and Cooper (2008). They liken movement around the classroom to a dance, with the teacher as the choreographer and argue that choreographing the classroom spaces in such a way as described in the extract above, or as Hirst and Cooper (2008, p.431) put it '*keeping them in line'* puts divisions in place which may be linked to broader patterns of social division and inequality in society. Their research found that the construction of pedagogical spaces and the students' participation in these spaces make significant contributions to the ways that students learn to be a particular kind of person (in other words it contributes to their identity). Therefore that the ways that teachers place students and space them are crucial to their learning and teachers should reflect on their practice in order to actively choreograph the classroom in a more emancipatory manner. Presumably, what they mean by

this is that they should seek to break down the power relations by changing the physical positioning of the students in relation to the teacher. Some of the lecturers I observed achieved this, but the majority kept these power relations firmly in place. Hirst and Cooper (2008) maintain that the complex and changing constellations of power in relation to space and identity are sometimes clearly visible, but that sometimes they are well hidden. Clearly, where the quotidian practice is for the classroom or lecture theatre to be arranged such that there is separation between the lecturer and the students, the power relations incumbent in this arrangement may be rendered invisible due to the everyday unremarkableness of this quotidian practice. The significance of these power relations and their effects upon the formation and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships may therefore not be acknowledged. The extracts below render these practices and the accompanying power relations visible in the focal university however, and the significance of these is discussed.

*'Steve remained at the front behind the lectern. He did not speak at all with the students or interact with them.'*

*'Steve is behind the lectern and keeps looking at his watch.'*

*'Once Alan is back he stands centrally at the front and says "Ok, let's get started."'*

*'Alan is displaying a table about Marx on the screen and explaining this to the students. He is pointing to individual items on the table. At this point all the students are looking at him and some are taking notes but keep looking up at him and the screen.'*

*'He puts up a slide which gives an overview of the lecture and starts going through this. All the time walking from behind the lectern to the screen and pointing to sentences on the slide then back again to behind the lectern.'*

The physical space and distance between the students and lecturer in these extracts may be unremarkable and therefore unnoticed to the lecturers and students involved due to the taken for granted university policy (exosystem process) regarding furniture layout. However, the separation this places

between the lecturer and students will inevitably bring with it power relations which will impinge upon the relationships that are able to emerge. This separateness is also suggestive of the idea that it is possible to transmit knowledge unproblematically from the expert lecturer across a divide to the students which is in complete contrast to Lave and Wenger's notion of learning as increasingly more complex participation in the valued practices of the setting. Whereas transmission/acquisition models of learning assume that it is possible for the transmission of knowledge from the lecturer across a divide to the brains of the students, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that to understand learning we need to see it as participation in social spaces and maintain that there is no division between individuals within these. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's propositions from his bioecological theory state that proximal processes (student – lecturer interaction in this instance) must be frequent and increasing in complexity for development to occur. Accordingly, it could be inferred from this that university practices relating to classroom layout or physical unavailability of lecturers such as those described above which create space, distance or boundaries between individuals disables interaction, mutuality and the formation of positive interpersonal relationships. This in turn hinders the students' likelihood of being able to participate and therefore learn in that environment.

However, despite the exosystem practices dictating the layout of classrooms such that the transmission/acquisition model of learning is inferred, again, it appears that personal agency on the part of individual lecturers can at times be used to overcome this. The reason I make this argument is because some lectures that I observed were notable in that the lecturers taking them appeared to make significant attempts to reduce the physical space and distance between themselves and their students. This was in some cases engineered through the lecturer's own movements whereby they put themselves into close proximity with the students, reducing the divide between them so that they could interact with them more easily. The following extracts illustrate this:

*'Dave is walking around the room talking to individual groups of students. He asks them if they are ok and whether they know what they are doing. Most of*

*the students say that they do, but a few ask him questions and he stays and explains things to them.'*

*'He walks back up to the front and a student leaves his group to go and talk to him. One of the female students in the row in front of me raises her hand and Dave comes back down to speak to the group. I cannot hear everything they are talking about but it concerns the task in hand. He walks away when he has finished explaining something, but they shout him back to clarify something which he does.'*

Where lecturers choreographed their movements around the room to gain closer proximity to the students I observed much more interaction between the lecturer and students than I observed in all the other lecture observations. Given my previous arguments, this interaction may well lead to the breaking down of power relations, leading to positive interpersonal relationships between the lecturer and the students and greater mutuality and therefore to learning relationships. The lecturer in the extracts above also attempted to choreograph the classroom space in such a way as to reduce the physical space and distance between the students themselves. This was achieved through actually moving the furniture so that the students could more easily interact with one another as in the following extract from my field notes:

*'Dave says that before they get into groups that he wants to just say that they can spend about half an hour on this and that they can take liberties with the furniture. The students start moving around and moving their chairs in order to get into their groups. They do not move the desks though as they are in rows and cannot be moved easily. The students are still moving around and there is a lot of discussion going on.'*

Of note in this extract is the fact that the desks were too heavy to be moved. We could infer from this that movement and interaction of students was not envisaged by the university when the classroom was set up. Since the furniture was newly purchased, it seems reasonable to assume that this is because the transmission / acquisition model of learning is still deeply ingrained even in contemporary university culture (the exosystem) and beyond (in the macrosystem). The same lecturer in the extracts above also features in the next extract in which the students enter a classroom and see it already set out in a semi circle:

'*The students comment on the chair arrangement and Dave says "Yes, well you can keep them like this…it is like this from before…it wasn't planned but it may well work." One of the female students says "It's a circle of trust."*'

The fact that the students remarked on the unusual arrangement of the furniture when they entered the classroom shows how unusual it was. During all my observations, this was actually the only time that I had entered a classroom and seen it set out this way from a class that had taken place beforehand. This again highlights the ingrained nature of the transmission/ acquisition model of learning in both university and wider culture (or the exosystem and the macrosystem respectively).

*The role of relationships across contexts*

Clearly the interactions of the various immediate relational settings (mesosystem in bioecological terms) which the students and lecturers inhabit will impact upon their learning too. For instance, in her interview Rose told me that her choice of university was influenced by the distance she would be from her parents and also by how likeable her dad thought Dave was at the university open day. Furthermore, Philip mentioned how his relationship with his brother had brought out the competitive streak in him which he had brought with him to university. Whilst field note data (Appendix D) noted how the students sometimes rushed out after lectures or did not return after break because they may have demands from other microsystems such as child care issues or work which sometimes took precedence over their studying. These are just a few examples of how the students' different relational settings (their microsystems) interacted and impacted upon their learning.

Sometimes, experiences in one of the students' relational settings (microsystems) can be extremely relevant to their learning in another. For example learning to type at work can be beneficial to the student when writing essays. The relevance of this skill in both settings is quite transparent. However Rogoff (2003) argues that sometimes there is some relevance of past experiences to a new setting but that newcomers cannot see it and need to be helped by others in the situation to realize this. In order to help the newcomer to

realize what skills are applicable to their new situation the others in the new setting would presumably need to know the newcomer well, so that they know what experiences they have already had. This is again indicative of the need for the development of relationships in the learning context.

In bioecological terms, the different lectures and seminars which the students attend could also be seen as different microsystems of interaction. Where there are microsystem links across lectures such as when lecturers and students have both been present in one lecture and are then present in a subsequent lecture, it is plausible that students may be helped to realize that skills from the prior lecture are applicable in the present one by their tutor. My data showed how some lecturers tried to help the students in this way:

'*Dave says, "To be fair that does sound like a Schumpeter argument because do you remember the first lecture where we talked about the benefits of democracy and if we were relying on two elites.'*

'*The student starts to stumble over his words and Dave says "Yes, this is the thing," to help the student out. He then says "I gave you a word last week …it begins with P" A student shouts out "Pluralist." Dave says "Pluralist…and what does Riles say about this…Neil has mentioned it."'*

'*He comes back to the word authorize and asks the students "Do you remember what we said about what it means to authorize?"*

The lecturer in each of these extracts is encouraging the students to think back to past lectures and understand the relevance of past understandings to present ones. Arguably, for the lecturer to be able to do this he had to know what the students already knew – there would need to be links across microsystems. Clearly, where modules had different lecturers every week then there would not be this link across the different lectures. But, where lecturers deliver lectures regularly, there is the possibility of this interaction across relational settings. The bioecological proposition of the necessity of proximal processes to be frequent, regular and increasing in complexity brings the chronosystem (time) into play here too. The lecturer would need to be a regular feature in the students' various microsystems (if we take each lecture to be a different relational setting or microsystem in its own right) for them to have any

impact upon their development and learning. Given my previous arguments, regular interaction with the students would be necessary if they were to come to know the students well enough to know what they know and to help them to discern whether what they know is relevant in their new setting. Rogoff (2003) argues that seeing connections between past and new situations is more often than not dependent upon the support of other people and this once again emphasises the vital role for relationships in students' learning in H.E.

**Summary and Discussion**

This chapter has presented my theoretical interpretation of my data. I had always assumed that there would be some complexity involved in researching the role of relationships and how these can enable or disable learning in H.E. especially given my theoretical leanings. However, the amount of complexity uncovered during the research process was even beyond what I had imagined. Layer upon layer of factors all influencing each other in an open system have proven very difficult to untangle in a systematic way in order for themes to emerge and to write about them. I could not entirely untangle one issue from another. Furthermore, in offering this analysis of my data, I do not claim in any way that it would be representative of all universities. The analysis relates specifically to the focal university, the focal department, and the particular individuals at the specific historical time when I collected my data. Indeed, Will commented in his interview about the difference between the focal department and others. He said '*I have gauged that we have probably got the cream er where we are.'* So, I fully recognise that the focal department may not be representative of others. However, the interpretation given here may still be suggestive of some considerations which may provide some important understanding of relationships and learning in universities in general and promote discussion of these.

The first theme emergent from my analysis was 'The Need for Relationship.' Most of the students had similar relationship needs in their learning, but there were also some differences in their needs which I have highlighted in the thematic analysis. The importance of relationships to learning and the

differences in the ways that relationships are required by individual students problematizes dominant models of learning which reify knowledge as something quantifiable which can be transmitted unproblematically between individuals. It furthermore suggests that theoretical models which see learning as something achieved in interaction with others in the world may be more useful to understand the learning process. This has implications for H.E. pedagogy where the independent learning discourse is pervasive and high staff to student ratios means that the formal lecture is still heavily relied upon, (Mann and Robinson, 2009).

Interaction of Identities was the second theme to emerge from my data. I discussed how some lecturers through their interactions with their students worked to close the psychological distance between them. They did this by exposing their own vulnerabilities and also by attempting to understand the students' point of view and showing their students that they 'mattered' to them. Further, that interaction of identities of lecturers who did this with those of the students appeared smooth and unproblematic giving rise to positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships. The issue of trust was suggested as an aspect of this. My data also showed how some lecturers either knowingly or unwittingly created more psychological space and distance between themselves and their students. It was argued that interaction of lecturer identities with those of the students in this case was problematic and militated against the formation of positive interpersonal and learning relationships. The interaction of student–student identities was also discussed and it was posited that these can (but not always) lead to positive interpersonal and learning relationships too.

My third theme discussed how intersubjectivity might be achieved in the lecture theatre and it was suggested that the prolepsis process may go some way towards explaining this. However, the complexity involved in lecture theatre interaction would indicate the probability of the involvement of many other similar processes too. More in depth examination of lecture theatre exchanges would be a productive avenue for future research in order to more clearly

specify the actual mechanisms of both intersubjectivity and scaffolding in this context.

My fourth theme, context and relationship discussed how proximal and distal processes can enable or disable interpersonal and learning relationships and learning. I discussed how exosystem processes relating to classroom layout meant that the dominant theory of learning at the focal university was one in which learning was in the main seen as something achieved by individuals. I gave examples of how in some lectures (but not others) the lecturers appeared to go against this dominant theory by choreographing the classroom differently in order to encourage interaction and participation on the part of the students in the meaning making process. Rogoff's (2003) notion of discernment across contexts was also discussed in relation to how some lecturers tried to help the students to see the relevance of their learning in one microsystem to another. I argued that this also demonstrated an important role for relationships in learning.

Overall, my data suggest that for interpersonal relationships to be enabling in this particular context (that is, for positive interpersonal relationships to form which in turn facilitate the formation of learning relationships through which the students are enabled to participate, their identity to shift, and their learning and development to occur), the following conditions were found to be necessary:

- frequency of interaction, as dictated by the context, this was not of course the same frequency that a parent and child might enjoy for example, but was limited by what the context would allow. For example where student participation in the meaning making process in lectures was invited, or where lecturers ensured their presence with the students at break times and after the lecture or generally had more regular contact with the students taking their modules.
-  the interactions needed to increase in complexity over time. This also required continuity in teaching delivery so that students and lecturers were able to come to know each other and also what each other knew,

so that an appropriate ZPD was allowed to emerge for the particular context and the particular individuals within it.

- interactions which were perceived as positive by the parties involved and which served to engage both students and lecturers in fundamental human activity, but again within the parameters of the context.

- interaction which was as reciprocal as the context would allow, for example lecturers replying to student emails or from the lecturers perspective, students being responsive to questions in seminars.

Where these conditions were present it appeared that there was warmth and trust built between the individuals in relationship (or in other words they had built a positive interpersonal relationship) which enabled the emergence of a ZPD appropriate to the context and the particular individuals in relationship; the process of passage through this ZPD being the point at which a learning relationship was formed.

My analysis has thus enabled a tentative attempt at theorizing the role and formation of relationships in learning in the H.E. setting. Clearly, further research is required in order to definitively account for all aspects of this, since my data does not allow me to generalize to settings beyond that which I studied. I am not making knowledge claims here beyond that, however, there is the possibility that my data may be indicative of some general tendencies in relation to the role and formation of relationships in learning in H.E. and I hope that in offering the following theoretical framework, further discussion and exploration of these may be promoted. Please see theoretical framework diagram overleaf.

**Figure 3: Diagram representing the formation and role of learning relationships in the H.E. setting.**

CONTEXTUAL
PROCESSES

INDIVIDUAL
PROCESSES

⊖ ⟵ **HUMAN INTERACTION IN THE H.E. SETTING** ⟶ ⊕

Characterised by:-

Characterised by:-

• Infrequency
• Interactions which are perceived as negative
• Interactions which are not reciprocated

• Frequency
• Increasing complexity over time
• Interactions which are perceived as positive
• Interactions which are reciprocal

⊖ **INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP** ⊕

Trust unlikely to be built possible feelings of vulnerability and/or anxiety

Trust more likely to be built, and feelings of vulnerability and anxiety subside.

Non emergence of ZPD

Allows for the emergence of a ZPD

Intersubjectivity unlikely to be achieved, learning unlikely to occur, interpersonal relationships unlikely to develop into learning relationships

**Passage through ZPD**

**Intersubjectivity achieved**

**Learning occurs**

**LEARNING RELATIONSHIP FORMED**

Participation in the valued practices of the H.E. setting disabled

Allows for participation in the valued practices of the H.E. setting

My theoretical framework brings together Vygotskian, Bioecological and CoP perspectives in the interpretation of my data and allows for an explanation of the role that relationships play in learning in this particular H.E. setting. In order to explain my theoretical framework I need to firstly restate my definition of the term interpersonal relationship within the H.E. context and where this has come from. Giles (2011) argues that once a student has enrolled on a course, the teacher and student are always in a relationship and cannot exist ontologically in any other way. This premise and the assertion by Bokeno (2009) that relationship and interaction are mutually defining leads me to argue that having enrolled on the course the student is in relationship (what I will term here an interpersonal relationship) with the lecturer and the other students on the course due to propinquity and the basic human interacteractions (be these positive or negative, face to face or distanced, frequent or infrequent, reciprocal or not) that this will necessarily entail.

Having established this, I will now explain my theoretical framework which seeks to understand the nature and role of relationship in learning. The starting point for this framework is the human interaction entailed in the H.E. setting, which may be negative or positive or a mixture of the two, depending upon the many individual and contextual processes which may be impacting upon how it is possible for individuals to interact in the particular setting. My data suggested that where this interaction was characterised by infrequency, perceptions of negativity, or a lack of reciprocity, then such interactions were more likely to typify an interpersonal relationship which was at the more negative end of the continuum. In this position, trust was unlikely to be built up between those in relationship due to possible feelings of anxiety and/or vulnerability. Under these conditions my data indicated that it was more difficult for a ZPD and therefore a learning relationship to emerge between individuals.

On the other hand, where interactions in the H.E. setting were more frequent and appeared to increase in complexity over time, (which from the bioecological perspective are necessary elements for the proximal processes to drive development) and were in addition perceived as positive by those in relationship and were reciprocal, then the resulting interpersonal relationship

appeared to be a more positive one. Trust was in this instance more likely to be built, since feelings of anxiety and/or vulnerability were lessened. Under these conditions, where there was a positive interpersonal relationship, this appeared to allow for a ZPD to emerge and it is postulated that passage through this may have allowed a learning relationship to form. That is not to say however, that I view the interpersonal relationship between individuals in relationship as existing in any fixed form. Rather, that the interpersonal relationship is constantly changing and in flux with constant movement on a continuum between positive and negative, depending upon the quality of interaction over time between the individuals in relationship. (I have attempted to represent this in the diagram with the broken rather than solid line for the interpersonal relationship, but I have mentioned the difficulty in representing process previously in diagrams and the same applies here). Likewise, the learning relationship between the same two individuals may alter depending upon the quality of interaction that changing individual and contextual factors will allow.

To summarise, in order for a learning relationship to form, it is suggested that contextual and individual processes which allow for positive interactions of the type described above are required. This may lead to the formation of positive interpersonal relationships through which trust is built, leading to feelings of vulnerability and anxiety diminishing and allowing for the emergence of a ZPD. Passage through this may lead to the formation of a learning relationship through which intersubjectivity is achieved between the participants in relationship and learning occurs for both parties as they take on new understandings from each other. The CoP perspective enters the framework here in that the learning entailed in passage through the ZPD enables the student's participation in the valued practices of the setting and changes in their identity. In offering this explanation of the role of relationships in learning and the formation of the learning relationship I wish to restate that this is my first tentative attempt to do so. The theoretical framework is entirely emergent from my data, which I acknowledge is not generalisable to other settings and further research is therefore required. However, there may be some aspects of the present research which may be applicable to other settings and I therefore

hope that my theoretical framework may provide a starting point for further research to build upon.

***Exploring the implications of identified issues for teaching and learning in H.E.***

My final aim for this research was to explore the implications of identified issues for teaching and learning in higher education. So as well as analysing the role of relationships in learning in H.E. and what enables these, I also sought to identify and analyze any disabling effects on the individuals in this context. This was in the hope that bringing these to light may stimulate discussion and debate which might eventually bring about change to improve on their situation.

My data and analysis shed light on the importance of relationship in learning but highlighted how some of the quotidian practices in place at the focal university militate against the formation of positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships. Further, that this is disabling to some students' participation and learning. One quotidian practice which my data revealed as militating against the formation and maintenance of positive interpersonal and learning relationships was the method of teaching delivery. My data revealed that the main method of this on the timetable at the focal university is the 'one size fits all' lecture. This is despite the diversity of the students now attending university due to the macro level policy of widening participation (Pring et al. 2009). However, whereas in the 1960s and beforehand it was just the privileged 5% who attended university (Trow, 1973), nowadays the student demographic is much broader and Cameron (2009) argues that students' lives and their preparation for study at H.E. level has undeniably changed. Further, that the lecture style delivery of course content may therefore no longer be appropriate. However, the increasing numbers of students that widening participation has brought with it means that teaching in universities is more likely to be delivered in large lectures to accommodate these numbers. If students are unsuccessful at university it is often according to Lawrence (2002) the diversity of the students' backgrounds rather than the method of teaching

delivery that is used as justification for this. He argues that it is the educational practices which are unsuccessful and 'blame' for students being unsuccessful should not therefore be placed with them, but rather with the university practices in place (of which the lecture is one). Lawrence (2002) suggests that diversity of the student body should be accepted as the norm, rather than as a deficit of the individual students and despite the difficulties involved, universities should at least attempt to cater to different students needs with more inclusive practice (Lawrence, 2002). However, the lecture persists as a cultural object (Cameron, 2009), despite the fact that teaching practices could be adjusted to better support students.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the main method of teaching at university needs to take account of the changing needs of students and be accessible to them all. Yet as evidenced in my data, where teaching involved a lot of lecturer talk and students being required to simply listen and/or take notes as would be typical of a traditional lecture, the students were not very well supported in the meaning making process. However, my data also revealed that some sessions which were billed as lectures actually interspersed lecturer talk with invitations to the students to participate too. The lecturers and students and students and students in such sessions interacted with one another, which meant that the students were well supported in the meaning making process. Although the word lecture implies 'being talked at', it might be argued that at the same time the purpose of a lecture is to learn, or to make meaning. Yet in traditional lectures characterised by lots of teacher talk, I argued in my analysis that it was difficult to see how meaning could possibly be made contemporaneously in such lectures. From my ontological position, meaning making occurs in social participation with others, such as in the sessions described above in which students were invited to participate. It may be that the re-envisioning of the cultural object which is the lecture into something which allows for student participation in the meaning making process may be more inclusive of the full diversity of students who attend university.

Another quotidian practice which my data revealed as militating against the formation and maintenance of positive interpersonal and learning relationships

was lecturer availability. My data and analysis illustrated how some lecturers' identity appeared to be more aligned with that of academic researcher rather than that of teacher and that as a consequence they did not always see the value of personal contact with their students. Furthermore, contextual processes sometimes meant that the balance between lecturers teaching, research and administration duties sometimes prevented the lecturers from being available to the students. These things in combination meant that there was sometimes insufficient time or opportunity for positive interpersonal or learning relationships to form between them. It might be suggested that if more value was placed at an institutional level upon teaching as well as research, this may mean that lecturers may come to view their academic role differently. If, when considering staff for promotion, the university could give more credit to the lecturers for their teaching experience and good practice, rather than basing decisions solely on their research profiles, rather than seeing themselves primarily as researchers the lecturing staff may come to regard their teaching responsibilities more highly too and may accordingly realise the need to be more available to the students. Furthermore, reviewing and maybe cutting down on the lecturers' workloads, particularly the balance between time for teaching, research and administration duties may also help them to be more available to their students. Being available to students might furthermore indicate to the students that they 'matter' (Giles, 2011) to their lecturers and there may also be more basic opportunity for positive interaction between the lecturer and students and therefore for interpersonal and learning relationships to be formed.

The culture of competition was another aspect which my data revealed as disabling the formation and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships, this time between the students. Feelings of competition between the students may be reduced if students were routinely given more opportunities to work together cooperatively on collective assignments for which they are all responsible for each other's mark (as in the group task set by the lecturer Dave described in my analysis). This may help them to interact positively with one another and to garner trust between them and there is the possibility that they may be more likely to form positive

interpersonal relationships and maybe learning relationships. However, as evidenced in my data, it was not enough to give the students a task and simply expect them all to be able to cooperate with one another and to do so willingly, since some students may not see the benefit of doing so, like Philip one of the students whom I interviewed. The support required by the students in order to enable them to work cooperatively together on tasks would therefore need careful forethought and implementation in order for the students to see the value of working cooperatively together and gain benefit from this.

My data also revealed that classroom layout militated against the formation and maintenance of positive interpersonal and learning relationships. Without exception these layouts positioned the students separately from the lecturers and more often than not, the students separate from one another also. This meant that interaction and collaboration in the meaning making process was difficult between individuals in the teaching space and was perhaps reflective of the ontological position that learning is something which one does alone. This neglects the need for relationship in learning. A layout which does not restrict interaction or place barriers between individuals might go some way to better enable the students' participation in the meaning making process contemporaneously in lectures. Concomitantly, the formation and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships between the students and their peers and the students and their lecturer may make it more likely that they go on to have learning relationships.

In exploring the implications about the issues which emerged from my data, I recognise that they may not be applicable to other university settings. However, I hope that I have shed light on some of the emergent issues and that this invites further discussion and debate around the importance of relationships to learning in the H.E. setting and furthermore, how rather than enabling learning, the taken for granted practices in place may sometimes disable this.

# CHAPTER SIX

THESIS REVIEW


The aims of this research were:


- To explore how and why relationships shape students' participation and learning in higher education.
- To observe and document the everyday practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To uncover and document the implicit practices and processes that impact upon relationships; participation and learning.
- To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships; participation and learning.
- To generate a theoretical framework for understanding how relationships can enable or disable students' participation and learning.
- To explore the implications of identified issues for teaching and learning in H.E.


I believe my research has been able to address each of these aims, but to varying degrees of success. The first aim was relatively straight forward, since using the data collection methods described in chapter four enabled a broad exploration of relationships and how and why they are able to shape students' learning. The second aim was fulfilled to a certain extent. It may seem a relatively simple task to observe and document the everyday practices and processes which take place in the H.E. setting. However, since any researcher is only able to address certain foci at any one time, I am aware that I may have missed some of the everyday practices and processes and failed to document these. The reader should therefore bear in mind that the practices and processes that I managed to observe and document in the present research may not constitute the totality of practices and processes observable. The third aim has been addressed in so far as I would argue that some of the implicit

processes impacting upon relationships, participation and learning have been uncovered. For example, it became clear through my research that the underlying position of the focal university on learning was that this was something achieved by individuals. Many of the practices and processes in place were therefore underpinned by this individualistic notion of learning, which does not view relationships in learning as important. By making this view and the practices which stem from it explicit, this research opens the practices and the underlying assumptions up for debate. Of course again, there may be implicit practices in place which I have failed to uncover, but any research can only provide a snapshot of what is happening in a given situation. I feel that by revealing some of the implicit practices and processes and making them explicit, this has also helped me to fulfil my sixth aim which is to explore the implications of identified issues for teaching and learning in higher education. Whilst the issues revealed in my data may not relate to other university settings hopefully this exploration of the implications surrounding them may invite further discussion and debate about the importance of relationships to learning, the practices in place in other university settings and how these may be disabling to the students participation.

I believe that I have also been successful up to a point in achieving my fifth aim which was to generate a theoretical framework for understanding how relationships can enable or disable students' participation and learning. The theoretical perspectives discussed have gone a long way in enabling me to analyse my data and come to an understanding of this and the complexities involved (as set out in the diagram and explanation of this in my analysis chapter). However, there is still some way to go and further research is indicated. The theoretical framework diagram which I offer therefore represents my tentative first explanation of the role played by relationships in learning and further work on this is required. I am aware for instance that practices which enabled relationship were lacking in some lectures, yet the vast majority of the students I observed actually managed to obtain their degree at the end of their three years at university, which would suggest that they were actually able to learn in the absence of face to face positive interpersonal relationships or learning relationships. This could mean one of two things. Either the practices

which encourage positive interactions (and through these positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships, giving rise to enabled student participation) were in sufficient supply to enable the students to pass their assessments despite some  practices which may give rise to more negative interactions (as defined in the theoretical framework). Or, maybe the practices in place, both those which encourage positive interactions and those that do not encourage these, must work to some extent in order for the students to pass the type of assessments currently in place at university to a reasonable level of success.

Given that my theoretical framework rests on the premise that positive interpersonal relationships are so central to learning, it becomes necessary to seek possible reasons for the students' success even in the absence of practice which encourages positive interactions and the formation of positive interpersonal relationships, and learning relationships. One explanation could come from Vygotskian thought. From the Vygotskian perspective, it could be argued that as well as individuals being supported in their learning by the social relations in the immediate setting (or not being supported by these where they are not encouraged), the notion of cultural tools introduces the possibility that they are also supported by social relations in connection to previous generations. This support comes through the use of books, diagrams or written and spoken language for example that have been passed down to them, which can all scaffold their learning in the present. In my observations there were numerous instances where the students were noting down what was being said in lectures, particularly in those which were characterised by a lot of lecturer talk in which the students were not required to participate. They also had books and the printed out power point slides from the lecture. Sometimes the students helped one another with the use of cultural tools. For example, I observed books being passed around and loaned to one another and the students told one another where to find useful information in these. Alan also emphasised the use of cultural tools, pointing the students to particular book chapters for particular essays. It may be that where the students were unable to gain much understanding contemporaneously in lectures, they were able to either produce cultural tools or use those provided or loaned to them after they had left the

lecture to help them to complete their assignments in a way that was sufficient for them to pass the assessment.

As well as the Vygotskian view, there are also claims from Wenger that participation is social even when it does not involve direct interaction with others. For Wenger, the situation of a student in their bedroom alone writing an assignment may seem like a solitary activity, but fundamentally its meaning is entirely social. The assessor to whom the student is attempting to make their points understandable or meaningful is also implicitly present in the bedroom with the student. The sources of information that the student is drawing on (cultural tools such as lecture notes and books in this instance) which have enabled her/him to understand and make meaning will also have come from historical meaning making instances with or by others who are therefore also implicitly in the room. Wenger maintains that the meanings of anything we do are always social, since as in the student example above; all our activities implicitly involve other people even though they may not be physically present.

So, my data appear to suggest that face to face interaction leading to positive interpersonal relationships and learning relationships which scaffold the meaning making process contemporaneously in lectures and seminars may be the ideal for learning. This is as it is set out in my theoretical framework diagram. Yet, it may also be the case that students are able to gain enough meaning from other sources to pass their assessments through the minimum of direct interaction in the lecture theatre if they are also scaffolded in their attempts through their use of cultural signs and tools. However, this does not mean that learning is asocial or not reliant on relationship, since even in the absence of concrete face to face interaction and productive learning relationships in the lecture theatre, the other is abstractly manifest in cultural tools, rules and artefacts. Through these the students engage in the meaning making process (and we could possibly theorise even achieves intersubjectivity) with the individuals who have produced these over historical time which enables their success in the present assessment system. Further research which explores how students pass assessments in the H.E. setting in the absence of direct face to face positive interaction is clearly required in order

to theorise how relationship may still have a role to play in learning and in order to add to or modify my theoretical framework.

On reflection, the fourth aim is the one which I really struggled to address. This was partly because whereas I could easily observe practices and processes in the immediate teaching setting (the microsystem), I could not possibly be in attendance to observe practices and processes in more distal settings. Furthermore, the students and lecturers could only tell me what they could remember or what they chose to tell me about these. In addition, whilst I could observe some exosystem processes, I had to largely rely on document analysis and conversations with staff and students and student interviews for much of this data. For exploration of wider societal and political processes I had to rely entirely on document analysis. My analysis therefore reflects this distribution of data and whilst the microsystem is analysed and explained in detail, wider more distal processes are more thinly analysed and explained. However, on the whole I feel that I have been able to consider, analyse and explain how the wider systems impact upon the students' learning and relationships in their microsystems sufficiently for the reader to come to some understanding of the embedded nature of the students' development. Furthermore, since relationship and learning was the main focus of this thesis and relationship processes are on the whole located in the microsystem, then this distribution of data perhaps does not reflect too negatively on the thesis's utility to explain these. Rather, this distribution of data was perhaps what one should expect.

## Contribution to the Literature

Since learning is seen in the literature as something which occurs intra individually, the role played by relationships in learning is often ignored or rendered invisible. This means that research has rarely set out to investigate the role that relationships play in learning in their own right. This research therefore contributes to the extant literature firstly by making the role of relationships in learning visible. Secondly, the present research contributes to the literature in that it challenges many of the existing approaches to researching learning in higher education. Existing attempts to understand learning in the research usually involve separate analysis of the teacher or

student roles or measurement of their personal characteristics, neglecting the analysis of the many dynamic processes involved in learning and their interactions. This research is significantly different to the existing research in that it brings to light and analyses these processes and their interactions and also the everyday quotidian and implicit practices which impact upon them. It is only by bringing all these to light and analysing them that the complexities of the role of relationships in learning in H.E. can be fully understood.

Finally, I would argue that relationships in learning are undertheorized and there is little understanding of the complex psychological and sociological processes at work in the extant literature. The present research contributes to the literature by allowing some understanding of this. It does so by building a theoretical framework through which to understand the inherent processes of learning as facilitated by relationships and how and why and under what circumstances relationships make learning possible. To my knowledge and after an extensive review of the literature, there has been nothing offered in existing research in terms of a theoretical framework for understanding the actual processes at work in the role of relationships in learning in H.E. and how the wider processes can impact upon these. This thesis therefore plugs this gap in the literature, making an original contribution to knowledge.

## Further Research

My study takes a broad perspective in its exploration of the role of relationships in H.E. and considers micro through to macro system influences. It was therefore beyond its scope to focus too intensely on any one system. This has meant however, that there are some foci which have emerged as ripe for further exploration. One of these is more in depth examination of the actual exchanges between individuals in the lecture theatre and the processes through which these interactions enable individuals to achieve intersubjectivity with one another and to learn. I have given some theoretical analysis of my data in my analysis chapter which may plausibly explain this process to some extent. However, the complexity involved in learning and relationships would indicate a multiplicity of processes interacting in dynamic ways depending upon the specific context and the individuals present. Therefore, research which

focuses more intensely on the mechanisms involved is required in order to more clearly specify their actions and effects and explain the process whereby interaction is able to promote intersubjectivity and learning.

Furthermore, further research which specifically asks lecturers about their conceptualisations of what it is to teach and to learn and what their role is in this has emerged as a productive line of enquiry through the present research. My conversations with students, observations of their behaviours and in depth interviews with them have meant that the present research gave much attention to individual student identity, yet lecturer identity was somewhat secondary due to the fact that I did not interview the lecturers. Whilst I did manage to catch glimpses of lecturer identity in conversations and through my observations of their lecturing and being with the students, a more in depth study which also interviews the lecturers to ask them how they see their role would give further insights. This is necessary given that the data I was able to collect was suggestive of the fact that lecturer's conceptualisations of what it is to teach and learn and their identity as a lecturer may have implications for their practice. Their identity is therefore important since this impacts upon the relationships they are able to form with their students and the students' learning.

I would also agree with Selwyn (2007) and Monahan's (2005) argument about the need to go beyond the immediate concerns of whether computer technology is useful in H.E. to ask instead what social relations computer technologies produce. My review of the literature noted that computer technologies may have begun to recognize the importance of relationships to learning in a way that may have sometimes been missed by some of the research in the 'face to face' teaching and learning environment. Further research is therefore required to more clearly specify the role of relationships in the virtual learning setting.

Furthermore, given that some students were still able to gain pass marks even where there appeared to be an absence of practice which enabled the formation of positive interpersonal relationships in lectures, research which

investigates how students learn in the absence of these practices is required. It may be the case as I suggested above, that students are able to achieve success through the use of cultural tools, but further research is required to more clearly understand the processes involved here.

Finally, research in terms of how the independent learning discourse surrounding higher education plays out in terms of relationship and lecturer and student expectations, behaviours and identity may also be a productive area of exploration to follow.

## Concluding Comments

Learning and relationships are extremely complex, which makes it seem impossible to propose that we could ever begin to fully understand them. It furthermore makes my claims for the ability of my theoretical framework to explain and understand them rather ambitious. Going back to my critical realism leanings however, I argue for an ontological reality and furthermore that we can and should seek to uncover this. That is not to say that I am claiming to guarantee the production of 'true' knowledge. However what I would suggest is that there is the need to acknowledge that open systems are complex, messy and ambiguous and that our theories of them, including my own theoretical framework can never quite capture this messiness. But at the same time, just because we may never be able to quite capture the reality of relationships and learning in their entirety, this does not mean to say that we should reject all hopes of making progress with our knowledge claims. There is still the need to pursue explanation of relationships and their impact upon learning; otherwise our knowledge of them would never advance. We need to acknowledge that our knowledge claims can never be absolute whilst at the same time attempting to use our theories to understand phenomena even though we can only know that phenomena through particular descriptions of it. Accordingly, I feel that the interpretation I have offered demonstrates how the theoretical perspectives discussed in chapter two go some way to providing a useful framework for analyzing and understanding my data in terms of how learning is impacted

upon by relationships, even if it only allows us to understand this in one particular way.

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APPENDICES

**Beverley Hirst**

**PhD Research Proposal**

**Proposed Title**

**An Ethnographic Exploration of Relationships Following Transition to University.**

**Literature Review and Rationale**

The rapid expansion of the higher education sector since the 1980s (Rosslyn, 2004) has meant that more and more of the population are now attending university. Yet Rosslyn, 2004 argues that Universities have been slow to join the debate that has been going on in schools about the emotional background to learning. This may be Rosslyn (2004) argues because universities are after all higher educational institutions and the students that they teach are autonomous adults in the eyes of the law. Emotional needs and support systems therefore seem to go against the university ethos, yet whilst going away to study at university is generally viewed in a positive light and as a new opportunity for young adults; at the same time, they are suddenly faced with the many discontinuities that this brings about. There will be a change in their location, their academic life and their social circle. Alongside this, there are monumental changes in their relationships with for example parents, siblings, wider family, friends and teachers. All these discontinuities have to be managed by the young person in transition, and it will depend on how each individual comes to terms with these discontinuities as to how successful their transition is (Fabian, 2000.) Drawing on Wenger, (1998) one of the main assumptions that this research takes is that learning is not located within the individual but is instead a distributed process. Furthermore, since one of the central aspects of learning in any setting is that we are social beings, one could argue that relationships will impact on the learning process and on how well individuals settle into university life and that this therefore requires exploration. Despite

the expansion of the higher education sector, there has been little attention to the provision of support systems for individuals dealing with discontinuities in their relationships, which means that sometimes the transition to university is stressful (Rosslyn, 2004.) There is therefore the necessity for research which investigates how individuals come to terms with these discontinuities in order to be able to inform student support schemes that universities may wish to provide in order to smooth the transition process.

A review of literature relating to young people moving away to  university  has highlighted that whilst there is a great deal of research that addresses transition for example Walker et al, (2004) and Cassidy and Trew (2001);  there is only a limited amount of research which deals specifically with student's relationships. Furthermore, in the main those that do deal with relationships, only concern themselves with parental relationships. Samuolis et al (2001,) for example argue that attachment relationships and identity development are particularly important at this time and that continued parental involvement can be good for the student as it will provide a secure base.  A study by Bernier et al (2005) maintains that leaving home for college is a potentially stressful event for young people with preoccupied attachment patterns as measured on the Adult Attachment Interview and self report questionnaires about their relationships with their parents. Whilst Lefkowitz (2005) investigated college students' perceptions of changes in their relationships with their parents as a function of their transition to university through the administration of self report surveys. Yet, due to them concentrating only on parental relationships, these studies do not provide us with any information about the effects of discontinuities in other important relationships which may impact on the young person in transition. Fass and Tubman (2002) however, looked at the influence of peer relationships as well as parental ones on college student's academic achievement. However, this study, as well as the other studies mentioned all use an Attachment model (Ainsworth et al., 1978) to address relationships arguing that this can be useful in understanding young adult development with regard to their relationships following their transition to university. However, the methodology used in attachment theory (typically categorization based on questionnaires and observations) arguably does not give it enough power for it to be useful in this

context. Can we really fit all of humanity into its small number of predefined categories? Furthermore, do these categories remain stable throughout the life course so that a young adult will still use the internal working model of relationships which attachment theory maintains is formed in infancy, to judge their relationships in the context of starting university? It could be argued instead, that relationships are more complex than this; moreover, that young adults will experience present relationships in various ways depending on the type of relationship; the context of these and life events that have occurred since infancy.

Previous literature then, with its reliance on categorization and the collection of quantitative data, fails to address the context of relationships and the complexity involved. Nor does it address the various types of relationship. It arguably, therefore fails to gain insight into the numerous processes that can impact on young people's relationships and the meanings ascribed to these.

Wenger, (1998) presents a theory of learning in which the underlying premise is that it is through engagement in social practice that we learn and so become who we are. He says that individuals pursue shared enterprises over time and in so doing form informal 'Communities of Practice.' Wenger's theory of learning explores how issues such as community, social practice, meaning and identity interact and also provides a conceptual framework in which to think about learning as a process of social participation. Furthermore, Tobbell and O'Donnell (2005) say that participation in a Community of Practice underpins and develops individual identities and that this will shape learning and life trajectories. They also say that participation is mediated by lots of different factors in an individual's life which work together in unpredictable ways. It would seem necessary therefore that the complex processes that mediate an individual's participation in their CoP have to be made explicit in order to understand their transition to university. To this end, the present research will seek to take into account the complex processes surrounding young people and their relationships as it is argued that these are important in mediating their participation in the various CoP that they encounter before and after starting university. It will also draw on Bronfenbrenner's (2001) ecological theory in

order to understand the wider societal and political imperatives which impact on an individual in transition and the effects of these.

**Methodology**

Having previously undertaken a research study from a phenomenological perspective in which young adults in transition were interviewed, I am acutely aware that whilst interview data can provide useful information about the meanings that individuals give to their experiences from their own subjective perspective, this only allows us a very limited view of the processes that are going on around them. For this reason I feel it is necessary to go beyond the confines of interview data which only addresses individual's experience. Sayer (2000) argues that research needs to address the empirical, which is what we experience; the actual, which is that which happens, but which we do not experience and the real, which is the general tendencies that come about through the existence of generative mechanisms. Tobbell and O'Donnell (2005) argue that not all methodological approaches would take these three ontological layers into consideration. They argue for an ethnographic approach to data collection since through the use of observation as well as interview they say that the explicit is rendered implicit which would address the actual and the real. If using interviews alone however, this only addresses the empirical- that which is experienced by the individual. Furthermore, ethnographic research will allow for the location of the researcher into the contexts in which the students have relationships and will allow access to all the different levels of meaning. This research will therefore make use of ethnographic methods in an attempt to address the context and complexity surrounding individuals in transition and their relationships.

**Aims**

Although I have broad aims for this research study, it is envisaged that as my exploration of the topic area broadens, then my aims may be modified. It is my intention therefore that my research should be organic so as not to place constraints upon the direction in which it may go. However, having previously undertaken interview studies and understanding their limitations, I now feel that

I am committed to ethnographic methodology for the present research since I can see that this will provide greater understanding of the meanings underpinning the behaviour of young people in transition. My general aims therefore stem from this methodological commitment and also from a desire to go beyond simply presenting findings, but also to making tentative suggestions as to how issues identified could perhaps be addressed in order to smooth the transition process for students and universities alike. The aims of this research at this stage are:

- To observe the practices (enabling or disabling) which take place within the different communities of practice to which the students belong.
- To observe the practices which enable or disable the university tutors.
- To explore the different contexts which shape these practices.
- To explore the student's relationships and the impact of these on the students' transitional experiences.
- To explore the impact of the British government's policy of widening access and increasing participation on the student/ tutor learning relationship.
- To offer suggestions as to how issues identified may be addressed in order to help in the management of transition.

It is hoped that the ethnographic nature of this research will provide insights as yet untapped by research employing alternative methodologies. Furthermore, that these insights may be useful in informing support schemes that universities may wish to provide in order to smooth the transitional process of their students and to help the university staff to provide this support.

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# Appendix B: Submission to the School Research and Ethics Panel

**THE UNIVERSITY OF (anonomised)**
**School of Human and Health Sciences – School Research Ethics Panel**

OUTLINE OF PROPOSAL

Please complete and return via email to: anonomised

Name of applicant: Beverley Hirst

Title of study: An Ethnographic Exploration of the Relationships Which Shape Students' Learning in Higher education.

Department: Human and Health Sciences/ Psychology                    Date sent: 12/3/2009

| Issue | Please provide sufficient detail for SREP to assess strategies used to address ethical issues in the research proposal |
|---|---|
| Researcher(s) details | Beverley Hirst |
| Supervisor details | Dr. Jane Tobbell |
| Aim / objectives | <ul><li>To understand how students' relationships shape their participation and therefore their learning in Higher Education.</li><li>To observe the everyday practices (enabling and disabling) which impact on the relationships that shape learning in Higher Education.</li><li>To uncover the implicit practices (enabling and disabling) which impact on the relationships that shape learning.</li><li>To explore the wider social, environmental and political imperatives that impact on students' relationships and learning.</li><li>To generate a theoretical framework for understanding how relationships can enable or disable students' participation and learning.</li><li>To offer suggestions for Universities to address identified issues and provide meaningful support so that students can become enabled learners.</li></ul> |
| Brief overview of research methodology | Eighteen students from a social sciences undergraduate degree course will be recruited in order to explore their learning relationships. The eighteen will be made up of 6 from the first year, 6 from the second year and 6 from the third year of the course. This will include whole teaching group observations. The data collected will be incorporated into a narrative of the students' overall experiences over the three years and teachers will be asked for their reflections on this. The individual student's identities will not be made known to the teachers, and the narrative will be written in such a way that individual student's contributions are not identifiable as theirs in order to preserve their anonymity. An ethnographic approach will be taken, with data being collected in the following ways:-<br><br>**1. Interviews with each of the 18 students which will be structured around reflection on a time line of each student participant's learning from their earliest awareness to the present.**<br><br>**Rationale for this**<br>Helping participants to draw a time line in which they position all their learning experiences chronologically, will help them to think about their |

| | learning and then to talk about this in an interview which will be structured by their time line and their own reflections on this. I do not envisage using pre planned questions other than prompts to participants to describe their time line and what happened at certain times in their life, and then to respond to this by picking up on any interesting issues that arise. |
|---|---|
| | **2. Observations of the everyday practices that shape learning relationships in lessons/ workshops/ lectures/ conversations as they occur in their locations. This will mean that I am going to be undertaking classroom and lecture theatre observations of the whole teaching group, including the tutor/lecturer.** |
| | **Rationale for this**<br>In order to observe and record the actual practices which impact upon the students learning. |
| | **3. Lesson Logs** |
| | **Rationale for this**<br>In order for the students to document their immediate view of the factors that they feel are impacting upon their learning in their lessons, in a way that does not depend on their memory of events as they are to be filled in when they are actually in the lesson. These logs have been kept as simple as possible in order to allow for them to be completed in situ so as not to impose too greatly on the students participation in the lecture/lesson. (Please see attached for proposed format.) |
| | **4. Document Analysis** |
| | **Rationale for this**<br>Having sight of module and course handbooks and other University documents as well as Government policy documents corresponding to Higher Education, in order to explore the wider social and political imperatives that the students may be unaware of, yet nevertheless exist. |
| | **5. Teachers' Reflections on a narrative of students' overall experiences.** |
| | **Rationale for this**<br>A narrative of participants' overall experiences will be written and shown to their teachers in order for them to reflect or comment upon the 'student experience.' This will provide another layer of data of which students may not be aware, but again nevertheless exists. |
| Permissions for study | This is presently being sought. |
| Access to participants | The behaviour that will be observed is part of the everyday public life of students and lecturers and my presence will be made clear to everyone present at each observation. Participants will be fully briefed as to the nature and aims of the research in order that they can give their informed consent to take part. However, since the study is ethnographic which will mean that I will be following the 18 main student participants into different learning contexts (lectures, seminars etc.) in which there will be other students and tutors, I feel that I should gain permission from all members of the class for observations. Any students that did not give permission would not form part of the data analysis.<br><br>In order to recruit participants, I intend to contact heads of department and course leaders to ask for permission to approach students to ask for their participation. This would be by email in the first instance (please see attached for example) asking the entire student group for that course for |

| | their participation in principle to both aspects of the study; i.e. the whole class observations and the in depth data collection. The first 18 (6 from each year group) to reply positively to both aspects of the data collection would be the ones that I would recruit as participants for the main data collection part of the study. This would also allow me to have an indication if the other students were willing to participate in the observation aspect of the study. If large numbers do not agree to participate, I could then approach another student group as it would not be practicable or logistically possible to observe in classrooms/ lectures where large numbers had not given consent. Once the 18 participants for the main data collection had volunteered and been selected, then these students would be sent a letter asking for their participation (letter 1) which I have included in my supporting documentation. They will also be given information sheet 1 and asked to sign a consent form. Participants who have agreed to my presence in classroom and lecture theatre observations will also be given a letter asking for their participation, (letter 2,) information sheet 2 and asked to sign a consent form. Staff will be given a letter asking for their participation, (letter 3) an information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. |
|---|---|
| Confidentiality | BPS guidelines will be followed here and no information given to the researcher will be revealed to another person other than members of the research team unless prior agreement has been given by the participant. If information revealed by a participant is published, then care will be taken to ensure it will not be identifiable as theirs. All data collected whether on paper or electronic will be stored securely in my office in a locked drawer and all electronic data will be password protected. Data will be destroyed upon publication of the PhD thesis or after a period of 5 years (whichever is the greater.) |
| | Furthermore, there will be 18 students taking part altogether and the narrative will reflect the overall experience of students over the three years. So it is felt that it is very unlikely that individual student's contributions would be identifiable, especially as the aim is to write it in such a way that they are not. However, the intention to write this narrative and the implications of doing so will be pointed out clearly to the student participants in both the attached information sheet (sheet 1) and verbally. If they are worried about this aspect of the research they will be advised not to participate. |
| Anonymity | BPS guidelines will be followed with regard to this and no names or descriptions of students or tutors will be recorded in the data collection process. Data collection and analysis will be undertaken using pseudonyms and data that could potentially identify a participant will be removed. Furthermore, the students who have volunteered for the main data collection process will not be distinguishable from the other students in the teaching group when I am undertaking observations since I will be observing in an unobtrusive way and I do not intend to interact with them in anyway differently from the rest of the students. However, in practice, because data will be collected in my own university, readers of my research (if they also come from my university) may be able to pick out details that indicate who the participant is (although because there will be 18 students from different years I feel that this will be highly unlikely.) I feel therefore, that the issue of anonymity needs explaining to the participants before they agree to take part in the research so that they can choose not to participate if this issue is important to them. However, if participants wish to have their names published in an acknowledgement section in the thesis in order to acknowledge their role as co-researchers then I would wish to facilitate this, but would ensure that their individual contributions would not be made obvious. |
| Psychological support for participants | Although the research area is not a particularly sensitive area, the researcher is aware that on rare occasions unforeseen psychological distress may occur. If this is the case, participants will be advised that they are able to contact the University Counselling Service for psychological support if they wish to by telephone or email. |
| | • Telephone- number provided |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • E-mail – email address provided |
| Researcher safety / support (attach complete University Risk Analysis and Management form) | Since all data collection will take place on University premises, it is not envisaged that there will be particular safety risks for the researcher over and above that which would normally be expected from being present on campus. However, the researcher will be supported by the academic supervisors with whom she is in regular contact and who are also willing to be contacted by mobile phone if necessary. |
| Identify any potential conflicts of interest | None envisaged |
| **Please supply copies of all relevant supporting documentation electronically. If this is not available electronically, please provide explanation and supply hard copy** | |
| Information sheet | 3 sheets attached for<br>• Sheet 1 for the main Student participants<br>• Sheet 2 for students that may be present when data collecting (but who are not included in the main data collection process.)<br>• Sheet 3 for the students' teachers |
| Consent form | attached |
| Letters | 4 sheets attached<br>• Letter to Gatekeepers- this will be sent to two people<br>1. The head of department to ask permission to do the study and ask if it would be alright to ask for participants from his/her department.<br>2. The course leader of the course from which I would like to recruit my participants to ask if it is alright to ask for participants from her/his course.<br><br>• Letter 1 to recruit the 18 students for the main data collection part of the study and ask for their participation.<br>• Letter 2 to ask the rest of the teaching group for their participation.<br>• Letter 3 to ask the teachers/ lecturers of the teaching group for their participation. |
| Questionnaire | NA |
| Interview schedule | As interviews will be around students' own reflections on a timeline of their educational experiences, it is not felt appropriate to use an actual interview schedule. However, areas for discussion will include:<br>• The students' learning experiences so far- in either formal or informal settings.<br>• The settings in which students feel that they were able to learn well.<br>• The settings in which students feel they were unable to learn.<br>• Their relationships in these settings with teachers, fellow pupils, others.<br>• The factors that students believe facilitated their learning in the different settings.<br>• The factors that students believe hindered their learning in the different settings.<br><br>Similarly, when asking teachers for their comments and reflections on the narrative of the student's experiences, I would like to keep this as open as possible since I would like to gain each teacher's immediate reaction on reading the narrative. Although this will depend somewhat on the actual narrative produced and what comes to light, likely areas for questions will include:<br>• Initial thoughts and reactions to the narrative.<br>• Anything that you would have expected in the narrative?<br>• Anything that surprised you?<br>• Do you agree with the views expressed by the students- if not, how do you differ. |
| Dissemination of results | Results of the study will be made available to participants and it is envisaged they will be presented at appropriate conferences in the future as well as in articles for academic journals. |
| Other issues | If any sensitive information came to light in the course of the study, then I |

| | |
|---|---|
| | would take the issue to my supervisors. My participants will already know through my information sheets that information they give me is confidential, yet may be discussed with my supervision team. I would also reiterate this when I brief students prior to beginning my data collection. I would specifically put it to them that if myself and/or the supervision team feel that on discussing particularly sensitive situations, some intervention to offer help or support is necessary; then we may have to disclose some information to certain parties in order to be able to offer this. I would however assure them that they would be informed if this was going to happen and that myself and the supervision team would only do so with their consent and at all times only if their best interests were being considered. |
| Where application is to be made to NHS Research Ethics Committee | Specify NHS REC documents submitted NA |
| All documentation has been read by supervisor (where applicable) | Please confirm. This proposal will not be considered unless the supervisor has submitted a report confirming that (s)he has read all documents and supports their submission to SREP |

**All documentation must be submitted to the SREP administrator. All proposals will be reviewed by two members of SREP. If it is considered necessary to discuss the proposal with the full SREP, the applicant (and their supervisor if the applicant is a student) will be invited to attend the next SREP meeting.**

**If you have any queries relating to the completion of this form or any other queries relating to SREP's consideration of this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact either of the co-chairs of SREP: Names and numbers provided. Information Sheet one for the main student participants**

**Information Sheet 1 (For the main student participants)**

**Beverley Hirst**

**Project Title:** An Exploration of the Relationships Which Shape Students' Learning in Higher Education.

I am a PhD student, interested in learning in Universities and I have written out a series of questions that you may have in order to give you some more information about my research and to help you to decide whether you would like to take part in it.

Q. What is the research about?

A. I am interested in exploring how relationships help to shape students' learning at University. These relationships might be teacher-student relationships, student-student relationships, or any other social relationship that an individual feels has impacted upon their learning.

Q. What would being a participant in the study require me to do?

A. In order to explore learning relationships I would like to collect a variety of different data over a period of 12 months. Taking part in the study would entail:-

1. Being interviewed about your past and present learning. For this, you would be helped by the researcher to draw a chronological timeline of your educational experiences so far, and then asked to reflect on these. I do not have any preset questions as I hope that the timeline will help you to recall your experiences and relate these to me with very little direct questioning from myself. However, if you touch on something interesting when describing your experiences, I may ask you to tell me more about this.
2. You will also be asked to keep a log of the factors that you feel have impacted on your learning in individual lectures and seminars. This log will be provided for you and should take only a minute or two to fill in each day. I have attached an example of what this will look like so that you can see what is involved.

3. I would also like to sometimes accompany you to lectures or seminars to observe the everyday practices that impact upon students' learning relationships and how these shape learning, and to take field notes from my observations.

Q. What if I do not want to answer a question or give some information that I have been asked for?

A. If you feel uncomfortable in any way about anything that you have been asked it is perfectly alright for you to say that you do not wish to give an answer.

Q. Who will get to see the information I have given you?

A. The information that you give me will be treated as completely confidential and will be revealed to no other person other than my supervisors. However some of the information that has come from you or is about you may be included in a narrative which represents the overall 'student experience' or published in the thesis. If this was the case I would of course ensure that the information was not identifiable as yours. Furthermore, all data collected will be kept securely and electronic data will be password protected to preserve your confidentiality.

Q. How would you ensure I remained anonymous?

A. If you agreed to take part in the research you would be allocated a pseudonym in field notes and all other forms of data collection, and so would not be identifiable in the data. Data that could potentially identify a participant will be removed if that is what the participant requests. However, if participants wish to have their names published in an acknowledgment section in the thesis in order to acknowledge their role as co-researchers, then I would facilitate this, but would ensure that their individual contributions would not be made obvious in the write up.

Q. What if I agree to take part in the research and then later decide that I do not want to continue with it?
A. You would be able to withdraw from the research at anytime and withdraw any data that has been collected from you up until the thesis is being written, when it would become impractical to exclude it. You should consider this very carefully before you agree to take part.

I have tried to anticipate any questions you may have, but if you still have any concerns about taking part in the research or would like more information, please contact me (details below) as I would be more than happy to answer any of your questions.

Beverley Hirst
Department of Behavioural Sciences
Address and telephone number provided


**Information Sheet 2 (For students who may be present when observing classes.)**

**Beverley Hirst**

**Project Title:** An Exploration of the Relationships Which Shape Students' Learning in Higher Education.

I am a PhD student, interested in learning in Universities and I have written out a series of questions that you may have in order to give you some more information about my research and to help you to decide whether you would like to take part in it.

Q. Why are you giving me this information?
A. I will be asking several students from your peer group to take part in my research. Part of this will involve them being accompanied to lectures and seminars in order for me to observe the everyday practices that impact upon their learning relationships and how these shape their

learning. I am giving you this information, since although you will not form part of the main data collection, it is likely that you will be participating in lectures or seminars which I will be attending in order to observe. I would therefore like to ask for your consent to take part in the observation part of the study.

Q. What is the research about?
A. I am interested in exploring how relationships help to shape students' learning at University. These relationships might be teacher-student relationships, student-student relationships, or any other social relationship that an individual feels has impacted upon their learning.

Q. What will I be expected to do as part of the research?
A. I will only be observing the everyday public life of my participants in some of the lectures and seminars that they attend. You are not required to participate in any way other than in your everyday capacity as a student attending class. However, I will be taking field notes to record the everyday practices that occur in these situations and although it is unlikely, it is possible that some of your behaviour may be noted down if you have previously consented to this.

Q. How would you ensure my anonymity?
A. If I recorded anything that happened involving you in my field notes, you would be given a pseudonym so that you would not be identifiable.

Q. Who will get to see any information that is collected?
A. Any information I gather will be treated as completely confidential and will be revealed to no other person other than my supervisors. However, some of the information that has come from you or is about you may be included in a narrative which represents the overall 'student experience' or published in the thesis. If this was the case I would of course ensure that the information was not identifiable as yours. Furthermore, all data collected will be kept securely and electronic data will be password protected to preserve your confidentiality.

Q. What if I do not want any information about me included in the study?
A. If you do not wish to be part of the study this is perfectly alright, you do not need to give your consent and I will ensure that you are not included in the data collection in any way whatsoever.

Q. What if I agree to take part in the research and then later decide that I do not want to?
A. You would be able to withdraw from the research at anytime and withdraw any data that has been collected from you up until the thesis is being written, when it would be impractical to exclude it. You should consider this very carefully before you agree to take part.

I have tried to anticipate any questions you may have, but if you still have any concerns about taking part in the research or would like more information, please contact me (details below) as I would be more than happy to answer any of your questions.

Beverley Hirst
Department of Behavioural Sciences
Address and telephone number provided

**Information Sheet 3 (For Staff)**

**Beverley Hirst**

**Project Title:** An Ethnographic Exploration of the Relationships Which Shape Students' Learning in Higher Education.

I am a PhD student interested in exploring how relationships help to shape students' learning at University. These relationships might be teacher-student relationships, student-student relationships, or any other relationship that an individual feels has impacted upon their learning.

The research is based on the view that learning is a socially mediated process that comes about by participation in the valued practices of a particular context. In order to explore this, I would like to collect a variety of different data over a period of 12 months. I will be asking

several students from the first year intake to take part in this research which will involve them being interviewed, keeping a learning log, and also being accompanied to lectures and seminars in order for me to observe the everyday practices and processes that shape their learning.

Taking part in the research would involve allowing me to accompany students to their lectures or seminars to observe these practices and processes and take field notes which will later be analyzed. The research will in no way judge or assign values to the practices or processes observed, but hopes instead to form a picture of the everyday life of the students in order to better understand how relationships help to shape their learning.

In addition to this, I may show you a narrative representative of the students' overall experiences which I aim to write after the initial data collection and analysis, and ask you to reflect or comment on this. Your comments and reflections will then be used as additional data, so that a more holistic view of University life can be taken.

If you have any questions or concerns about taking part in this research, I would be more than happy to discuss these with you. My contact details are:-

Beverley Hirst
Department of Behavioural Sciences
Address and telephone number provided

**Participant Consent Form**

**Title of Study: An Exploration of the Relationships Which Shape Students' Learning in Higher Education.**

| | **Please confirm the statements by putting your initials in the boxes below.** |
|---|---|
| I have read and understood the participant information sheet. | |
| I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study. | |
| I have received satisfactory answers to all of my questions. | |
| I have received enough information about the study. | |
| I agree to interviews being audio taped and the contents being used for research purposes. | |
| I agree to field notes being recorded and the contents used for research. | |
| I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study:-<br><br>1   At any time<br>2   Without having to give a reason for withdrawing | |
| I understand that any information I provide, including personal details, will be confidential, stored securely and only accessed by those carrying out the study. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (When relevant) I understand that any information I give including direct quotations may be included in published documents but my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonyms. | | |
| I would like my participation in the study to be acknowledged in the published document, without linking my name to any of the data or quotations that have come from me. (Please tick the relevant box.) | Yes | No |
| I agree to take part in this study. | | |
| Participant Signature                              Date | | |
| Name of Participant | | |
| The name and contact details of the main investigator are given below. Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.<br><br>Beverley Hirst<br>Department of Behavioural Sciences<br>Address and telephone number provided | | |

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

## Appendix C: Some Examples of Students' Timeline Diagrams

Maya

Phil



Primary School

Secondary School

College

gap year

Uni

288

Will



ACADEMIC    CSES

General
schooling | Apprenticeship | Business
skills

Emotional
intelligent.

LIFE.    16    38 years
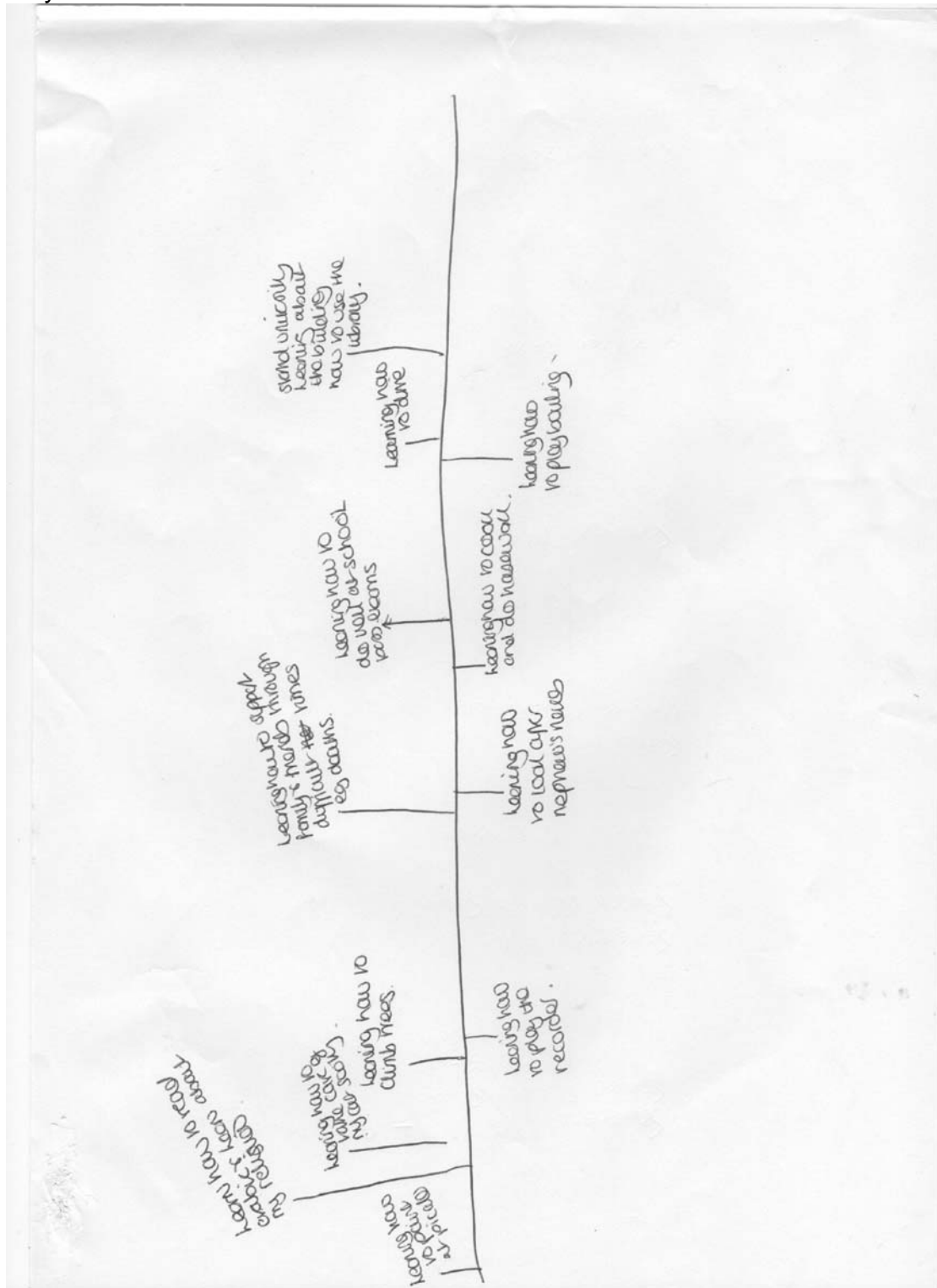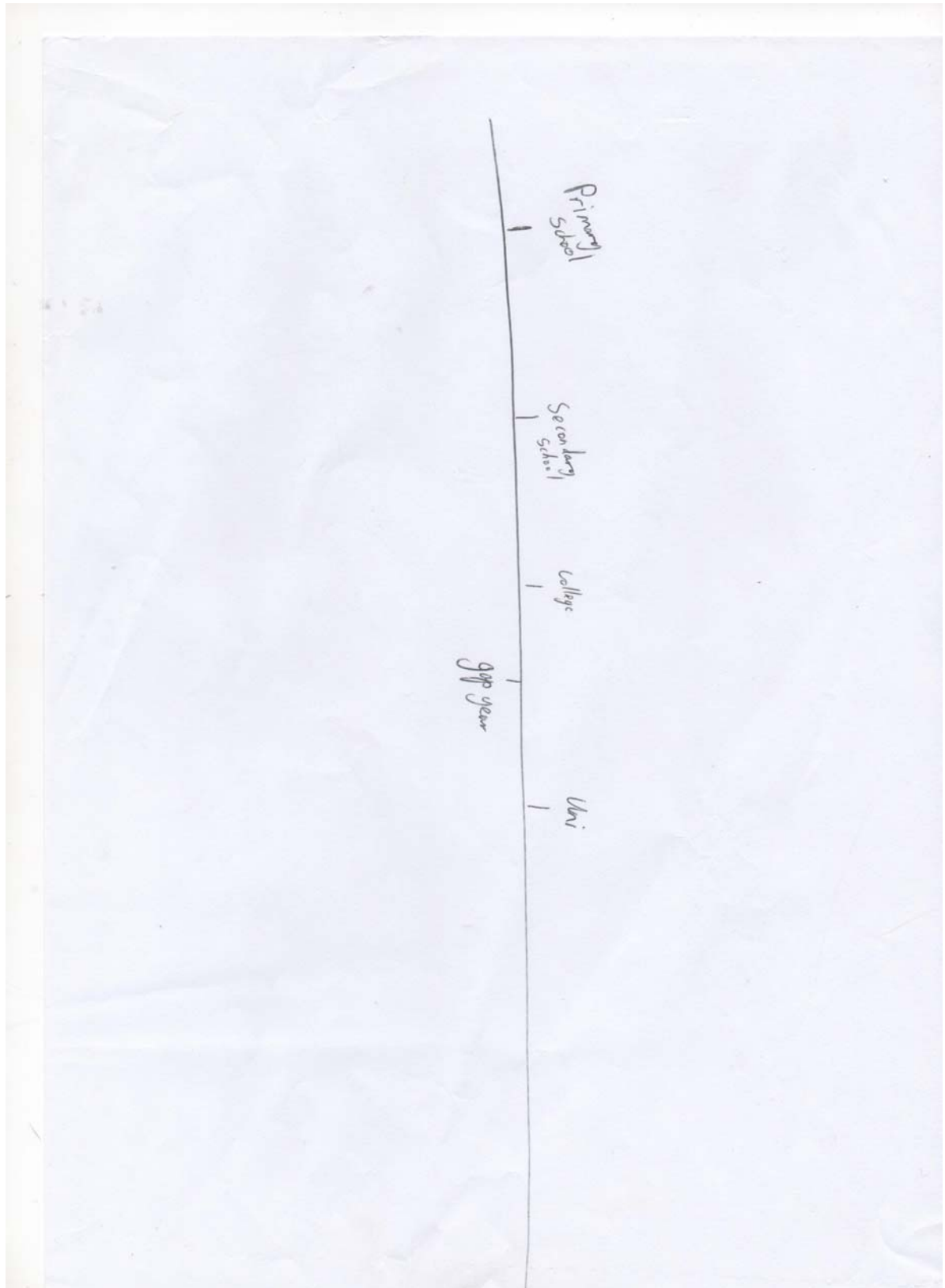
## Appendix D: Ethnography Fieldnotes


**Conversation with Participant 1 after his interview.**
The student told me that he is obsessive with his filing system even to the point of having OCD. He feels strongly that he has to keep all his notes in order and types up the notes he has taken in lectures as he feels like he really must keep ahead of the game now because of all that has happened to him. (He is referring to his previous attempts at higher education where he didn't manage to stay on the course for very long.) He tells me that he also always has a book with him just in case and I later see him sat alone in the café with his IPOD on and reading a novel. He says that he now realizes that he has to work hard and not make the same mistakes again. He also said that he felt that he wanted to tell the younger students on his course not to make the mistakes that he made previously by going out all the time and neglecting their work. This student sat at the front of the class with four other students for the Introduction to Political Philosophy lecture. At break time he gave me back his consent form and said hello. He did not appear to mind the other students knowing that he had participated in the study.


**Lecture Observation 11.15 a.m. until 1.15 p.m.**
**Dave**
This is a first year module. The lecture is the third one in a series and was about the political philosopher Hobbes. The lecturer has previously told me that this is his favourite lecture. The course comprises of a lecture one week after which the students are encouraged to view an electronic lecture, read some seminar readings and complete worksheets prior to a seminar on the same topic the following week. All lecture notes are provided for them in their module handbook.
The lecture takes place in a room in an old traditional building with high ceilings, dark oak doors and dark corridors. The room is quite a large room but not as big as a lecture theatre. The desks are all set out in neat rows of four either side of a central aisle. They all face the front where there is a large screen on which the power point presentation slides are shown. To the left 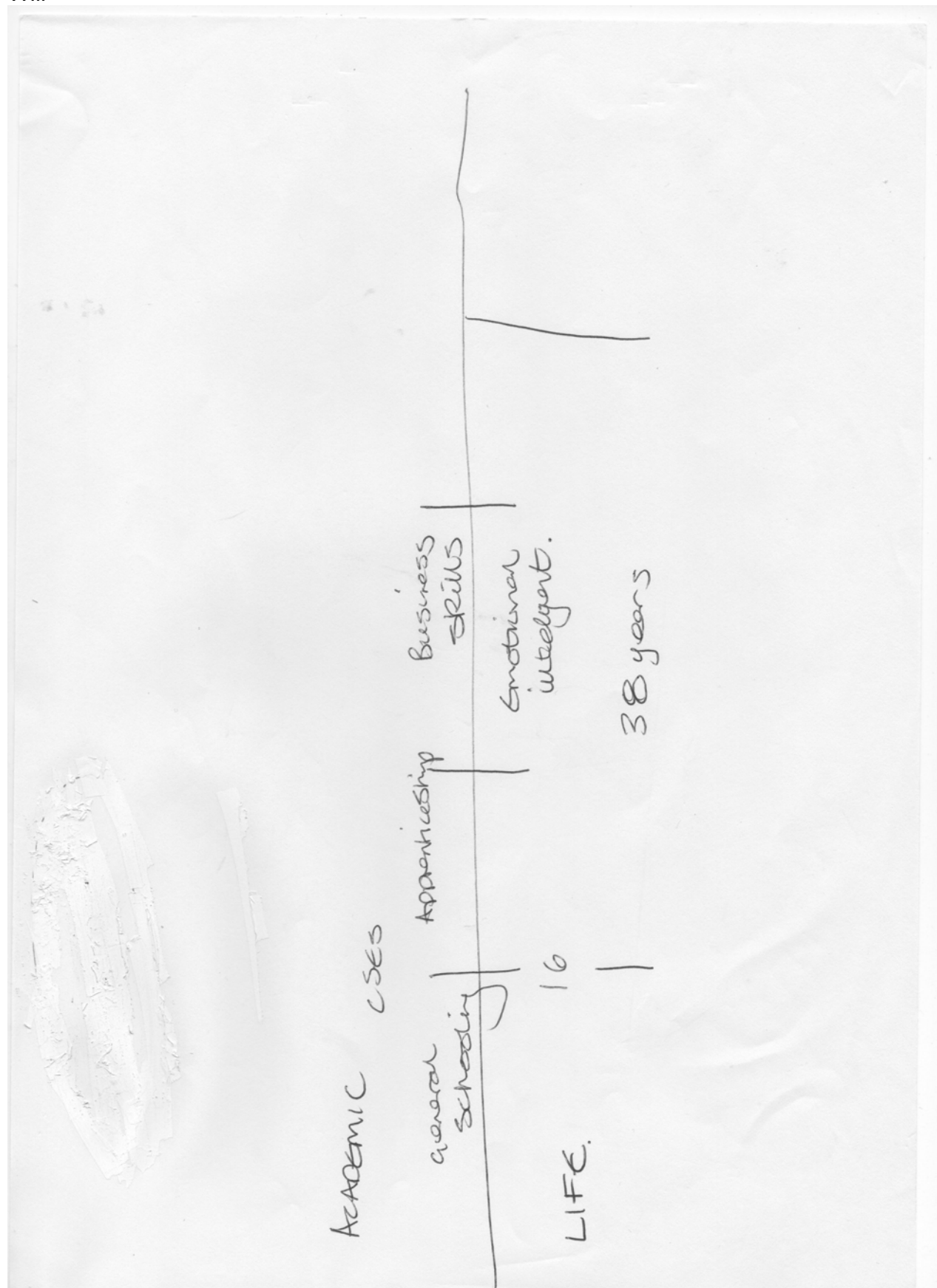is a light wood coloured lectern and to the right a whiteboard. The desks, chairs and lectern are quite modern in appearance and in contrast to the rest of the room. There are two large windows to the left, but I can not remember being able to see out of these, so they may have been screened with blinds or something similar. To the right are three large, solid, old oak doors. The two closest to the front are locked but the one at the back through which entry is gained is kept open with a chair. Consequently if anyone passed the room making a noise this could be heard by people in the room.

There were 27 students present in total, of which there were 10 females and 17 males. These ranged in age, but were mostly young school leavers. I noticed a few mature male students. Two of these were English, one around 50 years of age and one who was about 30. There were also some male mature overseas students. These sat together at the front. There were in addition 2 female overseas students who appeared to be around school leaving age. There were a lot of students filling up the rows at the front and then a lot filling up the rows at the back left hand side. On the rows in between there were ones and twos sat on rows with empty desks between. Just over half the seats were occupied.
I occupied a desk where there was an empty row of desks at the back on the right. This was beside the open door. A student arriving late took up a position on the same row, but left 2 desks between us. She kept smiling at me throughout the lecture.

The lecture was a little late commencing. I couldn't find the room but then saw Dave exiting and realized that's where I should be. I took up my position at the back and got out my things. When Dave re-entered I made my presence known to him and he smiled and said hello. He went to the front and then came back with a course handbook and a booklet of seminar readings for me. The course handbook has all the power point slides for the complete series of lectures and also a worksheet of key points for the students to fill in after the lecture. I told Dave that I needed consent forms filling in and he was surprised at this. He asked if I wanted him to do this and I said that it would probably be quicker (I didn't want to intrude on his lecture any more than was necessary.) I felt a bit awkward asking and apologized. He went to the front where he introduced me and said to the students that it illustrated the importance that our school research ethics panel place on ethics because they are demanding consent just for me to

observe the lecture. Dave and I gave out consent forms and information sheets to the students. As students were settling down Dave was interacting with them all the time. Then he said that while they were filling the consent forms in that he would get down to things which signalled the start of the lecture.

**11.25am**
Dave started into the lecture and constantly moved up and down in front and sometimes ventured a little way down the middle aisle as he was talking. He was using his hands all the time to emphasize points he was making and making eye contact with the students. All the students were totally engaged and watching Dave move around. Right at the beginning he made a joke about himself being socially embarrassed once when he came across the name St. John and pronounced it wrongly in front of people. He made this joke to illustrate that the word Magdalene on his slides should be pronounced maudlin. The students all laugh at Dave's faux pas. They are all engaged and appear interested.

Dave goes on to relate Hobbes to things that the students could identify with, for instance telling them where they could find his grave if they wanted to visit and that Hobbes is rumoured to have invented jogging and binge drinking. Most students are just watching Dave, a few are taking notes.

**11.30**
Dave says that people don't remember battles from the civil war and to illustrate this asks the students if they can remember any. One student responds, but mentions a battle from a different war. At this point there are sounds coming from the corridor through the open door and some students turn towards the door and are distracted by this. However, once the people have passed, they turn their attention back to Dave who is asking who recently celebrated bonfire night and most of the students nodded their heads or said that they did or put their hand up. This was relevant to the lecture as Dave was trying to show how bonfire night was a way of celebrating the death of a catholic. A few minutes later he is asking the students to shout out dates, he is walking around the front and a little way down the central aisle, talking and giving eye contact to all the students and using lots of hand gestures. All students are engaged and appear interested as Dave is giving background information about Hobbes.

Then, Dave says loudly, "So, let's get down to his ideas." This signals that the background is filled in and they are now moving onto the important stuff. Students are all looking at Dave and attentive. He talks about nature and makes a joke about nature not as in the Flintstones and the students laugh. He talks about people's rights and everyone being equal and how Hobbes says that anyone could kill anyone. He makes another joke about himself to illustrate a point saying as he is a big bloke he could snap anyone like a stick, but if a few of the students ganged up and approached him from behind they could easily overpower him.

**11.45**
Asks question to all students "can anyone sense what might be coming- what could be round the corner?" One student responds- "government" to which Dave replies "well eventually but before that?" The student responds again I couldn't hear what was said, but it was the answer that Dave expected because he said "that's right." Talking about Hobbes's work he asks the students if they have all done Shakespeare. There are a few nods. He says that as they should all be able to get their head around 17$^{th}$ century English, he would be disappointed if they read the modern translation of Hobbes's work the Leviathan. He says this in a lighthearted way. He apologizes for using the term mankind, saying that he is merely quoting Hobbes. He gives his opinion on Hobbes's way of talking about women which he says are in contrast to one of his female colleagues. He makes some more teaching points, but asks questions all the time too. "Can you see a problem?" "What would happen?" and the students promptly respond to the questions. He asks "do you remember this term?" when referring to the term pre-emptive strike from the first Gulf war, but then says that most of the students are probably too young to remember this. He talks about the fact that for Hobbes if someone is looking at you funny you are in your right to "Kill 'em!" and the students all laugh.

Most students are just watching Dave and listening to him. Others are taking notes. One student combs her fringe whilst still watching Dave. He makes some more points and then asks

more questions "Is this true?" "Is it the state that keeps us in check?" A student responds and Dave nods in agreement and then expands on what the student says. Dave makes some more points all the time walking around and using hand gestures and looking at the students. When he is mid flow, someone puts their hand up and Dave stops and says "yes" and nods his head at the student. He lets the student make his point and then encourages him to expand on his point by saying "go on." He nods in agreement with what the student says and then expands on what the student is saying. He gives some more information about Hobbes's views and then asks "Who agrees?" (With Hobbes) to which there is no response. Then," Is there no one?" There is a little bit of mumbling among the students, but no one says that they agree with Hobbes.

Then Dave says "Now, this is the thing" quite loudly and everyone looks at him. There is a boy at the back yawning but all the other students look alert and are listening to Dave. He continues "Don't read all of the Leviathan, there are only about fifty people in the country that have read it of which I am one, but you only need to read certain chapters." He goes on to quote from Hobbes's Leviathan and translates the passage into modern day English and asks "what does he mean there?" A student responds straight away with the statement "a state of nature." Dave agrees and goes on to explain further what Hobbes means by a state of nature. After this Dave says, "Well I think this is a natural midpoint (in the lecture.) He says what they will be doing after the break and sums up the main points so far and tells the students to have a ten minute break. The time is 12.00 noon. Some students leave in small groups and ones and twos. Most come back later with various hot and cold drinks.

During break Dave walks around talking to groups of students. He asks one group at the back (which includes the mature student who gave an answer to the civil war battles but got the answer wrong) "How are the historians?" He stays and has a joke with them. Then moves on to a student sat alone. I do not catch all of the conversation, but Dave addresses the student by name and says that he needs to go and see someone (I don't catch the name) as there is a problem with his halls of residence pass, which is probably due to some problem with the system. I notice that the student talks in an overseas accent.

Dave moves to the front and starts interacting with the students on the front row. There is a conversation about smoking and health and the students are laughing and talking to him. During break the rest of the students are talking to one another. There is a low level mumble but I am unable to hear individual conversations. I go round collecting my consent forms in and a few students ask me about the research. I take the opportunity to ask if they would consider being interviewed as part of it and a few say that they would.

**12.10**
The students are all back and sat quietly chatting to one another. They are drinking their coffees and cold drinks. Dave stands in the centre at the front and says "Who has seen a beautiful mind?" There are some students who put their hands up and some that say that they have seen it. All of the students' attention has now gone from their friends who they were talking to, to Dave. He says "You also should watch Tropic Thunder, that's a great film too." He makes a point about game theory and uses an example from the film. He apologizes in advance because the example is somewhat sexist, but he says that the example comes from the film. The example is about 3 blokes in a bar and he asks "What is the best outcome for each of the 3 blokes?" A student responds with the answer that Dave is looking for. There is some noise outside from people passing by the open door and the students at the back look towards this for a few seconds and then redirect their attention to Dave who asks "What impact would this have?" Several students respond at the same time. A mature student jokes "That's what I did when I was younger!" Dave and the other students laugh. All the students are listening and some are taking notes. Dave keeps reminding the students of points that have been discussed previously in the lecture as he introduces new concepts.

**12.20**
There are three male students at the back who are showing signs of being tired, they keep yawning and stretching. One of them picks his nose. Dave says "Now, this is the thing….this is important and I will tell you why. All the students look at Dave and seem attentive and alert. Dave trips and makes a joke about himself saying "And I do yoga believe it or not, my balance

is perfect." He continues with the "important point" saying "I just want to ponder on the word authorize…what does the word author mean?" A student responds straight away. Dave agrees with the student and makes a teaching point. He then talks about Hobbes again and translates what he says into more easily understood language for the students. He comes back to the word authorize and asks the students "Do you remember what we said about what it means to authorize?" and he makes a teaching point about individuals being responsible for government's actions since we have elected them. He asks "Did anyone see for example …and don't get me started…absolutely disgusting…Gary Glitter programme. (He is referring to a spoof programme that was on TV recently about Gary Glitter being executed for his crimes) He goes on "If the state kills someone- you are responsible. You have a choice there don't you? How much choice?" Students start responding – there is a low level mumble as they start agreeing or disagreeing with Dave and muttering to one another. Dave says "Who feels that you have a free choice?" The low level mumble continues but no hands are put up. Dave asks "No one?"

**12.30**
The students at the front are looking completely engaged and watching Dave intently. A boy on the back row stretches and yawns. Dave continues making teaching points, walks up and down at the front and partly down the centre aisle. He continues to use lots of hand gestures throughout. He stops at one point mid flow to allow a student near the front who has his hand up to talk. He nods his head as the student is talking and asks a question which encourages the student to expand on what he has just said. He then makes a contrasting point and another student interjects. Dave encourages him to keep talking saying. "Yes, right" and by nodding. Then he says "Ah, but see yes, this is an interesting…" and then asks the student further questions to encourage the student to think and see things from a different angle. He then asks the student "does that make sense?" Next he asks "Now- what rights do we have in society?" The students are unresponsive. Some male students at the back are stretching and yawning, doodling and one is texting. Dave explains something and then a student at the front asks "Is this…" and I cannot hear more. Dave makes further explanations, and then asks another question and another student at the front says something which I can't hear. All the students apart from the three males on the back row look engaged and as though they are listening to Dave. One of the males is peeling the label off his water bottle. Some students are filling in a sheet in their module handbook which asks them to note the key themes from the lecture.

Dave talks about footballers diving and the previous night's matches as a way of making a point and then makes a joke about himself playing five a side for the staff team and going down like a sack of potatoes to explain the point further. He then says loudly "And this is the thing" and the students look up from their note taking and he talks about the cartoon (cartoon series) to illustrate another point. He asks "who is the author of…" and I didn't catch the rest of the question but a student responds straight away. Then he says "therefore it follows that…" and leaves the sentence unfinished. A student finishes off the sentence.

**12.50**
Says "Now, I have saved a special little treat for you till the end. Hobbes rewards the careful listener with a joke." He makes a joke about himself saying that he still thinks of himself as a trendy lecturer. More of the students are filling in their key themes sheet in the module handbook. Some students (the three males at the back who have been yawning and stretching) begin packing up. The other students are still listening intently. The Hobbes joke is the last thing listed on the slides and Dave keeps referring to it. There is a diagram of a man made up of lots of people on the slides and Dave asks "What is this person comprised of?" A student responds "people." Dave agrees and makes a teaching point about this. Then says, "Now, you have been very good so brace yourselves for the Hobbes joke. This is on page…… (I didn't get the page number down) it's a bit racy as well." He then reads out the joke aloud and there are sounds of "Aww" coming from the students, this is because the joke is not funny in modern day terms, although it possibly would have been in Hobbes's time. Dave says "So briefly… you are not impressed with the Hobbes joke?" The tone of his voice suggests that he knew that the students wouldn't be. The students start packing up as Dave sums up. At the end of this summing up Dave says "There it is. Which seminar group was a bit sparse last week? "Some students say things to him. He starts laughing and says "Well if you should be in the second one come to that one." He says that he will see most of the students later and that he will see

some of them straight away as they have a tutorial with him after the lecture. Some students go up to talk to Dave to ask him about points that came up in the lecture and to voice their opinions on what Hobbes has to say. Dave listens and makes comments on what they are saying and both he and the students keep smiling and laughing. Dave packs up his things as I go to thank him. He is in a hurry as he has the tutorial to go to, so I walk out with him as we are talking. He says that the observation may not have been useful for me as there wasn't much interaction with it being a lecture. I say that the politics students seem very responsive to questioning and interact well during the lectures with him as compared to my experiences of being a psychology student. As well as responding to questioning they would spontaneously make comments which did not interrupt the flow of the lecture but instead added to it. The way that Dave in turn responded to the students made it clear that he valued their contributions and maybe it was this that made the students feel confident to express their opinions. Dave says that the students are responsive because of the culture of politics.

**I attended a PhD research forum which provided some insights into academia and the teaching and research culture at the university under study.**

One of the psychology lecturers came to talk to a small group of us PhD students about "how to be an academic." She talked to us about her own experiences in academia and told us that the culture at Focal university town is very different to other places she has worked. She thinks it is important for academics to also do research, but said that a lot at Focal university town do not as they say that they haven't got time due to all their teaching duties. She was making the point that as an academic one should make the time. Lecturers she said only get one research day and even if they get funding for research, recently they are no longer able to buy themselves time out of their teaching duties in which to do the research, but are instead expected to do everything on their one day for research. She said that things were however looking up in terms of research at Focal university town and that there should not be a dichotomy where there is emphasis on either teaching or research. She feels that it should be both in combination. She says that some famous researchers at her old university loved to teach as well as research as they welcomed the chance to be able to pass their ideas on and influence students and she said that she liked that aspect of her work too. She also made a point about keeping our integrity as a researcher since she said that she had had an experience where she had been to conferences presenting a research idea of hers, but someone she worked with in effect stole the idea and published some work using her idea. So she was warning us to be careful about the competitiveness found in academia. It seems that lecturers at university have lots of constraints on their time because of the multiple responsibilities they have. She also expressed a lot of frustration about admin jobs that she thinks is not a good use of her time.

**Lecture Observation 2.15 pm- 4.15 pm**
**(Alan)**

This is a third year module. Room R1/11 is a smallish room. The furniture is modern and in stark contrast to the rest of the room which has high ceilings and dark oak doors and panelled walls. The chairs are the type that has an attached desk that moves to the side to allow the occupant to get in and out of the chair. There is a screen at the front and a lectern to the left. There are two large windows and it is possible to see outside. There are 4 rows of 5 chairs at either side of a central aisle. The lighting is modern and inset into the ceiling. There are 15 students in all 10 males and 5 females. I hear quite a few overseas accents. I sat at the back on the right hand side where I could see all the rest of the classroom.

**2.10**
I approach the room to find that the door is open. Inside there is a female student sat on the front row next to the aisle. I ask her if she is here for the African Politics lecture. She says that she is. I say "Oh good," and explain that I am here to do research. She asks me about this and I explain that I am looking at learning in higher education and the role of social interaction and relationships in this. She looks confused and she asks "what…what is this" in broken English. I try to explain in simpler language to which she replies "so it is education?" and I say "yes." She tells me this is the first time that she has been "abroad" and that in her motherland they do not

speak English. I ask her where her motherland is. She says "Vietnam." I start to say that I really admire her being able to study in a language that she is not familiar with but the teacher who I have only had email contact with previously comes in. I say "hello" and ask if he is Alan and introduce myself. I ask if it is ok if I just sit at the back and he says that of course it is. A few more students enter and one goes up to Alan to talk about changing his dissertation. Alan gives advice about this and the student goes and sits down. Alan leaves the room and comes back with a hot drink in a mug. Several more students have entered meanwhile and some sit quite close to me. They come in very noisily but just totally blank me. I find that I am surrounded by really chatty male students who have all made their way to the back. I worry that I may be sat in their usual place.

**2.25**
Once Alan is back he stands centrally at the front and says "Ok, let's get started." He explains that he has had to reschedule some of the lectures to fit in with the essay assessment. There is a male student at the front eating chocolate. The teacher is standing at the front, moving around and using lots of hand gestures as he talks to the students. Some students are looking at the teacher and some others are taking notes. A student comes in late; Alan says "Come on in." Then, "Ok let's make a start then."

Alan is talking about Marx and relating this to past learning in the 1st and 2nd year. He makes some jokes about Marx and some of the students give faint smiles. Some students are intently taking notes; others are just listening and have no writing materials out. Alan uses big hand gestures and is looking around the room giving all the students eye contact in their turn. He makes a joke about white collar workers. The students don't show any response. Alan talks about Marx and Feminism and comments that this would be a particularly unhappy marriage. Only I smile- the students are unresponsive. He talks about the usefulness of theory.

**2.35**
Alan is displaying a table about Marx on the screen and explaining this to the students. He is pointing to individual items on the table. At this point all the students are looking at him and some are taking notes but keep looking up at him and the screen. He walks to the lectern and has a drink from his mug. He makes some more teaching points. One student yawns, some are taking notes and the rest are looking at Alan who is talking about class differentiation not being a key issue in Africa. He is using lots of hand gestures and smiling and moving hands to emphasize points. One student near the front is nodding at Alan's explanations. The male student who was eating chocolate earlier is now drinking coffee. Alan keeps giving small groups of students eye contact and gesturing towards them with his hands and saying things like "For example if you (meaning the group he was gesturing to and looking at) used to sell food on the street corner, you would end up owning a shop." Then he moves on to another small group saying something similar and then finally the third group. In this way he is getting the individual groups of students to imagine that they are living in Africa and how a change in government would affect them. The students who he is gesturing towards at any particular time give him direct eye contact back and most of them nod whilst he is explaining to them.

Next, he asks the students if they can remember when they looked at a particular topic, but none of the students respond. There is noise from outside as people are passing and talking. Alan makes a joke about Gordon Brown losing the next election and a few students laugh, look at one another and mutter something to one another.

**3.00pm**
Alan says finally we will talk about peasants, but not in the romantic way. He goes on to make some further teaching points, and then asks a question about whether the students think that class is the key to African politics. He relates this to the essay that is due for assessment. None of the students have responded to his original question, so he now says "Hands up if you think class is useful." Three students put their hands up. He says that it is now the break and tells the students to come back at twenty past three. He asks if everyone has dibbed in referring to the registration system. The dibber port gets passed around and students are getting out their student cards. Some students leave, others are in conversation with one another. Alan leaves the room.

Five students stay in the room during break and most are in conversation with one another. The Vietnamese student is still sat on her own at the front. Occasionally she turns round as though she is going to join in with the conversation going on behind her, she never actually says anything but keeps looking at each of the students participating in the conversation. I can't help feeling sorry for her as she seems excluded. The conversation going on behind her is about an assignment. A male student who is speaking in what sounds to me like a Polish accent (I have some Polish students and am used to hearing this accent) is asking a female student when the assignment is due to be submitted and how many words it has to be. Some male students near the back are talking about what someone has said on the social networking internet application called Facebook and going out in Manchester. There are two girls close to the front deep in conversation. I hear one ask the other if she wants to go and get another coffee. They have been drinking coffee all way though the first part of the lecture, as there is no room on the small desks that are attached to their chairs; they have been putting their cardboard cups on the floor and keep bending down to pick them up. The other students start coming back in dribs and drabs. It strikes me that they are quite loud. They come back talking and laughing with one another. The two girls come back with their coffees and start another conversation. I hear a conversation about the 19$^{th}$ century and another one about how to go about writing a particular essay. I am unable to get much detail down as all these conversations are going on at the same time. One student is walking around and he opens a window. The Vietnamese girl looks at him and says "Why?" and gestures towards the window. He says "There isn't enough oxygen in here. She still looks at him quizzically and he repeats what he has just said. I hear another conversation about going on to do a master's degree at Focal university town. The Vietnamese girl puts her head on her desk, she looks tired. She lifts her head up and turns round and smiles at me. She is the only student to even acknowledge my presence. I hear another conversation about the lecture.

**3.20**

All the students are now back, most with coffees and cold drinks. Alan comes back. Previously he was in his shirt sleeves, but he has returned with a suit jacket on and carrying an overcoat. He also has a carrier bag with him. He says that after the lecture he only has enough time to run to the train station to catch a train to Aberdeen and therefore will not be able to stay at the end to answer questions. He advises the students to drop him an email instead if they have any queries and he will respond. A student goes to the front and shows Alan a document. Alan reads this and then writes something on it. The two coffee girls start a conversation about what they are going to do when they leave. The temperature in the room is cooler now. Alan says that the next part of the lecture will be about ethnicity. He asks the students what sort of sports do Scottish people play and one shouts out "Kaber Tossing" and someone else says something that I cannot hear. Alan says something about somebody Connelly and a student responds with "Billy." Alan makes a joke which is also a teaching point saying that when he goes to Aberdeen tonight there won't be anybody there playing what are seen as typical Scottish sports. One of the female students who were drinking coffee earlier is reading a magazine in full view of Alan and is making no attempt to hide it. Alan ignores this. She eventually puts her notebook over the magazine and starts writing notes again.

**3.30**

Alan is pointing at the screen and making large hand gestures when making points. Some students are looking at Alan and others are taking notes. Some students have power point print outs, others are copying from the power point slides as Alan displays them on the screen into their notebooks. Alan then turns to the students and as he did previously where he talked to groups individually using eye contact and hand gestures. He gets one group to imagine they are a certain ethnicity and another group a different ethnicity and the third group to imagine that they are a mixture of the other two ethnicities. He says that if you live in a village, when the vigilantes come you have to quickly decide which side you are on. The point he is trying to make is that this would be difficult for those who are a mixture of ethnicities due to mixed marriages etc. Again the students that he is giving eye contact to in their turn nod at him and give him eye contact back. One of the male students close to the back looks a bit awkward when Alan looks at him and diverts his eyes and shifts about in his seat.

**3.45**

Alan keeps mentioning the essays and how the present lecture relates to one. He advises the students that for the essay they need to really "Get under the skin of ethnicity," and talks about the dangers of taking it at face value and that if they get under the skin this will push it towards a really good essay. He asks "Do you get that?" Some students are nodding. He says "Later on when you start writing you can submit to me and get some intensive feedback." He draws the students' attention to the course books and what chapters he thinks are useful as these have case studies about ethnicity. I notice that it is growing dark outside. I see that the three male students sitting nearby at the back are the only ones not taking notes at this point. I notice another male student doodling. I see that it is quite a large doodle and I realize that this must be what he had been doing for some of the time when I had thought that he was taking notes. He sees that I have seen him doodling and stops. The female student at the front is reading her magazine again. Alan makes another teaching point and uses the same technique again where he gets the students in groups to imagine that they are in a certain situation and is looking at them and giving them eye contact and gesturing towards them with his hands and arms. He starts saying something and then forgets what he is going to say. He makes a joke about his age and looks at me and smiles. I smile back at him with empathy! A male student starts flicking through his notebook. Alan makes a joke about pronunciation and the way he says something. He asks the students whether they now believe that class or ethnicity is most important in African politics. Most of the class put their hand up for ethnicity. He says that this is interesting and then looks at me and asks who hasn't a clue? He and I put our hands up. He nods and says that it is probably a mixture of the two and to remember this for their essays. It is not as simple he says as one or the other- it is more complicated than that. The students have started to pack up and are doing this really quickly as Alan is doing his final summing up. Alan has to raise his voice in order to be heard over the noise. He says that next week there will be a PhD student taking the class and that he will lead some discussion about class and ethnicity. He adds that if the students need him at all they can email him. One student goes to talk to Alan at the end and engages him in conversation as he is quickly packing his things up. He is in a rush. I wait until the student has finished and then go up to Alan and thank him for allowing me to observe. I walk with him so that I can talk to him as I know he is in a hurry. He offers to ask the PhD student who is taking the discussion class next week to let me observe that as there will be more interaction. I say if he wouldn't mind that would be great but no pressure as I know it can be a little daunting to have someone observe when they are not very experienced. He is very gracious and says it is a pleasure etc. when I thank him and then rushes off to catch his train. The students had left prior to this in small groups talking as they went. The Vietnamese girl was on her own as she left. I found the lecture really interesting and the concepts which although unfamiliar to me were quite straight forward and explained really well. It was therefore easy for me to understand even though it was a third year module in a subject other than my own.

**Skills Workshop observation**
**(Dave)**

This is a first year module. There are 63 students present in total and they are an equal mix of male and female students. T5/08 is a large modern room in a modern technology building. It has 7 windows in all. There are white roller blinds screening these and they are all pulled down. There is no natural light, only artificial light. There are two rows of 8 desks either side of a central aisle.

Before the lesson a few students are already inside the classroom. There is a lecturer inside as well who comes out with a registration port and a box of handouts. I get the impression from this that some of the students have been in the same room for a previous lecture, so this is probably their second two hour lecture without a break. Some students are waiting outside in the corridor and when the lecturer comes out they go into the room. Some other students are outside on the access ramp smoking. As it gets closer to 2.15 they start to come inside and take up seats in the classroom.

**2.15**
Dave arrives and some students go up to talk to him straight away, they and he are laughing and joking. He walks about saying "alright?" to various students sat close to the front. They respond but I am unable to hear what they say as I am sat right at the back on the right hand

side. I go out to say hello and to make sure that he realizes I am there. I asked Dave if I could have a handbook for the module and Dave said sure but that the handbook for this module isn't as exciting as the one for Political Philosophy. Another student goes out to talk to Dave and talks for a few minutes. Some late comers come in and Dave talks with them. He has been fiddling about with the projector remote and keeps going up to it to try to get it to work. He is all the time talking to students too and manages to finally get the projector working. There are more late comers and Dave gives out handouts with the lecture slides already printed out for them. There is a low level buzz as the students all talk quietly to one another.

**2.25**
Dave says "Afternoon all." All the students hush. He makes a joke about himself being an arrogant bastard because he had a parcel delivered the other day in a padded envelope – he asked the students if they knew what type he meant and they were all nodding or saying "Yes" and then he said that it looked suspicious to him so he went outside to open it as he thought it was a bomb. It was in fact some chocolates from someone who he had written a reference for, but the point he was making was that he was so arrogant that he thought he was so important that he was "bombable." All the students are laughing and all their attention is on Dave. They are passing the registration dibber round too and when it reaches the end of the row in front of me they offer it to me. I shake my head and the female student that offered it to me took it over to the students at the other side of the classroom. Dave says that today they are going to be doing preparation for group work and their presentation. The workshop is actually to give guidance about working in groups and about presentation skills. They are expected to do a group presentation in a few weeks time as part of their assessment for the module. Dave says that if the students haven't got groups yet that he would start introducing people. The students start mumbling and Dave says "niggle, niggle…I know you want to sort groups out but please…" The students quieten down and Dave goes on talking. He makes a joke saying that it is the staff Christmas do the evening before their oral presentations; he is walking up and down at the front as he is talking and the students are laughing and what he is saying. He then starts telling them what they need to do and what makes a good presentation. The students are now silent and all facing him at the front.

He asks the students "Who here has looked at the Andrew Clapham book." Some of them put their hands up and some mumble "yes." Dave says that he expects a forest of hands in a few weeks. He talks about the presentation being worth 25% of the marks for the whole module, so it is important although there is still plenty of time for recovery. He emphasizes however, that if they don't arrange themselves into a group and participate with one another they will lose marks. He talks about the length of the presentation, saying that some people think that length and size is good, but that in this context it is not- the presentation must run to time. The students are laughing at what he has said and Dave says that he doesn't know why they are laughing at that." Of course, it is obvious that he does really. He talks about sharing the work out amongst the group. He says that everyone in the group need to say something but if say someone has done a lot on the actually PowerPoint presentation, they don't need to then speak lots when presenting. He also says that he doesn't want the students who are not presenting that day to come to the rest of the groups' presentations. He only wants the people who are actually presenting on any given day to turn up because he says this will then give a feeling of collegiality as everyone will be in the same boat so to speak.

Dave is walking up and down the aisle. He says that after the group presentations, they will be given a provisional mark and verbal feedback straight away. But, he says that the presentations will be videoed to which some of the students start groaning. He goes on to explain the reasons for this saying that these are two fold. Firstly he says that it is important for the students' protection as once they have been given their provisional grade the moderator will view the presentation as well and check that the correct grade has been awarded. I do not hear him mention a second reason, but instead he says that the students should not worry as the video will not be put on U Tube. Most students are just listening, some are writing. Some students on the row in front of me glance at one another when Dave mentions U Tube.

He goes on to talk about there being a moral responsibility for each of the students to do equal work as everyone in the group will get the same mark. However, he says that when they get their written feedback there will be a form that they can fill in to complete if they feel that it is

unfair that someone receives the same grade and he and the moderator will investigate whether this person needs to be downgraded. He emphasizes however that this is not to be used lightly as it is not a witch hunt and the form should only be filled in if there are genuine concerns. Someone tries the door then goes. Dave looks through the window in the door but sees no one. Then the person comes back, he enters the room and says "Sorry I am late, I missed the bus." Dave allows the student time to sit down and then continues talking. He is talking about working in a team; he says "When working in a team, people are different, be accepting of this. Working in teams is problematic and it's not how we would expect for example we can't expect there to always be an inspirational leader saying "There is no I in team etc." He puts up a PowerPoint slide about Bruce Truckman who says that there are 4 stages to teamwork. These are forming, where everyone is a little awkward with one another and this means that they are really polite to one another. Then there is storming where the awkward stage has been got over and everyone has different ideas and are not afraid to express these with a consequence that they may all fall out. Dave says however, that some good can come out of this as the next stage is norming where the people in the group feel that they know one another's strengths and weaknesses and how to get along with one another and the final stage is performing where the group can co-operate in the task in hand in a productive way. Dave gives the example of his own MBA course on which he fell out with a woman who had very different opinions to his own, but that since this they were now ok with one another and could get along to do group tasks really well. He asks "What is another way of saying norms?" Some of the students say things I cannot hear. Dave clarifies "Morals, rules, ethics. The message is this…if you fall out don't worry about it…this is normal and usually something good comes out of it.

A picture of a man is on the screen. Dave says "This is Meredith Belbin…he doesn't look like a Meredith does he but that is his name. He is a teamwork theorist. Now, this is the thing…Jonty Rhodes is the ultimate team player but he challenges this idea of teamwork. He says that it is good to have different types of people in a team. Some for leading, doing, thinking and socializing. There are a few students talking at the back. So, who here is a brilliant ideas person but can't finish things?" he gives an example of himself and his decorating – that it was a good idea to start decorating but that it is taking him ages to get it finished and he is having to sleep on a mattress in his spare room. "Who here couldn't live with this situation. No one puts their hand up. A female student in front of me is talking to a male student. A few of the others are mumbling. Dave says loudly "The point is this…" He pauses for the mumblers to stop. They stop straight away then he says "The point is this…presentation skills…why might you not…when doing a presentation for the first time give a good presentation? A student pipes up "Nervous." Dave talks about what the student has just said and talks about there being nothing worse than being faced with a sea of faces looking bored. He says "I can tell when you are looking bored." A male student at the front says something funny (a few of the students around him laugh.) Dave says "Ah, bless you." Another male student comments on what Dave is talking about and then a female student. Dave says that cue cards can help in presentations but warns against writing out full scripts as this prevents interaction with the audience. There is more mumbling, but this is about what Dave has just said. He also makes a point about trying not to be intimidated by the group and that there are different tastes in presentation styles. He emphasizes again that we are all different and that this is ok. To illustrate his point, he puts up pictures of two different comedians namely Jack Dee and Lee Evans. He asks what style each of these have and students shout out different adjectives for each of them. i.e. Boring, dry humour, for Jack Dee and energetic, sweaty etc for Lee Evans. Dave asks "Is it fair to say that some people may find one funny but not the other?" Most of the students shout out "Yes." Dave says "Yes, well likewise I think where presentation skills are concerned I think it is important to find your own voice, because we may have different ideas about who is a good public speaker. I mean I quite like Tony Blair, but I think he is a poor public speaker. And Churchill was dire. I think Bill Clinton was the best public speaker. It was his delivery…his speeches were not particularly good, but it was the delivery. Who did Bill Clinton stand against?" Several students say "George Bush." One male mature student near the front says "George Bush Senior!" Dave repeats this "George Bush Senior" and then goes on to talk about a famous debate that the two underwent in the run up to an election campaign in order to illustrate how Bill Clinton's delivery helped him to win the election.

Dave asks "Who here is planning to do a power point presentation?" Some students raise their hands. He says "I will ask again…who here is planning to do a power point presentation?" (with emphasis.) More students put their hands up. He says "I am waiting…. All of you is the answer." He then goes on to warn against what he calls "death by PowerPoint" and makes another joke about power point and all the students laugh. He then goes on to talk about the advantages of PowerPoint and how it can be used to structure a presentation. The students are all facing forwards and listening what appears to be intently. Dave asks "Who here has no idea how to use power point?" No one puts their hand up. Dave says "Sorry I shouldn't have asked you about this, you won't want to say, but what I will say is if you haven't already got to grips with power point, use this as an opportunity to. First off then, I want you to get into your groups." The students start fidgeting and collecting their things together. Dave says loudly, "I mean when I have finished talking. I want you to by the end of the session have a name for your group and come and put it on one of the sheets of paper at the front and list the names of the people in that group. You will have 15 minutes in your groups and I will come round and make sure everyone knows what they are doing." Some students start moving around and getting into groups.

There is a group of six female students in front of me and they start discussing their group and who will do what. I hear one student asking "What do you think?" to a girl sitting two seats away from her – they all seem to be in deep conversation about the task in hand. I hear another student say "Sally…would you be alright with that? Are you sure?" Dave is walking around the room talking to individual groups of students. He asks them if they are ok and whether they know what they are doing. Most of the students say that they do, but a few ask him questions and he stays and explains things to them. He walks down to where I am and says "Alright?" I say I am. He says "Not much interaction from your point of view." I say, "No, it's great…the way they are made to feel safe to actually get together and do a presentation and group work." He says "Well I think that if you are going to assess a skill you need to teach it." He walks back up to the front and a student leaves his group to go and talk to him. One of the female students in the row in front of me raises her hand and Dave comes back down to speak to the group. I cannot hear everything they are talking about but it concerns the task in hand. He walks away when he has finished explaining something, but they shout him back to clarify something which he does. When the students have talked in their groups for a while they have been asked to put their team name and their individual names on one of 3 pieces of paper at the front. Some of them have finished talking and are getting up and going. Dave reminds them that they have to put their team name on the paper first. Some groups are still talking and all the students are interacting with one another. Some individual students go to talk to Dave on their way out. I see my interview participant 2 going out to talk to him. I have not met her face to face yet, but she has been sending me really chatty emails saying where she sits in the lessons and what she looks like, so I am sure she is the one. I am even more sure when she gives me a smile. When she has spoken to Dave she comes and sits with me at the back of the classroom. She says she doesn't mind the other students or Dave knowing that she is being interviewed. She says that she needs to ask me something. She tells me that she is a Muslim and has to pray three times a day and that it is now time for her to go and pray, so would I mind waiting for her. I say yes that's fine and arrange to meet her in the library in ten minutes. She says that there is a special place there for Muslims to go and pray, but I arrange to meet her in the foyer.

The rest of the students are filtering out once they have written their names on the papers at the front. They are talking and joking to Dave as they do this. I pack up my things and head to the front to the table where Dave and several of the students are left looking at the names that the groups have given themselves. Some of these are quite witty and the students are laughing and talking to Dave. I comment on a couple of funny ones and the students join in. I thank Dave and tell him to have a nice weekend. He puts his thumb up to me and says and you too.

I go to meet participant 2 for her interview and we have a conversation on the way. She asks me about my PhD and what it involves. Then she tells me that she is from Bradford and is glad to get away from where she lives. She says that some friends of hers who she still sees have gone to Bradford University and they say that it is the same old thing, the same faces everyday and that she wanted to see something new. She also tells me that she has just been training for a job at the university and had to miss a lesson the other day because of this which she doesn't like doing as she doesn't like having to catch up. She says that the job entails being out in the

cold all day pointing out places to people at the graduations that are coming up. She says that she is worried because she will have to miss another lesson though and worries about having to catch up. She also tells me that she has another job at uni which is going back and helping in her old school.


**Seminar- Observation. 2.15-4.15**
**(Dave)**
When I arrived at R2/08 there was a note on the door saying that the class had been permanently moved to T5/06. This was a modern room in the technology building with 2 rows of desks either side of a central aisle. Most of the students were sat on the left together. There were 2 in front of me on the right. There was a screen for showing power point slides but this was not switched on. Dave was sat down at the front. There were fifteen students present. Four of these were female and the rest male. I sat at the back right hand side.
**2.10**
I arrived at the room at 2.10 and there were some students already in there. Dave was sat down on a chair at the front. I asked if it was ok if I came in and he said "Sure." The students are talking to one another and to Dave. He says that they will wait a bit for everyone to filter in because they will have gone to the usual room and will have to then make their way down to this one. He comments that the Christmas lights are going to be switched on by Patrick Stewart the university chancellor who has been present all week for the graduations and has been looking round the university. Two male students enter a little late, one is carrying some books and Dave comments that this looks good. The student laughs and says that's why he is carrying them…he isn't going to read them; it just creates a good impression. Some students are talking between themselves and the others are talking and laughing with Dave. He mentions the Christmas light switch on again and says that they will be finished well before 4 O'clock with the class being a seminar, so they have plenty of time to get up there if they so wish. He says this tongue in cheek as if he isn't really expecting the students to want to attend the switch on. The students are laughing. Dave says "What do you reckon….are they all here that's going to be here?" to the students. Then "Well hello chaps and chapesses. This is our home now…for the greater good." He explains that one of the admin staff asked him if he would swap rooms with another module that had more students so he had agreed to this because some of the students on the other module had been having to sit on the floor. He says this is also the room where he has his yoga lessons. I have heard him mention yoga lessons before and I do not know whether he really does have them or whether this is a standing joke he has with the students. The students are all laughing and some make comments to him. He says "Now, where John is over there (he points to where a student who is usually quiet in classes is sat) that is where I usual do my yoga. So, John if you suddenly feel your chakras re-aligning while you are sat in that area, it is because you are getting energy from me." John smiles back at Dave, the other students are laughing. He says "The task today is on pg. 14. Who is going to be brave and give a definition or an explanation of negative freedom?" A male student close to the front looks as though he is going to start talking, but doesn't. Dave says "Yes, go on." The student that Dave referred to still doesn't say anything and after a moment or two a different male student puts his hand up and starts speaking to give an explanation of negative freedom. Dave nods as he is speaking. A male student near the back talks to the student next to him. Dave says to him "Have you anything to add to that Joe?" Joe says something about negative freedom. Dave says "One thing I want to say…one thing I want to add….give me an example of something you are not free to do but in a broad sense." Several hands go up and one male student says something. Another student says "Yes, but …." and gives a counter argument. A female student puts her hand up and says "Is it what you were saying last week about…." (I don't catch it all) Dave says "Precisely!" and goes on to explain further. Someone else at the back says something and Dave gives a further explanation. All the time he is sat down behind a desk at the front. He does not move about as I have seen him do in other lessons that are more lecture based. He is however, using lots of hand movements and gesture.

After the students have made all their points and he has expanded on them, Dave says "So, let's run through all the things you have said." He then goes on to pose a scenario to illustrate the notion of negative freedom and asks the students if a particular event would affect it. Most of the students say "Yes." He poses another scenario and asks "Does that?" The students respond "No." He poses another scenario and asks for the students' response, they say "Yes."

This time he asks "Why?" A student voluntarily explains and then Dave expands on what he says. A student asks "Is that positive freedom?" Dave says "Well yes" and does some more explaining. He poses another scenario "What about….does this?" I cannot catch all his words. The students say that it does. He asks why and a student explains why. Dave agrees with the student and then expands on what the student has said. Then he says "I think I have made…well, what inference should we not make about negative freedom?" A student says "That it's bad!" All the students and Dave laugh at the simplicity of his explanation and the fact that he is stating the obvious. Dave tries to get them to think deeper about this and asks "What for instance could prevent you from getting a degree?" A student says "Getting drunk." Dave says "Not once or twice, but perpetual drunkenness might." He talks about this in terms of negative freedom. He talks about intelligence and asks what this is. A student gives an explanation of what he thinks intelligence is. Dave says "Ah, yes…the thing is intelligence is hard to define…but yes, your broader point is good." He asks "Has anyone got a firm side of the fence on this?" A male student at the front says "I am not being funny, but I don't think you have to sit on either side of the fence. I don't care. I do see…it just seems a bit….." (I do not manage to write down the rest fast enough.) Dave says "Ok, let's stretch that point. Ok, let's suppose I want to take heroin…should the state prevent me?' A student on the second row says "Yes." Dave asks "Why?" Jimmy at the back is whispering to his friend. "Jimmy, do you want to get in on this?" Dave asks him. Jimmy says no, but after another 2 students speak Jimmy then makes a comment about negative freedom and says that under this you would be OK to take heroin. Another student says the opposite of what Jimmy has just said. Dave reiterates what Jimmy has said and then the opposite view that the other student gave and then makes a teaching point about both views. He uses lots of hand gestures as he does this but remains seated throughout. He then says to all the students, (but then looks first at Jimmy and then at the other student who gave the opposing view making direct eye contact with each of them in turn) "Does that make sense…you are appealing to your positive sense of freedom." Jimmy says "Does that mean…." (I don't catch it all.) Dave says "No" and gives a further explanation using pointing and hand gestures. Jimmy is nodding and saying "Yes, yes" throughout the explanation. Another student asks "Is this that…" and Dave says "I am assuming that the positive are right." All the students laugh and then the student and Dave continue, the student asking things and Dave responding. All the other students are listening. I do not catch all their conversation. Dave asks the students a question and points to one student and says "You have hinted at this" and then to another student and says "And you have hinted at this." One of the students who have been pointed to starts to answer the question, but is rather slow and stilted with his explanation. Dave says "I think you are getting there, lets see what Tony says." Tony has his hand up. He makes a point to which Dave responds "I think so yeah." Another student interjects and Dave says "Yeah, yeah, quite." They are talking about personal freedom now.

Dave asks the students "What happens if the state restricts your freedom… if it stops you doing things based on the idea that it is in your best interests to do so and this is why Berlin has no time for it?" No one responds. He says "Let's take an example." and gives an example. All the students listen and then most of them start contributing to the discussion which is too fast paced for me to note. Dave poses the scenario of the twenty year old Somalian woman being stoned to death recently for adultery and says "Does this make sense." A student asks "Does this mean…?" Dave says to him I think you are alluding to a good point here but…" and then makes some further points and then goes on to talk about tyranny. He then says "But are you free if you are on the streets starving and in absolute poverty? Are you free to live a full life?" He makes a joke about being cold hearted and the students laugh. Neil has his hand up and Dave says his name. Neil asks "Is this because of the constraints of the situation?" Dave says "Well, this is the thing…it isn't my understanding that Berlin takes it in this sense. Well…what is money…is money not some form of tender?" All students are looking at Dave and listening as he gives more examples to illustrate his point. He says "Is that not negative?" A student responds "Yes, but…." And Dave responds "But… (I don't catch some) ….and don't get me wrong I don't want to see Jim protesting against capitalism at the switch on tonight." He is referring to the Christmas lights being turned on later this evening. The students including Jim laugh. Dave says that he is trying to link the students' points to practical examples. He gets the students to consider a scenario where his boss comes in and says "Dave you are a fat bastard, do 20 press ups." He says "Let's examine this…what is false about this statement?" The students and Dave start laughing (Dave is quite a rotund man.) He goes on "Now, we all know it is good to be fit but should the state make fitness compulsory? Should I for example be forced

to go and do spinning classes?" A student says "The smoking ban is another example." Dave says "Ah…but, there is not a smoking ban. Should the government ban smoking altogether and also ban unhealthy food?" Some of the students say "Yes" others say nothing. Dave says "Can the state force you to do something?" A student puts his hand up, Dave points to him and he talks. "We have different concepts of what is good and it should be up to the individual. Dave says "So you think….?" The student says "Yes." Dave says "Yes and…" and stops as he sees another student with their hand up. He points to this student and says "Sorry" and the student starts adding to what the previous student said. Dave nods and gives direct eye contact to the student as though he is listening intently. The student starts to stumble over his words and Dave says "Yes, this is the thing," to help the student out. He then says "I gave you a word last week …it begins with P" A student shouts out "Pluralist." Dave says "Pluralist…and what does Riles say about this…Neil has mentioned it." A student says "Something …of the good?" Dave agrees and says "Can you see where this links in because what Neil says I think is an important point. Wearing a seatbelt…what justification is there for wearing a seatbelt?" A student says "It protects us." Dave asks "Should there be a law?' Several students shout out "Yes" and Dave says "Why?" A student says that it also protects others if we wear a seatbelt. Dave says "Right I am going to come back to this point, and he brings Neil into the explanation too and uses both his hands and points to both students. He says "The point that Jim makes is important" and then explains why this is so. He says "And then Joe makes the point …. (I don't catch it all) Can you see this is the same policy but two different things? And Neil's point is a good one…who here has a motorbike. Who wears a helmet…there is some notion of positive freedom here." One student says that he has a motorbike.

Dave says "Right, oh sorry" He has seen that a student has his hand up and points to him. The student makes a point about freedom. Dave says "Yes…do most people have a problem with wearing a helmet?" Why shouldn't I be able to carry a handgun?" A student asks "To protect you against people?" Dave says "I have given up that right." A student gives an example from his work situation in which he works in a bar and is unable to handle customers even in defence of himself. Some students give other examples and someone raises the point of the farmer who shot a young burglar and another of a woman who was being threatened by a knife and then the attacker fell on his own knife and she had to go to court. Dave mentions the fact that he has even had to do a health and safety risk assessment for when he is working at home. He says that currently he is redecorating so it isn't a very safe place to be. The students give other examples, speaking in their turn. Dave sits and listens to them. When there is a lull in their conversations Dave says "Does anyone have a problem if someone attacks me…I defend. As a liberal lefty I don't understand why we are not able to have them. (He is referring to hand guns.) But, overall, we are safer without handguns. Not…if John (referring to a student who hasn't so far spoken) comes over and ruffles up my papers …but actually in self defence."

**3.10**
Dave talks about next weeks lecture and what he is going to introduce, he is looking at all the students and giving them eye contact, he is pointing and using hand gestures. He refers back to today's lecture on freedom and sums up what has been covered. He says "Is it fair to say that? Do we all accept that? Very briefly does anyone want to be really brave and define what … (I don't catch who or what) says about….?" A student says "Does he say…?" Dave asks "Why?" The student starts to say something but struggles and is very slow as though he is having to think carefully about every word he says. A few of the other students put their hands up. Dave says "James come on." James gives an explanation. Dave says "You are getting there…Neil." Neil starts to explain slowly and then the first student pipes up again building on what Neil has said. Then Dave says "Yes, and then explains further and rephrases what the two students have just said." He says "Does this help us?" A student says "Yes, because…er…" He is slow and keeps stopping to think. Dave lets him continue, he is still and keeps looking at him and then after a while says "yeah" to encourage him to go on. He then recasts what Neil and the other student have just said and says "I think you are right. I will leave you with a final example. Every year, you as a tax payer subsidize ballet, opera etc. even though you probably can't afford to go. Why not let them fend for themselves and give money to the NHS instead?" A student says laughing "We should keep the BBC but…." Dave says "Why?" The student says "I like the programmes." Everyone laughs. I notice two students at the back; one seems to be explaining something to the other. He is pointing with his pen and the other student is nodding. Dave asks if a Bananarama ticket should be subsidized. A student

says "No" and Dave asks him why. The student says that Bananarama are popular enough without the subsidy. Dave poses the question is it then only what is seen as "higher" or "better" music that is subsidized. A student says something to which Dave plays devils advocate and gives the opposing view and asks why something is so. A female student at the back who has been silent throughout the rest of the workshop says "Better culture." Dave repeats what she says loudly and points to the girl. The girl smiles and seems pleased with the point she has made and the way it has been received. There is some more conversation between the male students and then some male students at the back are having their own discussion alongside the class discussion. Dave says "This is the thing "and they all start to listen again as he says something relating to another point that Neil has just made.

**3.15**
Some students start packing their things away. Dave continues "Freedom is meaningless if you don't protect things so that you have a choice. So, subsidize the BBC etc. because the BBC can do things that ITV can't because of the public subsidy. I have now taken it off…but these discussions are important." He tells them that he wasn't going to give them a reading pack this year as last years students took that to mean that this was the only reading that they needed to do. However, he tells the students that he has been persuaded that this particular group of students would not do that and would read much more broadly than the pack, so he is going to give them one as long as they do not think that this is the only reading they need to do in order to pass the module. The students continue packing up. Dave says that he may be a little late for next weeks class, but will send an email round if he is definitely going to be. The students pack up and start to leave. Most of them have a word with Dave as they go.

**Conversation with Dave after class**
At the end I tell Dave "There was lots of fuel for my theorizing there," and he says "I have tried doing that in small groups but it doesn't work as well as keeping the whole group together." Also, that "They are good the second years, they are nice and friendly." I say that a lot of how it worked was down to him though and he tells me that there was a boy at the back whom he has never heard speak. He tries to explain to me where he was positioned in the class and I had noticed him sat alone. Dave had however referred to him during the session as though he was trying to make him feel part of the group and included in the conversation. He had used the boy's name and the boy had laughed at what Dave had said. Dave said to me that he wondered how much of a personal assault or a violation it would be to try to get him to talk if he didn't want to and that he was wary of doing this in case it made the boy feel like that. He said that the work that this student hands in is good, so he is obviously a reflector. He also said that often the reason he tries to get the students to join in is not for their good, but for his own so that he knows that they are getting the point he is making. He tells me to look on the internet for the Michael Sandel lectures. He has taught Political Philosophy at Harvard since the 1980s. Dave says he gets 1,000s of people in his lectures and gets them all to interact.

**Seminar Observation 4.15- 6.15.**
**(Alan)**
I had arranged with Alan via email to come and see this lecture, as he said that he would be doing the lecture on this particular day. When I arrived at the room there were several students waiting outside the door in the corridor for Alan to arrive. Some more arrived in ones and twos and they were all chatting with one another. I was surprised at the way the students were interacting with one another as they have only been at University for a few weeks, but they appeared to get on really well. I asked if they were waiting for Global Politics with Alan and a few say yes and smile at me. A male student asks "Are you sitting in again?" He is really smiley and chatty and I say that I am observing again. I commented to the students about the late timing of the lecture as I have noticed it is getting really dark outside. I asked if they had had lectures all day. They said no and that this was their only one. One student laughingly told me that he had just managed to get out of bed to get here. I notice that the students have all started to go into the classroom and I realize that the teacher must have come and unlocked it but I hadn't noticed him. I joined the end of the queue to go in after the students, but when I got to the door, I realized that it wasn't the teacher I was expecting. A younger man in a suit and tie was standing behind the lectern getting ready for the lecture and I realized this must be a PhD student of Alan's. Since I am a PhD student myself who is just getting used to teaching at university I could put myself in the lecturer's position and thought how I would feel if someone

just came in and said that they were there to observe. I felt that it was unfair to put him in that position without asking him before hand, so I decided to slip away and did not stay to observe.

**Workshop observation 2.15-4.15**
**Dave**
It is sunny today. The session is in the same room as last week but the blinds are up today so we can see outside. I forget to count the number of students present as it is so busy when I get there, but it is similar numbers to last week and I estimate that there are 60 plus. I sit at the back right hand side in the same place as last week.

**2.10**
I arrive at the room and the students are already inside. Dave is already here too as are two other men who I do not recognize. The men are putting up Amnesty International Posters on the front wall at the side of the screen. Another man who I think is a mature student on the module is going round giving out Amnesty International magazines. There is a low level buzz as the students are filtering in and talking to one another. Some students are talking to Dave. There is a group at the front who he is having a laugh and a joke with. Lots of freebies from AI are being passed round and a paper for the students to put their email addresses on if they are interested in joining AI. I have to get out of my seat to pass something to the group of girls in front of me. I mention my research to them and I ask them if they would be willing to be interviewed as part of it. They offer their email addresses but I say I will email everyone and they can respond to that. As things are still being passed around Dave says "How could you use this for your presentations…how could you use this Amnesty stuff? Just think about it…as well as it being a good cause to support if you so wish think how you could use this in your presentations. So, today you are going to be working in the groups that you are going to be in for your group work and then two weeks today you will be doing your presentations. On the first week it is team Sequin… you are kicking us off and then it is team…".(I don't catch all the team names, but Dave says the order in which the teams are presenting and then goes on to say what teams are presenting on the following week.) He says that only the teams that are presenting that week are to attend and that all the information is on blackboard too. The register dibber is being passed around and also a male mature student who I have seen helping Dave pass things round before is coming round with handouts with Human Rights case studies on them as Dave is talking and there is a low level buzz of conversation amongst the students also. They are talking about their presentations and the running order that Dave is talking about. Dave says, can he point out what is going to happen next week. He says that it is a help and advice week for presentations and says that the groups can come along to see him with their plans etc. or work in the library. He says "Or work in the library" four times and says that he is trying to get to a hidden message here, but that he will be here in case the groups want to run a section of their presentation by him or even to do it all. He mentions Steven and Demetra who have been handing round the AI things. He says that they want to say a few things and that the students can use some of the information in their presentations.

Steven gets up to talk and introduces himself. He says that he is a second year criminology student and that he is going to give a short presentation on Amnesty International. All the students are facing the front; they have stopped talking and are listening to Steven's presentation. He has a power point presentation that is displayed on the screen. He says that Britain has made 1000 breaches in human rights since the H.R. bill was passed. Some students at the back are talking. Steve plays a U tube clip which is from the secret policeman's ball it is a spoof about Osama Bin Laden. All the students are laughing. The presentation goes on for about ten minutes and at the end Steve is encouraging the students to join A.I. He says that there is a piece of paper being passed around for their email addresses although there is no obligation. At the end the students clap, they appeared interested in the things that Steve was saying.

Dave stands up and makes links between some of the things that Steve was saying and the students work. He asks the students "Who supports the death penalty?" A few of the students raise their hands. He thanks the two men who begin to pack up their things. He says that today they are going to do their group tasks (discussing the case studies he has given out) and a few of the students start moving around to get into their groups. Dave says that before they get into groups that he wants to just say that they can spend about half an hour on this and that they

can take liberties with the furniture. The students start moving around and moving their chairs in order to get into their groups. They do not move the desks though as they are in rows and cannot be moved easily. The students are still moving around and there is a lot of discussion going on. The group of female students on the row in front of me are talking about their presentation. Dave is walking around and discussing presentations with the students. He explains to a group of girls at the back that they have to discuss what they are going to feed back to the rest of the group. The group of female students in front of me are talking about their finances. Dave is talking to a group of students at the front and a mature male student is talking and laughing with him. Dave leaves the group and the mature student starts to talk to the rest of the group. One lad has to climb over the desk so that he can sit with the only other male student in his group. He was separated from him because they were on a row with three girls in between them. The group of girls near me are now talking about being overdrawn at the bank. The Amnesty International man Steven brings me some badges and the other students ask for some. The girls in front of me also. They spend some time attaching the badges to their clothes and their bags. Dave sees that they are not engaged in what they are supposed to be doing and comes to the back and asks them what their thoughts on the sex discrimination case study he has given them are. They don't say anything, but then Dave poses some questions and the girls respond to these. When he goes one of the girls asks me if I am a student because the lad in front of her has asked her. I tell her I am a researcher and remind her about the email I sent out. Most groups seem to be on task and discussing the case studies that Dave has given out. The group of girls in front of me start discussing and one says "So what is our answer?" A girl starts saying something and the lad in the group in front turns round and says "I agree" (the girl was speaking quite loudly and confidently. One of the girls from the group in front of me goes out to the front to talk to the teacher and is talking to him at the lectern. Then Dave starts walking up and down. The girl group in front of me start writing things down. One says that she doesn't think that something is right with what they have just written down. The others join in – they are discussing one of the case studies. One says "It's health and safety though isn't it." The others say "Yes it is" There is a group to the left which consists of male and female students. They are discussing one of the case studies. Some of the group are talking in their turn, while others in the group are listening. They are also writing things down.

Dave is talking to a group of male students in the middle right hand side who have asked him something. They continue talking with one another after he has gone. The girls in front of me are now talking about boyfriends and jealousy. Dave is going round asking students if they are ok and whether they are ready to feed back to the group. He says "Right, we will have our final plenary if you are all ready." He explains that a plenary is where they have all been off in little groups but have now come together again. He asks "So, were they victorious?" He is referring to the people in the case studies and their legal battles. He goes on "The first one, who thinks that she was successful in this …hands up." Several students raise their hands, then he asks "Who thinks the employer?" Several of the other students raise their hands. He then says "The employer won, this is the intriguing thing. He goes on to make a point about care work and that how overwhelmingly it is women who have responsibility for this in society. He goes on to make a point that feminists think this should be acknowledged, but that in the case study this hadn't been recognized by the court passing judgment on the case. The girls in front of me are talking- I can not hear what this is about. Dave says, "The second case study, who thinks that it was the woman who won?" One of the students says "You could say that there is more to it than qualifications. " Another student joins in making the same point and Dave adds to this. Dave poses the third case study and asks who thinks that the employer won and no one puts their hands up. He asks who thinks Swinburn won and all the students raise their hands. He asks "Does anyone want to say how much money they think she got?" Different students shout out different amounts such as a million but laughs as he says this, then twenty thousand etc. Dave says "500,000." The students seem surprised at this and I hear one say "As if!" They all start muttering to one another about this. Dave starts talking- he is making teaching points and is at the front. He is using arm gestures and keeps walking around across the front and then a little way down the aisle. He keeps pointing his pen as he is making points too. Then he talks about the 4th Case study. He asks them who they think wins and asks for the students to raise their hands as for the previous case studies. He then tells them who has won and the students are very surprised. They start saying things like "What?" and then arguing with him that that isn't fair. He says "Don't shoot the messenger." The case study was about dress code and so Dave extends the argument by talking about religious dress and how in French schools the pupils are

not allowed to show any visible signs of religion. The girls at the back are talking about this and also the group on the left of me. Dave makes a joke about the fact that he would be happy to just wear his Speedos and why can't he just stand in front of them in these. A student says because there is a dress code. He points to his pink t-shirt and says "Is there really?" The students and Dave laugh. He moves on to the fifth case study and again asks the students who thinks this person won and who the other. The students raise their hands for different people depending on their opinion. He is talking about clip on ties and practical considerations for policemen who could be strangled by conventional ties. The mature student who sometimes hands things out for Dave acted out being strangled by his tie- he unzipped his jacket stood up and made a gesture as if he was being strangled by his tie as if to illustrate Dave's point.

Dave asks can you remember the issue…it is two weeks since we talked about it. The girls at the back are talking. Dave notices and stops talking to get them to stop talking. They stop and he continues. He talks about things not always being how they seem and how he once spent a term in office as the escort to the Mayor in his hometown. He had to visit a garden as one of the duties but when he got there he thought that it hadn't been very well thought out as he didn't think it looked very nice. He made a comment about this to a person he was drinking tea with and this person happened to be the garden's designer. He told Dave that the garden was a sensory garden which had been planted for blind people who cannot see the plants but can smell them and so the plants were chosen as they all had a strong smell. He is trying to get the students to see that there are different levels of reasonableness in different situations and for different people.

He says "Before you go…I think we are winning…" The students take this as a signal to start packing up. He raises his voice "So, just to clarify, next week the time is yours to do whatever. Good luck!" The students pack up and go out. Most of them are in small groups. Some stay behind to talk to Dave, other have a quick word with him as they leave. He has a laugh and a joke with some as well as they are leaving. I notice that there has been lots of litter left in the room. Some of it is the A.I. stickers. Some of these are stuck to the desk, even though Dave told the students to stick them all over and everywhere but not in this room as he is responsible for it. There are also several cardboard coffee cups left. I go around collecting all the rubbish. I find some pencils and ask some of the remaining students if they want them. They take them from me and then have a word with Dave. I thank him and depart.

## Lecture observation 2.15- 4.15
## (Steve)

From what I can gather there are several teachers who teach on this module as when I asked Steve if I could observe, he said that he wouldn't be teaching on the module again until week 9. Also, throughout the lecture he kept referring to other lectures that had been done or were due to be done by other lecturers.

T5/07 is a medium sized room with desks set out in rows at either side of a central aisle, each with a chair behind them. There is a screen centre front on the wall and a lectern on the right. There is a whiteboard but this has been folded up. The room is modern with modern inset lighting which the lecturer dims slightly before he starts speaking. There are doors at the front left hand side and back left hand side. Both are extremely squeaky. There are high level windows with blinds which are up on the right hand side. Because it is such a dark day however, there is not much natural light coming through. The trees outside can be seen and they are blowing about really severely. There are 16 students present when I enter and then more keep coming as the start of lecture time approaches. Some arrive after the lecture has started. There were a total of 33 present in all for the first part of the lecture, and there was an equal mix of male and female students. When they are all sat down there are only about 4 spare seats left. Two of these are to the left of me. There were a few mature students present and these tended to be sat together. There was one female mature student sat with a young Muslim woman at the back a few desks away from me.

I sat on the back row at the right hand side. There were 2 female students to the left of me and a full row of male and female students in front of me. I had emailed Steve several weeks previously to see if it was OK for me to observe this lecture and then on Thursday last week just to check that it was still alright. Both times he had said no problem. However, when I entered

the room and went to introduce myself to him he just looked at me blankly. I said that I had emailed asking if it was ok to observe. He said "Oh I had forgotten all about that." So, I just asked, "Well, would it be ok if I just sat in at the back?" He said yes and that as long as I didn't drop to sleep I could do what I wanted. So, rather awkwardly I made my way to the back, smiling at some of the students as I went along and settled at a desk. I got out my notepad and pen, but for the first time in all my observations I felt really awkward about taking notes. Steve remained at the front behind the lectern. He did not speak at all with the students or interact with them. The students were coming in in dribs and drabs and talking amongst themselves. The door was very squeaky and distracting so that whenever someone else came in most of the students' attention went towards the door. Some were texting or talking on their mobile phones. Some were eating sandwiches and drinking both hot and cold drinks.

**2.10**
Steve had the first power point slide displayed on the screen by now. This said Religion and Terrorism and week 9. The students are continuing to talk amongst themselves. Some of the conversations are about their university work. For instance the two female students to the left of me are talking about an assignment and how they are going to tackle it. There are also 2 females in front talking about an assignment, but the rest of the students in my earshot are either texting or talking about something other than university work. Steve is behind the lectern and keeps looking at his watch. A mature female student at the front has a laptop which she takes out and a male mature student who is sat with her plugs it into a power point for her. I hear another conversation from the two females to the left of me. They are talking about how many exams they have and what exams they are doing. One woman says something which I can't hear and then the other one says "I am trying to get that in my head…I don't want to think about it."

**2.15**
Steve dims the lights again slightly and another student comes through the squeaky door. He doesn't sit down straight away and Steve keeps looking at him. The student remains stood up as he takes off his coat and talks to a group of students about essays. He says "You can do one for so many thousand words or another for..." and I do not catch the rest of the conversation. He brought in a sandwich with him. There is a low buzz among the students who are all still in conversation with one another or texting. The male student who has just arrived sits down and starts eating his sandwich. Steve says "by bringing that sandwich in you are contravening university law clause 4, 768. It is a good job that I have had my lunch otherwise I would have upheld that law. Put the packet in the bin otherwise I will." I thought he said this jokingly at first, but then realised that he was annoyed, especially when he then went on to say "You should not bring sandwiches into lectures… ok." Steve then says "So, is Religion a cause of terrorism or is religion used as an excuse for terrorism?" More students come through the squeaky door and no one responds to Steve's question. He goes on to make some teaching points. The students are becoming quieter now and starting to pay attention. Steve says that he is agnostic and asks "Does anyone know what agnostic is?" A student close to the front answers but I cannot hear. Steve says "Yes, I believe that there is something up there, but there is not enough there to explain it yet." He asks "What is an atheist?" and then makes a joke saying that in Northern Ireland if you say you are an atheist they say yes but what sort, a catholic atheist or a protestant atheist? The students don't respond to the joke, but a few put their hands up to answer the question and one says what an atheist is. Steve says that today's lecture will ask more questions than it will answer. He says that he is going to try to make the students think about it. He puts up a slide which gives an overview of the lecture and starts going through this. All the time walking from behind the lectern to the screen and pointing to sentences on the slide then back again to behind the lectern. The screen is no more than a meter away from the lectern.

**2.25**
More latecomers come in through the squeaky door. It is a male and female student. They have drinks with them and chocolate bars. They sit down and start eating and drinking. Other students watch as they sit down and some nod in greeting to them. Steve makes a joke about Homer Simpson relating to God and Superman. Some more late students arrive and most of the students look towards the squeaky door. The joke has been missed because of this disturbance and none of the students smiled or laughed. Steve asks "What does reverence

mean?" There is no response from the students. He goes on "Have a guess" Two more students come in late the door squeaks again and as they sit down they turn round and start talking to some students behind them. Steve stops waiting for a response from the students and says "I was looking for..." and goes on to explain what reverence means. The dibber registration port is being passed round and students start rummaging in their pockets and bags for their dibber. One female student suddenly stands up whilst Steve is explaining about reverence and squeezes past everyone sitting on her row and leaves the classroom. A female student passes something to another female student in the row behind her.

**2.30**
All the students are looking at Steve and appear to be listening.  Steve asks "What were the working classes promised by Christianity for 1000s of years?" A student answers but I cannot hear. Steve says "Yes, the promise of a better life in the future if you adhere to the rules now. The female student who had left the room a few minutes earlier comes back in, the door squeaks and everyone looks to see who has come in. She squeezes past everyone in her row and sits back down. Steve is walking back and forth between the lectern and the screen pointing to phrases on the screen and using lots of hand gestures. He talks about Marx saying that religion is the opium of the people and asks what Marx meant by that. A student answers, saying that religion disguises their rubbish life and Steve expands on what the student has said saying that according to religion guilt and suffering is part of life and that you then get your reward in heaven. One of the latecomers is eating, someone asks him to pass the dibber port. The female student who went out previously searches in her bag for her dibber and stands up to ask for the port to be passed to her.

Steve makes some more teaching points and talks about both the Koran and the Bible both having parts in them which could be interpreted as saying that it is ok to fight in the name of God. But then there are other parts that could be interpreted as saying that it is wrong to be aggressive. He says that all these books are ambiguous and can be interpreted two different ways depending upon what spin is put on it. He goes on to say that specific interpretations can be used as an excuse for terrorism. He refers back to a lecture on ideology that has gone previously. He asks what this is. A student says that it is a belief system and Steve agrees and expands on this. He says that there are scores of belief systems that have led to terrorist violence and gives the example of the Animal Liberation front. He makes a joke about Christian Monkeys but there is no response to this from the students. He talks about his friend who is a vegan and says that he says that the bible says that humans should protect animals, but says that conversely the bible says that humans are more important than animals. He says this to show how religious writings can be interpreted in different ways. He asks "What does Nazi stand for?" A student asks "As in….?" and I don't catch the rest of the question. Steve replies "As in …." and the sentence was again said too quickly for me to note. The student then gave an explanation which I couldn't hear as he was sat close to the front. Steve agreed with what the student said, saying "Yes, and there is Christian in there too. They dropped it, but it was in there originally. Religion can be used by anyone the same way as terrorism can be. I do not think the other students could hear what the student had said either.

**2.45**
Most of the students are taking notes, some have printed out lecture slides whilst others are making notes in notebooks. Others are not taking notes at all. There is one male student who I have noticed before in other lectures with Alan. He takes no notes but gets really comfortable in his seat with his legs up and is slightly turned sideways. He looks at the lecturer intently all the way through as though he is really interested in what is being said. Steve puts a slide up with a quote on it and says "Can you remember when we unpicked this?" He then makes a joke about the quote saying that it doesn't mean planting bombs. All the students laugh at this. I wonder why they laughed at this and not others that Steve has been telling. I notice a male student at the back who is looking through a book. This is a student who has been responding to questions that Steve has posed previously. Steve talks about Jehovah's witnesses in the context of the lecture and makes a joke about a top tip to get rid of anyone on your doorstep is to ask them in for a cup of tea. The students do not respond to this one at all. He says that this is what he does and he doesn't think they respond with violence afterwards and he doesn't think they let his tyres down or anything. The students do laugh now. He goes on to talk about extremism and subjectivity and that also it depends on peoples mood as to whether they will tell

people with other beliefs to their own to bugger off or not on any particular day. He mentions the Greenham common women being arrested under the terrorism act. The students are taking notes, mostly hand written, but the mature student at the front is using her laptop for this. A female student in the row in front of me is texting. It looks very windy and rainy outside. Steve says that extremism tries to make people afraid of others beliefs saying that others are conspiring against them to frighten them.  He talks about the Ten Commandments as being laws that we should abide by and that the Koran says very similar things. He poses the proposition that these laws may have had an evolutionary function thousands of years ago and that religion may have been a way of surviving. He makes a Cliff Richard religion joke which is shown no response by the students. I get the feeling that Steve is trying really hard to be sensitive to everyone's religious beliefs in the lecture. There are obviously some Muslim students present and he is trying to be really balanced in his lecture. He talks about the fact that if you didn't go to church in years gone by that there would be the fear of reprisals and also about the difference between peoples' beliefs and their behaviours- saying that these were more often than not incongruous. He gave an example of this from a project done by one of his students a few years ago. He says that using religion as justification galvanizes people against others. He asks the question "How many wars in the name of religion are actually about religion? Or, is it really about territory… religion is used as an excuse… a smokescreen. Look at the IRA was that religion or economics and Hitler… he justified the killing of Jews because he said they killed God."

**3.00**
Steve says "I will explain this bit then we will have a break." He talks briefly some more about religious terrorism and then says "Right we will break there. We will say 5 minutes so that's 5 past 3. I will talk for 20 minutes and then we will chat about Northern Ireland." Some students stand up and go out of the room. The mature student on my row included. The rest of the students start having conversations. One female student is having a conversation on her mobile phone, others are texting. The female student on my left looks at me and smiles. I ask if she has had any other lectures that day. She says that she has had one, but then had to wait around for this one. She asks me about my research and she seems really interested. I ask her if she could email me the module handbook for the course as Steve does not have any spares with him and she says that she will. She asks about my psychology degree and whether that was interesting. I ask about hers and she says that it is good that they are all following different pathways for example Politics with Sociology or Criminology etc. and so they get to mix with different people. The female student is still talking on her mobile but Steve who went out of the room has now come back and is walking back and forth looking at his watch. The rest of the students are still talking. Eventually Steve says "Ok, right…if you ask me mobile phones are the devil's work." The girl is still talking on her phone, but is saying goodbye to the person on the other end. Steve asks "What is a predominantly Christian Characteristic?" No one says anything. "That's the trouble today no-one knows" he smiles. The students do not respond to his joke. I feel sorry for him and smile. A mobile phone goes off. Steve says "The KKK …Klu Klux Klan…they are Christian fundamentalists." More students enter late back from break. The door squeaks and everyone turns. One female student mumbles sorry under her breath as she takes her seat.

Steve asks "What is an antifederalist?" There is no response from the students. He says "Politics students help me out here!" One student says something which I can't hear. Steve says "Why?" The student replies and Steve says "Yes, they can't be doing with the FBI or anything that is run by central government. Why are they tax resistant?" There is no response. Steve says "No...Is it because they don't want to pay or where the taxes go?" A few students say together "Where they go." Steve then talks about a colleague of his who has been sent correspondence from a Christian Patriot group in the USA because he has spoken up for people of other faiths in publications. This correspondence has been a bit threatening in nature and Steve says that he found it funny if slightly worrying and so much so that he has moved offices. He says this as a joke and the students laugh. Some of the students look at one another and make a comment to each other which I cannot hear. I notice that there are more empty seats after break than there was previously. I realize that the mature student from the same row as me has not returned either.

Steve asks the students if anyone can remember what Waco was. One mature female student sat in the middle says yes and then goes into a quite in depth explanation. When she has finished Steve expands on this and makes some teaching points. He has moved to the front of the lectern and is leaning on it with his arm. He asks the students "What's secularism?" A student asks "is it away from religion?" Steve says "Yes, the church is separate from the ruling of the country and Bin Laden says that that is why the West is immoral. But that is for you to decide. He has come in for criticism on Islamic grounds. For instance, if I understand correctly in Islam you have to be taught to reach the higher levels, but Bin Laden had not been educated in Islam so Islamic scholars say he has no rights to espouse it.

**3.30**
Steve says "I have gone on longer than I intended to there. Northern Ireland …In a nutshell what is it about?" A student at the back who has been answering questions previously starts explaining. Steve nods and says "right" the student goes on with what he was saying. When he finishes Steve asks "What happened in 1921?" A student answers and Steve says "Yes, and…?" The student then expands on what he has said. Steve then makes further explanations talking about Michael Collins and the fact that for 3 days there was a united Ireland but then six counties split off to become Northern Ireland and the rest was Eire. There is a young female student sat in front of me who is texting all the time. She has not taken any notes for the duration of the lecture. Steve asks "Why did it blow up?" The same male student at the back who has been answering most of the questions so far answered something about the Catholics wanting their own parliament. Steve says, "Well… read about this, make your own minds up but Catholics were treated very much as second class citizens…who did the British army go over to protect originally?" There is no response from the students. Steve says "It was the Catholics originally, but then it turned the other way round. The question is or the question I pose is, was it about religion or social injustice or land?" I recently went round Belfast in an open top bus and there is this wall called the peace wall that was used to segregate the Catholics and the Protestants and it was frightening…awful." He is walking round in front of the lectern. He says "In conclusion" and the students start gathering their papers together "religion is a factor but not the cause...it is about social justice and territory." I notice it is becoming dark outside. He says "Does anyone want to say anything?" There is no response. He says "If I have offended anyone's religious sensitivities I am sorry that wasn't my intention." (He was however, in my opinion really careful to be sensitive to the different religions that were represented among the students.) A Muslim male student looks at a Muslim female student on the same row and the male student says something that I cannot hear. To the left of the male student is a tall male student who I have heard speaking with a Polish accent. He hears what the Muslim student says and starts up a conversation with him. I can not hear what they are saying, but they are both smiling at one another. Steve goes on to say that he is looking forward to the students essays if they have the stomach for it. They are all packing away as he speaks. He asks if there are any questions but there is no response. He says "No? OK," and starts packing away. The students start leaving; the two male students are still having their conversation. Steve is having trouble turning off the projector with the remote control. I hang back as I want to go and thank Steve but I don't want to intrude if any of the students need to go and speak to him. However, none of them do, so I go up to him as he is still fiddling with the remote. I thank him for allowing me to sit in the lecture. He looks at me and says "Did I pass?" I feel awkward that he has said this as who am I to judge anyone. I said "It's not about that…it's just looking at interaction." Steve said "Well it's difficult to get any kind of interaction." I say "Oh, absolutely ...in a lecture it's difficult. But it's about interaction between the students as well as between the lecturer and the students and it has been quite interesting." Steve interrupts me as I am saying this with "Yeah, texting." I say "No, not just that, I thought the lecture was really interesting." (I wasn't lying to spare his feelings; I genuinely had found the topic intriguing… it had made me think.) He says "Ok," I say "Thanks" and walk out and he says "Thank you" as I am walking out. I feel an awkwardness that I have not felt in other lectures. I also feel sorry for Steve for some reason.

**Seminar Observation 11.15-1.15**
**(Dave)**

This module has a lecture one week with a seminar the following week. The students are given reading materials to read before the seminar which comprises an open discussion on the

activities outlined in a seminar preparation pack. It is a third year module. Room R1/11 is in an old building with wood panelling and heavy wooden doors. The furniture is however, modern. It has chairs with desks attached that can be moved to the side in order to get in and out of them. There is a screen at the front and a flip chart. The door is on the wall to the right and the windows are on the left. There is light coming in from the windows and there is modern lighting inset into the ceiling also.

There are 9 students at the beginning of the seminar and these are mainly males. However, one female arrives later and then another male. They are sat in a semi circle at the front facing Dave, and I sit in the row behind them slightly to the right. I am worried that my presence will be intrusive as this is quite a small group so I try to be as inconspicuous as possible.

**11.05**
Before the class began I stood outside the classroom in the corridor as the door was locked. There was already a male and 2 female students waiting. They are in conversation with one another. They are talking about what Dave ( their tutor on this module) had on his Facebook page. They are asking one another if they are friends with him (on Facebook.) The girls then start talking about shaving their legs and the male student says to one of them "Do you shave your legs?" She says that she shaves them every other day. A female student that I saw outside the building smoking arrives and they all say hello to her. She goes and stands with the other students and they continue the leg shaving conversation. They then go on to eyebrows and the benefits of threading. A male student arrives and one of the females pipes up "I can't believe you are here!" He pretends to fall backwards. A male student asks him if he came on Friday. He says that he didn't and asks the male student if he did? He says that he did and that he hoped he felt guilty because nobody came. It appears to me that they all know one another really well. They start talking about Alan another one of their tutors. One of the girls says that he has got a promotion at another University. One of the males says that he won't miss him. They all agree. They ask the female student how she knows about the promotion. She says that it is on his Facebook page. One of the other females asks if Alan is her friend on Facebook. She says "No but you can get on it can't you." The other girl says "Yes" and they both laugh.  The male students talk about a seminar that they had this week on Alan's module which was taken by one of Alan's PhD students Sid. One of them said "I like Sid, I feel like I have learned something." Sid is the PhD student that Alan told me was taking the seminar the following week after I had been to his African Politics lecture. I ask the students if they do more seminar type work with Sid. One of the male students says "Yes, it's more discussion. All Alan does is do a lecture and then rush off to *Place Name*. "They laugh and so do I and I say "He was going to *Place name* when I observed last week." One male student says "How's he got a job at *Another Place Name* when he's always at *Place Name*?" Someone says "He can't just leave half way through a module…when will he be going, will it be at the end?" One of the others says "He can go, I won't miss him." More of the students are joining us in the corridor. Each one is greeted by the others as they arrive. Dave arrives, nods at me and says "Eye, eye folks." He unlocks the door and the students are laughing and joking with him as we enter. The chairs in the room are set out in a semi circle from the class before. He says "Come in Bev… I will introduce you in a minute."  The students comment on the chair arrangement and Dave Says "Yes, well you can keep them like this…it is like this from before…it wasn't planned but it may well work." One of the female students says "It's a circle of trust" and the other students and Dave laugh. Dave is sat down at the front of the class with his back to the wall. The students are in a semi circle facing him. I am in the row behind them to the right of the semi circle.  Dave says "Do you know what thought I am holding? Fairy Tale of New York is vastly overrated." He is referring to Christmas songs and the students start laughing and saying things about Christmas songs. It becomes obvious to me that this is an "in" joke that they have all been sharing. He then talks about an S Club 7 song being uplifting and students are joining in with the joke and one male refers to a concert that he had been to which was very S Club 7 (but wasn't really.) They are all laughing and making jokes that I can't "get," but which all the members of the group including the lecturer obviously do. This carries on for several minutes and then Dave says "The task today…you have had your reading so we are going to do the task bottom up. What role did Edmund Burke say an MP …why is it an MP that's not the linguistic rule is it …should play and should not play? So…what role should an MP play? And why is this the case?" So, I want you to split into 2 groups and each have a piece of paper…can I make the dividing line at Dawn. So what should an MP do and why…then I want to talk about

elitism…so about 15 minutes. One of you can use the flip chart…so its first come first served and you can illustrate it ….but not in the style of etc etc! Feel free to take liberties with the furniture. One of the female students in the group to the left of me gets down on the floor with her groups sheet of paper and picks up a pen. Dave says "Well done Sue…that's it." Then two male students from the other group get down on the floor also and one picks up a pen. The students keep referring to their reading material and then chipping in with comments to the scribes who then jots things down on the paper. Occasionally someone will say something and it isn't written down straight away. Instead there is some discussion amongst the group about what exactly should be written down.

A female student comes in late, she says sorry and Dave asks her to join the group on the right. The other members say "Hello" and "Alright" to her. One student from each group is scribing and they are all interacting and discussing what should be written down. Dave says "Remember in this exercise there is no winning etc. it isn't a competition." He asks them if they liked the link he had sent them. He remains seated. He is quiet now allowing the students to discuss and write things on their paper. They all become quite vocal each expressing their own points of view and then coming to an agreement over what should be noted down. Dave still says nothing and appears not to be listening to the students… he is instead looking engrossed in reading the module handbook. The students continue their discussions and scribing. The group to the left is making comments on the drawing that the scribe is putting on their sheet of paper. One male student says "You need to do it like this," he is laughing and the female student who is doing the scribing says "Sorry!" She is laughing too. They are having lighthearted banter; the male student is not really telling her what she should do.

A female student in the other group says something about people shouldn't have to give up freedoms. A male student clarifies what she has said. A male student asks "How do you spell topic?" Some of the others pipe up "C not K." Dave says "Remember, when Burke was writing it was before dictionaries" and then has another joke with the students who all laugh. The other group is talking about the task in hand and they keep laughing at what one another are saying. They all seem to know one another really well and are all participating in the discussions and the task in hand. No one is excluded; they are all taking part and saying something. Dave says "I think I am going to allow you two more minutes." The students are still mid discussion and so he repeats what he has just said to ensure that they have heard what he has said. A male student enters the classroom late. It is John a student that I have seen in previous classes. He talks with an Eastern European accent. Several students in the group farthest from the door immediately shout out "He is in our group!" They are claiming him before the other group does. Dave says he can go and join that group and he has to maneuver through and round the furniture to get to them. He says that they are almost done anyway. The students carry on writing more quickly now as they know that time is almost up. Dave says "…and stop the clock…times up." He looks at a student and says "Heads or tails?" They say heads and it is tails, so he asks the other team "Do you want to present your view of what Burke says an MP should do and why?" The male student who had been scribing reads out the points from the sheet of paper that they had noted down. He elaborates a little on what has been written also and when he has finished Dave asks "Who should have ultimate control?" the other students in the group say "The government." They have all reached a consensus on this although I heard in their discussions that they had slightly different views on this in the beginning and some members of the group had to be persuaded to view things this way. Dave says "Good, good." He continues saying "Good" intermittently as the student is making points from the sheet. At one point the student's speech slows right down as though he is having to really think about what he is saying and he makes a joke about himself at which everyone laughs. It is as though he made the joke in order to cover up feeling awkward about not being able to articulate what he wanted to say fast enough. He continues making his point and Dave keeps saying "Good, good," as though to encourage him to keep talking. When he has finished, Dave thanks him and then says "Team two." The female student who has been scribing describes and explains the first two points that they have noted down while Dave and the rest of the class listen. When she gets to the next point she says "And the rest is just like theirs" and throws her pen down as though she is done talking. Dave says "No, pretend that they haven't spoken, continue…" The student continues and Dave says "Excellent…good….good." When she has finished Dave says "Just to clarify, you shouldn't sacrifice your own opinions…you have both mentioned it…what does it actually mean?" A student responds but I am not quick enough to note it. Dave says,

"Yes, absolutely, but who?" Another student says something and then Dave clarifies saying "To be absolutely clear…how do we regard that as being a democratic principle?" There is no response. He continues "What do we expect…" (I don't catch it all.) There are a couple of nodding heads among the students. Dave looks at them and says "We have some nodding heads…why?" One of the nodders responds, then another says something and then the first student speaks again. Other students have their hands up. Dave says "Kathy" but then realizes that Frank had his hand up first and says "Frank, then Kathy." Frank speaks and Dave nods as he is speaking. Dave is watching him intently and when he has finished says "Yeah." He points to Kathy and says "Did you have…?" She shakes her head – she doesn't want to speak. Some students are writing things down. I see that they have a teacher made sheet to note issues down on.

Dave says "We are taking it off topic here…but is it fair to say that most people vote… is that fair to say? Some students murmur "mmm" and are nodding. Then Dave says "But this is the thing…is that, is that …how does this impact on the relationship between MPs and their constituents? I'm with Rousseau on this. I am reading from Burke, if you want to read along with me…this is the important bit…while both groups have hinted at this I think it's important because there is more." Dave reads out loud and the students follow. Then he clarifies and explains more, he says "So, if an MP represents the interests of the constituents…was that your phrase Steve?" The students are listening and the teacher is looking round the semi-circle giving eye contact. "Can you see a link with Rousseau here? Yes?" he laughs. "Let me rephrase that in a way …what is the link? A student says something and Dave says "Sorry to say this, but that's exactly what it's not." Another student tries and then another. Finally Dave interjects and says "Well, it's a generally Kantian idea. Let me take you back and then you will remember. He reminds them of something they have done previously; he looks at them all as they do this. He then asks them a question that I don't quite catch and a student answers "When it's in the interests of all." Dave repeats "When it is in the interests of all." With some emphasis. The student called Frank says "That's a very idealistic view." Dave laughs and says "Yes it is a very idealistic view but…" and then gives a further explanation and an example about a Glasgow MP and ship building. He asks the students what the MP is to do if for the interests of his constituents it would be better for a new ship that was commissioned for it to be built locally, yet it could be built more cheaply elsewhere and it would be better for the interests of the nation to have it built more cheaply. Rousseau he says would say that you have to consider the interests of others rather than your own. He asks "Does that make sense? Can you see a common theme…is this the problem with democracy?" He then talks about this in relation to laws on the death penalty and fox hunting where people are divided over what should happen. He asks if it is fair to say that you are less likely to be racist if you are a university graduate. There is no response and he asks "Does no one want to stand up for democracy? This leads us on to (What sounds like) Schumpeter's …what's Schumpeter's key points? A student responds and Dave says "Absolutely, there are 2 layers to Schumpeter that you have alluded to. He explains these two layers. The students are filling a worksheet in as he talks. He asks "What do we think of this?" A student responds saying "Schumpeter makes a point about….because you know you need the best of the best…" he trails off. Dave steps in and says "When you say knows do you mean…. (I don't catch the rest.) The student says something and trails off again. Dave says "Go on." And the student says some more. Dave expands on the point the student made. I notice that the female student who scribed for one of the groups is still sat on the floor. Dave says "Must we therefore accept Schumpeter and democracy?" He says to the girl sat on the floor "You shook your head." The girl says "Because for me…" and then continues but I cannot catch it. A male student joins in and says "Yes but…" and gives a total opposite view of what the girl has said. Others join in with different points of view and some are agreeing with one another. A male student makes a point and another male agrees with him. These points are again at odds with what the girl sat on the floor has been saying. The girl questions them asking "but how can that be so if…" One of the boys says to her "How are you saying this……" to get her to clarify what she means. The first male says "If …there was…"and then he asks Dave "Was that Schumpeter?" Dave says "Come again" as he hasn't quite understood what the boy was saying. He clarifies what he means and the others are listening in. Dave says, "To be fair that does sound like a Schumpeter argument because do you remember the first lecture where we talked about the benefits of democracy and if we were relying on two elites. The student called Frank says "It reminds me of the British Interests…the MPs are too elite there are major benefits to themselves and relatively do not

meet other's needs. Dave says "Who has ever written to their MP or been to a surgery?" No one puts their hand up. Frank says "Why haven't we…we don't believe the systems fair." Another male says "The problem is people don't write to them. Dave says "Let's take the Focal university town MP- he was in favour of the smoking ban. But then it has affected the pub trade… would this change his mind?" Frank says "I don't think so …that's my own opinion." Dave says "Precisely. How do you decide whether to vote? It's like that Gilbert and Sullivan song Ruler of the Queens. A student responds with something I do not hear. Dave says "Do you vote for the person or the party?" A student responds "Party." Dave says "So representation in democracy doesn't work? It's interesting that Frank thought this was idealistic…was that your word?" he looks at Frank. He goes on to say "I think … (missed) is too idealistic." He tells the students "If you went to a political party they would love you if you were under 35 and can string a sentence together. He asks one student in particular "Do you go to Labour party meetings?" The student says that he has been to some. Dave asks "How many people your age are there…certainly under ten? You will be classed as a youngster under 35 because all the councillors are retired. Why do you think that the young and the worse off don't vote? If you plotted a graph that's what happens…why?" A student says "Old people" but doesn't elaborate. Dave says "Identity problem." A female student says "There is no point voting if everyone is middle aged. Another student says "They may be less educated in what the government can do for them. Dave says "A vicious circle…parties don't address the needs of the young, so they don't vote." He talks about the rumour that tuition fees may go up to £7,000. Frank says "I start stealing if that happen," in broken English. Dave says "But this is the thing…students can vote so you would think that governments would be wary. Conveniently there is a review going on at present and it will be reporting back after the election. But this is the thing …why would the government do it?" A student says "In the best interests of the nation." Dave says "But there are massive numbers of students this would make a big impact. Big cities would be impacted and the Labour Party. You know more about British Politics than me…but you don't have political parties in Dorset." (Where Dave is from.) He says "Wherever we are at the moment… we have now looked at two overlapping models…what would you say…ponder back…it is all very well…taking Burke…think past to our work on the Levellers and see the models as a challenge. Next week we will look at two separate models…these are two completely separate models. So…what's the major…sum up liberal democracy in one sentence. "There is no response. Dave says "Suppose I voted to have Clive horsewhipped is that acceptable…in a democracy?" A student says "It would be funny." Dave starts saying "I won't…" and a student pipes up "It's not the right thing to do." Dave says "I admire your views but why?" The student responds "You can't have all rights in a democracy." Dave repeats what the student has said "You can't have all rights in a democracy…so yes (and goes on to explain more.) So, I won't spend too much time on it I will spend more time on deliberative democracy …there it is. The students begin to pack their things away. "Homework this week is Springfield…they do deliberative democracy … public meetings, participation in politics, have a look at that." The students get up and leave, all having a word with Dave as they go. One lad says to Dave jokingly that he has to stop making fun of his employer and Dave has some banter with him. He obviously knows where the lad is employed and talks about the employer who Dave seems to know also. Some of the female students tell Dave he must recycle the paper they have written their points on even though it is obvious that Dave has already told them he is against recycling as he does not believe that global warming is as bad as it is made out by politicians. He reiterates this stance, but nevertheless says that he will recycle to appease the students. We walk out together and he tells me that he did the writing points on paper exercise deliberately today to get them interacting more as it has been difficult previously to get them to interact. He seemed pleased with how it had gone. He did not know that I would be turning up to observe, so the exercise was not for my benefit.

**Lecture Observation 11.15-1.15**
**(Ralf)**
Room R2/08 is a large room in an old building. It has modern furniture, blinds and lighting in contrast to the large, old fashioned solid wood doors and high ceilings. There are two large windows to the left and the desks are set out in rows facing the front. There is a lectern to the left, a large screen on the front wall and a whiteboard to the right. The very old door will not keep closed and keeps opening all the time. This results in noise from the corridor frequently being heard by the people near to the back of the class. There are fourteen students present, ten female and four male. They are mostly sat in small groups but some are in twos and two

are sat alone. The teacher Ralf brings the register dibber in and places it on a desk near the front. Students get up from their desks to go and dib in. There is a male student sat to my left on the back row with several seats between us. He talks with a female student several rows in front about an accident he has had. She asked him how he is and where his crutches are. He mentions damage to his knee and that he has given up on the crutches as they were very hard work. He says that he has had to have all his hand in dates deferred to next year.

Ralf says that they are going to be looking at good guys and bad guys in film. A female mature student goes out to the front to dib and another female asks her to pass the dibber to her. Ralf asks "So far in the module what have you been looking at?" A student answers but I am so far away from him (I am positioned at the back right hand side,) that I am unable to hear. Ralf says "I always like doing this…I like films." Two latecomers enter and Ralf carries on "I can't watch a film without analyzing it. Who's doing the film next week? (There is no response from the students.) Someone's doing it. Who's done it already?" Some hands go up. There is another late comer. Ralf goes on "You've got to do one. We will sort that out. Who watches films and analyses….that man wouldn't do that…can't watch that?" No one responds. "Well the aims (he shows the Power Point slide) are to explore masculinity theory of feminist and non- feminist origin and analyze the differences. " He goes on with a few more aims. He continues "To look at the problems with theories of masculinity…all men are not the same…hitting people on a Saturday night when you are drunk doesn't explain what a lot of men are about. He is walking around down the aisle using hand gestures. "There is a lot of work based around feminism…there is an imbalance. So, man to man violence…why does he go up behind someone and hit him?" A male student asks "Doesn't he know there's CCTV?" a female says "To prove his masculinity" Ralf says "How?" The female says "stronger" Ralf says "Yes, why else?" the female says "Drunk." Ralf says if it is down to alcohol why is it guy, guy not female?" There is no response. Ralf explains "We have all experienced this…one explanation is he is proving his masculinity…mmm…not sure. (He gestures towards the slide) these are some of the explanations" (he keeps walking towards the screen and back.) All the students are writing things down from the screen. Ralf reads from the screen but then illustrates with explanations taken from real life situations. He says "We all know people like this …that like violence..." Two lads near the front look at one another and mutter something. All the students are quiet and listening and taking notes. Ralf makes points about patriarchal social relations, the power of men over women and the rise of feminism. There are points on the slide about domestic violence and sex offending. Ralf makes these points and gives further explanation. He talks about reasons for these and then about the term "To become a man." He argues that to become a woman you just need to get older…it is automatic and yet to become a man is not the same. There is a late comer at this point. She apologizes and Ralf says "Alright." Ralf argues that masculinity is more often than not explained in terms of problems with men's relationship to women, yet Strauss argues that men demonstrate manhood in relation to other men. The girl sat in front of me is eating fruit and drinking coffee as she is listening.

Ralf asks "What are we talking about when we say the rules of manhood? (No response.) If you knock into someone and spill their drink why do you go and buy them another one?" several students say at once "To avoid getting punched" or   "So you don't get punched." Ralf agrees and repeats "To avoid getting punched…you have threatened their masculinity and they have to get it back by punching you. Put it in another way…someone spills your drink…how do you react?" A male student says "It depends how big they are…but your friends will see you differently so you have to do that." (Meaning you have to square up to the person who has spilled your drink.) A female student interrupts saying "Girls would do that too…I would expect the person to buy me one back…not beat up." Ralf says "What would happen…shout? Not violence. There is probably a threat of violence….unwritten rules. That's interesting…the masculinisation of feminine culture." He refers back to the Power Point slides and talks about the practical implications of masculinity. He says that when he was talking to Andy the module leader previously about rules, the only one he could think of was etiquette. He goes on to describe a place in Ireland where it is almost a ritual that people (meaning men) get together and get drunk and then one person starts an argument off and then they all start arguing but they are also all holding each other back at the same time, so they have no intention of fighting because their mates are holding them back, but at the same time they don't lose their male pride because they don't have to back down.

He talks about heroes then and them being a symbol of manhood. He asks the students what they think of when they think of heroes. A female student says "Strong" another one says "Masculine. Ralf asks what the definition of a hero is. A male student responds saying "The better man." Ralf asks "How is he the better man?" A female says "Because he does the right thing morally." Ralf asks "How else?" A female says "Villain or baddy." Ralf says "Go on." The female student explains further but I am unable to get it all down and then Ralf reiterates what she has just said saying "Yep, so the villain…" (I don't catch it all.) He then asks "How else?" A male student says "A bigger man." A female student says something in response to what the male said and he explains himself further "More patriotic." Ralf asks "Why, which hero are you thinking of?" The male responds with "Superman or Spiderman." Ralf says "So moral is better." He gestures towards a female student and says "Were you saying something as well?" The female says "Better looking." Ralf says "ALWAYS better looking." A female says "Always get the woman." Ralf- "Why?" A male responds saying "It's his prize for being a better person." Ralf says "Yes, they always get the woman. It sounds cheesy to compare manhood with heroism (he is walking round back and forth using hand gestures) but films don't do anything about the other guys in the film. Name me some heroes. A student shouts out "Hercules" Ralf asks "Who was Hercules? It's not a history test (students laugh.) Ok name another." A student shouts out "James Bond." Ralf says "Excellent, how do we know he's a hero?" The students respond with various reasons and then Ralf says "How else?" A female student says "He gets the woman." A male says "He's English" Ralf says "How else?" There is no response. He asks "Who is he? We don't know how much money he has but he goes into a motel and it is a bit shabby in one film and so he goes and checks into a 5 star hotel and uses his credit card, so we know he is classy and wealthy and stylish. Who else?" A student says "Die Hard." Ralf says "Who is the character?" Several students respond giving descriptions of the character, his physique and what he does etc. Ralf asks "Who else?" A student responds with "Wolverine." Ralf says "Excellent…why is Wolverine? What's his background?" A student says "He does things out of revenge though." Ralf says "Alright, but was it a personal thing or…" The student says "I dunno…his wife got killed and he had to take revenge." Ralf says "Right….King Arthur…what does King Arthur look like? (No response) Does he have armour on? The hero myth is reconstituted…he would have been really scruffy really. Rocky…who has seen Rocky? (No response) Everyone has seen Rocky! It was on last night. Is Rocky a hero?" Some students say "Yes." Ralf continues "What kind of hero?" A female student responds "He comes from nothing." Ralf says "A loser." He puts the film on and says "Watch the interaction between the characters in the first scene in this first film." As he is saying this a girl gets up and leaves the room. All the students watch the film intently. After a few minutes Ralf stops the film. I notice that the girl has come back in but did not notice her do this. Ralf says "The first scenes let you get to know the character. The character in the first scene…we talked about it a minute ago…who is he?" A student says "A nobody." Ralf- "How do we know?" A student says "Well they were ripping him off, he'd done the work and he had to do it again." Ralf- "Yes, that tells you about the character that he just did it again without question…what else" A student says "There were bums everywhere, it was bleak and not a nice place. Ralf says "What else? What about the pet shop?" A student says that the character was looking at the animals in the pet shop window and that this showed that he had a soft side. Ralf says "Yes, that was in there for a purpose." A student says "Also that he can be lonely…he has got no one. Ralf says "Brilliant…we are already empathizing with him…he's got no-one etc. We will watch the film for a few more minutes." He puts the film on and all the students sit silently watching. After a while he stops the film again and asks "What's it about now?" A male student says "Homeless people…yes he's a hero to the people. Ralf –"Yes, he's a people person." A female student says "He's like there's no food in his fridge…he doesn't look after the house because he's on his own." Ralf says "I actually did that the other day…I'm single and live on my own and I opened the fridge and there was no food there so I opened a bottle of beer. So, he's a people person but there is a dichotomy." A student says "He locked the door." Ralf says "Mmm…is he scared?" The student replies that he isn't and Ralf goes on "No, he's not a coward, it is just the way it is…what else?" Another male student says "We know he has done well today…even though he has been ripped off." Ralf says "Yes, even though really he had had a rubbish day, he thinks he has had a good day." A student interrupts and adds something to what Ralf has just said. Ralf says "Good, I was hoping someone would mention that…we will come to that in a minute. What about when he was skipping down the road?" A student says "He is childlike." Ralf says "Yes, he is a bit childlike…he talks to the animals etc." A female student says "He

might also be talking himself back up…building his masculinity back up." Ralf says "Yes, he may be building his masculinity back up.

**12.10**
Ralf says "Right we will go for a break in a second. There is nothing pretentious about him…we are behind him straight away. There are differences…do they define Rocky as a man and Rocky as a hero?" A student responds "They define him as a man." Ralf repeats "They define him as a man." However, a female joins in saying something about men winning fights. The male student responds with a counter argument. This is all very fast paced and I cannot get every detail down. Ralf asks the male student "Why?" The male student responds saying "Generally speaking…" and then something about the guy being spot on which I don't catch. Ralf says "I would say that a different type of hero to Rocky is James Bond. But both get their head down and get on with it." A male student says "It's almost like starting from scratch…coming from nothing." A female says "Yes…deserving." Ralf says "Yes…we will leave it there yep a five minute break." Some students exit, one goes to the front to talk to Ralf. The row of female students in front of me begin talking about their hair. Ralf is trying out the next film clips on the computer. Some of the students are eating. A male student goes across the aisle to a female student and gives her a book. After a few minutes Ralf comes to the back of the classroom and closes the door next to me. He then goes to the front and closes the door at the front. Most of the students have returned. He says "Right, lets get this one finished…so after watching Rocky…is it as simple as a man is a man?" He is referring to his Power Point slides. Two female students come in late with coffee, they say sorry and Ralf says that it is ok. He is walking up and down using hand gestures and talking about a REAL man is not guaranteed by gender alone…it means something different. There is another late comer who opens the door at the back to enter and then it keeps opening. Ralf goes on to argue that for women, gender is enough to be a woman. You can be a bad woman, but you are still a woman. He talks a bout gender identity and socialization. There is noise coming into the room from the corridor so I get up to close the door. Ralf thanks me…the noise was disturbing the whole of the class. The door doesn't shut properly and Ralf says "Yes, it doesn't shut" to me. He goes on talking to the students about control, dignity and power and how these can easily be taken away from men. He is using lots of arm gestures. He asks the students "How do you maintain masculinity?" He talks about new guys in prison being referred to as Brittney's or girls by the other inmates. Prison he says is a high fear and anxiety environment so how can the new inmates keep their masculine identity when they are being referred to as girls? The door annoyingly keeps opening and noise from the corridor keeps coming in. Ralf asks me "Has it got a lock on it?" I cannot see one, so I put the chair there. Ralf starts the film; a female student asks "Would that make him the ultimate hero?" Referring back to the last film. A male student says something and Ralf stops the film and asks "Why …etc…" in order to encourage more discussion. The male and female student have opposing opinions and take part in a fast paced discussion with Ralf interjecting at points to ask why they have said something and then sums up at the end of the discussion. Then he says "Right, this scene is from Gladiator…what is the difference between the hero and other characters in the film. How do we know he's the hero?" He puts the film on and stands watching it on the computer screen not the big screen on the wall with his arms folded. After a while he turns to watch on the big screen. All the students are watching intently. After a while Ralf stops the film and says "Right, tell me about that bit." There is silence. He goes on "tell me about the clues…what's going on…what's it like to be in that situation?" Still no response from the students. What type of country…is it a cold country? "A student says "A hot country." Ralf says "A hot country…where?" The student says "In an arena...it's hot." Ralf says "Yes, the hero is hearing all this noise that people are cheering because there is going to be death…what else is there? The clues are heroes and men." Again there is no response from the students. Eventually a student says "The winners are men the losers aren't." Ralf says "Yes they have to thrust their sword into someone's flesh to be a man…nice, right. A male student says "No!" A female student says "It's not that  ...it's that you do this or someone will do it to you." Ralf says "Yes, it doesn't matter what you have to do, you just do it. You have to become a monster to become a man. There will be more (he means episodes like this in the film)." He puts the film back on. After a few minutes he stops it again. He says "Right, we will leave the violence out for a minute…what do we take from that?" A male student says something that I don't catch. Ralf says "Yes it does… that is symbolic…that knowledge. Yes, someone said something else (he is referring to a student who had said something at the same time as the male student.) A female student says something and Ralf

says "Yes, a farmer is not about killing…he's about nurturing and growing and life…there is a dichotomy…yeah." The female says "Also like, with fighting he is the underdog." Ralf says "Yeah, there a different type of underdog…look at the Gladiator costume…they engender fear and he's not scared…what else?" A male student says "That bloke wets himself…he's a man and no man." Ralf steps back and says "Yes, that's not what it is to be a man. He's maybe trying to control himself…he's not wanting to be fearful. A male student says "And they were chained together." Ralf says "Yep, they were slaves…no one…we will fight you till you are dead." He puts the film back on. "This is the hardest stuff now, the violence. " He is watching the small computer screen again with his arms folded, but with his hand to his face. The students are all watching the big screen. He stops the film again after a few minutes and says "So, it is symbolic of hell…there was loads in that…what are we to take from that?" A female student says "Animalistic." Ralf says "Totally!" She says something else which Ralf questions and she explains further. Ralf says "Ah, I see…yes, a symbolic act of what I am. How do we analyze that...look at violence differently?" Another female says "At one point he started helping the other man." Ralf says "He started helping and protecting one another…we are better than them." A student interrupts" Yep but he chopped the blokes arm off when he died." Ralf- "Yep…arm off above the chain…no slave no longer. But how did he do it?" The student- "He just got on with it…what he had to do." Ralf- "Yes exactly. It's not about the violence…that is incidental…not happy having to do it, just there…this is what I have to do…it is transcending fear." He is referring back to the power point slides on the big screen again now. He says "Hero sets a standard of masculinity that overarches social, cultural or racial divisions. The problem with this…what might you see as a problem with this?" He changes his explanation to a question for the students. A female student answers and Ralf says "Right, you can't always be a hero…it is an internalization of the ideal masculine self. " A female student says "You are still a man when you don't." Ralf says "But do you? We have got away from feminist theory. (He makes further points in the same vein.) You can't always demonstrate courage so if that is taken as the ideal masculine self you can't do that all the time." The female doesn't reply, but when Ralf moves on to make a point to the rest of the class so that his attention is no longer on her, she turns to her female friend to the left of her and mutters something which is inaudible to the rest of the class. Ralf has gone on to ask the students "What happens when power is taken away from him?" A student says "Yeah, there's a bit in the film where he found his wife dead and he cries because there is no one around him." Ralf says "True, what does he do about it?" The student says "he's upset, but there is no one to see it and then he goes and sorts it out. Like you spilt my drink …buys another or I will sort you out." Ralf nods and says "Yes" in agreement. He then shows a poem on the Power Point slide. It is the Kipling poem 'If'. Ralf says that he loves this poem and reads it out.

After he has read the poem aloud with the students listening Ralf says "But what it describes is episodic situations…you can't…the four guys here are you doing that now (what it says in the poem?)" All the male students either shake their heads or say "No." Ralf then asks the female students "Women are you being women?" (He does not wait for their answer but says "Yes" for them.) "Men, you are not showing that you are men. There is cognitive dissonance…have you heard of this before?" Some of the students say that they haven't, so Ralf goes on to explain. "Cognitive dissonance means where you believe one thing but act in a different way. He explains this with reference to being a man. He says that violence is perceived as being a way of maintaining control. A female student asks "What would happen though if you never had to show this…would you still be a man then?" Ralf says "Would you?" A male student says "You'd be lucky!" (Not to have to.) Ralf says "You'd be lucky but would you still be a man?" The male student says "Not by this definition." The mature female student says something which I don't catch and then Ralf says "You have a choice never to put yourself in that situation…the fact is it is a choice all the time…you could chose to be in the army where you are in the situation all the time or a gas engineer or an office clerk…you can change this…but does this say something about you?" A female student asks "What if you didn't want to make the choice…then you are not a man?" The male student on my row laughs quietly at this. Ralf says "Not by this definition. It's the choice…the spill the drink thing…an unwritten rule to keep the status quo with other men…does that explain that, " he asks the female student. "I am not going to show Falling Down (next scheduled film clip) as we are running out of time. Has anyone seen it?" Some of the students say that they have and describe the first scene where the main character is refused breakfast in Mc Donald's and goes on the rampage. Ralf asks the students what kind of

people the character shoots. A student says "People who he perceives as more powerful than himself. Ralf says "Yeah the teenage gang etc. the McDonald's people etc. The guys the hero….watch it if you get chance…there's lots of cognitive dissonance in society now, it is very salient…do you know what salient means? It means prominent…at the forefront. So, the hero/villain dichotomy that you mentioned earlier (he points to the student who had mentioned this) the villain makes the hero. Right, the fourth film is Seraphim falls. Has anyone seen this film?" There is some nodding and one or two of the students say that they have. Ralf describes the film and says that the main character is again a man who is just getting on with it but that he is obviously a villain. He says that once you get into the film you realize that it wasn't him that did it, it was in fact no one's fault, but once they have started competing with one another (the so called villain and the man pursuing him) they can't stop. Ralf is walking around using hand gestures and looking at the students as he is talking. He says "It ends with this scene…if it loads." He attempts to get it to play, but it doesn't seem to be working. A student asks "What's it called?" Ralf replies "It's called Seraphim falls and I think it's actually crashed…it might come on as I am talking." He begins to explain what has happened in the film so far…that the characters are on the salt plains and are dehydrated with no energy left to shoot one another but they still can't give up. He also explains that in essence the villain and the hero are the same person really …they are reflections of one another. All the students are listening intently. He asks them "Has there ever been a gay hero?" Most of the students say "No." Some say nothing. Ralf talks about sexual conformity and all the students start to join in with what he is saying. Some of the things they said are "We don't know any (gay heroes) is it a coincidence?" Also, "Why is it not seen as a masculine thing to do?" Ralf asks "Does Graham Norton display traits of a hero?" the students reply that he does not. Ralf refers to Greek history and Alexander the great who he says was bisexual and that this was seen as being the normal thing to do when the men were away fighting all in their tents and there were no women around. He goes back to refer to something on the screen (on the Power Point slides as the film did not work.) It is now turned 1p.m. and someone from the next class who has been waiting outside tries to enter the room. The students turn round, but Ralf continues. He says "The thing that stops you being a hero is cowardliness. An example of this would be (and he names a character from Fellowship of the Ring.)" There are people talking loudly outside in the corridor making it difficult to hear Ralf and this is becoming quite distracting. Ralf asks "So, what is the opposite of the hero?" (There is no response from the students who are starting to get a bit fidgety.) He continues "A non- man obviously" and then continues talking even though the students are getting increasingly more restless and there is more loud talking outside. The door also keeps opening by itself and this makes a loud noise. One female student packs up all together. It is now 1.10 pm and Ralf displays another new slide and talks about it, then another and talks about this too. Some girls near the front are talking and eating and are paying no attention to what Ralf is saying. A female student asks Ralf something to which he replies "No it doesn't…it just…I will talk a bit about that in a bit…it's just we are running out of time." He continues explaining the slide and then says "That's the end." He then goes back to the student who had asked something and said "Sorry…what were you saying?" He has a conversation with her as the other students are packing up and leaving the room in conversation with one another. Some of them have a word with Ralf as they leave.  I wait for all the students to leave and then go to thank Ralf. I walk back with him to his room. He says that he enjoys doing that lecture. He suddenly realizes that he has forgotten to sort out with the students what films will be reviewed next week and who will be doing it. All the students have to take it in turns to review a film. He says that he will have to sort it out with them by email later.

**Lecture Observation 11.15- 1.15**
**(Ralf)**

This is the last session for this module before the Christmas break. There are five students present when I arrive and three more come in late at 11.20. One of these, a female student says "Oh "when she sees that there are not many other students present. She then asks the others "Does anyone know what film it is?" Ralf comes down to me at the back and says that this is going to be quite a different session to the one planned. As he had forgotten to organize with the students about which of them was to review the film this session, he had contacted the module leader who had said basically that the students would probably not even turn up with it being so close to Christmas, so he could just put something on to entertain them. Consequently Ralf himself and not the students would be leading the session. He goes back to the front and

starts talking to a female student who he knows by name. She is talking about a forthcoming presentation she has to do for another module and tell Ralf that she is really scared. She calls him by his name as she tells him this. He talks encouragingly to her. He comes back down to the back of the classroom to the door and says "Let's see if I can shut the door." I get up and try to lock it as it kept opening last session. Ralf says it is a new lock. A female student enters and Ralf puts his thumb up to her as he says "Did it go ok?" he is referring to her presentation that she has just been giving for another module. He continues "Is it dissertation presentations today? Has it gone ok?" A student says "Yep, I had mine ten minutes ago…62%." Ralf says "Oh, they tell you straight away…it's a better way…it used to be an essay."

"Right, no one signed up for this session…it should have been …wasn't organized so I am going to be doing what you would have been doing anyway. A student asks "Is it subtitles?" Ralf says "Do you know what I found out the other day…all my favourite films have subtitles…I'm turning into a subtitles nerd." He starts talking to two female students at the front about one of his favourite films. One of the females says that she thought it was shocking.

There are two groups of three students in the middle to the right hand side of the aisle. One of the males is leaning back in his chair talking to a female in the row of desks behind him. He is talking about going out, being drunk and texting. The female thinks that he was texting her on a drunken night out, but the male insists it was not him. He says "I'm not kidding, it's not me…whats the number?" The female locates the text on her phone and reads out the number. The male says that is not his number and says his own number quickly from memory as if to convince the female. She starts laughing with the female sat next to her and starts wondering who the mystery texter is. All the students seem to know one another quite well.

Ralf puts the film on; it is Seraphim Falls…the one that would not play last week. He says,"It's Christmas…we will watch a film. " Then asks "Does anyone know where the volume control is? There are two remotes." A male student says "No, use the computer." He adjusts the volume controls on the computer. It appears that the students know the room and its equipment very well. Ralf says "Right a quick recap…what were we talking about last week?" A male student says "Representations of masculinity." Ralf says "Yep, what about it?" There is no response. He says "It must have been a good session." All the students laugh. He says "We talked about the problems of feminist writers defining problems with theories of masculinity. We defined masculinity in a different way…what was it?" A student says "What?" and laughs. Ralf says "Not violence…what?" The student responds "Violence is just a part of it etc." Ralf says "Transcendental courage…what do we say about heroes…villains?" A student responds "You can't have one without the other." Ralf asks "Why not?" There is lots of interaction here that I cannot catch with Ralf posing questions and the students responding and then Ralf stretching the point to get them to think more. At one point he asks "Why not?" and a student starts to respond but can't formulate a sentence and after trying says "I can't "and trails off. Ralf says "You are right…" and this encourages the student to say some more. He says "One defines the other." Ralf says "Yep and then adds further explanation to what the student has just said. He then asks "How do we know he is not the hero?" The student says "He doesn't react the same." Ralf says "He doesn't react…absolute fear is not what it's about." He puts the film on and says "I will stop every now and again." He turns off the lights so that the screen can be seen better. A male student at the front keeps making comments to the male next to him. One lad sighs loudly and stretches as though he is tired. All the students are watching the film. It is 11.35. At 11.45 they are all still watching the film. A male on the front row makes a comment to the male and female students to his left about the film. A male student on the second row is explaining something from the film to the girl to his right. He is referring to putting gunpowder inside a wound. The room is darkened as the blinds at the front window are closed and the lights are off. At 11.50 Ralf stops the film. He says "Just quickly…what did the beginning of the film tell us about everybody in it?" A student explains something and Ralf questions him further and the student responds. Ralf says "Yep…we don't know, but we get the impression he is a good guy …why…if we analyze…Matthew?" Matthew has indicated that he wants to say something and says "Vulnerable in that environment." Ralf says "Yep, like Rocky…the underdog…we root for him straight away. Why else? What makes him as a character?" A student says "He has not spoken yet." Ralf says "Not spoken yet…that's a strong statement…how does that work?" The student says "He knows what he is doing." Ralf says "Yep, good…knows what he's doing…he's used to coping. What else?" The student responds with something that I do not catch. Ralf

responds by saying "Yeah, yeah, yeah," and the student goes on to say some more. Ralf says "Yeah…determined as well. How does he react to these things?" The student says "Like we said last week with Gladiator…just getting on with it." Ralf says "yes, he certainly does …like Sylvester Stallone etc. a one man army… a very different portrayal…scared and anxious, but just gunna do it. So, yeah, he's the hero then. The other guys…who are they?" A student says "Bounty hunters." Ralf says "Yeah, like they are men. How do we know they are villains?" A student responds "The way the guy at the beginning said let him leak…suffer." Ralf says "Yep, we let him bleed let him suffer. We know he is the villain and they want to not only kill him but to make him suffer. The previous scene…what did you see there?" A student responds and Ralf says "Yep, what do you take from that it is symbolic?" A student again responds with something that I cannot hear and Ralf says "Yep and the house was burned down. The Confederates…they were the good guys…we take from that that he was one of those and that reinforces that he's a good guy. Let's see how he plays around with it." He starts the film again and the students watch. It is by now 12.00 pm. In the film a sharp object hits a man in the forehead and the students all gasp and some say things like "Orgh!" They all then laugh and look at one another. Ralf laughs. They all continue watching the film. A while later a male student is texting. Ralf asks "Does anyone realize what he was doing there?" (He doesn't stop the film but talks over it instead.) A student says "Cutting his hand off." Ralf repeats "Cutting his hand off yeah." In the second row a couple of the students are talking about something from the film. All the students are watching the film intently and making occasional comments to the person at the side of them. One male student stretches and pats the head of a lad at the side of him. A male student behind him does the same and so does a girl at the side of him too. All the students are smiling at one another they seem to get on very well. A more exciting part of the film comes on and the attention of all the students is directed back towards this. Ralf is sat at the front left of the classroom and is facing sideways. When he talks to the students he stands up, stops the film and stays stood up to talk. He says "Again quickly…masculinity…who are the men?" A student says "Yep" and laughs. Ralf says "The Pierce Brosnan character …is he a man?" The student says "Pretty much." Ralf asks "Liam Neeson's character…is he a man?" A student says "Yep." Ralf asks "Why?" but there is no response from the students. He goes on "Well…it's like Pierce Brosnan. Right…there's only one woman so far. Is there anything interesting about the way the main character was around her?" A student sys "He was a gentleman to her." Another student says "He stopped her getting raped." Ralf says "I will come to that later…that other man…what about the other man. He was vulnerable…weak…teary…not how you'd expect a man to be around a woman. So, talking about the good guy and the villain…are they still the same?" A student says "It is changing." Ralf asks "How is it changing?" The student says "The man…I dunno….nice." Ralf says "Yep, he was nicer." Another student says something and then another asks "Did he … (I don't catch the rest of the sentence) "and Ralf says "Did he? Yeah, I think he did tell her to leave his horse. Why did he say that?" The student says "Well, without a horse, they can't do anything. " Ralf says "So, they are changing a little bit…did anyone notice what he said when … (I don't catch the rest.) A student says "Yeah" and says what he noticed. Ralf explains more and says "You are changing …kinda wondering who is the good guy or whether there is something else there. But, more importantly they are still men…does it matter that one is a good guy and one bad?" The student says "No, not at all." Ralf restarts the film it is 12.20. All the students are watching. One female student enters the room and sits at the end of the second row with three other students. They all say something to her in greeting. She takes off her coat and dibs in. The other students had already dibbed in before the film was put on. The student who has just entered starts to watch the film but then starts texting on her phone. I get the impression she has been doing her presentation so she may be texting someone to let them know how she has gone on. I notice that it looks cold, wet and miserable outside. The students will be breaking up for Christmas in two days time. A male student on the second row has put the hood of his sweatshirt up. The girl who has just come in gives out Christmas cards to the two girls on the row. She doesn't give any cards to the male students. The girls open their cards and compare what is written inside. The female student that gave them out asks to see them. She looks inside them both and laughs. She throws them back along the line of desks to their recipients.

Most of the students are quite distracted since the late female student came in. However, there is a part in the film where a man is stabbed and some of the female students flinch and look away and at one another and pull a face. I am quite surprised that the male students do not look away or flinch or show any of the same reactions that the female students show to the

onscreen violence. Instead they do not take their eyes away from the screen and continue watching the film intently. It is by now 12.45 and I notice that the room is becoming quite chilly. The late female student talks to the boy next to her and then leans across him to talk to the other two girls on the row. The boy is sat back in his chair trying to continue to watch the film. The girl is however, being quite disruptive to the rows viewing. The other students are however watching intently. A while later, I notice someone on the second row talking- a male student this time. A male student in front of him looks round to see what he is talking about. One of the girls signals jokingly to him to turn round, which he does and continues to watch the film. A different boy on the front row keeps turning round to the boy who is talking. A boy on the middle row puts his head on the desk and a girl to his left strokes his arm. One row of students are doing some kind of finger game with their hands. The girls on the row with the latecomer are all talking across the boy who is still trying to watch the film despite them. It is by now 1.00pm. The front row of students are all talking now. A girl to the left and a boy to the right put their heads on the shoulders of a lad who is sat between them and then quickly sit back up. A girl on the second row puts her head on the desk but then lifts her head up to look at the screen where there are noises of a horse distressed – the horse is dying and all attention is now back on the film. One female mature student looks away as the hero from the film slits the horse's throat so that he will not suffer any longer. All the students start making comments to one another. The hero hides himself in the horse carcass but we are not shown this and when he jumps out of the carcass all the students jump and start laughing. Ralf looks at his watch and stretches. It is 1.10 pm. He gets up to switch off the film. This should have been a student led seminar, but no one has volunteered. He says "Right that's it, so, what do we take from that? It doesn't matter if you are a hero or a villain but for different circumstances they are both the same man. Masculinity is defined in terms of other men…not in terms of women." The students all pack up and are talking to one another. The students from the next class have been waiting outside but start to come in before the present students have left. Ralf says "I am not going to tell you how it ends either." He is referring to the end of the film which they have not had time to watch. As he goes out a couple of the students are talking to him about being scared about their presentations and he is being encouraging and telling them not to worry and that it is better than the old system where they had to write an essay instead.

**Lecture Observation 2.15-4.15**
**Sid**

Room R1/11 has dark panelled doors, but the furniture contrasts with this. It is modern and the chairs have small side tables attached to them. There is a lectern and a screen. The chairs are set out in four rows of five chairs on the right and four rows of four chairs on the left. There are eleven students present who all arrive a little bit late, but before the lesson begins. Four of the students are female and the rest are male.

I have a conversation with Sid before the lecture and he tells me that he is in the second year of his PhD like me. He is very welcoming and happy to help a "fellow researcher." He says that he has been really busy with teaching at the same time as trying to collect his data which he has to go to London to collect. Inside the classroom, Sid passes round the registration dibber and the students are all coming in quite noisily and chatting to one another. They obviously know each other really well. I have positioned myself on the back row as far to the right as I can get so that I am not sat amongst the students and can see what is going on. A male student goes to talk to Sid about his dissertation. He says that he wanted to show his proposal to another member of staff who is leaving (a man who happens to be Sid's supervisor.) Sid asks the male student when it is due in and says that he will see the staff member about it and ask him to look at it before he leaves. Some students sit on the back row but leave a space between them and me. One girl (Kathy who I interviewed) comes in and looks at the ones sat at the back but then sits about 2 rows in front of me (I think she may have done this so that she didn't have to sit beside me.)There is a female student sat amongst the students on the back row and she asks the girl who has just arrived why she has sat so far away from them. The girl replies that she doesn't know why and moves back so that she is in the row directly in front of me. The students continue dibbing in and talking to one another. One topic of conversation is the marks that they got in a recent essay from another module. They are all comparing marks and come to the conclusion that one of the markers (someone who I know is a postgraduate student) is lenient and another marker is harsh.  One male student says that he has got 58% and that he didn't

expect to do any better really as it wasn't his best piece of work. Another male student asks him if (lenient markers name) had marked it and he said yes. To which the other student realizing that he had had the lenient marker said "Well that's worrying is that" as a joke. They all continue talking about their marks and a female overseas student (the one from Vietnam who I have come across before) comes in with her essay and she is really pleased with her marks. She is smiling and shows it to the girl sat in front of me (this girl is Kathy who I interviewed) and the girl explains to the overseas student that the other students have worked out that there is a lenient marker and a strict marker. The overseas student doesn't remark upon this, she sees me and smiles, she is obviously very happy with her marks. The girl in front of me tells the overseas student that she has done well. The overseas student shows the girl some of her feedback; she underlines a phrase with her finger and reads it out as though she is asking the other girl what it means. She has a quizzical look on her face. The girl says something which I do not catch, but the overseas student starts smiling again. The students are still all talking about marks when Sid the teacher says "Just to confirm, you have all seen this video?" He has put a video on the screen to which he is referring. Some of the students mumble that they have. Sid says that they are going to have a discussion about democracy and that they are going to watch the video again because he wants the discussion to be in the context of the video. He also says that he has his colleague here today and motions towards me. I say, "Some of you may have seen me before, I am here observing again." One of the male students jokes "Oh yes, I have seen you before, I have certainly seen you around." I just smile and Sid says "Is that ok?" I look back towards Sid and say "Yes, that's fine." A female student and a male student look at me and smile; I get the impression that they are embarrassed about the other male student's joke. I smile back at them to show them that I have not taken offence by the joke. Sid puts on the video and says "Please do not sleep…I will be really embarrassed if you sleep." All the students laugh and Sid switches off the lights. They are all watching the video intently. The video is about Kenyatta (the past president of Kenya) and talks about fathers of the nation not killing people. It also talks about a coup in Africa through a narrator who seems to be a young girl who lived through the whole experience. Sid is sat on the front row of chairs on the aisle seat and is watching the video half turned towards the screen and halfway towards the students. All the students are quite attentive throughout the video. The video lasts for about 10 minutes and when it ends Sid says "The idea is to talk about what you feel about ideas and issues within the video and what it tells us about politics in Kenya, Africa and the whole world. But before that we need to define the terms and democracy in the context of the video. He is still sat down facing the students now. He gets up and turns on the lights and says "I had better turn on the lights" and the students laugh. He asks them if they want to get into small groups to discuss this but the students do not respond. Sid says that he prefers to do it all in a big group and the students stay in the large group. A female student says something about the multiparty system in Kenya to which a male student (the one who made the joke about seeing me around earlier) says something about this being detrimental to Kenya and that there are over 100 political parties. He refers to one of the people in the video but has forgotten the person's name. He asks Sid "Was his name Y…?" (I did not catch the full name) Sid says "Yeah, Y…, yeah yeah" and the male student continues with his point. When he has finished Sid says "So, you can have elections….anybody, ideas from the clip in terms of how different democracies operate?" He looks and nods towards a male student and says "I'm sure you do…" The student say "Me?" and Sid says "Yeah, "and laughs. The student says "My definition of democracy is….like Afghanistan it is not the same as the West." Sid asks "What IS your definition of democracy?" The student launches into a full explanation of his views on democracy. He is very articulate and the other students are listening intently. He then says "I'm just going off on one." (He means about the war in Afghanistan.) Sid says "There is a huge debate around how to pull out, but in terms of this clip...did anyone hear the term Father of the Nation?" The students all nod, but don't say anything. Sid asks "Would anyone like to pull it apart?" A student says that they heard the term and tries to explain what was meant by it in the clip. Sid asks "Anyone else?" Another student says that democracy is necessary to follow on from colonialism. Sid looks at the students and says "Yes" and then gives further explanation and asks another question. A student responds to the question and Sid says "Yes, yes, yes," The students who are not responding to questions are all sat listening intently. Sid says that the student made an interesting analogy with Tony Blair and asks if anyone else wants to define democracy. He says that he is wanting to unpick the concept so that we can unpick the clip later on, but that we need to define these now. A student attempts to give his definition. Sid nods and asks if there are any other ideas and looks pointedly at a girl who has not spoken before. She responds and

gives quite a lengthy explanation which I am unable to catch. Sid says "Anyone else?" There is no response Sid says "What's interesting for me around Father of Nations is that there are problems." He says that it is as though the country is one huge family, but that it is paternalistic, not maternalistic and that you set people up to fail when you give them this title. He then says "In my view." One female student is writing down these points as Sid speaks. Sid asks "What about progression? What is the clip trying to tell us?" A student says that the clip showed that though there was school for all, there was an increase in crime and unemployment so the idea of democracy was forged by the events that happened. Sid says "Yeah." Then another female student makes a point. Sid says "Yeah, anybody else…someone who hasn't spoken." There is no response so he continues. "Right if we are defining democracy for the next 10 minutes because this is very important when we are teasing it apart…what issues do we need to look at?" Again there is no response, so he tries again. "If we have democracy is that enough?" A student picks up on this and gives her opinion. Sid says that if he did not know through experience he would probably think that himself but asks "What about the citizens themselves or is it all about leadership? What about the participation of the citizens?" A student says "Well, crime was on the increase, so they are not interested in leadership." Another student chips in saying that it said in the clip that the cars were breaking down so this was not the case anymore. The first student says something in response to this, giving the opposite view. Sid says "Yeah, why would that change though?" The first student gives his view of why this may be (I do not catch it all) and then the other student who was debating with him expands on the point that the first student made. Although they were in disagreement initially, they now appear to have reached common ground. There is silence for a while until Sid asks "Anything else?" Another student says "They seem less afraid at the end of the clip. Sid says "Yes, what about the media…freedom of expression in the clip…what was (leader's name, I don't catch it) he called?" A student says "His Excellency." Other students say this too. Another student says something about the leader being called this and all the rest of the students are listening. A female student is making notes about what the other student is saying, and so is a male student. The student who is talking says "I don't know how much freedom they have in the press" and looks at Sid as though he would know and he is asking him a question. A female student looks at Sid and says "They have radio stations too don't they?" It is as though she is asking Sid to verify that what she is saying is right. I get the impression that they know that Sid knows a lot about what goes on in Africa. Sid says that they do have radio stations and that if a political party has control over a radio station overnight then they have control. He asks "What have you learned from the clip?" A student says that they have learned that pushing democracy on a nation does not work. Sid asks "Did you see them doing that in the clip?" (Pushing democracy on the nation.) A male student describes how he thinks that they were showing that in the clip and a female student agrees with him saying "Yeah," to what he is saying. The male student says that instead of pushing democracy "You need to empower people." He expands on this point but I am unable to take down all the detail. A few of the other students are taking notes as the male student speaks. Sid asks "Does anyone else have views on that?" A student says "It's not just in a democracy that the state should offer services…education….health." A female student says "If you have education you have more ability to vote." Sid says "Education helps them to participate in the democracy process? If you think about the last discussion, maybe we should have considered these issues maybe then. Anyone else want to throw anything else in?" A male student says something and then a female one says something different. Her point is that if you are educated more you are more likely to be able to make good decisions about who to vote for which is more democratic. The male student disagrees with her, he says "Not if the people in power don't give the right to vote." The female student comes back at this point saying "Yeah, but…" and I don't catch the rest. The male student says "The best way is a coup…that's why they happen." He says this in a jokey voice as though he wants to stop the debate with the female student and it does because all the students laugh at his joke. The joke was something that would only have been funny to people who knew what the student was talking about. Sid asks "What about peaceful ways?" A student says "It all comes down to know how." Sid asks "What if they know what they want if they are educated and they may want a dictatorship," The student says "It's plausible…democracy may not benefit every country." Sid says "Even in developed countries…. they send people out and consult, but people might not have the right tools to know what's best…so, I'm just throwing that in …it's up to you to decide." He likens the US situation with big corporations to the media in Kenya, because both he says have influence over political parties. He says "These are all arguments that you need to look at. He talks about education, saying everything you learn in school about

dictatorships makes you think in that way. He asks "Does anyone else want to share how they feel about the video?" A student says something and then another student says "But…it's like Rupert Murdock…you will not get elected without his help..." The first student says "Yeah, well I'm not thinking about Rupert Murdock. I was thinking …" and he starts talking about social networking sites. All the other students are listening intently. A female student says " I think you need access to all sources…there is a lot of filtering going on….there should be less filtering and more availability of choice….I think." She seems a little embarrassed that she has been so vocal and this is why she said "I think." She then laughs which confirms to me her embarrassment. Sid laughs too as though in empathy with her. Sid looks at the male student who mentioned Rupert Murdock earlier and asks "What were you going to say about Rupert Murdock?" The student says "He is way too powerful…you will not get elected without him. Sid says "Yes, he is currently thinking about charging to have to read his papers on the net." The student says "Good, not so many people will read them." Another student says that the internet could be seen as damaging to democracy and freedom. The male student behind him joins in agreement. The two students keep making points along similar lines, they have now turned to the whole class and are both talking in turn to the class and making big hand gestures, the rest of the students laugh at what one of the students who are talking says. He says "It happens…look at the McCanns." Referring to the way that groups were set up on facebook claiming that the McCann's were murderers. Sid says, but you have got the good side too. A student says "Yep, but it didn't help to find the child did it and people still thought they were abductors. The biggest problem facing democracy is absolute freedom of speech. People use it for the wrong reasons…like John says …smear campaigns. Sid says "I'm just trying to think about that…is it that or a reaction to something else?" A student poses the scenario whereby someone goes out and gets drunk one night and just for a laugh decides to say something bad about their friend on facebook or set up a group saying that they are a murderer or something. They might then go to bed and forget about it, but next day by the time they have got up thousands upon thousands of people could have joined the group and be thinking bad things about the friend. He makes the point that newspapers would get sued if they put similar stories out about people. Another student continues the conversation saying that sometimes the papers report what is on Facebook and that that is sloppy journalism. To which Sid responded that it will never be perfect, but everybody should have the right to free speech and that it is dangerous when people don't. The student says that it is common sense that on the internet people will vent their frustrations as it is an interactive world. Another male student says that if you did something similar in the outside world to what you can get away with on the internet you would not get away with it. A girl says that you can't sensor people, and that both situations are detrimental. Sid poses the question of where do you stop with censorship. A student says that you have to be able to trust newspapers. Sid says that Rupert Murdock is too big to control and where do you stop if you start to censor. He says that if the discussion that the class was having was posed in Kenya, they would be having the same debate, but with different words. He asks "Where do newspapers get their money from and says "From the State that opposes." He talks about someone in the clip that said that he cried until his eyes turned red. He asks what the person did after this. There is silence from the students and Sid has to say the answer "Became a dictator." He asks "Should we one, Rupert Murdock, clip his wings, or two if it is not his fault, the bloggers is it their fault. Should we stop them like China does? The reason I let this debate go ahead is because it is relevant to Africa, it's about freedom of expression. Have we agreed about everything re Murdock and the bloggers?" I think that was what I wanted to cover in the first half." He says "How many minutes again?" He is referring to the fact that it is break time and he has a usual amount of time that he allows for this. The students are well aware of what he means and they say together "Seven and a half." Sid says "Yes, seven and a half," and smiles as he does so.

It is break time and some of the students get up to leave the room. Sid says "I used to teach at a college but the students were too disciplined, too quiet." He laughs and looks at me as though to say that it is good that the students here are not like that as they are talking and joining in the discussion. Some more students leave and a female student enters late. She sits with a row of other students and is talking to the others. Sid asks generally to all the remaining students "How are you doing with your dissertations?" A male student says "Could be better." One student goes out to discuss something with Sid individually. The girl who came late has got her essay back and the others ask her how she did and who marked it. It was apparently marked by the more lenient marker and she got 65. A female student explains to the latecomer who is

an overseas student that everyone who had their essay marked by the marker that had marked her paper had got good marks. The male student who had been marked by the lenient marker yet still got a poor grade in his opinion is made the subject of some leg pulling by one of his classmates. He says "I expected it anyway, it was not my best piece of work. " He says that he is going for some water and asks a female student if he can bring her some. She says yes and hands him her plastic cup to which he says he will bring her a new one. She says that no he must use the old one and recycle. She is referring here to a standing joke that this year group seem to have. I heard conversations about recycling first in Dave's lectures where a big thing was made about recycling because Dave thinks that the notion of recycling and global warming is being built up by politicians to be worse than it is. The students jokingly insist on recycling in front of him. The same female student is now explaining the marks to the latecomer. The male student comes back with the water and hands a cup to the female one who makes a joke.

There is a female student talking to a male student at the side of her about dissertations and who they have got as supervisors. The male student says that he has to have 500 words for his supervisor by a particular date. A male student comes back from break. He has been to pick up his essay. He says that the marker has not read his conclusion because his work is over the word count. Everyone is back now from break and the students are chatting amongst themselves. Sid stands up and says I thought I would show everyone this graph. It represents freedom in Africa. He is displaying a graph on the screen. The students put some things away and start listening to Sid. Sid asks "Do you want to change the way you are sitting, does anyone disagree with that?" None of the students indicate that they disagree and start to shuffle around so that they are in a group. I stay on the outskirts of the group as I do not want to intrude upon their discussion or inhibit them in anyway.

Sid starts pointing out things on the graphs and explaining them to the students. He asks the students if they can see any connections between the graphs and the video clip. The students don't say anything. So, he asks the question another way. "Does anything in the video explain what we are seeing here?" Again there is no response so he says "Does somebody want to say...do I make sense? Can some of that be explained in the video clip?" He persists in trying to get the students to respond and eventually one student says "What year was the coup?" Sid says that this was in 1986. The student says "1986…" he is looking at the graph and there is nothing of significance to note in 1986. However, in 1996 the graph shows a peak and the student asks "What happened in 1996?" Sid says that there was a multiparty debate. The student responds saying "They wanted to" (have a coup.) A female student says "2002 was significant, the second…when Moi…what was his name…liberation." Sid says the correct name that the student was trying to pronounce. The student responds to this, but I am unable to catch what she says. Sid asks "What happened in 2009…you remember when…" and he refers to something in the video they have previously watched. He talks about political rights going up and civil liberties increasing also. He says that there are more problems taking the law into your own hands. He says, "That's my take on it…does anyone have an alternative way?" There is no response so Sid asks "Would it help if we put on the video and do it bit by bit?" Again the students do not respond so he says "I think there is a lot in that video, I will put it on." He puts on the video and the students start watching it. He stops the tape after a while and says "Why democracy…what does that mean…why democracy…are they giving democracy?" A male student says "It's not why democracy, but is democracy right for Kenya?" Sid says "Use evidence from the clip …does the clip show us evidence…that's what I mean by that." He starts the clip again and the students start watching again. A student starts to mention something he says "What she (referring to a woman in the clip) is saying about…" I do not write down the rest quick enough. Sid responds to the student by stopping the clip and saying "Yeah, so the voices were not silenced …the discourses in the country…but something else she says ….about the roads …the roads were cleaned in those days…this shows there were good intentions." A student says "The same as in Nazi Germany." Sid says, "Of course and that's another thing." He is at the edge of the group talking to the group and interacting with them. He says "Does anyone want to add anything…no one?" No one responds so he starts the clip again. After a while a student says "Civil liberties were diminished." Sid stops the clip and says "But does it show that? People say that that's…" The student says "But they were right weren't they?" Sid laughs and says "Yes, but because I know the context…this guy became a …the state and Kenyatta became the same thing…this is what the people were thinking…can you see what the narrator was trying to say? She spelled out colonialists…that was important. Kenyatta was a

super size hero, so his death was pretty much the same. People were scared of losing a father figure, but you are right… they turned out to be right. Could anything have been done differently by Hoy? Did he contribute to the problems?" There is no response from the students. Sid asks "Why was he a father figure, what forces were behind him? These things you need to think about, why nationhood?" A student says "Was the…what's the word…split up?" Sid says "That's the idea." The student says "They had no direction…he gave them this." Sid says "They had no identity, he gave education etc…the people contributed but the popular discourse was that it was the leader." Sid is at the edge of the circle and looking at each student in turn giving them eye contact. A male student says "They were not free." Sid replies "Yeah." A female student says "But I would say that's better than colonialism." Sid says "Yeah, that's another debate but very relevant. How the different identities…not turn against each other." A student says "Why do you need that one identity?" Sid says, "Yeah, what do others think about that…it's quite a good argument." Another student says "It would not be the first to do that. Look at Thatcher…are you with me or against me, as a way of justifying." Sid says "Yeah a way of justifying, but not one identity…they are defined in different ways …they become enemies. One identity is defined better than others, but if they didn't do that they may not have had liberation. So, it's these things…I can understand what it means in Kenya and elsewhere in the world. Does someone want to add something?" There is no response so he starts the clip again. He is stood at the edge of the circle and keeps looking at the clip and then at the students to see if they want to say something in response to what they are seeing on the screen. The students are once again watching the clip. Sid is again hovering over the pause button and looking to see if the students are going to say something. The clip reaches the end and Sid asks "Does anyone have any ideas?" A student asks "Did she (the narrator) mention underground and chambers?" Sid says "Yeah, how do we explain that move from this period to this when they have underground chambers?" A student says "They seemed to be doing fine until the coup, but then it changed in 1986." Sid says "yes, there was a change in 1986." A student asks "Why did the coup happen?" Sid says "Well, you have to ask yourself those questions…he blamed the West, but the world was changing. That is one of the things to think about. Why the coup…if it was justified, should he have recognized the justification and not turned against the people?" A student asks "The West was to blame for the coup?" Sid says "Well, that is what he thought." He gives some further explanation whilst looking at the students directly and giving individual eye contact to them all n turn. He is sat back within the circle. A student says "It's kind of like Moi's government trying to put in their own political system and balance that with the Western version of democracy." Sid says "Moving on from the coup to the 1990's …is there anything significant?" A female student says "Multiparty system." She gives no further explanation of what she means and says "Yeah, just that." She gives an embarrassed laugh. Sid says "What about the multiparty system?" A male student asks "Is it…." (I don't catch all that he says.) Sid says "Yeah the conditions laid down by…" (Again I don't catch everything. Another student asks "Could the bank have said we could withdraw funds if you don't introduce the multiparty system?" Sid says "So can you see the conditions where they try to make dictators change? What other ways are there to explain the changes?" The students do not respond. "Are we going forwards or back?" A student says "From the chart back." Sid asks "Why going back?" the student suggests why he thinks this and says that the video doesn't suggest that as much as the chart. Sid says "Yeah, can anyone else suggest reasons to explain why things are bad here …someone who hasn't shared …there will be allsorts of reasons." There is no response from the students. He says "If no one is going to share …" and goes on to explain the point himself. He then says "So, these are some of the reasons you will be able to pick up on, but other than that…"! He gives a lengthy explanation of other points that they need to think about for their assessment and is looking all around the circle giving eye contact and gesturing. He asks "Can you follow this argument here…it's not an absolute argument, but one that could develop." He asks "What other things?" A female student says something to which Sid replies "Yeah." A male student adds something and Sid says "Mmm…can you see the narrator…dancing…dancing." He is referring here to a part in the clip where the narrator said that there was a time when there was lots of dancing. He goes on to explain that this was a time when there was more than one radio station, so there was not just one political party. The station had music, but it was also political." He asks the students what they think about the multiparty system where there are one hundred plus parties in Africa. A female student says that she thinks this is bad for democracy. Sid laughs. A male student says that there are lots of political parties in this country. Another male student says "Yes, but it depends how much power they have. " He says that some don't have much power compared to others. Sid asks the female student "What do

you mean by bad for democracy?" She says that she thinks some political parties are more real than others. A male student says "It's not just that though," and several students start to have a debate at this point which I am unable to write down fast enough. One student asks Sid something mid debate and he explains something to the student. The student says "So, it doesn't mean that does it?" Sid says that it doesn't (the student is right in what he is thinking,) and then Sid adds to the explanation. The student responds and whilst I am unable to take everything he says down, it is obvious that he is satisfied with Sid's explanation and that they have helped him to understand. His own questioning helped him here too. Where he didn't quite understand, or wanted to make sure that what he was saying in the debate was correct, he asked for clarification from Sid. Sid notices one student shaking their head as if in disagreement with what Sid and the other student were talking about. He says to this student "You're shaking your head…what were you thinking?" the student says "I wasn't" One student has been packing up, he looks at Sid and gestures that he has got to leave. Sid nods at him as though to give him permission and then looks at another student and says "I bet you was." (He means that he bets this student was thinking of something.)  I get the impression that this particular student is usually quite vocal  and that Sid can rely on to get him out of the tight spot he is in with the student who has just said that he wasn't thinking about anything. Before this student has the chance to say anything a different female student says something about what she was thinking. The other students are still discussing and most of them are joining in, first one and then another expressing their opinions. They are talking to one another and occasionally look at Sid as if for reassurance that what they are saying has credence. Sid keeps giving the reassurance they are looking for by nodding at them and occasionally saying "Yes, yes…" to encourage them to keep speaking. It is by this time 4.15 and the whole of the lesion has been taken up by the clip and discussion. The discussion and debate is still continuing, so Sid has to draw it to a close. He says "Alright, I think we have outstayed our welcome." There is another class outside waiting to come in. He goes on to say what they will be doing next week s the students begin to pack away their writing materials. He says to them "Thanks overstay." Some of the students start to for the leave the room. One male student goes up to Sid to ask him whether because he is doing something about Africa for one essay, whether he would be allowed to do something about Africa for another one. Sid says that he is ok with this, but that he should ask the female member of staff who I think is the module leader for the other essay because Sid says that she is the "important one." The students are all exiting the room and talking to one another as they go. They all seem to get along together really well and have lots to talk about. Sid says goodbye to them as they go, acknowledging each one and they say goodbye to him also. I wait to thank Sid and he says that it has been great having another researcher in the room with him. I am surprised at this and wonder if he is just trying to be kind to me.

## Appendix E: Interview Transcripts

Lee's Interview Transcript

*B: Ok, so right what I'm wanting you to do is draw a timeline showing all you learning experiences from your earliest memory to now.*
*L: OK, so basic dates and what I did?*
*B: Yeah, so just a line and then there might be informal or informal learning situations.*
*L: Right, well I will put all the formal ones in first, that's primary school*
*B: (Laughs) I'm not going to tell you what date I started primary school.*
*L: I feel old anyway*
*B: (laughs)*
*L: Surrounded by 19 and 20 year olds (laughs)*
*B: I know…my son went to university at the same time as me*
*L: (writes something on paper) I can tell you all you want about that, it is probably my worst single educational experience*
*B: Mmm, yes*
*L: Because I was the first academic year where it was altered and it wasn't just the eleven plus and you went to a secondary or a grammar school and you took exams whatever and you could chose the particular school and with hindsight it was the wrong decision*
*B: Mmm*
*L: My first attempt at higher education*
*B: Mmm*
*L: I went to Manchester when I was 18 years old. I had a great time.*
*B: You just didn't learn anything? (laughs)*
*L: (laughs) I went to about 6 lectures but I had a fantastic year. In fact, looking at this my formal educational life is RIDDLED with mistakes that I have made really*
*B: Awww*
*L: The choices that I've made really*
*B: Yeah, but sometimes maybe it's because you haven't been enabled to make the right choices?*
*L: Yeah, yeah, there is that erm so, (mumbling dates to himself as he writes)*
*September 1996, I came to do a part time degree here*
*B: Right*
*L: But unfortunately I was working full time which …too much 35 hours a week at work, 12 hours a week here, 3 till 9, 2 days a week, just no chance. Part time.*
*(Mumbling to himself as he continues writing.) That's it.*
*B: Is that sort of your formal education experiences?*
*L: Yeah, primary school, senior school, 17 attempts as higher education (laughs)*
*B: (Laughs)*
*L: Erm, so first informal…*
*B: What about when you were really little…what's the earliest learning experiences you can remember?*
*L: Tying my shoelaces on my own and that was like first like God, first 3 months at primary school probably, so by the end of 1984 I could tie my shoelaces. Not that I bother anymore (laughs)*
*B: (Laughs) do you have Velcro?*
*L: If I can get away with it yeah (laughs) probably learning to ride my first bike that would probably be 1987, I remember I falled into a hedge my dad let go of my bike…I was fine until I realized*
*B: Yeah*
*L: But as soon as I realized I was like oh God, I'm going. ….Probably in between those 2, 1986/1987 I started to learn French. Informally, when I was a Kid at primary school, you didn't learn languages*
*B: NO*
*L: It's not like nowadays is it? (Mumbling) That's was just going on holiday*
*B: That's great*

*L: In terms of the informal things I learned to do in my primary school years, that's the only things that stands out. They are the 3 kind of big things that I at the time learning to tie my shoelace was like a huge thing*

*B: Oh yes, it's like a major milestone isn't it*

*L: Massive achievement, as was learning to ride my bike*

*B: Oh yeah*

*L: Cos that, caused massive, massive anxiety to my parents that, charging off down the road and learning French was kind of like it was just…it was all through osmosis*

*B: Yes*

*L: Cos we went to France every year for 2 or 3 weeks and my parents made me ask for things in French. I mean I think they recognized the value of learning a language I mean obviously a long time before I did but by the time I was 6 or 7 I was asking for the bill in restaurants and ordering things like vegetables on my own*

*B: That's brilliant*

*L: And that was the start of my obsession with France and French the culture and language.*

*B: Do you still go?*

*L: Yeah*

*B: Are you fluent in French now then?*

*L: Yeeaah I have got a bit of paper that says I am. I have an A level, a strong A level but then I have actually lived and worked over there on and off*

*B: That's it so you have actually had to use the language to get by in France.*

*L: I can remember being told once by a shopkeeper he said do you think in French and I said if I am here long enough then I do. If you start dreaming in French, then you know you are fluent, and when I worked there for three months and by the time I came home I was dreaming in French.*

*B: Crikey*

*L: It's all disturbing then eh? (laughs)*

*B: (Laughs)*

*L: Within my grammar school education, GCSEs and A levels I don't know what you would call it (muttering) Erm I can't remember my grades*

*B: Oh that's ok*

*L: Good (inaudible muttering) In terms of my informal education at grammar school it was more social education than anything else. Erm I went from a primary school where I was the most intelligent kid by a long stretch I was moved up a year and my teacher wanted to send me to grammar school a year early when I was ten and this big (Motions with his hands to depict a very small child). But there was no way that I was going to grammar school a year early and that small because my life would have been a living hell*

*B: Yeah, yeah*

*L: I mean I have never been big anyway, but I was tiny*

*B: Yeah, yeah*

*L: So there was no way I was going a year early and that small, my life would have been a living hell. So I stayed and I actually took my 11 plus when I was ten and I did pass but I stayed anyway and the choice came like I say my year was the first where you had a choice so I took the entrance exam for….4 grammar schools*

*B: Right yeah*

*L: Passed them all …and chose (School name) on the grounds that they offered Latin.*

*B: Right, yeah, was that a choice that you yourself made?*

*L: Yeah erm*

*B: Or, your parents sort of thing?*

*L: Oh no, God no, my parents said that there was no way that I would be allowed to go to (School name)…unless I managed to get a scholarship, because the fees were…ridiculously high*

*B: Right, yeah*

*L: Er and as it was I got the third or 4$^{th}$ highest in the exam, so I got like a third off for 7 years so they said like now you have done that it is entirely up to you. The other 3 schools (Names 3 schools) erm but (refers to school he chose) was the only one that offered Latin and whatever reason, you know precocious, so whatever you want to call me at that age, I thought Latin would be a good idea. And I actually saw it all the way through to A level I saw it all the way through so in that respect it was probably the right decision. But it was a real culture shock,*

*because it was a boy's school, single sex and I was socially precocious as well I had lots of friends*

*B: Outgoing?*

*L: Yeah, but I got there and I was suddenly in a class of 30 and I was like mediocre in terms of my intelligence. And I was the only person from my primary school to go there*

*B:Yes,*

*L: So I was lost, straight away and that that was when it became difficult. I mean in the first year I came third out of my entire year in exams, but …was it 18 out of 30 in terms of my classroom work.*

*B: Right*

*L: Which. I knew I could do exams. Cos I always had you know the ability to retain information and the classroom work I didn't particularly enjoy myself with that I don't think… that went on for the first couple of years at the end of the second year we were streamed in English, maths and French and we were streamed in our forms too. I was in the top set for English, the top set for French and the 2ⁿᵈ set for maths which I KNOW upset my parents despite the fact that they never said anything because my mum's a maths teacher and my dads a chartered accountant, so it was like maths was their focus obviously it wasn't my focus so I er yeah, I ended up in the 2ⁿᵈ set for maths which…which didn't particularly bother me I don't think.*

*B: Did you have a feeling that you were disappointing your parents?*

*L: Oh yeah, but that's probably for a different interview (laughs)*

*B: (Laughs)*

*L: Although, you are a psychology researcher so you know em oh yeah yeah, there were a lot of things that happened at my grammar school where I felt I let down my parents when I got my GCSEs and didn't get straight As. I don't know why I felt that I had let down my parents because back when they did their O levels they didn't get straight As in fact my mum failed a couple of O levels but I got it in my head that I needed to get… top grades in everything. Er yeah, so anyway we were streamed in the second year and that was when I got to choose between German and Latin and I chose Latin. Alongside that I also did classical studies as well.*

*B: Right*

*L: Because I have always been a bit of a history buff as well. Er that went on for the next 2 years the streaming and at the end of the third year obviously you chose your GCSEs so I obviously chose humanities, but we had to do sometimes sometimes we had to chose something we weren't keen on… like my dads from a scientific background his A levels were maths, further maths, physics and chemistry which were just an anathema to me. Growing up I was biology, animals, chemistry and chemistry sets I liked mixing things up and seeing what happened.*

*B: Yeah, yeah*

*L: But as I got older when I went to school and was exposed to history, Latin, Classics, languages I realized that that really was what I was interested in it was far more interesting than that so yeah the focus of my GCSEs and A levels was humanities subjects . My A levels were French, Latin, Classics and general Studies which I still have issues with that cos it was like 2 hours a week for 2 years and the exam was essentially a pub quiz.*

*B: Really?*

*L: Yes because you had multiple choice questions*

*B: That's not really testing your knowledge?*

*L: Not at all*

*B: Yeah*

*L: Latin and French were translations and essays and Classics was just a series of essay questions and like you had to really know what you were talking about. Whereas the General Studies I thought I may as well put A for every answer and at least I will get something right*

*B: Definitely*

*L: And I did, I actually got a D, bearing in mind I just made it up. Yes, my GCSEs were fine absolutely fine I didn't put in very much work for them I realized that I could get through them without doing anything basically*

*B: Like my son (laughs)*

*L: I mean Geography coursework was 25% of the mark and I didn't have it but I still got an A on the exam alone. Biology I failed all my coursework, I think I got about 2% and I still managed to scrape a C.*

*B: Yeah*

*L: I realized that I could pass the exam because I had enough information retained. Unfortunately that then carried on into my A levels, I thought I could get away with it.*
*B: Yeah…it's a different ball game isn't it*
*L: That were again, grammar school was just a series of educational and social shocks, but the A levels was the worst one. When I started A levels the headmaster had a Classics 1 from Cambridge, so the headmaster was very interested in all the students who chose Latin and Classics at A level, decided I would be a good candidate for Cambridge to this day I don't know on what grounds because by the time I was doing A levels I was going to the pub at lunch time and skipping classes and he decided that made me perfect Cambridge material.*
*B: (Laughs)*
*L: I don't know whether that says more about me or him whether he saw my intellectual ability shine through my attempts not to be intellectual, because I did try really hard not to come across as too intellectual and I think that was social pressure.*
*B: Mmmm right*
*L: From the people around me…who…weren't as academic so I think I was trying to fit in with them…you know taking your tie off at lunch time and going to the pub and trying to get served.*
*B: So, that became more important than …your education?*
*L: Yes, it did, but…I applied to Cambridge, got an interview…failed…to get an offer went into the went into the pool of candidates that they thought it was worth re interviewing or who they could pass on to other colleges because when I had gone for it I had applied to Queen's College Cambridge, you know (starts laughing) because I thought if I am going to do classics at Cambridge I am going to do it at the best college*
*B: Yeah*
*L: Erm had another interview at Sidney Sussex? College, they did offer me a place, erm 3 As erm 3As obviously it was still to do one of the best degree courses in the country. Erm, so through my A levels I still didn't do very much work. My course work was terrible, I was still in this whole GCSE mode and as well I was distracted I just, got my grades, got an A and 2 Ds and my mum made me ring Cambridge to see if they would accept that, which was humiliating. Because I knew … if Cambridge offered 3 As there is none of this I got 2 As and a B is there any chance. So, I ended up going through the whole clearing process, which again I made a massive mistake picking the first course that looked good. Erm mainly because I was going to a music festival that weekend. I'm not joking…I…got my A level results on the Thursday morning and Friday morning I was going to the V festival at Leeds with about 15 people and suddenly… for the sake of those 2 days it was irrelevant which university I ended up at. You know, which again is the whole obsession with being popular again, being involved so yeah. Back in the day '97 there was no internet so it was all on teletext. I can like remember they used to out clearing places on ceefax saying what was available and it just used to scroll round and round and round*
*B: Right, I didn't know that.*
*L: And I had applied to do Classics at Cambridge and Philosophy at Edinburgh…I think there were only 2 choices. And again I had only gone up because my mate was going up for an open day and I thought oh that would be good. Didn't go to see anybody in the philosophy department, but philosophy had a certain intellectual cachet as well you know and all these romantic visions of sitting around drinking black coffee and smoking cigarettes*
*B: And thinking*
*L: Yeah yeah which and reading which actually that's something I didn't mention before, I could read before I went to school erm I was tested at the age of 7 and I had a reading age of 14. I have always read and in my bag now apart from my university books I've got several books that I carry around just I case.*
*B: How, how did you learn to read?*
*L: Picking up either books that my parents were reading or newspapers and once they realized I had an aptitude for it my mum started bringing home teaching materials from the school that she was working at because although she was a secondary school teacher it it was a school where there are various different students with various different educational requirements where they do turn up illiterate at 11. So, they do have like word cards things like that so although it probably wasn't that formal because it was all home based and not that structured, but I could read to a fairly basic level when I got there.*
*B: So, do you think that because your mum and dad were reading all the time that…*
*L: Mmmm yeah, although I have completely outbased them*
*B: Have you (Laughs)*

*L: I mean they don't read much anymore. I've got piles of books several feet high in my room that I haven't got round to reading. I keep organizing them into piles of the ones I want to read because I have had them for years and never read them yeah, erm but it's always like I mean especially recently I've started buying books that's completely out of my realm of experience. So like books on quantum physics, things like that. Just to see if I understand them.*
*B: Mmmm*
*L: something else I find interesting linguistics as well I think that relates to…*
*B: Your interest in Latin?*
*L: Yes, it's just a natural progression. Erm, so yeah I went through clearing in 97 and I decided that by the time I had finished looking that I wanted to do a degree in French, because that was the one thing that had really held my interest all the way through school. So I found this degree at the University of Manchester in French and Russian and I thought this sounds interesting different language, different alphabet, why not. And they did say that they didn't expect you to have any Russian when you start. So, I went to Manchester my dad was delighted because that's where he'd gone in the early seventies to do his degree so he thought that was brilliant… He was kind of of the opinion that Cambridge would have been no good anyway …I don't know I never got to the bottom of the reason behind that he probably thought that it would never have worked the educational environment for me I'm not sure…*
*B: Yeah, right*
*L: But I think that's what he was thinking. The thing with the University of Manchester is although it is quite traditional it is quite modern in its outlook. So, yeah I went to the University of Manchester, lived in the halls of residence did the whole first year student experience erm went to my first Russian lecture, decided that I hated it, dropped it, managed to transfer onto a full French degree, but that didn't fulfill any of my expectations.*
*B: In what way?*
*L: Well I assumed that a language degree would be about learning a language, in my naivety erm but like my first lecture was 12th century romantic poetry which was like trying to learn English, but being exposed to Chaucer on my first day. It bore no relation to the modern day. And then there was ironically there was a module on French politics which hopefully I am looking forward to doing next year here*
*B: Right*
*L: Because on my course it's a module on my course here now*
*B: Yeah, right*
*L: And erm French culture and I think it was about 2 hours a week learning about modern French which was less than I had done at A level, so that kind of just encouraged me not to attend pretty much after the first 2 weeks. So I spent pretty much a year, living in Manchester, going out and that was was September 97 to June 98 that's all I did erm kept my union card obviously (laughs) and the perks that provided had access to the library which cos I didn't stop reading, I just wasn't doing any work I was just here for pleasure which is what I had always done.*
*B: So it wasn't reading about your subject?*
*L: No I was just going into the library and picking random books here and there, whatever interested me.*
*B: So in a way you were still learning?*
*L: Oh yeah, yeah, but it was on my terms and it was what I wanted to read on any given day on any given week and there was no assessment or anything associated with it. It was just reading which is something I have done for 25 years read about I mean I'm a voracious… I am a voracious reader I read anything I will just pick up a book and read it like stuff that my granddad gives me and it's all like Colditz 3 and that but it's you know if I have nothing to do for an hour I will pick up a book. So yeah that was a complete buzz I didn't attempt my end of year exams and obviously I failed, failed because basically they didn't know who I was. It was pretty much to that extent.*
*B: Yeah…could I ask you, you know your teaching at Manchester, was that lectures.*
*L: Yes, yes it was a big course I remember; it was a well attended course. They always are in the first couple of weeks aren't they because everybody turns up don't they? But yeah, probably between 40 and 60 which…*
*B: Yeah…probably medium sized?*
*L: Yeah well I have a couple on this course that have a 100 which is er but they seemed big compared to my A levels where there was 3 doing Latin 8 of us doing Classics and 15 doing*

*French and suddenly it was like doh! And also it was a step up again which I didn't like because I had not done any work for the three or 4 years previously*

*B: And yet got through*

*L: And got through…not to the standard I probably would have done still, I could still tell everybody that I got A, A, D, they are three passes aren't they. I got a D in General Studies so it's still another A level*

*B: Yeah, so the interaction with your teachers then in Latin…*

*L: Well in Latin it was almost one on one and yeah again the same for classics there were so few. And there were so few of us in Latin they merged us with the other year, 3 in our year and 3 in the year above so it ended up a class of 6. For 2 hours at a time and it was really intense…intense, there was no where to hide if you weren't fully prepared.*

*B: How did you find that?*

*L: …Daunting but but it was the one the one subject that I made damn sure I was prepared for, because me and that teacher had an interesting relationship anyway, I didn't really get on with her, I didn't like her teaching style, I didn't like her teaching style but unfortunately you don't get a whole Latin department of 10 different teachers unfortunately, it's just the one. Yeah, we had a love hate relationship really, but er because I loved her subject, it was just on a personal level, I really didn't like her at all, but she was hard so if you were not prepared you had to make the effort you couldn't just coast through really.*

*B: Right, what was your relationship like with your other teachers?*

*L: French teacher, brilliant, in fact he became quite a close friend. He got me work in France prior to going to university I went to work in France for about a month 6 weeks, I was working in a youth hostel in Paris which was for underprivileged kids from the suburbs that came to this place and learned to cook and did carpentry, things like that. That was really interesting because there were kids from all over Europe at this place working there. I mean there was a couple of English lads, 3 or 4 Polish girls this guy from Mexico and we all ended up sitting there speaking to one another in French because that was the common language, which is pretty rare for me, I mean the common language for virtually anybody is English*

*B: English, yeah*

*L: But they didn't, so that was fun and that was fun too it was a really really good summer and then I did the same after I left the University of Manchester before I went back to Manchester Met, I went and worked on the South Coast of France, totally different working in a Camp site, working in a pizza kitchen making pizzas for the holiday makers and again the common language was French.*

*B: So you learned a lot then?*

*L: Oh yeah absolutely, it went from being quite good at French to, because working over there for two summers you can't escape from it, you're immersed in the culture and you've got no choice.*

*B: You've got to take it on board haven't you?*

*L: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so came back from that applied to Manchester Met over the summer to do French and Spanish because I was determined to do a French degree. I thought that Manchester Met its more modern it would be less politics history and culture, but no it was the same. So, after about probably 3 months I got bored of living on 30 pounds a week or whatever it was I was living on because a couple of my friends had gone out to work and were bringing home   150 quid a week and were able to go out buying themselves things and things like that so I had a word with my parents and said I don't think this is for me higher education. I don't think I am ready for it and I have made some choices that are not the right choices and I don't think I'm going to get anything out of it. And, they weren't happy because they felt that I should get a degree because I was intelligent enough to get a degree. And we had a fair old chat about it and I said great but it's not you that is going to have to suffer this degree for the next three years and I'm not prepared to do it. So ok, well I started working and |I have worked pretty much full time… with… 2 breaks in employment since 1998. I was unemployed for 3months in 2004 and then I was off work …ILL from June until November last year and then unemployed from November until June this year, so 12 months out of it. Erm September 2006 I was back here for the first time trying to do a part time degree*

*B: While you were still working*

*L: Yeah, that failed on a number of levels firstly I was working over 30 hours a week, plus 12 hours contact time, plus independent study and I was suddenly finding myself having to find 65 hours a week and you can't do it and I decided that if I was going to do a degree I was going to do something that was useful so I did business studies which I have no idea why I chose that*

*probably because it sounds like a useful degree but it was just so dull. I try really hard not to denigrate the department because the teaching was fine it was just the subject matter. Me and the subject matter just didn't agree, the teaching was really really good and they made an effort to make part time students feel accepted and first class academic citizens which I know a lot of places really struggle to balance part time and full time but subjects like macro economics and functionality of business stuff like that I can't get excited by it I was just bored and that has been my problem since I was 5 years old if something bores me I just don't want to commit to it.*
*B: It sounds like you want to quickly move on to the next thing.*
*L: Yes, that's it yeah, so I get a bit. I did the first term pretty much and I couldn't see it getting anymore interesting. Work was becoming a struggle I had various issues with my personal life my marriage was breaking down at that point*
*B: Oh dear*
*L: So, I thought I really don't need to be doing this as well. So around the time that finished me and my wife separated, 18 months ago I had…I will say a bit of a breakdown*
*B: Oh dear*
*L: I completely lost it (laughs) and ended up taking loads of drugs with interesting names because I went to the GP, went for therapy, that was 6 months last year I was off work for ages a lot longer than I intended. I mean I tried to go back to work 2 days after I had my breakdown (laughs) which because work was my only escape at that point it was the only thing I was focusing on but that ended up…I lost my job and that was a mutual decision really because they said to me are you going to come back and I said I don't really want to no, so they said well we need to replace you so I said well that's fine. I ended up out of work from November to June. It gave me a lot of time to think what I wanted to do. I actually sat down and talked a lot to my dad about higher education because he works here so it's kind of like an insiders view of what it's like because I know that in that 3 year period between attempting the part time degree here and coming back the amount of investment that has been put in place and the amount of change is unbelievable.*
*B: And probably changes in you too*
*L: Yeah…*
*B: I think when you go through things…*
*L: Yeah, well it was traumatic and God awful ….but …it ….gave me a lot of time to think about myself and what I really wanted to do and all the jobs that I have had since I left Manchester Met in 1993 have been beneath me intellectually like call centres…*
*B: But why do you think you chose jobs like that?*
*L: Because they were easy and I didn't have to think, that's purely and simply I could go to work 8 hours a day do what I had to do and then just leave.  Which is why going to work one and a half days a week now is a real struggle because I have been exposed to proper academia in a subject that I love and I think that I have finally, touch wood found a subject that I am interested in…can deal with and am…reasonably knowledgeable in well as a baseline anyway, coming into the subject I had a reasonable grasp of politics …political movements and things like that.*
*B: So you think that you have come in at a level that you are comfortable with and that you can cope with?*
*L: Yeah, yeah yeah and the more I get exposed to the teaching here the better I feel that I have chosen this course. I mean obviously my dad is very keenly interested in my academic experiences, but he works in finance so he doesn't very often see the academic side very often. It's almost like since I started he's been asking how I am getting on with the lecturers and the course work, things like that. And I know full well that he's feeding back to various people what I tell him cos he made a point of saying that to me when I started like I'm his own little spy (laughs)*
*B: Right (laughs)*
*L: And to be honest apart from…one or two….little minor niggles which I think everybody has them don't they no one ever has a perfect experience ever I don't think. But generally like I keep saying to him the lecturers are all fantastic, the subject matter is amazing the library it has been completely been redone since last time I was here so it's totally different so we will see but like I am only what 7 weeks in.*
*B: Yeah, but it does sound like you have really found your niche*
*L: Yeah yeah I think it's a passion for the subject more than anything else, which has taken me far too long to realize, but so be it. I'm still only 30, graduate when I am 33.*
*B: Yep, still got all your life ahead*
*L: Could take over the presidency of the SU …or something (laughs)*

*B: Yes, definitely*

*L: So, yeah I mean in amongst that the whole thing that's continued down the informal path is just my… reading I think more than anything else. I mean I …I can't say that I have had any informal learning experiences at work particularly. Exposure to new software packages, you know custom made, customer service data bases things like that but things like that I would consider to be ..*

*B: And how do you learn that then?*

*L: On the job training or it was for the first few years but I am now in the position where I can go to the job just like that because I have had so much exposure to it, I can just get on with it because they are all essentially the same thing and but generally the informal side of my education that's just been my love of reading all, anything you know…...*

*B: Who taught you to ride a bike?*

*L: My dad*

*B: Can you tell me about that?*

*L: Yeah, he bought me a Raleigh …a BMX Raleigh it was ace. Bright blue handlebars, Blue saddle it was brilliant. Bought it for my…it must have been my 7$^{th}$ or 8$^{th}$ birthday, I say 8$^{th}$ birthday like it was about 87 so it was my 8$^{th}$ birthday. I just remember it being downstairs with stabilizers on obviously which looked really cool on this BMX Raleigh and I remember sort of messing about because we live on quite a private road so there are only 3 houses and it's miles away from the main road so it was quite alright just to go out and get on it and tootle up and down the drive.*

*B: With your stabilizers on?*

*L: Yeah, yeah and then after a few months, probably not that long really about a month or so, do you want to learn to ride it like a big boy does. And why not (laughs)*

*B: Did you have any friends that could ride bikes?*

*L: Probably not… that I saw outside of school with any regularity, because we had moved from living like a 100 yards away from my primary school to this house that was about a mile a way, but when you are 6, 7 or 8 years old it might as well be a 100 miles, so I really only saw my friends at school. My next door neighbour, my next door neighbour had 2 children 3 year and a year older than me and they used to play out on their bikes and skateboards, so yeah we used to play out together all the time so yeah I probably would have been exposed to them messing about on their bikes without stabilizers on and my overriding memory is like I said earlier on of my dad pushing me along and like I said not telling me he had let go and me being fine for about ten yards and then I glanced over my shoulder and he was stood at the end of the drive like that and I just veered sideways fortunately I went into an hedge because if I had gone the other way I would have been bang onto the tarmac. And…erm that kind of ….scared me for a bit and I was nervous about getting back on but you soon forget at that age*

*B: Mmm*

*L: and it just didn't take me that long at all which is amazing because my sense of balance and spatial awareness is just terrible (laughs) dreadful, so clumsy. I mean I still ride a bike now, mainly for exercise, but yeah, it's true you don't ever forget, it's 22 years since I learned to ride a bike and I can just get on and go. Tying my shoelaces that was at school that was fine, reception class teacher. Like a board with giant shoelaces on it we learned to tie 'em I was left handed that must have blown her mind (laughs) learning all these right handed kids how to tie their shoelaces, then there was me. My handwritings dreadful actually cos they never corrected my…grip on my pen until it was too late. I was ten and it was like I had a broken wrist almost it's just like at a different angle. So, I have trained myself and if I do have to write it is all in block capitals because I struggle to decipher my cursive script.*

*B: Right*

*L: Let alone anybody else (laughs) it's that long since I have written any cursive I don't think I could anymore probably. But that, I'm of a generation where everyone has a computer anyway*

*B: There's not the need anymore*

*L: Which, that's it isn't it although actually I have done more writing here in the last 6 weeks than I have in 6 years, you know with lecture notes. Although actually you see them all here with especially the kids the younger students like 18, 19 they bring their little laptops, net books to lectures, unbelievable. But I, I love technology, but I couldn't be bothered with that I much prefer just to handwrite them. I mean I do type them up when I get home*

*B: Oh, you are good aren't you?*

*L: I think it's just a reinforcement technique*

*B: Yeah*

*L: We are writing stuff down anyway even though we get given slides  print handouts and stuff writing stuff out reinforces it then going home and typing it up and it also means I can run  my …verging on obsessive compulsive filing system, because without that I would be lost  without some kind of filing system. I'd never find anything, 6 modules wads of notes for each module all over the place. So, yeah we will see how it goes, but I am optimistic… about my education for the first time in years.*

*B: Oh that's good*

*L: I mean looking back over this it just looks like a series of mistakes to arrive here probably 10 years later than I could have done it if I had thought about what I had really wanted to do rather than doing…things that I thought I should do.*

*B: Should do for whom?*

*L: For me more than anything else yeah not necessarily for anyone else. I mean my parents I don't want to paint them as having any oppressive educational beliefs or anything like that*

*B: Oh no*

*L: They just said go and do what you want and there is nothing in my psyche that said you don't really need that you are saying what you want  to hear but what you really mean is that you should do this*

*B: Yeah*

*L: But that's in my head*

*B: I think we all try to do that*

*L: I think it's taken me a bit longer to get to this point than what it would normally take , but so be it.*

*B: You maybe had to go through things to get to the point you are at now.*

*L: Yeah, I think that's probably fair. I mean my mum didn't get her degree until she was maybe 37; she went to the Open University. She did her teacher training qualification when she was 18. My dad did his degree at Manchester when he was 18 and graduated at 21 in computer sciences. Can you believe that he went to university in 1971 and did a degree in computer science and now he's probably the most computer illiterate person I know now? Mainly because a computers doesn't fill an entire room now (laughs)*

*B: Yeah yeah (laughs)*

*L: So education has always been a…round in the family. My sister got a degree from Sheffield Hallam in… I don't know, probably hospitality or leisure management or tourism or something like that. And she does use it in a way…she is a windsurfing instructor (laughs)*

*B: Oh (laughs)*

*L: My mum and dad were the first generation of their families to go university which I don't suppose is that shocking really they were both born in the sort of like early to mid fifties so the generation before that so the didn't go from middle or working class backgrounds did they*

*B: No*

*L: My granddad, both my granddads were working at 15. Both my grandmas never worked a day in their lives. Never worked FOR anybody*

*B: Yeah*

*L: Never earned a salary in their lives both of them and that's just how it was wasn't it*

*B: Oh yes*

*L: But having said that my mums younger brother and sister never went to university either it was just my mum so, but yeah education has always been massively important to me and to people around me I have tried to be reasonably well educated because otherwise you just end up talking about what was on x-Factor the night before (laughs.) I mean the best thing about coming here is seeing people carrying copies of the Times and the Telegraph and the Guardian instead of the Sun and Mirror you know it's…yeah.*

*B: Have you made lots of friends while you have been here or are you mainly on your own?*

*L: There is there are kind of I mean at the moment if I go to read or go to study it is on my own as there isn't any real need to be in groups….yet, I don't know if there will be*

*B: No*

*L: So there's kind of 5 or 6 people who I met that first week they are all really good coincidentally 3 or 4 of them are between 28 and 32*

*B: Mature students?*

*L: Yeah and then there is one girl who is 19 she's in her first year and there's one lad 18 going on 40 (laughs) so, and I have started getting involved as well and my dad was really keen on that. He said you have got to get involved in stuff; you are not just there to study so I've got a show on the radio station*

*B: Oh right*

*L: It's good, it's an hour a week, and doing things like this even you know if I get any emails like this I will do it if I have got time. So yes, I think it's definitely about the fact I would say …it's a balance between formal and informal education at University. That is my experience anyway. However, I think that some other people need to come to realize it's not just about the formal side the better, because I am very aware now of deadlines. Trying to get the work done I think …because of my experiences at Manchester University where I just basically went out and partied for 18 months and now I see people doing the same thing and I am trying really hard not to say to them you are going to regret this.*

*Erm, but you know they will either learn or they won't …if they don't they may be like me and be back here in ten years time*

*B: This is it, there is this lifelong learning thing now isn't there.*

*L: Absolutely*

*B: Is there anybody throughout your life that you feel has been really influential on your learning?*

*L: My A level French teacher …a guy called Mr. McGuiness …he really instilled in me a passion for the country as well the language. His wife was French and all his children were brought up bilingual I used to go around to his house for tea. Things you probably wouldn't get away with these days you know going round to your teacher's house*

*B: Yeah, it's as if now there are more barriers up*

*L: Well back then it was just do you fancy coming round for a drink and to watch telly, I mean it was totally inappropriate…going round for a beer and stuff*

*B: Oh, I see*

*L: But, you know he was a good guy. And er, my parents and my dad's dad. My parents because they have always been …they have always taken an interest in what I have taken an interest in whether they care or not. I mean after 6 weeks they are getting sick of hearing about politics but they know that I am passionate about it.*

*B: well, I bet they are pleased that you are happy now aren't they?*

*L: Well this is it. And my dad's dad because he was just like me he would just absorb information from anywhere and I still get you are just like your granddad was, talk about anything. I mean my sister says about this degree in social policy she says you are just doing a degree in professional talking aren't you. And I'm like yeah, opinionated talking is pretty much what I want to get out of this and my granddad was like that. I mean we would be having Sunday lunch and he'd be half an hour behind everybody else and he'd say can I just say and something will have occurred to him or he will have heard something on the radio*

*L: And his funeral service was like that it was brilliant. The vicar read a poem about a watch maker how everything had to be perfect and in its place like that. So, I would say those 4 people my A level French teacher, my parents and my paternal granddad. For varying different reasons, but yeah those 4 have been KEY to what I have ended up like I think.*

*B: And now you have got Dave and …?*

*L: Yeah, yeah, you know it's weird isn't it. I have only known him 6 weeks and I feel like I could talk to him about anything*

*B: That's great*

*L: AND…have a laugh with him …about the subject and you know….*

*B: Do you think it is important that a teacher sort of knows a little bit about you anyway?*

*L: I think it is at this level. I think it is key at this level to understanding what their students are going to get out of their lessons, I think they need to know a little about what they feel about the subject, what opinions they have formed already because some of the subjects we will be covering next term in human rights, some of the subjects we will be covering, some people will have preconceived ideas. I mean human rights next term we will be studying abortion and euthanasia you know everybody, everybody has an opinion on whether it is right or wrong. That is the only module so far that has its own code of conduct attached.*

*B: Right*

*L: To stop, stop speaking over people and not shouting people down; because everything we are doing next term is so contentious. And they do seem to make an effort to get to know you, I mean beyond learning your name you know so, and I have got experience of 2 schools as well because one of my modules is history so I am split between politics and history at the moment, which is really good because that was totally unexpected. I didn't realize that I had to do history and I was like well what is the relevance but I've really really enjoyed that. The 2 guys lecturing us are brilliant so you know that's another pleasant surprise really.*

*B: So, is that, is it sort of small groups?*
*L: They range from…the smallest group we have is our policy and society seminars…that's about12 of us. Up to our human rights and social sciences lectures which are between 90 to 120 if you are talking about our research for the social sciences lectures it's between 50 and 100 depending on how many can be bothered to turn up that week (laughs.) yes, I think the largest group we have is our human rights because that's about 120 but it doesn't seem like a big group for some reason.*
*B: Is there lots of interaction in it then as well?*
*L: Oh yeah. Less than in a small group obviously because it's more difficult to control but yeah especially because they are so happy to stop and have people ask them questions you know even mid flow they are more than  happy to break off. I mean this morning you will hear him. He will most likely mention (cartoon series), he has published he's published on Political policy and (cartoon series) hasn't he so I'm he will be able to link that in again. He will get something in about Southampton because he is obsessed with his own town and he will say I'm  sorry I have digressed about 4 or 5 times because he just goes off…*
*B: Just goes off (laughs) …*
*L: yeah but not only that I love it, it just widens the whole experience for me it's not just right we are going to have a 2 hour lecture on Thomas Hobbs and that will be it there will be other bits and pieces as well and obviously depending on what people want to ask him as well relevant or not.*
*B: I'm looking forward to it*
*L: Oh it will be good*
*B: Right, well I think that's just about it.*
*L: Excellent*
*B: That's brilliant thank you ever so much.*
*L: That's quite alright it was fun.*
*B: Fun??? (laughs)*


Sally's Interview Transcript
*B: What I would like you to do is to think about all your learning experiences so far, whether these are in an informal setting such as riding a bike or learning to tie shoe laces or a formal one such as nursery or school and just jot these down along the line drawn on this paper in chronological order as much as you can and then I would like you to tell me about these experiences. So, if you want to start down here with your earliest memory of learning something…*
*S: Yes, yes. (starts to draw) Can I put just sort of ad hock little*
quotes here because sometimes there were little things that happened that I found it enhanced my learning environment?
*B: That's great, yes, yes… anything, just to jog your memory and then…*
*(Silence for a couple of minutes as S is jotting down her memories on the timeline.)*
*S: Education (whispered to herself)*
*B: If you want to go onto another page*
*S: I can do it down there*
*B: That's fine, yes.*
*S: (inaudible whispering odd words to herself) Sigh, right….age 19…that's where my relationship first …work was an education in itself…the institutions…the institutions were there actually…work in institutions (all this is barely audible whispering to herself as she is drawing on her timeline.) That was the September. Sorry about my writing.*
*B: That's fine*
*S: In my twenties I was…. I will put this…but I had twins then and that's an education*
*B: Oh yes…definitely*
*S: Had twins,*
*B: These are all the things I am wanting as all these things will impact…*
*S: (Interrupts) have shaped me*
*B: Definitely, yes*
*S: Had twins…(then inaudible whispers) Right, I have got a lot of talking to do.*
*B: Great…brilliant…this is lovely. Thank you very much.*
*S: Top, left to right,*
*B: Yes*

*S: Then next row*

*B: Right. Right then…if you could first of all just talk a little bit about nursery and your experiences there please.*

*S: Right I will throw in a little bit of you know er…er …since I've grown up there are…I can understand situations now as to why I felt like I did.*

*B: Right, great.*

*S: Like…my parents were 17, 16 when they had my brother and then they had me twelve months after exactly.*

*B: Right*

*S: So it was hard to learn …and learning at home was…I found…it, it, it just didn't happen.*

*B: Right*

*S: And I was a child that wanted to be played with but with my mum and dad trying to my dad worked lots of hours trying trying to get us out of the council house to buy our own house he wasn't around and mum struggled because she was too young.*

*B: Oh Yes*

*S: Children having children as far as I am concerned and I do remember the fact quite vividly of feeling quite frustrated and I was quite a naughty little girl really.*

*B: Right*

*S: Because of that…now because I was at home quite isolated the three of us, my brother…myself and my mum…we were quite isolated really in that respect and she couldn't take us out because it cost lots of money, so that when my first day at nursery arrived I was absolutely terrified …*

*B: Oh no..*

*S: I will never forget it …I…I….was so upset…I couldn't understand why she was leaving me. She didn't prepare me before it, I can't remember ever sitting me down a few weeks before and saying what do you expect, what do you want to do*

*B: She was so young wasn't she?*

*S: She was too young she didn't understand she just thought thank God they are going to nursery …I think and I love her to bits don't get me wrong but I can see the dilemma there. So, my nursery erm…memories…were …terr…absolutely terrified and …*

*B: Had you not had any friends at home?*

*S: No…no…no…because they were more likely to nick your bike…*

*B: Ohh*

*S: Yes that was the area where we lived …and so I guess…I guess as well that they didn't like where they were living…they were very protective of our toys…if it was left out it would be nicked ten minutes later, so I took on that resistance as well*

*B: Yes, yes, yes*

*S: Erm…so I had to get…I was very careful about who I played with. So and then during nursery…I can't remember very much about it I don't remember it being a happy occasion. I don't remember it being memorable…but I do remember at one point what my teacher looked like. I don't remember any friends erm and I just remember always feeling that I was fighting…to get a book that everybody else had…do you know what I mean?*

*B: Y..e..s…like competing*

*S: It's like therapy this isn't it yes competing for resources*

*B: ( Laughing) …yes*

*S: and erm I suppose the classes then were quite large and you had one teacher and there were no helpers at that time*

*B: No, no*

*S: So, if if you weren't bullish and helped pull yourself to the front you just sort of got carried with it rather than participating.*

*B: Yes, yes*

*S: So that was my nursery*

*B: So you didn't feel you had much interaction with your teachers because they were so many children?*

*S: Just too many I think and especially at that age you need key workers like what they have got now.*

*B: Yes, yes*

*S: So, so yes I didn't really feel like I benefited from that really, I didn't look forward to going but then again it wasn't a problem.*

*B: So how did you feel then about joining big school …you know after your experiences at nursery?*

*S: Erm I can't actually remember starting primary…so that's good in itself. It it wasn't an issue at the time. Erm I was quite a shy child really so I was never I can't believe how shy I was actually to how I have turned out*

*B: (Laughs)*

*S: Quite bullish you know…I will have my voice heard sort of …but I think then I think it was just the way my parents brought me up …my dad was quite strict as well so there was the you know children seen and not heard and he'd come home from work and he was tired*

*B: Like my dad (laughs)*

*S: he was yes, yes he was that was one issue…so I think because of that experience and the lack of experience from my parents I think that erm I didn't really get the best out of it because of lack of confidence*

*B: yes*

*S: Whereas with my children my children are absolutely great…they get on with it. I've got a ten year old daughter and I've got twin boys at four and their speech because I talk to my children all the time even if it is just chopping carrots talking about rabbits you know…it was probably that sort of interaction that I lacked and as a result of that I underestimated myself all the time. I would think I would really like to get hold of that book but I can't I was too quiet and so I sort of shrunk back a bit. But saying that…how long are you at primary…about years? You have got your reception which is infants*

*B: yes, 3/4 years at infants and then 4 years in juniors*

*S: yes, yes, so I would say half way through my primary, I enjoyed the work …erm….but I still felt like I was on the periphery…erm like I feel now I feel like I am am am part and parcel of the whole package here I feel quite at home*

*B: That's interesting*

*S: But at primary no…in my primary years I felt I was slightly on the sidelines…on the outside and purely probably down to you know my upbringing and experiences I had had prior*

*B: Right*

*S: but saying that, sort of half way through my primary years erm there was an erm an opportunity I suppose it was to give a bit of responsibility to people which I did it was was my way of getting to the front I suppose of the queue and there was a lot of opportunity to help with disabled children because we had quite a few how would you say to help with disabled children*

*B: Really*

*S: Erm which I I opted for and and accepted and I felt completely at home then because I felt included erm and quite special*

*B: Yes, yes*

*S: Erm and I had quite a strong relationship with one of the guys Jonathon and I still see him around in Focal university town actually and erm I felt fulfilled*

*B: was Jonathon one of the disabled …*

*S: Disabled …yes, he was in a wheelchair*

*B: Yes*

*S: It is quite difficult to be wheelchair bound*

*B: Yes*

*S: erm so that sort of brought me together with another helper key worker which we were friends but we had so much of a laugh but at the same time it it was an experience I'll never forget.*

*B: Right, so how long did it last for that?*

*S: That lasted for 12 months I think it was either the third or the last year*

*B: Yes*

*S: and that that brought me out of myself that experience*

*B: Right so by the time you had finished that you were ready to go on to secondary school and how did you feel about that…*

*S: I was terrified because again there wasn't it's like I'm going through this now with my daughter there was no she will be starting next year, and there was no conversations about it really*

*B: Yes*

*S: it was like I was told which school I had to go to we wasn't given the choice it was like well you are going to Schools Name further up the road and from that primary that's the only one you can go to…which wasn't true erm*

*B: Is that because it was closer probably?*

*S: Closer probably*

*B: easier for your mum and dad?*

*S: Easier for mum and dad but there again I would have been brave enough to jump on the bus possibly if it was a short journey*

*B: Yes…given the chance*

*S: Given the choice and if mum had have taken me to the open days because they had their own open days then but I never attended any so I think that has influenced the way I expect my children to be educated now…I give them a full range of choices whether she likes it or not*

*B: Yes*

*S: It's like we've got a choice of two schools and she only wants to go to one but I have said to her have a choice I didn't have that erm…so she's got her head round that and is quite pleased that's happened for her*

*B: Right*

*S: Sooo… because of that I started secondary school again ab-so-lutely **terrified.** It was a school I had never even visited. I knew how to get there …I just knew how to get in and the whole playground was just full of all these kids thousands in my eyes and I was completely overwhelmed by it to a good degree.*

*B: Right, so your first day, it was literally the first time you had set foot inside the place?*

*S: Yes*

*B: Gosh*

*S: Yes*

*B: And did you have any friends from junior school who went up with you?*

*S: This is the key I keep telling my daughter cos she wants to go to the school that all her friends are going to and I said that my experiences were that I went to the next school along where all my friends were and I didn't see them from that day onwards because people forge new relationships*

*B: Relationships yep*

*S: I mean you would be surprised at there's so many bands that you could be in at so many different levels and you are with not one person from your class for every subject because don't expect to keep those relationships going because it will change and I think as a child as well children don't like change they like what they know.*

*B: Yes, I remember a similar experience with my son…*

*S: Exactly…so I have said don't make your choice based on that because it will not turn out that way*

*B: Yes, it's hard for them to see though isn't it*

*S: Yes, they are children and they are not experienced like we are*

*B: Yes, yes. So, you know how you said in primary school that you helped with disabled people er and that helped you to sort of belong a little bit…*

*S: I felt included*

*B: Yes,*

*S: I felt…not that I didn't feel included before but I think it was was it helped me to feel included so I included myself then*

*B: Yes, so you sort of got a role?*

*S: I had a role to fulfill rather than I was just stood on that periphery*

*B: Yes, yes, so do you think that impacted on you know your transition to secondary school …do you think that you came out of it with a little bit of confidence to take with you to secondary school?*

*S: Yes, yes I didn't get that at home but I got it through the choices I made at school*

*B: Yes, yes and erm …how…how do you think you coped with the lessons at secondary?*

*S: Erm …………..(Silence for several seconds) well there was there were issues I remember all my teachers actually, some teachers were more friendly than others.*

*B: Yes*

*S: Some were too authoritarian so you didn't feel compelled to go*

*Could you say that again …I don't quite understand?*

*B: Yes,*

*S: Whereas the last teacher Mrs. Pollock erm….she we we just seemed to get on really well. I used to sing…in the choir and erm I she she just loved to hear me sing and I think that sort of gave us a common interest*

*B: Right*

*S: She loved to hear me and I loved to sing and I was I was very musical so*
*B: Yes*
*S: which I think that pressed her buttons in sort of the right way and mine so I had a good relationship with Mrs. Pollock and I felt like I was achieving*
*B: Right*
*S: I felt as a child I felt brainy because I felt included*
*B: Right, yes, so, so what…*
*S: In other classes I didn't because I didn't get that…I didn't need special treatment it's just that well done that's it you have done really well there*
*B: Just some form of connection*
*S: Yes, a bit of praise a bit of recognition even if it's something little …you know you you are on the right track so that you want to do better.*
*B: yes, yes, what what other kind of things did she used to do Mrs. Pollock to make you feel like that to make you feel that you had got a …*
*S: She was friendly, she treated us like little people rather than children we were people erm*
*B: How was she different to the other teachers?*
*S: She was just gentle if if if the children were playing up she's shout but it was a sharp snap and that was it. She didn't go on and on, she didn't send children out of the room…not that I can remember anyway…I do remember it in other classes. Erm and after Mrs. Pollock actually I went to Mr. Heaps Mr. Heaps class and I had never been taught by a man so again my father came back…*
*B: Authoritarian?*
*S: Authoritarian figure I wasn't really looking forward to that but he was more of an extension of Mrs. Pollock he was he I think they were just happy people really. As a child you don't you don't identify these things but in retrospect when you are grown up…I think they were just happier people I mean some I mean …there are some lecturers here that are miserable don't you think but then that's not going to impact on you because you don't need that*
*B: Yes*
*S: you can get it out and swear in your other relationships*
*B: Yes, yes, so…they were happy people and that impacted in some way on their teaching?*
*S: More gentle…a lot more confident, I I this is another key thing as well that in my secondary school a lot of the teachers the secondary school that lacked confidence*
*B: Right*
*S: Definitely lack of confidence that made them more aggressive which in turn made the naughty children more aggressive and you spent half the time listening to them shouting and throwing things at other children*
*B: Right*
*S: Which I I just felt a little bit debilitated by it*
*B: Oh yes, if there is all that going on it's impossible to learn. So that's interesting as well it's as though if they have no confidence they are putting the barriers up?*
*S: Yes the barriers are up…between, being miserable, not wanting to interact because they can't be bothered erm whereas these two key people right at the end of primary were jolly and and had a laugh.*
*B: so, more open then…to the students?*
*S: Yes, and if a teacher came in to you and say you had done a story or a poem you generally there was a feeling that you could have done that better or what are you doing?*
*B: Mmm mmm*
*S: or are you daydreaming and and it's not constructive that whereas Mr Heap I remember…I do remember …I've got an awful lot of memories haven't I?*
*B: It's brilliant (laughs)*
*S: I remember Mr. Heap saying to me er you I know you can do better than that so bear that in mind next time*
*B: Mmm*
*S: and it wasn't a telling off it was encouragement there is a big difference isn't there.*
*B: Yes mmm just in the way he worded it, yes, yes Oh; he sounds like a lovely chap. Right, so is this where you took exams at tech?*
*S: I went to secondary school and at secondary school…overawed by it…lack of interaction from my parents really as far as I'm concerned and the school was full of kids that didn't want to be there really…I know we are all diverse. That had a huge impact on teaching and that brought out the insecurities of teachers. It it it wasn't the best of schools, I knew that before I*

went and they struggled a lot with bad behaviour and fighting erm so I didn't really feel like…I loved English and I I got the interaction and the teachers but in your Geography, mathematics, that sort of thing you had certain personalities with the teachers that you just wouldn't indulge in as far as interacting with your teachers and asking for help.

B: Mmm

S: I remember my maths teacher, I remember I had really bad hay fever so I had streaming eyes from May onwards, so one of the maths teachers and I was dreadful at maths as well he just said I looked really weird.

B: Oh!

S: Yes…and he made fun of me in front of the whole class.

B: Oh, gosh…

S: yes and it's it's so wrong it was I I just think in retrospect now are you ok is everything ok would suffice

B: yes, and yes, not in front of everyone

S: especially when you have got orders flying around you you know it's like a lead balloon inside you

B: Oh dear it's quite shocking really isn't it because after parents teachers can have such a big impact on children

S: Absolutely because you think they are teachers they know everything

B: so if they say it it must be true

S: Absolutely

B: But it is not really. Oh dear, so because of that environment then did you…

S: I struggled but I made some fantastic friends. It was, I I was a conscientious girl but I always needed just a little bit of encouragement and praise and it was it it lacked but I I was just a child that needed that. I still do it now I still make my partner read my assignments before I hand them in I ask what do you think and he says I don't understand that by the way so I say that's ok. He's very well educated he's passed his masters so I I yes, some people just need it. It's just a basic requirement really.

B: Yes, oh definitely. I think most people do really. Some more than others maybe. So then you went to tech did you to redo your exams?

S: Er yes er because of the lack of encouragement at home sort of thing I didn't really do much homework I didn't really enjoy doing it I wouldn't get involved. Er, plus the fact that you are going out enjoying yourself that sort of thing. So, I didn't really do that well as far as my education…I I got basic, I got 2 O levels I think it was Geography was it geography or Home Economics and English. English was my strong subject but I was very musical and I transferred my skills through music. So erm I was er I was gifted even though I say so myself. I was gifted so I spent my time not studying but playing the guitar and I moved to have lessons here as well at the polytechnic

B: Right, so what about your teacher for that

S: Mr Price

B: Mr Price…tell me about Mr. Price

S: he was brilliant

B: I was going to say yes, you smiled then when you said his name

S: Yes, He is he he he brought the best out because he encouraged erm and I think to fulfil that each week I practiced like hell, and I I knew I was good, so…

B: So did you want to please him as well because of that?

S: I wanted to please him but as well I got an awful lot of enjoyment listening to what I was producing.

B: Great, yes and how did your parents respond to your musical abilities?

S: Erm they bought me my I started with the recorder and I put them both together and started guitar and carried on with both of them. And, but erm I'd say that again they didn't really get involved and I remember I remember telling this to someone quite recently actually ….what do I remember …erm I was really proud of what I was achieving in a way I knew I was good and I'd say to my mum and dad can I play this for you and my dad would say we are watching the news so I'd say well what about after the news? Well Coronation Street is on so I would say oh it doesn't matter and I it didn't effect me but I was just disheartened I I wanted praise erm so I rem I remember they used to go out every Saturday night and we had a babysitter. So my mum used to get in the bath and I would get my guitar open the bathroom door and close it

B: Laughs. A captive audience?

S: Well she couldn't go anywhere so that's what I used to do every Saturday play what I was learning. And she would say that's lovely but I just think you know it would be nice for you to say get your guitar out lets have a listen

B: Mmm

S: So yes.

B: Aww and is that something you have kept up with your guitar?

S: Well after that I got my first boyfriend and I thought I haven't got time to do this. But I will be honest with you I think I will pick it back up because I think I have still got it and so I entered talent contests and allsorts yeah

B: Great

S: oh yes I probably will pick it back up because I enjoyed it.

B: Probably as your children get older you might do it then?

S: I think I think if one of the boys my my daughter plays the flute and again she has just taken off with it but she has finished now because she just can't be bothered with it but I used to have to work hard to get to what I achieved but she doesn't try very hard but yet she is still very talented. She can do it just like that you know. But certainly if the boys want to start they could have my guitar and I would probably get involved again.

B: That would be lovely wouldn't it. …So, we've got learning to drive?

S: So then, yeah, after secondary school I went to technical college and I wanted this was sort of my back up really

B: Right

S: I I joined the typing school to get my RSA, retook my English to get a better grade and erm and then I erm went to work when I was about 17 on the Youth Training Scheme

B: Oh yes,

S: I got a bit of work experience and I think the most I got out of it rather than the work was just to improve my erm interaction with people really. I was a bit overawed with grown ups really I found working with them not really difficult to cope with but yeah, again if you are working with decent people it is nice.

B: Yeah, yeah. So did you feel…did you feel once you went to work did you feel you actually learned more there rather than at technical college?

S: Erm I enjoyed going to tech. because there were people there who wanted to be there so it was and that was really my template to right I will continue to night school, right up until 4 years ago because I am 42 now.

B: Right

S: No, 5 years ago, so because of that good experience because people wanted to be there it sort of shook off that that lack of participation that that was in the past. And I could move forward with that it was that education in mind on a different level.

B: Yes…do you feel that you made more friends there then at tech. than what you did at secondary where people just didn't want to be there?

S: No, no I still made some really good friends

B: Ok, right

S: But then again the sizes I still think it's the sizes of the classes you know if you needed that little bit more time you didn't get it. I I remember feeling in art and design…I was quite good at art and design but I just needed that little bit more hands on help just to improve my knowledge and to get on with it. A lot of the time I remember looking at everyone else and thinking I don't know what I am doing here you know like silk screen that sort of thing and I remember the struggle wasn't to do the work it was to keep up with it.

B: Yes, so you were looking at the other students to see if what you were doing was right?

S: Yes, to see if I was on the right track whereas that energy should have been put into my work.

B: Yes, yes right and so the teacher wasn't like…well she probably wouldn't have had time if it was a big class would she?

S: yes well I think we are talking I think there were about 35 in the classes, 40 sometimes and it just doesn't work.

B: So, then when you went to tech. was it smaller classes? How many typically were in your classes.

S: Quite a lot in the typing school, but because it is less theoretical and more hands on it it took sort of a natural course and you you got your homework to do and it it was more in practice and you knew what you were doing so you just got on with it.

B: Yes, right, so you didn't need that much interaction with the teacher or anything.

*S: Yes, yes*

*B: and you just got on with it. So, when you went to work you were typing?*

*S: Erm I I on my YTS scheme I had a job at company's name 'cos it was quite local it was quite a big company and I started on the switch board, and I was absolutely terrified and then I then I there was another girl and I started at one end and she started at the other and then we sort of rotated round and it was it was good experience it certainly improved my confidence.*

*B: Yes actually having to talk to people on the telephone*

*S: I was sad to leave I was very sad to leave. It's very hard actually I've always said this you finish school and you are expected to right it's further education but my parents just didn't just didn't talk about it. I remember my dad saying well if you want to go to university or whatever you have to fund it yourself and I just didn't have a clue what to do. And so this sounds quite negative but I just thought well I will have to work. I think that children that finish school because you are still children when you finish school but you are expected to take on this adult persona and it is only that. I think there should be more lessons in in in in being introduced into the workforce.*

*B: Yes, it's sort of like one day you are a child at school and the next you are an adult*

*S: There are such high expectations of you*

*B: Yes, so it can be quite frightening then as in your experience when you had to work the switchboard. It's sort of sink or swim almost*

*S: Absolutely*

*B: About your confidence …eventually how long do you think it took to get some…until you felt comfortable with doing that job?*

*S: Erm … I think I started in the summer so I think 12 months. No I was there 12 months but I'd say from 6 months.*

*B: What do you think helped you to become more confident…and competent?*

*S: Certainly the staff basically and they were very considerate as well knowing it was the first YTS scheme they had ever got so they did mother you a bit which was great but I got …I think what helped was their interaction and consideration about who you were and why you were here obviously to introduce you to work.*

*B: Yes*

*S: and I think in turn that improved my confidence I think that's what it was that made it ok.*

*B: Yes. Did they actually show you how to do things?*

*S: I used to do allsorts you know those old duplicating machines we had a copier but I used to have to do stencils you know and get on with that and you know you were on the cusp of adulthood and so I was behaving like a child. You used to switch it on and it sounds like a motor and off it goes. And sending Telexes by ticatape and because there were urgent messages you sort of got an air of importance about you which actually you needed rather than just helping with the postage box sort of thing.*

*B: Yes, so they showed you things as well as giving you responsibilities then didn't they which made you feel part of it. I can see how this helped your confidence.*

*S: Yes, absolutely*

*So, is this work in institutions then…this is after your YTS?*

*S: Yes...er learn to drive*

*B: Oh sorry*

*S: That was a huge learning experience that was just overcoming utter fear.*

*B: Laughs me also*

*S: Also I had moved down south I was 19 and I had left home to move in with a chap that I'd met on holiday*

*B: Right*

*S: it was a great time of my life I regret it now but it was a great time of my life and he had been speeding for so long that it got to the point where I get caught again I'm gonna be banned so I offered to drive and he said right I'm going to get you driving lessons and he had a good job so er we weren't short of cash and I absolutely loved it and er but because it was something I had a choice I made that I was learning to drive it was exciting but on the other hand it was a lot of pressure because he did get caught speeding again and he was banned. He was due his court appearance in Rotherham and we were down in Buckinghamshire we had come to visit and he was caught speeding so it was a case of if you don't pass this we are stuck.*

*B: Yes, yes*

*S: So it sort of changed from a sort of hobby where I used to love it to being a little bit scary, but I passed it so again it's like an achievement and working under pressure and then I realized as*

*time went by that I work so much better under pressure well you know it's like if I have to think what have I to do now how will I fit this in I work better like that.*

*B: So, if you have got a need to do something like for you it is better than just like drifting into things or whatever?*

*S: Well it's like last year I'm in my second year now and last year I worked two days a week. I've got three children and everything else that brings about and studying and I found it quite difficult to get going here cos you know I didn't know where the loo was never mind the library.*

*B: yes*

*S: I think the more pressure I am put under the more I think I'm not gonna let this beat me I will get there, I just need to get on with it.*

*B; What to prove to yourself or…*

*S: Yes that was my first identification of me in that sort of area in education which is why I put that (points to her timeline)*

*B: Yes, yes….yes definitely. So…*

*S: So during this time here I had moved down south and it was quite ironic because I didn't need to work there was no real necessary it wasn't a necessity. So I thought what shall I do? Shall I go into further education or shall I find a job and I…started running a little business actually I have no business acumen but I made a profit but it got to the point where I thought I need to find a job so I I so I started working at Abbey National on a temporary basis. It was head office Abbey National in their complaints department which is the last port of call before it reaches the ombudsman so it was very busy and erm I really enjoyed it because a lot of my telephone manner and because of my speech you get each and every day scores of people shouting and being quite abusive and they got sick of it and the guy who was head of department had a nervous breakdown. So, when I came in with my experience of switchboards because I temped as well during certain periods erm I had a very calming influence apparently on the people that I worked with and so I just used to end up taking all the calls evaluating them to see which person dealt with it which area should take that on board and I ended up temping there for quite some time actually it was 2 years and it got to the point as well where it ended up as if there were too many illnesses at one time down on the switch board which was a massive room the switchboard system that I'd go down there and help. I felt quite needed and wanted and and erm guided erm yes I felt institutionalized*

*B: Right, is that why you have called it institutions here ( referring to timeline)*

*S: Yes, I call these places institutions really because they are.*

*B: Yes, and you felt that you were in the centre of it really*

*S: Yes, so again I'm still building my confidence. But but then my marriage broke down and I moved back up here………*

*B: Yes, yes, right (referring to timeline) so…yes Open University…*

*S: So when I left…so like I said my marriage broke down and I moved back up here and I temped for a wee while erm I was very upset about it I remember …it took about five years to get over it being honest. I was absolutely devastated but I knew it was the right way. Erm what what happened was necessary and I got a job with a company…well I started temping actually and a job came up so I applied for it and I got it and I was there for 13 years and it's it was in the pub industry with with company name it was when I first started and they had 25,000 public houses nation wide and I was at head office at Halifax and it wa was great I really enjoyed it I I probably grew up with them from the age of 24 when I started and then 13 years later being given 2 years prior notice fantastic I had sort of grown up with them known everything there was to know about the industry as well as training other people as well that I felt I feel really fed up here now and I had had my daughter as well I I really want to do something else but I really don't want to leave I'd had my daughter as well and it gives you a different slant on life it changes you when you have children. And then we were given 2 years notice on the fact that it would come to an end*

*B: Right*

*S: And that we were going to be made redundant so I thought right I'd better find another job. So er anyway their erm way of coping with these pending redundancies unless you wanted to work in Birmingham which no thanks was anything that we can do to make it to help you find another job.*

*B: That's good*

*S: they were fantastic, they got a company as well to to see to our immediate necessities or anything that we might need. And and I said I'd like to to I'm thinking of going back to studying*

*I'm going to be made redundant I will get a redundancy package, I've got my house, I can have a holiday, I thought why don't I do that?*

*B: Mmm mmm*

*S: They said well why have you thought about the ope university? So I I enrolled on it and they sponsored me so it didn't cost me anything, absolutely loved it and hence I am here now 5 years later.*

*B: I've got a lot of time for the Open University.*

*S: (Whispering) Do you know I was getting 70 or 80 percent in everything and now I get 65 maybe 70 and I think oh I can't do it and they say no it is different and I do wonder if I should have gone through university but the experience was far more invaluable probably.*

*B: yes, well I think there are fors and againsts for both.*

*S: Yes, yes, yes.*

*B: What did you do with the Open University?*

*S: I I I went on a foundation sociology course erm absolutely loved it, did very well to say that I had never properly studied before on any level apart from what you are aware of. So, I was very proud of myself and I'd got a young daughter as well just out of nappies. I was working full time but I could do my job standing on my head so I was doing this by night and at weekends erm when she went to see her dad. And erm so it's it's a very happy time actually*

*B: Yes*

*S: And that was with a view to potentially going to university. Was made redundant, got my money, sold my house, had a lot of money met my partner who I am with now, found out 3 months later I was pregnant. Found out 2 months later it was twins. I thought well that just puts the cat among the pigeons here there's just no way I could study with twins. I could with a baby, but just not with twins.*

*B: yes, yes*

*S: You've always got something to do so erm so then I took 2 years out I had no money, had to move house twice to accommodate erm and then decided well I have to go back to work at some point but thought I'm not going back to the work I was doing. I I enjoyed the work but but I I needed to do something, I want to make a difference and started a foundation course, and then when I was pregnant I took on another part time course, 60 credits it was.*

*B: Right*

*S: and erm American erm what's it called erm America in terms of the economy and there was a political context to it. That's how I stumbled across political studies although it was just very briefly with my foundation course and then this that was more political and then I thought I'd already booked it so I thought take some time out, booked the course, and then 2 months before I started it found out I was expecting twins and I managed to bang my…I had 3 more essays to do, banged that one out the night before I had my C section and got 78% so I thought there is no such thing as a baby head but again I was under pressure and I work well under pressure.*

*B: Yes, so you knew you had got to do it then.*

*S: Went to bed at 1 O'Clock, got up at 6 and half past 7 I had my C section.*

*B: Oh, my word!*

*S: I know, I know…I don't see myself like that but I know I am…does that make sense?*

*B: Mmm mmm*

*S: So, er I never got to finish the course but I still got to do my essays so I thought right after that experience and I've got these 2 children I should get a job and we need the money, but I said I'm getting older and I need to do it. I don't want to think about it anymore, I need to do it. So I applied and got into university so yeah.*

*B: And here you are.*

*S: Yes*

*B: So, how do you think the teaching differs here as compared with the Open University?*

*S: Well, there was no teaching really apart from your tutorials. And the tutorials …were (sigh) helpful erm but I found..*

*B: Were these face to face tutorials or over the phone?*

*S: No erm well you could have contact with your tutor over the phone which I thought was pointless for me as I thought well I will just never stop talking as you can probably tell so I thought I am better emailing and then I can think about what I am putting and be concise. So, I found that helpful and on my Sociology, when I did my foundation course I attended , I didn't really get in touch with the tutor I just made sure I attended the tutorials which were once a fortnight for 2 hours. They were helpful but there was a lot of younger people doing the course*

*as part of their work. They were work related courses depending on where you were working and erm they weren't forward enough to be able to participate in things it was the same as being back at school really.*

*B: And how did you fit into that…did you find that you were more vocal?*

*S: It's the same like being here now it's it's I've always got something to say and there and there'd be he'd say right what do you all think about  erm erm I don't know the pub and it's relationship in the workforce or you know the street and everyone would just sit there and I'd think I don't really have any thoughts but I am quite happy to chat.*

*B: Laughs*

*S: So, so I would start it off and then it brought everybody else into it. It was hard for them, but not for me.*

*B: Was, was it a big group?*

*S: It started off being about 15 and it ended up being about 7 actually one by one people dropped out.*

*B: Right, do you think they found it easier to interact when it was a smaller group?*

*S: Probably and I think I was the safe option too because it enabled people to keep stum if they didn't want to talk. And the tutor used to look at me as if to say help us out because you know your tutors got to say as little as possible to get you to interact.*

*B: Yes, but that wasn't happening unless you…*

*S: unless I*

*B: Yes, yes and do you find that happens somewhat at uni now?*

*S: Er not now because we are all familiar with our classmates in different lectures erm and when I first year definitely it encouraged people to….I think as well because I was older they expected me to because you do when you are older you are more experienced and they are pushing you to the fore the forefront. Erm I mean there's some very strong characters on my course being politics and there's a few that are trying too hard.*

*B: Right*

*S: Do, do you know what I mean?*

*B: Yes, yes I do.*

*S: Erm, but no not now. It was when I started for a good three months of lectures and seminars but then after that people realized that well she gets it wrong sometimes.*

*B: Yes, yes and that's a big thing I think as well that It's it's ok to be wrong. You can express your opinion can't you and it doesn't matter if it's different to somebody else's.*

*S: I I remember in policy and society last year and it's quite a difficult course for the first year actually because it attacks nitty gritty bits about public policy and erm the amount of times he would be going on about this that and the other and I would think I haven't got a clue what he is on about so I would put my hand up and he'd say "Yes Sally?" and I'd say I, I don't know what you are talking about and he'd say "Why?" and I'd say "Because you said that and it sounds contradictory because of blah blah blah so where does it I don't know how, why you are applying it in this instance.*

*S: And he'd say "Does everybody else understand?" and there'd be silence and he'd be like come on be honest and about a third of the people would be like that (puts hand up in air.)*

*B: So, you made it safe for everybody else then didn't you, by saying that you didn't understand?*

*S: Yes, yes in philosophy last week, erm part of one of the philosopher's we were studying and he said one of his examples was was if you are in a classroom and you didn't agree with something or you wanted further clarification would you , who would put their hand up. And I went I would oh I would definitely because then everyone else then they are like sheep behind you. And and he was quite surprised at that, but not at the same time whereas other people have different views but then I thought no but you don't exercise them.*

*B: Mmm mmm*

*S: So I think there's a huge there needs to be clarity from all your thinking of what you think you are to what you actually do. Does that make sense?*

*B: Go on,*

*S: Like…I'm just thinking this might help you in your studies…it's like people perceive themselves to be this particular person but they don't do it and there's a big dis ….*

*B: A big gap between people's attitudes and their actual behaviour?*

*S: Absolutely, it has to go hand in hand for it to be legitimate doesn't it ?*

*B: Yep, yep for a person to be legitimate, but I think sometimes it is social pressures isn't it that stop you being who you really are.*

*S: Exactly*

*B: Yeah, yeah yeah … Is there anybody, that you think, has had an impact on your learning in your life.*

*S: …..negative or positive?*

*B: Both*

*S: Negative my parents. Without them realizing it.*

*B: What, what, how are they now with your studying?*

*S: Erm, I, I, don't talk to them anymore. (Laughs) It, it became too much of a an emotional rollercoaster situation this is going back to last year now.*

*B: Yes,*

*S: No, this year, erm they they have just retired now and they they, because they have been together for 40 odd years, erm too young, nobody else, I just disagree with how they talk to one another and to me. I just, on the first of January there was a situation, I thought and I'd got my children there and I just thought this is wrong for me, it's wrong and I've just got to walk away from it, so I did.*

*B: Mmm mmm…. I have just gone through a similar thing as you with my parents.*

*S: Thank God. Ohhh wow. It's, it's I I had to stop trying to dream about what could be because it never will.*

*B: Yeah, yeah ….*

*S: And I thought I've got too much to worry about here. I've got my children…*

*B: And, do, do you think that comes with education though and getting a mind of your own and feeling entitled to have an opinion?*

*S: ………..Er, yes, I think it's probably the arena for that, if but, but is it education or work because…mind you…education …drives you to …have an opinion to be able to reinforce your work and your experience through presentations, through written work, through open discussions  seminars. So, purposefully taken out of your comfort zone, for some not, for some massively some just improving on it. So, yes, I think …I'm trying to disagree with you whilst I am talking, but I think you are probably right because the workforce is we give you shape to do your job…to say a certain thing in a certain way…*

*B: Right…yeah, yeah*

*S: Whereas here it's an open forum isn't it*

*B: Yes*

*S: And I think whether it's in politics or not, democracy is a thing that is encouraged*

*B: Mmmm*

*S: With, you know, we want students to, like I'm the student rep. now, so it's all part of being in a democracy. Yes, it's I think, I think because you are forced to think for yourself and to think that whatever you have got to say is valued especially from a youngster's point of view.*

*B: I mean I was thinking of work as part of education as well do you know what I mean? I think that is something…*

*S: It's part and parcel*

*B: Yes*

*S: because don't forget we are being educated all the time.*

*B: Yes*

*S: Into the workforce, even though we are here it's still the workforce*

*B: yes, yes yes. What do you think about the idea that education including work and how we learn how to fit into the work situation changes our identity?*

*S: Absolutely…I think what's interesting… for you is that because of this lack of educational thought  as I've grown up, I mean my dad he's he's he's a builder, very successful very hard working a master of his trade erm and when he was in his early twenties he was approached, he used to help out, I don't know in what capacity I was too young to understand but  for some reason he got roped in to the local technical building college to help out and he got involved in that only to a very small degree but they said how do you, how would you feel about teaching full time here and there was just no way he would consider it and I said to my mum why did he not consider it? And my mum said because he was frightened, he was frightened.*

*B: Mmm*

*S: And when I started university, my dad is very political to a point where he is extreme, which isn't politics as far as I am concerned. Politics is where you agree to disagree and vice versa*

*B: Mmm*

*S: My dad, he's very blue collar, he's blue collar and me being a white collar worker from school was if if I was tired it was well you haven't been like me…building walls all day long*

B: yeah

S: And I know for a fact that mental energy is worse than physical because it doesn't go away.

B: Yes, you can work it off when it's physical can't you

S: And go to bed and have a good night's sleep. When you have got mental exhaustion it prevents you from sleeping.

B:Yes.

S: So, I had that struggle of, of, of, of, he'd introduce this class issue and he he it as far as I'm concerned it doesn't exist. Just because I want to learn it doesn't mean that I am better than anybody else.

B: yes

S: And it, it got to a point where he we would talk about certain things and I wouldn't talk theoretically, I would keep university talk away from my parents but I would say and my dad would be forceful and a little bit demeaning towards me

B: Yes, yes

S: but I I thought I'm bigger than this I can get beyond this, but I have always struggled for all my life with that with him but it it got to a point where I would say what do you think about X Y and Z and because he knew that my mind had expanded with all other external factors that actually what he was saying was crap, he he he felt belittled.

B: Yes, he felt threatened yes, yes yes.

S: It's it's even on a social level I can't have a conversation with them it's just too explosive.

B: Yes, yes yes.

S: I have been to counselling for a long time about it mmm…

B: Mmmm have you….Do you want to switch this off…

S: no, no I'm absolutely fine…but you know I I it's strange how I connect how where I've arrived now and going right back to here (pointing to connect 2 points on her timeline) so, it's been a big factor in my life actually.

B: Mmm

S: Not only are we going to counselling because of this, erm me and my partner separated but we are back together again

B: Good

S: So we we've been going to counselling not realizing that the problems we were experiencing were because of my anger towards my parents being vented onto him.

B: yes

S: So yes, we had been going for months and it was the last thing she asked me about she said what about your parents and I just burst into tears. I'd not spoken about it and just internalized it and …threw it onto my partner….so it does have a domino effect and that's through education.

B: Yes, yes…it does, it changes your identity

S: I feel better…I don't feel obliged to do things I don't want to do anymore.

B: No, no. Well, thank you that has been really useful…


Maya's Interview Transcript

B: So if you can imagine that's your life up to now and then think about the first thing you can really remember learning.

M: Erm, ok does that include things like for example today when Dave was talking to us about presentation skills?

B: Yes, yes, anything at all, any learning experience that is significant to you.

M: Oh, alright, er, er…I have put learning how to drive because that's very significant

B: Yes, yes…have you passed your test?

M: Yes,

B: Oh, brilliant

M: I passed it in September just after my birthday.

B: Yes

M: Err, I started university as well in September, so I could put erm learning, learning about the building and finding my way around

B: Yes, yes because I think that's a big part of it isn't it

M: Yes, how to use the library, stuff like that…erm erm … mmm…erm I've gone back to earlier now …learning how to climb trees and that

B: I suppose that comes with having brothers doesn't it?

*M: Yes (laughs) erm I could put learning how to take care of... my cats Sooty and (inaudible)*

*B: Did you have them from quite a young age?*

*M: Yes, they were really young yeah. Erm...erm....I could have learning how to like support friends and family when things happen. Like when my grandma passed away recently and my mum is still quite upset about it so erm...*

*B: And did your grandma live with you as well?*

*M: No, she didn't live with us but she lived nearby and we used to visit her all the time erm ... ... ... ... ....(still drawing on timeline). I have put er learning how to do well at school*

*B: Mmm hhh*

*(Laughs) like pass exams and stuff like that*

*Mmm...did you go to nursery school or anything like that?*

*M: Erm...yeah...well yes I went to Picolo that's nursery school where you learned how to like paint and things like that*

*B:Oh yes, right, yes if that's something , somewhere where you think you learnt something*

*M: Yeah...erm I also learned how to read the Kor Koran you know in Arabic because that's, as I previously told you I'm a Muslim so I've put learning how to read Arabic and all that stuff*

*B: Yes...yes, do you go to a a special school to do that to learn that?*

*M: Er, yeah I used to go I went to a special school when I was younger like after school kind of, that was in someone's house they used to teach us but when I got to Secondary school we had a teacher that used to come to our house to teach us and that was really good, it was like a personal thing you know because it was just one teacher and us, that's nice*

*B: Yes, you can build up more of a relationship with them then can't you*

*M: Yes, he'd ask us how school and have a little chit chat before we started work*

*B: So he was interested in you as well, not just in the subject he was teaching?*

*M: Yes, and we are still in contact and he will come and visit, so that's nice.*

*B: Aww, that's lovely*

*M: Erm yes, erm...I've put here learning how to hold babies. (laughs) When my cousins had their children like you know I was still only young only 9 but I had a little nephew and niece... I have got 4 altogether. So learning how to hold them and learning how to take care of them. (laughs)*

*B: Laughs. That's something I had to learn too, my mum had a baby when I was 12 so I had to do a lot of looking after.*

*M: Yeah. …. Erm...I used to have to cook and stuff at home, my mum used to teach me, so I have put in housework and all that sort of thing.*

*B: Yeah*

*M: Erm... I don't know...learning how to (laughs) ....bowl*

*B: Oh, do you like bowling?*

*M: Erm I do it sometimes, occasionally with my friends. But yes, it's good fun.*

*B: There's a bowling alley right next to where we live, but I'm not right good (laughs)*

*M: I'm not either (laughs) … oh yes also I had to learn the recorder too at primary school...erm oh….*

*B: We can leave it at that for now, you know and it might be that as we talk ….it's just sort of to give me a guide as to what to ask you and to sort of jog your memory as well.*

*M: Oh right, yes*

*B: Is it alright if I ask you about these things?*

*M: Yeah, yeah*

*B: OH...learning how to paint at Picollo...what can you tell me about that?*

*M: I just remember us all being together...we had like a little bowls and straw things*

*B: Oh yes,*

*M: and we had to blow into it and paint and then I just remember the paint on a piece of paper. I remember the finished product as well, but I don't remember acting out the actual painting if you see what I mean*

*B: Yeah*

*M: I just remember the steps in between and the final product.*

*B: And who helped you to do that was there anybody helping you?*

*M: Yes, there was a few other erm members of staff and young women and I can just remember some of the others around me on other tables and that.*

*B: So you had got lots of helpers then?*

*M: Yeah, just dotted around and stuff and with me telling me not to suck in or you will end up will end up swallowing the paint (laughs)*

*B: Swallowing the paint (laughs)*

*S: Erm yeah so lots of helpers then*

*B: Yeah, what other kind of things did you used to do at Piccolo?*

*S: Er we used to have like tricycle things and we used to like go outside and play on them. You know if the weather is nice*

*B: Yeah*

*S:  You know outside…there were lots of toys there and I remember I think it was coming up to Christmas 'cos we had like a little Christmas party. We had to like pass around the parcel , well we all got little presents and I remember a girl got a really nice present a girl got a little pony and it was really nice  (laughs)*

*B: (laughs)*

*M: We also had parties and I remember like eating jam sandwiches and stuff yeah (laughs)*

*B: So, did you have lots of friends?*

*M: Yeah, at Picollo, yeah I can't remember any of them specifically, but I can remember going and enjoying seeing my friends. There was one girl, I just can't remember her name or anything, but I know she was quite fair, she had blonde hair, maybe she lived near me but I can't quite remember.*

*B: She was a particular friend was she?*

*M: Yeah yeah I think so.*

*B: Are there any teachers that you remember?*

*M: I can remember my teachers from…from er from reception yeah, like from a nursery when it was actually school*

*B: Yes*

*M: Like Piccolo is before nursery isn't it*

*B: Yes, right, I don't know I've never heard of Piccolo before*

*M: Ok, well Piccolo I was really young then about 3 or 4 and then nursery I started at about 5 years old. It was name of school nursery and I remember my teachers really clearly there.*

*B: Why was that, why do you think you could remember them?*

*M: Erm I think it was because I was older yeah, and…because they were more of a key figure really. Because you are with the teacher and you are with them all day and you have that relationship with them and they teach you things that you learn and you remember. But whereas with these helpers at Piccolo, they were just around. They weren't there particularly with you, there were lots of children*

*B: Yeah, so you didn't get to know them as well as your teachers at school*

*M: Yeah, that's true I was probably at Piccolo for less hours too, like 2 hours or something like 3 times a week*

*B: Yeah, whereas when you were at school it was all the time*

*M: But it was everyday, you know for a year or however long it lasted you know each…each*

*B: year group*

*M: each year group yeah (laughs)*

*B: It sounds like you really enjoyed school*

*M: Yeah (laughs)*

*B: You have got that you learned how to read Arabic too straight after Picollo…were you quite young then when you learned how to read it?*

*M: I can't remember how old I was. I remember going to a number of different mosques depending on where I lived because I moved house like twice. I remember just going there to learn.*

*B: Yes, is is it something that you just pick up as well is it like spoken a lot…at the mosque sort of thing?*

*M: Er, yes, it's er*

*B: Or at home whatever*

*M: Not really, it's not like a language like English like you read and speak it. You only speak Arabic if you live in like an Arabic country. So it's like, imagine for me my mother tongue is English, so it's like reading German for example but speaking in English. So it's like at home we speak in English, at the mosque we speak in English, but we read in Arabic.*

*B: Yes, so it's like a skill that has to be specifically taught then?*

*M: Yes, that's true yeah, but yeah, but like if your mother tongue is already Arabic it will be easier to learn.*

*B: Yes I know what you mean, it's like if I go and learn French or German, or or Arabic, isn't it, and my mother tongue is English.*

*M: Yes, yes.*

*B: You said earlier that you used to go somewhere to learn Arabic. Was that at the mosque?*

*M: Er it wasn't it was at someone's house, cos they used to have mosques in the house because*

*B: Right, yes*

*M: Back then, obviously it has taken quite a while for that mosque to be established in Britain, because it's not a Muslim country so back then when we were younger there wasn't that many mosques around so we just used to go to people's houses.*

*B: Right*

*M: Yeah like that. And er a lot of the mosques were like mainly just for men to go but now erm there are purpose built mosques and they have enough space for women. They build it specially for women and they have crèches for women.*

*B: Oh, that's good. You know when you were learning Arabic, were there lots of people there?*

*M: Yes, there were loads of people there and what we had to do we just sat in a big room and we had homework to like read over what we had learned and we had to go out to the teacher and  recite it. The thing is with Arabic, it's all about reciting the Koran, the Koran I mean we learn the Koran right*

*B: yeah*

*M: You don't like you know for German, for example we used to do German in school right so we used to like write it, play games, but when it comes to Arabic it's all about reciting. Remembering it in your head and you know like that*

*B: Right*

*M: We don't write it its just reciting.*

*B: Right, you don't actually write it then*

*M: no no*

*B: You just learn to recite*

*M:  I mean I now go to another Mosque where they try to teach us how to speak Arabic and how to write it you know how we do at school with German*

*B: Oh, right…is that more structured?*

*M:  Yeah, yeah it's like further learning like understanding the meaning of Arabic and what's written in the Koran*

*B: Oh, so it's more like literature isn't it, you know like English literature, getting inside something and understanding it.*

*M: Yes, yes*

*B: I see what you mean. And then you said that you had a teacher that came to the house?*

*M: Yeah, yeah*

*B: Go on, what can you tell me about that?*

*M: Erm that was like erm (starts laughing) I am just laughing because the first teacher I never,  I couldn't concentrate very well and I just used to mess around and I remember once doing a rolly polly and landing in his lap (laughing all the time as she is saying this)*

*B: (laughing) Oh gosh!*

*M: That was really embarrassing. But yeah, that was a lot better because because erm like I said there was only me and my two brothers so it was a lot ore erm personal. We had a number of teachers erm the first one I can't remember that much, I was young, I did that rolly polly thing (laughs) and then the second we reaaalyy liked him so much he was like a he he I remember he taught he remember like him teaching us specifically like I can remember his lessons more I can remember the stories he used to tell us and teach us about our religion more and stuff*

*B: Yes, yes*

*M: and then er he got really busy and he passed on his friend to teach us and erm we stayed with him longest and we stayed in contact. Well we stayed in contact with both of them now*

*B: Yeah, yeah*

*M: erm he was …I think I was his favourite (laughing) we got on quite well together.*

*B: Yeah, yeah. You know the one that you liked best, the middle one.*

*M: Yes*

*B: what do you think it was about him that made you more able to learn from him…what made you like him?*

*M: Erm, I don't know really erm….I probably just erm liked his personality and how he was and like seeing him as a really knowledgeable person who knows so much. Obviously the elder I got the more interested I became about learning about my religion and stuff that helped as well and*

*he used to vary the lessons and tell us different ways because otherwise it was just boring but you know he used to come and he had different ways*

*B: You said he used to tell you stories as well about your religion?*

*M: yeah, he used to tell us stories as well, not just about religion but also about life at home and stuff and what's going on and erm about school and the teachers also yeah and he used to encourage us he'd like encourage us to speak and tell stories what we'd been doing and stuff erm so yeah, he'd be like that's why erm he'd talk to my dad as well about our progress. He taught my mum as well*

*B: Oh right*

*M: Yeah, because my mum is English, she converted when she married my dad*

*B: Yes*

*M: and my mum as well, I remember my mum being in the class with us as well and learning as well*

*B: Oh, well that worked out well didn't it…right, so yeah, learning to climb trees…tell me about that*

*M: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah erm I I don't I don't like, obviously climbing trees is not something like oh you start off and you put your hand here and it's just something you kind of grasp. It's not like learning to read a book you know the verbs and adjectives…it's just something that you do and I just remember going out with my brothers loads and there was like a field and well we've got a back garden and there's a field and we would go outside and explore and I just remember being actually inside the tree and I thought oh I've done it you know for the first time and erm there's a tree in our garden an 'em apple tree and em I used to climb that a lot and then when I got more confident I started climbing the neighbour's tree. I used to play with my neighbour he was a boy, so yeah, that's all I can really remember about that.*

*B: So, is it more of a thing that you wanted to do it because you saw your brothers doing it and your neighbour?*

*M: Yeah eah, that's probably why, I saw them doing it and I wanted to do it as well and I copied them yeah yeah (laughs)*

*B: I'd have been too scared to climb trees (laughs.) Oh, playing the recorder is that primary school?*

*M: Yeah, that was at primary school yeah*

*B: Tell me about that*

*M: (Starts laughing) Well, I was supposed to learn to play the violin actually and I quite enjoyed that but then once I snapped I stood on the erm you know the fiddle*

*B: Oh, the bow (laughs)*

*M: the bow and it snapped and my headmaster was angry and I couldn't carry on with that anymore and I didn't I carried on with the recorder instead. And I just remember we used to take time out of lessons to go to the annexe like this building and the headteacher used to teach us and we had like big books and we had to practice our fingers and how to blow and I used to practice at home but everybody just used to get annoyed because when you can't play properly it just sounds awful (laughs.) I remember playing in a group like as part of the choir, but I also used to do the instrument side as well so I remember like playing together in the group and feeling quite happy and proud that you know I am in the group and playing the recorder (laughs.) But I I think I stopped about year 4 I think they stopped it you know and let new people start.*

*B: Yeah, did, did your friends play the recorder as well?*

*M: Errr no…I think I was the only one to out of my friends to start playing it, then other people joined and I made friends with them. It wasn't oh lets all go and join the recorder*

*B: You just went on your own*

*M: Yes*

*B: That's quite brave isn't it when you are little?*

*M: Yeah, I suppose. It was just something I really wanted to do so I just thought; oh it doesn't matter if no one goes with me.*

*B: No, that's good. What was your teacher like?*

*M: Erm, she was ok, sometimes we used to laugh at her at the things she used to you know how she used to count with her finger when she used to sing it was just funny (laughs.) But she was nice she was never mean so that's good.*

*B: Did you find it easy to pick up then playing the recorder?*

*M: I think so, from what I remember, I think so yeah, it's not too difficult.*

*B: Could you read music as well...did she teach you to read music?*

*M: Yeah she did. I remember once or twice not being too confident with it and I was copying someone at the side of me and my teacher said you can't be copying because you will be out of synch with that person…you know timing wise*

*B: Yeah you would be a little behind them wouldn't you.*

*M: Yeah, because we used to play with people a little bit older than us too yeah so, erm I remember the songs I really liked I knew them really well but I didn't like study the whole book properly if you see what I mean?*

*B: Yeah, I see what you mean (both laugh.) I used to play the recorder. Oh, then you have got learning how to support family and friends through difficult times…that's really important isn't it.*

*M: Oh, yes, I guess it is. I think that's something you just pick up over time that obviously listen to the person and try to support them as much as you can. Erm…with friends it was more like trouble with boyfriends or family problems and stuff. Yeah, I remember my sociology teacher talking about the relationship you have with your parents, like your mum for example and saying or em usually it's the children the child who goes to the parents to offload and say this happened at school or I am worried about this and stuff, but she goes on do you find yourself at your listening to your parents and everyone in the class was like yeah. So, obviously it's a two way thing but I don't mind that at all I think it's quite important and as I said my mum my mum was very close to her mum and she used to offload on her but now she hasn't got her she does it to me but I don't mind 'cos when I'm old if I've got children hopefully I would like to do the same (laughs) so there's no reason not to be there for your mum because your mum does everything for you.*

*B: Yeah, well that's lovely. And like you say that is just something that you just pick up isn't it…you are not taught it…it just happens.*

*M: Yeah*

*B: Erm…could you just tell me a little bit more about primary school*

*M: My primary school erm yeah and what …*

*B: just sort of what were your favourite lessons and did you have any teachers that you used to really like.*

*M: OK, well I really used to like primary schools for all of it. Oh er…my favourite lessons were probably erm PE and er we had like this art erm art erm design I used to really love it like at Christmas time we used to design Christmas cards and they taught us all different ways of like arts and crafts and how to design cards and things and nice messages. I remember doing the story a book about Jesus every year what happened like in the stable (both laugh) honestly I remember acting it out too as well I used to love that. My favourite teachers erm…I used to like a teacher called Mrs. Riley. She had got us in year 3. I think I liked her because of the way she looked. She'd got like curly hair quite short and cute she was just a nice teacher, she was quite young too. One of my worst teachers was erm she was actually a nice person, but we used to be really so of her because she was really strict. She was called Mrs. Starkey and when she used to shout like her face used to go really red and she used to start to spit and stuff and we used to go whoooo we we…I went back to visit them like when I was in year 9 at secondary school and they were all really happy and stuff and it was oh it is nice to see you and I remember one teacher who I used to really hate, well I really quite liked him but then he seemed, he seemed to get quite rude in a way erm like, for example like I said I'm a Muslim and there are certain things we can't eat, you know our diet*

*B: Yes*

*M: So, we were making cookies one day and there was an ingredient in there I can't remember what it was maybe gelatine or something and we were saying a certain few of us we were saying we had made the cookies but we couldn't eat them and he was like ohhhh haha and eating them in front of us. Another teacher would have just said oh don't worry and even given us something else to eat instead or not just…*

*B: Just not make a big deal out of it*

*M: Exactly…I remember I had a Sikh friend and she she like out of respect for us she didn't eat it like I'm I'm with you kind of thing which was nice. So that was a bit weird and I didn't like him after that and then I heard some other stories about him as well when I left school so I was like oh forget about him because he's weird.*

*B: Yeah*

*M: Erm, but yeah I really loved primary school I was like I had a really big group of friends a big group of friends I really liked and erm I didn't used to wear a headscarf then (laughs) so I used to get quite a lot of attention from boys*

*B: (laughs)*

*M: Erm, I really liked that and erm there were loads of boys that I really liked as well and it's like ooooh but like when you get older it's like well they are not that nice (laughs) yeah. And what else yeah I enjoyed being with all my friends, taking part in like parties and Christmas parties and stuff and er yeah I remember when I was in reception and when it was your birthday we had a big calendar and we had to move like your name tag from one side of the room to the other just a board to show that I was 4 and now I am 5*

*B: Oh, right*

*M: Yes, I remember our our coat pegs used to have like our name on a picture like a sunflower or something, I think mine was a sheep oh I remember learning how to spell my name as well*

*B: Oh, right*

*M: Yeah so*

*B: Oh tell me about that*

*M: We used to have a like a this like a bookmark with our name written in a really black felt thing and we used to see it all the time and I remember one day I just I used to practice in the sand first writing my name and I got half of it like C K I and then one day I was able to write the whole thing and I was like so happy, oh I don't need my card anymore you know the felt tip card cos oooh and I was just really happy.*

*B: And did the teacher help you with that as well?*

*M: Erm…*

*B: Or did you do it just by copying?*

*M: I think I just did it by copying yeah but I remember showing it to the teacher and being really happy oooo and stuff so yeah….*

*B: Oh…looking after nephews is next*

*M: (Laughs) Yeah, I just remember erm with my like my cousins live in London and when they had their children they came down to Bradford and er… I just remember holding erm the baby…he's called Usman one of the youngest ones and erm I had to everyone was saying oh you have to support him properly and first I was sitting down with him 'cos it's more comfortable and then I walked around a while and I can just remember that (laughs)*

*B: Yes, and then you have got school again, learning how to do well at school and in exams.*

*M: Oooh yeah…erm that was just about erm like mainly that I came through my GCSEs trying really hard and stuff and I can remember like sometimes I would do a good piece of work and the teacher would read out whoevers work it was and without guessing the name, without saying the name and I remember at the end of the class one of the boys said oh it's either A or Jess, so then then they figured out it wasn't jess so it was me. And one thing I remember is I got my work marked and it was erm only a B and I was really disappointed because it was only a B and I wanted an A and they sent it off to be remarked by the examination board and it came back it was an A. That I wasn't my teacher wasn't in class so she wrote we had a substitute teacher so she wrote out everything we had to do and at the bottom she wrote congratulations A you got an A!*

*B: Aww, so it sounds like you had a good relationship with those teachers then, when you were doing your GCSEs?*

*M: Yeah, that's true I liked all my teachers in secondary school. They were all very helpful and I am doing this other job thing for the university and we get to go back to our school our secondary school to help children and whatever, so hopefully that will be nice I will see my teachers again*

*B: Yes, it will won't it. And to see the children too and then they will hopefully see you as a role model …that you have come to university and hopefully they will want to come as well.*

*M: Hopefully yes, it will be good.*

*B: And then housework…we have got housework next learning how to do housework and cook*

*M: Oh yeah (laughs) oh it's one of those things houseworks like …oh just you know just one of those things that's got to get done and you've got to take part in it as well as everyone else you can't just leave it to your mum and I've got two brothers and obviously they are lazy they don't do anything. And erm cooking…I always think my mum's right good because she never used to say oh come on and watch me cook but she used to like if I wanted to join in she wouldn't say oh get off the kitchen she would let me like experiment and stuff. That gave me an interest and erm so yeah, I started learning to cook from there and erm I practiced more and more and erm like erm and now I think I'm ok. (Laughs) But like you know we you know Asians we have chapattis*

*B: Yes, I like chapattis*

*M: and my aunties like say that it is very important that you learn to make chapattis and stuff and that stuck in my head and I wanted to like master making them and stuff and I think I am at that stage now where I'm like ok I don't have to worry about that.*

*B: I wish I could make chapattis…I have to buy them (laughs)*

*M: (Laughs) It's not that hard*

*B: Isn't it?*

*M: No, no*

*B: What do you have to do?*

*M: erm just flour erm you have to buy the flour from the Asian shop special chapatti flour and then erm…. just flour, you put a bit of oil in it and boiling water and you make it into like a dough but not too soft and then what you do you knead it with your fists you knead it and knead it but you don't want to get it too soft 'cos it gets sticky*

*B: Yes, yes*

*M: a medium kind of feel then you just put a bit of water not water butter on it to keep it soft…Flora, that Flora and then you tear it up and make it into like little circular discs like and then erm put a bit of flour on the table and roll it out with a pin and erm one of the main problems is getting it into a circle that takes practice and if you have the dough soft enough when you put it into the pan a flat frying pan em it should air air kind of goes into the chapatti and makes it rise*

*B: And makes it light?*

*M: yes yes and that's what cooks it inside*

*B: Right*

*M: So the you cook it on one side and then the other and the more spots it has the better you know those little black bits*

*B: yes*

*M: And, and there's different styles we are from like well from Africa we are Gudjerati, my dad's granddad was born in India, but Pakistani people they make it with cold water and they sometimes leave the dough in the fridge for a day or so before they roll it and the textures really different theirs are quite thicker. Ours are quite thin and very small whereas Pakistanis have bigger and thick…it just depends how you like them.*

*B: Right. It sounds like a real skill you know one that is sort of handed down from mums to daughters kind of thing?*

*M: Oh, yes that's true but nowadays there's like a you can go to the shop and buy a dough makers instead of having to knead it you can just put it in the machine and it does it. That's ok but it's not like doing it yourself when you make it yourself it's better. And I know like in Morocco they their tradition is they make bread you know home made bread*

*B: Yes*

*M: and theirs is like a similar method kneading it and (laughs)*

*B: Oh it's really interesting….. Its bowling next…you have bowling*

*M: Oh yes that's just when you go like with your cousins altogether and they say do it like this and you always get it wrong and they always feel really heavy don't they (laughs) but, yes that was just something that I wanted to learn how to do and have fun and participate with everyone else.*

*B: yes, it is a very social thing. What about learning to drive…what can you tell me about that?*

*M: (Laughs) I had 2 instructors and the first one I didn't like her very much. She was a very nice person like chatty and really nice but she used to take time off my lessons like drop me off 10 minutes early and pick me up 10 minutes late and like fill up the petrol while I was in the car and she shouldn't be doing things like that. And she was taking me reeeeaaaalllly slowly you know through the processes all my friends you know from their fifth lessons they were on manoeuvres you know and just driving and it. So…I had to cancel with her she wasn't very happy and I just had to say I couldn't afford it but I think she knew I just didn't know what to say and I didn't want to hurt her feelings or whatever so I just had to say I am sorry and that and erm she wasn't right happy with me because I had got one lesson that I had already paid for and she cancelled it and sent the cheque back. I got another instructor and she was really good I really liked her she taught me all the manoeuvres on the first lesson and erm …yeah I had driving lessons with her and I had my first test and I failed that, and I was was quite upset but I was only like one or two marks off I wasn't too disheartened because I thought well it's kind of hard to pass first time and then erm the second time I had a really nice examiner she was called Joy she was so nice and erm I passed it easily I only had 4 minors. I thought she was trying to trick me she was talking to me loads I thought was she trying to distract me (laughs.) But erm and my instructor was like I*

*knew you were going to pass and she was already waiting in the pass bay if you see what I mean. Like for m and now I have passed like with my instructor just having little chats. I suppose at the end when you get more confident with your driving rather than them telling you what to do it's kind of more like a social thing*

*B: Yes, yes*

*M: So erm I haven't got my own car so I haven't driven since my test which was like in September so I kind of miss it but I'm sooo happy that it's over it's very very expensive.*

*B: Yes, it is very expensive. So, you got on much better with your second instructor?*

*M: Instructor, yeah…I mean I still remember my first instructor I had this outfit on one lesson and she was like oh I like your belt, I like your coat she was a very nice person it is just the teach the teaching I didn't feel was too good*

*B: Yeah, yeah…because she wasn't moving you on fast enough?*

*M: Yeah, I mean I didn't I waited for a while I thought well fair enough I might not be good enough to move on but then I though oh well it's getting a bit much now the main thing was taking the time out like ten minutes late and she used to annoy me I'd be like waiting for her and she'd be outside and I could see her and you know how some of them give you missed calls to like let you know they are there well she used to annoy me she used to just wait there like you could have just miss called me so I know to come out. Anyway, never mind.*

*B: She doesn't sound very professional does she…*

*M: No, no*

*B: Erm, and then we've got university…what can you tell me about university?*

*M: Oh… I don't know what to say, obviously it's really different. I think the main difference is the independence, like motivating yourself, getting all your reading done and things like that. And obviously the subject politics I have never done it before and some parts of it I found it really difficult like law and the courts and stuff and stuff like that. Erm I like I really like it meeting all the people and all the different age groups and international students. Also I like that they have already got a prayer facility, they have got a room. In school we had to like use a teachers classroom and sometimes they were really busy and you didn't want to disturb them. Also, it's really nice sort of the independence and there's lots of cafes around and erm you can do your own thing. And a lot of the lecturers are really laid back, which I think is kind of ok for me because I'm not the kind of person to just stop attending lessons I'm quite into my work. But I think that I might feel a bit more comfortable approaching my school teachers about work than my lecturers. Don't get me wrong I do approach them, but I might be a bit shy about going back to them I would prefer to ask my friends or something like that. Whereas in school I knew I could go back as many times as I want and they would always be there. I'm sure these lecturers would be as well, it's just that you know.*

*B: There's just something…*

*M: Yes, there's just something yes, but like I say it's not like having the same relationship with your teacher, they know you and (laughs) but yeah, I do, I do enjoy university. Like I say, I am luck I have my brothers to take me sometimes or if not I catch the bus with my friends so that's ok. Or sometimes I like just read on the bus, I do some work, so that's ok.*

*B: So you are enjoying it then?*

*M: I'm enjoying it yeah, it's a new experience and I think it's going to go really quickly. And I was so happy that I managed to get out of (home town name) 'cos I just wanted like a new scene from where I lived ,cos I've got some friends from (home town) who went to (hometown) university and they are like oh you just see the same people all the time and it gets on my nerves. Erm, I'm still in touch with my old friends but it's good to make new friends too.*

*B: Yeah…broaden your horizons*

*M: Yeah and the shopping's better here too!*

*B: (Laughs) Erm how do you find the teaching differs at university compared with what it was like when you were doing A levels?*

*M: Erm…..erm….eh….well I think A levels, erm even though they are much more difficult than GCSEs, the teachers, they give you everything they cover everything you need whereas in the lectures some people for example Dave will give you the handout otherwise you have to get it yourself with other, other lecturers. Also, it's very much like they sort of talk at you and there's not much interaction and the classes are sssooooo much bigger so it's not like when you are in your classroom and you know everyone and you know it's alright to speak out without putting your hand up because erm and each person knows each others personality you know. Whereas here you I'm always unsure whether to put my hand up and do it before I speak and you know things like that.*

*B: Yes*
*M: So it's not as laid back as, although it is laid back in some sense – you can do whatever, but in the sense of I have been a bit more wary of people in respect of them more…I don't just butt in or shout out whatever. And then sometimes I think oh gosh that person is so clever and I'm so… dumb. You know what I mean they are so chatty and always putting their hand up. Whereas in school it's the same thing you get the same kind of people in school but you know who they are and… I dunno it's it's just a bit different.*
*B: You know them better and interact with them more?*
*M: Yes exactly and even if you know oh that person's going to get a better grade than you its ok, you still try and everything. But this way, at university it's a bit like more intimidating like oh no what if they get it and I am just so DUMB! You know that sort of feeling…or not doing that well, like in school I did quite well, but at university what if I don't do that well I'm a bit scared but I don't know how will my work come out like is it not at a professional level yet, do you know what I mean.*
*B: Yes, I know exactly what you mean. Well, I think that's it isn't it apart from to ask if there are any other learning experiences that you think have impacted on you?*
*M: Not that I can think of no*
*B: Well overall what do you think helps you to learn?*
*M: I think experience helps…erm if you are going to do something new you can ask someone who has been there before for some advice also, learning- to just go and do it and if you make a mistake you learn from that…and just asking questions and like I said with essays if I do rubbish well at least I will know what I have got to do and try to do better.*
*B: Yes, take notice of your feedback and all that. Is there anything that you think hinders your learning…what would stop you being able to learn?*
*M: Erm, erm, I don't know it depends because you are always learning. If you are thinking about academic learning if you have something on your mind or something about home or hungry or not well that would stop me. But if you are thinking about social aspects I think you are always learning all the time and I think it helps travelling and meeting people helps you instead of being stuck on your own and not seeing anything different.*
*B: Yes…….. I think that's about everything, thanks.*


Rose's Transcript

B: Right, the first thing on y*our time line is learning to talk, so can you actually remember learning to talk?*
*R: I can't remember my first words but what I can remember is sort of my mum praising me, I can remember praise you know for words off my mum and dad because I had a really good vocabulary from a very young age so*
*B: Right, yeah so you remember the praise and I suppose that made you feel…*
*R: As though I wanted to learn more and more*
*B: Yeah, so that's a really early experience isn't it. And then you have got primary school what can you remember about that?*
*R: You see primary school for me was really a mixed thing because part of me really loved it because I went to the local sort of primary and the catchment area was literally 4 streets it was that small. The way the streets went they were sort of in an arc and that was the catchment are so you sort of knew everybody so that was good. But then I also got picked on at primary school so I have good and bad memories and I do think that effects you being picked on because you are really miserable and you don't want to do anything*
*B: Yeah, I suppose there is a certain anxiety as well you know actually going to school*
*R: Exactly because you could say something and are they gunna pick up on that and so you stayed quiet as much as you could.*
*B: Aww. And you know with it sort of being just a small catchment area as well just 4 streets, were those children who were there at school were they there at home time as well*
*R: Yeah, you couldn't get away.*
*B: Did you not have any friends at home?*
*R: well cos on my street I was fine 'cos it was mainly my friends on my street and I was best friends with a girl 2 doors up so I was fine with things like that but it was when you wanted to go out 'cos at the bottom of the street there was a park so you'd all go to the park because your*

*parents let you because it was that close and so that's when you became a bit back because that's when every kid who went to your school was at the park.*

*B: I suppose there was no escape from it really*

*R: No not really*

*B: That's awful…so you know how you said you had a best friend do you think having that friend helped you?*

*R: Yeah cos she was a lot bigger I was quite a weak child I was tiny because I have always been really short really short at school and she had a growth spurt so she was the big child and she stood up for me basically telling them where to go basically so that helped.*

*B: Oh, that's good. Did she not get picked on as well?*

*R: No, because she was she was a big girl*

*B: Yeah, and did you pal about with her at school as well*

*R: Yeah there was a group of us it definitely got better towards the end because there was a big gang of us and when we left we said oh we are going to stay friends forever but it didn't happen.*

*B: So why do you think you became a big gang towards the end*

*R: I think we realised that we had to grow up it sort of became a thing where we are too old for this 'cos it was stupid arguments that got blown out of control*

*B: So the other kids stopped picking on you and you became friends? So you say it effected your learning then as well?*

*R: Yeah, I didn't really want 'cos our teacher was very encouraging that we should all give an answer and speak up and I didn't really want to because you would say something and if it sounded too clever then that would be something to pick on so you sort of kept your head down*

*B: Right, yeah. And is that one of the reasons you think that you got picked on because they thought you were too clever?*

*R: Yeah, cos I just had a knack I like academics I just had a knack for it so I would progress further than some of the other children so that would be …*

*B: A reason to pick on you?*

*R: Yeah, the thing is some people exploit others insecurities to make them feel better.*

*B: That's it yeah, yeah. So, what was your relationships with teachers like at primary school?*

*R: I have to say there was one teacher who had the biggest impact on my life completely and I actually went back and saw her just before I went to uni with a really big bunch of flowers and a thank you. Cos we had a specialist art teacher which was unusual in our are but we had a specialist art teacher and she was very unconventional she had jet black hair and purple lips and liked bands like The Cure and Pearl Jam and stuff like that and she told me before I left primary school=ol she said You will be a leader, you will not be a sheep. You will get out of this place this tiny thing and you will become a big fish in a big pond and I didn't believe her at the time I though yeah, not gunna happen but then looking back I was like…*

*B: Yeah, she saw the potential in you right back then.*

*R: Yes, so that was one of the best, looking back on her encouragement and she gave me a way out of the bullying because she ran an art club and there was a long list to join the art club but she pushed my name forward, so that gave me more friends because we all had an interest in art and that was different years as well so the older children would look out for me as well so it was definitely an influence.*

*B: So she sort of helped you to get more of a social life as well as the art side*

*R: Yes, brilliant*

*B: Were there any teachers that you didn't sort of get on with at junior school?*

*R: Yes, there was one teacher, because I think for her she was teaching the wrong year because they didn't stick to one year, they moved around constantly. And year 4, for her she was better sort of teaching older children like year 6 with year 6 she was fine, but she didn't know how to control the younger children so she would shout a lot and if you didn't get enough work done in a certain amount of time she would make you stay in at break time to do it. And at 8 years old you didn't understand what was…*

*B: Required of you no, no. So, did she sort of shout at you specifically then or were you just one of those she …*

*R: She shouted at me specifically because I am dyslexic and so my handwriting is…it's a good job there are computers here. But it just looked like I was sloppy so she'd have a go at me for that cos my presentation skills weren't great*

*B: But at the end of the day does it matter because like you say we have got computers nowadays haven't we. So, did they actually diagnose it eventually your dyslexia?*

*R: I was 16. It wasn't until I went to college and I was doing an English A level and I was doing brilliantly with the oral stuff but when it came to exams I wasn't doing that well and my English teacher was like we have to discover what's wrong because it didn't quite connect that an A grade student when you are doing it orally, but when you are writing it you are getting ds and cs so that's when my teacher told the head of department and when they assessed me they said I was dyslexic*

*B: How did you feel when they told you that?*

*R: It made sense it actually clicked and it was like that's why these thing happened, why my handwriting is like it is and I can't spell to save my life so it made sense*

*B: Was it sort of a relief as well in a way?*

*R: Yeah it was a relief but it was also an embarrassment because I felt thick, I did I felt thick like I was an idiot*

*B: Oh, and really it's the opposite isn't it that you are intelligent but that you have this disability. So, you must have had an awful lot of frustration when you have been growing up you know going through school.*

*R: Well, the first thing every parents evening was she is a bright student but her handwriting and her spelling need work and it was through every report and it was exactly the same from every teacher. Handwriting and presentation need work.*

*B: So then they hadn't clicked that you had got …*

*R: Well, you see I was probably quite a love for academic subjects I probably shouldn't say so but that's why they were sort of like that and also because I read well. I have always had an older reading age a good few levels older, so they just didn't see it as dyslexia because I could read. They just thought I was being lazy*

*B: Yeah, your intelligence has sort of compensated for your dyslexia along the way…so you have always been able to read well?*

*R: Yeah, yeah, never had any problems reading, still don't*

*B: That's fascinating…how did you learn to read?*

*R: You know the colour coded books where you go through all the different levels*

*B: Yeah the reading scheme*

*R: Yeah, I sort of did that in school, I started off at level one and then within a week they had moved me right up and then towards the end when we were leaving primary school all the rest of my class were on like level 9 or 10 and I was on the proper fiction books they ran out of levels so they were like giving me fiction books to read, because you were given a book once a week and you had to read to parent and they had to sign off that you had read.*

*B: Did you get a lot of help with your reading at home?*

*R: Yes, my mother loves books absolutely loves them and she's passed that onto me my dad doesn't read at all but my mum she would encourage me.*

*B: When you were learning to read did you used to use phonics…do you know what I mean by phonics… did you used to sound words out?*

*R: Yeah I used to sound out*

*B: Did you use the context as well, you know the meaning*

*R: Yeah I used to do both, do both*

*B: That's brilliant…Right, here you have riding a bike. Who taught you to ride a bike?*

*R: My dad…it took him a while and he swore that day that he would never learn me to drive (laughs) you see it took him a while so after that he said mother's learning you to drive. Cos where we lived there was an old abandoned hospital that had been knocked down years before but they had done nothing with the land. The foundations were still there but it was flat so it was literally like an enclosed square and you could just go round and round and round and you didn't have to bother because no cars could go down there there was no traffic so it was the safest place to learn a child how to ride a bike and we used to go down there every Saturday with my dad and my best friend cos my best friends mum was trying to teach her as well so we could learn together and our families were friends so..*

*B: Right, yeah…did that help do you think having your friend there as well?*

*R: Yeah, because the thing is it egged you on the competition because if she learned something before I did I was like I wanted to do that first. So it definitely helped, the competing with one another. Who would get the stabilizers off first and who got the big girl bike.*

*B: (laughs) so how old were you when you first learned to ride a bike?*

*R: Just after I got glasses so about 9 or 10. I can remember this orange bike. I don't know why I picked it. This bright orange bike!*

*B: So everybody could see you coming*

*R: Yes, (laughs) inaudible*

*B: Yes, so then we have got secondary school, what can you tell me about that?*

*R: Well, I had 2 because we left for Manchester half way through year 8 so I had 1 which was full of my school friends. There was 3 main high schools in London so therefore the class was cut into thirds so my class had some of my junior school classmates, but I didn't really hang out with them because I was in their form but I didn't like the form I didn't get on with the teacher so they moved me to a different form so I had to make new friends in that form but it worked out in my favour because one of the girls I made friends with I am still in contact with we are still friends even though that was 7 years ago and we still go out regularly.*

*B: So, you made a really good friend. You say you moved because you didn't get on with your teacher…can you tell me about that?*

*R: I think it was because he sort of he was very he preferred boy s and we only had 4 monitors and it changed every term and he'd only pick boys to do it and girls never really got a chance in his form. So that was why I asked to be moved so they put me in with the music teacher who was very fair to all you know much better.*

*B: Didn't the other girls mind not getting picked?*

*R: They just didn't want the responsibility whereas I was very sort of bolshy I want to do it stuff like that.*

*B: How did he react when you said that you wanted to move?*

*R: I think he was grateful 'cos I am a mouthy cow really. I am a very bolshy person and I like to put my viewpoint across so I think he was kind of grateful that I was leaving his class*

*B: Yeah, sort of made his life easier? So you got on really well with the music teacher then…what about the other teachers?*

*R: I sort of got on well with all the creative people like my English teacher and he was brilliant he was an older guy so you wouldn't have thought he would be but he was an older Welsh guy called Mr Stone who had a really really annoying accent and I used to call him (inaudible) and he said you are probably the only student in this class who knows who that is. But he was brilliant because he was firm, but he was very fair and if you there was another English teacher and she didn't think it was appropriate that I was reading animal farm she said she's too young to be reading animal farm but he said that I could read older material, he said well she understands it and he was very encouraging.*

*B: That's good, so he encouraged you with your reading. What about your written work with your English?*

*R: Again it was the same with my handwriting it was and my spelling was awful, but what I was trying to say and if I had have spelled it right it was good, so I'd get average marks because they had to balance the good work with the sloppy spelling and handwriting. So I was getting Cs and Bs.*

*B: So, did they not pick up on the dyslexia then?*

*R: No not at all, not until I went to college, obviously they knew something was not right.*

*B: Mmm, so once you went to college and they had diagnosed your dyslexia did you get any help at all?*

*R: I got one of those overlays*

*B: The coloured ones?*

*R: Yeah, the coloured ones and all my exam papers were printed on coloured paper.*

*B: Did it help that?*

*R: **A lot***

*B: Did it*

*R: My English A level grade went from an E and my final grade was a high C and for my theology I was getting Cs and Ds and I ended up getting a Band for sociology I ended up getting a B and so it's little things but…*

*B: So how does it help then?*

*R: Dyslexic people can't see stark white properly…their brain doesn't quite compute stark white if if you go through different spectrums your brain will pick up on certain colours and mine picks up on purple and so if you put a purple overlay on the stark white your brain picks up on it better.*

*B: Yeah, so you can decode the words better?*

*R: Yeah and other times if you re proof reading your work it then helps you pick up any mistakes you've made you know that's not spelled right or …*

*B: So do you use that now then?*

R: Yes, in lectures and stuff. And the lecturers have been really good 'cos they print me off a copy of their power point slides on the different coloured paper especially Dave, he has been really good about it so he will like give me a special copy or he will warn me if he can't and I will bring my overlay.

B: Right, that's really good. So, is there anything else about secondary school ?

R: Well, I changed in year eight to one up in Manchester and that was again a mixed experience 'cos I had better teachers. Again it was the creative teachers 'cos again I seem to get on better with creative people and I had a brilliant English teacher called Miss Hart who was extra encouraging because I got, even in the practice GCSE paper I got a C and a D and she said we can get it up to 2, Cs and she gave me lots of extra help and I ended up getting an A and a B.

B: That's brilliant.

R: Another reason why I didn't get twigged was because I was getting A's and B's, but because I am from the South and this was a Northern school, I got the Mick taken out of me I even got told to go back to my own country once I was like ugh?

B: (laughs)

R: (laughs) ok, so yeah that was the thing, but again I had a group of friends who could see past the accent.

B: Yeah, so did you find it easy to make friends once you came up here?

R: Yeah…there was a language barrier cos like of slang…I have absolutely no idea what you are saying but then in our school we had student librarians so 6 or 7 students at a time would go to the library at break time and sometimes lunch times and you'd monitor what kids were doing on the computers making sure they were doing work and not playing around and I got that. And I got that one or two months after I came to the school, so that gave me a great place to go if something… cos I could always go to the library. Even if I wasn't on duty I could still go in to sit and have my lunch and talk with the other librarians so (inaudible) and I had authority (laughs)

B: Sounds like books have been your saving grace all the way through.

R: Oh yeah, yeah

B: So then we have got learning sign language.

R: Not fluent, but a little bit. There was this course that was offered to me in my school because I couldn't do languages 'cos being dyslexic I couldn't master English never mind doing French or German, so because they could see I was really struggling they offered me another side from year nine because you hd to do a language of some description up until year 9 which you could then carry on to GCSE. So they offered me sign language which I then took another course with the British Deaf Institute. I can sign, sort of, but I'm not fluent.

B: Yeah, and did you put it into practice at all?

R: Erm occasionally because I'm learning I'm taking another course to get fluent because with the current job I have now it will be good to use…

B: What job are you doing?

R: I am an invigilator so if I can get fluent I can be with the deaf children cos if I've got that I can help translate and interpret

B: Yeah, yeah, that's really good. You have got job training here so is that for your invigilating?

R: Well for my first job I worked in a charity shop so I was trained how to use the tills and price things and stuff like that you know in retail.

B: How did you learn to do that?

R: Erm I used to shadow someone the first few times I went in and then I was on my own (laughs)

B: Right, so they showed you what to do and then you picked it up and eventually you could do it by yourself.

R: Yes, because they had to go upstairs to work on the finance side of things and they needed someone downstairs in the shop to do the till and that, I loved it.

B: Did you?

R: Yep, cos I took a gap year between college and uni and I loved it.

B: What did you love about it?

R: I don't know what it is but I have always got on with people older than me I don't know what it is just all my friends have to be older than me I don't know…just general . I don't connect to people my age very well and er there they were all older than me and they wanted to mother me but it was great and there was one boss which was Warren but that was because he was

*paid to be there cos that was his job and the rest of us were volunteers and that would be quite fun cos 2 of us would be downstairs and we could gossip*

*B: So that was all voluntary then, you did a full year voluntary?*

*R: Yes. I did invigilating in the summer. MY mum works at college so she got me the invigilating job*

*B: Does your mum teach?*

*R: No, she works in the exams department yeah so she's always stressed with exams but it's a different kind of stress.*

*B: Yeah. Have you got any brothers or sisters Rose?*

*R: No. I got a lot of attention when I was little I think that's why I'm a bossy cow (laughs)*

*B: (laughs) So then we've got college. What can you tell me about that?*

*R: The best, uni and college are my best educational experiences definitely.*

*B: Why do you think that?*

*R: Well, college prepared me for uni in certain subjects. I did ancient history and instead of the teacher talking away like you'd get lectured like here, she'd give you the bare bones of what you needed to know and then she would be like right you need to read this book, this book this book, this chapter, this chapter, this site and read and then come back and tell me what you have learned. Because she would be like at uni you are not going to be spoon fed, you are not going to pass just on what they teach you. So she was preparing us for that. There are two colleges in our town there is Berry College where my mum works which is for those that do vocational stuff like hairdressing, bricklaying and then you have Cross College where you do A levels, only A levels, so it was sort of assumed if you went to Cross that you were going to university. So that's why she was preparing us for it. And I had the best teachers as well there wasn't any teacher that I didn't get along with*

*B: What makes a good teacher in your view?*

*R: Well who I had for ancient history she was very preparing us for uni and then thingy…I did theology and philosophy and both the teachers I had for that were again they were very…you could approach them, you weren't scared to approach them. You didn't feel thick if you didn't get something. They were very understanding and yeah, like I say, when my dyslexia was diagnosed they were so helpful because I had to try and memorise bible passages (laughs) for theology and my memory is shocking so she gave me when you've got like…every good boy deserves…*

*B: Yeah mnemonics*

*R: She gave me them for all the different passages she definitely…the theology she definitely made the effort to make sure I could pass by giving me different things to help me.*

*B: Yeah, that's great. So did you have a really good relationship with all your teachers there?*

*R: Yeah*

*B: They all sort of knew everybody?*

*R: Yeah…cos it was a really small college it was bigger than my school but it wasn't that much bigger there wasn't that many people because you had to get certain grades to get in.*

*B: Yeah. Did you have a lot of friends at college?*

*R: We had a massive group of friends at college (laughs) we were called the under the stairs gang because the way the college worked there was this building and it had this great massive gap under the stairs and big glass windows and we all used to hang out there cos it was too cold to stay outside most of the time so we everybody knew us as the under the stairs group and there was about thirty or forty of us in this group and we were all great friends and we used to meet up in holidays and stuff .*

*B: Yep, did you find you could learn from the other students as well?*

*R: Oh yeah, cos we were all doing a different mixed bag we were all doing different things. Even the students who I had lectures er classes with one person would get one thing and maybe the others didn't and so then they'd explain it to you and it's much better when your peers are explaining it to you than when the teacher is explaining it because they can put it in language that you can understand and give you analogies that your teacher wouldn't think of. The thing is we would help each other out because there was this one boy who never wrote down his homework cos he was always asking if we had it so it got to the point where the teacher would say could you write this down and he went yes and have you got it and he went I've got it down! (laughs)*

*B: Did you find that you were the one helping a lot of the time?*

*R: Yeah I helped, but there was me and this other boy Connor who were the main ones that were explaining things but we definitely all helped each other and there was no competition*

*whereas at school there was always competition to be the best even though we were all working to the same goal because you would get grades and some had higher grades and some had lower grades, but it was all about getting the grades to get into your chosen university.*

*B: What made you come to Focal university town?*

*R: It's pretty random really but I had a history teacher at school in year 9 and she went here and I was talking about different degrees I possibly wanted to do and they were all humanities based and she said Focal university town has got one of the best humanities departments so we wrote around the end of year 12 and I fell in love with the place I fell in love with the town, I fell in love with the uni and I said to my parents this is it and they said you need a back up but I said no this is it, this is the one that. And I met the teaching staff and I met Dave and Dave made a great impression on my Dad and so my Dad said you have to come here.*

*B:Yeah, you sort of knew…*

*R: I was told that as soon as you walk into a place you knew. Also, it's only half an hour on the train so it's near enough to get home if I want to but far enough away that my parents can't just drop in.*

*B: Yeah, so you have got a little bit of independence.*

*R: I can live away cos a lot of my friends went to Manchester and they stay at home and I couldn't do that. This is the time where you go and learn what you can do. I learned how to make spg. bol.(laughs)*

*B: (laughs)*

*R: I have learned how to make mince go a llloooonnng way.*

*B: (laughs) how did you find it then moving away from home to come here?*

*R: I couldn't do halls, I knew that or a fact, I remember that was one downside of Focal university town the halls weren't nice.*

*B: No, the ones I've looked round haven't been.*

*R: (Place name) halls just aren't nice so, but when I came here I had 2 friends who they didn't take gap years*

*B: Right*

*R: I took a gap year and they didn't… who I met really randomly at open day…literally met them at open day and kept in contact. They did the first year and I didn't and they had a house and they needed another person and I said I will do that.*

*B: Yes, oh, that was handy that. I suppose it was good having someone who was already established here and you could just slot in.*

*R: It was a gamble because we didn't really know each other, we had literally only met on open day and kept in contact via facebook and texting and that was it…it was a complete gamble but it paid off really well and they have become really close now.*

*B: My daughters like that with her flatmates.*

*R: We have family dinners every Sunday in the week we are usually all in and out and cooking on our own but on a Sunday we sit down and all eat at the same time and have a chat and make sure we have caught up with everything.*

*B: That's lovely. So, how did it feel then moving away, even though you had got that sort of base…*

*R: The first night one of the girls came first and as I say she had been there in the house on her own and the others came on the Saturday and when my parents left that feeling …(laughs) I mean it didn't matter that I was happy I was excited Kelly was here and that was fine…that drop in the stomach my parents have gone away for the first time and they have let me here. So that…it lasted for about a day and then I soon, cooking for myself and the lectures started and so that wasn't that bad and then you are so busy you you don't notice it.*

*B: Yeah and I suppose like you say you knew they weren't that far away..*

*R: It was half an hour half an hour on the train.*

*B: Yeah so you could easily get home if you wanted to visit. Do they sometimes come to visit you too?*

*R: They came for my Dad's birthday and decided to take my whole house out so they sort of embraced the fact that I had moved out, I didn't ask them to but they do that occasionally. My dad teaches as well because he teaches in security he goes around teaching this particular course you know the license you have to have if you are a bouncer, door person we don't call them bouncers but we don't need to go there but he has taught in Focal university town a few times and he will take me out for a meal on the night, so I do see them a fair bit.*

*B: That's good, yeah and so what about your actual course then.*

*R: Oh, my course, I absolutely love it.*
*B: Why?*
*R: Because I have got great lecturers. The lecturers are fantastic and I have always been political always so it's just and it's learning and I love to learn and I love academics and thing and I have got great people on the course cos it's great to be on a thing where people want to be there that's been the problem throughout. People being forced to be there they they don't enjoy it but they have to be there so you never really got the proper learning experience because they had to shut the other people up. I remember in high school my teacher got to the point where she literally got the five of us that wanted to learn to the front and ignored the rest of the class and sat down with us 5 and went through the material because the others just weren't paying attention. So it's nice to be in a class where people are engaged and they want to be there and you get good valid points and good debate and ….*
*B: So, do you think that's down to the students then or down to the lecturers?*
*R: I think it's a combination of both to be honest. I know we have got a really dry boring lecturer cos we have had a guest lecturer a few ties because one of our lecturers left and went to work at another uni so we had the guest lecturer to sort of fill in the gaps and I know for a fact that you just sat there and your mind wanders. And you, the worst thing is having your mobile phone because you will text your friend if you are sat next to each other saying things you shouldn't be texting because your mind just wanders. I, they give us a break half way through because it is a 2 hour lecture and half the class will not come back after break.*
*B: Right, and is the guest lecturer from another university as well that's been brought in?*
*R: I don't know …I think a couple have been grad students from here and so…and one of them you can tell he has been given a book lecturing 101 and he has followed it to the letter (laughs) and it's sort of that's what they are gunna get.*
*B: Right so there is none of his own personality in there?*
*R: No because he has been told how to lecture and he just sticks to that whereas other lecturers like Dave he will go of on a tangent and he will go what was I talking about and he will go  right, and that's fun because….*
*B: yeah more engaging isn't it.*
*R: Yeah and you can take bets on how long it will be before he mentions (cartoon series)*
*B: (laughs) yeah*
*R: You can, you can take bets on how long it will take …or Hobbs*
*B: Yes, I think I have been in his Hobbs lecture (laughs)*
*R: He loves Hobbs, you can be talking about any philosopher and he will say and you can always do Hobbs and we have learned that  you don't do your presentation on Hobbs, and you don't  do your essay on Hobbs because there is nothing you can't tell him.*
*B: (Laughs) So have you done any …well you will have done some essays won't you?*
*R: Yeah*
*B: And how have you been going on with those?*
*R: The main two ones I was beyond happy with because I know this year doesn't count for anything but it counts for me because it proves I can do it. So like you have got some people who are just trying to get the bare minimum and once they have passed they are happy, I want to get a 2:1 this year.*
*B: You said about proving you could do it, was that a concern that you might not be able to?*
*R: Yeah, because I know dyslexia's not a bad thing as such , but it does knock your confidence and you do question your ability to do thing.*
*B: Yeah*
*R: And so I wanted to and like I said, it's a lot of reading, lots of essay work, lots of exams I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of doing it, capable of getting the degree I wanted to get.*
*B: yeah, yeah, so how did you feel when you got that first essay back and you got a good mark.*
*R: Well, it got emailed to me because some of them are electronic because you have to do electronic submissions now, but some of the lecturers just print them off anyway. But the irst one was emailed and I didn't realise, I thought it was something else and it came up and it was at like half nine in the morning cos I was getting ready for a lecture and my housemate was upstairs asleep and it came up and it was 65 and I was just YES!!!! Like that and my flat mate was like this betta be worth it you have just woke me up  (laughs) I was like you can go back to sleep it's fine.*
*B: So you were pleased then.*
*R: I was, I was dancing around the living room.*

*B: Cos it proved that you could do it?*

*R: Yeah, especially a subject I had not done cos a lot of my, the friends that are my age on my course did A level politics so it was good to prove that I could do a subject that I had not done before.*

*B: Did you find that difficult then not having any previous knowledge of subject area?*

*R: Only, it was only an issue with subject area because subject area …a lot of it (inaudible) and they have got previous knowledge of how like the legislation works how the executive works, so the first essay they like had a leg up which I didn't because they knew it. But for philosophy, I did philosophy A level I had that. With philosophy again it was take what you know and help others*

*B: Oh, that's good*

*R: So with subject area it was subject area and then I helped them with learning the Latin that you have to know.*

*B: That's brilliant. So you say you helped them, how did you help them what did you do?*

*R: Well Plato was the first philosopher you do and I did Plato for 2 years at A level so therefore when they didn't quite understand analogies that Dave gave and different concepts of Plato came up because I had done it for two years, I then explained it in a way my other teachers had explained it and I gave them the mnemonics and things like that. And then we had British Politics and with the legislature and executive work they explained it to me gave me breaks…so there's definitely lots of peer learning.*

*B: Yes, do you find that you have lots of discussions outside of class?*

*R: Oh yes, I tell you now on a Friday we have 3 hours between research and human rights and so we spend that 3 hours in the SU. And we talk about like especially because Dave like says you should read a  newspaper every day, we all read a different newspaper, not by choosing, we just do because we all have different political leanings and like different newspapers. So we are all debating the things we have read in the newspapers and what we think.*

*B: That's really good.*

*R: And that helps with our essays and stuff because something that we debated about a couple of weeks ago, I have an essay on policy and society and I can take their opinions and also use like the newspapers they have read.*

*B: Yeah, that's brilliant. So, what about the other teachers, you have mentioned Dave a lot, do you get on with everybody?*

*R: Yeah, like I say, there are guest lecturers because the lecturer left so we have got guest lecturers but now we have got Kevin who is a grad student he is taking us for the rest of the thing he reminds me of Alan Bennett. I told him it's just the way he speaks you expect him to…he like cream cracker under the sofa you just do, it's the way he talks (laughs.) But Sally, she does subject area, she's been really good and she's really funny and that helps she's very sarcastic and stuff like that and erm then we had Tim for (inaudible) and he's brilliant cos you can tell, the subjects he's taken us for it's things he has researched and he knows. Like he did devolution with us and perspectives of Britishness because he does all these perspectives of Britishness. He knows what he is talking about. Your head hurts after a while cos he's got 60 odd slides and he's just like we will just get through them all and you are like mmmm!*

*B: Trying to get everything down.*

*R: Yeah cos again there is writing on the slides but he will go on for 5 minutes about each slide.*

*B: And is it all interesting?*

*R: Oh yeah, cos its things you didn't know and it's like I should know that and but you find yourself like… did you know and no (laughs)*

*B: And so you don't get bored then even though it's a great big long lecture?*

*R: No because I think the lecturer is key because I think if it had been anybody else that …could…become …dry and you could become disengaged and you'd get bored.*

*B What is it then about Tim that engages you?*

*R: He is very charismatic, he's a very charismatic person and he is very funny and you know he knows what he's talking about and that helps because he is very knowledgeable and he will give you the extra information. He does pick on people which is funny because my friend she was doodling a dinosaur and he looked down at her and he said I don't believe I mentioned a dinosaur and you have a dinosaur. And she's going bright red and he said perhaps I'm a dinosaur oh, okey doke (laughs) which was so funny, so humour helps and I think the lecturers who I engage with are the ones who are funny. The only lecture I don't like is research because it is boring it is …it is not the lecturers fault but it is like paint drying …just boring, just*

*B: Yes, do you have to do a lot of statistics?*

*R: We are just on that what have just done a project using SPSS so I am like this what have I signed up for.*

*B: Yes, I used to have to do SPSS. I have gone on to qualitative research*

*R: You see that wasn't too bad for that we had to design it was about interviews and stuff so that wasn't too bad …it's the statistics bit that's …*

*B: Yeah reducing people to a number*

*R: Exactly, it's not what I went into subject area for; it's what I wanted to get away from treating everyone as a number*

*B: Yeah, yeah. So, throughout your life has there been anybody who has been really significant to your learning – I know you mentioned one of your teachers…is there anybody else?*

*R: Erm, I think at my secondary school there was a lot of teachers who were willing to put in the extra time which helped and occasionally the teachers didn't even technically teach me like, we in year 9 to year 11 maths was something that I was sort of good at and I was borderline because my school wasn't the greatest school they were more concerned with getting Cs. I was borderline with getting an A because it's maths it's not words. So, I had a teacher who gave me lessons once a week for an hour in her room because she was our substitute form teacher for a while and we got a rapport going. When I didn't understand something I would go along to ask her in form and it set up from there. So we literally had for an hour on a Friday from year 9 till year 11 when I got my GCSE and she would go through what the teacher had gone through that week. And like I say the English teacher gave me all the GCSE help me and my friend every week for like an hour after school from year 10 and 11. And then I had a history teacher the one that told me to come here. She didn't teach me but I was a mentor and I had to mentor one of the kids in her form and yeah, she gave my history help for GCSE when my history teacher wasn't available.*

*B: So someone has taken an interest in you all along, often going above and beyond what was required.*

*R: That history teacher was always like that because she didn't teach any year 10 or 11 because she was a newly qualified teacher so she only had the younger kids. But she still came to our GCSE results day to see how we had done whereas some of the teachers who had taught year 120 and 11 didn't bother turning up. So you definitely had some teachers who would go that extra step and then a few teachers who couldn't care less.*

*B: You know here do you think that there are certain ones that go above and beyond what's required?*

*R: Yeah, definitely there are. I mean Dave definitely is one of the ones. He definitely takes an interest in both academics and any personal problems you are having and he's really good at sorting them out really quickly which I thought was really good. Sally is very good at going above and beyond. Alan wasn't as much. Trying to find Alan was part of the problem.*

*B: Yeah, yeah……*

*R: Yeah I think because he taught another department as well and he was head of something, so he did have a lot on but it was trying to find Alan that was an issue. If you emailed him, you did get a response eventually but it didn't help if you had an immediate question whereas Dave would be back to you within half an hour. And you have him on facebook, you can message him on facebook if you are stuck and again he would respond whatever.*

*B: Yeah, that's really good because sometimes you just need that quick response to a query.*

*R: Yeah, I had that because we had to do portfolios and there had to be an article and I kept going over and I was like does it have to be exactly 500 and within 2 minutes he had emailed me back and answered it.*

*B: And what was the response?*

*R: That you could have the usual 10% either way. If you tell me to write 800,000 words on something and you waffle you make it more complicated than it needs to be but when you've only got 500 words to do …eh??*

*B: I know*

*R: You run out of words and then you are like I've got to do my conclusion now.*

*B: Yeah, yeah. So, you know your feedback or your essays. What's that like?*

*R: Really in depth, really cos you've got 4 different categories if your content was good, if your presentation was good if you had the right amount of sources and if your referencing was good. That's the bane of my life the referencing (laughs) and so you get good average whatever and whether you have met it or not and then your overall grade and then they will go through your essay and put that's a good point, that could have been clarified, that's irrelevant you know a full comment.*

*B: That's good and do you think that helps you then to progress?*

*R: Yeah, I do you take stuff from it.*

*B: Brilliant. I have not asked you about the job training because there is another job here between college and university.*

*R: That was the invigilating and the kids were barely younger than I was so the older invigilators were trying to sit me down for an exam and I was no no no no no .I'm one of you look, here's my ID badge. But obviously I had to do training and also because they do a lot of online testing at college because it is vocational there's a lot of things I had to learn how to set that up how to print off their results because they get their results instantaneously with being the online stuff . They do it and I am on the main computer and I can print off whether they have passed or failed…and then towards the end I had to learn how to do individual invigilation because there was …anyone with special requirements because having had them myself I was more equipped to understand about the different rooms and stuff.*

*B: Right. So, you know here then with exams coming up. Do you get any extra time or anything?*

*R: I can now, at college I didn't because I threw my back out…I threw 2 discs so I had to have rest breaks and you can only have one special arrangement per thing so I could have rest breaks or the 25% extra time . Now, because my back's sorted I've got the extra 25% time here so I will go into a special room that's got everybody else and get my 25%.*

*B: Do they give you any other concessions?*

*R: They are going to print my exam paper off on coloured and they allow me to have my overlay and stuff.*

*B: Yeah, do you feel that's enough.*

*R: Definitely because it's all I need. It's all I take with me when I go into lectures and I'm coping fine with that. They let me take a Dictaphone in lecturers so I can record it and I put it where they are lecturing. It doesn't help when they move I'm like I wish they would stay where they are. Dave moves so you will get your lecture and some of it is really loud and some of it is really soft…unhelpful!*

*B: Have you looked at Dave's lectures that he does on the podcasts?*

*R: yes and they are really helpful especially when I was doing my philosophy essay and I couldn't remember what he had said. It is better for me to hear it rather than to see it written down because if there's a lot of text I get confused.*

*B: yeah, so did you use them a lot then?*

*R: Yeah*

*B: Do you think the other students used them a lot?*

*R: A lot of my friends have used them. It's kind of weird because I sometimes forget to take them off my ipod so all of a sudden it's WHAT.*

*B: So, is it a requirement to watch them or are they just there in case you want to watch them.*

*R: It's just to give you a brief over…As Dave says it's not instead of the lecture it is just in case you forget things.*

*B: Right, brilliant.  Is there anything else…..thankyou.*


Will's interview transcript


*Will  had been very talkative whilst drawing his timeline. He is a mature student in his fifties who has recently lost his extremely successful business because his main client stole his intellectual property rights. He is keen to emphasise that he is a positive person however, and despite losing all his material assets he says that he is happy and now feels free. He said that he was written off at school because he failed the 11 plus and so went to do an apprenticeship. From there he started his own business and won engineering awards. The tape recorder had not been recording although I had thought that I had set it off. Will was very amused about this when I noticed and switched it on.*

*B: It's running now (laughs)…just start from apprenticeship (laughs)*

*W: (Laughs) The apprenticeship, yeah it was 4 years we used to think it was…it's not really…I enjoyed…I was actually on a technical even though I was on a ….secondary certificate of education I did an entrance exam and by…by default really I got to a technicians course, so I must have been borderline*

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*B: Yes*

*W: Even though my school education didn't take me …shouldn't take me there I got onto it, it was hellish the first year*

*B: Yes*

*W: I was I was just at the bottom trying to survive. It was a HUGE class as well it was above the cinema a HUGE class and one teacher was determined to thin it out and I sometimes wonder if it was organised better with more teachers I could have come through better with a bit of help. Having said that I ended up achieving a significant amount even on a global stage what I did do I w w w I've won global awards for technical innovation and and and so I didn't lose out in the end.*

*B: Right, yeah*

*W: I think the internet would have helped my abilities it it wasn't a happy period that when you are struggling when you are swamped and they wouldn't help you…they wanted to thin it out.*

*B: Right, so they wanted you to fail…*

*W: Yeah, yeah that's right, in fact that's just reminded me of another one that was when I went to a technical drawing class and erm there was sort of a it's not racist this a black man called Mr. White and that is how I remember him . He was…he was quite a brutal task master. I got through that but it was it was an experience.*

*B: Brutal in what way? Brutal that he wanted you to fail or…*

*W: Erm*

*B: Or brutal that he wanted you to succeed so he was being hard on you?*

*W: Erm, I think it was lack of empathy. Lacking in understanding of where you had come from lacking in finding out where the weaknesses were to underpin it…how can we move on through this difficult phase and go on to the next one. Where are the sticking points and he couldn't for one reason or another the skill wasn't in him or the will wasn't there yes…it was interesting (laughs) I did I did do a lot of drawing afterwards but I don't think it came from the course the skills I just sort of was dragged through and was taught a bit and life skills and now an engineer and then I had to bring them on (laughs) so, had to nurture them and I have always said this if anybody asks what is the biggest achievement there was one guy with no self esteem no self respect he just wired plugs in Brighouse he was a manic depressive as well but I knew that he was intelligent I used to go and pick him up to go to work and bring him in and erm he ended up being one of the top CAD drawers computer aided design he was it was there all the time*

*B: Mmm, but it just needed bringing out*

*W: Oh yeah, mostly I would say that's in most people as well (laughs) that was deep inaudible inaudible (laughs) it was good and you can't say it is entirely altruistic because you get a buzz you get a big buzz, that's my payback*

*B: Yeah*

*W: He's he's doing very well now as are quite a number of other people that I have brought on that wouldn't have done so it's a good feeling.*

*B: Yes, yes…brilliant. So, how did you make that transition then from being an apprentice yourself to having your own business?*

*W: Erm…well I left company's name and I had a few jobs and at the time obviously I had the idea of going elsewhere and I ended up working for a small company in town and I ended up taking a sales job and ended up being the director of the company. But that took me in a completely different direction which was purely engineering, electrical engineering but the writing was on the wall, the relationship had changed and you know as a director I didn't feel, I was quite happy moving on confident in what I do. If I am not happy I stay away for the sake of. So, then so I left and set up my own business interesting times.*

*B: What was that like then?*

*W: Erm overwhelming to start with, I I had done nothing like that at all. I had to rise 80,000 pound and that was a long long time ago as well and erm obviously that and I always say this it was my naivety that got me through 'cos if I had know everything there was to know and erm if I was an accountant 'cos in the process I could have taken all the time in the world*

*B: Yes, yes*

*W: it made me achieve things which, it needed that element of naivety to get me through because it was an enormous task.*

*B: Yes, not knowing what could go wrong*

*W: Yeah, yeah I mean I developed I developed a switch cube which was flat packed so I could transport it throughout the world and even though I was an engineer you know I was involved in a huge amount of processes I had never been involved with, casting rollings erm lots and lots of*

*processes I just investigated and found the various components it was different. In the end after 2 years in business I had developed a product that was viable and which was very innovative and it solved a big problem erm within the industry and we were in the top inaudible in the world and that was a big shock to me because I didn't realise how far I had travelled. I mean I went there on my own to do this kind of and I thought it was Mickey Mouse, but the point was it was really exceptional and erm I didn't I was so committed I didn't realise how much I had actually achieved until all the Charted engineers came round, came round to look at the product and gave it the top erm technical erm award for technical innovation and that was against multi national companies, America*

*B: Mmm*

*W: starts laughing, yeah so it was quite good that (laughs again) I enjoyed that*

*B: I bet you did… so...did you employ many people as well at that time.*

*W: Well it was relatively small at that time about 12 but then it got to about 40 but erm…in the end the business went because I had my intellectual property stolen and erm by my biggest customer who I inaudible for 2 years, but we id it for 15 years and during that time we made a grand profit and it was a good business and I used to just pump it all back in because I had a goal of making global products locally which it was to make small manufacturing units around the world where the product was needed somebody in Dubai or Oman it was really exciting pioneering stuff from where I had come from I suppose that is an education as well, I keep forgetting about that you have opened a few doors there.*

*B: Yes..the whole of life's a real learning curve really*

*W: (Talking louder now and talking over me) It was so exciting some guys from Leeds University wanted to study what we were doing and even a professor from Focal university town came over but he is retired now, but we had set up a factory a brand new factory. It was at the cutting edge in terms of technology and we were in the process of setting it up and the idea was that we would eventually and we would transfer that information to be able to replicate a factory anywhere else so it was global product made locally so everything was going to change and that was a long time ago which I had recognised then that cos we made a switch key for electrification that we would be better making it at source rather than trying to make it then export it. So we had a good we had a good it was the concept that was right and erm but the people who well I put all my eggs in one basket and they actually stole the concept by making global products locally (laughs) so, like I say then I went to court for 2 years but erm and that was the realisation that the legal process wasn't for people like me it was for elite people and people that basically stripped all the goodness out of a business and the company jut eroded and I just couldn't take him on it was quite a tough time. And that only ended last December so I have done 2 years at university with that*

*B: With that hanging over you as well*

*W: And and they've got the big powerful barristers from London protecting them and inaudible inaudible I have had to pay their legal fees as well which I knew I knew it and I can't pay because I went bankrupt inaudible inaudible inaudible but I had no representation whatsoever, whatsoever because if you are stripped in commercial terms, if you arte stripped of your assets then you have no assets to defend yourself and all they do is bring out all the artillery. And that's what they do I mean all these barristers the bill a hundred thousand I was amazed at that and I saw the I saw the it was a massive company, but that was the reason I came to do politics because I realised that how I was brought up I was quite naive my world view was based on what I had been told and I took it on board big time because yes, that's what you told me, that's what it is. That has been quite nasty, I knew there was something wrong along the way but I had no reason to mistrust but then I will know about it and it is a form of appeasement of myself to know about it and then it's a form of defending myself against it happening again you know it's fascinating (laughs.)*

*B: Almost like you can use knowledge to protect yourself in a way?*

*W: Yes, I think what we are doing is my mother always told me never tell lies and suddenly you come to wonder where it came from that notion. It's erm I had a terrible misconception that everybody was like me*

*B: Yes, yes, yes*

*W: I was shocked at how erm evil some people are in construction and how they operate and and and…*

*B: How can they do those things?*

*W: Yeah, so that was quite shocking and when I look at politics now I think how can certain things happen around the world  it's patently obvious their actions are causing deaths around the world …can't you see…just can't get that empathy at all.*
*B: No*
*W: So it's tough out there (laughs)*
*B: It is yes, yes*
*W: But I must I must stress really that the best thing I have found out is that I have always been a very happy and optimistic person before and I have never felt actually …I mean I have lost my house and everything I have had the bailiffs and been chucked out and we actually had a one bedroom flat and it was only 3 days before they offered us the flat that we nearly ended up in Pickering in a tent for 6 months which was fantastic absolutely fantastic. We looked forward to it, enjoyed it we did get the flat in the end but I realised that erm we all live our lives how we want to be perceived by other people and I don't care about that at all.*
*B: That's quite liberating*
*W: It is absolutely liberating. I am the freest I have ever been in my life and happy. I am happier now than I was before.*
*B: You have no expectations on you*
*W: Well it's funny one of the philosopher's one of the old philosophers the teaching we had was that you could be working on the shop floor or running the business but you are still enslaved. There were a lot of things going on and I thought wow, it's pretty powerful that and I m free as a bird now, very free and I intend to stay that way (laughs.)*
*W: I have talked to a few and I can see that they are completely stressed out and I actually see some question what's it all about because they don't know and they get to the end and think what was all that about…and you can't tell em.*
*B: I know (laughs)*
*W: You know, I've got status, I'm going to go round that golf course you see those guys and you think get a grip, 'cos I'm not interested…sorry about that (he has become a bit ranty)*
*B: No it's alright*
*W: It's very difficult to process, I mean my big beef at the minute is that everything is being homogenised because it's easier to sell to a group of people who are all the same and I will ask…erm, should I say this but the university's gone from an academic institution to a business model and the business model is just like an erm business it has to rationalise it's students and homogenise them and come on lets put more bums on more seats and it helps them literally, it's just for profit really. But I have seen the waste around too, there is enough money going in its just waste. I've got to a point where I don't want to contribute towards something that I don't disproportionately benefit. That's not a good place to be really. Because I'm holding back. I read somewhere about altruistic punishment or something and I thought well if I m going to punish myself, I will punish them at the same time (laughs.) You are not having my money and all my time and effort.*
*B: (Laughs) So, then you came here because there were questions as to why these things happen.*
*W: Yeah, I set up a little business and actually created another invention which was erm an intelligent bin, so erm when it was full it rang the mobile phone of the cleaner because everywhere you go you see them empty empty bins while full ones are overflowing.*
*B: Right*
*W: I did  really good job and then I went to the councils because councils buy street furniture and realized there were other companies absolutely dovetailed into the councils absolutely corrupt and I was spending an amazing amount of time with fantastic fantastically designed contemporary bins with all this technology costing tens of thousands of pounds on working processes and they weren't interested they said it would cut peoples jobs, but it wouldn't have, the jobs would have been streamlined it could have raised their profile but I thought to myself I am not going to exhaust myself in a business where people are just being corrupt. I just can't do with it it's just not me I can't play those games anymore. I couldn't break that inaudible even if I wanted to so I just moved away I am just trying to get a patent clause out of that one I will try to sell the intellectual property to someone. So that's that's when I decided I needed to do something else and I decided to push away from then on then. Probably because of my vast experiences and er I could have done international business studies but I don't want that and then I really found out that Politics was just the right course for me it told me the things I needed to know. But it's armed me a lot as well because even when I was going through the court I'd learnt enough not to have any deference with the court system as well. I was quite happy and*

*enabled to say exactly what the system was which again was quite nice. You know to tell the judge not to talk in terms of justice, it was about power being able to inaudible inaudible it was all about power, you know it and I know it.*

*B: And how did he react?*

*W: He couldn't look me in the face it was a marvellous moment and my chest was crowing I could feel my posture And my neck and yes it was good and I walked out of there 100 grand poorer*

*B: but richer in other ways*

*W: Oh yes it was worth it I'm just glad inaudible traumas of going through because it helped me to desensitise myself to that caps off mentality that might have been ingrained. That's another education (laughs)*

*B: Yes, did your tutors know you were going through all this?*

*W: No, a couple of the students knew, but they wouldn't have known the anxiety and the stress. It was like bereavement in one respect because I had built it up and I had a journey to conclude and it was stolen from me. I had put a huge amount of investment in it. So it was bereavement and it was difficult and people people I am not keen on inaudible inaudible*

*B: Oh no*

*W: That's what people rely on for emotional inaudible and I just don't like it. I don't see the benefit from it it takes you down.*

*B: Yes*

*W: And I've never looked I  I look back with fondness but I don't I don't think that's the best over. I try to explain to people if you start thinking the best is over that's when you starting to prepare to die. I'm just ensuring I'm looking forward and this is a challenge that I am doing now as big as anything I have ever done in the past and it keeps me vibrant really , you know alert and I know that it's actually it's sometimes harder because  I don't have to in a way. Not because I am financially bothered because I know that at my age I I I'm not going to get a first it's going to be the the young bucks at 25 with a first he' got a good working lie ahead of him. And I will be self sufficient from here on in just enough to be erm to be happy I'm quite happy actually living at the not at the subsistence level but enough to have er a desire to want to not want consume all the time because I think that's quite an addictive thing to have.*

*B: Yes, I think a lot of people just buy things don't they to make themselves feel better.*

*W: Yes, well that's it that's right and I have become quite happy that  that they example that I have made is that if you saw somebody with a really really nice car and he's driving around and you can see the smugness coming out of the car and you'd feel jealous and I'd think how stupid he is (laughs) is that what you've achieved because I I I'm trying to, I just know there is a different value system that no one seems to want to operate in . The value system ha been changed and it's harsher for people like er people aren't as nice to people in simple terms they will do down. I think it's called the veblin effect. It's where they are made to feel insecure …it's the marketing companies erm strategy to make you feel insecure. I get really mad with the law now. I think more now about women's interests as well (laughs.)*

*B: Is that through doing a* (course name) *course?*

*W: Yes, I think it's I think we have really treat the female race really badly. And I see all these commercials for makeup and all these scientific claims and I think what are you trying to do what are you saying and I am shouting at the TV because that is what you do when you get to my age (laughs) weird.*

*B: It's amazing how you start seeing everything differently.*

*W: Well I think it was Richard said this is it you will not look at anything else other than in a critical way. You analyse it and you think what did he really say. You can almost predetermine what people re doing nd why they are doing it, that's why it's so valuable…its its great to add to your armoury erm because it make you more complete it makes you safer, erm jut makes you it's probably wise.*

*B: More perceptive as well of what people are up to (laughs)*

*W: Yes, that's right but I don't want to be too cynical though 'cos that's the problem. If you become too cynical you just don't trust anybody and what kind of life is that. The best option is to throw everything in with regards to trust and see what comes back. You pick it up quickly if it is disingenuous inaudible (laughs)*

*B: ( Laughs) I know exactly what you mean. So, how are you finding your course then?*

*W: Erm, I think I am working very very hard, very very hard erm and I am proud of what I have achieved the improvements with my essays but erm we have exams coming up and I won't feel comfortable with that. I don't think it is a good measurement of education at all erm its its*

whether you are good at memory, its whether you are good under pressure and erm its er is it for the university's convenience …who knows. But I'm really pleased with myself for standing out and saying I am a good student, I am a very good student this might not reflect in essays or even the exams, but I know I am good and that's not in an arrogant way, I know I am good and I'm not going to be dumbed down by it. I look at …cos cos I see it, its just like people running a business its where there it is inaudible people and I don't want to sound too bolshy I don't want to sound like a Marxist or anything erm its it's the system that wants to produce something at the end of it and just because it doesn't fit my role doesn't mean they are right.

B: Yes, you are right.

W: Yes, I don't want to come out like 2,000 other political students in the country, who have all had this tight curriculum and they know all the theory. They will all put the same solutions down because they are not free thinkers, they are outside …what value can they actually have?

B: yes, in the actual workplace.

W: You know how innovative is that going to be when there is one thousand nine hundred and ninety nine other people. I want to keep my individuality, keep my my personality and my character and my individual thought processes, I want to keep them in tact. And I will struggle through, but I will get the degree, I will pass and I am alright with that and I know I will be better because of it erm And I will be able to use, I will probably be better because of my past life skills. Whether it is emotional intelligence, whether it's the ability to connect to different people. There are lots of skills I have picked up where my subject area degree would be of great value. And I see lots of guys and they want to get lost in academia and that's another thing I get frustrated with now we are kicking off (laughs) I get frustrated with academia, we know all that ails in the world but how is it the world outside don't know? What's the point of all this academia cos all they're doing is talking to each other bout the complexities and trying to create complexities and shall we just pin it down and let everyone know how bad it is so that we can all rail against it and nothing happens, they are all just scientists talking to other scientists and all the problems that ail are not not pushed out to inaudible…what's the point.

B: Yes

W: And I know one particular guy, and I know he's a fantastic A grade student, but he's backwards with social etiquette or the things you should say the thoughtfulness, cos there's that thoughtfulness, and I have seen him crush a couple of guy because it's not there and I am oh, please don't go into teaching. Please don't go into teaching, you will destroy so many people. I'm thinking you're just so far off the mark you don't know. It's that' that's not what makes a teacher. My partner, she's a dance teacher, she's good. She has a psychology degree and a masters degree and she is a dance teacher professionally and she can really dance she has danced internationally, but just because she is a brilliant dancer, teaching is completely different it has taken her probably ten years to become a good teacher they are two different things altogether.

B: Yes,

W: Inaudible inaudible…the thing is if you are in a subject for 20 years like I was in my business as it were you become so at one with it that when new guys come along you think these guys must be autistic, where have they got them from, they know absolutely nothing, but they don't understand the distance they have covered I always think and and you are falling off a log doing it you know, they can't get down to that level of banality (laughs.)

B: Yes, yes. Could I ask you if there is anyone throughout your life who you think has influenced your learning.

W: (Silence for a long time)…well….no….

B: No…

W: No….nobody

B: Nobody

W: Absolutely nobody

B: Gosh

W: Is that a shock?

B: Yes…there is nobody that stands out, no teachers that you have had or anything?

W: No

B: Not even when you were doing your apprenticeship

W: Nobody…no…no

B: I think that you are the first one I've had that has said that

W: I'm thinking hard…I'm thinking hard (he sounds sad)

B: So what's been your main motivation then for learning?

*W: Erm...I don't feel insecure so I'm not doing it for that reason. It's a difficult one…I suppose we all want respect from other people so I suppose that must be the driver even though inaudible my d card there erm I suppose like I said at the beginning I was told at eleven I was not good enough and I suppose there is a …deep seated erm I'm an affable person but I'm also a very open person and people see that as being stupid erm that openness seems to like inaudible to a point of stupidity and I know I shock a few people cos I have achieved quite a lot you know business wise I achieved enormously from where I came from. I beat guys from where I was an apprentice. I mean I was as daft as a brush and really out for a good time so they can't understand how I got from there to there (Laughs). I have got this badness in me I think where I want to shock, I mean I am doing this and I know when I come to the end of it I'm going to confuse people even more (laughs) It shouldn't happen, it shouldn't happen its just like the business shouldn't have happened. And so I don't put any barriers up I know it's a big ask 38 years away from education to do what I'm doing and I don't think, the problem is when you are a lot older than them and you are older than the teachers and you've got white beard they think well he must know a lot. There's a natural, there's a perception that you are going to be intelligent because you have been on the planet for so long. Er you know but if you are not in that cognitive development process you will absorb a lot of information but it's not in a way you can use it academically. But I don't think it is, it is in a way if you can put something across but I don't think it's all. It's just, I know, if you can get to the end of it I will do it. I I like to confuse people just say there you go (Laughs) 'cos I've met so many people who I I see them all the time and they think they can do things they know…I have seen loads of people in a really earthy working man's club and I can see the natural intelligence there. I think oh my god you are so intelligent I can tell the way you deduce things. These kinds of intelligence but they haven't got the courage that's the problem you know, I have huge mounts of courage and only a modicum of intelligence, probably I think think that's where I sit probably. If I if I put a badge on I would say I have got a lot of courage and I do I do I I want to achieve and I want to keep positive about there being something better. I am optimistic I am always an optimistic person. I don't just sit down and think those were good years and sit and start to decay. That's how I keep myself alive as it were so that it's worthwhile living inaudible at my age.*

*B: Yes, you have always got to have something to aim for I think*

*W: Yes, you have, I think something in there starts to rot quicker the whole thing starts and that's not feeling inaudible either it's just you try to get the most out; these days are even more precious. I mean I am a working class guy and we buried a guy not so long back and you see they've been wracked by not having a good life with drink. I feel sorry for them because they have nothing else to distract them. I wouldn't want to go there.*

*B: No*

*W: I like going out now and again and having a glass, but these guys have become dependent and they have so much trauma inaudible inaudible (laughs)*

*B: Mmmm….So, what do you think enables you to learn…anything that helps you to learn?*

*W: I think that the teaching is absolutely vital in the process erm the lecturers we have got we couldn't ask for better really. They are demanding, good, thoughtful. They will call you in if you are struggling. They are just…spot on really…I I can't er I have gauged that we have probably got the cream er where we are er not just in terms of their ability which has astounded me anyway but they are passionate, absolutely passionate about their teaching. You can tell they are passionate…one in particular he's pathetically passionate and I love passionate people I think wow. He needs something to calm him down, but that sort of enthusiasm it draws you in it makes you want to learn it and I think you then you want to be accepted by them or respected by them that's an important facet to it so that's…what…helps me erm get through it …that's that's the one that's worth talking about.*

*B: Yes, do you feel able to approach them you know if you are having difficulties?*

*W: Oh yes, yes like I say I think we are probably distorted from the norms I I I can't I mean we all all agree more or less you know we can't find fault. We we did in the first year with the research. We used to take bets on whether the teacher would turn up.*

*B: Gosh, they didn't always turn up then? Was that someone from the (*department name*) department or someone that came in from another department?*

*W: I'm not too sure, I'm not too sure. I don't see them as (*department name*) erm believe me if that was the level that everybody else was at I would have asked for my money back, it was appalling. Erm I didn't like it at all.*

*B: Did you just have that one teacher throughout then?*

*W: Er yes, well there was a couple but it was just a badly taught module. There was a couple and I am sure they were well intentioned but somehow or another it's possibly the subject …it must be the most thankless task in the world walking in there shall we say and people aren't interested it's the worst element of the three years of the course to go through stats and that. And so, it's a poison chalice for them…they love it but they don't understand it's boring to the students so it's a bad relationship all together then it was awful.*

*B: So, it was just the teaching then?*

*W: I think it was erm the subject and then it became…that connection didn't happen because the pupils weren't interested in they  didn't give anything to the teacher so the teacher like well why should I be bothered that's how it goes*

*B: So she just didn't turn up then*

*W: Didn't turn up or when they turned up you know, and it's a pity because I think they were actually …very able, but they didn't get that rapport with the students that that connection didn't happen. That connection where that respect for each other where you want to do well for them and they want to do well for you and and that fusion that happens like in any relationship I think. That's my lay person's view.*

*B: Oh yes…..  What else do you feel disables your learning?*

*W: I I think I've been shocked by erm young people's erm …nasty competitiveness…there is no goodness. I was shocked and I suppose I should have expected it, but it is really aggressive. And maybe I should have been battle ready for them I think with my past working experiences erm but I didn't I wasn't like that in my business with people and I wasn't like that as an apprentice, so I was cocooned by it because I had my own little fiefdom, I could do what I want and run it like I felt it should be run. Which was good for me and it was good for them and it was so that was the first time I had come into contact with the real world I suppose…people where they had no community and I   I know this community where people reciprocate where there is empathy you can say it is the same in society as it is in teaching, they pull those traits through and er I don't know if it's socialist, socialism or but there seems to be so much capitalism these days, I call them neoliberal children (laughs) erm and they don't understand it is my little joke. What's that term in evolution where the fear of where they are now implants in their young, I think these guys are different, they are not warm. They are friendly and they're funny humorous, witty, but they are very individualised, they are hard, they're hard it's the hardness that is quite shocking. I think more could come from if if we were all erm erm …we have done it once or twice where we have been taught something and you absorb that information in a certain way then someone else has taken it in in a different way. But when you share how you have taken it on its (formal? inaudible) and it starts to balance what you think and I say we should have some political debates when we discuss things and it's not because you want to catch up with them especially me cos I will probably come from a different angle and they will say that's interesting, they won't they won't*

*B: yes, you can learn from one another.*

*J Yes, it's got to add value and I don't mean from an economic point of view it's got to bring us on, but there's this I have got to win, it's a shame and that's a very difficult thing to break down. It's difficult to break down when there are groups of people trying to outdo one another cos it might be for jobs …there's a reason…to get a job you know and that's the case er it's not how we were meant to be .*

*B: Yes, we seem to be going away from community don't we nowadays*

*W: I am screaming and screaming you know and it's we can't put the brakes on it I can't see where it is going to stop. I mean I am not a fatalist, and I can't change the world so I just stand back …it's individualised myself in a way but I have just got to live my life how I want to without being impacted upon by other people I lament the past when I think there was a bit more community, but globalisation, technology erm it's all dehumanising in a way. We are supposed to have more liberty and freedom but whereas actually we have never been less free. I have just wrote an article in the student paper, I hate facebook, I mean what do they do on it for 3 hours. I think it destroys community*

*B: I see your point, but I think there are parts to it that unite people*

*W: Well, I just don't think we are supposed to transmit our emotions electronically (laughs)*

*B: (Laughs) Yes, yes…well I think that's it….*


Phil's interview transcript

*P: I have just sort of written down the usual learning experiences…erm and I had a gap year.*
*B: Ok*
*P: I think in terms of how I learned…at school I sort of you don't learn for yourself or you don't feel like you are learning for yourself. You feel that you are learning because you are obliged to.*
*B: Right*
*P: Because you get pressure from the teachers. But then at college there is not that pressure on you anymore and as a result I underperformed a lot. (laughs)*
*B: Right, what pressure do you mean?*
*P: They would put pressure…you were not doing it off your own back. My college was quite a good one I think for what I was doing. I did a music tech course and philosophy, engineering and maths…but er I failed erm maths in the first year  I was just lazy really. Philosophy, there again just lazy I just didn't engage with it at all which has changed because when we do philosophy now it's my best module by far.*
*B: Mmm*
*P: I had at college, I planned to erm to carry on doing the tech and I got into Reading Uni to do the tech. but then erm I decided that I didn't want to go. I decided I had had enough of education and ended up in my gap year going working in a hotel for six months and then moving house with my parents inaudible and working in Lidl for a few months. And I came to uni initially not to learn but because I wasn't making friends in Gloustershire and my colleagues at Lidl were not very inspiring (laughs)*
*B: (Laughs)*
*P: Er so I came here because I had friends in the year above me*
*B: Right*
*P: And I chose politics because it was semi sort of I thought it was the type of course that would look good sort of sound good on a CV. But it's strange because I feel like I have come to university for all the wrong reasons but it has all worked out in my favour. The course I mean immediately really engaged me and I'm doing quite well and…*
*B: Yes, why do you think this has managed to engage you whereas at college you were not engaged?*
*P: I think when I was at college there was no pressure and here there is no obvious pressure like there is in school but I think in college I knew that I wasn't doing very well I knew I could do better but I wasn't bothered and then coming here I was determined to prove to myself that I could do better erm and I did (laughs)*
*B: Yes, where do you think that determination came from?*
*P: I dunno, er partly …my brother …he's he did a masters and a history degree at Leicester …I think I could almost feel hi disapproval  of me and our relationship is actually a lot stronger now that I have actually done something that I like and have actually proved myself to him…which is nice.*
*B: Right, so is this an older brother then?*
*P: Yes and he's very very competitive at everything he does and I never have been. I think from a young age you get used to being the one who is sat at the gate and you don't get competitive, you don't get angry when you lose but he does. I think I came to uni, that sort of inspired me to prove that I could, you know to see if I liked it, but I don't think I would have come you know if I had stayed in Eastbourne and been employed in Eastbourne because all my friends would have been saying, there is a group of my friends who couldn't move on at all well haven't (laughs)*
*B: So you think you would still be there with them, but you moved house and you didn't have any friends there?*
*P: Yeah, luckily for me I had 1 friend from Eastbourne who went to university of Stoke and erm made friends and formed a band with a couple of guys from Hereford which was near where I was living so she was around in the summer. I think really the day that I decided I should really come to uni was I went to a party in Hereford erm with them and then realised if I don't go to uni I am not going to have any friends erm and next day was the deadline for the ucas application so I missed that and came in through clearing.*
*B: So, how did you go on making friends here…did you say that you had got some here already?*
*P: Yes, I do tend to make friends fairly easily erm but yes, actually having people there to make friends with. Yeah I did have pretty good friends already it was a guy from college and his*

*girlfriend. I have lived with them this year as well actually they moved up and I sort of tagged on.(Laughs)*

*B: Do you think that helped you to adapt to university life a bit?*

*P: Yeah, definitely…I don't know how I would have done without it in first year because erm I was in a flat in Place name…the student halls and it was very much a rowdy flat and I am not like that at all. Well, I gave up drinking a couple of weeks after coming to uni which is kind of the wrong way round*

*B: Is that because you had 2 weeks of drinking too much?*

*P: (Laughs) not really…I had sort of flirted with not drinking before and when I came to uni I wasn't drinking, but I don't really like it. Erm, I made friends with the people in Place name, I am sort of friends with them now BUT it's a different kind of friendship than I have got with my friends here. Erm I can't really discuss things that interest me…it's just sort of friendship. Yeah, but my friends, my existing friends gave me a means of escape from the flat when the parties were happening which was good.*

*B: Yeah, so then in terms of the course that you are doing now, how are you finding that?*

*P: Yeah…I'm really pleased with it. It's really beneficial having a smaller class size  because you get a lot of one to one time with the tutors…they are all really good…yes it's good. And it's strange erm …talking about having come to uni for all the wrong reasons. Now I recognise the right reasons and why I am here and I feel lucky that it has worked out how it has*

*B: And you enjoy the subject as well?*

*P: Yes very much…especially political philosophy which was one of my modules in college that I failed in*

*B: Yes, yes so if I could get you to think about your teachers at college, how did you get along with them?*

*P: Well, it was quite interesting erm for the engineering course I was on it was a BTEC and to be honest it was a very very easy course. But it was made even easier. We had three teachers one was just a very boring man, one was semi psychotic (laughs) she wasn't fun and the other was actually my best friend at the times dad and he was in my class as well so that was quite a strange dynamic erm but it worked out quite well it ended up with me and my friend sort of him helping me on the technical bits and me helping him on the communication bits because he was sort of technical not a communicative person. So it was quite odd but it worked out quite well you know having his dad who I had known all my life…I had actually known him since primary school*

*B: Could you actually call him by his first name*

*P: Er yeah he encouraged, we did that and yes erm that was good it sort of ended up where we kept in touch and he still provides me with references and stuff , he provided my reference for uni*

*B: You kept in touch that's great*

*P: Yeah, I'm more in touch with the father now than I am with the son. I ring him up when I need a reference for something, but I haven't spoken to the guy for ages. I think he ended up at Southampton uni. And yeah, then the other teachers erm again lots of teachers per subject. A couple for philosophy, one of which was sort of a very friendly, engaging creature and erm the other one that really wasn't. I mean the first one lots of parallels with the lecturers here, very friendly, very open, very sort of jokey and approachable.*

*B: Do you think that helped your learning?*

*P: It did a bit, I mean I liked his lessons but it didn't make me anymore committed to actually go. And it was the same in music tech it was very sort of jokey, not strict at all which was probably how it should be but probably not what would have been best for me if… I had not have made it … but it would have wrong for it to be like school environment in that sense I think it should be down to the student at that sort of level.*

*B: That the student should be becoming more independent do you mean?*

*P: Yes,*

*B: And, so at university do you feel that you are expected to be more independent … even more so?*

*P: Definitely, yeah I mean if you go to a lecturer with a question, they will help and they will help well, but they wont it's like erm I'm trying to do an essay at the moment an assigned essay and when I go I was thinking about doing something  around this they wont say do this they will give you lots more ideas and you have to work it out for yourself which I think is …it makes it harder but it's better.*

*B: Because you are having to think for yourself do you mean?*

*P: Yeah, which is clearly what university should be about*
*(laughs.)*
*B: Yeah, so could I take you right back now to nursery school*
*P: Ok*
*B: Can you not remember anything about it?*
*P: Very very, nursery's in primary?*
*B: Well, it's the bit before primary*
*P: Well I went to a playgroup but I have no solid memories of this at all only memories that have been told to me which are very vague relly. I mean primary school I had a certain group of friends for the whole time and then throughout secondary school as well with a few additions of people who didn't go to my primary school. But, up until I went to college I was pretty much in the same friendship group for years and years and years and years who erm like I say most of them are still around that area not doing anything*
*B: Have they not got jobs or anything?*
*P: Part time jobs, yeah, but some of them at secondary school they sort of formed a band and they are still toying with that but not getting anywhere*
*B: Do you play in a band now then?*
*P: No, I have pretty much given that up the whole music thing. I think I was never all that good at it I mean I never put the time in. I mean I had lessons but I had a really…I never really committed to it from quite when I was at primary school I had piano lessons and I remember intentionally forgetting the sheet music to take to lessons because I hadn't practiced it. I don't know what I was doing there it was a waste of money for my parents.*
*B: Was it something your parents wanted you to do?*
*P: I have a vague memory of actually being blackmailed into it. As as a child I was one of those children who was very resistant to things changing in the house and we had this piano my dad had got from a school he worked at horrible out of tune nasty piano and erm I think essentially my parents said look…I don't know if it was to get me started with lessons or to carry on with lessons but they would have got rid of the piano and I didn't like any sort of change*
*B: So if you took lessons they would keep the piano and there would be no change*
*P: Yeah and then erm I moved on to do guitar lessons when I was about 12 and erm…switched to base guitar my dad said my brother needed a base guitar for his band so why didn't I learn that and then I remember doing guitar lessons and at one period they were nine till ten at night it was horrible but that was the only time the guy could do it and erm he was a really good teacher and er he taught you what you wanted to learn but I never knew what I wanted to learn. But I think when I was in the band with my friends I mainly treated it as almost like erm essentially kind of thing performing on stage. Really sort of lets out of me really sort of energy erm so that was a factor and I occasionally reach for my base, occasionally when I am relaxing but…*
*B: You don't miss it then?*
*P: No, only when I have a inaudible.*
*B: Oh right. So, you are in your second year then now, how are you finding it?*
*P: Yeah erm good er it's not, some of the modules I am not a fan of to be honest. We have a workplace module I have just finished it it was 15 days,*
*B: Oh, it's not a whole year out then*
*P: but erm I wanted to just …once I got my teeth into the first year and realised I could write essays and things I didn't know I could do when I was at college erm I wanted to just do academic things this year. I also had a module which held a bit of group work and I'm not sure about group work because I usually end up dominating it and I don't know whether that's good and I usually end up getting frustrated with people, I am a bit of a control freak,*
*B: I think I know what you mean*
*P: I don't like anyone holding me back from achieving what I can achieve without them.*
*B: Yeah, that's understandable.*
*P: But it just makes…having that attitude …probably it's good because you try and push some people forward but I end up adopting their workload as well.*
*B: Yeah…so you said you'd learned to write essays and you didn't before. What made you realise that?*
*P: Well, I don't know…I do know really. At college my final philosophy exam was erm 4,000 words seen exam with a 1,000 word crib sheet so really easy I could have written  the exam 20 times and written it up again and again but again when I went into the exam due to laziness I had 2,000 words written in rough, no crib sheet, no conclusion and I should have done a lot*

*better than I did but I got a D I think. Again, that was mainly laziness I remember sitting at my desk when I was supposed to be revising at home sitting there for an hour and not doing anything else and then feeling pleased with myself for revising even though I hadn't done any, I was terrible. But then when I came here I thought I might as well put my mind to it and I think my first essay I got an 80 percent.*

*B: Wow, that's pretty amazing*

*P:  Which yeah I was really pleased about and to some extent it really inflated my ego which is kind of good but kind of bad at the same time obviously. But that made me sort of focus and try to get that with every essay.*

*B: So, have you ever got any marks that were lower than that?*

*P: Erm yes, I got an 85 this week, that's the only thing I've got higher than that and erm for one module last year I got a something in the 60's I think for both the pieces of work but that was er…it was actually a module that could have been really useful it was a module on research methods partly on qualitative and partly on quantitative methods and it wasn't very well done I don't think and erm yeah, so no-one engaged with that and I ended up trying to get the coursework out of the way as quickly as possible*

*B: Yeah*

*P: Just to chuck it in and yeah it was fine it got dropped as the lowest module. But I had….*

*B: So were you disappointed with what you got?*

*P: I wasn't that bothered because I had just written it off. I do get disappointed when I don't get firsts now, which erm again, possibly that's probably the best thing. We have, me and a few friends from the course have a sort of friendly rivalry where we'll sort of compare results and ….. It's not it's not to sort of gloat or anything I don't think, I don't approach it like that but I feel that it pushes you that bit more. It's not that I am doing it to beat them, it's just that if you beat someone who's intelligence you respect anyway, you feel good yourself. Erm, but I do think that makes some people on our course… friendship group feel uncomfortable I I mean it is a bit of an awkward moment when you say how did you do and your friend says 50 and you have this 70 and you say well done and trying to sound sincere and you think what do I do here because if I tell you my result you will think I am gloating  but I do think it's good because the people who I do it regularly with it just acts as a sort of friendly push which is nice.*

*B: Yeah, yeah. In terms of the feedback that you get for your essays what …do you get a lot of feedback?*

*P: Yeah they do like a sheet with a section about that big (motions with hands) on what you did well, erm and er normally they don't say anything negative which is good. Yeah, the one I just got back recently, he announced to the class beforehand that he was going to be negative in the feedback and sort of really say what you could improve o it's good I think erm that's the most useful thing. I've got a friend  who does politics and history and he was saying that one of their lecturers last year I think he has retired now erm would give him whole pages of feedback and that sounds really ideal to be honest  just sort of really deconstruct their  argument   really get at them for their grammar and punctuation, erm really just push them. I would like that a bit more I think.*

*B: Yeah, told how you could improve yeah.*

*P: Yeah but I mean they don't ignore that aspect in the feedback*

*B: Even though you are getting eighties?*

*P: This might sound quite arrogant but there are things like I appreciate that this is only a 2,000 word essay but if you had done this it would have been good as well or something or mentioned another point, but you just can't fit them in.*

*B: No because you have to be selective as to what you can fit in. Right, so you have not talked very much about your mum and dad. I wondered if they had any influence on your learning at all?*

*P: Erm they are both teachers! But, my mum started off as a inaudible which is like a teaching assistant*

*B: Right, yeah*

*P: But they both have roots in erm care of special needs people whereas my mum when I was growing  up a erm 1 to 1 assistant in a primary school with a girl with Down's syndrome I actually went into that class when it was inset day and then a couple of years later when we started secondary school they were in my tutor group which was weird. But they couldn't remember me but I remember some of them. And my dad er he started off teaching secondary he special needs I mean all my inset days when I was young or sick Days when I wasn't very sick, I ended up in these schools. My mum then did, went on to teach very very severely*

*disabled primary school and infant children and did that as their main teacher and did that for a few years my dad now does mainstream primary and my mum works as an assistant for a deaf girl. Erm my mum was doing a sign language course as part of her job and I was tempted because when I was young I did a bit of sign language at primary and secondary school and my parents sign a bit. I can do the basics I almost took a seventh module this year doing that. Erm, I'm really glad I didn't cos I don't think I would have had the time at all. Erm especially seeing how hard the one that my mum did and also the cost. If it had been free and I had the time I would have done it. And I actually went to my personal tutor last year and I talked to him about it and he strongly recommended that I didn't do it and erm I thought at the time I will do it anyway, but I changed my mind (laughs.) But in terms of how my parents sort of influenced my learning well they have always been very sort of liberal and they haven't ever …they have supported me but they haven't pushed me which is erm they they sort of assumed I'd go to university I think. My sister did and dropped out but my brother did and did very well but er I think…when I said I am not gunna go they they said that's fine do what you want to do sort of thing nd then when I changed my mind they said that's fine we will help pay for it.*

*B: So they were pleased then when you said you were going to uni?*

*P: I think they probably knew this was what I should be doing but if they had pushed I probably wouldn't have wanted to come. I often talk to my mum especially about my course and ideas and the actual discussions around subjects but less so with my dad 'cos he's more prone to just make terrible puns or something instead of any decent conversation. I think possibly my mum might be the brains of the operation laughs) but my dad is very much better at maths than her. It's strange me and my brother seem to have inherited brains from both parents. Well…I think I inherited more of the communication side like my mum. My brother's quite shy …I'm quite shy, but I'm not outgoing but I make friends really easily. MY sister she can sort of write she's good at English and things like that she was never very academic. She's a vet's nurse now but she really really struggled with her exams because they were probably GCSE standard maths in these exams and she essentially can't count. Yes, me and my brother got the maths side from my dad too but she seems to have missed out. But, yeah I think maths was the best…the only GCSE that I got an A in was maths but again at college it was a big leap up and they expected a lot of commitment which I wasn't prepared to give.*

*B: Yeah, yeah, yeah*

*P: So I mean there was something like 2 hours homework a week and 3 hours in the library…self study or something but it just wasn't going to happen just by inaudible there was a train journey to college about twenty minute train journey and then a ten minute walk from the train station to home so I couldn't get home really easily in breaks and twice a week I had 5 hour breaks sitting round in college and me and my friends would just sit in the common room just chatting. So I think somewhat having friends held me back as well.*

*B: Right…but not here?*

*P: No, I feel, I think it does …the friends I made at Place name, I see not very often now maybe once or twice a month I go over to them or I speak to them on campus or whatever. And…erm the friends I have made from home again, Sam who is the guy erm he was very relaxed at college as well but then in the second year he sort of sorted it out and he did well and erm he is very very very committed to his course and he is always working erm erm and that sort of forces me out of the house into the library because when he's working he's a tech and he's mixing quite loud or doing some weird experimental stuff which consists of him repeating piercing noise for about ten minutes.*

*B: Oh gosh, so you go to the library then to study?*

*P: That's what I need I mean even when there is just me in at home I can't study I need I think I need places where I work and places where I don't and…at home there's just distractions and I'm quite weak willed (laughs) but next year I am going to be living just across the road to the library so that's no problem. At the moment it's a half an hour walk into uni so it's not too good.*

*B: So, what do you want to do when you have finished your degree?*

*P: I'd like to go on to do my masters and PhD hopefully if I can think of something to write 80,000 words on (laughs)*

*B: Right, and you'd do that here would you?*

*P: No, probably not erm, they only do one masters in subject name here and it's not really what I am keen on.*

*B: Is it a taught masters then?*

*P: I think it's a research masters but it's something to do with I think it's a long title something to do with citizenship*

*B: Is it to do with the Britishness thing as well?*

*P: Probably…I don't think it's overtly connected to the (staff member's name) thing but I was speaking to (staff members name) yesterday actually…he's my personal tutor this year and he was saying that he implied that he know I don't intend to stay here for masters and erm he was saying look next year, right at the beginning of the year I want you in talking to us so that we can get you into the right institution so that's good*

*B: He's recognised your potential then hasn't he?*

*P: Yeah he's erm very supportive and he pushes a lot too which is good erm…*

*B: Has he just been your personal tutor for this year then?*

*P: Yeah, we hardly knew him at all in the first year, we knew all the other tutors apart from (staff member's name) who is new this year erm we had for modules last year we mainly had Dave who was also our personal tutor so we got to know him very well in the first year. We had (staff member's name) as well but erm (first staff member's name) wasn't around for us at all in the first year, he doesn't seem to have anything to do with the first years at all but erm yeah this year. Erm well I did go to see him a couple of times last year to sort out my work placement and to try to get out of it…but erm this year he's the one we see the most and have the most contact with.*

*B: How does it work the personal tutor system?*

*P: It's just really with with sort of the class sizes we have it doesn't really make any difference which tutor you go to you go to the one you need to talk to*

*B: Yeah, because you have got contact with all your module tutors*

*P: Yeah and Dave was last year as well as being the personal tutor the module leader up until this year when (Staff members name) has taken over really they are all sort of there on an unofficial level too to go and have a chat whatever I feel comfortable approaching them all which is good.*

*B: So, do you think there is anything that hinders your learning here?*

*P: Erm apart from my lack of self control erm yesterday I got half way… across the road, past some trees and then I thought I really should have done more work today and then I thought the only thing stopping me is me so I turned round and went back to the library for an hour to do some more work*

*B: That shows amazing self control*

*P: Not in the first place…I think (Personal tutors name) has said to me that he is worried that he isn't pushing me enough and I think in some modules I do not have to work very hard which might sound arrogant.*

*B: No, you are being honest*

*P: Erm I mean the philosophy module this year, that's a subject I seem able to really really engage with but, I felt it sort of progress very very slowly*

*B: Mmmm*

*P: Because there are some people in the class that perhaps don't grasp it as quickly as I do. Which obviously it is right to keep it*

*At their …you can't leave people behind it wouldn't be fair, but…it leaves me feeling quite apathetic about it and I haven't done as much reading for it as|I did last year. But, I still end up talking a lot in the class because in seminars it usually consists of me talking a lot which er I like but er probably doesn't go too don't go down too well with everyone else (makes low level mumbling noise as though to sound like the other students mumbling about him) that's fine*

*B: Don't they sort of say anything the others?*

*P: They do, erm some do some don't some never ever do there are probably four or five besides me who regularly contribute.*

*B: What does the lecturer try to do to get the others involved?*

*P: Well he poses the question and I answer (laughs)*

*B: Do you find yourself holding back as well sometimes?*

*P: I do, I er find it frustrating sometimes if I have just opened my mouth to answer and someone jumps in but then I talk enough I guess. But then often they take it in a direction which I wouldn't have taken it or sometimes I think they miss the point which they get caught up in when for example when given a sort of abstract situation instead of discussing the abstract with reference to the example they will say no but what if this happens they will not play the game which I find frustrating. Yeah…on the whole it is fine because I am enabled because it is only a small group so there is time for everyone to talk if they want to er the lecture never runs for the whole time anyway so it's fine really. I do find that sometimes we do quite a we socialise between lectures quite a lot. This seems to be within the group of I don't know maybe 20-30*

*there is 2 sort of main groups and me in one group[ and the other group and it's not like there is a divide you know we intermingle but my group of friends always go to the café after the lecture and sit and discuss things and talk erm and it seems bizarrely instead of ending up in the group with students more my age I have ended up with all the mature students and people who I wouldn't have thought I would actually mix with but it's fine.*

*B: Might that be because you see them as more on your level intellectually?*

*P: Emotionally maybe…well maybe that's the wrong word (laughs) the discussions less likely to resort to drink and parties and drugs but sometimes I do think… even in these discussions sometimes you think oh*

*B: what with the mature students?*

*P: yes and sometimes one person in particular does talk a lot about one certain subject and if anything it is just clouding the issue for me by sort of seeming to apply to everything and erm yeah just sort of I'm confused by the term now whereas before I didn't know a lot about it I sort of knew the basics but now I have no idea (laughs) but that's not really detrimental because if I actually needed to sort it out in my head I could do.*

*B: Yeah. Do you find that you have conversations about your work as well?*

*P: Yeah yeah most of the time the conversation is what are you doing your essay on or what do you think of this or we will discuss the lecture that we have just been in which is good I like it.*

*B: Do you get anything from that?*

*P: Yes, I do sometimes when if you know I am thinking about doing this, have you thought about doing this have you looked at this…that's useful. Often when it's discussing the lecture the conversation usually descends into discussing the lecturer and their delivery style which is less useful. It's just chat isn't it.*

*B: Yeah, yeah*

*P: It's you know…you don't want to talk about the lectures and ideas all day long*

*B: No. Do you support one another as well…you know if there was someone who is really stuck on something, would they come to you for help?*

*P: Yeah, I think I had one girl who I didn't know very well this year and I didn't end up helping her work much she was in my group… she was the only girl the only female she was in my group for this group work thing and she was texting me a lot erm asking questions about the after the group whether there was an individual essay question and before the group was completed lots of texts saying oh we can help one another for this and things like this. I ended up feeling it was a bit cheeky especially as she didn't turn up to the group work sessions. I even arranged twice to meet her separately to erm go through the group work with her and she didn't turn up to those either erm so I ended up just not replying and erm since the essay has been handed in I haven't had texts so that's quite telling. Erm but then another of my friends is very very shy and …I have tried to help him to overcome that with this group work there was lots of survey data that we were collecting and he was unable to do that really and with his workplace module I ended up helping him to find a placement becase he wouldn't have been able to otherwise. But he he helps me too…he's not stupid, he's just shy. He is shy enough for some people in our small class not to know who he is when you say his name. They will say who's that? But…I feel that we are sort of friendly enough for me to sort of give him push sometimes.*

*B: That's good…ye, we all need that sometimes don't we. So, will you tell me a little bit about your work placement…why didn't you like it?*

*P: I didn't like the idea of it. Erm, but I think again, by luckily stumbling on like what I did with uni I stumbled on something that was alright. Essentially when I found out that I wasn't going to be able to not do it. I just decided to make it as easy for myself as possible. I thought about going to a school for a bit I decided that it would be hard to fill the time it was fifteen days and there is only so much you can do and I wouldn't be teaching a class or anything so there's only so much you can do. So, I ended up just working with the SU. I got it because in the lecture we had a series of talks before it started and he mentioned that he had talked to the SU beforehand and they said that they were interested in getting someone to look at the level of participation and I thought that will be easy it's on campus just get it done so I went for that and I got it erm I don't think the SU were as keen on the idea, they weren't resistant to it, but I don't think they really thought about it. But it ended up being quite good though because I could do it completely self directed and go in there 1 day a week and did ten questions and I did some focus groups and some informal discussions with the tape recorder nd did a survey and I got 200 respondents for that in the end and erm we had this module on research methods last year and this placement has taught me more than that ever came near to doing erm using spss and things and I now can which is good. It ended up quite good I think but I would have preferred to*

*do an academic module I would think had I needed to learn how to do spss or questionnaires or whatever I would have learned had I needed to. It was useful to have learned but I would have preferred to have had a module to pick it up in the future when I needed to because I am not keen which is ironic seeing as the reasons why I came to university were just random. But I'm not keen on using university to just to sort of forge out a cv for oneself you know I did this and I did that. I think…once you get past my reasons for actually coming, I am here and I continue to be here because I am interested in the subject I like it. If I wasn't I don't think I would have stayed if I didn't like the subject. I am not here just to sort of get a job afterwards or to some extent obviously, but it's not the main reason whereas some guys I do get the impression that they are sort of worshipping at the alter of CV rather than to do the degree.*
*B: Sort of to help their job prospects?*
*P: Yeah, and I'm really not a fan of that approach erm…what was I saying. Yeah, so the work placement felt as if it was just for the benefit of CV building rather than actually the education side of it.*
*B: Right…but having said that you felt you did get something out of it?*
*P: Yeah, to some extent …I did feel that and the group work though undermined the year for me though because it felt like the emphasis has been on these two things which I didn't really. I got something out of it but I didn't enjoy it. I would rather have not done it.*
*B: So which bits do you enjoy then?*
*P: The academic side*
*B: The reading?*
*P: More the writing erm this probably sounds like arrogance again, I like putting my ideas down.*
*B: No, that's good*
*P: Yeah er the reading can be interesting, but can be frustrating as well because it is time consuming whereas …but the writing side is something I really like and I quite like presentations. Again in the first year we did 2 presentations one in a group and one on your own and the group work was first which was probably good it gets your confidence up but before that I was terrified of speaking in public but again it went well and it built my confidence and the second one went very well as well so I I look forward to them no.*
*B: That's good because you will need to do plenty if you are going on to do PhD and everything*
*P: Yeah and the group work one this year, the one we have just done it was more of a workshop session which was for much much longer than before but it ended up with me doing most of the talking because we didn't have time to plan it because of people not turning up, so I did the presentation basically.*
*B: And did everybody get the same mark?*
*P: Yeah (Laughs)*
*B: How do you feel about that?*
*P: Well I don't…we ended up getting 68 which isn't terrible and I am perfectly happy for that for group work. I don't mind people sort of riding on my mark as long as they don't hold me back. To some extent they always hold me back a little bit purely because it wasn't coherent, by the people who were presenting it when one had the first time she had gone through it was 2 days ago for 5 minutes with me in the library and that was the first time she had gone through it and I know she hadn't rehearsed it before in fact I am pretty sure that was the only time she had looked at it. I ended up writing on the actual power point slides what she had to say and let her read it out…I think erm …but…yeah…it was fine really I don't really mind it was only 40 percent of the mark which was fine….(laughs)*
*B: I can sense a little bit of frustration there*
*P: Yeah, a little bit, I was quite pleased though on the whole with the rest of the group, I I respected the very shy friend I expected to have to carry through it a lot but he he put in the most time than anyone else besides me…he he we did all the data entry and data analysis together because which he is better at that than me so we are able to bounce off each other and we ended up being able to do an adequate if clumsy way I think…a lot of copy and pasting of SPSS. I didn't know about cross tabs until I went on work placement (laughs) I should have red the handbook. But, erm but I was dreading his sort o section on the presentation because when we were just in rehearsals with the other group members there he wasn't able to get his words out. But I think he just went for it and in the actual presentation he was probably he came across as more confident which was good and another person there who had a tendency to rant I think the word is, but he held it back so I I was quite pleased on the whole but a little let down at the same time …but erm …no no I mean I wasn't expecting much at all so it was fine.*
*B: 68 is a good mark. Just not what you are used to getting?*

*P: Yeah, yeah (laughs)*

*B: So, overall then throughout your life, who do you think has had most influence on your learning?*

*P: That's that's difficult….I mean definitely at school it was all imposed on me….erm I just …the most influence on sort of getting me to uni and giving me something…I think I like having something to sort of prove myself against like my brother I have some  people on my course who in some modules get the same sort of mark as me or higher and so there is the constant back and forth between us and erm…also my flatmate because he is really clever, we always have semantic arguments which is good so it's erm but I don't know whether that is sort of what makes me do it 'cos I never sit down and think well this will show them or whatever, it's just interest….and wanting to prove myself against what I did at college as well…how badly I did there erm ….but so I don't think it's extreme rivalry but I think it's a part of it.*

*B: Mmmm do you think you have changed as a person since you have come to uni?*

*P: I think I'm more confident, at college I was very very very very shy erm…I'm definitely more confident….more assertive …but I don't think, I mean I have always been very friendly and made friends really easily. No matter what kind of person they are I sort of adapt to the group erm but I think I'm a bit more egotistical …erm which I don't think is a bad thing really (laughs) yeah…I fee la lot more confident*

*B: Do you think that's through straight away your very first essay straight away you got an 85, so you must have known what was required . Do you think your confidence has come from knowing that yes, you have got what it takes?*

*P: Yeah, I think so I mean that first essay I wasn't expecting that I didn't know what was a good essay. And still, I hand in an essay and I think it's bad and it still comes back as a first. Erm, which is sort of a  good situation to be in (laughs) but erm I think that first essay had to be the thing that really gave me the confidence to go for it…and…sort of assert myself and be confident I what I was saying about things erm. Also, my level of confidence has got a lot I think to do with my opinion of other people and this sounds a bit bad but … (laughs)*

*B: No, go on say it… (laughs)*

*P: (Laughs) I will, I will, but at school there was a group of my friends who I thought were cool and I was more nervous around them and probably less cool around. And there was a group of my friends who I thought were less cool and with them I was much more confident and probably bullied as a result (laughs) only what I probably what I got from the other end. Not proper bullying but…*

*B: I know what you mean*

*P: Banter or whatever you call it…banter and to some extent that's the same here and I think that's just something that's in my personality full stop …but I think I respect…people more here…I think I have become a bit more apathetic really but still erm you know I am more confident around people who I look down on …I guess that's what it is.*

*B: Yeah… Right, I think that's about everything unless there's anything else you would like to add…..*


Kathy's interview transcript


*Kathy is drawing her timeline of learning events and is silent.*

*K: My writings appalling*

*B: It doesn't matter it's difficult to write neatly when you are trying to write fast.*

*B: Have you got exams coming up in May?*

*K: Yes*

*B: How many do you have?*

*K: Three*

*B: Three*

*S continues with her timeline and eventually indicates that she has finished. She passes it to B.*

*B: Ok have you finished? Right, thank you, what we will do now is use this as a guide to structure the interview and then if there is anything else you remember along the way you can talk about  that too if you want. So, right what have we got first then, so oh dear…*

*K: Laughs*

*B: Erm, you have got here the first member of your family dying.*

*K: I was very young … 6/7 years old*

*B: Oh dear me*

*K: So…*

*B: So you learned about….*

*K: It taught me a lot yeah*

*B: Yeah…in what way do you think*

*K: Just in respect that…at that age it was my granddad and you don't understand at that age that they are gone and it was like seeing my family dealing with it as well, it had a big effect on me seeing how they dealt with it afterwards. I used to write a lot of poetry and I wrote a poem about it as well.*

*B: Aww,*

*K: It's a big thing as well because I was quite close to him and having to cope with it at such a young age is a big thing*

*B: And seeing all the people around you having to cope with it as well*

*K: Yeah*

*B: There's all that as well*

*K: Yeah*

*B: Yeah it is a big thing at that age*

*K: I think as well you see my parents especially my dad because it was my dad's dad when you are that young you see your parents as god practically and you you see that they are not as they still have fears as well practically and I think at that age you realize that as well.*

*B: Yes, that vulnerability that people can have yeah. It must have had a big impact upon your life, yeah. So was that while you were at junior school then?*

*K: Yeah*

*B: Do you think that impacted upon what was going on at school as well?*

*K: Erm I think so because maybe at some point because I went to his funeral because know some parents stop their children going to funerals so when I spoke to other children about it they was like they had never been to a funeral and when you think about it it's a big thing when you realize that you are maybe going through something that other people the same age haven't been through.*

*B: Yeah, and like you say a lot of people shield their children from it don't they, but it's probably better if they do what your parents did and let you attend….*

*K: I seem to remember at the time too them saying oh you won't understand because you are so young, but but that made me angry because I thought we understand more than anything because we were so close to him so, it made you feel like em that you have to take on this responsibility as well to show that you are not as young as they think you are and to show that you do understand*

*B: Right*

*K: I felt that anyway*

*B: Right, yeah, so you felt like you had to erm show that you were more mature…*

*K: More mature yeah because it made me angry when they said that I didn't understand because I felt like I did understand*

*B: Yeah, did you have any brothers and sisters?*

*K: Yeah I've got 2 sisters and a brother*

*B: And are they older or younger than you*

*K: Erm I've got a sister and a brother older and a younger sister.*

*B: Yeah, so it's not like you were the eldest and you felt that responsibility …it was just purely because you wanted to show that you were old enough to understand?*

*K: Yeah*

*B: I think sometimes people don't give children credit for what they do know.*

*K: Yeah*

*B: So at that time you were at junior school…can you remember erm any of the teachers from junior school?*

*K: (Smiles) yeah*

*B: Can you tell me a little bit about them? You smiled then*

*K: Yeah, I loved my teachers at junior school yeah erm my teacher in reception class she was lovely she was just like a mother figure and there was a stricter teacher that we all sort of feared. I think the discipline thing too you need that and erm…I remember with another teacher I got put in the naughty corner for stealing crisps (laughing) I was 7 and it was really bad yeah.*

*B: Oh yeah.*

*K: I loved primary school and if I could do it all again I would do primary school again, I wouldn't do high school again but I'd do primary school again.*

*B: No, there's a big difference isn't there.*

*K: Yes…I'm saying that I just remembered I had a friend who died before my granddad she was only 6 and she got run over*

*B: Oh dear*

*K: by a car, but I think then, then I was less able to address it than when my granddad died.*

*B: Perhaps because you had already had experience of someone dying before your granddad died?*

*K: I think because he was older as well, it's more difficult to understand someone your age dying, six years old it was more difficult to grasp*

*B: It must be yeah…awful. Do you think that your teachers at junior school helped you, you know with what happened to your granddad and everything?*

*K: Yeah, they were always there. But I was was quite a shy child, I never really opened up to things like that…outside of home really. I had a one best friend who I told everything to so I never really…needed to speak to the teacher.*

*B: Mmmm, and what about your actual schoolwork…did it effect that?*

*K: No, no*

*B: No…you just felt like you could just get on with it just the same?*

*K: I think, I felt like because in my family I have always been known as the academic one really*

*B: Yes,*

*K: My granddad used to write poetry and I kind of got that from him so it kind of made me stronger knowing that he would want me to carry on*

*B: Mmm…so then we have got sex education (referring to K's timeline.) Was that at junior school?*

*K: Well, I went to a Catholic high school and primary school and so it was very brief sort of this is contraception, this is periods, this is what will happen to you. So I learned all my sex education from my mum really.*

*B: Right.*

*K: She was fabulous in that way and I love my mum to bits, I was lucky to have a mum because a lot of parents expect their children to learn it somewhere else and you need to be able to sit down with your children*

*B: Yeah, mine went to a Catholic school…and I do think you need that.*

*Around that time, did you have any informal learning experiences? You were obviously really close to your granddad and he used to write poetry and you sort of followed that on…*

*K: Well my mum said that from a young age from about 3 years old I taught myself to read so I have been in, throughout my childhood I have never been a child I would never go out to play, I would always stay in and read. I'd always dreamed of being a writer, that had been my dream, so I think I got it from that …from reading a lot. I think I sort of lived in a little a dream world really.*

*B: Yeah, so did you always have lots of books at home?*

*K: Yeah, lots of books and if I ran out my mum would take me to the library to get more.*

*B: So can you actually remember learning to read then?*

*K: I can't no…*

*B: Or did it just happen?*

*K: I can't I can't remember, my mum said that she used to just put books in front of me…you know like picture books and I just picked it up (laughs)*

*B: Did your mum read to you a lot though?*

*K: She did. My mum talks a lot as well, so I think we got a lot of our language from her.*

*B: Oh, that's interesting. So, here you have discipline and structure of lessons. Is that in junior school or is that referring to high school?*

*K: High school, high school, just it's a big difference isn't it going from primary school to high school…it's a big step.*

*B: Yeah*

*K: I know it's a big step going to university as well, but I think it's an even bigger step going from primary, having to make new friends, and things like that . It was a big learning experience as well and I think I never, and I think that's one of the things I never learned as well as everyone else how to make friends. Throughout high school I never …still I don't have any friends left from high school now*

*B: Yeah*

*K: I think that is one of the things that is difficult…that people don't appreciate is how to learn friends…how to hold a friend too*

*B: Yes, that is a big thing, yes, yes…so did you not have any friends from junior school that went up to high school with you?*

*K: Well, my best friend from Primary school went to a different high school…my dad made me go to a certain high school, which I think he regrets now because I did say well I want to go to the same school as my best friend and so yeah I did sort of have to make friends again all over again*

*B: And, why did he choose this other high school for you?*

*K: Because he went there and because it was Catholic and yeah …*

*B: Right, so how did you feel that first day going to high school without your best friend?*

*K: I knew…there were some people from my primary school there so I did know some people and er I dunno…it was …you just make friends don't you…it just happens. But I haven't kept any friends from high school so maybe that's a sign. I was very shy in high school.*

*B: Was you frightened?*

*K: Yeah, yeah…it was yeah …but looking back now I think how I would have done it differently, you do don't you*

*B: Yeah, yeah…so, discipline and structure of lessons have you put that there because it is different then from primary school?*

*K: yeah, yeah erm …stricter lessons, more lessons as well you have more teachers for different things. You have to get used to one style of teaching for one thing and then another style of teacher and more subjects and just a lot to take in isn't it.*

*B: Yeah, yeah…did you have any teachers that you could really get on with at high school?*

*K: yeah, I did yeah….mainly the art teachers because we used to go and hang around in the art classes at lunch time (laughs) and then there were the other ones I didn't get on with (laughs)*

*B: Go on; tell me about them (laughs)*

*K: (laughs) My English teacher Mrs. Quinn anyone who went to my school would mention her. Well, because it was a Catholic School in my final year, I got quite noticed because I started practicing Wicca. I had to do a presentation about something that I enjoyed doing and forgetting that I was at Catholic school*

*B: (laughs)*

*K: I hypnotized one of my friends and one of my teachers came up to me and said you are sick and you need a new hobby. So…yeah*

*B: (Laughs) So that didn't go down very well.*

*K: You see I didn't mind learning about all the different religions, one thing my sister did though because she went to that school was, you learn about the virgin Mary and the immaculate conception, but then you go over to science and you get taught that to have a baby you have to have intercourse, so she told them they were hypocrites to their face (laughs) so …there were quite a lot of people getting pregnant and rebelling too (laughs)*

*B: Was there (laughs). Oh, so then we have got performing in theatre.*

*K: yes, well all through my childhood my mum used to put me in acting class and I used to love it and I got to college and I did drama at college and performing in quite a lot of plays and I think it helps you to learn how to be in a team with people and in certain circumstances you have to learn how to compromise to work together and that especially I think that taught me  how to work in a team more than anything else because there were a lot of arguments but it increased my confidence because up until college I wasn't very confident at all that increased my confidence…*

*B: Yes, it must do especially when you are in a stressful situation and you have to work together…can I come back to your wicca? Could you tell me how you learned about that.*

*K: (laughs) I don't know how …I don't know…when you get the internet I just look up things …I browse…*

*B: Right, you didn't learn from someone else then…it was just through the internet?*

*K: Yes, and my dad has a friend who collects crystals as well and he he …we were quite close and he's old, he's old but even though he's old we were close and he used to give me crystals and tell me like that they would look after me and like different things they would do …that quite got me into it.*

*B: Do you think that sparked your interest then?*

*K: No, I was into it before and that just sort of helped it along.*

*B: Right, yes. …Right, then you have got employment in various jobs …*

*K: Yeah…I've worked in quite a few jobs. I've worked, my first job was in Tesco's the worst job I had. I left after 3 months because I was bullied I was basically bullied at work*

*B: Oh dear…gosh…what by managers?*

*K: By people who wanted to be managers yeah…and I was only 16, but they would just be making horrible comments and I would end up in tears at work…*

*B: Oh…that was a big learning experience wasn't it.*

*K: And then I worked on an icecream van which was great …until I realized that I had a phobia of wasps (laughs) and then I've worked behind a few bars and in an office. I have had quite a broad range of experience.*

*B: Yes, yes*

*K: I think one of the most, one of the things I learned most from was working with a boy who had autism for a little while. It wasn't for very long because I disagreed with the way they was trying to …help him they believed in behavioural therapy kind of…and while I believe in the behavioural point of view they were just sort of treating him like a dog. They were kind of saying or clapping if he was doing good and to me that was just like no no no…I think it's a bit of both me I don't think you can say it's one or the other no…*

*B: No…well I think you have got to take everything into account and not try to fit square pegs into round holes…design schools more around the person rather than expecting everybody to fit into school.*

*K: yes, yes, and it's like gender as well it's like a lot of people especially today we used to fight for equal rights but really we are different and I realize that women are different to men and I say this all the time because they will say oh you are equal but I say no women are born with a womb, we are born….*

*B: Yes… don't want to be equal to a man*

*K: This is what I mean and any man who argues with me and says and I disagree with men being able to represent women in parliament as well, I think that's a big thing. I think, no a man can't represent a woman because a man can't go through what a woman goes through you know.*

*B: No, and also a woman can't represent a man…we are all different.*

*K: Yeah*

*B: So then you have got coming to university...is that after you had done all these jobs?*

*K: Yeah*

*B: You mentioned college as well,*

*K: Yeah I was at college and then I went to university… they were part time jobs, while I was at college*

*B: Right, just while you were at college yeah. So, you are in your third year aren't you?*

*K: Yeah, well 4 because I have been here 4, I switched, I did English first*

*B: Right*

*K: I switched because I didn't enjoy it*

*B: Right, so did you actually move to live here*

*K: Yeah*

*B: To Focal university town, to uni*

*K: Yeah*

*B: Right, can you tell me a little bit about that then?*

*K: I loved it, it was great at first…I loved it. It was a bit weird because I still can't cook so…it's just one thing I just never learned how to do and I think with me I latch onto people as well, since the age of 16 I have been in a relationship…this is the first time I have been single…for three months*

*B: Right*

*K: And I'm loving it*

*B: Oh are you…good!*

*K: But I kind of go on from one relationship to another relationship. When I got to uni I was in a relationship with a guy who was in the army and he went to Iraq the year I went to uni erm and I was really bad and got with another guy at uni so I was kind of juggling 2 guys at one go but that way, I could sort of then move into his flat with him and he would cook for me so I never sort of had to depend on myself. So, I think in that way I am quite dependent me, but in other ways aI am quite independent. I'm moving away in September*

*B: You are moving away from …?*

*K: England*

*B: Right,*

*K: I'm moving to South Korea for a year to teach English*

*B: Oh lovely, great*

*K: You have already got your job then have you?*

*B: My application was successful yes, so they just look for erm a school 2 months before I am due to go there and I have to sort my Visa and my vaccinations out.*

*B: So you are going there on your own?*

*K: Yeah*

*B: Oh it will be really good that.*

*B: So, tell me about English then (starts laughing)*

*K: Well, (Laughs) it was awful, well, it was, I came to Uni and …I didn't have a clue because I couldn't not have gone to uni not …I'm the type of person who loves to learn. If I could have stayed at uni for ever I would because I love to learn. For me it's not about getting a job at the other end of it …it's just I love to learn. And I have always wanted to be a writer ever since I was younger, so I thought I would go to Uni and do English with creative writing and maybe it'll help. But then I realized that you don't need a degree to be a writer so …and…and I've actually not written anything since I did that course. It's completely took my inspiration away from me and 'cos the creative writing lecturer…I probably shouldn't say this…*

*B: No, that's alright*

*K: But he basically, he was marking all the poems and saying that's a good poem or that's a bad one and I don't think you can do that*

*B: No, it's very subjective isn't it.*

*K: We sort of stood up against him and refused to speak in his lectures (laughs) basically. We rebelled. Cos yeah I failed because basically I wasn't interested in it at all. And I was going out every night and getting drunk…so yeah. And now I have switched to new subject area and I am getting firsts, so I think it's the best thing I did.*

*B: Yeah. What made you decide to choose new subject area?*

*K: I don't have a clue, I don't know…I was looking through the prospectus and thinking what should I do? I don't really know so*

*B: Do you find the teaching in new subject area different to English?*

*K: Yeah, yeah, yeah… In English it's falling to sleep boring lectures, its…because it's English it's English language that I did it's all set kind of this is what it is. We had to write an essay on what is language and basically you just have to go off the history of language…you can't change your opinions on things, unless it's like certain types of language like deaf people things like that you can give certain opinions on*

*B: Mmm*

*K: On how language was formed, but most of it is set in stone kind of with English and I didn't, I didn't find it interesting at all so the teaching styles kind of more strict as well I think on English as well but er…when they are marking your essays you don't really know what they are asking for and you can't give your own opinion and it was just more difficult. Whereas with politics you have got more of a relationship as well, because er…the reason I failed my English was because erm I was ill and couldn't get into uni to give in an essay so I emailed it to one of my lecturers even though I knew it wasn't allowed, but he never got back to me. The first I found out about it was at the end of the year when*

*he said you have failed 'cos I couldn't mark that essay and I was like but well you never got back to me, whereas here, better relationship.*

*B: Yeah, so if you were ill now…*

*K: They'd understand…*

*B: They'd understand and try to help you?*

*K: Yeah, but even if he had got back to me that day and said look I can't accept this, I would have found a way to get into university to give it in, but he just didn't get back to me at all, so….*

*B: Yeah…so do you think you've built relationships up sort of then with teachers in new subject area?*

*K: Yeah, yeah. I think it's easier to as well because there is more debate goes on in the lessons, as well you are more likely to form a relationship.*

*B: Are they smaller groups as well than in English?*

*K: Yes.*

*B: How many are there usually in English?*

*K: It depended on which module, but on average about 20. 20 people, so much smaller in politics. I mean the big (inaudible) 'cos they were big ( inaudible) lessons, there would be just loads of people. I think they are more enthusiastic about the subject too the teachers (in new*

*subject area.) When you are teaching in English, you learn it, anyone could learn it and teach it whereas in new subject area you need that bit of enthusiasm about you and I think Dave especially (laughs) is THE best lecturer*

*B: Mmm Dave has been really helpful with me too, he's been great. Have you made us of those, he does those podcast things*

*K: (Starts laughing) I am no good with things like that (laughs) no…*

*B: Do some of the other students (make use of them)*

*K: Yeah, yeah. I think in the first year especially, he doesn't really do owt for third years, but in the first year it was always podcasts*

*B: yeah, and were you expected to sort of watch them before hand and have a seminar afterwards?*

*K: Yeah*

*B: How did you find that as opposed to having him face to face?*

*K: Erm, it's good to have a podcast I think for some people it works, but for me it just…I never find like the space at my house I don't have any space to sort of get on my own and watch. I can't do it at the library because…well I suppose I could take headphones but I'm just not technological me really so. It is better for me to have him one on one.*

*B: Yeah*

*K: So, then if you don't understand anything like you can just ask there and then.*

*B: Yeah. So… (referring to timeline) travelling….*

*K: Travelling (laughs)*

*B: Travelling…go on then, tell me where you have been to*

*K: I have been to a few. Er the first I have been to was Egypt. That was my dream holiday. I went down the river Nile, saw all the temples, it was amazing.  But the lifestyle as well it was just completely different. You*

*Learn a lot fro that. They are really poor but they don't mind if you know what I mean because it is all they have ever known. They sort of live with it and down the river Nile there's like children swimming down the Nile and they sort of live across from one another so they get a boat across to your neighbour. I thought it was wonderful; I would love to live there.*

*B: Do you think there was more sort of a sense of community?*

*K: Yes, yes, but then there is places like Cairo where they deform babies to make them beg to earn money*

*B: Oh gosh*

*K: So I think in that sense you see the effect that capitalism has had on the world too and I just think it's really bad…because their money's worth nothing they are really happy if you give them like a pound kind of thing and I think to me what does that tell you we are forcing our Western culture onto this country and they can't deal with it and I think they were better off the way they were working in a community.*

*B: it's like in the slums in India isn't it…*

*K: That's right, I think as soon as you start telling them like in China like that's where it is really wrong, you are telling people you need to have all these businesses and you have all these factories and it's like slave labour and things like that and it's like that's not how its supposed to be ..*

*B: Have you been to China as well then?*

*K: No, I have not been to China but from what I know about China, it's slave labour and we exploit them. I'm a communist at heart (laughs) but yeah, I loved Egypt, the temples and the architecture is amazing jst like the history and to think we could probably never build anything like that today. How clever they were to do that without all the tools we have today it's amazing. I have been to Rome and the coliseum is amazing as well. I have been to quite a few places in Europe too, Serbia last year and that was, completely different as well the things that they've been through and the wars that they've been through as well, you just can't imagine over here. Been to Germany, loved Germany…*

*B: Do you think it changes you going to these different countries and seeing different things*

*K: I think it does change you, it changes the way you, this is why I can't wait to get out of this country because I have seen all these other countries and  the way it's been there and I think there's so much more to life than living in a nine to five job that you hate just for the money just waiting for the weekend…there's more, and we think we have got it good but to me that's not the way we should be living. So, yes it does change you, especially Germany, Sweden, places like that. They are more chilled out people and they work together more and they just seem happy. They don't do overtime the way we do.*

*B: What do you mean… they work together more?*

*K: Erm….you just get the sense that they come together more, and they enjoy their time together without having to go drinking sort of thing. You know like as a community they enjoy each other's company. They trust each other more too. It's just simple things like road laws, they don't have yellow lines in Germany, they just trust that you are not going to park your car in a stupid place. Whereas, over here we have all these laws about where you can park. You know even if it is still Western culture, they are still different they have a more relaxed attitude.*

*B: Mmmm interesting that.*

*K: I know…and I have quite a few debates, people disagree with me obviously. I disagree with them too, it's just the way it is but I think that you learn from other people's ideas as well. So, hopefully that will mean that other people can learn from me too. I have learned, I have changed some of my opinions, but some of my opinions I have kept specifically. But some people have changed my mind and helped me grow as a person because I think you do have to work together, because if you have a good idea and then someone else has a good idea, you need to share them because I think for me in politics people like to stereo into conservative or oh you are labour, but for me I don't think you can stereotype into anything because I pick bits from each one. Like some people would say I am very left with my communist ideals sort of thing, but then some people would say you are quite conservative with your views. Like abortion, my views on abortion, I wouldn't say it is conservative, but in this country I think the 24 weeks limit is too high…for me I think every woman has the right to an abortion but I think that's way too high. I have had so many arguments because I think they had a recent vote in parliament didn't they about whether they should lower it and they kept it as it is. And I said well there are far more many men in parliament than what there are women you know what I mean. It might be different, but it might not be different but you can't …that's when it's dangerous for men to represent women in parliament.*

*B: Yes…..so you've got as well languages and history.*

*K: Just the history that I have learned from different places and languages as well, like going when I went to Serbia, even though they are in Eastern Europe they could speak English and their own language as well*

*B: We are ignorant us aren't we*

*K: That's how I felt, I felt really ignorant and I think we should have languages in primary school we should 'cos that's where you learn it as a child. So for me, I mean I know some Spanish that I learned at school, but I like to learn other languages when I go abroad I like ask what does that mean. Like there's a girl on our course she is Vietnamese*

*B: Oh yes, I have spoken with her*

*K: She is lovely her, and I am always saying to her what does it mean in your language and she's teaching me, I love to learn languages, I think it is important. I think if we rely on everyone just speaking English it's like getting rid of everyone's culture. I think you should preserve some culture, I think that is important as well.*

*B: Yes, I agree definitely. So, you know over all your life, who have been the most influential people on your learning?*

*K: On my learning?*

*B: yes*

*K: Well, just a variety of people really, my parents have been the biggest I think. Maybe not as much as I have learned their values, but I have got my own values from seeing how they are as well. Because a lot of my values are completely different from my parents but I think I have got them from disagreeing with their values*

*B: Yes,*

*K: Sex education was one of the biggest as well because mum put me on the pill at 15 and I think it's one of the best things she ever did for me sort of thing. I think it is it is important and erm just my mum my mum especially like. My dad's the intelligent one but my mum's really sociable and she knows how to communicate with people so thinking that way I have learned quite a lot. And my dad, I have learned a lot and debating different things as well. We have always been on the same wave length…..*

## Appendix F: Table 3: Coding procedure

| Themes | Merged Codes | Initial Codes |
|---|---|---|
| **The need for Relationship** | • Relationships with other students | • belonging<br>• fitting in,<br>• measure ability against others,<br>• reciprocal interactions<br>• mutual understanding/intersubjectivity<br>• competition culture- mitigates against collaborating<br>• learning from others through discussion and debate,<br>• sharing different points of view<br>• explaining<br>• recognition/denial of the value of collaborating with peers |
| | • Relationships with lecturers | • Friendly, warmth<br>• trust<br>• belonging<br>• engaged<br>• reassurance<br>• feedback on their work<br>• reciprocal interactions<br>• recognition from their lecturers<br>• available/accessible<br>• allow time<br>• mutual understanding/intersubjectivity |
| **Interaction of Identities** | • Interaction of student/lecturer identities | • Lecturer identity academic researcher/ teacher<br>• Vulnerability /highlights own vulnerabilities/ manages vulnerability<br>• empathy for student position<br>• mattering<br>• psychological proximity to students,<br>• wield power/authority, upholding rules,<br>• students' rejection of authority- uncooperative, unresponsive. |
| | • Interaction of PhD student lecturer and student identities | • PhD student lecturer identity<br>• Psychological proximity -closer to students?<br>• Empathy for student position.<br>• Trust, students confident to speak up in lectures<br>• Less institutional 'power' |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • Interaction of Student/Student Identities | • Competitiveness,<br>• Different conceptualisations of what it is to learn- identity?<br>• Dislike group work/ favour group work-value of collaborating<br>• Annoyance- at others who push themselves forward / at others who do not put work in (group tasks) |
| **Achieving Intersubjectivity** | • Lecturing style | • Lecturer conceptualisations of what it is 'to teach' and 'to learn.'<br>• lots of teacher talk,<br>• minimum of interaction,<br>• time not allowed for students to answer questions.<br>• invite student participation,<br>• use of questioning to draw out discussion<br>• time allowed for student to speak/answer questions. |
| | • Mechanism of intersubjectivity | • Use of questioning<br>• Understanding of each others point of view<br>• Whole class discussion<br>• All opinions valued<br>• Reaching similar understandings after initially disagreeing<br>• Whole class meaning making- multiple ZPDs<br>• Proleptic exchanges<br>• Meanings in constant flux |
| **Context and Relationship** | • Impact of context on lecturer identity | • Macrosystem and exosystem processes<br>• privilege research over teaching<br>• Frequency of interaction with students in microsystem- proximal processes |
| | • Context, and the reification of the transmission/acquisition model of learning | • Classroom layout enforces transmission/ acquisition model of learning.<br>• Separate/ distance /barriers between individuals.<br>• Keeping boundaries and power relations in place<br>• Lecturers movements- choreography of the classroom |
| | • The role of relationships across contexts | • Mesosystem- links across different relational settings<br>• Family links<br>• Other life demands<br>• Discernment- Support from others to realize where skills from one setting might sometimes be applicable in another |