

Theories of Transformative Higher Education

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April 2019

Abstract

In this thesis, I present five new theories for transformative higher education as my contribution to knowledge in the field of Education. These theories specifically provide a way of viewing learning and teaching, and academic support for postgraduate learners and are as follows: (1) A Sense of an Academic Self, (2) A Trio of Actors, (3) Enabling Learning, (4) Coping with Uncertainty, and (5) Clear Fields—Muddied Fields. To be able to offer these theories, I examined the contemporary HE teaching and learning scene, and compared my experiences of it as a practitioner with what was in the literature. Taking the ontological position as an interpretivist and the methodological position as a Symbolic Interactionist, I made use of the concepts of Field and Disposition from Bourdieu's Habitus to act as vital thinking tools to conceptualise and realise theories. In effect, I adopted a practice-based, constructivist, grounded theory approach. With this approach, the starting point was not empirical studies derived from a traditional literature review but from musings and puzzles, collected from years of reflective teaching practice. In consequence, no narrow research questions were carved out of or honed from literature as might be expected. This does not mean that literature is absent or unimportant in the thesis. In fact, literature was very important to this study, only used in two non-traditional ways. The first of these was to contextualise constructed theories pre-analysis and then secondly to situate and advance theories post analysis.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to start by thanking my supervisor, Dr Paul Roberts, for having the strength of character as an educator to allow me to find my own way with this PhD. He was always a mindful advocate of my, sometimes risky, learning, which enabled me to become more than what I used to be. I would especially like to thank him for being such an excellent reader. His excellence in reading enabled me to become a much better writer.

I would also like to thank two people who are very close to me, my mother, Patricia Ross, and my best friend, Jill Baxter. My mother has been an inspiration to me because of her ability to find her way through difficult situations and to continually transform her life and world view in the process. My best friend is a constant source of support and amusement for which I am always grateful.

I would like to thank the participants involved in the research project for giving up their time to make, what turned out to be, such valuable contributions. I hope I have done you all justice.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Grandmother, Henrietta (Babs) Ross, who passed away on 24 April 2015. I believe that I may have inherited part of your inexhaustible determination - and thank goodness for that.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Micky Ross

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Outline of Chapter.

In this chapter, I provide a background for the study and situate it within the context of higher education. Here, I describe the experience of teaching and learning in higher education as a repeatedly transforming body. To do this, and to help myself and my reader conceptualise this transforming body, I take the notion of a marathon and use it metaphorically. This metaphorical use of a marathon is one in the sense of the London or New York marathons, where runners move together with shared and individual goals for a temporary part of their respective lives. In the second part of this section, I describe how internationalisation has impacted teaching and learning in higher education, arguing that the biggest impact has been for those teaching and learning in taught master degree programmes. My experience as one of these teachers, and the experiences of these students form the central focus of this investigation.

In the second section, I firstly introduce practice-based research and give a brief background to it. I secondly describe and justify how practice-based research can be a catalyst for theory-generating research. I thirdly continue by detailing and explaining the non-traditional relationship that this project has with the relevant and connected literature and why that should be the case. In doing so, I explain the often difficult relationship that the literature has had to this project, justifying the departure from tradition as I do so. I do this before explaining why this thesis does not include a literature review in the traditional sense but how literature plays a vital role in (i) contextualising this research project and then (ii) furthering the theory that has been born out of it. In relation to this, I introduce and give a rationale for taking a Grounded Theory approach, in terms of method.

In the third section, I introduce myself as the researcher. In doing so, I firstly justify why this introduction to myself is necessary. Secondly, I outline the process and literature I used to help me to communicate a narrative about my educational past as an “academic narrative.” I then, thirdly, present my academic narrative, detailing the critical incident that led me to conduct this research in the way that I did and also describe the transformation I underwent, both as a practitioner and as a person during the process of this PhD. In the fourth section, I introduce the theoretical perspective that informs my worldview, Symbolic Interactionism, and the theoretical tools that I used to construct knowledge in this project, Habitus and Field. In the fifth section, I openly acknowledge that this thesis is different in some ways from a traditional thesis; however, I assert that this difference was not brought about with the intent to disrupt an academy of thinking. Finally, in the sixth section, I provide a clear outline of how the remainder of the thesis will unfold.

1.2 Practice in Higher Education: Background and Context.

1.2.1 A form that is transforming.

As practitioners of higher education, there is one thing of which we can be certain: that the forms which our working situations take will always be transforming. Working situations in higher education will always transform because they are made up of continual flows of people. These flows are always in motion and continue year on year because each year our

practice is populated and then re-populated with new students. In turn, cohorts come and then go, before being replaced with new ones. On a national level, this phenomenon happens on a giant scale. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2018), over 2.30 million people enrolled in higher education programmes in the UK in the academic year 2016/17. This was preceded by over 2.28 million the year before and 2.26 million the year before that. In fact, over the last two decades, year on year, great flows of people have enrolled in higher education programmes at UK institutions. These great flows bring about images in the mind's eye of a single moving body of tightly packed-together people, somewhat like the very early stages of a marathon, seen from a bird's-eye view, when watching on the television.

As with seeing these bird's-eye images on the television, it is easy to forget that a mass flow of people is in fact made up of individuals. Of course, this can to some extent be forgiven because both higher education and marathon participants are bound by generic rules and principles. These rules and principles are necessary for what Dewey (1988) and Bourdieu (Reed-Danahay, 2005) describe as "the rules of the game." Similar to concept and practice of higher education, the rules of the game in a marathon are fairly constant. They may change over time, but this change is incredibly slow, if it happens at all. This slow rate of change is because the rules of the game genuinely matter to its continuation. Hence, the rules order conduct, and without them, the game would not be possible. For example, they, the students, have to adhere to any given rules if they wish to be recognised as having completed and if they want to receive their degree award. If the rules are breached, then the students may be disqualified or punished. Furthermore, they all have to achieve their award on their own merit. In terms of principles, all participants have generic goals. For instance, they have the same goal of completing the race, and it is most likely that they all want to do their best. Furthermore, their lives may be consumed by the race while they are participating; however, it will not consume their lives forever. The students exist outside of their participation, both before and after master's degree programme. Hence, in many ways, participants are indeed generic. However, as with all perceptions of mass bodies from above, what the body of the marathon conflates is the many individual journeys that are actually being played out.

As viewers of the marathon on television, it becomes apparent as the race evolves that the mass body stretches out and becomes fragmented. At this point, we, as viewers, see individual participants begin to emerge. As this process commences, we begin to identify the individuals and place them into basic blanket categories of participant. For instance, we identify some participants who are overwhelmed by the race as dropouts. These people were not ready to take part or were ill prepared. As a result, they are forced to discontinue. We identify other participants, who are on the verge of being overwhelmed by the race but nevertheless struggle on and are likely to finish, as amateurs. These people, although noteworthy for having been well prepared for their run, will never receive great accolade. On rare occasions, we identify a participant as a cheat. This person chose to circumvent the rules, and as a result, is disqualified. However, it also becomes clear that some participants are more able to advance themselves in the pursuit. In turn, we begin to identify an elite group of runners as strong participants or, perhaps, even professionals. In consequence, at this elite end of the race, we then begin to categorise runners because we can now identify them in less generic terms as strong participants or perhaps even professionals.

As these particular runners emerge, we begin to learn about them, not only as generic runners, but as individuals who are running. When watching the television, this comes about from what we hear in terms of commentary. This commentary allows our view of them to transform because it gives us a deeper insight into who they are and what their respective stories are or might be. This will include the basics such as their name and where they are from. However, it might also include a description of their professional motivations for running, their rivalry with another person, where they have run before, or their preparation for this race. We might also be made privy to more intimate details about personal challenges and goals: for example, the larger journey this specific journey is part of. More specifically we learn who they are doing this for, why they are participating now, or what physical or mental health struggles they have overcome. As we hear this information, we begin, not only to identify them as a category of something, but to identify them in a personal way. In effect, what were anonymous runners are transformed into complex individuals, whose characters are shaded by their wider narratives. These complex individuals have curious histories, rich in meaning and purpose, and we, as viewers, watch them proceed through what will very shortly become a memorable part of their history.

As professional practitioners of higher education, at the beginning of our academic years, we also experience a flow of unknown generic participants who we identify as a body of students. As with the viewing of a marathon, time passes, and we begin to identify different categories of students as they emerge. Some of them are strugglers who work hard, and as a result, are able to stay in the race. Some of them, it turns out, were not ready and drop out or opt for an alternative exit qualification. Some of them circumvent the rules and have to be disqualified, while others are clearly more able to advance their studies and pull ahead of the group. The marathon metaphor can only go so far, however. This is because we are not passive viewers of events, watching from a detached, faraway place. In fact, we practitioners are much more involved and even complicit in the experiences of those who participate in higher education as students. This is because we play an active role in structuring student learning.

As practitioners of higher education, we are people who help guide other people through learning processes. These learning processes take the form of the programmes of study and the support that we design and deliver. The roles of designing and delivering curricula are particularly mechanical, part of the rules of the game that have to be adhered to. Yet, we are not emotionless machines. We do not just design and deliver programmes without our own personal-professional involvement. Indeed, we form different extents of relationships with our students as a result of interacting with them, depending on the size of the cohort and intimacy of the programme. In essence, we become on some level familiar with them. And this personal-professional familiarity, coupled with programme design, becomes a structure that our students temporarily latch onto in order to advance their pursuits of higher education. By being people who guide people, we automatically become involved in our students' journeys, temporarily running alongside them. We interact with them through our practice and become involved in their journeys. As these journeys complete and fall into the past, we move on and become involved in new journeys with new students. These journeys are all slightly different, and this is because all of our students have slightly differing needs: some of them requiring close mentorship, others requiring encouragement from a distance. As the years go on, we meet tens, hundreds, maybe even thousands of students this way, all of them individual people with individual histories, who we are

welcoming one moment, only to be congratulating them at graduation the next, only to be welcoming the next cohort soon after.

1.2.2 International flows and cycles.

Higher education, then, moves in great cycles. Over the last two decades, the form of these cycles has swelled and transformed owing to the marked increase in international enrolments. International cohorts are mostly a product of internationalisation strategies that UK universities, as with many others around the world, especially in anglophone nations, have developed and implemented (Kehm and Teichler 2007; Knight, 2004; Nada and Araújo, 2018; Streitwieser, 2014; Wihlborg and Robson, 2018). Statistically, the impact of internationalisation on practice may look minor. For instance, according to HESA (2018), international enrolments to higher education programmes (including those from the EU) at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level for the year 2016/17 comprised only 19% of all enrolments. For undergraduate programmes specifically, this was lower still, where 16% of students were internationally recruited. However, where internationalisation has had a striking impact on enrolment is on postgraduate programmes. In fact, in full-time postgraduate programmes in 2016/17, international students made up 53% of total UK numbers with just over 80% of these enrolments being in taught master degree programmes.

Master degree programmes, then, have seen the biggest transformation in terms of cohorts as a result of internationalisation. This is not a surprise. Master degree programmes in the United Kingdom are very marketable, offering streamlined programmes in an English language medium, and the resultant qualification is typically for one year of study and from a university that has a high global position on league tables (Deem, Mok, and Lucas, 2008; QS, 2018; Schofer and Meyer, 2005). Although statistics for master degree programmes specifically are not available, HESA's (2018) statistics on taught full-time postgraduate programmes show trends indicating that the majority of these students are in soft science or humanities programmes, outnumbering their hard sciences counterparts by approximately two to one; they are, by a slim majority, female; and they are most likely to be between the ages of 21 and 24 years of age. Non-UK students formed the majority of cohorts in all subject areas in the soft sciences and humanities apart from Education and History and Philosophical Studies. Non-EU numbers were highest in the subject discipline of Business and Administrative Studies. The soft sciences and humanities then are where we find the most international students in our practice.

This has consequences for us as practitioners. Internationally diverse cohorts bring with them individuals who are disposed to learning in myriad ways. In short, individual students are touched and shaped by the worlds they have been socialised and educated in and by (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986; 1993). Hence, each comes with a significant history and with established senses of selves. They arrive with different stories, with various cultural assumptions, with linguistic and disciplinary approaches (Cunningham, 2018; Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2009; Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping and Todman, 2008). Subsequently, they also have unique ontological perspectives that they use to interpret the world which they see. This means that master degree programmes are filled with vastly different people. And these differences are, to varying extents, disruptive to our practice. The disruption is because we ourselves are not untouched or unshaped by

our socialisation and education. In consequence, we have ingrained beliefs and understandings about how our practice should play out. For instance, we come with beliefs about how those involved in our practice, both student and teacher, should act, and interact, or about what is appropriate conduct and what is not. However, the disruption which difference and incongruity brings to our practice is highly valuable.

It is highly valuable because it helps us to open our eyes to the perspectives of others. With our eyes open to others, we can also begin to see ourselves. Thus, by having others in our practice, we can begin to reflect. Subsequently, as the cycles of higher education play out, we are able to reflect on our practice and collect experiences. As we collect experiences, they begin to inform our practice. In real and practical terms, we may reflect on past experiences and ponder how we could, for example, “do things differently next time.” We may encounter a situation in the present that reminds us of one in the past, so we draw from the former to inform the latter, and both present and past experience then become reassessed and banked for any possible future situations that may or may not emerge. By considering experiences of practice, we are engaging in reflective practice. Reflective practice involves theorising. Theorising in this sense is imagining and conceptualising. It is joining the dots and filling in the gaps that exist in our understanding of the worlds in which we practice our profession. In essence, it is the beginnings of practice-based research.

1.3 Practice-Based Research and This Research Project.

1.3.1 Background.

Practice-based research is common in disciplines such as nursing and healthcare (Boswell and Cannon, 2011; Newell and Burnard, 2011; Rubin and Bellamy, 2012), social work (Dodd and Epstein, 2012), and counselling therapy (Bager-Charleson, 2014, Barkham, 2014; Barkham, Hardy and Mellor-Clark, 2010; Green and Latchford, 2012). It also exists in other areas of practice such as dentistry (Mjör, 2007) and now even policing (Santos and Santos, 2015). The common thread that all of these disciplines share is that they combine people in professional practice with people in the real world. These people need to deal with real issues and to find real solutions and interventions, as opposed to theoretical ones. These solutions and interventions more often than not happen as face-to-face encounters, where a practitioner and a client/civilian/layperson work together to reach desired outcomes. Practice-based research, then, exists in disciplines where there is no hiding from the client and where practitioners need answers that fit their local working environments. Oancea and Furlong (2007, p. 125) suggest that practice-based research “foster[s] theoretical, as well as practical modes of knowledge, and point[s] up the complexities involved in bringing research and practice together.” Practice-based research, then, is also from the grass roots level. It is taking a bottom-up approach to research.

1.3.2 Practice as a catalyst for theorising.

There are times as practitioners of higher education when we simply need to know what is going on in our professional working lives. This position is supported by Bager-Charleson (2014, p. 2), whose definition of practice-based research includes a statement that it is “triggered by personal experience and a ‘need to know’.” This need could manifest itself in different ways: perhaps we have had a difficult experience in practice; perhaps our face-to-

face practice has meant a loss of face; perhaps we are intrigued by a specific behaviour that our students are acting out; or perhaps we see a pattern in our practice that warrants more investigation. Practice-based research, then, is a mixture of professional intrigue and a need to problem-solve by undertaking an inductive endeavour. It is our response to the needs of our practice and as Dodd and Epstein (2012, p. 3) state, from the field of social work, “If social workers do not engage in research then we have to rely on other professionals to generate knowledge for us, something that we have relied on for a long time. So our insistence on the importance of being involved in research so that our research questions stay relevant and realistic and add social work practice perspective to knowledge-building.” Hence, in terms of this project, I also borrow from Wengraf’s (2001) definition, and define *research* as a means to get a better understanding of the reality in which we work.

Accordingly, through curiosity, intrigue and problem solving, we construct theories from our professional experiences of practice about our practice. Stiles (2010, p. 91) describes theories as “the intellectual tools that guide practitioners [and are] ideas about the world conveyed in words, numbers, diagrams or other signs that offer distinct sets of assumptions.” Indeed, we theorise about students, comparing them against each other, both past and present. As different situations emerge from practice, we compare our practice with the practice of others. These interactions are the basis for theorising, which takes place on different levels. For instance, our theorising could lead initially to precarious or shaky conclusions, constructed during minute-to-minute thoughts that we have during teaching, or perhaps private conversations that we have between ourselves as professionals after class. These theories may become less (or more) precarious if they are substantiated (or debunked) by colleagues after more open conversations. Further still, they may become stabilised after attending a conference or after discovering related studies in the literature.

1.3.3 A practical relationship with literature.

1.3.3.1 Redundancy and corruption.

At this point, this research project and thesis becomes different from traditional research projects. Traditional research projects look to narrow down and hone in on research questions from which to begin an investigation. However, in the earlier stages of this project, I found that approaching literature by doing a literature review in the traditional sense was a hindrance, often leaving me confused and frustrated. Indeed, the term itself was obstructive to how literature could help me. For instance, there was often little literature to review on the experiences of postgraduate students in higher education. Furthermore, the literature that I found was often corrupting. It was corrupting in that it took me down “rabbit holes” that further led me away from what I truly wished to study.

To take but one illustration of this, Mann (2001) provided a theoretical exploration into the student experience in higher education. She focussed specifically on alienation. Alienation is an interesting topic that I suspected might be relevant to the experiences of the people that I had hoped to investigate. Mann, herself, had drawn from expansive theorists such as Foucault, Marx and Sartre, which made for a somewhat difficult and extensive follow-up reading. In turn, I conducted a literature search on alienation. This took me to further papers which, at this early stage, were again either redundant or corrupting. For example, firstly, I found that alienation was thought to be an issue in virtual higher education

classrooms (Rovai and Wighting, 2005), as well as for ethnic minority students at predominantly white universities in the United States (Loo and Rolison, 1986; Jones, Castellanos and Cole, 2002). Secondly, I found that alienation had been discussed during an examination of student retention in higher education (Thomas, 2002). Furthermore, I found that it had been linked to student engagement (Kahu, 2013). Both interesting and potentially relevant, but ultimately corrupting in the sense that it changed and debased the angle of the study, taking me away from my practice and experiences within it that I wanted to study. Therefore, my experience of the traditional approach to literature led me down rabbit holes which often then led me to come out into huge expanses. In consequence, a well-honed research question was elusive.

1.3.3.2 Escaping a traditional mindset.

Despite my negative reading of the literature, in the earlier stages of the project, I was still in the mindset of a traditional approach and felt obliged to determine a research question. In the hunt to establish this research question, and to compensate for the lack of relevant literature at this time, I expanded my search into fields outside of Education. This expanded search took me into the expansive literature of Management and Organisational Studies (For example: Jones and George, 1998; Lewicki, Tomlinson and Gillespie, 2006; McAllister, 1995; Reagans, Argote and Brooks, 2005). My conscious move into this field was informed by a logic that suggested that another field, which involved people working together to reach specific outcomes might be helpful. In essence, it was my hope that, once I found a suitably similar research project in another field, I might be able to transfer a research question and then a method over by arguing that it could be made to fit a higher education context. I was wrong.

Although it became helpful in later stages, the Management and Organisational literature mirrored experiences of working together that were too far removed from educational contexts. While many issues, such as interpersonal communication, were relevant, I could not find a way to translate studies from one discipline to the other. This seemingly dead end led me to a second attempt in another field. My second attempt would be with nursing literature. This literature had several interesting studies investigating the relationships between people (For example: Dinc and Gastmans, 2013; French, 1994; Morse, 1991; Niven, 2006). Nevertheless, again, those relationships although similar were ultimately contextually very different from what is experienced in higher education. As a result, ultimately, no transfer was possible. However, my perhaps naive rambles in alternative fields would pay huge dividends, and the nursing literature in particular would make a consequential impression on this research project later in the process.

After reading extensively in the nursing literature for what was in fact a non-existent silver bullet, it became clear that practice really mattered in the discipline. And, of course, when literally dealing with the lives of people, practice does indeed matter. Furthermore, where the Management and Organisational Studies literature was thick with investigations where the researcher had been an outsider looking in on proceedings, the Nursing literature was flavoured with those who had investigated in more dynamic ways from the inside (For example: Bell and Duffy, 2009; Benkert, Peters, Tate and Dinardo, 2008; Carr, 2001). Many of whom had done this from the basis of their own practice; and thus, literature was not approached in the traditional sense. Often, these projects started with musings and

puzzles. These studies had emerged from practice and acted as the initial drivers of research projects. Acting on these puzzles transformed practitioners into practitioners as researchers, who chose not to ignore their experiences but to harness them and to approach data directly in an inductive fashion. Hence, I became drawn to and then adopted a practice-based approach, as I have described above.

1.3.3.3 Taking practice-based research to a systematic approach to theorising which has a non-traditional relationship to literature.

What is important to state here is the “*based*” in “practice-based.” Indeed, in this project, I have taken practice as a base but also added a systematic approach to research. I uncovered this systematic approach while exploring the nursing literature on practice-based research. This approach is Grounded Theory. Out of the many approaches and incarnations of Grounded Theory (see Chapter 3), I found the constructivist version of it, developed and driven forward by Kathy Charmaz, particularly compatible because it offered guidance in constructing and analysing qualitative data that was systematic yet flexible. Furthermore, and as Charmaz (2014, p. 232) states, constructivist theorists build theory “from specifics and move to more general statements while situating them in the context of their construction.” In effect, by drawing on Grounded Theory as a method, I was able to build on the foundations that a practice-based approach established. Although Grounded Theory approaches are varied, it is typical to introduce literature after data collection and the theorising stage (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This approach is non-traditional and suggests that the researcher should go first to data and then to relevant literature, meaning that the literature review is presented after the results and analysis chapter.

I took this approach in part during this research project. To be specific, I have provided two literature reviews. Firstly, I have provided a literature review (Chapter 2) that precedes the results and analysis and acts as a contextualisation of the study. To be clear, the literature review in Chapter 2 does not act as a literature review in the traditional sense that narrows down and hones in on a research question. This review is intended to situate the project within the literature. Secondly, I have provided a post-analysis literature review in discussion sections as the second major section of each theoretical chapter. It is here that literature played a role which is more akin to Grounded Theory in that it helped me to position theories constructed during this project within relevant studies. Furthermore, and importantly for the theorising process, the literature post-analysis also acted as a structure and inspiration to advance the theories constructed and presented from this research project. Literature, then, was used in a way that was thoughtful and appropriate to the practical nature of this research project.

1.4 Who Am I To Make Theory?

1.4.1 The responsibility of practice-based research.

As is becoming clear, I, as a practitioner and as a researcher, am very much involved in the making of knowledge and the theorising process in this research project. On top of this, I have stated that I wish not only to inform my own practice but to reach out to others by informing practice more widely. In turn, by choosing to act in this way, I have also heaped a huge responsibility onto myself. By investigating and theorising about my own practice, I am also investigating and theorising about my own actions and thus myself. In broader

terms, this means that practice-based research involves, to some extent, the researcher picking apart and analysing who they are and what they have done in relation to their practice. This is echoed by du Pock (2010, p. 122) who suggests that practice-based research is “a personal journey of discovery, or perhaps re-search.” In effect, practice-based re-search involves an extent of introspection. And as with much introspection, we run the risk of transformation (Mezirow, 1990a, 1990b, 1998, 2003). Transformation is a risk in this case, as by engaging in introspection through some form of critical reflection (Jarvis, 1992; Moon 1999; Rogers, 2001; Schön, 1983, 1987), we run the risk of changing how we see our world and thus how we see our respective selves. As suggested by du Pock, this is “a continual transformation process rather than a discrete event.” Hence, taking on a practice-based research project is a substantial responsibility. However, it is also an investment. It is an investment in our practices and in our selves. Through it, a positive difference to practice can be made. Hence, practice-based researchers by firstly reaching deep inside themselves and then secondly reaching out to others around them can, as Bager-Charleson (2014, p. 2) suggests, “produce knowledge that makes a positive difference to practice.”

1.4.2 Academic narrative: who am I to make theory?

1.4.2.1 Inspiration for academic narrative.

To realise my academic narrative in writing, I took inspiration from Ellis and Bochner’s (2013) chapter in *Autoethnography Vol I* which is written as a dialogue between Ellis and one of her students. Ellis and Bochner describe auto-ethnography as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (p. 132). Auto-ethnography may be a fuzzy genre, however, it empowered me in three ways. Firstly, it allowed me to use my personal experiences of both life and practice as a starting point for my research, in the way of many feminist writings (Linded, 1993; Reinharz and Davidman, 1992; Smith, 1979). Secondly, it provided a framework from which I could answer the question: “who am I to make theory?”. In effect, I could consider my own experiences as a learner, as a practitioner, and as a person by reflecting more deeply on my own self. However, by unearthing roots and pondering them, I became deeply fascinated and involved with the history of the peoples that had socialised me. This was to the point of grief and anger, to disdain, to indifference, and eventually to understanding and release. Hence, this auto-ethnography was, thirdly, a “native ethnography” (Deck, 1990) in the way that I examined my native culture which I now believe to have been a marginalised one. I have kept this as part of my academic narrative because I believe that it was crucial in empowering me to finally find my voice, which I realised had often been absent from my life and as a result had been absent from my writing.

Finding my voice mattered. It mattered because by building theory from the ground up as a practitioner was, by default, to put myself in the centre of my research. In doing so, I was interpreting a context that I was very familiar with. I am not alone in surmising that it matters for the interpretivist scholar to be reflexive (Bryant, 2002, 2003; Charmaz, 2000, 2008, 2014; Clarke, 2006, 2007, 2012; Hall and Callery, 2001; Thorne, Jensen, Kearney, Noblit and Sandelowski, 2004). Hence, before constructing data, I concluded that it was necessary to foster reflexivity about my own interpretations as a higher education practitioner studying participants in higher education. In turn, I questioned pre-existing

structural conditions and how they influenced my perspectives, privileges and interactions. I removed the many masks that I had been wearing and peeled off layers, walking myself down what were, at times, difficult paths into my histories with the intention of exposing the scholar behind this study. In doing this, I reflected critically on my past and considered how it influences my present at the time of writing.

1.4.2.2 Academic narrative: outline and intent.

As Ellis and Bochner (2013, p. 146) describe, “our uncertainties, our mixed emotions, and the multiple layers of our experience, and our accounts seek to express the complexities and difficulties of coping and feeling resolved, showing how we changed over time, as we struggle to make sense of our experience.” Furthermore, they go on to explain that “in conversation with our readers, we use storytelling as a method for inviting them to put themselves in our place” so that they can engage empathetically and reflectively with “worlds of experience different from their own” (Ellis and Bochner, 2013, p. 146). My intent, then, was, to some extent, to live my own research and document my development and transformation from an old self to a new one. In doing so, I have also attempted to willingly expose vulnerabilities to the reader. As a consequence, I hope to invite readers to consider their experiences of socialisation, how their selves have developed and transformed, and how this may have influenced their experiences of practice in higher education, and by extension, their experiences of research in the field of Education. By writing my academic narrative, I realised that I was an individual who had a solid understanding of myself as a person, a learner, a teacher, and a researcher. This meant that I felt confident and ready, having developed and transformed to a suitable point, to go forward with this research project.

1.4.2.3 Academic narrative: a critical incident that started this practice-based project.

Anonymous: “My first thought is, who are you to make theory?”

The spark that truly started this project was a critical incident that took place after the first full year of the PhD process; a senior academic challenged me in a way which seemingly required no answer, asking me: “*who are you to make theory?*” A critical incident is an event that particularly stays in the mind and leads to a transformed view of a matter. Such events engender moments in our lives when we stop and we think and we look and we see. These moments are moments of clarity. This clarity seems effortless and perhaps even obvious when it happens. However, these moments are the endpoints of particular threads that were much more involved. Clear moments of seeing happen when we finally make meaning out of what we have done or what has been done to us. They are reflective interpretations after a series of past actions that involved the investment of time and effort. They are the result of processes and experiences which do not exist alone but are entangled with other actors and with many other threads from many different narratives. These moments of seeing provide a still and calm space. This space feels momentarily exempt from the laws of time and where the individual exists alone, with a crystallised view of a reality which has only just become visible. Therefore, these moments are not simply cognitive but critically cognitive. They are critically cognitive because this newly earned view of reality means that we are not how we once were.

In effect, critical incidents have the power to transform what we *can* see and affords us the option of a new path if we wish to take it. Critical incidents as starting points for practice-based research are echoed in the literature (Bager-Charleson, 2014; Kemppainen, 2000; Newman, 2000; Tripp 2011). What made the incident I have reported (“Who are you to make theory?”) so critical for me was that perceptions of myself and *my self* in relation to my project finally crystallised. In effect, I realised that I had little ownership over my own interests in terms of my research project, and, after deeper introspection, I also realised that I had rarely felt ownership over any of my previous education. Bager-Charleson (2014, p. 17) claims that an “important aspect of practice-based research is [...] the emphasis on personal development and to ‘own’ the research interest, rather than conceal it.” In this vein, I made a conscious decision not to let others own my project, but to take ownership of it myself.

At the time of the incident, I was a fledgling scholar desperately grappling with my PhD research project, trying to navigate my way through what seemed like endless expanses of unfamiliar academic terrain. To me, my project was as if I were standing near the bottom of a huge mountain, looking up, and being unable to see the summit because of the clouds. However, for the senior academic asking the question, I believe that my project maybe looked more like a tiny anthill. Anthill or not, despite the limitations of my clearly subordinate position, I was quite easily able to determine that his question had not in fact been a question at all. I could tell this from the tone in his voice in which he had spoken, by the expression on his face, as well as the rather throw away fashion in which he had spoken.

From his position of cultural, social, and academic privilege as an older, straight, white, middle-class professor, he believed that there was only one perspective, and this was that theory-making was the domain of those who stood on mountains. Those mountains were mountains of published research. Research, in this case, was realised through a narrow “scientific” lens from which the experiences of people could only and should only be quantified, measured, validated, and generalised. Theory, then, was for those in an exclusive club. My exclusion from this club, although not petty or spiteful, was made quite evident in an act that lasted a moment. For the actor, this act was the product of successive re-enactments to the point that the actor’s familiarity with it made it invisible to him. However, to me, it was not invisible. Indeed, to me, it was an overt declaration of dominance; a “helpful” reminder of power structures which I should have known about before speaking, faintly veiled in the form of a question that allowed no space for an answer.

Of course, this is how I interpret this situation today. The meaning that I see and interpret now is very much allowed by what is now a transformed self (Illeris, 2014; Mezirow, 1990a, 1990b, 1998, 2003). With this transformed self, I have a transformed view of the world and myself within it. If I am to be honest, the former version of my *self* initially agreed with this narrow perspective and internally asked, “Yes, who am *I* to make theory?” In re-action, my former self initially chose the only coping strategy that he knew of at the time. This strategy was to be silent. Silence had always been a familiar refuge for me. In uncomfortable situations, when I felt as if I did not belong, silence acted as a small bunker in which to hide until that situation was over. However, it would be one of the last times that I would hide in this familiar bunker of silence. Indeed, this incident would become the

critical incident that became a turning point for this project and myself as a learner, and ultimately the spark that would transform my project into a practice-based piece of research that would build theory from the ground up.

This decision made for a complicated path. This meant seeking out new communities of thinking, and gaining new epistemological perspectives. Subsequently, it required a deep questioning of my values and re-assessing in what ways I would approach this research project. Consequently, it involved a complete rejection of objectivist approaches with which, coming from a hard sciences background, I had always been familiar. It involved embracing the ambiguity that goes hand in hand with subjectivity, interpretation and construction. It involved accepting my vulnerabilities and coping with them as I navigated the uncertainties of seeking out other communities of thinking in an effort to find the support structures to undertake this project in a way that, although might be more difficult to execute, was right for me.

1.4.2.4. Who am I as a professional practitioner in higher education?

As a professional practitioner in higher education, I am a learning developer. A learning developer is a professional in student academic services who works with learners to improve their academic performance. To improve this performance, I work with learners, mainly those who have been internationally recruited, in areas such as argumentation, critical analysis in reading and writing, academic voice, intercultural communication, and academic English language. I work with these learners, most of whom are postgraduate students, in three types of learning situations. The first is in a lecture situation. The second is in a seminar / workshop / smaller group situation. The third is in a one to one tutorial situation.

My current role as a learning developer is the end of point of a longer career working with adult learners. I have worked with adult learners since 2005. An amount of this has been in teaching English language, where my teaching career began. As a teacher of English language, I worked in the UK, South Korea, Cambodia, Austria, and Spain. After my career in teaching English language, I moved into teaching English for Academic Purposes and worked in this area for approximately six years. This was before eventually moving into my current role as a learning developer.

1.5 Theoretical Framework and Tools

In this project, I drew on two theoretical structures. The first was Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer 1986; Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934) and the second was Habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 1993). Here, I shied away from the term “framework” because it suggested a rigid structure. Typical of a Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2008a) study, I have not used theory to deduce specific hypotheses prior to collecting data. Instead, my approach was to allow themes and categories to emerge and then to find the best possible explanation for them, before moving them toward theory. Correspondingly, I chose to use the above two structures in the following ways. Firstly, I chose to use Symbolic Interactionism as a “soft” framework because it informs my world view, and thus, this project. In fact, taking a Symbolic Interactionist perspective helps to access a world that is dynamic. From a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, human actions construct self, situations, and society.

Reality is made of multitudes, understood through language and symbols, by and from which we form and shared meanings and actions. Symbolic Interactionism views interpretation and action as interdependent. In effect, an actor acts in accordance to how they view a situation. Individual actions, then, are reactions based on interpretations of the actions of a collective. In consequence, actions evolve as we continue to interact with other people. A Symbolic Interactionist perspective, then, is one that is aware of temporality. Secondly, I chose to use the concepts of “disposition” and “field” from Bourdieu’s Habitus as a theoretical vocabulary for describing the social phenomena that I studied. Furthermore, I also used these concepts as a set of assumptions to approach an explanation of them. As the project unfolded, the theoretical concepts of “disposition” and “field” became vital to delineating categories and raising them to the theoretical level. I go on to describe further the theoretical framework and tools in Chapter 3, Methodology.

1.6 Challenging Traditional Education Theses?

Over the very long time in which this project unfolded, it eventually became clear to me that it could be identified as one that set out to disrupt the traditions of thesis writing in Education. I would like to be clear that this was not its intention. In the same way as it did not set out to disrupt, neither did it set out to start a new community of scholars. Indeed, this thesis was written to speak to a current community of Education scholars in higher education who have an interest in teaching and learning. In turn, this thesis offers a number of theories as a contribution that hopes to inform the practice of such scholars, and, subsequently, it also aims to positively influence the experiences of those who undertake postgraduate study. However, where the product of this project may be more easily accepted as worthy, the method in which that product was constructed may be more controversial. Indeed, the method of this project followed an unconventional path. This path did not unfold at the whim of an intention that wishes to impress, agitate, or disrupt for its own sake. In fact, this path unfolded out of a pragmatic desire to do what would be best for learners. In this case, doing what was best for learners meant rethinking some traditional understandings of a thesis in Education. Although this may be thought of as disruptive, it stays true to the pragmatic and moral nature of practice-based research. In keeping with these values, my research should be research that considers what would best inform practice and what would most positively influence the experiences of learners. In consequence, I would claim that the method of this project is in itself a worthy contribution to the literature on practice-based research in Higher Education.

1.7 Structure of Thesis

The proceeding chapters of this thesis are laid out as follows. Chapter 2 is the Contextualising Literature Review. In the first section of this chapter, I describe the mission of the university. In the second, I discuss the changes that have taken place in higher education, namely massification, commodification, and internationalisation. In the third, I explain how the mission of “the university” has changed but how structures still exist in traditional terms. In the fourth section, I then go on to cast a light on the chronic problems with the delivery of learning that exists in higher education, the ineffectual pseudo-solutions that are put forward, and, importantly, the problematisation of those who are not seen as traditional. In the fifth and final section, I then put forward what is needed, namely critical and transformative pedagogies for a postgraduate higher education. Chapter 3 is the Methodology. In the first section of the methodology chapter, I present the theory

and analytic method that I used to construct and analyse data in this research project. In the second section of this chapter, I justify my use of a Constructivist Grounded Theory. In the third and final section, I outline, in detail, the procedure I took to carry out this research project.

From this point, I present the results, analysis and discussion together in theoretical chapters. In each of these chapters, I present the five new theories that I constructed as a result of this research project and as my contribution to knowledge. In each of these chapters, I firstly present the results and analysis. I then secondly present the subsequent discussion. In this section, I take the theories forward to literature, taking a two-pronged approach. For this first prong, I use the literature to position my theories within wider thinking. For the second prong, I use the literature to, where possible, advance these theories, at times presenting further theorising. These chapters are presented as follows. Chapter 4 is “A Sense of an Academic Self.” Chapter 5 is “A Trio of Actors.” Chapter 6 is “Enabling Learning.” Chapter 7 is “Coping with Uncertainty.” Chapter 8 is “Clear Fields—Muddied Fields.”

The final chapter of this thesis is Chapter 9, which is the Conclusion. In this chapter, I gather together the threads of the research project, highlight the contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes, and share limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Contextualising Literature Review

2.1 Outline of Chapter

This chapter is presented in 6 sections. In the first section, I explain the traditions of a university, using the analogy of torch-carrying. To help me achieve this, I draw from Freire's (1993, 2000) Critical Pedagogy. In the second section, I explain how the traditions of higher education have been disrupted by the outside forces of commodification, massification, and internationalisation. In the third section, I then explain how the mission of the university has changed but how it is still viewed in traditional terms by many involved, in particular by academics. I argue that the terms 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' students are outdated and suggest the use of the term 'post-traditional.' In the fourth section, I highlight the chronic problems within the context of a¹ higher education in three ways. The first is that 'non-traditional' students are being taught in traditional terms. The second is that teaching and learning pedagogy in higher education has gone awry. In turn, I assert that there is a clear need for a Critical Pedagogy with a transformative learning approach. The third is that current theory in higher education is unhelpful to the current context and fresh theory is much needed. Finally, in the fifth section, I lay out how I plan to approach creating fresh theory in light of this contextualising literature review with a constructivist approach to this research project.

2.2 The Torch-Carrying Mission of the Traditional University

2.2.1 Traditions.

Traditional and somewhat romantic images of the university conjure up further images of a scholar, most likely robed, older, male, with a white beard, wise in worldly matters, standing at a podium, lecturing to a small group of keen younger learners. In this romantic image, the learners are gathered around. They are, as Perry (2006, p. 26) claims, like other humans, "fascinated by, and drawn to, the unknown—to new things," driven by the curiosity to explore and discover. In turn, they sit diligently, and most importantly, they listen attentively to the learned man as knowledge emanates from him forthwith. For the fledglings, the more they listen, the more they can absorb and learn. The more they learn, the more they themselves can become worldly in matters and independent in thought to the extent where they also can engage with scholarly activity and emanate knowledge to those who are fledglings.

What I describe in this imagery are cycles of "torch-carrying," and the passing on of knowledge to successive generations. The passing on of knowledge to keen learners who are attentively listening and passively absorbing mirrors the Freirean concept of *Banking Knowledge*. According to Freire (1970, p. 45), a *Banking* education is one that "becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor." In a banking education model, learners learn to be receivers and storers of information. They learn to be receivers and storers because by receiving and storing, they

¹ The use of the indefinite article (and later the plural) with the term higher education becomes clear, as I go on to suggest that it does not exist as a homogenous entity

can then reproduce. By reproducing, they are rewarded as excellent students. In turn, the more that a learner receives, stores and reproduces, the more they are rewarded.

However, for the torch to continue burning, those in scholarship need to add to knowledge, as well as banking it. Adding to knowledge can only be done by what Freire would describe as “problem-posing.” Problem-posing is an active form of education where the learners do not merely sit and absorb but act independently to seek out knowledge. This is described by Freire (1970), who goes on to state that “apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 46). For the flame of the torch to continue, then, some must invent and re-invent through inquiry so that knowledge will evolve and grow.

This means that there are two ways of learning at university. One of them is by absorbing knowledge and reproducing it. The other is by seeking out knowledge through problem-posing. Laurillard (2002, p. 2) outlines such differences in stating that “at undergraduate level, students are exploring an already known field of knowledge, they are explicitly not breaking new ground, except at personal level.” In doing so, they should be encouraged to develop their own point of view. In turn, she states that making an attempt at breaking new ground is for postgraduate students. This is supported by Bretag (2007, p. 14), who states that postgraduate students are “expected to demonstrate critical and in-depth analysis of conceptually advanced subjects.” In consequence, it would appear that knowledge at universities must be banked in many cases but problem-solved in others, and that the former is considered less advanced than the latter.

2.2.2 Higher educations: avoiding reform and regulation.

This torch-carrying involving undergraduate and postgraduate students has been the mission of the university, lasting, in some cases, for centuries (Ross, 1976). This mission has been successful in its own terms because many torches of knowledge continue to burn brightly to this very day. This is despite varying extents of social catastrophe, such as war and financial crisis. To this very day, elite universities market themselves as centres, institutions, and pioneers of knowledge led by research and scholarship (Russell Group, 2018). Within this mission for research and scholarship, students experience what we have come to understand as a “higher education.” Institutions of higher education—unlike “lower” forms of education such as primary, secondary, and further—have, until recently, mostly been left alone by governmental organisations, standards agencies, and pedagogical theorists. Indeed, theorists in education have mostly focused on the developmental stages and pedagogical requirements of children and adolescents, having done so from the ivory tower of the university. Over the last century, some of these theorists have been particularly influential in shaping pedagogy (Bresler, Cooper and Palmer, 2001; Brown, Metz and Campione, 1996; Mercer, Wegerif and Dawes, 1999) and many of them appear to come to the same conclusions: that education should be active, democratic and constructivist (Bruner, 1978; Dewey, 1910, 1939; Cook and Piaget, 1952; Dewey and Ratner, 1939; Erikson, 1959; Piaget, 1955, 1968; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985; Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976).

Such great scholarly men and their theories have focused and polished many lenses that have been used to visualise pedagogy and realise institutionalised education across the world. Primary and secondary education have been the subject of endless scrutiny, being created, reinvented and compared for decades (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019). In fact, theorists, pedagogy writers, and politicians have dedicated large amounts of time and resources in doing so (Ball, 2012; Brighouse, 2006; Seller and Lingard, 2013). However, the theories of these great theorists, that are recognised the world over, have been little applied to pedagogy at the higher level. Indeed, it seems that much of education at the higher level has been exempt, and perhaps self-exempt, from the modernisation demanded of all “lower” others. To briefly illustrate this, I speculate about the actual, day-to-day teaching of Dewey (1910) when he stated that “we only think when we are confronted with problems.” Presumably, then, he allowed his students to come to such agreeable conclusions through democratic group work and not through the dictums of lecturing at them *en masse*.

Of course, although lower education has been formed into purposely thought out, regulated, and standardised curricula, higher forms of education have existed in multitudes. Here, I do not suggest this in terms of the product of a higher education. Indeed, the end product of these forms undergo quality control (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education [QAA], 2018) to check standards to make sure that a qualification of, for example, an undergraduate degree means the same across institutions. Here, I mean the other aspect of a higher education, which is the process or the pedagogical form, that leads to the product. In fact, we can only assume that the process of undergoing higher education has followed the templates of lectures and seminars, formed by centuries-old universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge. However, as a collective body of institutions, scholars and professionals, we do not know for sure what has transpired over the years in terms of pedagogy in higher education. For instance, we do not know how these lectures and seminars have been delivered nor how effective they have been. We do not know the attendance and attrition rates of these lectures and seminars. Of course, some disciplines of study attract far more students than others; hence, in some instances, lectures may have been delivered *en masse*, while in other cases to a handful of learners. Further yet, not every kind of higher education is delivered in the lecture-seminar style. For example, in some disciplines, there may be a problem-based approach, there may be a blended learning approach, there could be a flipped learning approach (O’Flaherty and Phillips, 2015), or finally a team-based approach (Rotgans, Schmidt, Rajalingam, Hao, Canning, Ferenczi and Low-Beer, 2017; Koh, Rotgans, Rajalingam, Gagnon, Low-Beer and Schmidt, 2019). In sum, higher education is not realised in the ways of lower education because it has not been subjected to the reforms nor to the regulation. In turn, I suggest that the term *higher educations* is more appropriate because it denotes a multiplicity of realisations.

Within the ether of higher educations, these centuries-old institutions continue to be held in high regard today by consistently returning high rankings in national and international ranking systems (QS, 2018; *Times Higher Education*, 2018). However, such institutions are also elitist. Their structures regress to a time when a higher education was the exclusive domain of an elite class. In such times, not anyone was allowed or able to engage in higher education and carry the torch of knowledge. In fact, in historical terms, it was only recently that this changed. This is described in the literature, for instance, by Raey, Davies, David and Ball (2001, p. 856), who state that “in 1938 less than two percent of the relevant age cohort were attending universities [and by] 1948 the proportion of the 18-year-old

population entering universities was still only 3.7 percent.” This had risen by 1963, when Robbins (1963) reported a mere 4 per cent of the UK population attended university. In fact, higher education remained exclusive and for an elite class all the way through until the 1980s (Elias and Purcell, 2004). It was not until the 1990s, when social changes ushered in university reforms, that their traditions were disrupted.

2.3 Massification, Commodification, and Internationalisation

2.3.1 Massification.

Since the 1990s, a number of factors have come together to disrupt the traditions of higher education. As stated by Altbach (2004, p. 5), these phenomena include “information technology in its various manifestations, the use of a common language for scientific communication, and the imperatives of both mass demand for higher education (massification) and societal needs for highly educated personnel.” Indeed, the term massification articulately describes, at the same time, the shift of higher education out of the realm of the elite and into the masses and the huge increase in numbers universities have since seen. The main driver of these changes has been governmental intervention through policy making and implementation to transform universities into institutions that prepare students for the workforce (Morley, 2007), and the implementation of strategies that have moved universities into a marketplace (Jongbloed, 2003; Molesworth, Scullion and Nixon, 2010).

2.3.2 Commodification.

Indeed, preparing students for employment in the workforce has become entrenched as the general understanding and rationale for the existence of higher education (Andrews and Russell 2012; Rutt Gray, Turner, Swain, Hulme and Pomeroy, 2013; Wilton 2014). The responsibility for producing new personnel, by enhancing skills and driving innovation, has been placed on the shoulders of universities since the last financial crash of 2008, further impacting the commercialisation of higher education (Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne, 2017, p. 14). In terms of the marketplace, successive governments have taken steps to make sure that universities compete against each other for students. One way of ensuring competition has been through the introduction of fees (McGettigan, 2013), which has cemented the commodification of higher education (Altbach, 2001). Furthermore, this commodification has also been further cemented by the introduction of the Research Excellence Framework (REF, 2018). More recently, in England and Wales, this process has included the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF, 2018), where universities are respectively ranked against each other in terms of their research and teaching excellence.

As massification has moved into the new millennium, numbers of students enrolling in university programmes have increased exponentially (Douglass, 2005; Scott, 2006). It is only in the last few years that numbers appear to have plateaued, and in the academic year of 2016/17, the United Kingdom saw 2.3 million enrolments in higher education programmes (HESA, 2018). The disciplinary area consistently making up the largest part of this sum is Business and Administration Studies. In the same academic year, the UK saw 333,425 enrolments into programmes in this wider discipline. Of course, a significant section of these numbers are the result of international recruitment. Specifically, in the

same year, the UK also saw 442,375 students enrolling in programmes, who were not UK domiciled. This huge market is available to enter because, just as in the UK, the view that universities should skill students and prepare them for employment is one which has spread and increased across the world (Govender and Taylor, 2015; Kalfa and Taksa 2015; Pavlin and Svetlik 2014). This shift in mindset has fed into the phenomena known as internationalisation.

2.3.3 Internationalisation.

Massification and marketisation came about in the era of globalisation and birthed what is known in the higher education sector as internationalisation. While there are many, perhaps conflicting uses of the term ‘internationalisation’, it appears to be used by universities as simply another way to try to increase student numbers and make significant financial gains. However, it is often dressed up as knowledge and cultural exchange across borders (Olssen and Peters, 2005). Internationalisation has been a particular success for English speaking countries (Shore, 2010) because of the use of English internationally as a *lingua franca* (Jenkins and Leung, 2014), especially, as stated above, in the sharing of scientific knowledge. For universities in the UK, this has meant the opening up of vast markets to gain vast capital, which has led to international students being an important revenue source (Habu, 2000; Lee and Rice, 2007; Levin, 2002; Murray, 2016; Rhee and Sagaria, 2004; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). In consequence, government and university leaders have manipulated conditions by devising internationalisation policies (Altbach, 2004; Altbach and Knight, 2007) to allow capitalisation by changing university structures to increase student numbers (Brown and Carasso, 2013; Lynch, 2006; Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion, 2009).

International markets have, in some cases, been massively impactful on the makeup of student cohorts. This is particularly the case for postgraduate programmes, which consistently attract high numbers of international students. For instance, 60 per cent of UK enrolments to postgraduate programmes were from non-UK countries in 2016/17, with the majority of these into Business and Administration Studies programmes and the majority of students coming from China (HESA, 2018). Indeed, students from China have become an ever-increasing dominant feature of higher education cohorts. Over the last five years, according to HESA statistics, even though international student numbers have plateaued, the numbers of students from China enrolling in programmes in the United Kingdom have in fact increased. However, while student numbers from China have increased, enrolments from Europe have fluctuated, enrolments from the Middle East and South America have flatlined, and enrolments from Africa and India have declined (See previous citation). Therefore, students from China hugely dominate many international cohorts in general, and in particular marketable postgraduate programmes cohorts in their entirety.

2.4 A Changed Mission in a New Context, Still Viewed in Traditional Terms

2.4.1 Traditional and non-traditional students.

Such rapid changes in the student body mean that the composition of higher education no longer represents a traditional elite club of monocultural students. In fact, the composition of higher education is now a broad church, cutting across class divides with a number of students coming from various backgrounds within international cohorts. As the

composition of higher educations has grown and transformed, the perception of it and its purpose have also changed from its original traditional terms. To be specific, students in contemporary higher educations no longer see themselves as torch-carrying scholars with a duty to add to and pass on knowledge. Instead, they see themselves as goods within an employability marketplace, and subsequently, see a higher education as a means to increase their value in that marketplace to make them more employable (Morley, 2007). Despite this clear shift in composition and perspective from the learners, higher educations are still often delivered in traditional terms because they are mostly viewed and controlled by educators with traditional frames of reference. To illustrate this, I take the binary of the ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ student and argue that it is outdated.

In the literature, the composition of the traditional student is clearly understood. In a North American context, Soares (2013, p. 6) defines the traditional student as one who comes “to college immediately after high school, attends full-time, and is financially dependent on their parents.” On the other side of the binary, Torres (2018) describes non-traditional students:

They themselves know that they are not the traditional student. They are sitting in the classroom with very different experiences than a traditional student. They themselves at times feel like they stick out [...] Their experiences of coming into higher education are very different than the traditional student.

However, with the massification and internationalisation of higher educations, the extent to which those that fall into the category of traditional as a majority is highly questionable. This is highlighted by Schutze and Slower (2002, p. 313), who illustrate this point with the following:

Non-traditional students in an elite higher education system were, by definition, a minority. With expansion and change in higher education, some non-traditional groups have increased in number arguably to a point where they have come to form a ‘new majority’ in higher education—at least in certain types of institutions or programs.

As a result, in many cases, the student, who for so long has been termed as “traditional” has in fact been left in a minority. Indeed, the process of massification, which has been underway for some time, has transformed student cohorts and opened up learning situations to the point where it is bizarre to continue to use a “non” term for a majority. In consequence, I here suggest that the term be updated and post-traditional be used in its place.

2.4.2 Post-traditional students.

Post-traditional has been a term used outside of Education literature and “coined to facilitate new ways of looking at certain central problems of modernization and development” (Eisenstadt, 1973, p. 1). Eisenstadt explains the crux of a post-traditional order:

The weakening of normative limitations on the contents of the symbols of the center, in their secularization, and in the growing emphasis on values of human dignity and social equality [in which] larger groups demand participation (even if intermittent or partial) in the formulations of the society's central symbols and institutions (p. 6).

In higher education at present, the term post-traditional exists in North American literature to describe, as Soares (2013, p. 6) puts it, “a diverse group that includes adult learners, employees who study, low-income students, commuters, and student parents.” She goes on to state that these students are also “individuals already in the workforce who lack a postsecondary credential yet are determined to pursue further knowledge and skills while balancing work, life, and education responsibilities” (Soares, 2013, pp. 1-2). However, it is here that I borrow and adapt the term post-traditional and expand it beyond its current North American usage to include international students in a UK context.

Despite the clear definitions drawn by Soares and Torres, the international students in the United Kingdom cannot be described as traditional. To help explain this, I borrow from Murray and Nallaya (2016) who argue, within a UK context, that through primary and secondary education, a traditional group comes well disposed to the learning situations ahead of them in higher education. In fact, international students may well have, in Soares’ words, attended university immediately after high school, be full-time, and be financially dependent on their parents. However, they are most likely not disposed to learning in the ways that Murray and Nallaya describe. In turn, they most likely share the experience of non-traditional students, in the way that Torres stated, and so sit in the classroom with very different experiences and feeling, at times, that they stick out. Therefore, I suggest that international students in the United Kingdom be included in a post-traditional definition. Further yet, I suggest that the era in which a higher education is now realised is in fact a post-traditional one. In a post-traditional era, post-traditional students exist outwith the narrow parameters of the binary of traditional and non-traditional.

2.5 Chronic Problems, Pseudo-Solutions: The Problematising of Those Who Are Not Seen as Traditional and the Need for Fresh Theory.

2.5.1 Overview.

In this section of this chapter, I argue that the problems with delivering learning in a higher education setting are chronic in nature, which clearly leads to a need for fresh theory to inform a higher education pedagogy. As part of this argument, I firstly discuss how higher educations are being delivered with traditional students in mind in an era which should be defined as post-traditional. In light of this, I further discuss the issue of scapegoating, where post-traditional learners are identified as problematic. Secondly, I discuss pedagogy in higher education, and especially how it has gone awry. As part of this discussion, I also discuss issues created by bankable knowledge and its delivery in education when knowledge and learning are seen as a commodity. In turn, I warn against the ease of bankable knowledge, highlight instances of pseudo innovation, and then put together a case for a pedagogy that is based on a Critical Pedagogy with a transformative learning approach. Thirdly, I discuss the absence (and also the absence of acceptance) of theory in adult learning to date, before urging that fresh theory is particularly necessary.

2.5.2 Students have changed.

2.5.2.1 Chronic problems: education for traditional students in a post-traditional era.

Firstly, higher educations are being delivered with traditional students in mind in a post-traditional era, leading to problems of a chronic nature. In fact, the minority of traditional students are treated as the norm to which all others should adapt. This alone highlights a central problem of modernisation and development that contemporary higher education faces. This may be because many academics who are educators in higher education experienced their education pre-1990s. This is reasoned by Torres (2018), who states that “the majority of faculty had a very traditional experience, so there is some dissonance between their own experience and what the student is experiencing today.” A distant echo of the thoughts of Torres can be heard in the literature. For instance, Rogers and Freiberg (1994, p. 173) twenty five years earlier pondered that “too often I am tempted to teach in the way I have been taught. Breaking this mold requires reflection about what is best for the learner, not about what is familiar to me.” It would seem then, that this type of reflection is not the norm and that the familiarity of old methods of teaching may be what keeps faculty from moving on with their teaching practice.

In turn, it can be inferred that chronic problems with traditional teaching practices are the result of good intentions, even if these good intentions are widely misguided. Again, this is expressed by Torres (2018), who also states that “[w]e want students to be educated but we want them to be educated in the same way that we were educated, which may not be a realistic expectation.” Even though it is possible to sympathise with faculty over this situation, these traditional frames of reference, as pointed out by Gunn, Hearne and Sibthorpe (2011), mean that many university lecturers assume that students arrive pre-loaded and seamlessly able to begin their studies. In consequence, much teaching and learning in higher education is, as Laurillard (2002, pp. 2-3) describes, farcical, where staff are “embedded in a system outside their control [where they must guide a] collection of individuals through territory that they are unfamiliar with toward a common meeting point, but without knowing where they started from, how much baggage they are carrying, and what kind of vehicle they are using.” As a result, it is, as Laurillard puts it, miraculous that any learning happens at all.

2.5.2.2 Making excuses: problematizing post-traditional learners.

However, these issues with teaching and learning in higher education are often excused with a propensity to point the finger at, and problematise post-traditional students. Here, I illustrate this with incidents of stereotyping. Warnings of stereotyping and blaming can be found both early on in the massification process (Biggs, 1999; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Richards, 1997) and more recently (Asmar, 2006; Morrison, Merrick, Higgs and Le Métais, 2005; Sullowski and Deakin, 2009). Several instances of stereotyping can be found in the literature where authors have taken a narrow lens in identifying problems with international students and then conflating them with terms such as “Asian” and “African.” For instance, Domboka (2018) found stereotypical trends from a preliminary practitioner research project, using the broad terms of Chinese, Indian and African students. In doing so, he suggests that all of these students gave the tutor a higher status and were interested in acquiring knowledge rather than discovering information for themselves. In terms of the

African students, he described them as seeing questions in class as a policing of understanding, while he described the Indian students as preferring to be primed for exams or coursework.

Such sweeping statements are the unevolved descendants of stereotyping and problematising that exist in past literature. To give a flavour of this, the term “Asian” has been used throughout the literature with liberal thoughtlessness for decades (For example: Bradley and Bradley, 1984; Carson and Nelson, 1996; Cross and Hitchcock, 2007; Fielding, 1997; Park, 2000; Samuelowicz, 1987; Watkins and Biggs, 1996). As an illustration of this, Asian students, according to much literature, are typically socialised to be conformist (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991) in their learning, which is merely concerned with reproduction (Carson, 1992), and is also passive and unquestioning (Shi, 2006). From reading this literature, it can be inferred that “Asian” is referring to a bizarrely localised global area of those from China and also the surrounding areas of South Korea and Japan, and not those from South, Central or all the other parts of the world’s most populous continent (United Nations, 2019). Such literature has sown and nurtured seeds that have germinated into stereotyping. This stereotyping has led to beliefs about the inherent ability of such students to engage in critical enquiry, abstract thinking, and active learning. It has done this by identifying the shortcomings of some, and perhaps many, and conflating them to apply to all as if they were a homogenous group.

Among this kind of stereotyping an easily identifiable shortcoming is English language proficiency. For instance, Atkinson (1997, p. 71) states that “teaching critical thinking to non-native speakers may be fraught with cultural problems.” Here, Atkinson expands out of Asia to encompass all that are not “native” speakers of English. More recently, language proficiency has been cited as an issue in the Australian literature. For instance, Freeman, Treleaven, Ramburuth, Leask, Caulfield, Simpson and Sykes (2009, p. 9) report that “academic staff and domestic students tend to perceive student difference as a barrier to learning.” According to Dunworth (2010), academics have been complaining about the lack of English language proficiency skills in academic contexts since the 1940s. According to Baird (2010) and Arkoudis and Baik (2014), such disgruntled faculty members are joined by many post-traditional students themselves. Dunworth also draws from Bretag (2007, p. 14), who unearthed concerns of academic staff, claiming that they have “difficulty grading work submitted by some international students, which, while seeming to demonstrate some understanding of the content area, is written in virtually incomprehensible English.” This is often because they “submit draft after draft of literature reviews that are nothing but cut and paste quotations from texts, with either poor referencing or none at all.”

In general, Dunworth (2010, p. 5) argues that “there are fundamental issues about the nature, measurement, and development of student English language proficiency that need to be addressed if universities are to build on those principles for good practice to make systemic and sustainable progress in this area.” This is a similar position taken in the UK, identified by the UK Quality Assurance Agency, who stated that there have been “specific challenges [...] with regard to the admission of English-language skills that are either insufficient to deal with the demands of their programme or have the potential to have detrimental effects on the learning of experience of all students” (QAA, 2009, p. 2). However, an articulation of how much proficiency is enough appears to be missing from

this narrative (Murray, 2016). In turn, the literature highlights yet another grey area in which post-traditional students find themselves. A grey area in which they, although following the rules of engagement and meeting the institutionally set language requirements, are still simply not good enough for staff and not ‘up to the standards’ of traditional students.

2.5.3 Pedagogy gone awry.

2.5.3.1 The ease of bankable knowledge.

Secondly, the chronic problems with delivering learning are further complicated by the issues surrounding the commodification of higher educations, and with it, the commodification of knowledge. By seeing education and knowledge as commodities, it is logical that students will see themselves as consumers (Altbach, 2001; Furedi, 2010; Molesworth et al., 2009). The experience of a consumer is described in general terms by Arnould and Price (1993), who articulate it as having four major stages:

“(1) the pre-consumption experience, which involves searching for, planning, daydreaming about, foreseeing or imagining the experience; (2) the purchase experience, which derives from choice, payment, packaging, the encounter with the service and the environment; (3) The core consumption experience, including the sensation, the satiety, the satisfaction/dissatisfaction, the irritation/flow, the transformation; (4) The remembered consumption experience and the nostalgia experience activates photographs to relive a past experience, which is based on accounts of stories and on arguments with friends about the past, and which moves towards the classification of memories.”

In fact, the student experience of a higher education mirrors that of a classic consumer experience, obtaining something tangible in exchange for the fees which have been paid. However, the teaching of criticality in learners cannot be satisfied with the piling on of knowledge.

This is where knowledge—bankable knowledge—is more easily commodifiable than critical learning skills, fostered by the means of a problem-posing pedagogy. For instance, banking knowledge is clearly defined; it can be added up and made to fit into measuring systems of quantification. However, problem-posing knowledge is abstract and qualitative. In turn, it cannot easily be commodified. Hence, it does not fit easily into measuring systems. This makes it difficult for universities to justify what is being sold, difficult for educators to justify what is being taught, and difficult for students to see and understand what is being obtained from their learner experience. On top of this, and in terms of teaching and learning, this situation plays into the hands of traditionally minded educators. These educators are, as Laurillard described, embedded in complex systems. Furthermore, and as Torres described, they are also in the way of traditional teaching. Further yet, they will also be required to justify their teaching to learners, and of course, they most likely have a lot of knowledge to share. In consequence, the passing on of bankable knowledge seems a familiar and relatively easy option.

2.5.3.2 Stagnating practice and pseudo-innovations

Other recent literature indicates that various scholars have been trying to push the same points made, in some cases up to one hundred years prior, most notably by, Dewey (1910). For instance, Gow and Kember (1990, p. 320) rightly state that “tertiary education must challenge students enough to develop their powers of independent reasoning [...] There is now ample evidence to show that good teaching encourages a deep approach to studying.” Hill (2014, p. 58) rightly asserts that “individuals continually structure and restructure the meaning of their experience through self-regulated mental activity. Learning occurs by matching new information against existing knowledge and establishing meaningful connections... therefore, effective teaching occurs by stimulating students to ask their own questions.” Ramsden (2003, p. 97) rightly claims that “sharp engagement, imaginative inquiry and the finding of a suitable level and style are all more likely to occur if teaching methods that necessitate student energy, problem-posing and cooperative learning are employed.” Von Glaserfeld (2005, p. 7) rightly demonstrates something similar:

Learning is a constructivist activity that the students themselves have to carry out. From this point of view, then, the task of the educator is not to dispense knowledge but to provide students with opportunities and incentives to build it up.

Finally, Bryson and Hand (2007, p. 351) rightly suggest, after a case study at a UK university business school, that “the lesson for teachers is that their task is to facilitate the student's task of constructing her/his own views about the subject and the world.” All of these points are well said and valid. However, the chronic problems of delivering learning continue.

The chronic issues with teaching and learning in higher education lead to literature that is littered with pseudo-innovations. Pseudo-innovations can easily be found in the most recent literature. Pseudo-innovations are products of sharing good practice by well-meaning practitioners who care about the learning experiences of their students. However, pseudo-innovations are merely rehashed ideas. I illustrate this with two examples. Firstly, Mba and Ng (2018) very recently (and rightly) stated that peer mentorship was particularly helpful in the learning experiences of medical students. Secondly, Thuermer and Wilde (2018) (rightly) suggested that there should be mentoring schemes in place for MSc students as practice in STEM subjects. Although these are admirable examples of good practice, in fact, peer mentorship is not an innovation. Peer mentorship is a fundamental aspect of Vygotskian (Vygotsky, 1978) and Neo-Vygotskian (Bruner, 1978; Wertsch, 1985; Wood et al., 1976) theories in Education, which were presented several decades before—not to mention, Dewey (1910) circa a century ago.

Of course, this does not mean that true innovation does not exist. True innovation has come about not directly because of theorising about adult learning in higher education but because of advances in technologies. Such advances have been especially embraced by the newer and non-Russell Group Universities to progress their teaching pedagogies. An excellent example of this is flipped learning. HEA (2018; For examples see: Bergman and Sams, 2012; Borg, McNeil and Rashid, 2018; Hale, 2018; Ho, 2018; O'Flaherty and Phillips, 2015; Seery, 2015; Smith, 2018) defines flipped learning:

[Flipped learning] is a pedagogical approach in which the conventional notion of classroom-based learning is inverted, so that students are introduced to the learning material before class, with classroom time then being used to deepen understanding through discussion with peers and problem-solving activities facilitated by teachers.

However, over the last few decades, despite advances in technology, and by cutting through pseudo-innovation, the literature indicates that there have been many problems with pedagogy and the delivery of teaching at university.

Much of this involves the lecture model and a lack of training. For instance, and in terms of lecturing, Biggs (1982) gave twenty reasons not to lecture. This was clearly supported by Rogers and Freiberg (1994, p. 30), who asserted from their study that learners “felt that they were being lectured to death. Every day they sat passively while faculty, whom they did not know and who did not know them, spewed enormous boluses of facts at them.” Mann and Robinson (2009, p. 246) stated that “part of the problem within higher education may lie within the traditional conception of the ‘lecture’, which implies a didactic transmission of material that students passively received.” Furthermore, Yorke and Knight (2004, p. 32) discussed teaching:

Bad teaching thrusts the burden of learning on to students, which means that the effort that they have to put into their learning is greater than it would have been if it were driven by the quasi-passive modality of the lecture room, and hence the learning gain is greater.

Then, as Cranton and King (2003) point out, “Most educators of adults come into their positions through a circuitous route, one that does not include teacher training” (p. 31) because, as Yürekli Kaynardağ (2017) mentions, “pedagogical training is not a requirement for being an instructor at a university” (p. 111). In terms of training for a higher education, Wolff (2006) states that “many people have remarked on the fact that if you want to teach in a school you need a lengthy and intensive training, but to teach in a university you need a PhD, some red-hot recommendations and a handful of decent publications.” In sum, despite these voices of reason, the extent of trusted and reiterated theory, and a century of literature, we appear to be far away from understanding adult learning and delivering consistently effective pedagogy in a higher education.

2.5.3.3 The need for a critical pedagogy with a transformative approach.

The faraway distance from which we appear to be from understanding the adult learning experience in higher education is particularly problematic for those involved in postgraduate learning and teaching. This is primarily because postgraduate students should be making an attempt to theorise (Laurillard, 2002). Where theorising is concerned, the banking of knowledge is close to worthless. Of course, the learner needs to have an amount of knowledge to engage with their subject matter. However, theorising involves an imagination of matters that do not quite exist yet (Cornelissen, 2006; Swedberg, 2012, 2014; Weick, 1989). Theorising is seeing beyond and between explicit descriptions and finding a way to cast a light on what otherwise might not been seen. To be able to theorise, an extent of critical thinking is needed, and thus, practitioners in learning and teaching

need a framework to develop criticality. This is where, the Critical Pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970, 1992) is particularly helpful. It is helpful because it allows for a view of education as *banking* and *problem-posing*. As discussed earlier, both of these exist in a higher education. Of course, Freire argued very much against pedagogies that promoted the “banking of knowledge.” This was because, for him, the banking of knowledge symbolised “a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing [who project] an absolute ignorance onto others” (Freire, 1993, p. 53). In turn, he believed that educators and leaders should not fill the heads of learners as if “depositories” because it fostered a society of passive receivers. Furthermore, he argued that “leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people— they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress” (Freire, 2000, p. 178). This is all very relevant, and even more so in a context where knowledge has been commodified, because many teachers and learning alike may want to take part in the banking of it.

In turn, teachers and learners need to be able to see the difference between the two. This matters because of the international and diverse dimensions of post-traditional students, which mostly implies that practitioners are unaware of the educational backgrounds of learners before they enrol in programmes. Indeed, if there is any truth to the stereotypes described earlier, it may be that many learners arriving to programmes may be only disposed to banking pedagogies. In consequence, they may expect success to come at the hands of reception, retention, and reproduction because it has always been approved and praised by the banking educators. Furthermore, by answering the siren calls of commodification, where the learner/consumer exists within a context in which they expect knowledge to be dispensed, the practitioner is failing. They are failing because by satisfying the needs of commodification, learners will never learn to theorise in academic terms. Thus, they will never be allowed to reach their full potential as postgraduate learners. As Freire (1972, p. 54: Cited in O’Shea and O’Brien, 2011, p. 86) states, where the banking model “anaesthetises and inhibits creative power,” the problem-posing model “involves a constant unveiling of reality.” Where the banking model commends passively listening, receiving, and reproducing, the problem-posing model is actively engaging, voicing, giving, and producing. As Freire goes on to describe, in such models “people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality; but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p. 64).

Here, Freire articulates a matter of massive importance to the experience of postgraduate learning and thus pedagogy in higher educations. This is that the appropriate pedagogy must exist in a world that is transforming. Furthermore, by engaging in a critical pedagogy and by theorising about the world, the learner is also transformed. By being transformed, a transformed view of and interaction with that world is engendered. To build on this view, such transformation is especially the case for those who are learners in the social sciences. Theorising about social matters as a person in society has the power to construct a new view of an aspect of the social world. By constructing new views of the social world, learners may also transform their own relationship with it. In turn, an approach to learning that allows learners and practitioners to facilitate and guide transformation is also absolutely needed.

As with Critical Pedagogy, the groundwork is already laid out within the literature on transformative learning. The literature makes clear that transformative learning is when there are qualitative changes in a learner. Qualitative changes in this case are ontological and epistemological. According to Mezirow (1991, 1995, 1996, 1997), who introduced transformative learning to the literature, it effects change to a frame of reference, involving a habit of mind and a point of view, and a way of knowing. Similarly, Illeris (2011, p. 5) discusses transformation in learning:

[It] implies a change or alteration into something qualitatively different. Thus, [it] is learning that entails a qualitatively new structure of other capacity with the learner. In this way, this expression involves the recognition that learning can be something more than and different from the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, in contrast to what has often been the understanding of formal schooling and education.

Furthermore, Kegan (2009, p. 41) states that “transformational learning is always to some extent an epistemological change rather than merely a change in behavioral repertoire or an increase in the quantity or fund of knowledge.” Transformative learning, then, is when learning is a reordering and a restructuring of *how* the learner knows rather than an accumulation of *what* they know.

In the case of postgraduate learners in higher education, transformative learning ties in neatly with Critical Pedagogy. Both are very much a matter of the becoming self. The self is one that matures through learning (Mezirow, 1990a) and is becoming, as Jarvis (2009, p. 25) states, in “the context of the life-world.” Thus, transforming through a Critical Pedagogy for a higher education has the potential to impact the learner beyond the boundaries of their learning environment. In other words, if an individual transforms parts of their view of reality, they are potentially and most probably also transforming in ways in which they experience their lives. Of course, in experiencing their life differently, as Illeris (2014, p. 38) suggests, a learner who “experiences one’s self, one’s qualities and properties, and how one is experienced by others” is also different. In consequence, a strong attempt on the part of the practitioner to foster critical awareness and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990a, 1990b, 1998) is a vital part of a Critical Pedagogy for higher educations in order to safeguard and support the learner. Kegan (2009) asks the question: “What form transforms?” and states that “the form that is undergoing transformation needs to be better understood” (p. 41). And indeed, at present, the form of the learner is little understood by academies upon entry to programmes.

This is, of course, impacted by the diversity of post-traditional students. In turn, it is very difficult to know the differing extents of maturity and critical self-awareness of particular learners on postgraduate programmes. In turn, this further suggests that it is also difficult to predict the differing extents of transformations in learning that learners will experience. For some, it may be a moderate-to-low transformation, resulting in minor alterations and a repositioning of the self within a contemporary space. Metaphorically, if the self were a residential property, it may be the checking of a strong architecture or the freshening up of some somewhat tired furnishings. However, for others it may be much more uncomfortable and uncertain, bringing to light the need for extensive alterations, requiring heavy labour,

exposing structural problems which had been hidden in the dark. In such cases, a gross re-evaluation is needed, one that does not only question the self in familiar spaces but questions the foundations of those spaces themselves (Illeris, 2014). Hence, transformative learning has serious implications and consequences, and, as described, it can be fundamentally impactful on the lives of the people concerned. Further yet, transformed views cannot be undone or switched off at the end of a programme. Instead, transformative learning brings with it not only new ontological perspectives, but perspectives that feel newly permanent.

A Critical Pedagogy with a transformative learning approach for higher education, then, is not one but a number of processes and experiences which question value systems and construct through introspection and reflexive actions. These actions result in the building of modernised, improved structures which offer fresh vantage points on the world and new spaces to view the self in relation to others. Hence, it is not just a value adding extension to the self in the way of banking, it is also a considered rethinking of the self in the way of problem-posing. Furthermore, it may also be disruptive to the learner because it involves processes of deconstruction and then a more astute reassemblage. Such ways of learning have been observed by Hill (2014, p. 63) who noted that “the students understood learning sometimes involves unlearning and often involves risk and change.” Jarvis (2009, p. 38) also discusses learning:

[It] is memory, and memory is the reconstruction of earlier experiences. In this sense we learn to be conscious [...] but our experiences are meaningless, and we have to learn to become conscious through a process of constructing and reconstructing our experiences.

Deconstructing and reconstructing experiences is a significant undertaking. Hence, a learner must be ready for and aware of the risks of their study, and thus, effective theory is so very much needed.

2.3.4 Fresh theory for contemporary HE is needed.

2.5.4.1 Past chronic issues with theory for adult learners.

As with many of the issues facing learning and teaching in higher education, issues with theory have faced chronic problems. Indeed, despite decades of literature to draw from and adapt, delivering learning in higher education is clearly difficult and problematic. Of course, massified adult learning in institutionalised contexts is relatively recent. Adults have normally learned things throughout adulthood through the experience of living (Jarvis, 2005, 2009). In turn, the existence of theory in adult learning has been seen as contentious. A particularly contentious attempt at adult learning theory that stirred up debate within the literature was *Andragogy* (Knowles, 1970). When *Andragogy* was first conceptualised, it gained popularity (Davenport and Davenport, 1985); however, this was relatively short-lived, before it became widely dismissed. Part of this early downfall, at the hands of men who continually obsessed whether or not it was theory, was because Knowles, in the words of Jarvis (2009, p. 39), “never really resolved this problem [between pedagogy and andragogy] and the reason was probably because he did not distinguish

learning from the senses and the emotions, from learning from the cognitions, and so he was unable to clarify any relationship between children's learning and adult learning.”

In fact, Knowles' theorising about adult learning led to some amount of ridicule. To take some examples of this, Houle (1972), London (1973), and Elias (1979) independently reduced Andragogy to a set of techniques and claimed that adults learned in the same ways as children. Criticism also came from McKenzie (1977, p. 225), who reduced Andragogy to a “trendy neologism devoid of significance.” Nevertheless, Knowles did draw on the greats, especially Dewey, in promoting teaching practice that considered the need for effective learning environments:

Physical comfort, mutual trust and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences [which were] conducive to interaction [where] the teacher accepts each student as a person of worth and respects his feelings and ideas[, and] seeks to build relationships or mutual trust and helpfulness among the students by encouraging cooperative activities and refraining from inducing competitiveness and judgmentalness” (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005, pp. 93-95).

However, even though it is claimed that the core principles of Andragogy endured in adult education (Holton, Swanson and Naquin, 2001), the lack of recognition of theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence (Grace, 1996; Pratt, 1993) proved the intellectual undoing of it.

In more recent literature, there has been a general consensus that adult learning theory is not possible. For instance, Smith and Swanson (2006, p. 115) stated that “as yet, however, no one has proposed a comprehensive theory of adult development, in large part because of the complexity and variability of adult life.” Furthermore, Merriam (2001) suggested that “it is doubtful that a phenomenon as complex as adult learning will ever be explained by a single theory, model or set of principles.” However, and interestingly, the foundational planks of pedagogy go relatively unquestioned. Seldom in the literature are there dissenting voices that challenge the work of Piaget, which was, as Jarvis (2005, p. 27) bluntly put it, “poorly informed and consequently badly planned, sometimes consisting of little more than leaving children to their own devices and failing to provide the stimulating challenges that would motivate children to actively discover and learn.” Furthermore, there is relative silence about the lack of empirical evidence behind the theories of Vygotsky, which were based merely on observations of mother and child (Gillen, 2000). It seems, then, that what constitutes theory in the case of teaching adults is much more readily exposed to scrutiny than that of teaching children.

2.5.4.2 Fresh theory can be built on current pedagogy.

Despite this muddle which the literature presents, there is clearly a need for theory. Indeed, to imagine that learners in a higher education could and should go through a transformative process of education without support that is underpinned by relevant theory by their educators is absurd. To think that educators should try to support learners through transformative processes, also without theory, is equally absurd. On top of this, in the age

of the student-customer, quality of experience and value for money is surely paramount. Indeed, the farce described early by Laurillard becomes strikingly clear once again, existing because of the muddle and absurdity that comprises the current context. In turn, and in order to address this, we cannot merely fall back on the ease of the banking of knowledge and the ease of delivering it, nor can we accept the nonsense that is more pseudo-innovation. Furthermore, we cannot accept the trope that theory in this context is just not possible. In fact, and as highlighted above, the foundations for necessary theory are clearly already laid. This means that there does not have to be the reinventing of the wheel and the making of a different pedagogy. Instead, these laid pedagogical foundations need to be considered in line with the current context in higher educations. By doing this, fresh theory can be built.

2.6 Approaching Theory for Transformative Higher Educations

From the literature, it is clear, then, that theorising about adult learning in the past has been problematic and those who have tried have even faced harsh criticism. However, it is also clear that theory for higher education is needed. It is thus, at this juncture, that I suggest that, rather than abandon the venture because it is difficult, a fresh approach to theorising in this field should be taken. This approach should not be one that attempts to discover an all-encompassing theory for a higher education pedagogy. Such an approach is not one that has worked in the past nor has it been widely accepted. And considering the complications of adult learning and the muddle of the literature, objectivist aims, which would be to achieve context-free generalisations with the assumption that reality is external (to take but two examples of an objectivist approach), are clearly fraught with difficulty in this context. One particularly overt difficulty is the crafting of research questions. This is because there are no theories to test, and there is no empirical research to build on that has a solid enough foundation. The muddle of the literature means that crafting such questions is at best unhelpful and at worst impossible. Due to this situation, I assert that the road is not clear enough to attempt this in this project. In turn, this investigation is “open” and is in response to more general questions about higher education and the knowledge that comes from the experience of being a practitioner.

To realise this project, then, I propose that a constructivist approach to theory is better suited to this context. By taking a constructivist approach, multiple realities can be considered, views of generalisations can be seen as conditional, interpretative understandings of reality can be garnered, and subjectivities can be acknowledged throughout the research process (Charmaz, 2014). This approach is much better suited to the contemporary cohorts in higher educations, which are comprised of a mass of students from a range of different backgrounds, who are in their majority post-traditional students. These learners bring a range of different perspectives and ways of knowing and learning to a shared endeavour. In this light, then, the best way forward is to construct theory by going directly to students themselves and asking them to recount their experiences of learning during their respective postgraduate programmes. From those conversations, an understanding of current pedagogical practice can be constructed, from which, data can then be constructed, from which, theory can be constructed. Importantly, this theory will be grounded in data. Hence, in the next chapter, I move on to explain in detail how I realised this research project by taking a practice-based, interpretive, and constructivist grounded theory approach.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Outline of Chapter.

In this chapter, I present my methodological choices. In the first part of the next section, I detail and explain the ontological position that I took for this research project as an interpretivist. Within this, I also detail and explain how Symbolic Interactionism informed and helped me to articulate this interpretivist position. This part also includes an account of the “thinking tools” that I utilised from Bourdieu (1977), and how I used them to help me better understand the world which I investigated. I then go on to detail the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach to analysis that I took. This is mainly based on the work of Kathy Charmaz (2008a, 2008b, 2014, 2015). In this project, I constructed data, and it is in the second section of this chapter where I detail this construction procedure. This section contains three wider parts which detail the data construction procedure from beginning to end. In the first part I focus on the participants of this study. I begin by outlining ethical considerations. I then go on to explain how I recruited participants, and the relationships that I had with them. I then discuss the initial participants before outlining a brief description of each participant’s situation, providing a brief profile of them. In the second part, I detail the steps that I took to construct data. This starts with a description of the iterative nature of the project. It then moves on to the practical steps in detail: firstly, intensive interviewing; secondly, theoretical sampling; thirdly, initial coding; fourthly, mind mapping to focus codes to begin theorising; fifthly, advancing theorisings through writing; sixthly, raising theory with the help of the literature; and finally, seventhly, theoretical saturation. In the third part, I provide a brief summary of the data construction process.

3.2 Theory and Analytical Method.

3.2.1 Foundational theoretical framework and thinking tools.

In the following analysis, I take an ontological position as an interpretivist. In doing so, I do not seek to study objective reality with a view of confirming or establishing fixed laws. On the contrary, I take the position that social reality is, firstly, becoming and, secondly, messy. It is, firstly, becoming because it exists as a temporal flow in the past, the present, and soon to be future, which is then the present, and then the past, and so on. Hence, I contend that it is not possible to pin down meaning, as Preece (2015, p. 6) eloquently states, in “the manner of a Victorian butterfly collector.” Because to do so, would be to forever have captured it in a past state, a state that becomes increasingly further away as the temporal flow continues. Social reality is, secondly, messy because it is a mixture of subjective and objective realities. To help me clarify this second position, I draw on the Symbolic Interactionist perspective that meaning in the world is co-constructed through social processes of dialogue and action (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Furthermore, and crucially, it is within this co-construction that a self is understood, developed, and maintained (Charmaz, 1983). Hence, for this project, the subsequent analysis, and later discussion, I see the self as fundamentally social in nature, understood in relation to other selves, emergent and experienced within the flow of a social world in action.

Consistent with this approach, in this project I investigated how learners in higher education experience postgraduate studies as social science students. The self is particularly important to these experiences for these students. This is because a higher education is not experienced in isolation, instead it is experienced as a social process and in a relational space which always involves others. Taking social science students, who made up the majority of participants in this project, as an example, they submit assignments that are written from individual perspectives; however, these perspectives are positioned within a literature of work written by others. Furthermore, they participate in learning situations such as lectures, seminars, workshops and supervisions, which involve at least one other person. Further yet, any individual student's assertions and conclusions are judged, being accepted or rejected by others. Experiences of higher education as social science students, then, are experiences of selves involved with others. These selves are adults, arriving to situations in states that are already formed and established (Illeris, 2014). These forms and established senses of selves matter to how these students experience a higher education.

To help grapple with these experiences, I drew upon two of Bourdieu's "thinking tools" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989, p. 50), *Habitus* and *Field*. I first drew upon *Habitus*. Bourdieu (1977, p. 214) describes *Habitus* as a system of dispositions and "the result of an organising action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; [a disposition] also designates a way of being, a habitual state and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination". He goes on to explain that dispositions are formed primarily by the socialising experiences of family and upbringing, and secondly, by the socialising experiences of formal education. In other words, experiences of socialisation in early life are highly significant, meaning a *Habitus* is formed in part by the *Habitus*es of other actors. Actors, in this sense, are individuals, groups and institutions, and it is this use of the term *actors* that I will use throughout this thesis. Actors, then, are socialising systems which structure and are also structuring, helping an individual to see the social world (Malton, 2012). A *Habitus*, then, is also an emergent structure. It is a form that is transforming. It exists and recasts in the interconnected space of the *Habitus*es of other actors.

I drew secondly upon the Bourdieusian thinking tool *Field*. *Field* is the contextual environment in which actors find themselves. Bourdieu describes it as made up of opposing forces (Thomson, 2012). *Field* exists with and because of *Habitus* and *Habitus* exists with and because of *Field*. Hence, the two are always locked in a matrix, with what Bourdieu describes as evolving logics. When *Habitus* and *Field* match, *Habitus* most likely goes unchallenged and unchanged. In such cases, the individual has an understanding of "the rules of the game" and practices go unnoticed. However, when there is a *Habitus*-*Field* mismatch, the *Habitus* becomes challenged and suddenly becomes noticed and noticeable. In such cases, formerly suitable practices may become unsuitable or ineffective. Hence, it is within these relational spaces that the self, fundamentally social in nature, is understood and learning is experienced in a transformative way. Ultimately, by drawing on these two thinking tools, a relational way of thinking to better understand experiences of learning in a higher education is possible.

3.2.2 A constructivist Grounded Theory.

3.2.2.1. *Rationale for a grounded theory approach.*

I took a Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) approach to data analysis in this project. Originally, Grounded Theory was *discovered* by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and, at the time, married up qualitative research with analytic procedures. The original version was seminal in that it opened a door to the novice investigator, allowing them to grapple with theory because theory could be generated from the ground up at a time when “scientific assumptions of objectivity and truth furthered the quest for verification through precise, standardised instruments and parsimonious quantifiable variables” (Charmaz, 2010, p. 183). Since its inception, however, Grounded Theory has been evolved and adapted into many different states and now exists as an extensive body of work (For instance, to name some of the more prominent scholars in this expanding field: Charmaz, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2011; Clarke, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Dey, 1999, 2004; Glaser, 2006, 2009, 2012; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1994; Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014). Within this extensive body of work, a consistent voice at the forefront has been that of Kathy Charmaz. Charmaz has led the constructivist arm of Grounded Theory scholarship for some time now, publishing two editions of *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Charmaz, 2008, 2014). It is this publication that has been invaluable to this project. From within the loud and often disgruntled voices echoing from the vast Grounded Theory literature, it was her voice that particularly appealed to me. It spoke to be because it was calm, reasoned, and non-dogmatic. Ways of approaching research with Charmaz resembled suggestions and thoughtful advice rather than dictums. In light of this, I chose to follow Charmaz, as she presented a set of helpful and systematic suggestions which were a research approach that allowed the project to evolve, as I myself evolved as a researcher. Importantly, the approach of Charmaz particularly addresses the practitioner as a researcher, as she encourages the researcher to follow leads and instincts in constructing data. This position is very different to the many others in other Grounded Theory communities, especially those such as Glaser’s, which are evidently born out of rigid positivist paradigms.

Constructivist Grounded Theory was the right choice for this research project because it is a systematic, analytical, yet flexible approach to qualitative research. This includes a sequence of checks through the analytic phases, where the researcher simultaneously collects and analyses data and codes analytically. As Holton (2007, p. 3) asserts, “coding gives the researcher a condensed, abstract view with scope and dimension that encompasses otherwise seemingly disparate phenomena.” These steps are completed in several iterations with data being collected and analysed in a constant comparison, using theoretical sampling (described in 3.3.2.1). From this constant comparison, categories emerge as data is moved from descriptions to a more abstract and theoretical level (Charmaz, 2014). Hence, these categories are, at first, substantive; however, they become, in some cases, increasingly theoretical. Theoretical categories are the precursors to theory. In effect, theoretical categories are tested against new data and then re-tested as the data collection process continues. In turn, they are either discarded or become increasingly focused and theoretical, resulting in the emergence of a grounded theory. In idealistic terms, a grounded theory will emerge at the point of saturation of theoretical categories.

3.2.2.2. *What kind of theory is a grounded theory?*

What constitutes a Grounded Theory and when exactly one is reached is opaque within the literature. In turn, for much of this project, I used the term *theory* with some amount of caution. Charmaz (2015) shared, in interview, that she felt that many of those who had claimed to have reached theory had in fact not done so. In turn, it may be that in some cases, a point of theory is not reached, leaving the research with theoretical categories instead. As a result, during the project, I was cautious of making claims to theory. In turn, it was not until the latter stages of the project that I felt able to use the term confidently. Importantly, there is support from Charmaz that theory does not have to be theory in the grand sense. Indeed, constructed Grounded Theory, as presented in this thesis, is not theory in the grand sense, but can be described as low to intermediate theory (Charmaz, 2014). What really matters to any Grounded Theory project is that theory (or theoretical categories) are grounded in data. This grounding in data makes for theory that is particularly relevant to a local context. Hence, instead of developing a theory through literature, and then testing it, the researcher can pose the open question: “What’s going on in this context?” This makes the investigation inductive rather than deductive. Furthermore, this means that it is a particularly practical and useful approach to investigation when the nature of an issue is, to a great extent, unexplored. Moreover, the continued interaction that the researcher has with data through this approach means that course-correction can be made early if necessary, and the investigator can follow intriguing leads at any point in the investigation as they emerge. Charmaz (2008b, p. 157) discusses the process:

Emergence means movement, process, and change. The concept of emergence takes into account that the unexpected may occur. The past shapes the present and future but does not make either wholly predictable. Emergent methods permit pursuing what researchers could not have anticipated. Grounded theory is particularly well suited to studying such areas because the method itself possesses emergent properties.

A grounded theory, then, is a kind of theory that evolves with the researcher on their journey with data. It is unlikely to be a grand theory in the sense that it should be generalised. In turn, it is a theory that fits, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 20) put it, “naturally to the kind of concentrated action found in classrooms and schools, [preserving] the integrity of the situation where they are employed. Here the influence of the researcher is structuring, analysing and interpreting the situation.”

3.2.2.3. *My journey with grounded theory.*

I took a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach to this research project because it allowed me to explore a field that was data rich and, to a great extent, uncharted. When I originally started the project, I spent a considerable amount of time searching literature, trying to find a way to create narrow research questions, to remove myself from the data that I wished to collect, and to objectify those data in the way of a positivist researcher. However, the openness of the field made the creation of narrow research questions overly complicated and distracting. By ‘narrow research questions’ I mean questions that are well honed and carved out of the literature after exhaustive searches. These narrow questions

act as a guide to the researcher, and anchor the researcher to a specific spot, keeping them from drifting off course. However, for me, this was not a viable option because there was no clear place to anchor. In fact, in the case of my investigation, I required to be unfastened, allowed to sail and to anchor the research at different places throughout the research journey. Hence, I did not hone any specific research questions. Instead, and throughout the journey of this PhD, I steered this project with the support of familiarity. It is for this reason that I felt that it requires a special mention in this methodology chapter.

Familiarity in this project has guided me in many ways. It was familiarity with the students in my practice that initiated the broader questions that underpin this project. As these students changed, these broad questions evolved and transformed. It was familiarity with the field that I am studying which allowed me to withstand the pressure of the project and the uncertainties of grappling with emerging and emergent data. It was finding more familiarity with myself and my own practices through the reflection that this project engendered that allowed me to understand better who I am, and thus, allowed me to become a better scholar. Familiarity in this project, then, became intimate, and it was this intimate familiarity that Charmaz (2008, p. 162) states is what “gives grounded theorists a window to see emergent processes in their data, allowing them to pursue a specific research problem that addresses these processes.” Charmaz (2008b, p. 162) also states that “researchers cannot assess how well their analyses fit their data unless they have gained intimate familiarity with the studied phenomenon.” Indeed, without these familiarities, I would not have been able to pursue the emergent leads that I was able to recognise because of the wealth of practical and lived experiences which I have as a person in the social world.

Through the journey of this project, and through the journey of my life and practice, I have become intimately familiar with the phenomenon that I have studied. In fact, one of the revelations and turning points for me was to involve myself in the data and to begin this familiarity; and it was Constructivist Grounded Theory that inspired me to do this. Indeed, coming to doctoral studies slightly later in my life than some no longer engenders feelings of being behind others or regret for having wasted travels overseas, and no longer do I speculate that “if only I had done this sooner, I could have a research career by now.” Indeed, there is power in the experience of life when studying the lived experiences of others. If tools and procedures such as Grounded Theory can be utilised, then much fruit can be harvested as a result. Indeed, it may be that the positivist approach to understanding the social world may belong to those with little experience of it. In sum, as a result of my journey with Grounded Theory, I now see that life experience is indeed invaluable in investigating the social world. It can help a researcher transform past, lost, or even “wasted” experiences into a valuable narrative that can act as a resource. For me, Constructivist Grounded Theory gave me a framework to use my narrative as a means to interpret the experiences of my practice and construct data. I describe this procedure in the next section.

3.3 Procedure

3.3.1 Participants in this study.

3.3.1.1 Ethical considerations.

To articulate my commitment to ethics and to establish the overarching philosophical approach I took toward those involved in my research project, I quote Collins (1990) cited in Denzin and Lincoln (2013, p. 50), and “endorse a radical, participatory ethic, one that is communitarian and feminist, an ethic that calls for trusting, collaborative non-oppressive relationships between researcher and those studied, an ethic that makes the world a more just place.”

In practical terms, I followed ethical guidelines set out by my own department, the Department of Education, comprehensively. All students were required to read and sign a consent form that had been pre-approved. The consent form (see Appendix 1) made clear to the participants that all data would be anonymised, stored securely, potentially used in the future for dissemination, and ensured of confidentiality. No monetary or material incentives of any kind were offered. All students were known to me through my practice, and I made contact with participants about the research project by email. In the email, I explained the project, asking if they would like to be involved. On their agreement, a mutually convenient time to meet was organised in a neutral space on the university campus and took place at the end of their programme of study either after, or just before, their respective dissertations had been submitted.

All interviews were recorded on an electronic voice recorder and saved to a folder in Google Drive, which was password protected. Files from the voice recorder were then deleted. All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw their consent post-interview, meaning that any data collection with their involvement would be permanently deleted. Finally, participants were given the contact emails of myself and the chair of the university Ethics Committee, in the event that they wished to raise concerns.

I acknowledge a potential for concern regarding the power differential between myself and participants during data collection. This is because, at the time of data collection, I was a member of academic support staff and directly knew the students whose tutor I had been. It may be that by being a member of academic support staff, who was not from their home department, mitigated positively against this power differential; however, this is merely an assumption. I strongly believe that all participation in the research process was completely on a voluntary basis.

3.3.1.2 Participants.

As mentioned above, all participants in this research project were known to me through my practice either because I had taught them in class or met them on a one-to-one consultation basis. I describe these ways in more detail later when I outline their Participant Situations (see: 3.3.1.4). I have outlined participant situations as a way for the reader to become familiar with the participants before engaging with them in the subsequent chapters.

The establishment of trusting relationships with participants, by having worked with them in practice, gave me two main advantages in data collection. This first of these was that participants were relaxed and open throughout the interview process. As Charmaz states (Charmaz, 2014, p. 29), “how your research participants know you influences what they will tell you.” In turn, I was able to take a relaxed approach to interviewing myself and participants appeared to speak frankly. This situation was perhaps created because I had always been in many ways removed from their home department. For instance, I had never been a member of their department or main programme because I was a visitor to their main learning environments, from a support unit. Furthermore, my classes were not mandatory: the students had chosen to attend and to receive academic support. Finally, although I had worked with them formatively, I had never read their summative work nor had I ever judged them academically. In sum, I believe that the positive relationships that I had had with my participants, when they were my students, accelerated the data collection process. In consequence, this removed the need for a cycle of interviews to build rapport and trust which is often mentioned in the literature (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

Secondly, I also believe that this was helpful for me in terms of recruitment. It was essential for the project that I recruited participants at the end of their academic year. This mattered greatly because I wanted to engage with participants at a point where they were at the end of their studies, so that they could reflect on their journeys as students. Yet, this had to be before they returned to their home countries. Because all participants were returning home after the dissertation was submitted, the window of opportunity was short and only a single interview was possible. However, because participants were in the final stages of their postgraduate programmes, it meant that they were in the midst of dissertation writing, which was a high stakes and stressful time. Moreover, at the beginning of the project, when I attempted to recruit participants out with my direct practice, I was absolutely unsuccessful. In turn, I am convinced that the relationship that I had established with participants was vital to them volunteering to sacrifice valuable time to engage with my project.

3.3.1.3 Initial participants: students that disrupt practice and construct sensitising concepts.

Where to start with data construction is an exciting prospect for the Constructivist Grounded Theorist. For this project, I looked to the students who had challenged my practice most. Looking to these challenging students was vital because they disrupted my practice. By disrupting practice, they created fractures and flaws in it and in turn forced reflection on how I conducted my familiar ways. And it was from the space created in the fracture that I began questioning, examining, and conceptualising. Such experiences are what Blumer (1969) describes as *sensitising concepts*. Sensitising concepts are initial sparks and tentative ideas about what data and theory to pursue. Charmaz (2014, p. 31) suggests that they can be used as “points of departure.” Hence, for my own point of departure, I looked to my practice and imagined who or what group would be the catalyst for this project. I was immediately drawn to a group of students who I supported while they were working towards their LLM in International Company and Corporate Law. I had supported them through their programme with an academic and communication skills course, which focussed on academic reading, argument writing, and critical reflection, over two terms. They were a group of 12 who were internationally mixed and gender balanced. They were all young adults who were from Nigeria, Greece, Spain, the United Kingdom,

Canada, China, India, and the Ukraine. They were also a group of high-achieving, driven students.

At the time, I had become very accustomed to teaching mono-cultural groups, mostly of Chinese women in their early twenties. On the whole, I had enjoyed the harmonious nature of these classes. However, I believe that this also led to a comfort and safety in my practice, which although welcome, also meant that I was not required to innovate and at times became complacent. Unlike the groups that I had become accustomed to, the students from the LLM programme openly disagreed and challenged each other and myself. For instance, they would vent their frustrations about each other during critical reflection at will. In consequence, their behaviour, and the shock that it created, demanded that I quickly develop my practice in reaction to it. This made the experience of working with them challenging. However, it also made it rewarding and intriguing. Ultimately, it broke the familiar in my practice and made me question what I did and how I did it. I also started to ponder questions regarding their goals, identities, interpersonal approaches, and experiences, being such different people from different backgrounds with different perspectives. These, then, were the sensitising concepts as described by Blumer and my points of departure as highlighted by Charmaz.

Acting on this, I invited all 12 students to participate in interviews. Out of these twelve, seven accepted. Out of this seven, five were able to attend. These were two participants from Nigeria, one from Canada, one from India, and one from Greece. I decided that I would start the data collection process with a small group interview. The logic for doing a small group interview at the beginning of the research project was to create some groundswell. By groundswell, I mean that I hoped a group interview would generate a wider range of responses and comments (Watts and Ebbutt, 1987) from which to initiate the research project and gain a rich data set. On reflection, the group interview was in part also a way of alleviating the imposter syndrome that I had felt at the time as a new researcher. It also helped to alleviate worries about interviewing on a one-to-one basis, such as, “What if they don’t have much to say?” or “What if I can’t direct the interview appropriately?”. These concerns seem trivial now; however, at the time they were quite real. As a result of the group interview, I may have lost more intimate data in the way that Ebbutt (1985) suggests. For instance, participants may not have voiced more personal matters. Nevertheless, the small group interview had its desired effect and by asking participants to talk openly about their experiences of learning in their postgraduate programme, I obtained a rich data set (the transcript of the initial interview can be found in Appendix 2). Out of the five students who agreed to participate, three of them were willing to participate in a group interview. These three participants were Alisha, Jon, and Nasha (not their real names), whose situations are described among the other participants, all of whom are presented in alphabetical order in the next subsection.

3.3.1.4 Participant Situations.

3.3.1.4.01 Alisha.

I met Alisha when I was teaching an academic and communication skills course in 2014 at a Law School. Alisha, a female from India, was studying toward an LLM in International Corporate and Commercial Law at the time. She had completed her undergraduate degree

in Law in India and had experience working in a law firm which was also in India. Something that struck me about Alisha was the enthusiasm that she appeared to have for her studies. She was engaged and engaging in class. She contributed regularly in group work but also listened to others and tried to draw out quieter students. She had a solid grasp of basic and more complex concepts but was also aware that she had a lot to learn. She did not experience discomfort when she contributed a wrong answer. A class of *Alishas* would have made for a delightful teaching experience.

3.3.1.4.02 Emilie

I met Emilie in an academic support course which I ran for Management students. She was studying toward an MSc in Human Resource Management. Emilie, a female from Norway, was thirty-seven at the time. She had recently been made redundant from her position in her previous employment. In turn, the Norwegian government were funding her studies in an effort to support her to re-skill. She had no former experience of Human Resource Management and had worked previously in translation. Some years previously, she had completed a master's degree in literature at another UK university. As a student, Emilie was engaged in class, listening intently, taking notes diligently, and was generally quiet. She worked well in groups and answered questions if nominated. She was highly proficient in the English language and spoke with a received pronunciation. In a small group or on a one to one basis, Emilie was amiable, well humoured and to the point, generally communicating on a "needs to know" basis.

3.3.1.4.03 Gregor.

I met Gregor when I was teaching an academic and communication skills course in 2014 at a Law School. Gregor was a male from Greece, then in his early twenties, studying toward an LLM in International Corporate and Commercial Law. Gregor had completed an undergraduate degree in Law and supposedly had experience working in a legal firm with his father and uncle, who he claimed were lawyers. I say supposedly, as I was not always sure that I believed everything that he said 100%. I was sure that the vast majority of the content was grounded in real events but felt that stories were an elaborated version of real events and may have been somewhat embellished. I was not alone in this impression. Many of his colleagues felt similarly and did not always trust what he had said. On reflection, the interview with Gregor is the one which reaped the poorest quality data.

3.3.1.4.04 Jelena.

I met Jelena in an academic support course which I ran for Management students. She was studying toward an MSc in Human Resource Management. Jelena was a female from Poland, was in her early twenties, and was the first person in her family to have undertaken a postgraduate level of study. She had previously studied Psychology at another UK university; however, she had reassessed her future career and opted to move into HR. Jelena had lived in the UK for some time, was a class representative, and in class, frequently answered questions without hesitation. She had previous work experience in psychology and had completed a short HR course before applying for her main programme. She was proficient in the English language; however, she appeared to hold reservations about her accent being "too Polish." In general, she came across as a hardworking, driven individual.

3.3.1.4.05 Jon.

I met Jon when I was teaching an academic and communication skills course in 2014 at a Law School. Jon was a male from Canada, in his early twenties, studying toward an LLM in International Corporate and Commercial Law. He had completed his undergraduate degree at the same institution and was very familiar with and comfortable in the learning environment. He had no previous work experience in law. Being a tall athletic man, he had a strong physical presence in the classroom. He was also self-assured and spoke confidently, however, he often struggled with silences in critical reflection sessions, stating openly that he found them awkward.

3.3.1.4.06 Kip.

I met Kip when I was leading a pre-university programme in 2016. Kip was a male from Thailand, in his early twenties, studying Philosophy as his undergraduate degree in Thailand, and after successfully passing the pre-university programme, he went on to study for an MA in Philosophy. This was his first study abroad experience. Kip had also been an only-child, whose parents were educated to university level. His parents were happy for him to study whatever he wanted, as long as he was studying something. They valued education highly. Kip became interested in philosophy from an early age. He was born prematurely. As a result, this had caused him to have issues with mobility, which had turned out to be because of an abnormality in his brain. This negatively affected his movement from a young age, which resulted in him asking questions of the world such as “why he couldn’t do things” and “why he wasn’t like other kids.” In essence, he felt as if he had been “a philosopher” from a young age because of his physical disadvantage, often turning to thinking and writing, which did not require much physical movement.

3.3.1.4.07 Nasha.

I met Nasha when I was teaching an academic and communication skills course in 2014 at a Law School. Nasha was a female from Nigeria in her early twenties, studying toward an LLM in International Corporate and Commercial Law. Nasha was from a family of strong women and both her older sisters were practicing lawyers. Nasha studied for her undergraduate degree in Law at another UK university. She arrived slightly later in the programme, perhaps the third week into the Autumn term. She had never experienced problem-based learning, which was the primary teaching approach of the school, before. During that time, she was a measured individual with a warm sense of humour.

3.3.1.4.08 Orisa.

I met Orisa when I was teaching an academic and communication skills course in 2014 at a Law School. Orisa was a female from Nigeria, studying toward an LLM in International Corporate and Commercial Law. While I found Orisa fascinating, she was particularly challenging in class because she projected a very hard exterior to me and her fellow classmates. On many occasions, she refused to participate in group work, presenting defensive non-verbal communication signals to interlocutors (including myself). For example, she spent a considerable amount of time checking her phone and rolling her eyes. She was mostly vocal in reflective sessions, where she would criticise her classmates openly. However, on the rare occasion that our paths crossed out of class, she smiled

warmly and appeared delighted to see me. This contradictory behaviour was supported by hearsay from the programme administrator who reported back to me on how much she enjoyed my sessions. Studying at the Law School for her Postgraduate degree was the first time that she had studied outside of Nigeria.

3.3.1.4.09 Sara.

I met Sara when teaching an academic writing module on argumentation. Sara was an Egyptian female, thirty eight years of age, and studying toward an MA in Women's Studies. She had joined the course on argumentation even though it was an undergraduate Stage 3 module from which she would attain no usable credits. This was because she wanted to improve her academic writing. However, she recognised mid-module that it was too much of a burden for her, and in turn, stated that she would no longer be able to attend. In class, Sara stood out from the other students. She regularly contributed alternative perspectives on various issues and valued writing narratively. She had a wealth of life experience, having worked with victims of domestic abuse in Egypt for several years. She also had experience of working with politicians on women's rights policy. In general, she was noticeably articulate in her use of language and had a calm demeanour.

3.3.1.4.10 Selia.

I met Selia in an academic support course which I ran for Management students. Selia was a female from Greece, who was in her mid-twenties. She was studying toward an MSc in Human Resource Management. Selia was a charming individual: jovial, observant, and very people oriented. She had always been a high achiever and had studied at an American university in Greece for her undergraduate degree. Selia had strong family connections and a solid friendship group at home. She was vocal in class, answering and asking questions regularly. She regularly talked at length about any matters up for discussion.

3.3.1.4.11 Thomas.

I met Thomas in an open access academic writing support session. Thomas was from Germany and was in his early twenties. He had an excellent level of English language proficiency, but still wanted to "improve" and "learn new words." I had never believed that Thomas needed to take the academic grammar course, however, he actively participated in lessons, attended regularly, assisted others with their work and was willing to develop in any ways that he could as a learner. Thomas was a student in Physics and studying toward an MSc. However, he was also taking a module in Economics. The reason for this was because of his future career objectives which were to work as a consultant with the idea that Physics made individuals good problem solvers, while Economics was a vital area to progress in the modern world. In turn, he wished to somehow combine the two. He had studied abroad before, in Spain. He was an articulate individual, who spoke concisely and with confidence.

3.3.1.4.12 Xu.

I met Xu in a one-to-one support session. Xu was a female from China, and was in her early twenties, studying toward an MA in Women's Studies. Her undergraduate degree

was in Arabic Studies, and she said that she had never studied any sociology-based subjects before joining her main programme. Until her master's degree, she had also been a "grade-A" student. However, during our short time together, she seemed underconfident and browbeaten. She was often inarticulate, and at times seemed to struggle to express herself as fully as she would have liked. She had had somewhat of a traumatic academic year: struggling to deal with reading, struggling to grapple with complex sociological theory, having little idea about her academic duties and rights, and often feeling left behind by her peers in most of her seminars. Her year had seemed to have taken a toll on her. Xu felt a strong attachment and obligation to her family.

3.3.1.4.13 Ying.

I met Ying when I was leading a pre-sessional programme in 2015 and then later in a student academic support role. She was a female from China, in her early twenties, and was working toward an MSc in Social Media Management. Her programme was a joint master's between the Management School and Sociology Department. She reported to be under confident with her English language usage, however, she had always spoken confidently in class with me. On a one-to-one basis, she spoke particularly frankly about her studies and her opinions.

3.3.2 Constructing data which leads to new data.

3.3.2.1 An iterative and interactive process.

Constructing a grounded theory is an iterative process that takes the researcher on a journey with their data. This journey could be visualised in the shape of a coil. A coil in this case is an iterative process that goes back and forth to data. This process, however, is not a loop or a spiral. Instead, it is an iterative process that progresses with each iteration as if coiling a wire around a cylinder. This coiling allows the researcher to continually interact with their data. By continually interacting with their data, new theoretical leads emerge, others become more substantial, and some become discarded. In real terms, the process of constructing theory is continually interactive in interviewing, coding, mind mapping, writing, categorising, theorising, and then interviewing again. I describe this process in this order in detail below.

3.3.2.2 Intensive interviewing.

An intensive interviewing approach provides a dynamic space in which to interact with participants to construct data. Intensive interviews are essentially one-sided conversations where the interviewer acts as a guide. In this one-sided conversation, I often posed open questions so that participants would reflect on their experiences of learning over the academic year. The question with which I started the conversation changed slightly as the project matured. In the first instance, I started these interviews by asking about interpersonal relationships experienced over the academic year. For instance, below is an extract with Orisa.

Micky: How would you describe the relationships that you've had this year? When you look back, do you think they've been positive, negative or a mixture?

Orisa: Some positive and I can't say negative because there were really no effort on any of our parts to improve relationships so it was just really a formal relationship but with some people I had real positive relationships.

Micky: Would you talk a bit more about those positive relationships and why they were positive?

O: Ok, like I think when I can I was instantly drawn to Z and N. Probably because they were from the same place I was, so it was so easy, and I was so drawn to MM because of her personality and she had positive vibes. And R too had positive vibes, so yeah.

Later on in the project, I started simply in the nature of any conversation between two people who were familiar by saying: "So, how are you? How have things been going?" I did this because I felt that it opened up a space for participants to begin a narrative about their experiences of learning over the past academic year, during which I asked for clarification of points. For instance, below is an extract with Jelena.

Micky: So how has it been going and tell me about, sorry, where is it you went?

Jelena: A pedagogy meeting and they were looking at learning outcomes and they were producing and kind of description for the program and they were looking at their perceptions of students from the master's program to try and combine the two and to see if we agree with what was on the master's and what wasn't on the master's and stuff like that... interesting.

M: Ok and how were those perceptions?

J: The description was accurate, but I think it wasn't the program... wasn't as practical as it could be. So, for the University but they didn't really put that into words

M: Ok so... sorry so it wasn't as practical as it could have been but that's a strength?

J: No, it's not a strength

M: Ok so it was a weakness of the programme

J: yeah

M: So, did you expect it to be more practical

J: Yes, because when I applied to several universities I applied to for example [another university] I was choosing between these two and when I called someone at [the other university] they said "well if you want a more theoretically based programme, you should choose here. If you want a more practical programme you should choose [the other one] because they are more practical.

M: Ok and how do you feel about that?

J: A little bit disappointed. I'm glad that I did the master's, and I'm happy with the content but I did think that some exposure to the practical work that I will be involved in would be really beneficial.

M: What kind of practical stuff do you think they could have done?

J: I did HR management course. and one thing is that HR managers to similar work and there are examples of duties they do which are more advanced. But if we could have for example a model company and produce a report. That is something that managers do and if we could practice it over that year at least a couple of times that would be an advantage.

Finally, as the project matured further, I asked the participants: "can you tell me about your programme of study and then how it's been?" This change in first question was to help the participant focus on their experiences of their programme to begin telling their narrative. For instance, below is an extract with Sara.

Sara: I'm doing a master's degree in Women's Studies in the centre for Women's Studies here. And... basically it's a one year taught master's programme and it's more grounded in Sociology and is Sociology related. And basically, I chose this particular programme because it relates to my previous academic experience and my academic interests / research interests. How it has gone for me so far... I guess I found it quite different to what I'm used to in my home university because my UG degree, of course we weren't asked to write as much. Like obviously PG education will demand more. But if I were doing a taught master's at my home university in Cairo I would have been required to write a lot less. So, that's one interesting part of the experience. I find that my academic writing, like it has improved much more than I would have expected over the year. That's probably got to do with the amount of reading that we had to do, and we had to write a lot of papers. I also think that, it's quite different here, that the teachers aren't constantly in touch with the students. By that I mean like, I was expecting much more closer contact with my supervisors. But my understanding now is that PG degrees are much more about independence research... And I mean like they are accessible. Like my teachers have been very friendly and supportive on all levels. In terms of the programme it's not structured so that you get in touch so frequently with your supervisor...

Micky: Why did you have that expectation coming in? Was it because of your UG?

I generally avoided the extensive note taking practices advised by Glaser (1978, 2005) because I found this distracting to the constructivist approach I was intending. I also found that decisions to take notes at times gave off the impression that I had been particularly interested in a certain contribution of the interviewee when this was not necessarily the case. Furthermore, I found that my efforts to take notes often distracted me from the conversation and hindered me from interjecting with my own experience and asking questions that seemed pertinent during the interaction. Finally, it was a distraction from paying attention to facial expressions, tone of voice, and momentary glances, which are often indicators of another narrative lying beneath the surface.

In preparing for an interview, I would typically look over notes and research memos to have clear in my mind the theories that I wished to pursue. However, of course, in the initial stage these did not exist. Instead, in the initial stage, I prepared for the interview by looking over some old classroom and professional notes that I had taken when I worked with the participants. This was an invaluable way of reminding myself about their characters and some of the experiences that they had had during the earlier parts of their programme. In turn, I made some brief notes on them, as well as about what the participants had been studying with me in class. This was helpful in providing myself with some scaffolding to conduct the first interview. However, as the interviews moved on, especially in the latter stages of the interview process, I became more confident with interviewing and had analytic leads that I wished to follow. In general, with questioning, I followed the advice of Charmaz (2014, p. 91), at times asking questions “slowly to foster the participant’s reflections.” The emergence and importance of carefully thought through questions derived from previous data collection is a fundamental part of constructing data with a Constructivist Grounded Theory, and I asked them to participants by weaving them into conversation, at times being explicit that I was interested in the matter. For instance, below is an extract from the interview with Thomas, where I follow analytic leads about familiarity and academic adjustment (presented in bold below).

Thomas: With the Erasmus scheme here, I like went to the department here and there were not like lots of applications and interviews and it all just seemed a little bit different. A bit more familiar.

*Micky: **I’m actually really interested in familiarity.** From what it seems, it is really important in the student experience and helps them feel at ease. Could you tell me a little bit more about why it was like that?*

T: It seems like in Physics that they don’t really care about position. They are not like, ok I’m a doctor etc... It doesn’t really matter who you are and where you are from. We are just all interested in research and it’s a bit more... it feels like they respect you a bit more egalitarian.

*M: **And how does that compare to studying at home?***

In a grounded theory, it is possible to follow analytic leads because of a sampling strategy called theoretical sampling, where data is taken on a journey to new participants.

3.3.2.3 Sampling theoretically in clusters.

Theoretical sampling is the main reason that a Constructivist Grounded Theory is a journey of data and participants (see Appendix 3 to see a map of this journey). Charmaz (2014, p. 197) describes theoretical sampling as the apparatus that “guides where you go.” Indeed, once I had the data from the initial sample, I then had a new point of departure. This point was my new data. Charmaz (2008b, p. 166) also states that “researchers who subscribe to the grounded theory method conduct theoretical sampling only after they have tentative categories to develop or refine.” Hence, in pure theoretical sampling terms, as theoretical categories emerge from the data, a path of where to look for the next data appears. In turn, the researcher should follow this path in pursuit of their analytic leads. In the same fashion, after coding, categorising, and theorising about the data, I then took early categories, ideas,

and unanswered questions to my next participant. To determine that participant, I reflected on my practice and considered questions: “Who would best inform me about this matter?” or “Who else has experienced this phenomenon?” For instance, the concepts constructed from the initial interview brought me to a participant studying an MSc in Social Media Management, and who was also a former pre-university programme student. This was because I felt that they may be able to cast light on categories which I felt were relevant and intriguing at the time.

However, due to the nature of my study, theoretical sampling in the purer sense was not possible. The nature of my project meant that I was interested in speaking with students when they were at the end of their respective academic journeys. This raised two wider pragmatic issues around the short window of time that there was to interview participants. The first of these issues was that this window for participation had paralleled with dissertation writing. As mentioned, this was a busy time for students, with some potential participants being too busy to contribute. Other potential participants had decided to write up their dissertations off campus. This meant that they were also unavailable. Because most students would move from the local area, many leaving the country, conducting interviews after the dissertation stage was not an option. The second of these issues was the length of the window itself in which to go through an iterative process of data collection and analysis. Yes, it was to some extent possible, however, spending extensive periods of time analysing data meant that opportunities to catch students who might participate would be, and were at times, lost. In consequence, I often chose the option of catching the student when they were available. In effect, the theoretical sample was at times realised in this project in a clustered sense, where interviews were conducted fairly close together with limited analysis between them with deeper analysis being conducted throughout the year, leaving me to pursue new data the following summer. Fortunately, the part time experience of the PhD was helpful to this process because it reduced the intensity of the workload by doubling the time in which I could schedule interviews.

3.3.2.4 Initial coding.

Initial coding is a way of finding an access route into data and, in turn, starting the process of generating theoretical ideas. To do this, I first of all transcribed the data. I then coded the data line by line. Line-by-line coding is a challenging form of coding suggested by Charmaz (2014, 2015) where each line of transcribed text is given a specific code, even if the line does not represent a complete sentence to abstract and fragment data (transcripts with line-by-line coding can be found in Appendix 4). Line-by-line coding is ultimately a way of breaking up data, which can later be pieced back together. I felt that breaking up data was a necessary step because I had been concerned about forcing data (Glaser, 2006). Forcing data is a particular concern for those who have taken more positivistic and objectivist approaches to Grounded Theory analysis. Although this was not my approach, and although I have argued in this thesis for a constructivist and interpretivist approach, I felt that, because of my closeness to the reality which I was studying, I did require an abstraction process to mitigate against this possibility. In practical terms, I did this by adjusting the margins of the text electronically, printing the text, using a ruler to focus my attention on the given line, and then manually writing a code next to it. I later did this electronically for ease of storage and searching for codes electronically.

Codes, then, were interpretive constructions and yet another stage where I brought myself, my practice, and my experience to this project. In real terms, I coded following Glaser’s (1978) approach, which was by using gerunds. The reason for this was the appealing nature of the “doing” action that a gerund represented to me. Charmaz (2014) describes this as *analytical coding*, arguing that in Grounded Theory the investigator continually analyses data with coding that is analytical instead of descriptive. This method prompted a mental image of what was happening at that time of interview, making the data feel alive and active. I found this allowed me to interact with the data, as I fragmented it, because in my mind’s eye had a mental image of it as if in real time. At times, I opted to name the code using the exact words of participants, whereas at other times, I took a particular fragment of data and constructed a name for the code that I felt best represented it (For an example of initial coding see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample data with sample code

Sample Data	Sample code
<p>Micky: Ok... Who was on the course? Was that a core module?</p> <p>Orisa: Yeah everyone did it, I think that most people had problems with L and were cross. Like, some people they won't come to class or some people were sleeping. I think that the course was kind of boring. [Micky: Was it lectures or seminars?]. Seminar... The seminars were boring. So she would just basically sit down and go through each page and not really deep... Not really communication as such, because only A used to talk in the class. Yeah so...</p>	<p><i>Perceiving collective problems</i></p> <p><i>Disengagement with learning</i></p> <p><i>Having problems with educator</i></p> <p><i>Being bored</i></p> <p><i>Being bored</i></p> <p><i>Being bored / passive</i></p> <p><i>Going through the motions</i></p> <p><i>Being an observer of learning interaction</i></p> <p><i>Feeling short-changed</i></p> <p><i>Lacking communication</i></p> <p><i>Observing disengagement</i></p>

Once a transcript had been completely coded, I extracted codes that were particularly overt to me because I found them meaningful. This may have been because they highlighted an issue that had emerged several times. However, the process of extracting codes was not necessarily quantitative. In fact, on many occasions, I engaged in abductive reasoning (described below in 3.3.2.5.2.) and followed what I thought might be interesting leads, speculating that a particular code may have been representative of a much more important, deeper issue—in metaphorical terms, a tip of a much deeper iceberg. For instance, I would highlight something evocative that spoke to the experience of my practice and required further investigation. Once, I had extracted these codes from the data, I then began a process of mind mapping.

3.3.2.5 Mind mapping to focus codes.

3.3.2.5.1 Beginning to imagine theories.

To piece back together fragmented data, I *mind mapped* fragments (examples of mind maps can be found in Appendix 5). Mind mapping is not something that appears in the grounded theory literature *per se* but was my approach to what others might call axial coding (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998). I used the term mind mapping because the term axial coding really did not appeal to me, and, as a result, I found it hard to engage with. On the other hand, mind mapping, which I already used personally and in teaching others to generate and arrange ideas for essay writing, was something with which I was familiar. Generally speaking, mind maps provide a visual account of early theorisings and the research's evolution. In consequence, a more concise visual account of the theoretical categories emerges. For this project, with mind mapping, I was able to sort fragmented data and create more focused codes. Focused codes are codes that encompass initial codes. For instance, several initial codes from the line-by-line coding process could be brought together under a new code. By doing this I was able to ascertain a clearer picture of what the data might be telling me. In turn, I was able to advance the theoretical direction of my work.

In practical terms, I usually used a large whiteboard, often with different coloured pens, and as the mind maps became more refined, I used the software Lucidchart (examples can be found in Appendix 6). For me, this was a way of reassembling data which was particularly visual and dynamic. I took the fragmented codes which I thought meaningful from the line-by-line coding process and displayed them on a whiteboard. As I displayed them, I mapped them in relation to one another. As I mapped, central themes would begin to take shape. For instance, and as illustrated below in Figure 1, initial codes such as *failing*, *affecting others negatively*, and *not being able to answer questions* became encompassed under *not being good enough* which later became *a negative view of self*. Of course, during this process not all codes were encompassed into focused codes, many codes became discarded. This was part of the sorting process that, as Charmaz (2014, p. 138) states, “directs our analysis early in the research process and helps us to evaluate the directions we take without embarking on a path of no return.” Indeed, by mind mapping and constructing focused codes, I was able to see paths of inquiry emerging from the very beginning of the research process. As a practitioner who was also a researcher, I was also able to ask pointed questions of the data, interact with them, conceptualise wider categories, and note unanswered questions and new ideas.

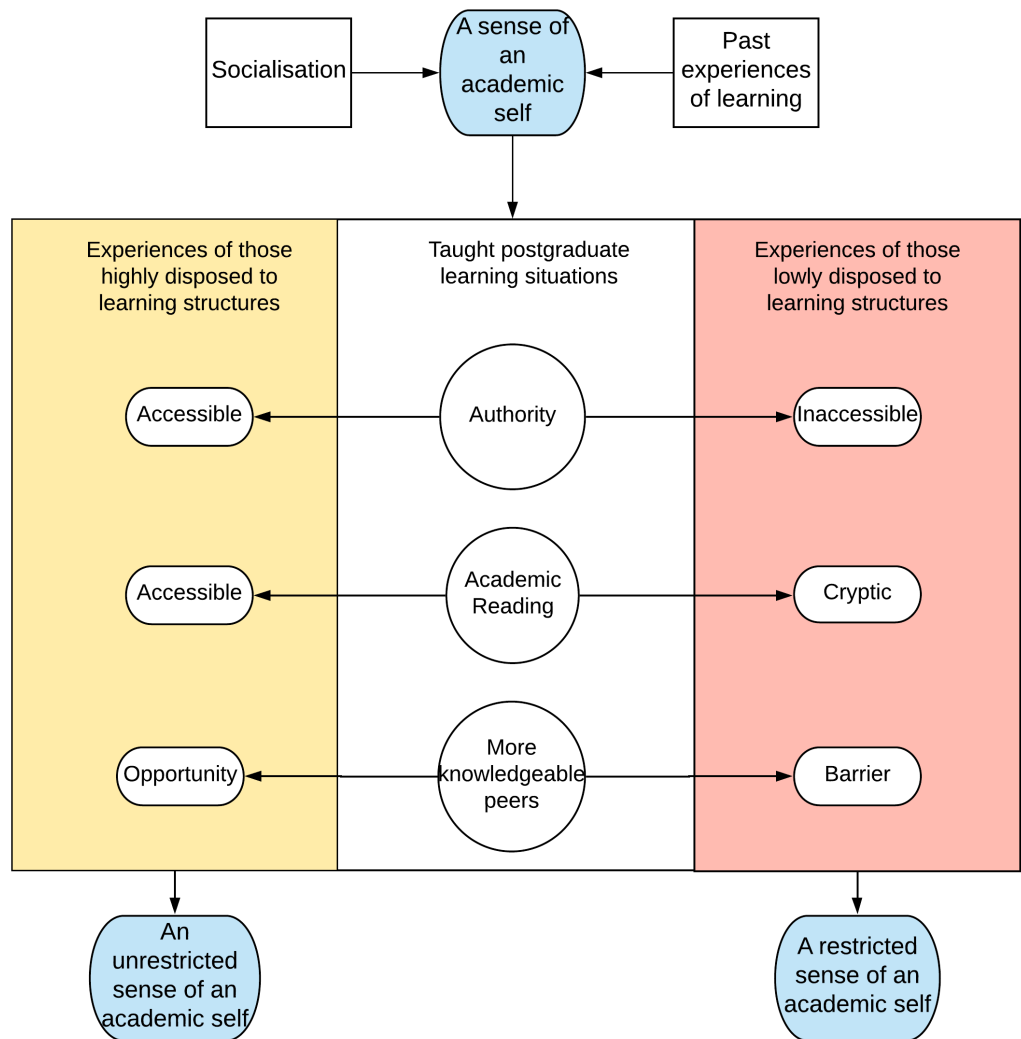
3.3.2.5.2 *Abductive reasoning.*

Indeed, I found mind mapping, in this way, to be an excellent tool for the practitioner researcher who follows a Constructivist Grounded Theory method. Using mind mapping, I could imagine what lay between the categories that I had created and what filled the silences that I had in my data. To do this in this project, I drew on my experience as a practitioner and interacted with the data in a way that Charmaz describes as *abductive reasoning*. Abductive reasoning, coined originally by Charles Peirce (Fann, 2012), is a process of creative problem solving and imaginative interpretation. It “aims to account for surprises, anomalies or puzzles in the collected data” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 157). Abductive reasoning became a key part of this research project because it empowered me to theorise about, rather than merely describe my data sets.

Abductive reasoning is particularly useful to practitioner researchers. This is because we are experienced in our professional fields. From these experiences come hunches, instincts, and enquiries. Hunches, instincts, and enquiries may play little role in research designs which have data analysis entirely post-data collection. Abductive reasoning may not be possible without the space that a grounded theory opens up through its iterative nature. More specifically, where many methods have separate data collection and data analysis stages, the iterative process of data collection and analysis in Grounded Theory opens a space for the grounded theorist to imagine with the security that they can check these imaginings against the data in the next iteration. In turn, taking abductive reasoning as part of a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach allowed me to draw on my personal and professional narrative and to be creative, to problem-solve, and to imagine as a means of interpretation. As Charmaz (2008b, p. 157) claims, abductive reasoning “aims to account for surprises, anomalies or puzzles in the collected data.” For those researchers who admit that they have life experience, and for those who are alive and alert to the social world around them, it opens up a powerful approach to research. Without considering and realising our narratives, we are blind to intriguing issues within our practice.

Hence, and in general, Constructivist Grounded Theory allowed me to explore and investigate in inductive and abductive ways, which particularly spoke to me as a practitioner because I was familiar with a higher education learning and teaching context. The three figures below give examples of mind mapping and how I used abductive reasoning to imagine and connect ideas and categories. The first is of mind mapping using a whiteboard in the early stages of data analysis. Within this mind map the codes mentioned above can be found. These codes would later be raised to the theoretical category of *a sense of an academic self*, which is illustrated in figure 2 and 3 with the mindmapping software Lucidchart.

Figure 3



3.3.2.6 Advancing theorisings through memo writing.

The next step in the analysis process was to take the visual mind maps and begin to realise them in written form (examples can be found in Appendix 7). To do this, I used a technique called memo-writing, which is a vital part of a Constructivist Grounded Theory analysis. For a constructivist grounded theorist, memo-writing is the link between focused codes and theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2014). Memo-writing provides a space which is private and safe for analytical musing. Holton (2007, p.21) suggests that the researcher use “memoing to develop ideas in complete conceptual freedom.” Freedom in this case is the freedom from mistakes, silly ideas, and judgment. Freedom is crucial if the researcher is to engage in abductive reasoning, and as Birks, Chapman and Francis (2008, p. 68) describe, it is something that “assist[s] the researcher in making conceptual leaps from raw data to those abstractions that explain research phenomena in the context in which it is examined.” To further this process, I therefore also adopted a freewriting method in the early stages. Freewriting is an excellent technique for getting started on a blank page. It is a short, set amount of time in which the writer must write on a topic without stopping. During freewriting, I did not concern myself with grammar and spelling errors, nor whether or not if what I was writing ‘made sense.’ Indeed, I wrote as if no one were watching.

In real terms, I would take a particular mind map and copy and paste it into a blank document. I would then muse over it. I would consider questions such as “*What is happening here?*”, “*What connections are there here between these codes and categories?*”, “*What is the bigger picture?*”, “*What might this theoretical category be called?*”, “*How might I define it?*”, “*What are its component parts?*”, “*What are the conditions around it?*”, “*What actions were taking place?*”, and “*What are the consequences of these actions?*”. In turn, I would spend short concentrated periods of time freewriting. After several periods of freewriting, I would then leave the memo for some days and return to it with a fresh eye. By doing this, I liberated low level theorisings and made them real in written form, which I found to be an empowering process. Such theories could be directly compared with and applied to practice in real time. This is in one way that Charmaz (2014) suggests that memos may be of particular use to the practitioner researcher. In other words, theorisings through memo-writing may be a way to notice practical implications during the early stages of the research. Furthermore, it engenders a constant interaction between data and practice.

I concur with this position, as I experienced this myself. Indeed, this interaction was something I found to be particularly satisfying about memo-writing because it often generated unexpected developments that, although raw, could to some extent inform my practice at that moment. In turn, my practice informed my interpretation of my data. Memos provided the space in which this interaction could be recorded. As time passed, practice continued, and new participants contributed to the project, I reworked and refined mind maps and my writing. I then relied on the following structure offered by Charmaz (2014, p. 190) as part of her guidance in memo-writing in my own memo-writing to help me advance theoretical categories toward theory:

- *Define the category*
- *Explicate the properties of the category*
- *Specify the conditions under which the category arises, is maintained and changes*
- *Describe its consequences*
- *Show how this category relates to other categories*

By using this structure, I was able to refine mind maps and writings. In consequence, theoretical categories began to crystallise and become more concrete. I then, through writing, transposed these into successive drafts of results and of analysis in the subsequent chapters.

3.3.2.7 Continued scrutiny through writing and thinking.

By transposing memo writings to the Results and Analysis chapter, theories continued to develop. This was because the writing process itself is a process that crystallises thought (Charmaz, 2014). For instance, when transposing text from memo to chapter, I regularly refined points and developed theoretical categories. As Charmaz (2014, p. 224) states, “as you develop your categories, you can see which ones to treat as major concepts in your

analysis.” Indeed, through the process of writing, theoretical understandings crystallised further and new inspirations, at times, influenced the final written product. This reflects the continued analytic and interactive nature of Grounded Theory, and as a result, I continued to scrutinise my theoretical categories as I wrote.

3.3.2.8 Theoretical saturation and the forming of theory.

Classic Grounded Theory proposes that there is a point in the research process where the researcher can and should claim theoretical saturation. However, with many issues in the wider Grounded Theory literature, what theoretical saturation is and when it is reached is contentiously debated (see Charmaz, 2014, p. 213–216). Within this contentious debate, Dey (1999, p. 8) appears to clarify that theoretical saturation is reached when there is no more “emergence of new properties, categories, or relationships. Once the data no longer offer any new distinctions of conceptual import, categories could be described as saturated and no further evidence need be collected.” However, when placed within the Constructivist view that the world is in action, the point at which saturation might be reached, and the time for which saturation might be maintained, becomes confusing and even bewildering. To add another layer onto this, Wiener (2007) states that saturation is a judgement and that research is constricted by time and money. In turn, the literature on saturation in Grounded Theory was particularly unhelpful for this research project. As a further example, even Charmaz, who consistently provides coherent explanations of all matter on Grounded Theory, falls into fuzziness. She claims that, for her, saturation in a Constructivist Grounded Theory is a saturation of concepts by “definition or by claim.” However, Grounded Theory is something that is in process (Charmaz in Biggs, 2015). Charmaz also instructs other academics to “think about how your claims of saturation affect the credibility of your study. A small study with modest claims might allow proclaiming saturation early” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 214). In effect, as with much of the wider literature on Grounded Theory, it appears that there are many differing rules and many contrasting vague and definite statements. This leads to an environment where, if the researcher is to claim theoretical saturation, and thus, to have made theory, an amount of confidence is required.

It took some time for me to be able to make such a confident claim and arriving at this point was not easy. However, I claim that I did indeed make theory. I make this claim not in the way that saturation has been executed in absolute terms. However, I make the claim with the knowledge that the theories that I have made are emergent theories. They are emergent theories because they exist within the constant motion of higher education, where, for example, constructs change because society changes, belief systems change, and public policy changes. In real terms, I asked myself questions such as “Have I done enough, for now?” or “Have I exhausted this enquiry, for now?” However, to add to what was my understanding and to help me to feel confident that I had constructed theory, I took theoretical categories forward to the literature post-analysis. This allowed me to situate and advance them within the wider literature. By being able to do this with the support of others, I became confident to claim that they were indeed theories. In light of this, in the following chapters, I present five wider theories, constructed from the process of this project. These chapters respectively contain results, their analyses, and then their discussions with reference to literature for each of the major theories presented in this thesis.

3. 3. 3 Summary of Data Construction Process

In this final part, I briefly summarise the iterative data construction process, starting with the intensive interview. This interview was similar to a one-sided conversation with the participant contributing the most. Each interview started with either an open question in the nature of a conversation about “how things were going” or by asking the participant to talk about their programme and comment on their current feelings about it and their progress. Follow up questions were guided by emerging theoretical categories either from previous iterations of the research process or by theoretical interests in the interviews themselves. The second part of the process was to code analytically. This was first with line-by-line coding, used to fragment and abstract the data. These fragments were then mapped by using hand drawn mind maps on a white board. These mind maps, with the help of abductive reasoning, allowed codes to become focused. Mapped and focused codes were then moved to a digital version, using Lucid Charts and then taken to a memo. Memos were private spaces to muse and write freely about codes, emerging, and later in the process, theories. After these emerged from memo writing, they informed who the next participants might be, and hence theoretical sampling began/continued. In turn, the process started over. As the iterative process matured, memos evolved and became honed through the drafting and re-drafting process of writing. This eventually became the written theory in the final theoretical chapters. These chapters are presented next.

Outline of Following Chapters

In this chapter (Chapter 4) and the subsequent four chapters (Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8), I present the theories that I constructed through the process of this research project. I present each of these chapters in two parts. The first part is the results and analysis. I begin by presenting the final version of the coding and mind mapping, as described in the Methodology chapter, followed by an extract of student testament that particularly emphasises a sense of the theory. From that point, I delineate the theories, explaining them in full under headings and subheadings and illustrating these explanations with extracts of participant testament. Once I complete the analysis, I then bring these results to the literature for discussion. By doing this, I situate the theories within the wider literature and advance the theories. Finally, although each theory has been conceived independently, there are several instances where theories interlink. Hence, those presented first re-appear later on to assist in the articulation of subsequent theories.

Chapter 4 is the first of these chapters and is *A Sense of an Academic Self Theory*. In this chapter, I suggest that on arrival to postgraduate studies, the self is understood in terms of previous learning. I have termed this a *Sense of an Academic Self*. In this section, I discuss how this academic self can be experienced in restricted or unrestricted terms and go on to explain how this is important in the way in which learning is experienced.

Chapter 5 is the second of these and is *Trio of Actors Theory*. In this chapter, I suggest that learning situations in postgraduate studies are made up of three types of wider actors. I have called these *mindful actors*, *limited actors* and *entitled actors*. These actors may experience their learning in restricted or unrestricted terms, as described in the previous section. However, in this section, I delineate these actors and their perspectives on learning situations. In doing so, I take mindful actors first because the other two can often be seen through their eyes.

Chapter 6 is the third of these and is *Enabling Learning Theory*. Here, I outline, in the main section, how educators can be enablers of learning, and suggest how they can also fail to do this. Towards the end of this section, I also suggest how learners can be enablers of learning for others.

Chapter 7 is the fourth of these chapters and is *Coping with Uncertainty Theory*. In this chapter, I suggest that for most learners the newness of their venture into postgraduate study brings varying extents of uncertainty. In turn, I outline and delineate the ways in which learners cope. This includes relying on, as well as creating, new networks, and the “wearing of masks.”

Chapter 8 is the fifth and last of these and is *Clear Fields– Muddied Fields Theory*. In this chapter, I suggest that two wider academic learning fields (Bourdieu, 1977) are present within the field of higher education. I have called these *clear fields* and *muddied fields*. I begin this section by explaining academic learning fields in general before going on to outline and delineate the two wider fields. I then go on to suggest that those who have

experienced muddied fields may exit their postgraduate studies with a greater propensity for transformation.

Chapter 4: A Sense of An Academic Self Theory

Part 1: Results and Analysis

Selia: The first thought that I had in my head was that I am good at writing papers, so I want to say that I am good as an academic. I thought that I wasn't good at taking exams, but it seems that I am good at taking exams as well. So ... I want to say that I do consider myself as a good academic.

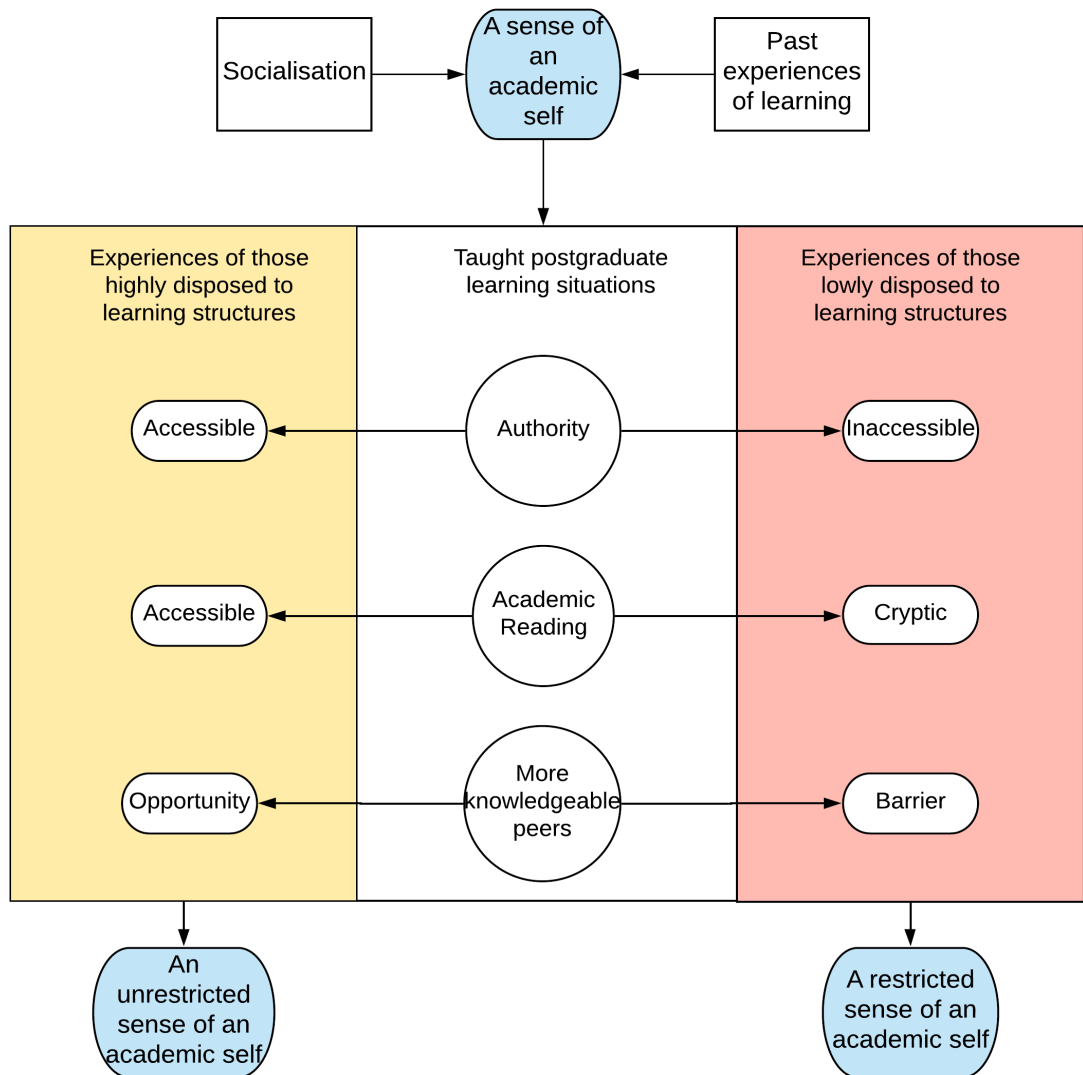


Figure 4

Figure 4 gives an overarching view of *A Sense of an Academic Self Theory* and is an evolved version of mindmaps created during the analysis process. This diagram should be read by starting at the top. Reading the diagram in this way gives an indication to the reader about how the theory will unfold in the following sections of the chapter and how Bourdieu's thinking tools of Habitus and Field, as described in the Introduction and Methodology chapters, have been used to realise the theory. In turn, this theory begins with

the socialisation and past experiences of learning of the learner. This structures a sense of an academic self before the learner enters a higher, structured by the habituses of others, which create fields which in turn structure other habituses. The structured habitus of the learner is then taken to a new field. As the diagram indicates, this is in taught postgraduate learning situations. Within these fields the learner experiences Habitus and Field in three wider ways. The first of these is authority, the second is academic reading, and the third is more knowledgeable peers. As the diagram goes on to describe, these experiences play out in two wider ways. The first of these is by those who are highly disposed to learning situations in a higher education. This leads them to experience their learning with an unrestricted sense of an academic self. The second of these is by those who are lowly disposed to learning structures in a higher education. This leads them to experience their learning with a restricted sense of an academic self. These processes, described above, are explained in detail in the sections below.

4.1 Definition and parameters.

All learners bring a sense of an academic self with them to their taught postgraduate studies. This sense of an academic self has been constructed in previously-experienced academic contexts. This means that a sense of an academic self is a deep-rooted sense of a self. Importantly, it is primarily understood and seen in academic contexts and in turn deeply influences how a learner experiences their postgraduate studies. Academic contexts, in this sense, means within the structures of institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities. Such institutions reify academic abilities by recognising certain dispositions and aptitudes positively and others negatively. They then choose certain symbols such as numbers and letters and assign meaning to them. These letters and numbers are later “awarded” to individuals in ceremonies and affirmed on bits of paper. These bits of paper are then called certificates, diplomas and degrees. Over time, these structures structure (Bourdieu, 1977), and eventually establish, a sense of an academic self.

When a sense of an academic self becomes established, its existence spreads outside of these institutions. In effect, recognition in institutionalised education leads to personal senses of academic self which may continue throughout life. For instance, some individuals may begin to recognise themselves, and are recognised by others, as academic, scholarly, and, even, clever. In turn, grades received in school, college, and university go on to play a key role in what an individual will do, and, in some cases is allowed to do with their life in adulthood. For those who have been recognised as successful, certain paths are expected and/or available, while for those seen as less successful, such paths are not. In consequence, a sense of an academic self is at the core of being an adult and is a long time in the making. Indeed, for most learners who arrive as postgraduate students, this sense of self may have spanned almost their entire lives, with postgraduate study being the final stretch of what has been a long journey.

By this time, learners have entrenched perspectives on what it means and how it is to be a "good learner." In turn, they can self-identify with a positive view on their sense of academic self. This is demonstrated in the opening quotation from Selia. In this quotation, Selia discusses herself in relation to her academic practice. In doing so she recognises herself as a good academic. Considering the advanced level of academia that postgraduate level represents, it would seem that all of those who have been granted places should self-identify in this way, and as a result, on some level, also as good learners. Indeed, they must

have been recognised as such by their respective educational backgrounds to have come this far. However, in the same breath, it also seems impossible that such diverse cohorts of learners, most of whom have been internationally recruited, could have the same dispositions, aptitudes, and abilities. More specifically, although all structures of education structure understandings of an academic self in a learner, they have not necessarily rewarded the same actions in the same ways. In consequence, what it means to be a “good learner” in the contexts that students are familiar with, or becoming familiar with, is not necessarily understood in a uniform fashion. Indeed, many learners who begin their postgraduate studies, identifying with senses of academic selves which reflect images of the good learner back at them, become quickly uneasy about this status.

4.2 A restricted sense of an academic self.

4.2.1 Overview of theoretical components.

Ying: When I start to write an essay, most my logic on the theory is based on my undergraduate knowledge, and I found some literature and theory based on the thing that I already know and explain it in English.

For many, reflections of the good student quickly fall away as they advance through their postgraduate studies. What were once successful strategies for gaining positive recognition from institutional structures misfire. For instance, tried and tested strategies of passively absorbing information and reproducing it, once applauded, are now rejected and even frowned upon. What were once ways of successfully experiencing learning until this point become restrictive to the learning experience. What were once useful maps and navigational apparatus to endure the educational journey now appear inadequate and even as antiquated relics, mostly redundant to what is required of the learning experience. However, the journey has already started and turning back seems an impossible choice. In turn, those with restricted senses of academic selves are forced to continue with what is at hand, as described by Ying above.

Indeed, postgraduate study casts a harsh light on many of those who have experienced previous learning through restrictive models of education. Restrictive models of education are most likely concerned with the banking of knowledge. In turn, proving that sufficient amounts of said knowledge have been banked matters and whoever can bank the most knowledge equates to a good student. In consequence, those who have experienced learning in these terms have developed restricted senses of academic selves. Those who have restricted senses of academic selves will face a number of struggles during taught postgraduate study in the UK. This is because the banking and reproduction of knowledge is met with apathy and at best mediocre grades, while passivity is met with criticism and even rebuke.

The harsh light that postgraduate study casts also reveals that there are many other physically real actors that must be considered and negotiated around in the higher education experience in three ways. Firstly, in direct physical form, these actors are the other learners and members of academic staff in learning situations. Secondly, in a more distant physical form, there are also the actors who exist through the form of text: those who have written and published texts which learners become an audience for and must

have a stance on. And, thirdly, there are also listening and reading actors who exist as an audience to spoken and written text produced by the learner. However, in restrictive forms of learning, the actions of other actors are superfluous. Only pleasing an authority matters.

4.2.2 Views of authority.

Deeply socialised understandings of how the self should engage with authority matter to how learners experience higher education at postgraduate level. For some, antidialogic relationships and lower positions in hierarchies are deeply entrenched ways of experiencing the world. In turn, these ways of experiencing the world then become obstacles to learning. Kip describes this in terms of his relationship with teachers when learning in his home country of Thailand.

Kip: I think that everywhere in the world there are things like that. But it's not the same as the hierarchy that we talk about in Thailand, but it is different kind of... You have to understand the context and the situations that you are coping with. When I was in Thailand, we aren't allowed to talk that much in the class, and the teachers have more power than the students.

As Kip outlines, relationships that structure the self in an academic context are symptomatic of a wider narrative. For instance, he also went on to describe the relationship that ordinary Thai people have with authority. In doing so, he compares them to his British counterparts.

Kip: For example, in my halls, I have British flatmates, and they always talk about the Queen or the royal family, and it's quite comfortable to talk. But in Thailand, we cannot talk about this stuff. You have to keep silent, all the time, you have to keep quiet. I dunno why. We cannot criticise the royals... It affects me like less than other Thai people, but it also is something that affects me. And, I don't feel confident enough to criticise a big name. If someone is the professor in a subject or something like that, and I have to criticise their work, I will feel a bit nervous about my thoughts and if they are good enough. And, I really struggle[d] with the first half of this year of my study.

For those who have never been seen by their own culture, or thus by themselves, as worthy of a voice, criticising authority is unthinkable. Furthermore, for those from authoritarian cultures, criticism of authority is highly inadvisable. Indeed, Kip admits to feeling nervous even in thought. Being nervous even in thought is quite a window of insight into the minds of those who have been socialised and structured in such environments. In consequence, feeling nervous, even in thought, is a difficult starting point from which to challenge an individual perceived as an authority. In fact, those disposed to harmony and peacekeeping find challenges to authority and the order of things culturally disruptive.

Xu: Ok so feminism is quite controversial in China because we have a male translation of this word, and it is womanism and another is about the empowerment of women. They are quite different. The difference is the practical power... the

second one is about how we need to enhance women's power and the first one we Chinese think is more neutral. Like what my family think is "crazy feminists" want the empowerment of women. We try to use more neutral language to show that we are a rational beings. We are not going to rush out onto the streets and do some crazy things, we want our society to be normal, and we want to be objective... We respect the scientific rational things. We honour the rational things, and it is very important. If you be too emotional, it's like you are not scientific and nobody listens to you.

Xu's experience of learning was akin to being caught between two worlds. By the nature of her main programme in Women's Studies, she was expected to challenge power structures. However, her instincts, structured from her socialisation, demanded that she keep harmony as much as possible. In turn, Xu experienced habitus and field clashes in both cultural directions. In consequence, her understandings of her academic self became restricted. Further, her testament describes the quandary in which she often found herself, which led to a downward spiral.

Xu: I think that they [UK students] are very smart.... I shouldn't say this, but I had a difficult time talking with them. They are all friendly, but we don't share common interests. For example, Emma Watson from Harry Potter. Chinese people love her a lot. We had a party, and I had a party with my classmates to support each other, and they are quite critical of her feminist stance... Like so I didn't feel that I am quite involved in this conversation. And the British election they will post some things like vote for labour and don't upset our country. And Chinese people are apolitical so... I don't know how to get involved in this movement. I don't know the difference between Conservatives and Labour... So, we can't talk... I want to talk deeply with them, but we only talk about the weather and food... and I want to talk deeply, but I don't want to show that I'm the idiot of everything, even after I've been living there for a while, so I try to avoid difficult topics.

4.2.3 Views of academic reading.

For those who only ever experienced prescriptive banking forms of education, academic reading poses a huge obstruction to their learning experience. Texts in banking forms of education require learners to read closed passages, comprehend text, and reproduce main ideas. In most cases, full understandings of texts are desired, and the fuller the understanding of the text, the greater the award given by the authority. However, academic reading in the context of postgraduate study in the UK requires the learner to read the text extensively rather than intensively. In other words, learners should scan texts, finding the main argument, take a stance on it, and read as much of it as is appropriate to the reader's needs. Although this practice is normalised in many of the academic lives of those in learning and teaching contexts in the UK, for those from banking forms of education, this further restricts their sense of an academic self. For instance, reading skills that had been used in the past to extrapolate information that provides the "right answers" become inadequate because they are neither given nor recognised. This is all compounded because intensive periods of reading absorb large amounts of time. Furthermore, varying styles, genres, audiences, and writing proficiencies structure a quandary for reading. In turn, reading becomes an affair wracked with anxiety; full and complete understandings of texts

become an insurmountable task; and further understanding is limited. Such an experience can be found in Ying's account of her experience while studying a module in Sociology.

Ying: At first, I don't know how to prepare in my programme, I don't know how to read or understand the literature or the information that the professor gave to me. I don't know how to study this materials, how to study, so that's the problem why I can't understand what is being said. In term 2, I start to work hard but sometimes even when I read the papers very very carefully, I still can't understand the whole thing sometimes. I discuss with my Chinese friends and they have the same experience with me, and sometimes when we read a paper we even... It's like... I know the title, I know the introduction... I should know what the paper said. But when we finish reading the paper, it's hard to understand what are they talking about. And erm, I never think about to ask for help from my... The local students. I felt that it's my problem.

Ying's battle with the academic reading further restricts her sense of an academic self. She identifies problems that need to be addressed; however, she is only able to confide in other Chinese learners in her programme, who are, it would seem, experiencing the exact same phenomenon that she is.

Xu: Because when we have a seminar in class and everyone has new ideas... I can't find my voice. And when I read new articles, I was too involved in the article. Cause when I read the article I think "wow it couldn't be better than this" but then someone else will say "it didn't look at other experience, it's Eurocentric" and I think wow yes that's amazing. It's like we discussed the "Cyborg" by Haraway. It's difficult, and I didn't know one of the British women said but its whiteness is quite... it didn't look at black women's experience. I didn't find this point, I just thought that it's quite difficult... I get too involved I think.

Feelings of becoming too involved with the academic reading are not uncommon for those with restricted senses of academic selves. This is not a surprise. The literature that makes up academic reading is by its nature a huge hall of echoing voices and standpoints. It is a complex maze of thoughts and assertions, where texts are often written with surety and authority, and those texts are not written with the learner in mind as the intended audience. In turn, to not have a firm anchorage in one's own self is to become lost within the literature.

4.2.4 Views of more knowledgeable peers.

The idea that more knowledgeable peers will, as a rule of thumb, pull those up behind them is not always accurate. For those who have come from banking models of education, and thus from cultures where listening, absorbing, and reproducing later is rewarded, entering seminars with what appears to be more knowledgeable peers, in an area of study that is unfamiliar, is a difficult beginning to a postgraduate career.

Xu: And in the first seminar, we talk about some feminist theory and my classmates talked about some post-structuralist and some postmodernism and New Liberal British theory and I was totally shocked, as I knew nothing about any of this. And... so at the end of the seminar our prof asked us "What else did you want to ask me?" and everyone put up very interesting questions... and what I asked is "what is Neoliberalism" because I wasn't into this, and she said Neoliberalism is equalled to New Individualism and it's about economic and liberal things and yeah... And at that time, I thought I should read some more. Because for my classmates, these kind of things are taken for granted but for me it's not. I hadn't heard of this sort of thing before.

In fact, those who experience learning in this way at the outset, struggle to catch up with the rest of the class. In turn, perceptions that some peers are more knowledgeable are created. In consequence, those peers who are perceived as more knowledgeable can actually become a barrier to learning and a factor in further restricting a sense of academic self. Taking Ying's account as an illustration of this, her shared learning space with those who she viewed as more able and knowledgeable than her in learning situations left her feeling demoralised, slow, and inadequate. In turn, repeated similar experiences consolidated these impressions of her restructuring academic self.

Ying: I can't follow them. They just go too fast, you know... And so maybe a few times, we don't want to interrupt each other. Sometimes, I try actually, I asked my classmates, asked her about "What's the point in a paper?" and she circled some points I never noticed before, so... It's totally different I think... I just noticed some points that I just circle it, and it's different with their points, so I think, it's a little bit like... It's a little bit sad because I can't follow and they have... It's my ability is not very well in the programme.

The negative views that those with restricted academic selves begin to feel can be confirmed by wider institutional structures. For example, widely accepted ways of interacting in learning situations can puzzle those who are not disposed to them. Furthermore, assessment structures reward some for their work while not others.

Ying: Because they can answer every question like the professional... Yes... They can answer the questions professional... talking about... They can analyse the questions in a very deep, very socially [unclear] way... They have higher mark... Like 80% but in the group most Chinese students, like my group, only got 30%, so that's the reason why I think they know more.

As a restricted learner's ways of being and ways of doing consistently yield little return in learning situations, those with restricted senses of academic selves reify their self-understandings. In turn, these learners begin to have more general understandings of themselves in relation, taking those who experience their learning in unrestricted terms as a constant point of reference.

Xu: They know more than me. Because when we have a seminar in class and everyone has new ideas... I can't find my voice [...] I want to talk deeply but I don't want to show that I'm the idiot of everything.

Here, Xu appears to have constructed a new understanding of her academic self, one which is severely restricted, one which is voiceless.

4.3 An unrestricted sense of an academic self.

4.3.1 Overview of theoretical components.

Not all students who arrive at postgraduate study have restricted senses of academic selves. In fact, many of them experience their studies with unrestricted selves. The experiences of those with restricted and unrestricted senses of academic selves are quite different. Where the former struggle to gain positive recognition for their efforts, the latter find that theirs are well received. Those with unrestricted senses of academic selves find that their successful ways of being and doing in learning situations from past learning situations can be reapplied with similar success in their new learning context.

Indeed, those with unrestricted senses of academic selves are those who have been structured by educational systems that have embraced a more critical pedagogy. This means that they are comfortable with dialogue, to problem-posing, and to creating rather than merely reproducing. This might not have come completely or directly from their institutional models of education. In fact, this may be from an amount of time in employment or from more life experience, where problem solving has played a bigger role in daily life. In turn, unrestricted learners are likely to have arrived out of models of education that have followed along the lines of a critical pedagogy or to be more mature students. Both of these structures structure expansive ways of thinking. They engender a self that is used to acknowledging and being acknowledged by the others in learning situations. Importantly, these others are viewed in an egalitarian sense, where, in authoritative structures, the students are viewed more as a respected servant than a master.

4.3.2 Views of authority.

Those with unrestricted senses of academic selves see authority as accessible. For these learners, their unrestricted senses of academic selves become apparent in their ability to speak truth to power. In fact, many of these learners are willing and able to become authority figures themselves by being a voice for others. Jelena describes in detail an experience of dissatisfaction during her programme of study. Viewing herself as a hard worker, she felt upset after failing an exam.

Jelena: I was the course rep, and I got complaints, and I got really upset about it. I prepared myself for that exam, and I felt prepared when I went into it... so yeah. I felt quite motivated to do it, and they listened eventually because I said that I would write a complaint to someone, and they said they would take it forward. But it's just... it kind of increased the feeling of being part of a university in a way.

By experiencing their studies in unrestricted terms, these learners reify these understandings of themselves by achieving positive outcomes when challenging power structures. However, these achievements cannot be won without seeing the need for a challenge in the first instance. An example of this can be seen in the testament of Sara.

Sara: I think that the only problems that I had in the programme, and I think that this is specific to our programme, the readings in terms of the kind of theorists that we are reading for... Especially in the first term, were Eurocentric. So that was one thing that we brought to the department. The students brought it to the department that we actually wanted more diversity in the readings, and we thought that it would add to the quality of the programme. We've always had these suggestions about ways to move forward with the programme because we can see that in terms of the academic theories that were presented to us and the theories and the readings and theorists that we had to engage with were not... to be very explicit, they were not engaging with global south theorists as much, and we brought this as an issue to the department.

Sara and Jelena's experiences of their postgraduate studies were greatly improved from the perspectives and abilities allowed by their unrestricted selves. However, where learners are able to see aspects of the academic worlds which they feel able to put right, other aspects are often irreconcilable. Such situations can lead to transformed views of departments and institutions, as experienced by Thomas.

Thomas: Yeah to be honest, I came here, and I feel that here it is all about money. I've lived in Germany, in Spain, and now here and, if I compare it, I feel that it is all about the money rather than the education itself. That is from my personal perspective. It kind of makes you a bit 'meh.' It's not familiar, the whole living situation, like it just feels like they [students from China] are someone they get money from [...] I had quite a lot of discussions about that with my German colleague in the department. What I feel is that they try to fit the course to the Chinese people. So sometimes in the exams, they could just learn it by heart and pass the exam. It's a win-win situation because the Chinese will come, and they get their money, and they get their degree. So from my perspective, I wonder about the education itself and the quality of the learning experience.

Indeed, unrestricted academic selves are able to question much of the environment and structures around them. In Thomas's case, questioning motives and politics led to a transformed and noticeably new perspective on higher education in the UK. In a similar way, but in purely academic terms, Selia questioned what it meant to be critical.

Selia: Like everyone said that I should be critical of someone else's work with someone else's work, and it seems that I have to be critical with the face of someone else. So, I'm not criticising someone as Selia, I'm criticizing someone as Rousseau... or as anyone... I'm criticising someone as someone else and that is hypocritical in a way.

For Selia, by being critical, in terms demanded by authority, she was also being duplicitous.

4.3.3 Views of academic reading.

Those with unrestricted senses of academic selves find academic reading accessible. Accessible does not equate to easy. In fact, for many, academic reading is a challenge. This is illustrated by Sara as she reflected on her experiences of dealing with complex theory.

Sara: I engage with theories around gender, I read Judith Butler and I think “How does that help me with gender-based violence?” You know, sometimes it was difficult to navigate.

Sara’s admission that academic reading is sometimes difficult to navigate is partly due to her wide view that takes into account the real world. Her experience as a person in society and the workplace means that she is always aware of this on some level. However, her sense of academic self allows her to take stock of her situation, and in turn, she can adapt her academic practice.

Sara: I guess yeah there is a shift, and I am enjoying the intellectual side... and enjoy reading a lot more about Sociology and Feminist Theory.

Indeed, an unrestricted sense of an academic self allows an access point to begin academic reading because it allows the learner to identify with an academic position on a matter. By being able to do this, the student has a reason for reading that meets postgraduate expectations of reading. In consequence, they place themselves in an advantageous position when compared to learners with restricted senses of academic selves who obsess over having full understandings of texts for the sake of reproduction.

4.3.4 Views of more knowledgeable peers.

For those with unrestricted senses of academic selves, the view of others in their learning situations who know more are opportunities to learn. This is described by Emilie. At the age of thirty seven, Emilie was trying to transition between careers after being made redundant. She wanted to move into the field of human resource management of which she had limited knowledge. Despite this, she was able to engage fully with those that she viewed as more advanced than her.

Emilie: For me it all depends on who you work in a group with. For example, there were one woman in my group and she had at least 10 years experience in HR, and of course, I could learn a lot from working in her group.

In such a case, for unrestricted actors in the learning situation, a constructivist teaching approach, aimed at learning in groups where more knowledgeable peers pull less knowledgeable ones up behind them, can be particularly fruitful. In direct comparison with

their restricted counterparts, it is clear that the success of such learning situations is dependent on the presence of unrestricted actors.

Part 2: Discussion

4.4.1 Overview of section.

In this section, I situate within the wider literature the fresh theory that I named a *Sense of an Academic Self* in the previous part of this chapter. In terms of layout, in this section, I first situate the overall theory a Sense of an Academic Self with its two major arms: a Restricted Sense of an Academic Self and an Unrestricted Sense of an Academic Self within the education and sociology literature. Following this, I then advance the components presented in the Results and Analysis section: Views of Authority; Views of the Reading; and Views of More Knowledgeable Others. Different from the Results and Analysis, where restricted and unrestricted senses of academic selves were clearly separated, I here combine them. In turn, I compare these components, and, with the help of the literature, advance them as grounded theories. After this, and as a result of taking theoretical categories to the literature, I present two new additions. This first of this is Disrupting Social Constructivist Learning Approaches to Group Work, and the second is a Transforming Sense of an Academic Self

4.4.2 A sense of an academic self.

4.4.2.1 A sense of self in fundamental educational theory.

In this research project, I identified learners as having a sense of an academic self. A sense of an academic self is constructed in previously-experienced academic contexts. In turn, a sense of an academic self is a deep-rooted sense of a self, which is primarily understood and seen in academic contexts. Consequently, it deeply influences how a learner experiences their postgraduate studies. A sense of an academic self does not appear in the literature directly. However, *a sense of self* appears in the sociological and education literature on many occasions and is foundational to how modern education and pedagogy is understood. For instance, this can be seen with George Herbert Mead's (1934) *Mind, Self and Society*, with Lev Vygotsky's (1930) *Mind in Society*, or with Erik Erikson's (1950, 1968) *Childhood and Society* and *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. In these texts, a sense of self pervades all parts of what it means to be a learner because, as Jarvis (2005, 2009) tells us about adult learners, adult learners are learners who are not abstracted from societies but persons within societies. These persons, when in a learning context recognise themselves as learners. In turn, they are able to perform the role of the learner. Such a performance is mentioned in the higher education literature as the *performing self* (Macfarlane, 2015; Macfarlane and Gourlay, 2009). In discussing the performing self, Macfarlane draws on Skeggs' (2009) analysis of a *bodily performance*, which is carried out through attending class, a *dispositional performance*, which is a willingness to participate in learning situations, and an *emotional performance* which is related to social practices and values. In turn, by performing the role of a learner, a learner realises a sense of an academic self.

4.4.2.2 *Sense of academic selves: echoes and aspects within the wider literature.*

The term ‘a sense of an academic self’ does not seem to appear directly in the wider literature, and I therefore claim that it is an important contribution to the literature on postgraduate learning in higher education. Within the educational literature, however, some echoes and aspects of this theory can be found. For instance, in the higher education literature, Mann (2001) offers several perspectives on alienation. In doing so, she suggests an explanation that echoes that of restricted and unrestricted senses of academic selves, stating that learners may experience learning in either engaged or alienated terms. Outside of higher education, an academic self-concept appears in the educational psychology literature for children on several occasions (Bong and Skaalvik, 2003; Byrne, 1996; Marsh, 1987, 1993; Marsh and Byrne, 1988; Marsh, Trautwei, Lüdtke, Köller, and Baumert, 2005; Marsh, 2014). In this literature, there is an overarching understanding that those who perceive themselves as more effective, confident, and able will be able to accomplish more than those who have less positive self-beliefs. Academic self-concept, then, is to a great extent about self-efficacy. In turn, a sense of an academic self-efficacy appears in the literature, which, according to Bong (1997), Bong and Clark (1999), and Zimmerman (1995), is when students gauge their confidence for success on their past experiences of encounters with the same or similar tasks. Senses of academic self-concept and self-efficacy, then, are similar to a sense of an academic self which was constructed from this research project, where past experiences of learning play a particularly important role in how academic selves are performed in learning situations.

Of course, a sense of an academic self is much more complex. This is because it is not only about confidence. To be specific, the main part of this is the deep-rooted nature of a sense of an academic self that has become so knotted and tangled through, and after, the highly influential structuring periods of formal education and past experiences of learning. The other main part is the complication which is becoming an adult (Dirkx, 1998; Illeris, 2003; Jarvis, 2005, 2009; Merriam, 2001; Mezirow, 2000, 2003). These circumstances are Bourdieusian in nature (Bourdieu, 1977, 1980; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989), where structures structure habituses that allow academic selves to understand “the rules of the game” in certain learning fields. In turn, these constructed academic selves that have been produced from formal education are then brought to new learning situations as an adult enters higher education. As adult learners enter these new learning situations, they then use these dispositions to navigate new learning situations. The success of these dispositions determines whether or not learners experience their academic selves in restricted or unrestricted terms. For the unrestricted academic self, there is an experience of learning that has a habitus and field match. However, for the restricted learner a habitus and field clash is experienced.

Thus, as well as having a deep-rooted nature, a sense of an academic self and whether it is realised as restricted or unrestricted, is also about the interconnectedness of learning. Such interconnectedness is further stated in the literature and widely accepted as a standard part of how people learn. For example, Erikson, one of the only early theorists to include adults in his developmental theories, stated that “life does not make any sense without interdependence” (In Evans, 1967, p. 51). However, interdependence is also the cornerstone of Piagetian *Constructivism* and *Discovery Learning* (Cook and Piaget, 1952; Piaget 1955, 1968) and Vygotskian *Social Constructivism*, two scholars who have been particularly influential in the structuring of pedagogy in Europe and North America

(Bresler et al., 2001; Brown et al., 1996; Mercer et al., 1999) and also later developments of theories such as the *Zone of Proximal Development* and *Scaffolding* (Bruner, 1978; Wertsch, 1985; Wood et al., 1976). All of these theories involve the shaping of an academic self with others and clearly support the construction of this theory.

4.4.2.3 Reinforcing the theory of a sense of an academic self with critical pedagogy.

What differs about the theory presented from this research to what can be found in the literature is that it has two main components. These are A Restricted Sense of an Academic Self and an Unrestricted Sense of an Academic Self. Restricted and unrestricted senses of academic selves act as vital points of reference for understanding the experience of learning in a postgraduate programme in higher education. As the previous section explains, it is most likely that those who find themselves with a restricted sense of an academic self are experiencing this self as a new and unsettling reality. For such learners, formerly successful strategies for gaining positive recognition from institutional structures misfire. For instance, tried and tested strategies of passively absorbing information and reproducing it, which were once celebrated, are now rejected and ineffective. In turn, what was once learning in unrestricted terms is now quite different. This chimes directly with Freire's (1993) Critical Pedagogy and specifically to his theory of the Banking of Knowledge, where those who bank the most are those who are recognised as good students. On the other hand, many students arrive at postgraduate study with unrestricted senses of academic selves. The experiences of those with restricted and unrestricted senses of academic selves are quite different. This, again, chimes directly with Freire's Critical Pedagogy and specifically to his theory of Problem-posing education, where learners are comfortable with dialogue, to problem-solving, and to creating rather than merely reproducing. For them, pleasing "a teacher" holds far less importance. In sum, Freire's Critical Pedagogy reinforces the theory presented here that learners experience their learning in either restricted or unrestricted terms.

4.4.3 The terms in which those with restricted and unrestricted senses of academic selves see authority, reading, and more knowledgeable peers.

4.4.3.1 Views of authority.

As mentioned above, theoretical components of restricted and unrestricted academic selves from this research project match neatly into Freire's (1993) theory of Critical Pedagogy. With the help of this lens, a clear divide between learners with unrestricted senses of academic selves, who view authority as accessible and 'dialogicable' in relation to those with restricted senses, who viewed authority as inaccessible and "undialogicable," could be seen. Overt examples of this from the data were from Jelena and Sara, who both engaged in community action by taking leadership roles within their cohorts and used that platform of leadership to challenge power structures. For instance, Jelena posed pointed questions to programme leaders and those above them, while Sara critically considered the political contexts in which her and her classmates studied, and with others, made positive change happen. In contrast to this, Xu and Ying often struggled to navigate difficulties in their studies due to their respective restricted academic selves when their needs clashed with the structures of authority.

An overt explanation emerged from the data which sheds some light on these phenomena. This was through the experiences of Kip, who talked at length about hierarchy. Kip's testament concerning his experiences of being a student from Thailand in a UK university reveal that views of authority in terms of hierarchical structures can restrict the academic selves of certain learners. For him, hierarchy was interwoven into "being Thai." In turn, by taking his personal account and viewing it through the lens of this theory, the structuring from his national culture had led him to experiencing a field-habitus clash in his experiences of learning in the UK and led him to experience learning with a restricted sense of academic self.

The literature in higher education offers little insight into this matter. A rare example are practitioners Bodycott and Walker (2000), who reflected on their experiences of teaching in higher education in Hong Kong. For them, hierarchy proved to be a central theme that shaped their experiences of teaching and learning. They state clearly that the issue, and its relationship to the concept of face were a vital factor in reticence from students to engage and challenge in the both writing and in learning situations. Specifically, they suggest that the issue presented a no-win situation because those placed at the lower ends of the hierarchy should not challenge those above them, while those at the higher end should not be seen to have the 'wrong' answers in front of those beneath them. These reflections are supported by Tan (2017), who explored the cultural challenges of teaching critical thinking skills in schools in Singapore. She claims that the participants in her study had the desire to maintain social harmony and hierarchy, as well as provide a safe and collaborative learning environment for students. In the study, she found that these main cultural challenges were the social expectations of teachers as the source and transmitter of knowledge, as well as a perception that "critical thinking is essentially adversarial" (p. 988). Tan draws on an amount of literature that suggests that approaches to critical thinking that are interpreted and viewed as aggressive and thus disturbing harmony as shunned by many "Asian" cultures (Fox, 1996; Littlewood, 1999; McGuire, 2007; Nguyen, Terlouw and Pilot, 2006; Tan, 2006, 2017). Although the notion of Asian culture is an absurdly broad net, the issue of harmony echoes the concerns of Xu and the disruption that her transformation into a critically thinking feminist could bring to her home culture on return. It would seem, then, that learners with restricted senses of academic selves self-censor because of views of authority, choosing silence over voice.

Importantly, the matter of hierarchy should not be naively dismissed by those who might stereotype by drawing national lines and pointing to "Asian" cultures (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991; Bond, 1992; Bradley and Bradley, 1984; Carson and Nelson, 1996; Cross and Hitchcock, 2007; Domboka, 2018; Fielding, 1997; Salili, 1996; Samuelowicz, 1987). The phenomenon of self-censorship due to hierarchy in groups has been noticed in the North American Management and Organizational Studies literature. For instance, Detert and Edmondson (2011, p. 484) suggest that "enabling individuals to speak up to those in power is inherently challenging, given the presumed risk-reward asymmetry that favors silence." Indeed, matters of hierarchy and the silence that it can inflict are central to management structures. In turn, the surrounding literature expresses concerns of the damage that can be done to collegiality, where employees choose silence over voice (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003) due to fear (Ryan and Oestrich, 1998). It would appear, then, that restricted senses of selves that lead to self-censoring are experienced in other fields, and, in this case, in the world of employment, which is so very closely linked to the soon-to-be graduates of this study. And indeed, speaking up and out about hierarchy

is a difficult matter for many individuals. In light of this, Kip's testament, made possible by this research project, is extremely valuable because it is rare to hear experiences of hierarchy, described first hand in such frank and open terms in the literature.

4.4.3.2 Views of academic reading.

4.4.3.2.1 Wider literature.

It is clear from the data presented in this study that academic reading is a challenging factor in the lived experiences of learning in a postgraduate programme. For all, a major part of this challenge is the workload that students at a master's level have to undertake, and this is mentioned in the literature (Chambers, 1992; Liu, 2015; Mann, 2000; Mendlesohn, 2002). However, workload is merely a basic component of the complex experience that is structured from academic reading demands. At first view, the literature appears to offer a significant amount of material to inform academic reading. However, when reviewed, using a sense of an academic self as a lens, this literature becomes inadequate.

These inadequacies lie in the fact that it almost entirely focuses on the difficulties faced by learners who would be identified by this research as those having restricted senses of academic selves. Part of this is born out of the English language testing industry (Chen, 2009; Dreyer and Nel, 2003; Golkar and Yamini, 2007; Guo and Roehrig, 2011; Hagtvet, 2003; Koda, 2007; Lau and Chan, 2007; Nergis, 2013; Shiotsu and Weir, 2007; Weigle, Yang and Montee, 2013; Zhang and Seepho, 2013), which fosters learners to become restricted through endless testing, memorising, and focus on comprehension. To some extent, this is unsurprising considering the importance of English language testing systems to many learners' entry into university. In turn, it offers an amount of an explanation for banking models of learning that act as structuring forces behind those who experience learning in restricted terms as they go through these systems in preparation for postgraduate study.

The other part of this is that the literature regularly attributes difficulties in academic reading to "international," "Asian," or "Chinese" learners. Indeed, the literature tends to conflate experiences that leads to stereotyping (Guo, 2006; Phakiti and Li, 2011; Zhao, 2005). Making broad generalisations that such learners may have for a long time been learning to read carefully to understand everything (Cheng, 2008) is, as Liu (2015, p. 1) states, part of why these students face "a gap between what they have brought with them from their home country and what they are expected to achieve in the UK [which] constantly generates tensions and conflicts in their academic reading, which greatly inhibit the reading transition during their master's study." Of course, with all stereotyping there is some truth. However, the theory presented here, a sense of an academic self either as restricted or unrestricted, helps to avoid such stereotyping and gives a much more accurate and fairer view of learners by allowing a view without national and cultural lines.

Indeed, unrestricted and restricted students face different challenges while reading. In fact, these two groups view reading from quite different vantage points, and, in turn, they also experience its challenges differently. Again, to help understand this complexity, Freire's (1993) Critical Pedagogy is helpful. Indeed, those with restricted and unrestricted senses of

academic selves experienced reading in these terms. It is in the nature of authoring texts that authors may well see themselves, and be seen by readers, as authorities on a matter. Specifically, those with restricted senses of academic selves view reading and the authors involved as transmitting absolute truth that should be banked when possible. Such restricted actors struggled to access the knowledge from readings and understand in complete terms; they instead experienced it as a torment because it was inaccessible, cryptic, and a constant barrier to learning. The comprehension of this habitus-field mismatch came as a heavy burden.

However, for those with unrestricted senses of academic selves, the challenges of academic reading manifested in different ways. Those with an unrestricted sense of an academic self approach reading with a number of strategies. For example, this may be by reading to learn (Grabe, 2009), or by grappling with how to relate reading to writing and form critical argument (Godfrey, 2013; Ramage, Bean and Johnson, 2016). However, the academic discussion in the literature is mostly dated (Ackerman, 1991; Kennedy, 1985; McGinley, 1992; Shanahan and Lomax, 1986). In fact, despite the importance of academic reading to being a student in an academy of thinkers, little is mentioned about the experience of learning, especially for those with unrestricted senses of academic selves. A rare paper on this (Mann, 2000) grapples with such complexity. For instance, Mann identifies students who are readers as those “who see learning as constructing new knowledge will maintain the contract with the author to understand, whereas those with a conception of learning as memorising will replace this contract with the focus on remembering rather than understanding” (p. 299). This speaks directly to the new theory presented in this thesis.

4.4.3.3 Views of others as more knowledgeable peers.

From this research data, it is clear that others play a significant role in the learning experiences of adults in higher education. Of course, with any group of learners, there will always be different levels of knowledge amongst others. In this research, how this was viewed by a learner depended on their sense of an academic self. For those who were restricted, it was viewed negatively at times and at other times with awe. Either view led to silence and a barrier to them. However, for those with unrestricted senses of academic selves, more knowledgeable peers were seen as an opportunity to learn and gain. This component of theory appears to be a new introduction to the higher education literature. Even the wider literature offers little to develop this theory further. The issue of more knowledgeable peers does come up in educational psychology literature discussing children. According to Bong and Skaalvik (2003, p. 15) “students [children] judge themselves less capable in the environment with highly able students and more capable in the environment with less able peers. Marsh termed this social comparison effect on self-concept the big-fish-little-pond effect.” The phenomenon, then, in part has been seen to exist in classrooms with children and, according to the results of this project, is evidently brought into adult learning.

4.4.4 Disrupting social constructivist learning approaches to group work.

To develop the theory of a sense of an academic self further, I suggest that a new view of social constructivist learning approach to group work can be seen. By constructivist approaches, I mean pedagogies and interventions that are grounded in Piagetian (1968) and

Vygotskian (1978) ideals of a group discovering together or the more advanced learner guiding the less advanced learners and learning themselves in turn. For such group work to run smoothly, senses of academic selves that are unrestricted are absolutely necessary. A total group of such learners will lead to collegiality. However, the introduction of those who have restricted senses of academic selves disrupts this idealism. Taking hierarchy again as a prime example of this. The restrictions of hierarchy that those with restricted senses of academic selves feel make Piagetian and Vygotskian approaches to teaching and learning, at best, difficult. In consequence, to merely arrive to a learning situation as a practitioner in higher education expecting to proceed with teaching practice in such ways, can now, through the lens of this theory, be seen as bad practice.

Indeed, there is evidence in the literature to support the idea that teaching practice has gone badly. Much of this literature is mentioned by Elliot and Reynolds (2014), who discuss the issue of participative learning approaches within the context of international cohorts at postgraduate level. For instance, there is mention of the difficulties in group work in higher education learning situations (Ridley, 2004). There is also mention of how shifts in pedagogy can be problematic and anxiety causing to learners (Currie, 2007). Similarly, difficulties in teaching practice have been described as “learning shock” on behalf of the learner by Gabriel and Griffiths (2008). That some learners are restricted by the proficiency of their second language is also recognised (Ledwith and Seymour, 2001). Elliot and Reynolds also highlight critical proposals to improve constructivist group work, such as by Valiente (2008), that suggest an intercultural communication provision to help bridge an obvious cultural divide in understandings of how pedagogy should be delivered. This seems particularly important considering the claims of Ledwith and Seymour (2001), Haigh (2002), and Baker and Clark (2010) which all suggest that these issues are exacerbated by educators who have not taught outside of the cultural and educational contexts they are familiar with and within which they themselves have been educated. In consequence, from situating the theory of a sense of an academic self within higher education literature, it is now clear that universalist understandings of constructivist approaches to learning through group work being appropriate in all learning situations is overly simplistic and ineffective to higher education cohorts.

4.4.5 A transforming sense of an academic self.

In developing the theory of a sense of an academic self further, I claim that the sense of an academic self is, in some cases, transforming. The sense of an academic self is transforming as the learner becomes re-disposed to ways of being during learning. There is support for this claim in the literature. For instance, Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000) conducted a longitudinal research project which focused on the transformations of what they call young people’s dispositions. They conducted 289 semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students, who were interviewed on 5 occasions over a 3-year period. Participants were asked about “events and experiences which they felt had had some bearing upon their learning, and about any aspirations they had” (p. 586). From the study, the authors argue several points based on transformation. Firstly, they argue that transformations in learning take a number of forms and are not “predetermined, although they are oriented by the habitus of the individual and by the material and cultural contexts within which the habitus has developed and the person is located” (p. 591). Secondly, because of transformation, they argue that a longitudinal perspective matters to understanding how students learn. Thirdly, they state that, therefore, learning that is

modelled “even implicitly, around notions of fixed personal styles, traits or schemata” quickly becomes defunct because transformations are complicated. Hence, the nature and time needed for a transforming sense of an academic self raises serious questions for how those in one year taught postgraduate programmes experience learning. For undergraduates, such complications may have ample time to unfold because learners have three to four years to grapple with a transforming self, and because they travel along learning paths which are fluid, situational, and existing as complex interrelationships (Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell and McCune, 2008; Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2000). However, and as found in this study, for postgraduate learners in taught programmes, potentially complex transformations must be navigated in much shorter periods of time.

Chapter 5: A Trio of Actors Theory

Part 1: Results and Analysis

Jelena: It was quite interesting to see because I didn't know that there would be kind of I dunno... The quiet in classes, but I know that it is a cultural thing as well. They don't really want to go for it because it is rude.

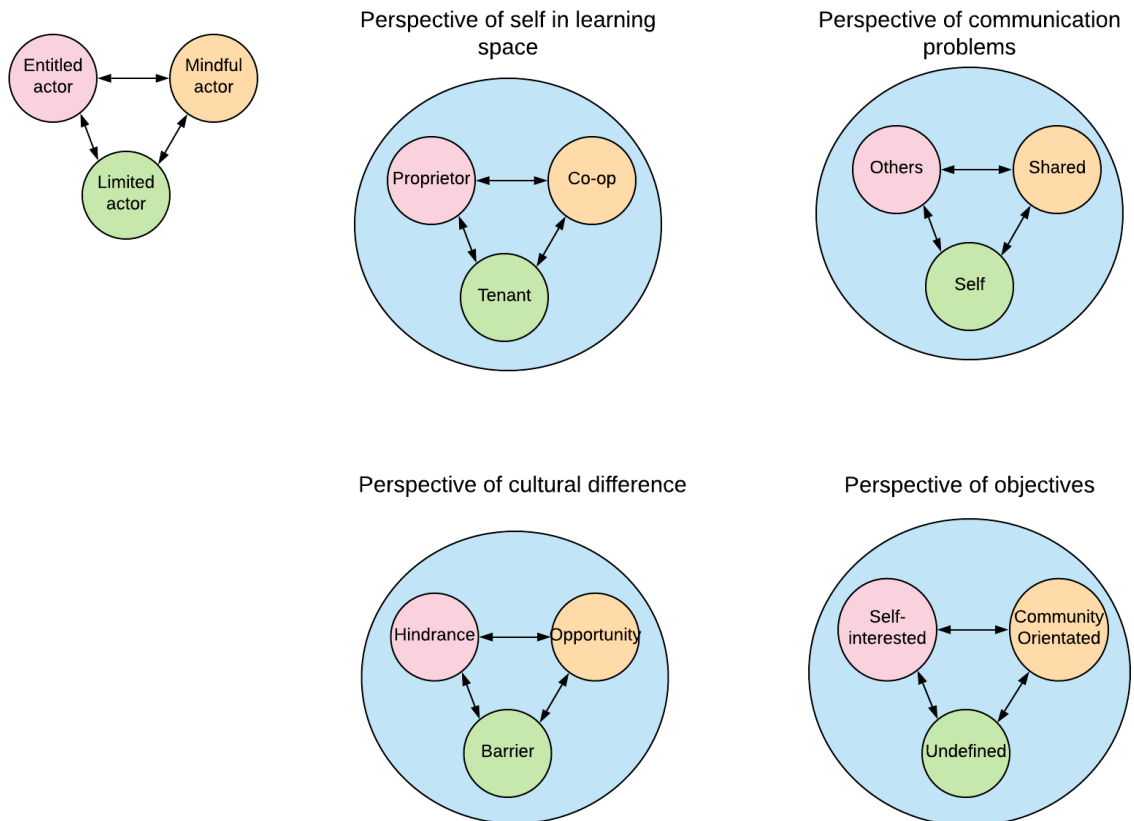


Figure 5

Figure 5 shows 4 diagrams that give an overarching view of *A Trio of Actors Theory*. These diagrams are an evolved version of the mindmaps structured in the data analysis process and give an indication of how Bourdieu's Habitus and Field have been used to realise the theory. It is helpful to engage with these diagrams starting at the top left where a key is presented. This key acts as a rubric for the four diagrams presented and indicates each of the trio of actors with a corresponding colour. In the main diagrams that follow after the key, the name of each of the trio is removed and replaced with the actor's perspective on themselves within a specific field. Although the name of the actor is removed, the original colour assigned to that actor remains. As mentioned above, Bourdieu's Field and Habitus again are used as thinking tools to realise this theory. This is indicated by each diagram having a blue background. This background indicates a particular Field. Placed in this Field are the Trio of Actors. Each actor from the trio has a particular Field. The Fields, and related Habitus *theory and practice clash*, that emerged from the data

analysis and are presented here are the *learning space*, *communication problems*, *cultural difference*, and *objectives*. The trio, and how they experience learning in these Fields, are explained in detail in the following sections.

5.1 Learning situations.

Learning situations in postgraduate social science studies regularly involve working in smaller groups. A smaller group in these cases means “any teaching situation in which dialogue and collaboration within the group are integral to learning” (HEA, 2013, p. 4) in a seminar-like situation (University of Cardiff, 2019; University of Leicester, 2019). These small groups provide a space for students to come together to share. Ideally, this sharing should involve what they know, which could come from multiple sources. For instance, knowledge could come from previous learning in another programme. It could also have come from a lecture that they have received recently in their current programme. Or it could come from a recent reading, assigned for homework. However, these sharing situations should further what learners do not know. Hence, these sharing situations are contrived by educators who anticipate that learning will happen in terms of Vygotsky (1978), where the more expert learner assists the more novice, or perhaps in terms of Piaget, where all learners are left to muddle along together (Jarvis, 2005). Furthermore, learning situations at a postgraduate level of study in the social sciences are experienced from multiple perspectives. People in learning situations use such perspectives to inform their actions. How learners act in these situations affects not only how they themselves experience learning, but also how those involved in the situations with them experience it. From these multiple perspectives, three broad categories of actors can be determined. I have called this group of categories *A Trio of Actors*—more specifically, within this trio are *mindful actors*, *limited actors*, and *entitled actors*.

5.1.1 Mindful actors.

5.1.1.1 Wide lenses with broad understandings and co-operatives of learning space.

I use the term “mindful” advisedly, in its dictionary definition sense of “inclined to be aware” (Merriam-Webster, 2019), “careful not to forget about something” (Cambridge, 2019) and “inclined or willing to do something” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019). My use of the term makes no reference at all to the Buddhist and psychological studies and practices of *mindfulness*. Having positioned the definition of mindful as such, I posit that mindful actors experience learning, in the main, with unrestricted senses of academic selves. They view learning situations and the others in them with a wide lens. With this lens, they are able to see those others around them clearly. By seeing others clearly, mindful actors are able to extrapolate an understanding of others. For instance, mindful actors assess and notice their peers’ qualities, their ways of being, and their proficiencies. In turn, mindful actors are able to position themselves in relation to these others. By positioning themselves, they ascertain an understanding of their own qualities, ways of being, and proficiencies in relation to the group. For the mindful actor, the space in which the group exists is one that is shared. Existing in shared space for them is akin to living and working under communal or co-operative conditions. In turn, mindful actors act as co-operatives within the space around them. In consequence, they see others in the space around them as fellow co-operatives and community residents of equal standing. In real terms, mindful

actors enter learning situations with an observing orientation. During class, they are not only interested in bettering their own performance but are also interested in working with others to help them. As a result, mindful actors learn more extensively and deeply from the experience of helping others. To them, the way in which they act is effective, but they are aware that this is their personal perspective and that others may see this differently to them. This observance plays out in class, where they are observant of the actions of others. In turn, mindful actors adapt and adjust their actions for the good of the group. If the class as a whole is judged as poor, they will take a share of the blame. They experience learning deeply.

5.1.1.2 Sharing responsibilities.

Mindful actors share responsibility in the classroom. Jelena demonstrates this in the opening quotation. She experienced silences in classes, and even though she was not expecting this, she did not pass negative judgement on those who sat in silence during seminars. In fact, she realised, unknowingly, that the situation, in Bourdieu's terms, was a Field-Habitus mismatch. In turn, she felt little frustration with such situations. Emilie, too, when meeting with unexpected situations, acted in a similarly pragmatic fashion.

Emilie: I must say I wasn't prepared for it. I had no idea. I thought it would be 90% British students and only a few internationals, so it was a bit of a culture shock, and there were times when I felt like "I've come to study in the UK, but I may as well have gone to China." But it doesn't really matter that much to me who else is in the class, and you get used to that, and they are very sweet and friendly people, and I think that it is getting used to that...

As a mindful actor, Emilie was disposed to compromise and see the bigger picture. She was able to look beyond assumptions of culture and race, seeing people as people. In turn, she was able to navigate her studies with an acceptance of the status quo. The composition of the cohort was not as she had imagined upon arriving, but her pragmatism allowed her to readjust expectations. She acknowledged that communication issues through language were a problem at times with learners from China. However, she apportions the blame equally between herself and those with whom she had communication difficulties.

Emilie: It was also very difficult to communicate with them because my English isn't that good and their English isn't that good either [Micky: Your English is pretty good]. Well, at least I struggled to understand them, and I felt stupid when I couldn't understand what they were saying.

Similarly, Jon, although not going as far as to apportion blame to himself, noticed communication issues that affected two learners from China.

Jon: It must have been tough as well, as the amount of times that I would see especially how fast a lot of people speak in English [agreement from Alisha and Nasha] would speak.

In general, Alisha, Jon, and Nasha all showed varying extents of habits which are consistent with being mindful actors. When discussing two students from China in their programme, they showed a great deal of understanding toward the complications that the Chinese students faced due to a lack of spoken language proficiency. In all situations, Alisha, Jon, and Nasha looked for the best in their classmates. For instance, they firstly identified one problem as being the pace of the class—an issue that Nasha, who was a late arrival to the programme, could relate to.

Nasha: It was more about me feeling confused about and the speed to things feeling fast. I'm used to like lecture halls and even though I'd been in group situations, I hadn't done anything like PBL [Problem-Based Learning] before, so it was like fast, it was too fast, but I didn't feel alone or... Confused—it was just the speed!

The three went on to identify the size of the group as a further issue, suggesting that as the groups reduced in size in the second term, those who appeared to have been restricted were more able to contribute. Furthermore, the three also suggested that they saw an improvement in their classmates' communication during the second term. Further still, Alisha, Jon, and Nasha also identified that the others had other strengths, such as writing.

Alisha: I think, in the second term, I saw a lot more input from M M and X [two classmates from China] for two reasons. First, because our group was really small, it was five people, literally. So, it was easier for them to hold a discussion if they didn't get something [Nasha voices agreement]. And the other thing was that I think the online feedback for the PBL—that really helped. Because even though M M and X, they may not be able to express themselves that fluently in English, in spoken English, they were able to write it down. So, we knew that they were able to understand everything, and they know what they are talking about. So that was—I think that was very, very helpful.

5.1.1.3 Opportunities to connect and learn.

For the mindful actor, there is much to be gained from cultural diversity and Field-Habitus mismatch. In the mindful actor's view, diversity and mismatch offer an opportunity to learn.

Emilie: It's difficult to have a conversation with someone, and, in class, it is difficult to have group work and have the time to try and explain to them what the task was that we were going to do, so it was difficult. It was also very interesting because China is so different, and they have so much to tell.

Such an attitude allows mindful actors to navigate potentially difficult or problematic situations, for example silence or miscommunication, which might otherwise be interpreted as difficult or awkward. In fact, it is common that mindful actors make an effort to bridge the gaps to improve the general dynamic of the space. Selia describes this in a friendship that she built up with a classmate from a different culture.

Selia: With Bo... She is very sweet, and we talk about differences between our cultures... which was really funny to hear. The one thing I remember was trying to pronounce our names in our [own] language[s], which was so funny. She said that I managed to get a decent accent but her pronouncing my name was so funny. It was impossible. Like from what I believe, they can't pronounce /r/ and it's so funny her trying to... I know it sounds terrible, but it was great.

By reaching out to those who are different, mindful actors sow seeds that can germinate and eventually bear fruit. Selia experienced this bearing of fruit as a result of her original efforts to connect with her friend Bo.

Selia: I've actually talked to a few others, and they are so helpful— like distributing my survey.

In effect, by reaching out to Bo and sowing the seeds of friendship, Selia was rewarded with access to a helpful network in the dissertation stages of her programme. This network provided a number of respondents for her questionnaire during the data collection phase of her dissertation.

5.1.1.4 Community-oriented objectives.

Alisha shows mindfulness and care for limited actors during her testament and conversation with Nasha and Jon.

Alisha: And even then, with all our different cultural backgrounds, some of us are just more outspoken, some of us are more... Like M M and X, they always used to say, you know... We were waiting for them to finish before we sort of spoke by then time was up and the discussion was over. Yeah so over time, I think it developed quite nicely. It was ok. Because by then, they were able to... Uhm I'm giving an example of M M and X because they had that language barrier sort of thing, [Nasha: Yeah] and I really saw a good improvement from them.

Indeed, mindful actors, such as Alisha, have the broader objectives of the wider community in mind during learning situations. From the perspective of the mindful actor, learning situations are maximised when there is the inclusion of and the full involvement of the whole group. Perhaps mindful actors approach learning with a sense of fairness and a fundamental assumption that all learners should be *in it together*.

5.1.2 Limited actors.

5.1.2.1 Limited lenses and tenants of learning space.

Limited actors experience learning situations with restricted senses of academic selves. They view learning situations, and the others in them, with a limited lens. Because of the narrow scope of this lens, they are unable to see the many others around them clearly. By being unable to see others clearly, limited actors are also unable to extrapolate precise

understandings of the others. For instance, limited actors are unable to assess and notice their peers' qualities, their ways of being, and their proficiencies. Different to mindful actors, limited actors assume an inferior position to others in the learning space. They do this because, for them, this space is the property of others. In turn, they act as tenants within the space around them and see others as proprietors. In consequence, they exert little authority, feeling that they have little say over what happens. In real terms, they enter learning situations unaware of the dynamic of the learning environment. During class, they are dazzled by the performances of others. As a result, limited actors are unable to participate actively. They are often lost and outperformed by many others. For these actors, the ways in which they have acted in past learning situations prove to be ineffective. This inability to act effectively plays out in class where they are *wowed* by other actors. In consequence, limited actors become left behind in the classroom dynamic and are unable to compensate. If the class as a whole is judged as poor, they are likely to self-attribute it. Their experience of learning is limited.

5.1.2.2 Self-blamers in communication issues.

By perceiving that they are the cause of communication issues in learning situations, limited actors also feel that they are an annoyance to others. For them, being an annoyance is to ask too many questions, to ask for too much help, and to take up too much time of others. Therefore, they refuse to reach out for help, feeling that they are overburdening others. This is demonstrated by Ying, who showed many attributes of a limited actor. She identified herself as a problem in learning situations. In her view, she needed help in understanding some basic issues. However, she felt that she was a hindrance to others in the group by asking for help and clarification too many times.

Ying: So maybe it's my fault... Sometimes I will ask them, "could you repeat" or ask them to explain it to me but most times, I just did nothing, just pretend that I understand them. Because too many times, I ask them to repeat, so not very polite, so I just keep quiet. Maybe, the next time, I am not discussing with them because we cannot communicate or understand each other.

Ying, then, chose silence. Silence in her eyes, in this case, was not to protect herself or to hide, but was in fact to protect those around her. More specifically, by keeping quiet in learning situations, she was not wasting the time of others, and she was not contaminating the learning experiences of others. She goes on:

Ying: I didn't read my literature properly, deeply, so I don't want to let... because of my fault, to influence someone else.

Ying, here, reveals a deep anxiety that limits her as an actor in learning situations. She does not feel that she understands the text "properly" enough to be able to share her thoughts on it with others. Her concern being that, if she shares, she may wrongly influence others in the learning situation. In turn, these restrictions lead to her learning experience becoming limited by being isolated, lonely, and pessimistic.

5.1.2.3 Barriers to learning.

For the limited actor, cultural difference is often viewed as a barrier. This barrier becomes an obstacle to learning, and, as a result, learning experiences become fenced in. The railings and boards for this fence come in the form of low trust relationships, feelings of being disadvantaged, and feelings of inadequacies. In turn, limited actors question their abilities, and formerly efficient ways of learning become inadequate. For instance, in her testament, Ying continually alluded to an us and them situation through her choice of language.

Ying: They are the native speaker, so they can understand something that we couldn't understand, so that's how I see it...

She believed that there are some areas that were simply, and quite unfairly, not accessible to non-native speakers. Hence, in her view, she was permanently restricted, and therefore, she was also permanently disadvantaged.

In fact, limited actors often hold the perspective that the structures within culturally diverse learning situations are not always transparent. This lack of transparency leads to issues of mistrust. In such situations, there is a strong pull toward the familiar. Many people will cluster together to foster a sense of security. These feelings may be unfounded. However, to limited actors, they feel very real. Issues of mistrust were brought up by Nasha, a Nigerian student in Law.

Nasha: Sorry, ours wasn't the most "friendly" class. So, even though you were friends with the person, you weren't necessarily "friends" ... I don't know how to explain it.

Nasha describes a lack of sincerity from her classmates, a diverse international group, in learning situations. In her view, this never changed throughout the duration of her programme. However, this view of the same group was in stark contrast to her fellow classmates Alisha and Jon.

Jon: I think that more like trust or something developed.

Alisha: I think that the comfort level becomes better. Like in the first term... These guys had already studied in the Law School, and they knew the lecturers, and they knew how things worked and whatever, and the rest of us, were like, "What are they doing?"

For limited actors in learning situations with low trust, overcoming perceived cultural barriers is a serious effort. In consequence, clustering with others they identify with is their immediate priority and represents a reprieve from the difficulties of an international, heterogenous group. This exact situation is described by Orisa, a student from the Law School and a limited actor. Throughout her time in her programme, Orisa struggled with

group interaction, regularly perceived her classmates as insincere, and often chose to sit in silence rather than contribute to the class. This is a clear example of how limited actors privatise their learning experiences:

Orisa: Ok, like I think when I came, I was instantly drawn to Z and Nasha. Probably because they were from the same place I was, so it was so easy

Going to a place of comfort and familiarity is indeed easy. However, repeatedly taking the easy action can lead limited actors into a reality where they receive little sympathy from others. This may even be the case from mindful actors who are disposed to compromise. In fact, the barrier in the minds of the limited actor can create further problems. In some cases, it can become physically noticeable. This situation was recounted by Emilie during learning situations in her Human Resource Management programme.

Emilie: Sadly, they didn't really try that much to contact us I feel, so they kept to themselves. Speaking Chinese among themselves and sitting together there and being in the group together, it was difficult.

Where physical clusters can build a difficult physical barrier in learning situations, linguistic clusters also stonewall other actors. It takes particularly well-equipped mindful actors to break through these barriers. These well-equipped mindful actors have the ability to bridge gaps across cultural divides. They may do this by finding familiarities between their own culture and the one they are trying to connect with. Orisa describes one of these actors from her law programme.

Orisa: R has a lot of Nigerian friends, and he was always telling me about them, so he knew a lot of things from Nigeria, so we could... Where he's from, his country, there's some kind of similarities.

In fact, these well-equipped mindful actors also have a great deal of conviction in their actions. This was demonstrated by Thomas, who was able to take successful action on being linguistically stonewalled.

Thomas: I think that everyone should stick to one language that they all understand. And, I actually asked my Chinese flatmates to please not speak Chinese when I am in the kitchen, as I feel offended. It would be different if I knew that they couldn't speak English. But because I know that they just can't be arsed to speak English, it annoyed me. And my flatmate was quite happy that I always tried to make her try her best and teach her a little bit.

5.1.2.4 "Undefined" objectives.

Thomas's honest account of his experiences with flatmates from China, at a first glance, appears to show limited actors as self-interested in terms of their objectives. His Chinese

flatmates appear self-interested because they exclude him from conversations. However, as his account continues, it is clear that this may not have been the case. In fact, Thomas's intervention in this situation casts a light on the desire of limited actors to engage with others outside of their familiar group, even though they did not outwardly present this. Due to his intervention, Thomas enabled a limited actor to shift to a more mindful actor and was shown gratitude for it. However, even with the interventions of mindful actors, unpacking and theorising about the objectives of limited actors is difficult. As explained above, the experiences of limited actors are convoluted and many of their experiences are privatised. Therefore, what structures their objectives can merely be imagined. Because of this, limited actors' objectives are termed here as "undefined." Undefined in this case means that the form of them is unclear, as if viewing them through an opaque screen, seeing that they are there, but being unable to clearly identify them, and in turn, explain them.

5.1.3 Entitled Actors

5.1.3.1 Narrow lenses with telescopic views and proprietors of learning space.

Entitled actors experience learning to a great extent with restricted senses of academic selves. They view learning situations, and the others in them, with a narrow lens. This narrow lens gives them a telescopic view of the subject that they are interested in. This view allows entitled actors to view subjects closely without moving to meet them. In fact, entitled actors are unlikely to meet others in learning situations. This is because entitled actors view space in learning situations as their property. In consequence, they see others around them as tenants, visitors, or even squatters in a space that belongs to the entitled actor themselves. In real terms, entitled actors enter learning situations interested only in the betterment of their own learning and are blind to the needs of others. They are irritated by those who they see as less able than them. They rarely take the time to help others improve but will do so if they see that it is in some way advantageous for them. To the entitled actor, the way in which they act is a gold standard, a norm, and as a consequence, all other actors should adapt to fit their model. They are unlikely to slow down or allow space for others who are different or less able. They do not adapt their actions for the good of the learning group. If the class as a whole is judged as poor, they are likely to attribute the blame to others and not themselves. Their experiences of learning are thus shallow.

5.1.3.2 Holding others responsible.

As a mindful actor, Selia describes her experience of seeing entitled actors in action during her programme in Human Resource Management. She identified several of the UK students, who she claimed refused to move to meet their Chinese counterparts in communication.

Selia: I don't think that the UK girls tried to connect with them at all, as they thought that there was a language barrier, and they kept commenting like "the language barrier—the language barrier" but they weren't really making any effort either. They didn't try. The Chinese were much more open.

Indeed, by identifying issues through narrow telescopic lenses, entitled actors gain a magnified view of the small portion of the learning environment which they are interested in. By the nature of the lens, the issues appear closer and larger than they are likely to be. Furthermore, entitled actors are also disconnected from their wider context. In turn, they can only interrogate those contexts at a surface level. Nevertheless, those contexts likely serve as a convenient justification for their narrow perspectives.

Despite these shortcomings, entitled actors' strong beliefs and dominance in learning situations mean that their narrow analyses become reified, as they share the same views with other entitled actors. Here, sharing is an exclusive club in which the members have such familiarity that it goes unnoticed to them. On broaching this subject, Selia hesitates. As a mindful actor, who described and identified herself as part British because of the extensive time that she had spent in the UK, she went on to describe the othering that she felt from entitled actors, as well as an impenetrable "Perspex divide" that she felt existed between her and them.

Selia: I dunno what it is... Sounds so bad, but it just didn't feel the same. It's weird, as I've lived in England before, and it felt that I had a Greek and a UK personality, but meeting other UK people was so... as if there was a glass, not a wall, but a glass between us. One of the girls that I talk to from the UK posted [online] like "A day at the races with friends" and I was like "What?!" Like maybe it's the different kind of UK people that I haven't come into contact with before, and it's not the kind of people that I would connect with but it just felt so... off. It didn't feel like we couldn't talk, we couldn't share, and we couldn't help each other out. It's just like that was it until they would share experiences, but they didn't seem like the kind of people who would say, "Let's go out." Like maybe Tom, but the girls felt completely different... like completely different!

Orisa described her experience of entitled actors in far more blunt terms. For her, she felt as if she barely existed outside of groups that were structured as the result of learning situations.

Orisa: I feel like some of them I didn't connect with them because like maybe... One of them, aside from the fact that we're not coming from the same place, we kind of didn't have the same experiences as such. And also the approaching, the way they come at you like... In a really formal way.... Not so friendly... They're only friendly with you when you are in a group with them... When they need something... Or one-to-one. It's a big turn off, yeah. For instance, S would only talk to me in a group. J would only talk to me in a group [Micky: OK]. Yeah, but outside a group, just because, sometimes I come early to class. James can be sitting down, and I'll be sitting down and we just "Hello—hello" But we don't talk without any group.

5.1.3.3 Being self-interested.

These examples bear reference to UK students in particular, however, the ownership that entitled actors feel may be something that is akin to any "home student." In discussing

these issues, Thomas drew attention to his wider international experience and specifically learning in Spain, where he found a similar phenomenon.

Thomas: Yeah, I don't think that this is British students particularly, but I think that it is students in general. Like I had this in Spain too with Spanish students. You are somewhere, and it is your mother tongue, it is easier to stick with people that speak the same language and... Yeah. I think that the newer you are in a place, the more desperate you are to meet some new people. And Spanish or British people they already have their groups, and they don't need anyone else. And with international students everyone is in the same situation.

Again, Thomas's observations of others are valuable. He describes home students as entitled actors who are blind to others because of the familiar nature of the environment in which they exist. Entitled actors do not need to reach out nor to build bridges because their networks are already set up and functioning. This perspective is not only that of the home student however.

Indeed, Jon exhibited some habits of an entitled actor. To him, the year had been perfect, with no major problems. This was absurd to Alisha and Nasha, and they greeted his comment with loud laughter.

Jon: "I loved everything this year. [Laughter] I did! Honestly!"

Laughter to one side, the self-interested objectives of entitled actors leave even well-equipped mindful actors questioning the structures in which they are operating. This was recounted by Sara.

Sara: I didn't know how to set expectations towards people making new connections and making friends. It was a bit hard to navigate... As like to get you specific examples because sometimes it was hard for me to understand that people would tell you that we are willing to have some coffee sometime or go out for coffee or have a night out or something, and then, they would just disappear, so it was a bit difficult to navigate at first. And sometimes, I was a bit... I guess like thrown off because some people had individualistic tendencies, but getting through the programme, I started to realise that it's part of postgraduate life.

5.1.3.4 Appropriating useful resources.

Indeed, the complication of social dynamics between internationally recruited and home students weaves through this part of the analysis of the data. For example, Emilie's testament of her experiences with the same students that Selia felt separated from by a Perspex divide is quite different:

Emilie: I've been really impressed by the British students in my class and have come up to me and been like, "Do you want to be in our group?" and I think that that is a really good thing to do to a foreigner. You know they know that my English isn't perfect and so as they want to be with me and be my friend I think that that is a really warm welcome and it made me feel good. They didn't need to do that.

Here, the entitlement of entitled actors is clearly evident. Indeed, it appears that it shines through as a bright light has perhaps dazzled Emilie, who was seemingly identified as acceptable for some reason or reasons, to the extent where she was invited into an exclusive group. In her own words she was impressed by this action and even surprised or thankful that the action was made due to her self-determined imperfect English. Indeed, entitled actors act in a way they think will benefit them directly. In turn, they evict and discard what they see as redundant.

Jelena describes this behaviour when she recounts a restructuring of her peer group after the results of an exam. Interestingly, Emilie and a change in her behaviour are involved in the account of events.

Jelena: ...There were people in the first semester we hung out with—English students and in fact Emilie—and we hung out with Emilie, and only me and Selia failed and... After that happened... It kind of felt that we were both separated from the pack, and it was a little bit weird. And by that point, I did make stronger friendships with students from the Chinese group, so I think that that was a critical point. [...] It was almost like a critical point of deciding who's better and who's not. Yeah... [Micky: And do you think that that was only your interpretation?] No, we—me and Selia—kind of spoke about it as we noticed it. It was like a week that kind of separated us on separate path. I dunno if it came from the evolution like those who are weaker go together and those who are stronger... It's interesting.

She continues to expand on her experiences:

I knew that from the beginning that it just didn't click. It was weird. I kept thinking about it because we were in the same boat, and we still are... So, we should be supportive of each other.... But I don't think it was us... I dunno... It was one of our group that decided to go another way. There was one other person that kind of got stuck with us... It was almost like two groups... those who failed and those who didn't.

Entitled actors, then, identify assets that they judge as acceptable and of value to them, before moving to appropriate them. In this case, they did so by, seemingly without care, fracturing a friendship group and extracting a component part.

Part 2: Discussion

5.2 Overview of Section.

In this section, I position the new theory of A Trio of Actors, and its components, mindful actors, entitled actors and limited actors, which I constructed in this project and presented in the previous section of this chapter. I present this as a more sophisticated alternative to what exists in the current literature. I do this in four main parts. Firstly, I provide a review of the theory presented in Part 1 of this chapter. Secondly, I highlight binaries that exist in the current literature and explain and illustrate their limitations in providing a frame with which to understand learning and teaching in higher education. In doing so, I describe aspects of a Trio of Actors that can be found in the literature within the previously described binaries. I then go on to use the literature to further theorise about how these binaries lead to a practice which I have called *single-line thinking*. I then go on to consider how a Trio of Actors can replace binaries and single-line thinking. Thirdly, I consider where others have seen the need to look for solutions to learning situations beyond binaries, using literature from Gay and Lesbian Studies and Intersectionality. Fourthly, I finally suggest that the theory of a Trio of Actors in fact has strong practical implications for learners. I do this by reframing past literature with it and by suggesting that it has the power to transform learning experiences.

5.3 Review of the theory of Trio of Actors.

From this research project, learners are identified as A Trio of Actors. This trio consists of mindful, limited, and entitled actors respectively, and I review them in the same order below.

Firstly, mindful actors experience learning, in the main, with unrestricted senses of academic selves. They view learning situations, and the others in them, with wide lenses. In turn, they are able to see those others around them clearly and are able to extrapolate understandings of others. For instance, mindful actors assess and notice their peers' qualities, their ways of being, and their proficiencies. In turn, they are able to position themselves in relation to these others, from which point they can further ascertain an understanding of their own qualities, ways of being, and proficiencies in relation to the group. For them, the space in which the group exists is one that is shared. Existing in shared space, for them, is akin to living and working under communal or co-operative conditions.

Secondly, limited actors experience learning situations with restricted senses of academic selves. They view learning situations, and the others in them, with limited lenses. Because of these lenses, they are unable to see the many others around them clearly. By being unable to see others clearly, limited actors are also unable to extrapolate precise understandings of others. For instance, limited actors are unable to competently assess and notice their peers' qualities, their ways of being, and their proficiencies. Different to mindful actors, they assume an inferior position to others in the learning space. They do this because, for them, this space is the property of others. In turn, limited actors act as tenants within the space around them and see others as proprietors.

Thirdly, entitled actors, who may at first glance be actors who experience learning with unrestricted senses of academic selves, in fact experience it in restricted terms. They view learning situations, and the others in them, with a narrow lens. This narrow lens gives them a telescopic view of the subject matter that they are interested in. A telescopic view matters to entitled actors because it allows them to view subjects closely which simultaneously omits a great deal of the surrounding picture that can be viewed clearly by mindful actors. However, and importantly, entitled actors feel they do not need to move to meet others in learning situations because they view space in learning situations as their property. As a result, any others entitled actors happen upon in the learning space are viewed as tenants, visitors, or even squatters in space that belongs to the entitled actors.

5.4 Blunt binaries.

5.4.1 Seeing two of the trio within the binaries of the literature.

A Trio of Actors Theory provides a new frame in which to view those in learning situations. Indeed, aspects of the trio of actors are recognised within the literature, but these are always viewed in binary terms. Therefore, the learners have always been identified with different frames of reference from the one provided by the theory in this research project. Within these binaries in the literature, aspects of the Trio can be found. For example, Peacock and Harrison (2009), mention mindful students directly. However, they see mindfulness within the binary of home and international. From their study, mindfulness can come from actions of the home student who is aware of issues such as “global English” and stereotyping. However, Peacock and Harrison do not consider that international students themselves can be mindful. Another example of how a Trio of Actors builds upon theory is in Leask’s (2009, p. 207) effort to “improve the quality and quantity of contact between home and international students and the development in both groups of intercultural competence.” In this study, Leask identifies home and international students in blunt terms as what would now appear to be entitled and limited actors. In doing so, she suggests that interaction between them could be improved through the use of formal and informal curricula. Although there is truth in this well-intentioned research, such a binary approach to learning and teaching leaves those who would otherwise be identified as mindful actors redundant. In their redundancy, those who could very well bridge the gaps between Leask’s entitled and limited actors are instead left at the margins with their skills underutilised, or perhaps even worse, left feeling patronised by inappropriate interventions.

In a further example, the ways in which two of the trio of actors choose to learn have also been seen in binary terms. For instance, Biggs (1999) terms learning approaches as being either deep or surface. According to Biggs, “the low cognitive level of engagement deriving from the surface approach yields fragmented outcomes that do not convey the meaning of the encounter, whereas the deep approach yields the meaning at least as the students construe it. The surface approach is, therefore, to be discouraged” (p. 13). At first glance, this generalisation suggests a mirroring of the unrestricted academic selves of mindful actors and the restricted academic selves of limited actors, where the former is willing and able to delve deeply into the reading and the latter is unable and perhaps unwilling to do so. However, such generalisations did not emerge from the theoretical categories of this project. In fact, both mindful and limited actors engaged in surface approaches to learning. For limited actors, this was perhaps not a choice. However, a

surface approach was adopted by unrestricted mindful actors at times if it was deemed to be of advantage to them in executing a particular task.

Imposing this binary on all learners and discouraging them from surface approaches presents two problematic issues for learning and teaching. The first is that limited actors are suddenly faced with, not only an already large amount of difficult reading content, but the added task of how to approach that content deeply as well as the added time needed to do so. The second issue is that discouraging surface approaches and encouraging deep approaches to reading is most likely unnecessary for mindful actors because these actors are well able to determine their own learning needs. Within mindful actors' learning needs are their approaches and strategies to reading. In turn, the practitioner runs the risk of disabling learning for both by over-burdening limited actors and instigating superfluous dictates in practice for mindful actors.

Such new perspectives raise questions about the conclusions of past research projects within the literature. For example, Hermida's (2009) action research project, comparing surface and deep approaches to reading with undergraduate students in a Legal Studies programme in Canada, found that participants took surface approaches to reading. He defines a surface approach as when learners "consider information as isolated and unlinked facts [which] leads to superficial retention of material for examinations and does not promote understanding or long-term retention of knowledge and information" (p.21). Whereas, a deeper approach to reading is when "the reader uses higher-order cognitive skills such as the ability to analyse, synthesize, solve problems, and thinks meta-cognitively in order to negotiate meanings with the author and to construct new meaning from the text." In turn, he implies that changes should be made to curricula so that students adopt deep approaches to reading at all times. However, re-viewed through the frame of a Trio of Actors, this advice falls short. In fact, certain learners need direction and support to be able to engage in certain reading approaches at certain times, while others need to be allowed to determine their own reading needs, many of which may well include surface approaches.

5.4.2 Single-line thinking: imagining continuums between blunt binaries.

The elements of a Trio of Actors that are present in the literature, through a binary lens, provide an opportunity for further theorising. Here, I suggest a new theory called Single-line Thinking. Single-line thinking is the result of a binary that is no longer helpful to teaching and learning contexts in providing an effective frame of reference, one that has, as described above, become "blunt." In effect, the blunt binary becomes two ends of a straight line that acts as continuum on which to place learners. In consequence, learners are placed on it to better understand and identify students' learning and teaching needs. Of course, it may be that, in some cases, this single-line thinking is helpful, but ultimately it is limiting. It is limiting because it engenders a one-dimensional space on which to conceptualise complex learners and their learning. This leaves behind those who are outside of predetermined norms. In consequence, learners are viewed in terms which are inappropriate to them. As a result, learning and teaching needs are most likely misinterpreted and miss the pedagogical mark. There are many opportunities to imagine the single lines between binaries in a higher education, many of which are blunt. These are generally constructed by creating a difference between normal and other. For example,

single-line thinking can manifest in any of the following areas, such as, the gender spectrum (Leathwood and Read, 2008), socio-economic circumstances (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010), ethnic minorities (Jones, 2006; Richardson, 2015), LGBTQI+ issues (Neslon, 2002), widening participation and traditional and non-traditional (Hutchings and Ross, 2005), home and international students (Altbach and Knight, 2007) and ideas of native and non-native speakers of English (Chen, 2009).

To illustrate single-line thinking caused by blunt binaries, I firstly examine the binary matters of home and international students, and secondly native and non-native speakers. The binary divide between home and international students at first glance may seem clearly marked. However, with only a little thought, it is clear that the divide is subject to single-line thinking. More specifically, the ways and the extent to which we see the “international” in international students is not so clear-cut. For instance, the extent to which we see Jon, the Canadian participant in Law, as international is not the same as the extent to which we see Ying, the Chinese participant in Social Media Management. Both of these learners are “international,” but the ways in which they experience their postgraduate studies with other international and home students is grossly different. Secondly, the binary of native and non-native speaker at first glance also seems clearly marked. However, it also creates the conditions for potential single-line thinking. Taking Jelena, the Polish participant, and Selia, the Greek participant, both in Human Resource Management and both unrestricted and mindful actors, as examples: the extent to which they were affected by their being non-native speakers in terms of their programme content was negligible. However, the extent to which Ying, also a non-native speaker was affected by the same categorisation was significant. In turn, the rigidity of these binaries forces us as practitioners to imagine a single line between the two, where, for example, Jon, who is from a North American culture, who speaks English as his first language, is very close to being a home student. Similarly, Jelena and Selia, when compared to Ying, are very close to being native-speakers.

What is more, the binaries here, and the single lines between them foster a situation where those placed on the continuum will never fully be recognised as belonging within the normal group. Literature in gender studies provides an insight into how damaging these kinds of binaries can be to those who need to work together. For example, Knights and Kerfoot (2004, p. 430) explain that “[t]he distinction between male and female and masculinity and femininity continues to polarize relations between the sexes in ways that generally subordinate, marginalize, or undermine women with respect to men.” In similar ways, Jelena and Selia, despite their unrestricted and mindful dispositions, faced a prejudice which forever prevented them from feeling fully accepted by home students and native speakers. For Selia, it was the experience of the Perspex divide and for Jelena, it led to the desire to don “the mask of the native speaker,” which is mentioned later in Chapter 7.

5.4.3 Where others have seen the need for alternatives to blunt binaries and single-line thinking.

5.4.3.1 Overview.

In creating this theory, I am not completely alone in thinking that blunt binaries and single-line thinking are inadequate in educational literature. In fact, this can be seen within those areas of the literature where those who are able to see the othering this thinking leads to—perhaps because they have experienced it themselves. To illustrate this point, I take literature on Gay and Lesbian Studies and literature on Intersectionality.

5.4.3.2 Taking action for inclusion in complex learning situations.

A little-mentioned area where efforts have been made in the past to explore the complexities of learning is Gay and Lesbian Studies. Examples of these efforts were drawn together by Nelson (2002), who gathered literature from journals, conferences, and newsletters that demonstrates where action has been taken to foster gay and lesbian friendly environments for teaching and learning, specifically in English language teaching contexts. He found that action had been taken, in some cases, to change institutional culture by addressing heterosexist discrimination at educational institutions and homophobic attitudes among teachers, administrators, and students (Anderson, 1997; Brems and Strauss, 1995; Hirst, 1981; Nelson, 1993). Action had also been taken to change curricula, resources, and teaching practices to be more gay-inclusive (See Nelson, 2002)) and to consider the educational needs of learners who themselves identify as lesbian, bisexual, or gay (Kappra, 1998; Nelson, 1993). Indeed, this wider area of study has been progressive in that it has recognised that students experience learning, not merely as learners, but as learners who identify in terms of sexuality. In fact, in concluding his literature review, Nelson goes further and suggests that new ways of viewing learning and teaching when groups are culturally and linguistically heterogeneous is needed. In turn, he suggests that Queer Theory may be helpful because it, as Burbules (1997, p. 111) puts it, is not about “tolerance of difference, or for that matter celebrations of difference,” but “the critical re-examination of difference, the questioning of our own systems of difference, and what they mean for ourselves and for other people.” In sum, Gay and Lesbian Studies provides an insight into the complexity of learners and how that complexity might be continually handled in learning and teaching.

5.4.3.3 Intersecting selves.

In the wider literature, Intersectionality speaks in support of a Trio of Actors. Intersectionality is defined by Hill Collins and Bilge (2016, p. 11) as “the events and conditions of social and political life and the self [that] can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways.” Indeed, how students experience learning depends on multiple factors that are present simultaneously. Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) further recognise this in terms of higher education. They state that “the social divisions of class, race, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, sexuality, and ability are especially evident in higher education” (pp. 11-12). This line of thought leads directly back to complications in a higher education multiplied by massification, discussed earlier in the thesis, where a multitude of complex learners exist together. In turn, this literature further enhances the theory of a trio of actors. It does this because it acts as a clear reminder that selves blur and overlap.

In consequence, for the theory presented in this research project, it means that there must be an awareness that components of the Trio may also on occasion overlap or at least appear to do so. For example, Jon, who although is mostly identified by this theory as a mindful actor, did at one point express his views about his entire experience of his postgraduate studies in entitled terms. Specifically, this was when he revealed through his testament that he had failed to see many of the challenging issues that Nasha and Alisha had observed. Clearly, in this instance, Jon viewed his learning experience with a narrow, telescopic lens. In a similar vein, it may seem at times that limited actors are in fact entitled actors. This can also be seen in the data from this study. For instance, the linguistic stonewalling experienced by Thomas in the kitchen of his student accommodation. In this instance, the stonewalling was not directly intended to exclude and silence Thomas. It was caused, in part, by a limitation in English language proficiency on behalf of his flatmates. To be stonewalled in an international context, for this particular mindful actor (Thomas), is seen to be unacceptable. Importantly, he was empowered to act on this frustration to enable positive outcomes for him and his flatmates.

5.4.4 The potential power of a Trio of Actors to provide and awareness with which to navigate othering.

Here, then, it seems clear that overt awareness of the theory of a Trio of Actors is necessary to navigate the othering that can occur during the postgraduate experience of learning. Taking stonewalling again as an example. Stonewalling, all but in name, has been reported in the literature. For example, Slethaug and Vinther (2013, p. 88), who investigated the challenges of multilingualism for international students in Denmark, noted that in learning situations there was a “tendency for students doing group work to speak sometimes in Danish to the exclusion of the international students” while in an English medium of instruction (EMI) programme. In the same report, the authors also remark on the early age at which Danish children learn English, and participants from their study commented on the advanced English language proficiency of Danish students. In turn, it can safely be assumed that the Danish students were proficient in English language (EF, 2019). In consequence, and without the lens that a Trio of Actors provides, these Danish (and home) students would appear to be merely othering their international colleagues in learning situations. In the case of Slethaug and Vinther’s (2013) study, this led to “serious grief” (p. 88).

However, when applying the theory of a Trio of Actors, a route through this learning situation can be visualised, and in turn, such grief can be negated and even transformed. This route begins with the identification of these students as either entitled or limited actors. On the surface, as with Thomas’s experience above, it would appear that these students have acted with entitlement. If true, this entitlement is because the students felt proprietary over the learning situation space. This is despite their ability to communicate in English, despite being in an international programme, and despite the presence of international students. However, it may be that they in fact acted with limitation. Limited by their limited lenses in a situation where they were unaware of their othering actions. Either way, with the knowledge of this theory, an understanding of the dynamic within the learning situation can be visualised. From this picture, a route through the complications of the learning situation can be mapped and, with the help of this map, the learner can navigate the learning situation effectively. In consequence, the theory of a Trio of Actors has practical implications that have the potential to transform learning situations.

In light of this, it seems that many experiences of learning could have been quite differently understood for those who felt exclusion as part of their learning experience as an international student. For instance, the report from Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010, p. 41) describes the problems that international students faced at a US university:

The absence of friendships with American students was a major theme. A Saudi Arabian man said he had “A very few American friends but mostly my friends are from my country”; a male Nepalese student said [he had] “very few American (friends)”; and a male Indian student commented [that] “Some of the Americans are not friendly enough to hang out with international students, [and that] they do not have a decent comfort level with people from different cultures.”

These experiences mirror those reported above by Slethaug and Vinther (2013) and led Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010) to recommend that improvements that could “include initiatives to raise the profile of international students, improved financial assistance and scholarships, and creating opportunities for international students to improve their spoken English” (p. 33). However, with the lens of a Trio of Actors, these recommendations now seem questionable. To be exact the problematisation of international students and their deficiencies seems quite inappropriate. In fact, a knowledge of a Trio of Actors and a strategy to navigate limited and entitled actors, and restricted learning experiences would be much more meaningful.

Chapter 6: Enabling Learning Theory

Part 1: Results and Analysis

Orisa: It was interactive. Like, she would give us examples. Like, we were talking about bribery and corruption, and corporate and social responsibility. She does examples about when she was with her dad in India... And he had to bribe to the mailman to bring the parcels or they had to go themselves and sit for 6 hours at the post office. And she told us how much it is and then she was like, "Who has that kind of experience?" And I told her that compare to that in Nigeria, it's worse! You can't do anything without bribing in Nigeria.

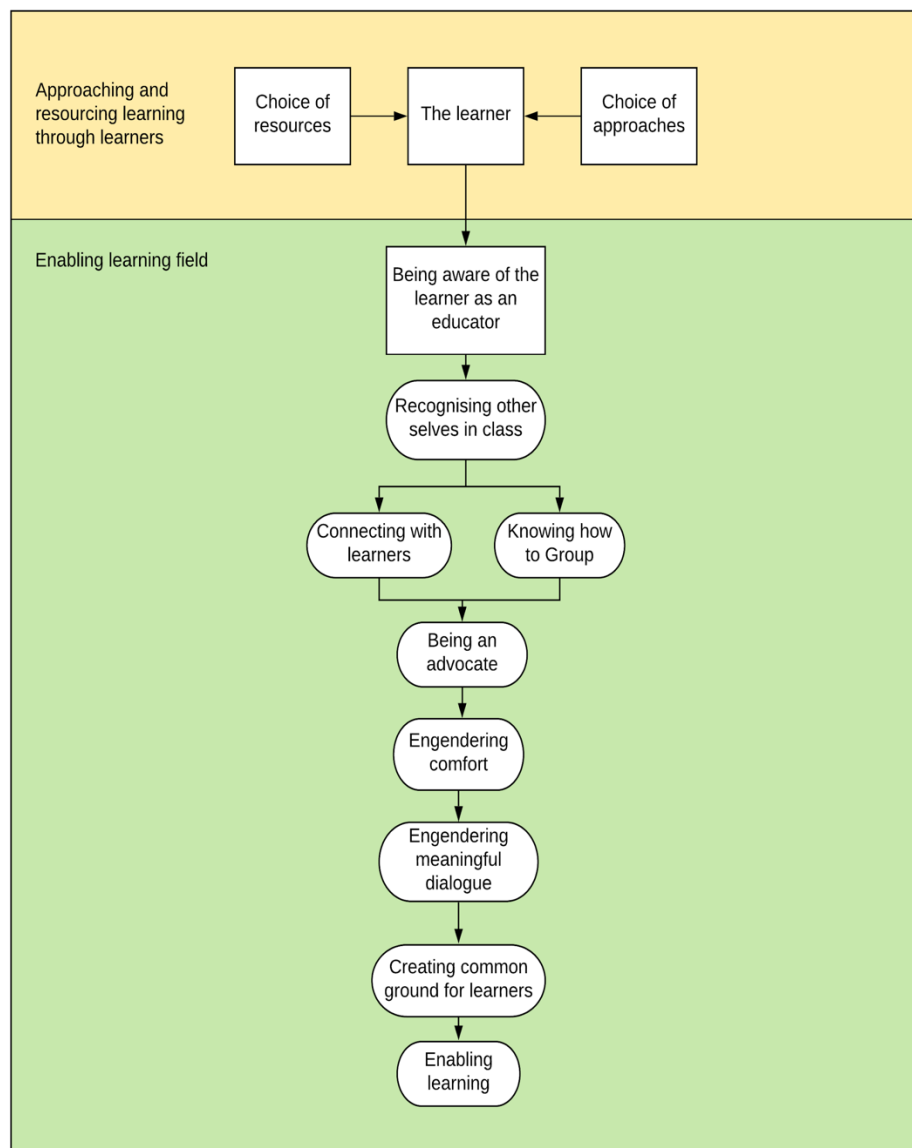


Figure 6

Figure 6 gives an overarching view of *Enabling Learning Theory*. This diagram is an evolved version of mindmaps created during the analysis process and gives an indication of how Bourdieu's Habitus and Field have been used to realise the theory. This diagram should be read starting at the top. Reading the diagram in this way gives an indication to the reader about how the theory will unfold in the following section of the chapter. It also gives a clear indication of the process of which an educator moves through to finally enable learning. Immediately, Bourdieu's Field and Habitus can be seen as influential in understanding Enabling Learning Theory. For instance, the process of enabling learning begins with the Habitus of the educator and how they choose to resource and approach learning situations and in turn structure a learning Field in which the learner, with their own Habitus, is placed. The diagram then indicates that an enabling learning Field can be created for the learner if the educator undertakes the proceeding process. This starts with *being aware as an educator, recognising other selves in learning situations or classes, connecting with and knowing group members, being an advocate of learning, engendering comfort, engendering meaningful dialogue, creating common ground for learners*, and as a result, finally *enabling learning*. The following sections of the chapter unfold with this structure in mind and explained in detail.

6.1 Choices of resources—choices of approaches.

As educators in higher education, we have to make many choices. The many choices that we have to make often happen in small moments—even in split seconds—during a busy class, for example, where we have to think on our feet to be able to answer questions as concisely as possible. By doing this continually, we develop strategies and habits to deal such situations. For instance, instead of answering a question directly, we may decide to deflect it back to the class, and, as a result, open up a new perspective from an informed learner. Of course, many of our other choices are made with much more thought and preparation. For instance, this may be seen in how we plan programmes of study. Within programmes, we determine which resources the students will have access to. For example, we choose which readings to include on reading lists. Within those choices come more choices. We choose the scope and depth of that list; we choose the difficulty of texts, the accessibility of them, and particular authors, perhaps over others. In the same way, we choose how to approach our teaching practice. Some of us base our practice on our past experiences of it and reuse the same formula. Others are under the influences of wider institutional structures and demands. For example, an instructor may be under the constraints of the traditional approach of lecture-seminar or even seminar only. However, they could be required to use the more recently conceived approaches such as a problem-based approach or a flipped classroom approach. Whatever our constraints, we have in mind how our practice will play out, and we make choices accordingly. Subsequently, the choices that we make, both momentarily and methodically determined, deeply matter to how our learners will experience their postgraduate studies.

6.1.1 Approaching and resourcing learning through learners.

Our learners are not mere objects of our teaching practice. They are, in fact, subjects of their own learning. They are subjects of their own learning because they are people in the social world. In turn, they do not “come alone” to learning situations in postgraduate study. Quite the opposite. They come with baggage that informs and flavours their worldviews. For instance, they bring individual histories, personalities, and ontologies. It is with and through these perspectives that they understand the world. And it is with and through these perspectives that we as practitioners wish them to discuss and analyse those worlds. In consequence, our learners resource our learning interventions with a great wealth of knowledge and experience. However, without acknowledging it as authentic and important, we will be unable to access this rich resource. By ignoring or failing to acknowledge that the students themselves are resources to draw on, we risk silencing our learners, and in turn, making them feel unimportant in learning situations.

As a learner, feeling important in learning situations appears to matter. This is especially the case for those who experience their postgraduate studies as restricted actors. Orisa’s testament presented at the beginning of this section is a prime example. Orisa in many ways demonstrated habits of a restricted actor and was often withdrawn in class. Having never studied outside of Nigeria, she found it difficult to adapt to the student-centred and problem-based approaches to learning used at her postgraduate Law School. Furthermore, she was also not disposed to dealing with actors who, viewed through the lens of this research, she evidently saw as entitled. In turn, she often opted out of participation, for example, by using her mobile phone as a barrier or by stonewalling other individuals. However, Orisa’s testament also describes a learning experience in her programme that makes clear the abilities of a particular educator who had a particular awareness of their learners, and in turn, could skilfully enable learning.

6.1.2 Being aware as an educator.

Being aware as an educator is one of the most important facets of practice. For an educator to “be aware,” they must be able to be sensitive to and perceptive of their students’ learning backgrounds. In part, it is a taking stock of students, but it is also paying attention to that stock to assess its quality. By taking stock in a way that pays attention to quality, we form a base from which to theorise about how we can best help learners. This method can be applied to different situations. For instance, it can be applied in the throes of practice, which I term the *micro level* of practice. In this case, awareness can be applied to navigating through teaching practice by paying attention to the dynamics of learning situations. Learners are essential to the dynamic of the learning situation, and their engagement crucial to their learning. Learners who are engaged in a task are interacting with a topic on the given task and creating output in some form. There may be silences, but these silences could be for thought and reflection. On the other hand, learners could be disengaged from the task. Perhaps the students were unable to get involved in the main issues because it did not interest them. Perhaps, there was an entitled actor that shut the other actors down. Silence in this case is a negative and a product of derailed learning.

However, the formula can also be applied to situations outside of learning situations. For instance, an aware educator may choose to reach out and connect with students to enquire into their ongoing development at a particular time. The awareness of if and when to reach out is built on a continued awareness. This continued awareness is obtained from the micro events of learning situations and also macro events of conversations after class and an openness and interest in dialogue about matters outside of academia. In turn, by having this awareness, such an educator is able to see necessary times to connect. For example, this might be because they have an awareness that “now” might be a particularly stressful time for this learner or group of learners. This awareness was described by both Selia and Jelena about the same educator in independent interviews.

Selia: Like T, I definitely feel like I can connect with... I definitely talked to her...

Jelena: I'm close with T, and she always encourages you, and I could talk with her a lot as well... I mean that you can talk to her about anything whether it is a personal problem or if it's an academic problem or it's an academic idea... she's open to conversation. And she also keeps in touch, so it's not just you as a student trying to get in touch with someone but it's also someone reaching out to you. She's not [even] my supervisor.

Selia and Jelena's experiences with T suggest that an aware educator has a positive impact on learners' experiences.

6.1.3 Recognising, appealing to, and accessing other selves.

A common thread that runs through the experiences of learners with educators who enable learning is that they feel recognised as a person in several aspects of their programme. Indeed, an aware educator is an *enabler of learning* and therefore recognises that learners bring individual histories, personalities, and understandings to learning situations. Enablers appeal to those selves and highlight the best aspects of the students. In doing so, they build bridges between themselves, their subject of study, and others in the learning situations. This bridge building allows Habituses to emerge and also links these Habituses together. To take Orisa's experience as an example: the educator initiated this process by sharing part of their own life experience that was related to the topic being discussed. They then added to this by taking an extreme yet entertaining narrative. The extent to which this narrative was accurate to original proceedings, or indeed whether or not it was fabricated was not questioned by Orisa. What mattered was that it acted as an inviting bridge that allowed Orisa to connect with the professor, and to draw on her own experiences of life. In turn, she did not withdraw into the restricted learner state which was normal for her. Thus, instead of privatising her learning experiences, in contrast, she was able to publicise them.

By recognising, appealing to, and acknowledging learner's non-academic selves and the experiences that are stored within them, practitioners who are enablers of learning create *Enabling Fields*. Enabling Fields are contextualised patches of common

ground. They are safe places to learn because they engender comfort. Comfort and safety, in this case, are the knowledge that personal experiences matter to the learning situation. Furthermore, an additional and very important safety resides in the fact that personal experiences are known best by the self. This makes for a solid, well understood point of reference from which to anchor learning. This was echoed in Orisa's strong words of praise for this particular professor.

Orisa: So, it was kind of like, we understood where she was coming from. And she kind of asked everybody... She'd say, "So what would you do?" So most of our classes were really interactive. I don't think I would never forget anything I learned from her! Even just mention a topic, and I would be able to talk on it. It's meaningful I guess and relating to real life.

Indeed, by choosing to approach learning and to use resources in a way that actively engaged the learners in the learning situation, Orisa's educator transformed her restricted sense of an academic self that she had laboured under for the duration of her programme. In effect, the educator de-restricted Orisa. Importantly, these experiences were not confined to chance, as the instructor consolidated them by consistently providing further positive experiences. These experiences echo those of Selia and Jelena above.

In fact, all of these examples of Enabling Learning describe educators who are mindful actors with unrestricted senses of academic selves, who are disposed to, able in, and skilled at their teaching practice. Orisa's testament helps to explicate the notion that resources lie in the rich supply in the classroom. They are waiting to be mined if the educator wishes to, and is able to, take such an action. While, Selia's and Jelena's testaments help to unpack how simple humanity and an awareness of others acts as a necessary bridge to learning as an adult, in turn, a vital facet of Enabling Learning.

6.2 Advocates and antagonists.

6.2.1 Advocates.

The experiences described by Orisa, Selia, and Jelena lay the groundwork for another category that comes under Enabling Learning called *advocates* and *antagonists*. Advocates and antagonists play opposite roles in the learning experiences of students. Advocates of learning support and champion learners. They, in all forms, do their best to make sure that students are listened to, supported, and safeguarded. Educators who are seen as advocates by learners, structure comfortable environments, ease tensions, and open up space for learning. They may do this by willingly exposing their own vulnerabilities to learners. This is because they feel confident enough in their own practice to see their vulnerability as a strength and a chance to share. Showing vulnerability in this way builds trust with the learner. In doing so, they establish space that allows a learner to also share, and as a result, grow.

Selia describes an advocate she found in her supervisor during her account of her postgraduate experiences. She described how she became stressed with her workload. This was compounded by a fail in a test for a particular module and a spell of illness. Being a mindful actor, she knew that she needed time with her support network at home. She was also in the dissertation stages of the programme, so she presented her work-done to her supervisor, who trusted her to continue her work off campus.

Selia: I just needed some time to cool off from everything, and she understood that I needed some time for easing out. So, she was like, "It's not an issue" and I'm really, really thankful for that. Like, she did her PhD recently, so she should understand what it's like. Some other people have been sick as well and she understood their situations, kind of by seeing them as a whole. I've heard from a lot of students that their supervisors haven't let them 'ease out' like that, so I'm really, really thankful that she shared my position... really thankful!

As a result of having an advocate, Selia was able to receive adequate support that she knew that she needed and the time that was correct for her. Interestingly, but perhaps only coincidentally, Kip had a similar experience with his supervisor who was also a recent PhD graduate.

Kip: My supervisor, he is really kind and a new PhD and just graduated this year and quite the same age as me. I don't know why, but he is really kind to me and he always followed up my work, asking how it's going and things like that, and I asked him questions about writing... It's quite weird in my department, as we have to submit the proposal for the dissertation in the first term. But at that time, I do not know what I am going to write, but you have to submit the proposal and say what you are interested in the first three weeks. So, I saw my proposal and said it is not the style of writing we need in our department, but I could not get the clear concept about it, but once I submitted the first two assignments then I knew that it is in the wrong direction.

6.2.2 Antagonists.

Unfortunately, not all learners are treated in the holistic way in which Selia and Kip described their experiences. In such cases, educators can be seen as antagonists to learning rather than advocates. Where advocates champion and support, antagonists of learning disrupt and frustrate. It is, of course, most likely that this is not an educator's intention. Indeed, they may disrupt and frustrate in ways better viewed through the respective frameworks of entitled actors and limited actors. For antagonists who are entitled actors, the concerns of students are simply not captured by the view of their narrow lens. For antagonists who are limited actors, their limited lenses are not able to focus on their learners' concerns. Both entitled and limited antagonists oppose and struggle against the learning of those in their learning situations, which means that such a situation becomes seriously disrupted.

Shortly after describing positive learning experiences, Orisa went on to share less inspiring accounts. For Orisa, these other learning situations were pointless for both

her and for all concerned. They angered her and only succeeded in creating animosity and fostering negative perspectives of the educator. Here she describes such a situation with an antagonist:

Orisa: I think that most people had problems and were cross. Like, some people they won't come to class or some people were sleeping. I think that the course was kind of boring. The seminars were boring. So, she would just basically sit down and go through each page and not really deep... Not really communication as such. I noticed everyone was nodding off sometimes. For me, sometimes I'd be on my phone. At first, I would try and pay attention and actually try... "So, what are we actually doing?" And sometimes when I tried, I tried to talk a couple of times but like, I don't know if she didn't understand what I am saying, so I just forgot about it. People weren't asking questions they were just keeping quiet. Just sit down and go through the lecture. Honestly, I didn't learn anything... I didn't learn anything! It was abstract. Maybe it's the communication but then it's abstract. But looking back at the handouts they were, I felt that if I was lecturing, there would be ways I would have probably done it to make it maybe, to make people like more... I don't know the word to use now... But to make people more familiar.

Antagonists as educators here are antidialogic. Antidialogue manifests from one of two things. Firstly, it could be the result of entitled actions. In this case, entitled actions could lead to an educator overlooking learner needs—making them virtually non-existent. In turn, students are invisible, or perhaps their selves are seen as unimportant. Secondly, it could be the result of restricted actions. In this case, the educator's restricted actions lead to an inability in the educator to engage with the learners for fear of leaving known and understood learning practices. Or perhaps they are unable yet to be vulnerable to their learners. Both ways, seemingly pointless methods coupled with an antidialogic delivery make learners feel that they could "do it better themselves." These students might not be wrong. To attend a module and claim to have learnt nothing is a damning testament. Both entitled and limited antagonists of learning force the learners to make private the learning experience.

Not all experiences are so extreme. Indeed, some experiences fall between the advocate and antagonist extremes. This is described by both Emilie and Jelena, during independent accounts of the same learning situation.

Emilie: I think that we were six groups and we were doing some strategic work for this company and of course every group found different solutions and the teachers said that all the solutions were very good... you know so it is difficult to know what is the solution and it would be good for me to know from an expert... What is the best solution and tell me, "Well if it was me I think I would have chosen this option but you could have done this."

Jelena: Yeah... well basically each workshop lasted for two hours and the first hour the lecturer kind of exposed us to the whole topic... told us what we will be

doing the workshop and then explained the exercises... and when we were doing exercises in groups she was sitting and waiting for us to finish and when we had finished we didn't feedback.

In such cases, attempts at learning situations that approach and resource learning through learners fall short. They fall short because they are perceived by the learners as listless and lacking in leadership. In turn, learners become discontent and frustrated. In effect, weak attempts at learning advocacy lead to experiences of mild learning antagonism.

6.2.3 Limited actors as disablers of learning.

Limited actors as disablers of learning stifle learning situations. Their limited lens means that they are unable to see the needs of their students well. In turn, they are unable to assess and notice their students' qualities, ways of being, and proficiencies. An educator may well realise that the learning situations for which they are responsible are ineffective and disliked; however, they are unable to broach the issues with their learners and are also unable to make any changes to their practice. An example of an educator as a limited actor emerged from the data with the participants from the Law School. Alisha and Nasha make light of the incident.

Nasha: Well, emm, L's lecture was Company Law, and I've done company law for the most part, so I didn't think that it was horrible. Like, I thought that she was really boring as she dragged out things, and she had a million handouts and there were like 40 millions things on one page... [Alisha: and she wouldn't breath] [Both: laugh] and you were always praying for the break.

Alisha continues:

Alisha: All the books or the readings that were given to us and it was all just going over our heads. All of us...

Nasha: Like when everyone was complaining about L's book. I'm complaining and you're complaining... And you're like, oh yeah ok!

Alisha: Hahaha.... It's like you know you're not alone... In like drowning!

The same situation and staff member was described by Orisa.

Orisa: I think that most people had problems and were cross. Like, some people they won't come to class or some people were sleeping. I think that the course was kind of boring. The seminars were boring. So, she would just basically sit down and go through each page and not really deep... For me, sometimes I'd be on my phone. At first, I would try and pay attention and actually try... "So, what are we actually doing?" I'd just go back later and look at the hand out, but during the class... No. And sometime when I tried to talk a couple of times but like, I don't know if she

didn't understand what I am saying or... I could see that she wasn't really getting what I was saying so I just forgot about it.

6.2.3 Entitled actors as disablers of learning.

Entitled actors who are disablers of learning bring learning situations to an end. Their narrow lenses mean that they are unable to see the needs of their students at all. In turn, they are also unable to assess and notice their students' qualities, ways of being, and proficiencies. Entitled disablers show little regard for the learning situations for which they are responsible, are ineffective, and disliked. They are blind to how they are viewed, and therefore do not see any issues with their learners or the need to make any changes to their practice. Ying experienced such an instructor who shows quite clearly that some educators are entitled actors.

Ying: For example, when we began the new class, the professor would tell us the essay... She told us some mistakes of some students before. And we know that it's the Chinese students because we have had the similar experience. And because, yeah... The management professor can understand the Chinese students' essay more easily. But most sociology professor, they told me they don't understand what I'm talking about.

Indeed, Ying was denied a fundamental part of the self, to be identified with the use of her own name.

Ying: They [Sociology staff members] can't even pronounce my name in Chinese. I can understand that it's hard to pronounce. I can't understand everyone's names in English. It's confusing about the name. You know? But sometimes the professor is like... 'you!' Or 'the person next to you!'

By juxtaposing her experience of learning between Sociology and Management Schools at the same university, Ying shines a light on the large discrepancies in how staff handle the work of Chinese students. Her experience of sociology suggests a narrow view of her work with no attempts to move to meet her as she tries to communicate her thoughts through writing. To further exacerbate this, examples of 'what not to do' were beamed in front of the entire cohort. In contrast, her experiences of the Management School show that staff were mindful of the way in which students from China might approach their writing. They showed a willingness to move partially to meet their students in an effort to support their learning. The fact that the Management School was able to be mindful toward Ying illustrates how the entitled actions of the Sociology School were particularly antagonistic and thus disabling.

6.2.4 Abstract and difficult concepts.

Communicating theory and difficult-to-grasp concepts to learners can be a significant challenge for educators. To many learners, academically abstracted theory that is communicated through expansive writing can be challenging. Theory is a challenge

even for learners who are highly disposed to postgraduate studies. This was expressed by Sara who showed traits of a mindful actor with an unrestricted sense of academic self.

Sara: So, coming here, I engage with theories around gender, I read Judith Butler... I am enjoying the intellectual side... and enjoy reading a lot more about sociology and feminist theory [but] I found it very hard.

While Sara's honesty casts a light on the experiences of the mindful actor, it also raises a worrying warning signal for those who are not. In fact, restricted or entitled actors, who are antagonists to learning, particularly struggle when it comes to describing and explaining abstract theoretical concepts. Such an educator struggles when trying to do this in the aid of restricted actors as learners. In fact, introducing such restricted actors to dense material, perhaps in an effort to offer an explanation, risks ingraining negative perspectives about the self in relation to that subject area. This can be taken from Ying's transformed belief that "theory in sociology is hard to understand."

Ying: I think that most theory is not easy to understand in sociology. It is hard to understand. Sometimes the professor wants to help us, but sometimes it is not easy to explain how to use, so sometimes they just introduce us to some papers.

To enable learning, educators act as a bridge between the academic world and the worlds of their learners. However, by introducing learners to such enormities of information in times of confusion is in fact to disable learning. For an educator to repeatedly overwhelm students with the enormities of theory is to disable learning completely. In consequence, when learning is completely disabled by the educator, learners have little choice but to retreat to familiar teachings and resources as sources of knowledge.

Ying: When I start to write an essay, most my logic on the theory is based on my undergraduate knowledge, and I found some literature and theory based on the thing that I already know and then explain it in English.

Ying's accounts of her experiences of learning touch explicitly on how key the role of the educator is. This is especially apparent when her experiences of educators in the Management School and the Sociology Department, during her joint master degree programme in Social Media Management, are juxtaposed. In her description of her experiences, she clearly identifies one educator who is an enabler.

Ying: Actually, we had a module called Business Information Systems, and the professor is very funny sometimes.

As with Orisa's experience of an enabling educator (described in Recognising, appealing to, and accessing other selves), Ying describes a professor who bridged the gap between the learners' current knowledge and the theory they were studying by revealing part of her own self to learners. In this case, it was entertaining personal narratives that provided a context for the learners to situate theory. Entertaining personal narratives are important because they relax learners. They breathe life into what would potentially be mundane and dry. Personal narratives create comfortable conditions. They allow the educator to be humanised and to present a real self to others. In turn, such narratives encourage selves to emerge into the learning space. Ying's positive experience with this educator continued as she goes on to recount another experience.

Ying: She teaches us something like the VR technology. It's maybe hard to understand at first because we cannot understand how it works, so she just gives some very vivid examples—like IKEA the company. For example, I want to buy a sofa, so I can use the app to make the sofa in the picture at home, so she did it in the class and everyone was very interested about that. And ... Like to made some things easier to understand, so it was very positive.

Ying's educator brought the theory to life. She realised it with the class in real time. She took an everyday example that every learner could connect with to reach out to all learners. In consequence, she created an Enabling Learning field.

Enabling Learning fields make for positive experiences. With positive learning experiences come positive perspectives. The positive perspectives in this case were three-fold. Firstly, they were of the self. In both cases, Orisa and Ying left their respective learning situations feeling positive about themselves. Importantly, they felt that they 'had learned.' In Orisa's case, she felt that she had learned meaningful, useful things. In Ying's case, she felt that she had learned difficult theory. Secondly, they had positive perspectives of others, citing that all others were engaged, with no mention of negative experiences of other selves. Thirdly, and in a more protracted sense, their positive experiences of learning reached further, bridging as many enablers of learning do micro and macro experiences as a learner.

For Orisa, these positive experiences began to influence her daily life and transformed her shopping habits.

Orisa: She'd use everyday life as examples of fair-trade products. It was good and it was because of her that people in class would buy fair trade products. Even me too. Even when I went to Nisa I would look for fair trade products because of her.

For Ying, her positive experiences shaped how she saw other educators. In her perspective, some educators were simply more disposed to being aware in learning situations. Such dispositions led them to take actions that would result in them being

recognised as advocates of learning. From her account of one experience, she generalised about others:

Ying: And the thing is... Most professors, they really want to do that job very seriously. They want to really tell students something, not just as their job, they really want to influence your thinking, how you understand things as students. Just like they were talking about when they first learned the theory and their problem or questions about theory and discuss it with us. It was like, they had the same feelings about theory which makes it more easy to understand. [Micky: and was that helpful?] Yeah it helped a lot.

In a general sense, the willingness of the educator to show that they were not always the expert opened up vulnerabilities, demonstrating to learners that even experts struggle with difficult concepts in the beginning. This advocacy helped the learners to relax into the learning situation and, according to Ying, had a positive effect.

6.2.5 Learners as enablers of learning for others.

In the macro learning situations that exist outside of the classroom, certain learners either take on the role or are assigned the role of enabler of learning by and for other learners. Learners in such cases identify qualities in this enabler that they feel indicate that this person can be trusted in academic matters. An example of this from within the data is described by Gregor.

Gregor: Yes, Alisha helped us with this. Because, our reference was Alisha, like "Ok who will ask Alisha?" And see who is right and wrong. Something like that. On academic things. She seemed professional... I dunno.

Here, Gregor is unable to articulate the exact qualities it was that Alisha possessed. However, they were overt enough to be recognised as an important resource for learning by him and other learners in the wider group. By accessing that resource, they felt a strong notion of confirmation, feeling that if Alisha agreed, then they must be right.

Enablers such as Alisha can even break through such antagonistic, antialogic learning situations as experienced in the Law school and recounted above by Orisa. Indeed, Orisa's testament even described how the resource that Alisha embodied was at times bubbling out over the surface.

Orisa: So, she [the educator] would just basically sit down and go through each page and not really deep... Not really communication as such, because only Alisha used to talk in the class.

However, in this case the educator chose not to capitalise on this resource, instead choosing to continue on their own agenda. However, learners as enablers of learning can be utilised in micro learning situations. Indeed, even learners who are not disposed to it such as Ying and Orisa, may be able to enable others if given the right support to do so, as their testament above alludes to. In sum, learners as enablers of learning are yet another resource stored in wait for the educator. However, this is only for the educator who wishes, and is able, to practise in a way that approaches and resources learning through learners.

Part 2: Discussion

6.3 Overview of section.

In this section, I present the discussion on the fresh theory Enabling Learning constructed from the data in this project and place it within the wider literature. Those who enable learning are actors who approach learning situations seeing the learners as a resource that should be tapped. They are also self-aware as educators. They recognise the other, non-academic, selves of their learners and appeal to them. This allows the educator to find an access point to the rich experiences of learners. These types of enablers of learning are termed *advocates of learning* in this theory, those who are not advocates are conversely called *antagonists*. I discuss the following points in the following order in this section, which is divided into two wider parts: enabling actors in learning and the theoretical components of advocates and antagonists. Firstly, I discuss how actors can be enabled in learning through the dialogue of mindful actors, micro reflection, and enjoyment of learning. Secondly, I discuss the theoretical components advocates and antagonists. To do so, I use the lens of enabling learners to review the literature, especially suggesting that this new theory can allow for new ways to look at past puzzles over experiences in learning and teaching.

6.4. Enabling learning for limited actors.

6.4.1 Mindful actors and dialogue.

The results presented in this research project have made clear that there are those in learning situations who can enable learning for others. From the data presented in the Results and Analysis part of this chapter, it is also clear that these enablers are typically actors who were educators. However, this was not exclusive, as some actors who are learners are also enablers. In light of what has been discussed in this chapter so far, enabling actors are typically mindful. This is unsurprising because mindful actors are typically disposed to being aware of others and their needs. In turn, mindful actors as enablers of learning play a key part in the learning experiences of other students. They play a key part because they provide structures for learning situations, and by doing so, are able to transform learning situations. Enablers de-restrict those with restricted senses of academic selves. This is particularly the case for those who are limited actors from within the Trio. However, this could also include entitled actors, who, with their narrow lenses, often experience learning in restricted terms.

Mindful actors as enablers of learning are vital to the success of learning situations. The key to the success that the mindful actor holds is their ability to enter into dialogue with

learners within a multicultural environment. This is recognised in the literature by McGrath-Champ, Zou and Taylor (2013, p. 38), who describe how such dialogue results in the “unlocking [of] the resources represented by a diverse, multicultural student body, and a genuine internationalising of courses, classroom and curricula.” Indeed, the ability to enter into dialogue lays a foundation for learning processes, ways in which to access relevant knowledge and experience, and a continued structure to support ongoing learning. This is echoed in the literature by Carnell (2007), whose research project reports that “the role of dialogue was a strong feature of the interviews. Teachers emphasized that the process of dialogue generates language to talk about the subject.” The idea that dialogue is generative of knowledge resonates loudly with Franke, Carpenter, Levi and Fennema (2001, p. 655-656), who describe “generative” knowledge precisely as “when the learner sees the need to integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge and continually reconsiders existing knowledge in light of the new knowledge that they are learning.” This is taken further by Ball (2009, p. 69), who demands, with seeming justification, that “teachers must be prepared to be generative in their thinking and generative in their teaching practices.”

6.4.2 Enabling learning through micro-reflection

However, this becomes more powerful as Carnell goes on to conclude that dialogue also “prompts reflection, critical investigation, analysis, [and] construction of knowledge [where] learners are allowed to experiment with ideas and the group is seen as a resource.” This clearly supports the theoretical category Enabling Learning constructed from this research project. It echoes the experiences of Orisa who experienced reflection as a micro-reflection *in situ*. The concept of micro-reflection is particularly important to enabling limited actors. Micro-reflection is a small momentary self-reflection where a learner thinks back to experiences and understandings which are relevant to the learning situation at hand (Eisenclas and Trevaskes, 2007). In terms of this research project and its participants, micro-reflection was particularly important in the learning experiences of Orisa. Orisa’s experiences of learning were marred with views of conflict with other learners, but, with the help of a mindful actor as an enabler of learning, she was able to overcome her restrictions through consistent and meaningful micro-reflection. This is directly supported in the literature by Morley and Dunstan (2013) (and also supported by Fook and Gardner, 2007), who claim that “critical reflection enabled students to better manage their responses to conflictual environments.” These circumstances provide a way into learning, and an access route and relationship to how knowledge is created. Enabling Learning, then, is epistemological because it allows such access, and a foundation from which new understandings can be constructed.

6.4.3 Enjoyment in learning and teaching as an enabling component.

What was clear from Orisa’s experiences of being enabled and de-restricted was that she enjoyed the experience to the point where she openly claimed that she will “never forget” what she learned in those situations. She, along with other participants, presented an extent of enjoyment in learning experiences that involved those who enabled learning. However, the importance of enjoyment to learning is much more prevalent in the literature on child education when compared to higher education, where it is merely noted or mentioned in passing. In terms of child education, enjoyment is seen as important in self-regulation and competency (Elliot and Pekrun, 2007; Grolnick and Ryan, 1989; Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun,

Frenzel, Goetz and Perry, 2007; Mega, Ronconi and De Beni, 2014). Furthermore, positive outcomes have been reported in terms of enjoyment in reading, such as by McGeown, Johnston, Walker, Howatson, Stockburn, and Dufton (2015). However, in the higher education literature enjoyment is little mentioned. For instance, Yorke and Knight (2004) mention enjoyment in passing while referring to Bandura (1997), claiming that enjoyment is not ascertained by the learner merely by achieving tasks, but is ascertained by achieving tasks that become increasingly more difficult. While, Haggis (2004), who reports on a longitudinal study, argued for the need for a wider range of approaches to thinking about learning in higher education, finding that a common type of learning as described by participants was “Learning as enjoyment, satisfaction or curiosity” (p. 346). Interestingly, it may be that learners notice the extent to which their teacher enjoys their subject and enjoys teaching during the learning situation. This is suggested in the literature by Courneya, Pratt and Collins (2008) who examined certain approaches to peer-observation, uncovering that a teacher’s outward appearance to enjoy the subject and the class affects the motivation and expectation of students’ performances. In sum, although the literature is scant on this subject, it appears that enjoyment is overlooked as in an important part of Enabling Learning in learning and teaching in a higher education.

6.5 Advocates and antagonists.

Of course, as the first part of this chapter made clear, as well as advocates of learning, there are also antagonists of it. Of course, those who enable learning are also advocates of learners. Advocates of learners support and champion learners. The term advocate can be found explicitly in the nursing literature (Iacono, 2007). The literature describes not only health professionals, but people who are outside of the medical field, who are vital for any patient to recover from illness seeing them holistically and as a person. In terms of this research, advocates of learning see learners in similarly holistic terms. Viewing students in holistic terms in a higher education sphere is echoed in the literature by Quinlan (2014) who states that “viewing students as people is inherently integrative; it emphasises the connections and relationships between thinking, feeling and action, rather than separating cognitive dimensions of education from affective or moral dimensions” (p. 33). This is supported by Dall’Alba and Barnacle (2007, p. 689) who claim that “higher education needs to take an ontological turn and institutions need to engage the whole person: what they know, how they act, and who they are.” In light of this, learning, then, is on some level emotional and personal. In turn, there is a strong sense of learning being holistic from the theory presented here in this research, and it is echoed in the literature. Specifically, how practitioners are disposed, as Bryson and Hand (2007) suggest, can affect engagement through their “discourse with students, enthusiasm for the subject, and professionalism with the teaching process” (p. 360). Furthermore, those who were disposed to fostering warmth, respect, and a sense of belonging (Kahu, 2013; Kember, Lee and Li, 2001) enabled meaningful learning experiences. However, there are those who disable learning. Disablers of learning were identified in this research project as antagonists.

Antagonists disrupt and frustrate the learning process. There may be many antagonists to learning in a higher education. With a lens focused with Enabling Learning theory, antagonists can be seen in the literature. For instance, this can be seen in Edmead’s (2013, p. 25) (now quite obvious) advice that “thought needs to be given by staff as to the inclusive nature of the task to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to contribute and are not unfairly discriminated against due to lack of cultural knowledge or

experience.” This could also explain other tangled issues in the literature such as low satisfaction with academic group work, also reported by Edmead (2013), who in the same paper reports that valiant attempts to improve group work through contrived interventions have fallen short where multicultural cohorts have been involved.

By viewing learning situations as including antagonists sheds new light on past research puzzles. For instance, the multiplicity of antagonists in a higher education and their disruptive nature might give explanation to the puzzle raised by Christie et al. (2008, p. 572), who found that “expertise learnt in one environment [did] not necessarily enable a student to succeed in a new learning environment [and had] implications for understandings of transferable skills.” For many learners, expertise from one environment cannot simply be transposed onto another because, in light of Enabling Learning, there is evidence that an antagonist may be restricting the learning. Moreover, those who are not disposed easily to dialogue, and who experience a learning situation with the absence of a mindful actor who acts as an advocate to enable learning will struggle to construct knowledge on their own. More worryingly, it now appears that antagonists are prevalent. To illustrate this, Quinlan (2014) goes on to claim that a holistic approach in fact “challenges the current dominant discourse of higher education” (p. 33). She goes on further to draw on Barnett and Coates (2005), Barnett (2007), and Walker (2006) to also claim that the “moral and social aims of higher education have been overshadowed by emphases on instrumental and economic goals, including employability skills and preparation for the workplace” (p. 33). It may be, then, that advocates are somewhat in the minority.

Chapter 7: Coping with Uncertainty Theory

Part 1: Results and Analysis

Kip: As I said this is still the new thing for me and I am struggling... well I'm not struggling, but I'm still learning how to cope with it... And that aspect is when you try to like... talk about things or try to discuss something in your class there is a line... Of which you can talk about something which is reasonable... and the one who is too ambitious. It is a blurred line for me. I am still trying to cope with that.

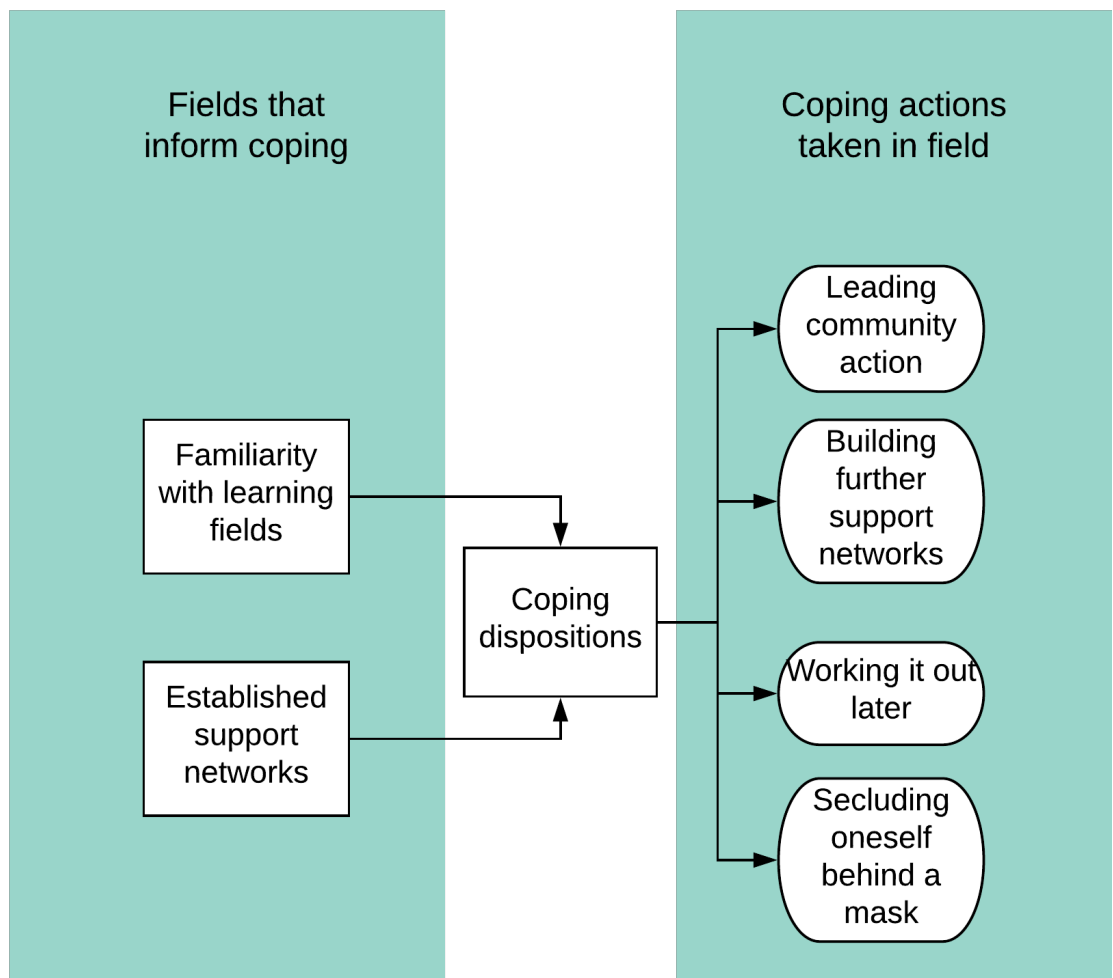


Figure 7

Figure 7 gives an overarching view of *Coping with Uncertainty Theory*. This diagram is an evolved version of mindmaps created during the analysis process and gives an indication of how Bourdieu's Habitus and Field have been used to realise the theory. This diagram should be read from left to right. Reading the diagram in this way gives an indication to the reader about how the theory will unfold in the following sections of the chapter. Immediately, from reading the diagram, it is clear to see how the thinking tools of

Bourdieu's Field and Habitus are vital to realising the theory. Specifically, *Fields that inform coping* are indicated as *familiarity with learning fields* and *established support networks*. *Fields that inform coping* are structured by respective Habitus of learners which are structured by Fields of previous learning and established support networks. This leads to coping dispositions that are then taken to the new Fields that are experienced in a higher education. These coping dispositions are realised in actions taken in a higher education, which are indicated on the right of the diagram as *leading community action*, *building further support networks*, *working it out later*, and *secluding oneself behind a mask*. The following theory is explained in detail in the following sections with the structure of this diagram in mind.

7.1 New ventures—new uncertainties.

New ventures come hand in hand with new uncertainties. In terms of learners in postgraduate programmes, such uncertainties can come in the form of new approaches to teaching and learning, new friendships, new methodological outlooks, new assessment regimes, and once it is all over, new futures. Postgraduate study is a journey that demands plotting a new course which can be viewed from myriad viewpoints. Firstly, there is the view from the *seasoned learner*. For them, the prospect of the journey is passé. Having “done it all before” they feel self-assured that they are disposed to handle whatever may come. The *seasoned learner* has succeeded in other similar experiences and therefore suspects that this one will be nearly identical. Indeed, as with the experienced marathon runners, they know the impasses and have navigated the difficult terrain. In turn, there are likely few uncertainties for them, and as a result, risk of failure is low. Secondly, there is the view from those who are more risk averse. These adventurers in learning are more novice than the seasoned learner, less seasoned perhaps, however, more disposed to risk-taking. For them, they see the course ahead as an exciting new voyage into the unknown, an exciting challenge, and an opportunity to expand horizons. In turn, they relish the prospect of discovery. Perhaps they do not fear failure, or perhaps failure is of no consequence to them. Thirdly, and finally, there is the *hopeful learner*. For them, this journey may mean everything. This is because they have invested, and thus risked, all that they have in it. Thus, they and the success of their voyage are fates now locked together. In sum, the journeys that postgraduate students undertake have many different journeyers, each individual, each with individual ways of interpreting the world. It is from these ways of interpreting that our learners cope with the uncertainties that they experience.

Coping with uncertainties is a major part of how learners experience their programmes. Coping can take many forms in the context of postgraduate study. These forms are forms of extent. For instance, they are the extent of familiarity with a learning field. They are the extent of aversion to risk. They are the extent to which failure is seen as personal. Coping, however, is also tied into support. Support also comes in many forms which tend to take the shape of interpersonal structures. For instance, this assistance can come from the deep-rooted support from family, the support from old friends, and the support from more newly established peer networks. These forms of support are also strategies for coping. These strategies may be understood from previous experiences. For instance, in some cases, previous experiences of learning can be directly transposed to fit new learning situations. Other times, they need to be restructured to fit new situations. Previous experiences can also be taken from life. In these cases, life experiences can inform actions in new situations. The quality of life and learning experiences can also be important to the extent

to which an individual is able to create new coping structures from the ground up or access ready-formed structures when appropriate.

7.2 Having familiarity with the learning field.

Those who have familiarity with certain learning interventions gain advantages in learning situations over those who are unfamiliar. For these learners, a Habitus—Field match is created. Because of this match, in theory, familiar learners can navigate such learning situations with relative ease compared to their unfamiliar counterparts. Many of the participants who studied at the Law School experienced unfamiliar terrain in learning situations. The Law School took a problem-based learning (PBL) approach to delivering the master's programme. The postgraduate cohort in the programme was typically small, with approximately fourteen students. The PBL approach was not only the mainstay learning situation for postgraduate cohorts. It was also the mainstay for undergraduate cohorts. From the intimate postgraduate group, five students were graduates from the same school, the rest were not. For the five internal graduates, PBL was deeply familiar. For the others it was not.

The extent to which it was familiar to some was expressed by Jon.

Jon: Obviously, I studied here before, and I was like familiar with PBL itself and obviously coming to the LLM there were a few of us who had studied here before, and of course there was obviously a large majority of the group who hadn't. And, originally when it started off, you could see that amongst the people who had studied PBL before, there was trust amongst those people and probably not as much trust with the rest of the group, as they weren't as familiar in how to study in this way which wasn't our fault but we were like, "Let's just jump to this" and the other guys were like a bit like "Woah!"

In this case, by familiar and unfamiliar Habitus a field was created. This field went on to nurture animosity. Animosity was nurtured because perspectives of selves emerged within the group which were starkly divided into cans and can-nots. In these terms, the cans experienced learning as unrestricted actors. These unrestricted actors, with three years of familiarity behind them, breezed through learning interventions. However, this was not the case for the can-nots. The can-nots experienced learning as restricted actors. These restricted actors, with no familiarity behind them, stalled, being stonewalled by the structure of the learning intervention and stagnated. This is described by Nasha.

Nasha: We had to like watch them talk and understand and we couldn't even understand the first bit and they were just like so familiar with it. I personally found them really fast, like they just go in, like a couple of times I just sat and watched. A couple of time, we first of all, I came like two weeks late to school. So, when I came, I just kept staring and was like, "What they doing? Why are they talking so fast? Why they answering?" They weren't questions until the end and then they started talking about issues after like reading one thing. Like, where they get the issue from, and they bring up like new things and it was like really, confusing for me like the first like few classes and like...

Indeed, engendering unrestricted and restricted actors in such clear terms transforms the latter into bystanders in their learning. Becoming a bystander is indiscriminate of academic ability and interpersonal competence. In turn, even the brightest students and the best communicators are stymied and silenced in such situations. In contrast, those who are unrestricted may become frustrated because of the disruption to proceedings.

Jon: If I look back, I probably, cause, obviously the majority of my memories come from my final year, probably if I look back to how the group works, at the end of first year and how the LLM group worked at the end. Their first year of PBL would probably be on the same track but my memory is like third year, so we've had like three years of doing it so naturally we going to be better or...

In consequence, separating learners, and allowing learners to self-separate, in such a way in an intimate learning environment creates an 'us and them' situation. Us and them situations foster poor trust relationships, which if not noticed and confronted, can lead to prolonged restricted learning when those who are unable to navigate their way through the teaching methods need trust in order to be able to move to being unrestricted. This can be seen in Orisa's account of her experiences of learning in the Law School.

Orisa: I didn't talk all the time but I talked some time. Because I thought like yeah, they would not give me the chance to talk.

In Orisa's view, being transformed into a bystander was not temporary. In fact, and for the most-part, it continued throughout her learning experience at the school.

7.3 Established support networks.

7.3.1 Actors that can be relied on.

No matter the type of actor, all students rely on support networks to help them cope with the challenges of their studies. A particularly important network, and one that goes far beyond the temporary nature of postgraduate study, is the established network. The established network is one which the student arrives with. As the term suggests, it is a network that has existed and provided support for a long time and is recognised as permanent. For example, this could be family or life-long friends. Having an established network is particularly important to the experience of learning. It is the knowledge that there are familiar surroundings, and familiar people who can be turned to. In fact, an established support network forms a solid point of reference that goes beyond familiar into certainty. Certainty in this case is the unwavering knowledge that the furthest depth that we can fall is into the safety net that our established network provides. Certainty is a safe place which exists both as a point of origin and as a final destination after a long journey.

For some, they remain tethered to that place even when they decide that they will never permanently return. This was experienced by Selia, who, although she had no intention of returning to Greece for work, claimed that her established network existed at "home in Greece" with her family and friends. Selia did not have to explain her needs to her

established support network. And not having to explain her needs to a support network during a stressful period was magnetic. She spoke about this in real time during her interview which overlapped with her dissertation write-up.

Selia: Now, I feel like I need to be back with friends, family, and the environment that I know, with the support that I need, to stay here. I don't think that I get that here.

For Selia, her established support network provided the foundation for her studies abroad. It was something that she had been unable to recreate. Interestingly, she felt that without her established support network at home, she would not be able to continue her studies in the United Kingdom.

7.3.2 Family as support network.

The family as an established support network often comes with strings attached. Selia alludes to this in her interview. On failing an exam, she planned to return home so she could re-ground herself and clear her head. First, however, she had to admit to her parents that she had indeed failed a test. This is not something that she did easily nor quickly. Indeed, it appears that she withheld the truth from them for an amount of time. This may have been because Selia was conscious of being viewed as a disappointment by her parents. In Selia's eyes, she was in constant comparison with her high achieving brother, feeling that she could never be quite as good as he was.

Selia: I've got a lot of pressure because of my brother is outstanding at everything that he does. He finished with 7.5 out of 10 for his undergraduate degree, he went to Imperial College for his master's. He went on to be the presidential guard in the army.

Hence, how an individual views themselves within the context of the family circumstances has consequences for their learning experience. In these terms, failure is very personal. In consequence, Selia kept her failure hidden for as long as she could manage. However, by keeping the failure hidden, she limited her access to the support network that she so heavily relied upon. Eventually, she managed to open up about what had happened. By opening up about her failure, she was then able to release a burden. By releasing this burden, she reopened access to her established support network.

Selia: When I got the grades, I was really afraid of what would happen... but instead when I said that I had failed they [her parents] were like, "Don't worry it's fine—you will get a resit won't you?" And it just felt so much easier to accept the fail when they were so understanding. I even told them like, "Thank you for being so understanding," and they turned to me and, "It's our job!" and even now when I think about it it's like, "It's so sweet!"

In some cases, established support provided by families is tethered to indebtedness. For Xu, this became very literal as her worldviews changed during her master degree

programme. A dramatic change in worldviews may shake the foundations of the established support network. For Xu, this was too much of a risk and thus something that she felt that she would have to keep hidden forever.

Xu: They support us through BA and MA... I have spent all their money and... I dunno I feel that if I say that I don't want to get married, and I don't want children then it's so cruel to them... I dunno. We are too close. We are not like the British and when you are 18 you are independent. We are always bonded together.

7.3.3 Friendship as a support network.

Friendship, too, can provide and be part of established networks. Friendship allows space for a different kind of support. Support from friends has less strings attached than family. Friendship opens up a space in which a learner can be more honest about their experiences of learning, as implied by Selia and Xu's statements above. However, friendships formed on postgraduate programmes move and change during the course of the programme. In turn, what may have seemed like strong support structures for coping may indeed only be temporary. An example of this can be seen from the data included in Jelena's narrative.

Jelena: There were people in the first semester we hung out with English students and in fact Emilie and we hung out with Emilie and only me and Selia failed and... After that happened, it kind of felt that we were both separated from the pack and it was a little bit weird. And by that point, I did make stronger friendships with students from the Chinese group, so I think that that was a critical point.

As support networks fall away, new ones often take their places. In effect, support in programmes is usually available to learners in some form.

7.4 Coping actions taken in the field.

7.4.1 Building further support networks.

A student who is aware of their own needs for support is more likely to be aware that support networks can be built. They are more likely to have the knowledge and experience at hand to do just that. In this case, a learner may have the ability to observe what is going on around them both *in situ* and from broader, higher societal perspectives, and in turn situate themselves within meaningful networks and social relationships which positively affect their studies. Within these structures this learner evaluates the terrain and is able to *build further support networks* to seek out and embrace support provision and access the right people at the right time. Sara, a student from Women's Studies, illustrates this in her account of experiences. She observed that:

Sara: Whenever I reached out to my supervisors they were accessible, especially if it was an electronic communication. It was much easier to send them an email with enquiries. They would suggest readings or schedule office hours. Well of course my peers are the most accessible. We could exchange

ideas or read each other's writing and stuff like that. And then sometimes, like especially when I am working on my dissertation when I go about on my own for the most part, and I just reach out to my supervisor if I absolutely need to do so.

Further to this, their skills set allows them to adapt. This is vital within international contexts because it means that they have or can develop transcultural communication skills. In the case of Sara's experience, her studies acted as a lynchpin from which she could navigate an international cohort of students. This was because her subject area provided a deep-rooted sense of belonging. By noticing this commonality among her peers, she was able to capitalise on this environment. In doing so, she was able to draw on tacit skills and knowledge, which she used to her advantage. She recalled that:

Sara: I think that for the most part I belonged because with Women's Studies. You had shared concerns and shared perspectives originally before we start the master's. You know experiences aren't identical but you can tell that there are some shared ideas both international and home. And of course, it has an impact on me that there are other internationals who are trying to adapt to the academic setting here. It helped us formulate a support network.

This ability to find, construct, and embrace support is a major factor which allows them to act as independent autonomous learners. They are able to view and interact with unfamiliar situations positively. This means that instead of fearing unfamiliar and uncertain situations and retreating to safe spaces, they are willing to risk action if they think that it is necessary and move into unknown spaces and ultimately maximise learning opportunities.

7.4.2 Leading community action.

Despite a variety of personalities exhibiting the dispositions of mindful actors, almost all participants testify to learning situations in which they suffered antagonists of learning without taking positive action. In fact, in the entire data set, the only two participants who reported to have intervened actively in the curriculum were Sara and Jelena. They both did so by *leading community action*.

Sara: I think that the only problems that I had in the programme, and I think that this is specific to our programme, the readings in terms of the kind of theorists that we are reading for... Especially in the first term were Eurocentric.

She goes on to report that with consultation with other students they decided that they

Sara: —actually wanted more diversity in the readings, and we thought that it would add to the quality of the programme.

Sara presents here a number of transformative dispositions. Firstly, she saw the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum juxtaposed with a wider international cohort as being unsatisfactory. Secondly, she judged that the collective cohort would benefit from wider international perspectives. Thirdly, she networked and organised with others in the cohort. Fourthly, she was empowered to take concerns to programme leaders. In fact, Xu reported the same event but very much as a bystander.

Xu: When I read the article I think, "Wow it couldn't be better than this," but then someone else said, "It didn't look at other experience—it's Eurocentric," and I think wow yes that's amazing.

The leadership shown by Sara in Women's Studies was mirrored by Jelena in Human Resource Management albeit the circumstances were different. Jelena took on a leadership role as class rep for a module where over 30% of the cohort would fail an essential exam—including her. Where Sara's programme leaders listened to and acted on her concerns with relative ease, Jelena faced a large amount of resistance from the Management School's hierarchy.

Jelena: I saw my supervisor, who is the acting postgraduate director, and they said that they don't really know what happened but they can't really do much about it. But I got really annoyed about it because it was like a third that failed. I got complaints and I got really upset about it. I prepared myself for that exam and I felt prepared when I went into it... so yeah. I went forward and they took it to the top and they are kind of at the level of deciding if not this year then next year.

As with Sara, Jelena strongly demonstrates a number of dispositions that allowed her to lead community action. Firstly, although the initiating event was much easier to see when compared to Sara's, Jelena saw that a high fail rate on an exam was unsatisfactory. Secondly, she judged that they collectively would benefit from her actions on the matter in hand. Thirdly, she networked and organised with others in the cohort. Fourthly, she was empowered to take concerns to programme leaders. Fifthly, due to the resistance that she faced, she found resolve to see the matter through to an acceptable outcome. In fact, this admittedly stressful situation had another interesting outcome in that it made Jelena feel that she had a stake in a community.

Jelena: I felt quite motivated to do it, and they listened eventually because I said that I would write a complaint to someone, and they said they would take it forward. But it's just... it kind of increased the feeling of being part of a university in a way.

Jelena was not the only one to link motivation to having a stake in a community. Alisha, Jon, and Nasha, in conversation, emphasised in the initial data collection that that they all felt quite strongly that having a choice in what modules they were studying directly impacted collective motivation.

Jon: One thing that Alisha was saying before though, like second term being a lot more easier than first term. I think that it comes a lot back down to people's interests. Like, you said that there were modules forced upon you that you didn't want to take. Second term, you were able to pick your own modules, so naturally you show interest in that [Both: yeah] And you are probably going to want to work harder [Alisha: Work harder; Nasha: yeah] or create a better group dynamic if everyone kind of has the same interests and stuff which obviously showed in the negotiation module. Whereas, if someone doesn't want to be there then naturally they are not going to be [Alisha: interested] as active as a group member.

However, many modules that students have to undertake in their taught postgraduate programmes are not optional.

7.4.3 Working in out later.

Many students disengage from learning situations. Alisha, Orisa, and Nasha all described this during the learning situations mentioned above and in the previous section, experienced in the Law school. Extracts of their testament are given below:

Nasha: I didn't think that it was horrible. Like, I thought that she was really boring as she dragged out things, and she had a million handouts and there were like 40 millions things on one page... and you were always praying for the break.

Alisha: She wouldn't breath, I was just like literally waiting for a period to come.

Orisa: I think that most people had problems with L and were cross. Like, some people they won't come to class or some people were sleeping. I think that the course was kind of boring. The seminars were boring. So, she would just basically sit down and go through each page and not really deep...

Jon, however, did not describe the experience of the same class negatively. Perhaps because he had experienced far worse from studying for his undergraduate degree in the same institution with far bigger student numbers in lectures.

Jon: I loved everything this year... I'm not being funny because at undergrad I wouldn't go to lectures. I just wouldn't go. Because you'd go in and there would be a lecture hall with like 100 people or whatever and it would be one guy talking, and again, you feel a lot more intimidated even though these are your peers, putting your hand up and asking a question in front of 100 people as opposed to like 10 people. This year, I was far more vocal than if I would go to lectures and what ended up last year would be that we just ended up teaching ourselves through PBL but actual lectures as a whole, I just wouldn't go to, just because, I found them a waste of time, personally.

Ying offloaded about her experience of seminars in general during her time with the Sociology department, but the mood is one much more of hopelessness.

Ying: Just I don't think that I understand what I am learning here. Sometimes, I can't follow the professor, and I've already ask too many questions, so I am like, "Ok shut up and pretend that you understand." Yeah. And another thing, the most problem is my language, sometimes I can't totally understand people, and that's a little bit upsetting, so I just let it go. I can't understand, so that's my problem. So, why keep to try it, just keep it, stop it.

Despite all describing similar experiences of learning interventions which led to disengagement, Alisha, Orisa, Nasha, and Jon lay the responsibility for this firmly at the door of the educator. Jon most so, who simply sees some learning situations as a waste of his time. Alisha and Nasha appeared to be able to find comedy in the situation, whereas, Orisa responded negatively. However, when describing similarly disengaging learning interventions Ying, as with Xu earlier, clearly viewed herself as inadequate.

Nevertheless, while clearly reacting differently to similar experiences, they all deployed the same coping strategy to their learning, which I have termed *working it out later*. Working it out later is a strategy that is deployed when a learner becomes disengaged. This could be because the capacity of the learner to engage with an intervention is exhausted. For Nasha, this exhaustion was acute because of the volume of information. For Alisha this was the pace of the delivery; for Orisa, it was repeatedly boring seminars and content and an impression that the educator was 'going through the motions' and skimming the surface of the topic; for Jon, the exhaustion was chronic, as disengagement with lectures was normalised, although the intimacy of the group gave him reason to attend; for Ying, the disengagement was on a much more fundamental level where she became completely accepting of the fact that she would not understand. As a result, she felt abstracted from any learning.

7.5 Secluding oneself behind a mask.

Coping actions are not always so proactive. Indeed, as a way of coping with aspects of learning situations that learners may not be disposed to, they may don a mask to help navigate it. Masks, then, are formed by learners to hide their inadequacies and vulnerabilities and to create the illusion that they understand more than they do. They are formed to deceive in some way. Deception in this case is not a wicked deception, but one to assist the learner through a learning situation while keeping real experiences of learning private. Masks are used as temporary structures that transform outward appearances, projecting images of something different from what they are truly feeling to other actors. Masks are primarily worn by restricted actors or those forced into restricted actions. From the data in this study, the primary motives of those wearing masks seem to have been to deflect discomfort in one of the three following ways: firstly, by showing indifference, which I have termed *the mask of the indifferent actor*; secondly, by showing an imitation of oneself that will be positively received by an educator, which I have termed *the mask of the good student*; and thirdly, by showing a linguistic representation of oneself as close to

others who are identified as native speakers, which I have termed *the mask of the native speaker*.

7.5.1 The mask of the indifferent actor.

The mask of the indifferent actor is worn by learners who wish to deflect the discomfort they are experiencing during a learning situation caused by negative feelings toward others in the learning situation. For example, this appearance of indifference could be instigated by being removed in some way from the other actors in the situation. However, a learner could also act this way because they feel left behind by a learning situation, or they feel out of their depth. An example, previously cited from the data, of such an exclusive learning situation can be found in the section about the antagonistic, antialogic educator in the Law School. As described by Orisa, several learners in the class became “cross” and “were on their phones” during the learning intervention. Indeed, Orisa regularly donned the mask of indifference. Being under-disposed to postgraduate learning situations in international contexts, she was unable to navigate conflict easily, unable to deal with the disregard she interpreted from the actions of entitled actors, and unable to challenge authority when learning structures taught her nothing.

7.5.2 The mask of the good student.

The mask of the good student is worn by learners who wish to deflect the discomfort they are experiencing during a learning situation caused by a need to appear positively toward an actor who they identify as an authority. For example, a learner will wear the mask of the good student when they encounter an educator or perhaps another scholar who is more advanced in their studies. In fact, Ying all but mentioned the word mask in a confession about her experiences of postgraduate study.

Ying: I maybe pretend that I'm a good student, but I'm really not.

Ying went on to illustrate her pretence, giving examples, such as the one below:

Ying: When we have the group discussion she would come over and listen to what we discuss and ask us if we have any problems, but most of Chinese students say, “No, we don't have any problems,” because we don't know how to... Explain that we have a problem to the professor.

Ying again shows habits of a restricted actor. She knew in some ways that she needed to reach out for support but was unable to make the necessary connection, or even, it would seem, find the correct language to express herself to educators.

Where Ying used a mask to hide, Nasha spoke of creating one to impress. In conversation with Alisha and Jon, Nasha enthusiastically counters their expression of dislike for exams. She goes on to justify her stance on the grounds that the educator should be impressed by extensive reproduction.

Alisha: I found that as there were no exams, that was very helpful. [Nasha: that was annoying to me]. Because I could just concentrate on learning about deeper issues. If I had exams then I would have like, approached it like, "I have to learn, learn, learn!"

Nasha: Oh I love exams... [Jon: I hate them]. No but, I love exams. I wish that we had at least one module that had an exam [Jon: No...]. Like, if there was one then I'd be on like a distinction. Like, you know what you are writing and the person is so impressed that you all this in how many hours. And you like read articles and you like rephrase the articles in the exam...

Nasha clearly shows the deeply held beliefs that reproduction holds value and that it will impress another who she identifies as above her in a hierarchy. This remains the case even if the reproduction holds no value in itself.

7.5.3 The mask of the native speaker.

The mask of the native speaker is worn by learners who wish to deflect any discomfort they experience during learning situations caused by an anxiety about being rejected due to the way that they sound. This was expressed by Jelena, who, along with Selia, felt shunned by the native speakers in her programme. Jelena, an individual proficient in the English language, talked of her long desire to lose her Polish accent.

Jelena: I remember when I first came to England I was ashamed of talking because of my accent. It just felt like I wasn't tolerated when I talked to others. "What if I say something, and they don't understand me because of my accent?" So, I think that it could be something similar in this case. I still can't get rid of my... I feel like I still have a Polish accent.

Part 2: Discussion

7.6 Coping with uncertainty theory.

In this section, I situate the theory *Coping with Uncertainty*, constructed from this research project, within relevant literature. In doing this, I advance the theory and discuss its component parts at length. From this discussion, the importance of this theory and how it affects the experience of learning becomes clear. Although coping is present in the literature, the theory presented here clearly moves beyond current thinking and provides insight into experiences which directly relate to teaching and learning practices in higher education. I continue in this section, firstly, with a review of the theory itself. Secondly, I relate the Fields that inform the theory in the context of the wider literature. I have divided the theory into two subsections called (1) *the disruptiveness of uncertainty* and (2) *the helpfulness of familiarity*. Thirdly, and finally, I go onto delineate the component of the theory called *coping actions taken in the field*. To begin this, I discuss leading community action and building further networks, which I combine. Then, I discuss the component of *working it out later*. To end, I discuss the component *secluding oneself behind a mask*. This section is more involved because I draw parallels to performativity before distancing this component from such literature.

7.6.1 Review of theory.

Coping with uncertainties is an important part of how learners experience learning in postgraduate programmes. How learners cope takes many forms which exist to many extents. For instance, the ability to cope is linked to the extent of familiarity a learner has with a learning field, the extent of their aversion to risk, and the extent to which failure is seen as personal. Coping, however, is also tied into support, which also comes in many forms and to differing extents. For instance, deep rooted support from established networks can take the form of family and long term friends. However, a learner can also build further support networks, such as the support from more newly established peer networks. These forms of coping are also strategies which may be understood from previous experiences— for instance, previous experiences of learning. In some cases, these strategies can be directly transposed to fit new learning situations, however, in others they can act as a template to build something new. The need for coping exists because of uncertainty brought by new situations, and the resultant need for familiarity.

7.6.2 Coping with uncertainty in the wider literature.

Although there is an extent of literature in this area, it falls short in two ways. The first is that it heavily focuses on the undergraduate experience of learning (Andrade, 2006). The undergraduate experience is markedly different in nature from the postgraduate experience, therefore, the extent of its usefulness is questionable. The second is that the literature which can be extrapolated from the undergraduate literature and added to the scant literature on the postgraduate experience mostly describes problems that international students face rather than theorising about how they can and do cope with them (For example: Robotham and Julian, 2006, and Ryan, 2012). This can in part be seen through the work of Frydenberg (2008) and Frydenberg and Lewis, (1993, 2000), who refer to coping as productive and non-productive. Indeed, with this lens, it's clear to see that much of the literature in educational contexts refers to non-productive coping strategies. Tully (2004, p. 45) enumerates such non-productive strategies, such as “wishing things were different, comfort eating, drinking, smoking or taking medications, by taking it out on others and/or trying to forget it.” Yes, these are descriptions of experiences and hold some value. And of course, such descriptions resonate with some of the experiences of the participants in this study. However, these tend to be with those with restricted senses of academic selves, who experienced learning as limited actors. Indeed, the experiences of those who do in fact cope are absent from the literature. In turn, neither practitioners nor students are helped to deal with coping issues. In fact, in this study, the majority of participants had significant coping strategies to carry them through their studies. Indeed, where they did not have the strategies, they constructed them successfully.

7.7 Fields that inform coping with uncertainty.

7.7.1 The disruptiveness of uncertainty.

It is clear from the data in this research project that the uncertainties experienced by undertaking a postgraduate programme, can be, and at times are, disruptive to the lives and learning of students. The most obvious disruption is the shift from banking to problem-posing approaches of pedagogy experienced by Ying, Xu, and at times also, Nasha and Orisa. This transition out of banking pedagogies into problem-posing ones as difficult is discussed in the literature by Robertson, Line, Jones and Thomas (2000) and by Ryan

(2007) who comment on the disruption caused by a learner moving from rote-learning and testing to new approaches. Of course, banking types of learning often go hand in hand with large class sizes, which, for example, are often seen in China (Chan, 1999; Harfitt, 2015; OECD, 2012; Yee, 1989). Moving from huge class sizes where knowledge is delivered to much smaller groups where knowledge is constructed through dialogue was also found to be a disruptive factor (Cain, 2012; Chanock, 2010; Macfarlane, 2015; Rogers and Freiberg, 1994). Furthermore, the removal of such dominant and rigid structures, which structure a passive learning, results in the removal of the safety that they provide. In turn, passivity in learning is no longer an accepted approach to learning and activity in learning must replace it. As a result, where passivity in learning felt safe and familiar, activity feels unsafe and unfamiliar. This is not directly described within the Educational literature. However, it is echoed by Luhmann (2000, p. 101), who states that “risks emerge as a component of decision and action. They do not exist by themselves. If you refrain from action you run no risk.” The previous literature discussing risk, which is cited above, only scratches the surface of the insight that the theory *Coping with Uncertainty* can provide educators about international students and their connection with risk. The reasons for inaction and reticence, mentioned within this project, that learners experience in learning and teaching in a higher education begin to become clear and explain the limited actions of many with restricted senses of academic selves.

Of course, although these experiences mirror those of many, learners who experienced uncertainties in the sense described by Luhmann were in fact in the minority in this research project. However, although this was the case, all participants experienced uncertainty and the disruptiveness that it creates in some way. Firstly, this disruption was present because participants feared failure. This is reflected in the literature in the words of Kyriacou (2012, p. 109) who claims that “learning is a high-risk activity and failure is painful.” Pain and failure come together in terms of fear because, as stated in the testament of participants, failure at this level of study is a very personal failure. Secondly, the participants faced uncertainty with fear because they were faced with the challenge of building new relationships, such as friendships, and existing within a new cultural environment. These fears are echoed throughout the literature (Adelman 1988; Bochner, 1982; Furnham, 2004; Lombard, 2014; McClure 2007; Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland and Ramia, 2008; Sherry, Thomas and Chui, 2010; Zhao, Jindal-Snape, Topping and Todman, 2008). Therefore, as claimed in this research project, all students face some level of uncertainty during their learning experience.

7.7.2 The helpfulness (and unhelpfulness) of familiarity.

It is also clear from the research data that familiarity acted as a counterbalance to uncertainty on many occasions. These familiarities emerged as familiar faces in the established support networks of family and friends. They also emerged in terms of familiar ways of learning, familiar environments, and familiar knowledge that had been learned in the past. Familiarity can be found in the Sociological literature and is what Luhmann (1998, p. 6) describes as “an unavoidable fact of life” and claims that familiarity is a way to cope with uncertain, opaque situations. Familiarity, then, acts as a point of reference when negotiating uncertainties. For instance, in building new relationships, familiarity helps in finding common ground on which to build. However, familiarity also acts as a safe place. This is of course helpful to learning in the right circumstances, for example, where a familiar individual acts to support learning. Nevertheless, if the uncertainty is too great, as

experienced by Ying, familiarity can also be a drawback where the learner retreats to the safety of formerly learnt knowledge. Indeed, then, familiarity matters to learners on postgraduate programmes and must be provided in some capacity during studies. This is echoed by Perry (2006 p, 27) who states that “a creative and respectful educator can create safety by making the learning environment more familiar, structured, and predictable.” However, familiarity is mostly absent from higher education literature despite the words of Caine and Caine (2006, p. 58), who state that “a key to nurturing an appropriate state of mind in learners is the sense of safety and community that is generated in a course or class.”

7.8 Coping actions taken in the field.

7.8.1 Leading community action and building further support networks.

Two of the four coping actions taken by the participants of this study and presented in this research project offer new ways to consider the international experience of learners in a higher education. Leading community action and *building further support networks* focus a view of these learners not as vulnerable, helpless, or passive victims of learning situations, but as powerful individuals who will not only take action for themselves but will pull others up behind them. This was especially the case for the component taking community action. Two clear examples were presented in the results and analysis part of this chapter from the respective testaments of Jelena and Sara when they conferred with their peers and challenged authority. A further example of empowered students can be seen in the component *building further support networks*. Again, here, Sara proved to be particularly effective as an actor. However, this was also experienced by Selia, who reaped the rewards of engaging with fellow students from China. However, that students can be leaders of action for the sake of their learning community is not reflected in the literature. Similar literature concentrates on the leadership in terms of academics as leaders of institutions (For example: Bolden, Gosling and O’Brien, 2014; Macfarlane, 2005). In the wider sense, these experiences point to issues found in the Education and Sociology literature such as citizenship (Veugelers, 2007; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004), community (Tuomi, 2005), and a social capital (Fukuyama, 1995). However, these concepts are not reflected in the higher education literature in terms of learning, and therefore, I claim the uniqueness of this theory within a higher education context.

7.8.2 Working it out later.

The above theory provides a picture of how certain individuals have actively and positively coped with issues which have come to a crescendo. The theory above, then, describes macro coping strategies. However, this research project also reveals a micro strategy for coping called *working it out later*. This strategy is an indirect coping method where the learner endures the learning situation only to problem-solve later on. In turn, it disturbs the traditional binary in the literature described at the opening of this section by Frydenberg (2008) and Frydenberg and Lewis, (1993, 2000) that coping is productive and unproductive. This was reported by Alisha, Jon, and Nasha in the Law School, where they in fact, engaged in both productive and unproductive coping strategies to navigate bad teaching. Hence, the component of the theory presented here led learners to positive outcomes despite negative experiences. The literature does not appear to reflect this component despite its clear importance to navigating learning experiences.

7.8.3 *Secluding oneself behind a mask.*

The final coping action of those identified by this research project is *secluding oneself behind a mask*. This component describes an action taken by many learners to navigate a learning situation in a way that is not proactive. In turn, this component speaks to the typical non-productive coping strategies which are often described in the literature (Frydenberg, 2008; Frydenberg and Lewis, 1993, 2000). In consequence, I do not claim that these components of coping with uncertainty are novel. Instead, I here situate them among the wider literature. In doing so, I recognize that the wearing of masks is similar in nature to performing an act. In turn, the wearing of masks in this research has parallels with literature on performativity and performance (Parker and Sedgwick, 2013). However, this literature potentially opens up a multitude of new conversations about, to take a mere small example, gender (Butler, 2002) and belonging (Bell, 1999). There is no doubt that these issues affect the experiences of all learners in postgraduate programmes. However, delving into these debates exceeds the scope of this research project, and indeed, also exceeds the scope of what a practitioner in a higher education can do in an academic year. Instead, what matters practically to practitioners and learners alike is an awareness that performances, including academic performances, are being played out. These performances are being played out because the learner has decided to hide. In light of this, the term “mask” is particularly helpful in highlighting this matter.

Masks in a higher education context, then, and as determined by this research project, are temporary disguises used to deceive others in learning situations. By deceiving others with masks, the mask wearing deflects the advances of an other, and in turn, averts an exposure and allows the learner to cope within a learning situation. What exactly the exposure would be if the mask wasn't worn is not always clear. This was seen in the case of Orisa who often wore the mask of the indifferent actor. Orisa's reasoning is not clear and is mostly likely deeply rooted and complex. However, such actions of coping are recognised in the literature as “coping through disengagement” (Khawaja and Dempsey, 2007, 2008). Another mask identified as a result of this research project was the mask of the good learner. This was worn at times by Nasha and Ying. This mask is mirrored in the Nursing literature, where the term “the mask of motherhood” is used by Maushart (1997) and then later by Shepherd (2011). Shepherd found that women were wearing a mask that presented them as mothers who were managing when in fact they were isolated and struggling. She states that “they did not want to be seen as not managing. Thus, a visit from the nurse was readily accepted but not asked for” (Shepherd, 2011, p. 143). These experiences of motherhood mirror those exposed in this research project and thus the implications for practice in nursing, here mirror the implications for teaching practice.

To be specific, being aware of and noticing the wearing of masks is part of developing into a skilled practitioner. Skilled practitioners can then act upon mask wearing in an appropriate way. This is echoed in the Nursing literature by Shepherd, who commends the nurses from her research sample for their “skilled and caring practice.” In her eyes, the practice was skilful because it not only noticed the phenomenon but also provided support in a “covert manner.” By covert, she meant that nurses “gave positive feedback and provided openings to encourage women to discuss their feelings. Such an approach allowed women to talk when they were ready” (p. 144). In the same way that women may not speak of their concerns out of fear of being criticised and judged as being bad mothers, students remain silent because of their concerns out of fear of being criticised and judged

as being bad students. In turn, a practitioner in a higher education must also be skilled to provide the space and time in which a learner can remove their mask if that is what they want.

Indeed, it appears that some learners do not want to remove the masks that they are wearing and instead would like to improve their masks to completely camouflage their true selves. This was the case for Jelena, who admitted as much as to wear “the mask of the native speaker” as an act of coping. For Jelena, she lived with an amount of anxiety because of her Polish accent and felt that it had been a barrier for her. The literature shows that she is not alone in feeling this way. Brown (2008, p. 86) conducted an ethnographic study into language and anxiety in postgraduate international students of 14 participants over 12 months. These participants included those from the Asia Pacific region, Brazil, Slovenia, Russia, Jordan, Iran, and Germany. She found that participants carried an overwhelming amount of stress with regards to linguistic competence, concerning the following of lectures, and more significantly, making contributions in class. Furthermore, this is also an issue highlighted in Andrade’s (2006) extensive literature review of issues around international student adjustment.

Chapter 8: Clear Fields—Muddied Fields Theory

Part 1: Results and Analysis

Sara: Yeah, and like, well I mean at some point I just had to let go of my previous experience and get soaked into the academic setting like basically, “Ok let’s stop thinking about the real world and let’s think of how the academy understands things or presents things for our understanding.”

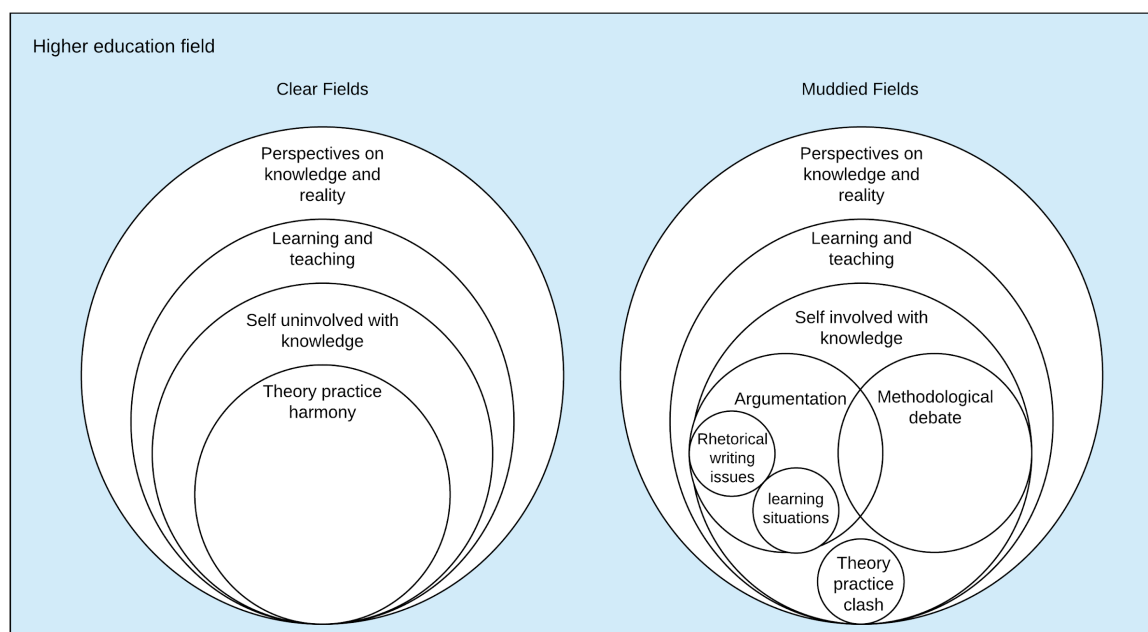


Figure 8

Figure 8 gives an overarching view of *Clear Fields-Muddied Fields Theory*. The diagram in figure 8 is an evolved version of mindmaps created during the analysis process and gives an indication of how Bourdieu’s Field has been used to realise the theory. This diagram should be read in two parts. Both these parts sit within a greater Field, coloured in blue, which indicates the wider Field of a higher education. Each of the two parts within the wider Field of a higher education has a number of layers presented as circles which become increasingly smaller. The first part, on the left, indicates Clear Fields. The outer layer of Clear Fields is *perspectives on knowledge and reality*. The second layer is *learning and teaching*. The third layer is *self uninvolved with knowledge*. The fourth layer is *theory and practice harmony*. The second part, on the right, indicates Muddied Fields. Although the outer two layers of Muddied Fields are the same as Clear Fields, from this point Muddied Fields become different and increasingly more involved. This begins with the third layer. The third layer is *self is involved with knowledge*. Within this layer there are two overlapping layers. The first of these is *argumentation*. Argumentation has two further Fields, which are *rhetorical writing issues* and *learning situations*. The second of the overlapping layers is *methodological debate*. The final layer presented in the diagram is *theory and practice clash*. As the diagram suggests, Muddied Fields are potentially far

more difficult to navigate as a learner, as they involve several more complex layers. The layers of Clear and Muddied Fields are explained in detail in the following sections.

8.1 Academic learning fields.

All learners in postgraduate programmes find themselves in specific learning fields. These learning fields are multi-layered and exist on many levels and dimensions within the structures of a higher education. Here, I discuss the primary layer of these learning fields, which is an academic learning field. An academic learning field is generated by the actors who control programmes of study. Collectively, these actors are known as an academy. An academy is a group of scholars who provide study for others in a specialised field. Indeed, academies determine what, and in what ways, research and scholarship will take place. For example, some academies take objectivist perspectives. In objectivist terms, an assumption is made that reality is external and that data is discovered. In turn, scholars aim to reach context-free generalisations. To take a further and opposing example, some academies take constructivist perspectives. In constructivist terms, an assumption is made that reality is multiple and that data is co-constructed through interaction. In turn, scholars do not aim to make generalisations because generalisations are situated in the context of time, space, and action.

Some academies have clear methodological boundaries on their perspectives, while others do not. For example, those in hard science disciplines, such as physics, see their worlds of study in “scientific” terms. In contrast, those in sociological disciplines, such as women’s studies, choose to see their world of study with constructivist paradigms. However, there are many academies within the social science disciplines that see their worlds through a range of paradigms that vary across the spectrum from a positivist perspective on theory and knowledge production to the several responses that there have been to that original position. Varied methodological perspectives make for uncertain learning fields for learners. Uncertainty in learning fields complicates learning. These complications tend to appear in disciplines which attract larger cohorts of students, for instance, management. In these disciplines, academies exist with, much like the theological differences in Protestantism, some factions studying the field in more traditional terms, but with others choosing to study using constructivist or interpretivist perspectives. In sum, what these scholars want to do and how they want to do it has ramifications for the experiences of those learning in postgraduate programmes.

These ramifications begin with learning and teaching perspectives and strategies. Academics provide programmes of study with their own particular styles of learning and teaching, materials, and with particular methods of assessment. To take styles of learning and teaching first: learning situations are specific to learning fields. For instance, learning fields in hard science disciplines tend to be lectures and laboratories, while in the social science disciplines learning fields tend to be lectures and seminars. Within the social science disciplines there are differences again: where disciplines such as women’s studies have only seminars, and disciplines such as management may have workshops. Furthermore, cohort sizes differ. Disciplines such as management attract very large cohorts, while women’s studies attract much more modest numbers. Secondly, assessment differs depending on learning fields. For instance, assessment in hard science disciplines is

in examination form. However, examination is much less common in social science disciplines where argumentative essay writing as assessment is the norm.

However, learners themselves do not necessarily arrive disposed to the learning and teaching perspectives and strategies of their chosen academies. Indeed, their dispositions vary greatly, depending on their former experiences of education. By the time learners arrive at postgraduate study, they mostly arrive with established senses of academic selves with Habituses that have successfully helped them understand how things should be done. In some cases, in some programmes, there is clear alignment between an individual Habitus and the academic learning field entered. In these cases, learners experience academic learning fields as *clear fields*. However, for some other learners in other programmes, there is Habitus and Field clash. In the case of Habitus and Field clash, it is the learner's Habitus that has to bend to the will of the Field established by the academy. This is described by Sara in the opening quotation. For her, she found that her ways of approaching her studies were obstructive to her learning and chose, because she was able to, to transform the ways in which she thought about her studies and accessed knowledge. In consequence, restructuring approaches and ways of thinking in order to fit her new academic learning field.

Sara's instance is but one of many instances when a learner is faced with a *muddied field*. Unlike clear fields, muddied fields are complex and layered. Muddied fields are far more likely to transpire in social science disciplines where matters are debatable, contested, and open to interpretation. Muddied fields involve subjectivity. They are understood through the self. As a result, muddied fields are experienced in a multiplicity of subjective ways, leading to a range of perceptions of muddiness: those who are more disposed to the academic learning field in which they study, for example, are more likely to experience those fields as less muddied; those less disposed to muddiness may require many more flexibilities than those operating in clearer fields. In consequence, the higher disposed the learner to the field, the more likely they are to succeed, and the easier their journey will be. In this section, I go on to delineate, and illustrate with data, Clear and Muddied Fields. The data allows for a shorter section on *clear fields* and then a much longer more involved number of sections on *muddied fields*.

8.2 Clear fields.

Clear fields provide clear boundaries and expectations for learners. Examples of clear fields are learning situations that are directive, assessed by examination, and have fixed and assumed perspectives on methodological issues. As a result, learners experience insignificant Habitus and Field clash. For postgraduate studies, this means that learners can enter and advance in these academic learning fields without added complication. The prime example of this from the data comes from Thomas's experience of physics. Thomas expressed, in clear terms, the assuredness that his chosen discipline of study gave him.

Thomas: I would never like it in the school where you had to discuss something and it all depends on the teacher's view and you have to argue something. In physics you get a value and it's right or wrong.

Indeed, academic learning fields such as physics provide learners with right and wrong answers. In turn, right and wrong answers provide a certainty that decomplicates the experience of learning and simplifies subject matter.

8.2.1 Uncomplicated learning.

An important part of learning that is decomplicated is assessment. In the plain logic that clear fields present, if the work is put in, then positive results should be attained as a result. Thomas describes this certainty with the major form of assessment in his programme, which was examinations. For him, hard work and learning specific lessons in preparation, assured such positive attainment.

Thomas: And when you go out you usually know whether you failed or not. If you do lots of exercises then you should be fine.

Indeed, according to Thomas, physics itself is a decomplicating discipline, one which fosters clear thinking and a problem-solving skill set that can be used to deal with a transforming world.

Thomas: To be honest, physics helps me quite a lot in the way I approach problems and the way that I see things, and if I have a problem I don't try to put it to one side, I try to think about it and I do it. I think that is why some physicists end up being consultants because they can think about problems and approach it... it's just a different topic then... for consulting you just need some more high subject background. It's just the way that you approach things I would say. So, it's more about how you handle things and not about how much you know about a topic.

This problem-solving skill set appears to be easily transferable between academies and cultures. Indeed, for those in hard science disciplines, transitioning from one academy to another, from one educational culture to another may be much more seamless than those in the social sciences.

Thomas: Based on my experience, I haven't really had a bad experience. I haven't had to adjust for anything. It is all kind of similar.

8.2.2 Absence of methodological debate.

During Thomas's account, there was a no mention of methodology. It is completely absent. It is not absent in the sense that it is missing or removed. It is absent in the sense that it is invisible. It is so assumed and familiar that it cannot be seen. However, an image of it can be theorised with the reflection of Sara's experiences. Indeed, Sara and Thomas are almost mirror images of each other in terms of dispositions. They are both highly disposed to studying in a higher education. They are both mindful actors. They both demonstrate habits of learners with unrestricted senses of academic selves. In fact, they also both experience the methodological demands of their academies in clear terms. However, these experiences

of these methodological demands are at opposite ends of a methodological spectrum. More specifically, Thomas experienced objectivist perspectives, and Sara experienced subjectivist perspectives. For Sara, subjectivity is the *raison d'être* of the academy (Women's Studies) which she had joined. It is an academy built around matters of being, where ways of knowing are multiple and scholars respond to dominant power structures, aiming to disrupt norms. For Sara, her academic self is meshed together with the world that she continually questions as a woman within it. However, for Thomas, it is very different and far less involved. His academic self is removed from his world of study. The nature of being is not debated in his academy, and neither is how knowledge should be accessed. Indeed, for Thomas, these matters are all so taken for granted by his academy, and thus by him, that they are clear to the point of invisible, merely assumed as a simple norm. In consequence, those who experience their learning as Thomas did, within clear academic fields, experience it without the burden of a methodological debate.

8.3 Muddied fields.

8.3.1 Methodological bewilderment?

For those in hard sciences programmes, being unaware of methodological debates is perfectly understandable when they do not exist in your academic learning field. However, for those in the Social Sciences this understanding is not extended. Indeed, the deeper that learners advance into academia, the closer they come to producing their own knowledge, therefore, the more an understanding of the debates around knowledge and theorising they are expected to have. In fact, Sara was the only participant to discuss such matters. This absence of this methodological awareness in the data was intriguing. It is possible that learners were clear on these issues, having full understandings of methodological issues, sources of knowledge, and the nature of being to the point of not mentioning them. However, I suspect that they were most likely not. Indeed, the absence of the mention of methodological issues when they are so central to the objectives of academies is mysterious. In fact, I theorise here that this absence is due to such a huge difficulty in engaging with it.

8.3.2 Argumentation

8.3.2.1 Helpful apparatus within muddied fields.

Argumentation is the apparatus that we use to help us muddle through the grey areas of the social world that do not adhere to the absolute values, and the right and wrong answers afforded to those in the hard sciences. In turn, argumentation pervades studies on social matters, being involved in oral communication in constructivist learning situations and vital to success in written assignments. It involves an appeal to an audience and the uncertainty that comes with a need for their acceptance of a set of reasons given in support of a theory that is routed through the self. Indeed, the self is a key factor of argumentation because the self is the driver behind it, the lens with which the social world is seen for analysis, and the crafter of the argument itself. Ultimately, if the argument successfully persuades another of a standpoint, then the self is accepted; however, if the argument is unsuccessful in persuading an other, then the self is rejected also.

The area where argumentation matters the most is in academic writing, where most of the assessment is realised. To be able to successfully persuade the reader, there are first a number of things that the writer must be able to do. Firstly, they must have a sound understanding of a topic area. Secondly, they must find an issue that is worthy of discussion and analysis. Thirdly, they must be able to take an academic position on that issue. Fourthly, they must have an understanding of their position in relation to others in the literature. Fifthly, they must have on some level an understanding of the position on the given matter that their audience is likely to take. In sum, academic writing is not just putting words into a text, it is considering many things in crafting a critical argument.

8.3.2.2 Rhetorical writing issues.

Although argumentation is helpful in helping learners navigate muddied fields, it becomes itself muddied in the international context of postgraduate higher education. This is because persuasion is laden with value-based and cultural understandings. For instance, how, and the extent to which, a writer chooses to structure a persuasive argument and to evidence it, varies depending on their cultural understandings of persuasion. Therefore, for international cohorts of students in postgraduate programmes in the United Kingdom argumentation is a critical issue in navigating learning experiences.

The complications that argumentation adds to the experience of learning for those in social science disciplines adds a further number of layers to their fields of study. For those who are disposed to this argumentation and writing critically, or those who are able to adapt, unrestricted learning experiences can ensue. However, for those who are not disposed to writing critically, restricted academic experiences can result as they try to catch up. Catching up was something experienced by Alisha.

Alisha: I had never done critical writing before in my UG.

Alisha, as with many learners, walked blindly into her written assessments, unaware that critical writing was necessary, what it was, or how to do it. The consequences for her, a student highly disposed to learning in a higher education, who mostly experienced an unrestricted sense of an academic self, and who was a mindful actor in learning situations, were setbacks in the form of lower-than-expected grades in the first term of her study. Because of her dispositions, she was able to adapt and progress in development, taking all experiences as opportunities to learn, and feeling motivated to improve rather than despondent about perceived poor grades.

However, this is not the case for all learners, with many who were not very disposed to a higher education left struggling. In turn, this can lead to frustration and even anger, finding themselves with an extra and very high hurdle to overcome. In her account, Orisa expressed frustration and anger, claiming that:

Orisa: I had no idea how to write, everything I had been taught was how to write a descriptive essay. We weren't taught critical writing. Even in my dissertation it was descriptive. No argument [...]when I came here, no one told

me when you were writing essays, you do it this way. Not basically hold my hand but... No one told me that when you are writing essays you rather than giving your own personal opinions... You structure it in a certain way. Like, it can be argued that or it had been suggested that. No one told me like, you have to get like opinions from other people to support.

Indeed, Orisa experienced almost her entire postgraduate programme in ignorance of what was expected of her in terms of writing. Furthermore, she seemingly entered and went through most of her LLM with no critical engagement in terms of academic reading, and was ignorant of the concept that she, as a learner, was afforded and expected to use an academic voice as part of a wider academic discussion. Moreover, even the notion that she might and should have an academic voice was also completely absent. Her fellow Nigerian classmate Nasha expressed a similar perspective:

Nasha: It (the LLM programme) taught me how to write essays, that's the only thing that I'm thankful for. Now, I know how to do it!

Here, as with Orisa, it appears to have taken Nasha the entire academic year to deduce what exactly it was that was being demanded of her in terms of writing. Indeed, for Nasha, finally uncovering the nature of this was somewhat of a relief, as if cracking a code or solving a puzzle. In terms of learners and learning experience, those such as Alisha, Nasha, and Orisa experienced their learning with varying extents of added workload and an added pressure when trying to attain acceptable grades.

8.3.2.3 Writing as a craft.

Writing persuasive argument is not a skill that can be quickly learned; it is a craft. And as with any craft, craftsman-like skills take time to develop and hone. These skills involve much relearning of rhetorical structuring, developing a tone and tenor appropriate to new audiences, fine tuning language skills to convey meaning accurately, while learning how to integrate appropriate supporting sources. However, these skills are often left blunt with hapless interventions from departmental staff. Indeed, Xu recounts a conversation that she had with her supervisor after receiving a very poor grade for a written piece of work:

Xu: Actually, I had a very difficult time last term because I got a very disastrous feedback. One of my modules called Qualitative Research Methods I got 16%. I also overwrote it [...] My supervisor met me and hugged me and said that I did a very good job as I am not a native speaker and all my classmates are really good at English and for the future I need to structure my essay and provide references... how to write in English style and they said that my critical thinking is not enough and I need to think harder and not just describe in my essays.

Picking apart this recollection, it seems difficult to see how she did “a very good job.” In fact, she appears to have done very badly. Indeed, it appears she was identified as deficient in several ways. Firstly, her English language was identified as not “really good.”

Secondly, her writing had no “structure.” Thirdly, she had not referred to any literature. Fourthly, she did not know how to “write in an English style.” Fifthly, she could not think critically “enough.” Sixthly, she needed to “think harder” because, apparently, describing is not thinking hard. In sum, Xu’s recollection describes a torrent of ambiguous, unhelpful, and patronising feedback, which left her feeling dejected and negative because it identified her as deficient with no tangible solutions on which to follow up.

Many departmental assumptions about the writing abilities and styles of learners make for alarming accounts of learning experiences. Kip recounts his experience of “mysterious” rhetorical structures particular to his department.

Kip: Yeah, but the reading does not affect that much I think compared with the mysterious thing about writing... you don't know where to go. The tradition of writing is like completely different. When I was on pre-sessional course, E told me like you have to use academic language, and you have to write with the formal style, and I had good marks on that but I think that most of the things that the department in the university, they use that style but not in philosophy. I wrote my first two essays in academic style, and it was really bad and my supervisor told me to use informal words all along. Yeah, and I think this is specific to philosophy, they want me to speak in first person—like a narrative. Actually, the rhetorical structures are quite different. You have to continually repeat stuff to allow the reader to keep up. I've never experienced that before. They didn't tell me about this before. I wrote really formal English, and my lecturer told me that this is not what we need in our department.

Here, Kip suffered a double mishap. Firstly, he was unwittingly misguided on his pre-university programme. Secondly, he was, presuming unwittingly, kept in the dark by his department concerning what was expected of him. The first assumed that academic writing styles were universally accepted at the university. The second assumed that academic writing styles were universally understood by all.

8.3.2.4 Constructivist learning situations.

Most programmes in the social sciences approach learning with some extent of constructivist learning methods. In many cases, these are seminars. In seminars, learners must come to the learning situation prepared to present a paper or perhaps have read a paper for discussion, which has been assigned for homework. Discussions in learning situations should not merely be descriptions of texts. Instead, they should include critical evaluation of the matters discussed in the texts. To be able to do this the learner must have some level of understanding of the text, but more importantly, their own standpoint on the main issues that the text has brought to light. As discussed earlier in the chapter, this is a difficult task for some, however, it requires time and effort in preparation for all. This was discussed by Gregor, who pointed to Alisha as model student in terms of preparation.

Gregor: Alisha was reading everything, she was very well prepared always. For example, me with the guys, maybe the day before the lecture, we were outside drinking beers... yeah... So, we were like, ok, we won't do the reading for

tomorrow... We'll do it during the weekend. But Alisha was always prepared. I think it's in her character, she's very organised.

8.3.3 Theory and practice clash.

8.3.3.1 Experience of practical matters as a helpful point of reference.

Many modern programmes in higher education point to practical futures. One in particular within this data set was human resource management. The three participants from the human resource management programme were Emilie, Jelena, and Selia, all of whom had work experience in some form and all of whom hoped to be HR managers in the future. Out of these three, Emilie was oldest at thirty-seven years of age and had significant work experience behind her. She had never been an HR manager. However, she had experienced HR and had “been managed” by different people in different professional capacities. These experiences of practical matters acted as helpful points of reference for her as a learner.

Emilie: I could draw parallels, especially being in a field like HR which is about working and having been in working life. I think that that really helped me because I know what it is like to be an employee, and I have seen some good examples and some bad examples of HR, and I could relate to that.

Indeed, for Emilie, her experiences of HR helped her to relate to theoretical matters on a conceptual level. However, for those who have enrolled in a programme that suggests that they may be able to transition into a specific role in a job market, there are often feelings that engagement with theoretical issues are not enough. In turn, a desire for practical experience becomes a distraction to studies and further muddies fields.

8.3.3.2 Practice as a distraction.

Practice as a distraction to studies was experienced by all three participants from the human resource management programme. For instance, Jelena expressed disappointment at the lack of practical skills that she had gained from her experience of her programme.

Jelena: I feel a little bit disappointed. I'm glad that I did the masters and I'm happy with the content, but I did think that some exposure to the practical work that I will be involved in would be really beneficial... Something similar to examples of duties they do which are more advanced. But if we could have for example a model company and produce a report. That is something that managers do and if we could practice it over that year at least a couple of times that would be an advantage.

Indeed, those who have enrolled in programmes that point to practical futures look to build their resumés wherever they can. In turn, they look to find tangible experiences during their programmes of study, perhaps with an impression that a jobs market will most likely be competitive.

Emilie: I think that this course has given me a background but there still is a lot that I need to learn. The practical side of HR and how it is actually done. I think so yeah. It would have been even better and one thing that I missed is that going into work I'm pretty sure that I will have to use some HR software and it would have been really good to put on my CV that I had some experience with that.

However, the extent to which theoretical programmes can truly provide practical experiences is questionable. This was described by Selia, who imagined practical interventions but felt that they were beyond the scope and ability of universities to produce.

Selia: To be honest, I'm actually not sure about practical level because it has not felt so much of a practical in relation to a theoretical level. Maybe financial management has felt a bit more practical because it's not my major and its exercises and you can do that but when it comes to skills and knowledge, unless you work in an office at the same time as this masters programme, so you get to apply your knowledge, I don't feel like it's practical.

8.3.3.3 Attempting theoretical PBL.

In fact, learners in the Law School reported serious theory and practice clash. A section of the conversation between Alisha, Jon, and Nasha, led by Jon—a veteran of PBL, described this in detail.

Jon: You can't do like a theoretical PBL, it's got to be practical. You can't do PBL on [Alisha: on abstract] Corporate Governance when we are talking about theory and stuff because it becomes so ambiguous. And no one's ever going to get the learning outcomes [Alisha: I agree]. But whereas when we have a vary [variant] in the law or an issue that is going on, then we are like, oh ok... this person needs to go to this statute and look at this case and that's how it's run at UG level.

It appears here that a modern, constructivist approach to learning clashed with the more traditional approach of discussing and analysing theoretical matters. As a result, learners were left frustrated, grappling in practical terms with abstract concepts. In turn, problem-based learning outcomes became impossible to reach and the learning structure redundant.

8.3.3.4 Resisting the influence of one's own experience.

For those in programmes that do not point toward practical outcomes and positions of employment, practical matters can be a huge distraction. This was experienced by Sara in women's studies, who at thirty-eight, had a wealth of experience working with vulnerable women in Egypt. However, her experiences of the practical world became an obstacle to

her theoretical studies. In turn, she had to actively block out and cut off her practical instincts to be able to engage with theory.

Sara: Sometimes, I just felt complete detachment between studying and engaging with an academic theory and what's actually related to my previous experience as a professional working in social work and feminist work. So, it was a bit of a struggle honestly because as I said I was more oriented to action-based research like I'm trying to get to these findings to find out how to work out the problem. To give you particular examples when we were talking about gender-based violence for example... I document testimonies, I find certain patterns, then look for answers in social policy... that's how I work with it. So, coming here, I engage with theories around gender, I read Judith Butler.

Indeed, Sara admitted that much of what she has been studying and learning had no place in her working life, even though she had enrolled in the programme to boost her job prospects in the future.

Sara: I have the space to do that but like it's just because it is not a social policy programme, it's about sociology and you really have to distance yourself at some point because it's theoretical and intellectual kind of... because like the work that I do at home if I'm campaigning for a law I'm sitting with a bunch of politicians imagine that I said "Judith Butler says that..." and I'm quoting... it's not going to happen! And I know that I'm going to be screaming at their faces and telling them that gender-based violence is bad and you have to oppose it [...] I guess I can't tell how better or worse it is for me going back to my professional field. Like it feels like I am a lot more informed now going back to the professional field and that I am a lot more informed and how much I am going to use these tools and how much I am going to use these tools in the practical field... I don't know yet...

Practical experience, then, can be distracting to learning and can further muddy fields if the actor cannot disentangle them.

Part 2: Discussion

8.4 Overview of section.

In this section, I position and advance the new theory *Clear Fields—Muddied Fields*, constructed from this research project within the wider literature. To do this, I outline this section as follows. Firstly, I provide a review of theory from the results and analysis section. Secondly, I position the theory within the wider literature to show that it is supported, and I then position it as a lens with which to re-view the literature, and in turn, show how it is a more sophisticated alternative to what exists in the current literature. Thirdly, I advance the theory with the help of the literature in academic literacies and critical thinking to suggest that learners undertaking a postgraduate programme in muddied fields may require particular guidance to learn effectively. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a section called Embattled Runners. In this section, I return to the metaphor of the marathon and marathon runner, presented in the introduction. I do this to help bring this

and the other theoretical chapters to a close and also to portray a sense of transformation in the participants of this project.

8.5 Review of the theory Clear Fields—Muddied Fields.

Clear Fields—Muddied Fields is a theory that begins, as presented in the results and analysis section of this chapter, with the assumption that all learners in postgraduate study enter an “academic learning field.” Academic fields are structures that structure in the Bourdieusian sense, and these determine what, and in what ways, research and scholarship will take place within a school of thought (Becher, 1989). Scholars in clear fields aim to reach context free generalisations and generally represent those in the hard sciences where values and truths can be sought and objective realities can be discovered. However, this is not the same for all schools of thought. In response to this, this research project states that academic learning fields can also be muddied fields. Muddied learning fields are structured by scholars and schools of thought that take constructivist perspectives and can be found in the soft sciences. In constructivist terms, an assumption is made that reality is multiple and that data is co-constructed through interaction. In consequence, such scholars do not aim to make generalisations because generalisations are situated in the context of time, space, and action.

8.6 Clear and muddied fields and the literature.

8.6.1 Support for the theory in the wider literature.

The terms introduced by this research project cannot be found together in the literature to describe and explain learning experiences in a higher education. However, distinctions made along the lines of *clear and muddied* are supported. For instance, in terms of learning fields, Thomson (2012, p. 70) states that Bourdieu’s social fields have “distinction,” or quality for example, between “hard sciences and soft arts in academic disciplines.” Bourdieu (2004, p. 16) discusses this further:

The “puzzle-solving” activities of “normal science” are based on a commonly accepted paradigm which defines, among other things, in a relatively undisputed way, what counts as a correct or incorrect solution. But in revolutionary situations, the background framework which alone defines “correctness” is itself in question.

Brint, Cantwell and Hanneman (2008, p.394) apply this directly to teaching and learning in a statement in their study:

[It] differ[s] by discipline, with a distinction often made between the “soft” disciplines, such as humanities, where there is less consensus of knowledge, and the “hard” disciplines, such as natural sciences and engineering, where there is greater agreement about both content and methods.

Further yet, Winter and Kron (2009, p. 301) claim that a “well-known distinction between soft and hard science cuts a sharp line of demarcation between hard and soft facts of

scientific studies.” They go on to take an example, stating that “physics deal with precise hard facts characteristically whereas social sciences are confronted with imprecise soft social facts because social facts are notoriously vague, interpretative facts of meaning.” Here Winter and Kron clearly support the premise for this theory. They go on to use the term “fuzzy.” This term echoes the term *muddied* and has been used at intersections between hard and soft sciences where scholars have attempted to apply mathematical and precise models to sciences that are vague and inexact (Pipino and van Gigh, 1981). However, this is where *muddied* differs from “fuzzy”, as the term *muddied* is not an attempt to apply an objectivist lens to a constructivist one. Instead, the term *muddied* is merely a tool to help understand the complications of those who study within such schools of thought. Hence, *muddied fields* are muddied in the sense of muddied waters, a term which has been used in the literature to describe complex social matters (Applebaum, 2003).

8.6.2 Re-viewing the literature with the theory.

By structuring an understanding of clear and muddied fields, this theory becomes visible within the literature. To illustrate this, I take Carlos Torres’ (2009) writings on Education and Neoliberal Globalization. Torres juxtaposes the two epistemological extremes of positivist and constructivist perspectives on knowledge in educational contexts. He highlights the “methodological monism of positivism” (p. 36) and explains its pervading dominance of institutions and claims that positivism is the “predominant scientific paradigm in education planning” (p. 35). He then goes on to explain the differences of involvement of self in learning from the view of the constructivist. For example, he states that “constructivists actively participate in learning [, and in turn,] we must acknowledge the diversity of perspectives involved in the formation of a community, and a community of inquirers and teachers in particular” (p. 36). In consequence, he details the basics of what can now be seen as the principles of clear and muddied fields in terms of the learner’s involvement with knowledge. In these terms, those who are in the humanities and social sciences are clearly involved with knowledge, and learn in methodologically complex environments, which is very different from those who learn with positivist perspectives.

As a further re-viewing of the literature through the new lens of Clear Fields—Muddied Fields, I take the example of Clifford (2009), who reported on attempts to internationalise the curriculum. Clifford’s study drew on staff and student interviews of a large Australian university that had eight campuses, including one in Malaysia and one in South Africa. To aid her in the project, Clifford drew on Becher’s (1989) classifications of disciplines. These classifications are four: hard pure; hard applied; soft applied; and soft pure. In her study, Clifford drew data from several discipline areas. She classified them on a “continuum of disciplines,” moving from left to right, as follows: hard pure: science; hard applied: engineering, medicine, pharmacy; soft applied: psychology, law, business and economics, education; soft pure: history, media and communication, art and design.

From Clifford’s interview data, facets of a clear and muddied field can now clearly be seen. For instance, in terms of clear fields, Clifford (2009, p. 136) reports on the hard disciplines:

The interview scripts from the lecturers in the hard disciplines illustrated clearly a belief that their discipline was already international, based on value-free universal principles. They believed that the theories, principles and concepts of the disciplines were the same the world over.

However, as she moves along the continuum the interview data becomes more muddled. For example, she reports on her findings (p. 137):

While the lecturers in the hard-applied subjects, such as pharmacy, information technology, and medicine, also believed in “international science,” they did recognise that the students would be practising this science within different health systems, with different regulations, belief systems, and ethical standards, and that this would affect the outcome.

Indeed, from what merely looks as if it is a small shift along a continuum from hard pure to hard applied, the different backgrounds of the students enter learning structures and begin to cause a Habitus-Field clash. As Clifford moved into the soft sciences side of the continuum, issues of localisation and identity became apparent, especially for offshore campus staff. For instance, she reports on interview data from a Malaysian lecturer who described cultural clashes which had led to accusations described below (p. 138):

Accusations of teaching “communism” and dealing with the concept of pornography in media classes which was offensive to some religious groups and led to complaints. She asked, “how are you going to impart those values of liberalism and humanism and still fall in line with Islamic views and perspectives?”

Overall, when seen through the frame of the theoretical category of clear and muddled fields, Clifford’s research indicates that there is a clear shift in terms of engagement with knowledge and the world between hard pure and soft pure disciplines.

8.6.3 Academic literacies, argumentation, and critical thinking as necessities for learners in muddled fields.

It is clear from this study and the theory presented that learners at postgraduate level within muddled fields require some level of support to guide them through their studies. As stated, this is because muddled fields structure learning situations that are potentially complicated for learners. In amongst these complications are several factors. For example, one such factor is the methodological debate which, from the point of view of the learner, sees the philosophical matters of knowledge as understood in multiple terms both within the literature and the school in which they are studying. Furthermore, learners, by the nature of their discipline, may be involved with learning knowledge and debating matters that exist within the grey areas of society. In turn, they must engage in and, to some extent, master argumentation. The need for argumentation situates muddled fields directly with the literature on academic literacies. Academic literacies is concerned with “making judgments and determining what counts as valuable knowledge, reflecting tacit beliefs and values” (Tapp, 2015, p. 217). In turn, an understanding of academic literacies enables a learner to

operate epistemologically within academic discussions by situating themselves within a debate relevant to their studies. To be able to do this, they need to be able to, firstly, think critically about texts, and, secondly, voice their position.

What critical thinking actually is has been debated throughout the literature. However, there is some agreement that it is what makes higher education “higher” (Hammer and Green, 2011; Marshall and Case, 2005; Moon, 2007). According to Ennis (2011, p. 1), ideal critical thinkers have certain traits:

[They are] disposed to: seek alternative hypotheses, explanations, conclusions, plans, sources, etc.; and be open to them, consider seriously other points of view than their own, try to be well informed, endorse a position to the extent that, but only to the extent that, it is justified by the information that is available [; and] care to understand and present a position honestly and clearly, theirs as well as others.

Argumentation is the creation of an argument based on evidence (Clark and Ivanic, 1997; Graff, 2003; Jones, 2009; Stierer, 2000), using particular rhetorical structures to communicate a position to an audience (Ramage, Bean and Johnson, 2016). In practical terms, academic literacies, then, are the practice of a student positioning themselves within an appropriate body of literature, and then manipulating that literature appropriately to use it as evidence to structure a persuasive argument that will satisfy the academy with which they are studying.

8.7 Embattled runners.

As learners complete their journeys of postgraduate studies, they cross the finishing line in different ways and in different states. For some of them, they may complete the race smoothly and effortlessly. These learners have experienced their journey with relative ease. Others are more shaken by the experience, glad to be safely through, and happy to return to a more normal pace. Some feel sorry that the journey is over, while others look back at it with an extent of displeasure. Others, yet, return embattled. These runners faced many challenges and at times suffered; however, they found a way to navigate their journey. Although their bodies are exhausted, and the finishing of the race was inelegant, the marathon has been a success, and, most importantly, they have survived. However, the nature of completing the journey so battered may be bitter-sweet.

As with many battles, the frantic nature of the action may have happened all too quickly and by the end of it, there are gains and there are losses. This is true also for our embattled learners. Many of them become caught up in a whirlwind of action all too quickly. And when the action has ceased, they are left with gains and losses. Gains and losses for learners come in terms of perspectives. These perspectives stem from the self but are about the many others around them. The extent to which these perspectives have changed depends on what each learner's journey brought to light. For some these changes are minor alterations with no real changes to their worldview. For some, their views are minorly transformed, and as a result, they experience narrow implications. However, for others, there are major transformations, and, as a result, they experience much wider implications. I detail and illustrate some of these below.

8.7.1 Transformed academic selves: narrow implications.

Many learners experience transformations to their academic selves that have narrow implications. These changes are often in areas of argumentation and critical writing. Where learners have reconfigured their approaches to writing in some ways. Or perhaps they have found a new confidence that allows them to experience academia in a transformed way, one of which is unrestricted and empowering. Such positive transformations of an academic self can be seen in Sara and Alisha's testaments.

Sara: I find that my academic writing, like it has improved much more than I would have expected over the year. That's probably got to do with the amount of reading that we had to do and we had to write a lot of papers.

Alisha: I was really stressed about it at first. And second semester, I was like a lot more confident. I was a lot more confident about how things worked. So that definitely helped.

Sara became intellectualised by seeing herself not only as a practical person but as someone who was a reader and writer of academic theory. For her, smaller aspects of her academic self were transformed. Alisha had a similar experience. Although never having written in a critical style, she was able to transform her writing throughout the academic year to a point where she successfully realised her postgraduate programme. Yet they both remained as they started, with unrestricted senses of an academic selves and as mindful actors, despite both facing strong challenges during their experiences of learning.

8.7.2 Transformed selves: wider implications of intellectualisation.

Continually demanding criticality and stance taking from learners has lasting effects that reaches beyond their academic lives. Indeed, a continual questioning of assumptions and examining the social world can transform an academic self. In such cases, the academic self can become a more dominant part within the individual learner. As a result, the learner brings intellectualised perspectives to other areas of their lives. Intellectualisation, as with other forms of transformation, once put in place, cannot be undone. In turn, intellectualisation has consequences. These may be positive and applauded by academic others, they may also impress some; however, they can also cast a new light on personal relationships. Such a new light is not necessarily favourable. This is illustrated here in Sara's account of her relationship with her (now) former partner.

Sara: Yeah one observation I had over the changes that took place for me was my self-worth and self-perception has changed and one of the consequences has been, for example my boyfriend was Egyptian, and I started perceiving our relationship in a whole new light, and I think I dunno if it is my education or is it only that or that I had a distance from home and a space to reflect or maybe it's a mix of both. My education has helped improve like the fact that I saw myself in a different light and helped and influenced me in thinking about my personal life.

Of course, for Sara, there was an exit route to her relationship. An intellectualised self can move on to find others who may act as more appropriate partners. However, Jelena had a similar experience, but with her immediate family, which left her with a more permanent dilemma.

Jelena: There is this thing that crossed my mind—well it crosses my mind a lot lately. It's a little bit different when I speak to my family. Well, they were raised in a different culture and that's one thing but the other thing is that none of them have finished university. Well my brother has and it's a little bit different when I speak to my mum or my other brother, so sometimes it can be a little bit annoying because I don't... It sounds really harsh but it just feels weird when I talk to them and it didn't use to. In terms of logic and stuff, you just used to find the logic in what they are saying, now I just can't find the logic at all. It's quite sad really. It's your family and you want to be close to them but then again when you just get tired of them all the time.

8.7.3 Transformed selves: wider implications from negative experiences.

Where Jelena's mostly positive journey and subsequent intellectualisation resulted in some pessimistic consequences in her personal life, Sara's transformation seems to be just another step along a greater journey. However, in contrast, Xu's experiences seem to have had few positive moments. The continual muddied fields which she was forced to navigate seem to have come at a heavy cost. For instance, as a former grade A student, Xu's understanding of her academic self was quickly transformed from unrestricted to restricted at the beginning of her studies, and it appears that this perspective was then entrenched and made concrete. In turn, her once positive views of herself in academic terms appear to have become forever altered.

Xu: I'm not a smart person, so first I will check the dictionary of every word I don't understand and then read the article twice... I will browse through and then search for a Chinese version, and then try and read them in Chinese.

And for Xu, this change was personally overt, she saw it in herself in clear terms, albeit with a bit of bewilderment.

Xu: I don't see how much they taught me but they have changed me. They gave me different ways of thinking... I didn't know how complicated gender is... I think that it is maybe... It is so amazing and I think it is the thinking patterns that have changed.

Xu's confessions highlight a telling part of transformative learning: that its deconstructing and reconstructing results cannot be undone. Indeed, transformative learning changes the lives of the transformed forever. In the next and final chapter, I bring this thesis to a conclusion.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Overview of chapter.

I present this final chapter in three overarching sections. In the first of these sections, I describe how individuals in a higher education are engaged in a transformative process. I describe this process by recalling the beginnings of the thesis and the conclusions of learner journeys. I then describe the transformations and futures that lie ahead for the participants of this project and how, for them, their journeys continue. I then caution those who might hijack the term “transformative learning” and underline its seriousness before highlighting the opportunity it provides for stakeholders in a higher education. I then place the responsibility of guiding transformative learning in the hands of practitioners who are themselves transforming through teaching and learning practice. In the second section, I gather in the threads of this research project and tie up how I sought to understand these transformations and articulate them. In this section, I firstly describe how I dealt with the complications of learning in higher education. In doing so, I illustrate how I used the literature to help me do this. I then go on to demonstrate how dealing with complications was risky but was also a necessary approach to this research project. I then discuss my recommendation that practitioners consider taking a similar approach to research. In the third and final section, I firstly share a final thought from this research project and thesis, which is the importance of risk-taking to learning. I secondly share potential limitations of the study. I thirdly, and finally, lay out my contributions to knowledge, which includes the five fresh theories for transformative learning in higher education.

9.2 Individuals engaged in a higher education are in a transformative process.

9.2.1 Ending one journey and continuing another.

Learners who are postgraduate students arrive at the end of their respective marathons as people who are all changed. All are changed in some way because of what they have learned as part of the journey that they have been on. Part of this change is in the quantitative and additional sense which is the adding of knowledge. In effect, they know more than when they started their respective programmes, and in turn, they understand and identify themselves as having more knowledgeable academic selves. This is notarised when they are awarded meaningful pieces of paper which have important words and stamps on them. And with these pieces of paper, they can further identify themselves as masters of a particular discipline—a symbol that will be recognised by others and will further impact their senses of academic selves in a positive way. However, the participants in this research project experienced much more than the university recognises with paper.

Indeed, the majority of the participants of this research project were learners who were changed in ways that were not merely additional. In fact, many of these learners were transformed. Transformation is change. However, it is not change in the quantitative and additional sense. Transformation is a change in the qualitative sense. And for these postgraduate students who arrive at the end of their respective marathons, this transformation means that they see their respective worlds, to some extent, differently from how they did when they started. Indeed, for many of them, these transformations came about after a degree of struggle. For those who struggled, they learned the skill of endurance. Such endurance would not have come about if knowledge was simply

accumulated and banked. This endurance transformed them from within. Such endurance came about through problem-solving, through doing, and through navigating the complications of their year of study. Importantly, and differently from the quantitative and additional changes, these transformative changes are ones which resulted in senses of academic selves being profoundly changed. In this case, these learners have a transformed sense of an academic self.

Unlike the change that comes from additional change and the banking of knowledge, the change of transformation is much more involved. With transformation comes a freshness. Although this freshness means new ways of seeing the world, it also means losing old ways. In turn, transformation brings with it, as well as a sense of gain, also a sense of loss. These experiences of gain and loss are mirrored by the gain and loss of completion of an intensive period of study. For example, qualifications are gained but the familiarity of the day-to-day affairs of the university or the goals demanded by the assessment regime are lost. Furthermore, friendships and relationships gained during the relationship, are, in many ways, lost when the structures in which they were formed are taken away. These lost structures were also what supported the transforming sense of an academic self. And the loss of these structures has significant consequences.

The loss of these structures means that former learners have to re-enter the real world. And although re-entering the real world brings with it a sense of hope and excitement, for those who are transformed, it also means re-entering familiar worlds with what may now be unfamiliar selves. For instance, former and familiar relationships may be seen in quite different terms. Or perhaps, formerly agreed upon boundaries may now be seen as inappropriate. Of course, new access routes to new opportunities could also become visible with transformed views. What is evident is that transformative learning transports selves to altered realities with lasting consequence. And, by taking a transformative journey, a part of the self is always left behind. In turn, this new reality might be one where the familiar is now the unfamiliar and one in which the former learner finds that their self (both academic and personal aspects) is estranged. This estrangement is a result of choosing to enter the marathon of higher education. However, re-entering the real world is not a choice once their postgraduate studies are over. Life must “continue as normal” and in its latest form.

9.2.2 Different transformations—different futures.

How transformed selves cope when re-entering the real world may depend on several factors. Some of these factors include the extent of their transformations, their dispositions to coping with transformation, and also the futures that await them. For example, for some who took part in this research project, they were able to find structure in employment. Indeed, many of them went on to possible new futures where fresh senses of academic selves had potentially clear roles. For instance, Alisha, Gregor, Jon, Nasha, and Orisa all graduated with law degrees. Although they were very different people with different dispositions, they all exited their programme with the clear respective ambitions of being lawyers. For these young people “being a lawyer” meant continuing yet further down a long road, but that road was, in many ways, unambiguous. Therefore, for them, a relatively clear field emerged. With this clear field came a clear choice: to participate in that field, and to take that road or not. This situation was similar for Emilie, Jelena, and Selia, who all graduated with degrees in human resource management. They all felt that they were

perhaps not ready to manage, but they were ready to begin down a road toward being a manager. For these learners, then, studying law meant becoming a lawyer, and studying human resource management meant becoming a human resource manager. In turn, all of these former students re-entered the real world with some extent of structure waiting for them, and in turn, a certainty facilitated by the world of work.

However, for our other runners, the fields to which they were going were less clear. To some extent, this was the case for Thomas and Sara. Both of these former students were to return home to their respective countries, Thomas to Germany and Sara to Egypt. For Thomas, his future career was uncertain. His ambition was to work in consultancy, and he looked to innovate in this area by taking the logic and problem-solving of physics to the field of economics. In turn, much of the uncertainty around his future career was his own making and one which he had chosen to take. Sara was returning to life of work which had been on hold while she was studying. In returning to this life, she was unsure about how her degree was to benefit her working life because it had been so highly theoretical. Her experience of practice had in fact disrupted her learning, and she had had to ignore the practical side to continue her studies. Now, she was to re-enter work, as a successful practitioner in her field who was also an intellectual. Despite these unclear situations, both of these participants had been highly disposed to being postgraduate learners in a higher education. In turn, it seemed that they would be able to transfer many of their dispositions to help them navigate new and changed situations, just as they had been able to do so when studying on their respective postgraduate programmes.

However, this was not the case for the remainder of the participants whose future fields looked particularly muddled. This muddiness did not only come from unclear roads toward employment, but also from transformed selves and thus transformed views of the world. In consequence, this led to a number of uncertainties for returning home. Specifically, these participants were Kip, Ying, and Xu. All of them faced the prospect of returning to their home contexts without the structures of a clear professional field to support them. Yet, these people were experiencing and about to experience their transformations more markedly than the others. For instance, Kip was to return home with an overt view of how hierarchy and power dominated the culture of his home context in Thailand with the understanding of how he had been so silenced by it. He now would be required to integrate back into that hierarchy. Xu was to return home after being transformed into a feminist. However, the culture that she was returning to was one which did not, in her view, positively recognise feminism nor did it even have the language to articulate gender in the way in which she now understood it. Further to this, her transformed self would also have to exist in a society that overtly rejected disruption. In turn, this society was also one that would expect her to conform, and one of those ways was through marriage. Finally, Ying was to return to her home country, and despite successfully passing her degree programme, would do so with a damaged sense of an academic self after being negatively transformed through her postgraduate education. In turn, she was less clear of her future than she was before, doubting her intellect, and doubting her abilities. This negative phenomenon did not only affect these participants, in fact, they were joined in this situation by Jelena, who even before finishing her degree had noticed the shift in the ways in which she viewed her family, feeling that she had been, to an extent, intellectualised.

In sum, within the group of participants in this research project, transformation was experienced to differing extents. For some, the effects of transformation were not so noticeable. Of course, perhaps these transformations were indeed significant, but they were merely highly disposed to this kind of change. However, there are many who are transformed greatly with significant consequences and in overtly noticeable terms. These types of transformations do not make for easy futures. Indeed, for those who transform significantly through their learning, transformation comes at a price. And in the balance of loss and gain, the loss can seem more significant than the gain. In light of such a situation, ethical issues emerge from the conclusions of this study. This is because it is clear that some of these participants were transformed in ways which were out of their control and without their proper consent. In turn, these students did not transform in the active sense but were transformed in the passive sense. For those specifically who “were transformed” through their education, they were also not readily disposed to postgraduate learning in a higher education, nor were they to exit with necessary support structures to assist them afterwards.

9.2.3 Transformative learning: caution and opportunity.

It is here, then, that I offer a caution to prospective students, idealistic practitioners, and astute marketeers alike. The term “transformative learning” is a term that must not be hijacked. It has been made clear in this thesis that the term transformative learning is a term of the utmost seriousness. In turn, it should not be mis-sold because it may sound alluring. If the term is indeed to be used with sincerity and responsibility, then a number of assumptions should not be made of perspective learners. The first is that it should not be assumed that all learners require transforming. Secondly, it should not be assumed that all learners wish to be transformed. Thirdly, it should not be assumed that all learners arrive to learning situations appropriately disposed to transformative learning. In light of these, I strongly suggest that perspective learners are advised of the consequences of transformative learning so that they are clear of the process in which they are about to enter.

This does not mean that learners, practitioners, and curriculum designers should shy away from the high ideals and aspirations in teaching and learning that a transformative pedagogy can bring. This is accentuated by Hill (2014) with the following recommendation:

Learning should not merely be a measurable experience in which students are expected to acquire new knowledge. Learning can be a transformative experience that changes people, enriches their lives, and enlarges their perspectives. Classrooms can be spaces that allow students to think new thought and create new visions.

However, this approach needs to be well thought out, measured, and transparent. This responsibility lies chiefly in the hands of practitioners as the actors with power within an academic community. Hence, it is practitioners who need to be responsible academic citizens. As responsible academic citizens, practitioners can shape and guide the

experiences of their learners in a positive way while being unavoidably involved in their learning.

In sum, I urge all stakeholders in a higher education to embrace the many opportunities within transformative learning made clear in this thesis, but to do so responsibly. Indeed, the theories presented in this thesis provide new ways of seeing learners within higher educations for many different stakeholders. For instance, A Sense of an Academic Self makes it clear that the mission for programme designers and those shaping teaching and learning strategy is to transform learners' academic selves into those that are unrestricted. A Trio of Actors clearly offers practitioner and learner alike a new way to identify and engage with up to three types of actors in a given learning situation. In turn, they will be able to move away from the blunt binaries that are so limiting to teaching practice, such as home—international student and native—non-native speaker. For those in senior management, it is clear that such blunt binary views are now outdated and institutional structures should be updated to administer this. Enabling Learning speaks directly to those interested in good teaching practice and those tasked with shaping it, such as leaders of PGCAP programmes. For instance, the theory makes clear the benefits of resourcing learning situations through the experiences of learners, the necessity of being an advocate of learners and their learning experiences, and how to approach and communicate effectively difficult and abstract concepts. Coping with Uncertainty speaks directly to academic and support staff who work in student facing roles. It makes clear to these stakeholders not only how learners do not cope, as is common in the literature, but how in fact they *do* cope. For instance, they cope by building further support networks and with the wearing of masks. Finally, Clear Fields—Muddied Fields makes it clear to academic and support staff that not all learners experience their studies in uniform ways. In fact, those who are in muddied fields experience learning with great complications. Therefore, such learners may require a significant amount of targeted support in learning and teaching.

9.2.4 The transforming practitioner.

As demonstrated in this research project, practitioners cannot help but be involved in the learning of the students who they meet in their practice. In consequence, this means that practitioners are also transforming through their practice. However, this transformative experience is different from that of students. For instance, for the students, their experience of a higher education is generally much shorter, and in the case of a postgraduate programme, the experience is usually merely a single cycle or an academic year. However, for the practitioner, a higher education is experienced in continuous annual cycles. These cycles take place over years of a professional career in which a practitioner meets hundreds and even thousands of students, and although students transform and then exit back into the real world, for practitioners, a new cycle begins with a stream of new students being fed into it. In consequence, practitioners continually change. This change is not necessarily in the additional sense but in the sense of transformation. And this transformation is continual, and with it comes a wealth of experience. This wealth of experience should not be left redundant, it should be used to help understand the transformations that students undergo because it is valuable.

9.3 Seeking to understand transformation and then articulate them.

9.3.1 Finding a way through the complications of learners and their learning experiences.

Throughout this investigation, I have sought to understand the transformations of my students and of my own self as a practitioner and student. To do so, I have embraced a world of complications. As set out in this research project and then demonstrated through the research process, learners who enter postgraduate study in a higher education are complex individuals. To seek understandings to these complications, I focused my attention on international students. International students are particularly disposed to transformation through the nature of them being other within a learning environment. Being other was something which I was particularly able to sympathise with due to my own narrative. Of course, those who are from cultures other than that of the one in which they study are more highly disposed to changing and being changed. However, these students were also in part chosen for me because they are the learners who I have been connected with for the duration of my practice. And it was through my experience of them in practice, and as a reflective practitioner who wants to improve my practice, that it became apparent that due to the scant literature on international students there was little known about their experiences of learning. In consequence, there was little to structure, guide, and generally inform my practice. This exposed a clear need for research. This need had to be one that directly informed practice. However, in the same way that practitioners are complicit in the learning of their students, I was also complicit in the transformative experience of this research project. In turn, by investigating the experiences of my learners, I was simultaneously enabled to consider my own experiences of life and learning. As a result, I, to a great extent, lived my own research project and myself experienced transformation.

Many views of research would recommend that the best way to deal with the complexities of adult learning would be decomplication in order to garner an understanding of them in objectivist terms. However, I have not only argued that such decomplication and objectivism is an inappropriate way of investigating the experiences of learning in a higher education, but I have also followed this up by applying a systematic approach to research in order to articulate new understandings. This was not easy and took a considerable amount of time, effort, and planning to achieve it. To help with this great effort, my main source of support was the research approach laid out by Charmaz's (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory*. This approach helped me to grapple with the fluid, emergent realities experienced in my practice. Importantly, the approach laid out by Charmaz was not a dogmatic one, and this allowed for a flexible approach that I was able to adapt to explore the experiences of those who participated in this project. Furthermore, Charmaz articulated her approach to grounded theory in plain, uncomplicated terms, making it, for the most part, straightforward to follow. As a consequence, I myself constructed and articulated grounded theories that do more than just describe my own practice but are of value to other practitioners within the context of higher education.

9.3.2 Two approaches to using literature.

Part of this articulation of grounded theories was with a two-pronged approach to literature. This is an important note about literature and "the literature" in a practice-based

project in this concluding chapter for those who may wish to take a practice-based approach in the future. As described in the openings of this thesis, the literature proved to be a distracting and often corrupting part of the research process. Furthermore, approaching the literature in traditional terms to carve out a research question was at best unhelpful. However, after some amount of time formulating an approach to this investigation that would accomplish meaningful results, I can now offer the following two suggestions to those who would undertake a practice-based research project. The first is that the literature can be used to contextualise the research project before analysing and theorising. In this case, when reading to contextualise, it is vital to read critically. By reading critically, I mean that it is vital to have an open mind, to keep, as Ennis (2011) might suggest, one's mind open to alternatives. The second way that literature can be used in a helpful way is to situate and advance theory post-analysis and theorising. Indeed, this way of using the literature was particularly efficient. Whereas traditional literature searches can be laborious and time consuming, in fact, literature searches with data in hand make for pointed searches. An extensive argument is not needed to suggest that literature searches are in fact much easier when the searcher knows what they are looking for.

9.3.3 Risking the more difficult road and the consequences.

Seeking to understand transformations and then articulate them has not been easy. Indeed, by rejecting positivism and taking a constructivist path, accepting and embracing complications, and gaining a better understanding of myself as practitioner and as researcher to better understand my practice was to choose a more difficult road in this investigation. And I did not make this choice lightly. For instance, the ways in which I used the literature, as described above, was definitely the right approach for what I wanted this research project to achieve. However, I did not always have this certainty. In fact, the approach that I took at first was the traditional one. The tradition of this approach led me to believe that the literature must be researched exhaustively to discover relevant gaps in knowledge that should be filled. This was reinforced by an academy of more established thinkers, who, in having the best interests of academics in mind, view the risk of stepping away from tradition with an amount of caution. In consequence, turning away from tradition to seek out an alternative approach also led me to want the safety of a more traditional road, not because it was particularly familiar to me, but because it was familiar to others who would support my forming research project. Consequently, abandoning my attempt to understand and improve practice for safe, quantifiable data was a tempting prospect and offered an easier path.

However, these wants of safety are echoes of the siren calls of bankable knowledge so often acknowledged in this thesis. And as this thesis makes clear, in an age of commodification, the easier road is not always the best one, and is not one which will facilitate a meaningful and transformative experience of postgraduate study. In turn, and for me and this research project, although a PhD in the current higher education context is clearly seen as a commodity, if it was to be truly educational in its value, it should not have been a means to an end in that an easy path was taken to expedite a qualification. Due to the reflective and transformative nature of this research project, this idea became something that was especially important. Specifically, that importance was that I, not only provide theory that was meaningful and effective, but also that I, in my view, finally facilitated for myself a meaningful educational experience. As someone who had experienced many educations at the hands of others, often as a limited actor with a

restricted sense of an academic self, this mattered, and I am meaningfully changed because of it.

9.3.4 A call to practitioners to construct meaningful theory from practice.

In this research project, I created a space for a practice-based project which was realised with a constructivist grounded theory. As demonstrated, there was a great reward in terms of theory that is both useful and that can be applied to practice. Indeed, it is clear from this research project that a project may seem to be small in appearance can, in fact, merely be the beginning of a much more involved, intriguing, and fruitful journey with research data. Importantly, these data, their construction, and the constructed theory resulting from them are massively amplified by the experience of the practitioner. In turn, the value of practice-based research to contribute knowledge to a field such as education, and especially to a field with sparse and disparate literature on the subject of higher education, is convincing. In consequence, I call out to practitioners in higher education to consider undertaking practice-based research projects and theorising from the point of their own practice. The rich experiences of learning and teaching that come from practice offer a great source of data that, if collectively mined, could construct an understanding of practice that could hugely transform our understanding of the experiences of our learners and inform our practice greatly.

9.4 The contribution to knowledge made by this thesis.

9.4.1 A concluding thought.

In a concluding thought for this thesis, I wish to highlight the importance of controlled risk-taking to transformative learning. Through this project, I have achieved a significant amount of meaningful theory by taking risks in learning. These risks were not easy to take but were helped by those who were risk-takers. However, it seems that risk in academia is averted in many ways, perhaps due to the commodification of higher education. In fact, and in my view, the less we risk the less we gain. As practitioners in a higher education, then, we must also be practitioners of risk. In doing this in a sensible and controlled way, we will be able to structure meaningful, and of course transformative, learning experiences for our students. Consequently, we will be able to make positive and lasting change in the world.

9.4.2 Future directions for this research

Although this research project has been a long project and has attempted to contribute a significant amount of theory to the field of education, it is merely the start of a new career in practice-based research in higher education. As described in this thesis, the theories presented are theories that are emergent. Emergent theories are in motion, they are never truly finished nor complete because they are part of the social flow of reality. Importantly, the emergent theories presented here open up a space in which to further theorise about teaching and learning in a higher education. I intend to take both a leading and participating role in education-themed reflective practice seminars and conferences where I will encourage others to explore the space, sharing my proposed theories accordingly. Finally, I intend to publish this research in a scholarly journal.

9.4.3 Limitations.

I do not claim centrality in this thesis. Indeed, I cannot generalise about all learners and all students, and, of course, I would not attempt to as this was not the purpose of this thesis. In terms of limitations of the research approach, I do not claim that I have saturated theories in the way of a classic grounded theory research project. There were limitations of data collection in terms of the number of participants and their schedules and timing which mean that data collection and investigation could not continue indefinitely. Furthermore, due to the nature of the one-year master degree programme and the international student experience, it is not possible to return to participants to gather more data from them. If saturation is to mean the saturation of a concept, then the nature of the higher education experience is also limiting as its great flow does not allow a practitioner researcher to choose the students who they come into contact with. In light of this, the extent to which I was able to claim saturation is unclear. Therefore, I make no claim to it. This is, however, one of many drawbacks and arguments against using grounded theory for a study. However, I will not further involve myself in such arguments, as I have used grounded theory as a way in which to better understand the world of my practice. I believe I have done this successfully.

9.4.4 Summary of contribution.

In conclusion to this thesis, I strongly feel able to offer the following contributions to knowledge and understanding in the field of education. The first is a measure of reassurance that practice-based results can offer an extent of valuable results in education. The second is that personal narrative and self-awareness can lead to useful and diffusible self-discovery for a practitioner who wishes to further their practice and theorise about practice, from practice, as a researcher. The third is a measure of reassurance that theses, in fact, do not have to follow a traditional pattern to make a contribution to knowledge. Fourthly, I offer a significant contribution to knowledge of education in the shape of theories of transformative learning in higher education. These theories are (1) A Sense of an Academic Self, (2) A Trio of Actors, (3) Enabling Learning, (4) Coping with Uncertainty, and (5) Clear fields—Muddied fields.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form

Participant Consent Form: Group interview

What will be involved in participation?

I understand that:

- The purpose of the proposed study is to better understand the interpersonal relationships of international students in taught master's programmes.
- The study involves participating in a one-hour group interview with fellow students in the programme.
- Audio recordings of the group interview will be made.
- I may request to view and comment on the transcription of the group interview.
- My responses in the group interview will not have an impact on my grades and only anonymised data will be used in the study.

How will my data be handled?

I understand that:

- My participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw myself and my data before 9th September 2017 by informing Micky Ross (micky.ross@york.ac.uk) without any penalty being imposed on me.
- Only the researcher will have access to the data and information collected in this study before it is anonymised.
- The data and information collected during this study will be anonymised by the researcher as soon as possible after collection.
- The anonymised data will be archived and may be used for other academic and research purposes by other researchers inside and outside the University.
- The anonymised data may be disseminated through seminars, conferences, presentations, journal articles, and other scholarly publications.
- The data will only be used for academic and research purposes.

What should I do if I have questions or concerns?

I understand that:

- This project has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the ethics committee in the Department of Education at the University of York.
- If I have any questions about this research, I should in the first instance contact Micky Ross (micky.ross@york.ac.uk).
- If I have any concerns about the conduct of this research, I may contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee, Dr Paul Wakeling (paul.wakeling@york.ac.uk).

Name of participant _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Name of researcher _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Participant Consent Form: Interview

What will be involved in participation?

I understand that:

- The purpose of the proposed study is to better understand the interpersonal relationships of international students in taught master's programmes.
- The study involves participating in a one-hour interview.
- Audio recordings of the interview will be made.
- I may request to view and comment on the transcription of the interview.
- My responses in the interview will not have an impact on my grades and only anonymised data will be used in the study.

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Name of participant _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Name of researcher _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Appendix 2: Coding by Hand

Photos of transcripts with hand-written codes appear from next page.

Micky: Would anyone like to talk about any kind of relationships that they have had this year, maybe any kind of learning group?

N...: Well they're not exactly like a learning group they probably more like a friendship to get more comfortable with your classmates and stuff. So, I don't know I believe that people learn things together. Like, I and Jordan, like first semester, we select this course like problems and pick each other's brain and stuff like that but we didn't particularly learn through like, we had like assessment, we didn't learn through the time. Maybe on the last day we said, "what you writing, what am I writing" We talk about it and make sure that you are on the right track kind of thing. I don't know that was like important to form like a friendship but it was important to just know everyone and like be familiar so that you are more comfortable in the class.

A...: Yeah, I think like that over time we sort of uhhm developed this sort of comfort level, like N... said, and we were able to push our thoughts between in the group. Towards the end in the group especially like M... and X... were like also speaking up, which they didn't do in the beginning [agreement from the other two]. And like uhhm and I think that smaller group like helps with the trust and comfort level because like in the second term our competition law we were just like 5 us and it was very helpful because C... also as well, like the lecturer, she was just like discussing things, it wasn't really like a lecture. It wasn't a monologue of sorts, so that I think was very helpful in like building that comfort level to just put your thoughts out.

J...: Uhm, I found it interesting that like. Cause obviously I studied here before and I was like familiar with PBL itself and obviously coming to the LLM there were a few of us who had studied here before, and of course there was obviously a large majority of the group who hadn't. And, originally when it started off, you could see that amongst the people who had studied PBL before, there was trust amongst those people and probably not as much trust with the rest of the group, ad they weren't as familiar in how to study in this way [agreement from other] which wasn't our fault but we were like, "let's just jump to this" and you guys were like a bit like "woah"

A...: yeah that's true, we had to get you guys to like, slow down

enabler
being comfortable
explaining learning
questioning assumptions
bringing ideas (off others)
refuting group learning
discussing group learning
suggesting learning through
bringing ideas
getting assurance
refuting friendship as important
knowing people and being familiar
being comfortable
explaining the importance of this
developing comfort
pushing thoughts between groups
enabling of quieter students to talk
observing positive change over time
being in smaller groups enabled trust; being comfortable
experiencing smaller groups
seeing importance of small groups
having dialogue
avoiding monologues
building comfort; putting thoughts out

conveying interest?
recounting past studies and familiar
being familiar with the environment
seeing that the programme was split
seeing difference among the group
advocating trust among former college
advocating less trust among new college
being familiar with study conventions
deflecting blame, excusing actions
suggesting events were overwhelming
intervening to slow down procedure

Neel: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and we had to like watch them talk and understand and we couldn't even understand the first bit and they were just like so familiar with it

Watching others talk
grappling to understand
conveying difference in the familiarity of a process
advocating the importance of experience
describing a rift in the group
comparing groupwork, reflecting on better times
describing jagged profile of group
suggesting disappoint in level of group

Jordan: Yeah... And I did just find, and this is probably just because we had experienced it three years prior to the LLM, but I did find that... Uhhm... PBLing at undergrad level with my groups was far more effective that it was at the LLM. I don't know that the whole group at the LLM really grasped the whole concept as well as the undergrads did.

Ameli: I agree with that

expressing agreement

Jordan: Uhhm when we were in undergrad, by third year, obviously we had had three years or two years of doing PBL and we would fly through it and we were very very on track and precise about the answers that we wanted to get, and I felt like that at the LLM level, even at the end of the [Ameli: Yeah] we were still struggling to go in the right direction, sessions were over-running, it was taking us a lot longer, we'd go off in tangents, the dynamic of the group wasn't that effective.

reflecting on U.G. experience
rationalizing jagged profile
remembering good times?
suggesting more skill at higher level
suggesting disappoint with group
suggesting disappoint with progress of group
giving examples of group deficiency
pinpointing problems with groupwork

Ameli: I think that that's like because we spent such little time with each other

experiencing lack of collegiality

Neel: Mmmm [positively]

agreeing

Jordan: This is true this is true

agreeing

Ameli: Over the three years you kind of build a relationship with your classmates, even if your group is changing [agreement from both others]. You know that they've had the same experiences, you know [Jordan: It's probably the reason why] it's the time that you spend together. We were literally just thrown into it.

building relationships
building relationships continuously
sharing experiences
sharing experiences over time
spending time together / being thrown into it

Jordan: If I look back, I probably, cause, obviously the majority of my memories come from my final year, probably if I look back to how the group works, at the end of first year and how the LLM group worked at the end. Their first year of PBL would probably be on the same track but my memory is like third year, so we've had like three years of doing it so naturally we going to be better or...

reflecting
pinpointing recent memories are salient
comparing groupwork in UG to PG
pinpointing time spent as important to groupwork
pinpointing recent memories as salient
suggesting time is crucial to developing groupwork

Ameli: Yeah...

agreeing that time is important

Micky: So how did you guys feel coming into that situation?

2.

A: Well, I actually did not like the structure of the PBL in the first term at all because, for two reasons. A: we were for, whatever, Commercial Transactions module, it was literally like we study something today, we have a PBL problem that is based on the lecture, so we don't have to research anything (!), as the answers we already had. And for Corporate Governance, it was too abstract to get to anything specific, so I did not personally enjoy PBL at all. In the first term.

disliking class structure
disliking Term 1
highlighting a particular module
studying a specific topic
disliking dullness
highlighting a particular module
disliking abstract topics
speaking personally about dislikes

J: PBL didn't work for Corporate Governance, they should never have set it up that way

identifying mismatch between subject and method of teaching

A: It was too, it was too, just like something we were doing because it was on the syllabus but it wasn't helping at all.

suggesting mistakes from leadership
grappling with what was wrong
finding syllabus unhelpful

J: You can't do like a theoretical PBL, it's got to be practical

identifying problems with learning method

A: Yeah

N: I personally found them really fast, like a couple of times I just sat and watched. A couple of time, first of all, I came like two weeks late to school. So, when I came, I just kept staring and was like, "what they doing, why are they talking so fast, why they answering". They weren't questions until the end and then they started talking about issues after like reading one thing. Like, where they get the issue from, and they bring up like new things and it was like really, confusing for me like the first like few classes and like...

being overwhelmed by pace
'stepping out' of learning
joining the group late
feeling lost
feeling left behind
being confused by order of events in class
feeling left behind / confused
grappling to understand class logic
feeling confused

A: Especially Corporate Governance, because a lot of it you dealt with Companies Act and I at least as an international student had no idea about the UK's Company Law, so when you guys had a discussion about that like Stakeholder Theory and stud like that, I was like "what are they talking about?!" Because I have no idea, like I've read the section, but I don't have [Nengi: Yeah] the background of the history that these guys might have had in undergrad already. So, I was lost.

highlighting a specific class as confusing
highlighting specific issue
feeling alienated as in int student
drawing on specific example
feeling confused and left out
having no idea
having a different background
having different UG experiences / being lost

J: One thing that I picked up on as well like, and obviously this changes between different people and their confidence levels, was speaking in front of a group. But... I'm quite a confident group speaker, so if I didn't understand something I would be the first to say like, "oh hey could we go back". I did feel like a lot of people were reserved in that sense and if they

picking up on nuances
seeing differences of character
speaking in front of a group
feeling confident to speak up when didn't understand
being reserved to admit ignorance

didn't... Didn't then they just kind of let it run on... which would be worse for them in the end.

letting things making things worse

~~Name~~: Mmmm (positively)



Micky: Did that change from the beginning of the academic year to the end?

~~Name~~: No, I'd say that if you didn't have like the confidence, I don't know whether it was a matter of confidence, like for some people, I know that I had friends who wouldn't say anything throughout the class because they weren't sure, then after the class would talk about it. It was not like about confidence, they just didn't want to hold the class back, just because they didn't understand, they felt like, asking if someone was talking about something and if they had a problem at the beginning and the person goes all the way to the end then they wouldn't want to drag the person all the way back to the beginning to like explain. So, if there is someone they know that someone they know understands it, then they just leave it and wait until after class to understand what the problem was. Like, a number of times I explained stuff to Meng Meng, obviously because of her English speaking ability [unclear]. It wasn't because she didn't have the confidence to ask, I don't think so.

experiencing sustained low confidence suggesting reticence is more than /confid knowing other who were reticent not being sure and staying quiet figuring out after class Not wanting to hold class back /lacking insight asking someone else asking about problems letting things go to far feeling guilty for dragging someone back knowing someone else enduring class / asking someone in the room going to peers who knows supporting peers identifying Eng proficiency as an issue of confidence

~~Name~~: I found that Meng Meng became more confident as the courage went on.

seeing confidence change in others having courage

~~Name~~: Yeah over time. It was really because she couldn't speak the language not because she wasn't confident enough.

being unable to speaking observing language as a barrier

Angeli: I think in the second term I saw a lot more input from Meng Meng and X for two reasons. First, because our group was really small, it was five people literally. So, it was easier for them to hold a discussion if they didn't get something [Name: Agreement]. And the other thing was that I think the online feedback for the PBL, that really helped. Because even though Meng Meng and X, they may not be able to express themselves that fluently in English, in spoken English, they were able to write it down. So we knew that they were able to understand everything and they know what they are talking about. So that was, I think that was very very helpful [?] [last word unclear]

seeing positive change in others identifying struggling peers being more at ease in a small group being enabled by a small group reflecting on online learning receiving feedback was helpful being unable to express yourself not being fluent having written ability / questioning ability having knowledge having feedback a positive

Jess: It must have been tough as well, as the amount of times *imagining struggles for others*
that I would see, especially how fast a lot of people speak in *seeing pace of speech as a problem*
English [agreement] I would.... [recording cut off]

Nick: I couldn't even hear them so [talking about MM and X?] *being unable to hear others*
Jess: Figured out by that point... Ehm

Angie: And even then with all our different cultural backgrounds, *recognising cultural backgrounds*
some of us are just more outspoken, some of us are more... Like *having different characters*
MM and X they always used to say, you know... We were waiting *realising cultural differences*
for them to finish before we sort of spoke by then time was up *finishing without including all*
and the discussion was over, yeah so over time I think it *feeling that discussion is over*
developed quite nicely. It was ok. Because by then they were *developing nicely*
able to... Uhm I'm giving an example of MM and X because they *giving specific examples*
had that language barrier sort of thing [Nick: yeah] and I really *impressing language barrier*
saw a good improvement from them. *seeing improvement in others*

Jess: I also felt like, the more social kind of things that we did *reflecting on social things*
outside of the classroom, like when we had that Christmas get *getting out of the classroom*
together [agreement]. *getting together for Christmas*

Angie: Christmas yeah

Jess: Because, although that was the end of first term, we still *ending first term*
had two more terms to go, we decided to just go for a drink in *deciding to go for a drink*
the pub, the Glasshouse and then order pizza and watch a *spending time together*
movie all together, and to be fair everyone, kind of got together *getting together*
[agreement]. And although we started at the beginning of *getting together late in the day*
October and that was the beginning of December. A couple
months in and I felt that the whole group dynamic totally *seeing group dynamic change*
improved afterwards [agreement] when we came back from *recognising positive effect from get tog*
exams because people got to know each other less as peers and *getting to know each other a*
more as friends. You know?! Because if you are not seeing *friends*
people outside of the classroom it's more and more trust *building trust by seeing people*
develops when you know someone on a more personal level. *building trust on a personal level*

Angie: And I think that our collective frustration with a few *having collective frustrations*
lecturers also quite helped us with each other [agreement] *bonding thru shared adversity*

Nick: yes yes yes yes

Angie: We were like so "what do we do with this?!" Sort of thing, *pulling together in adversity*
so I think that that really helped us bond with each other. *bonding with each other*

Micky: So in a way like that adversity helped you to bond? *bonding in adversity*

~~Amel~~: Yeah sort of. Like those lectures...

recalling specific moments

~~Nengi~~: Yeah yeah yeah! Something silly about the teachers and then someone else like...

recalling something silly

~~Amel~~: All the books or the readings that were given to us and it was all just going over our heads. All of us...

being given texts going over our heads

~~Nengi~~: Like when everyone was complaining about Lorraine's book. I'm complaining and your complaining... And you're like, oh yeah ok

complaining about a text having collective grievance

~~Amel~~: Hahaha.... It's like you know you're not alone... In like drowning...

realizing you are not alone in struggle realizing comprehending

Micky: That's interesting, because at that beginning thing, like what you were saying Nengi, when you came to the course at the beginning, you came late, did you feel alone?

~~Nengi~~: Well no, I knew ~~Zahra~~. I knew ~~Zahra~~ from uni, so I didn't particularly feel alone. It was more about me feeling confused about and the speed to things feeling fast. I'm used to like lecture halls and ever though I'd been in group situations, I hadn't done anything like PBL before, so it was like fast, it was too fast, but I didn't feel alone or... Confused it was just the speed.

not feeling alone feeling confused experiencing a change in method being unsure of a method not feeling alone feeling confused

Micky: Can we go back to friendship? For you personally, do you think that that was an issue for you in your learning and the PBL or learning situation? So we were saying that after you'd done some social stuff together, you found that group dynamic was better...

~~Jessie~~: I think that more like trust or something Developed.

developing trust with peers

~~Amel~~: I think that the comfort level becomes better. Like in the first term... These guys had already studied in the law school and they knew the lecturers and they knew how things worked and whatever and the rest of us, were like "what are they doing?"

feeling increasing comfort with others seeing that others were already settled seeing others were familiar with stuff feeling oriented

~~Nengi~~: Sorry ours wasn't the most 'friendly' class. So even though you were friends with the person, you weren't necessarily 'friends'... I don't know how to explain it.

perceiving an unfriendly vibe feeling friendships were shallow feeling peers weren't friends

~~Jessie~~: It became less formal though, I think and more informal

becoming less formal

6.

Alex: yeah, it's like we were in that one conference room from 9.30 to 2.30 4.30 or whatever. And you know what it's like you'd go to a conference and you'd remain with the same people the whole week and you'd sort of

*being in the same place
spending all day together
remaining with the same people*

Nora: Know them.

knowing people

Alex: Get to know them

getting to know people

Jordan: I think more at the beginning of the term people would finish lectures and then go off and do their own thing. But if we had lectures later on in that

*seeing chance in relationships
finishing and going home*

Nora: Day

Jordan: I think that's when people got to know each other. Yeah, people would hang out, have coffee at the desk and chat between lectures. As before people would just go off and do their own thing. And then meet back up

*getting to know peers
hanging out / having coffee
reflecting negatively on lack of concentration
going off and meeting later?*

Alex: Yeah...

Micky: And did that make a difference to learning? Or to your experience? Or how you felt?

making a difference to learning

Alex: I think it did

making a difference to learning

Jordan: Yeah I think so because they were far more approachable afterwards [Nora: yeah]. For example say like even if it's not something that it wasn't something directly in the lesson. Say like afterwards you start talking to someone after lectures, or about something that you discussed, or how someone's work's going, or a study is going or whatever

*getting extra from better relations
becoming more approachable
experiencing indirect benefit
talking to someone after class
recapting after class
chatting about academic progress*

Alex: Or it could be something as simple as "I'm tense about this". Like I remember I had a conversation about Ben, about our job situations or something and it was just a simple conversation, it wasn't anything related to academics at all, but just because we had hung out during the whole day, like we used to be there at one room, so it just sort of flowed

*chatting about being tense / simple issues
recounting a conversation
chatting about simple things
chatting about non-academic stuff
hanging out during the whole day
feeling that things flow*

Nora: I don't really know that friendship really has anything to do with learning on the PBL. Like for example Zarah, she's like the most sociable person I know, right. But the way she learned on the PBL. She basically never really spoke or asked

*questioning the importance of friendship
learning in class
discounting sociability to learning
recalling a sociable person who didn't speak up*

questions. Even if she wanted to ask a question she was like, *being reticent even when someone else raised their voice or someone else said not getting a chance had question* something, so never mind. She was friends with everyone *giving up* before I was even friends with anyone, so I dunno that friendship *being silent even with friends* helps the learning situation, honestly.

Alex: I think that that's an individual...

Neel: Thing..

Alex: How much you want to participate in the group and *wanting to participate* enhance your learning. I think that some people just absorb *enhancing learning* more... rather than speaking. So... You know, I don't think that *having other learning options* friendship has got anything to do with it. *discounting friendship*

Neel: To do with it [agreement]

Jordan: I think it does.

All: 'laugh'

feeling that friendship is important

Micky: Has this got anything to do with what you were saying earlier?

Jordan: I dunno, like, maybe not directly but you might not notice *indirect importance* it. I feel like if people are naturally more comfortable with each *being natural brings comfort* other on a personal level then... I think people are more likely to *experiencing a personal level* challenge someone or ask questions or something. Like... *challenging others/asking questions* Like... In PBL they wouldn't be forced, if someone didn't actually *not being obliged to speak* know someone, that well, I would feel a bit more reluctant to... *feeling reluctant*

Neel: But Even if you challenge someone and the person just *challenging someone* doesn't answer, and that's just because that's the way the person *not answering/being stuck in ways* is. The person doesn't want to bring any kind of attention to *not wanting attention* herself... because that's the kind of person she is then no one *performing character* has learnt anything and the lecturer will answer for you... And *answering for you* like ok

Alex: In the beginning when we started with our PBL things. *beginning a new method* Mutau and I [Jordan agrees] used to be the most talkative in *being talkative regularly* class. But that's because that's our personality. Even though we *performing personality* weren't really friends or as such comfortable with the rest of the *discounting friendship/comfort* group or whatever. [Jordan: Yeah] But, we were just vocal. *being vocal* That's just our personality. But at the same time there were *being yourself/seeing different persons* those weren't so much... [Neel: It's maybe a 50-50 thing, it depends on you] So, as you you go through it, and you come to *going through it*

know that what you are going through is the same things as the person next to you is going through and you just sort of connect and you become more comfortable.

*going thru the same things
connecting during process
becoming comfortable*

J: I think that like if you see someone like G... and at the beginning G... He would talk but actually he wouldn't really talk that much but at the end of it this guy would be chatting about everything [N: yeah...!] and really kind of leading a lot of discussion [A: Yeah] and I think that that does come from the fact that every was more comfortable [A: Probably] and was more connected with someone more on a friendship level as opposed to like an academic peer [N: possibly]... I think as well because there's so much diversity on this LLM that people's cultural backgrounds play a huge part [A: I agree] especially with language barriers and stuff like that... And again the majority of people on the PBL at UG level were native English speakers and that allowed for uhm for discussion to...

*experiencing a specific personality
seeing someone open up
seeing someone become sociable
leading discussion
being comfortable
being connected with someone
experiencing opposing identity
being multiplicit
experiencing diversity of culture
experiencing language barriers
seeing a majority on the programme
seeing English speakers as different*

A: And you spend a lot more time together right? Like you have classes every, the whole day [J: yeah]. You just hang out the whole day, you spend the whole time and your friendship sort of deepens. But in a period of one year...

*spending a lot of time together
having class everyday/hanging out
spending the whole time
experiencing deepening*

J: But at the UG level, there was far more drama [All: laugh]. Like, I'm talking people like people hating each other and requesting to leave groups [N: Oh wow]; wouldn't be in the same room as someone else because of someone's views or someone's political views it was like really really intense [Both: Laugh]. Because like everybody there was quite outspoken and they would share their views.

*reflecting on immaturity
hating each other
leaving groups
experiencing conflicting views
experiencing intense views
being outspoken
sharing views*

A: I think that most sort of eh... Most bonding so to say happened in the negotiation module. Because everyone was like... There was no reading for that as such... [J: Yeah that's true actually]. There was nothing that you could depend on it was literally just [J: We were relying on each other to come up with innovative ideas] Innovative ideas [Nengi: yeah]. So, I think that was a very useful module and we all did very well in it because it was so collaborative.

*bonding
highlight a module
having little reading
having little to depend on
relying on each other
being innovative
having a useful module
collaborating*

N: The assessment was easy too [laughs to herself] [A: the assessment was easy?]

having easy assessment

Micky: Why do you think that your ideas were innovative in that one and not the other ones? [questioning tone]

N: Because there were no textbooks to read [A: yeah] [M: you *not having textbooks* had to be innovative] You had to be innovative. And I think *having to be motivated* because we had to be a team because we were fight... Working *having to work together* with Americans and they were their own team. And it was kind of *being in a team* like a win or lose everything *competing*

J: I think everyone with that negotiation module, and it was like this for myself, forgot that it was actually an... *forgetting you are in academia*

A: Academic thing [all laugh]. Yeah I agree.

J: everyone just really really got into the role *getting into a role*

A: Yeah [All: agree]. After the first the first call happened, we were like "that's it!" *being united*
having a cause

N: "These Americans!"

A: ?

J: Everyone was just determined to win. [A: Exactly] And the fact that there wasn't a planned outcome [Both: yeah]. Even the lecturer didn't know what the outcome was going to be, it was up to us [A: come up with it] to lead it and... *being determined to win*
not having a planned outcome
not knowing the outcome
having to lead ourselves

A: There was no law you could fall behind on or... A theory or any academic writings that you could fall back on, it was just [N: the process] facts and that was just a very very good module and it really helped us connect with each other. *not having theory*
not having fall back
describing a good module
connecting with peers thru meaningful learning

Micky: So do you think that you learned more in that module?

N: Well yeah and we got negotiation skills now, I dunno about learning learning. And I think that we probably built the trust relationships because you had to trust the negotiator not to mess it up. [All: agreement]. You'd be like, I hope you're ready, I hope you're ready for them. And I hope that you've gotten all the relevant facts and then... If someone told you something from like behind the screen. Because like we had a screen and like the obviously the Americans couldn't see into the class. You had to trust the person's opinion was right enough to put it through. To tell them, so... That like... *getting skills*
building trust
trusting others
feeling risk
feeling risk
having relevant facts
describing the situation
having competitors
having to trust a peer

A: yeah, you had to trust whoever was on the call to articulate it [N: Properly] in a proper manner, otherwise it would all just like, you know, fall apart.

trusting your peer with some
having expectations

N: So there was a kind of trust relationship in that

having a trusting relationship

Micky: So it seems that there was more of a perceived risk then in this one

perceiving risk

J: Risks that we cared about I think [All: laugh] [A: yeah]. You know? No honestly because... There as that...

caring about something
really caring about the risk

A: Yeah, because before this none of the other modules had any groups or group assignments.

other modules lacking
having group assignments

N: it wasn't particularly graded, we just had to win. Even though they graded you participation...

having to win
being graded

A: yeah someone was grading in the background, [N: but we weren't worried about that] no one cared about that because "No, we have to get this done!" [N: We have to do this]

being graded
not caring about grades
having collective determination

J: Whereas PBL all the time is like, oh when we're doing PBL we were like, oh how many times, I'm tired, hard like you've been up for like three hours, [All: laugh] you just wanted to get to the outcomes and then go home, you knew that the outcomes were going to come by the end of when it got to 4.30... If we didn't arrive at them the lecturer would give them to us.

going thru the motions
feeling tired
feeling exasperated
going thru the motions
knowing the outcome
getting handed something

A: With Negotiation, we didn't care how long it took [N: yeah!]

forgetting about time

J: How long it took... We'd sit there for hours! [A: yeah hours]

not caring about time

N: It was good fun, it was Saturday. It was a Saturday and everyone was still happy to come.

going in @ the weekend happily

J: Which, I think shows that if you care about something that much then you are willing to put in that much more effort and without realising it you probably are building teamwork skills. If everyone has the same best interest [Both: Yeah]. Your teamwork are probably going to develop [A: I agree] better if everyone is trying to move toward the same goal.

caring about something
willingness to go the extra step
learning without noticing
having shared best interests
developing real teamwork
having a shared goal

A: Like I was super impressed with ~~George~~ because before his call he was totally... "We should do this, and we should do that" [N: "We should walk out"], "We should walk out" And all of us

being impressed by a peer
describing situation

were like... [J: George was worrying me] nervous before the... *feeling risk*
Oh my god [N: God please, don't do that!] [All: laugh]. *recounting exact feeling*
Everything is going to fall apart, but he really controlled himself *feeling extreme risk*
and he actually got a lot of agreements done, and I remember *feeling surprised by peer*
telling him that I was really impressed with him that day. *expressing gratitude to peer*

N: He did really good...

back up claim

Micky: So George was high risk?

identifying high risk

N: Yeah [All: laugh] He was like "I'll get up and I'll walk out" "and *worrying / perceiving risk*
I'm not going to agree to that... Dih dih dih" [A: Yes!] *recounting story*

J: Yeah, so he was high risk, and so was E... Because E... *identifying risky peers*
bless him. His negotiation skills were [A: yeah I agree]... He's *critiquing skills of others*
too soft of a guy.

A: He's too polite [He's too nice]

discussing peer characteristics

J: So if someone would screen like "No, we don't want it!" He *recounting experience*
was like "ok..."

N: I don't understand as he's such a different person in class *conflicting expectations*
right?

A: I was his partner and the girl on the other side, there was a *recounting a specific story*
pair of girl and boy, and the girl was very aggressive like me and *remembering specific details*
the guy was sort of aggressive, but not as polite as E... And *seeing weakness in peers*
E... would be like, "You know, I'll introduce the point and you *recounting specifics*
take it forward". And I'm like "ok" and then he's like "so" *recounting specifics*
[Laughing] and then we'd just go... I think E... is like really *suggesting lack of prep*
really soft... Like he explained it as, as saying that... Because of *seeing differences in cultural background*
his cultural background or something, or something that he'd *grappling to understand peers*
picked up from his dad's negotiation skills, that they'd speak in a *critiquing peer skills*
very monotonous tone and bore the gap out of people [all: *com.*
laugh] so that ultimately, they just go 'like fine'... So I think that's
quite interesting.

Micky: "You've bored me to death, ok just have it"

A: Yeah, they'd be like, ok that's fine

Micky: Did you believe E... When he said that?

N: Well I didn't know about that. But I think that the smartest *not knowing the full picture*
way... Because the Americans had a way with.. And we already

12.

knew what kind of people they were from the personal negotiations. And they were like, with the power play, so you couldn't come with that and expect [A: Yeah]... You couldn't even expect them to be bored because they were fighting... So...

knowing about opponents
working out opponents
unrealistic expectations
unrealistic expectations

J: With that module, it was quite, there was a lot of pressure on the people that were sat in those seats because you gotta remember there would be three of us sat here... And the camera facing you, that's all the screen and a full lecture hall in America can see... [Both: yeah] And you've got all your peers behind you. And so everyone is focused on [All: you]. There's about 40 people. So whatever you say is very very important, especially in negotiation situation [A: yeah] because you can slip up and say something that you didn't mean to say [A: yeah] and it can change the whole outcome of something.

being under pressure
having opponents
being in a team
being under pressure
being judged by peers
being under the microscope
having to make your contribution count
perceiving risk
fearing saying the wrong thing
actions having real consequences

A: But I was really impressed with P... also, the way that he conducted the whole module... He just left it to us.

being impressed with teacher
being well conducted

N: I was really disappointed, he didn't seem to want it as bad as we did. He seemed to just like want anything, he just want to end somehow... And....

being disappointed in stuff
perceiving lack of guidance

J: Nahhh!

disagreeing

A: I first believed that...

N: We wanted to just kill them and get everything that we could get... And he was just like "yeah OK" And I was like "Ok, Why are you not like... Why are you not as hyper as we are?"

feeling highly competent.
feeling disappointed with guidance
experiencing difference in excitement for task

J: I guess that he's not as involved as we were [N: I guess]

rationalising teacher behaviour

A: I thought it was nice the way that he conducted it as on the other side... They were putting us on hold and they literally forgot to mute the call [N: laughter] during the whole [J: So we heard everything they were saying]. [All: Laughing] We heard everything they said. They put us on hold and they would ask their lecturer what to do. Then on our side we just figured it out [A: on ourselves... Yeah yeah yeah]. And I think that way, I really liked the way that P... conducted it [N: Yeah], in the sense that he left it up to us, so we had to trust each other and we had to come up with solutions. I think that that was very helpful. We were independent.

seeing the positive
recounting exact info
remembering fondly
pulling together
sharing memories
praising staff
having responsibility / trusting each other
having to find solutions
being autonomous

J: And we prepared well as a team. So if something didn't work out then we always had something else.

*preparing as a team
being well prepared*

N: Even if it wasn't your session then you would wait for the next person. [A: Yeah]

*wanting for peers
being interested in others
performance*

A: You were like slipping papers under the table [All: laugh]

*pulling together
helping each other*

Micky: So everybody prepared and everybody was willing to share what they had prepared.

*being willing to help others
sharing prep*

J: Yeah absolutely, there was like a huge sense of teamwork. And I do think that it comes down to... The fact again that we all had the same interests and that we all wanted to achieve the same goal and we really got into the role. So if someone was winning, the whole team was winning [N: The whole team was winning, yeah] [A: Yeah Exactly]. Which was important to everybody as individuals. Whereas in the PBL classroom, it's just kinda like meh... This is my homework, I don't really care about this [A: yeah] Let's get this over with and we'll go and do our own thing.

*having a huge sense of teamwork
pinpointing route cause
having the same goal
sharing goals / playing a role
winning together
winning
working together / seeing difference
feeling lethargic / not caring
wanting to get it over with
wanting to go home / do own thing*

Micky: Let's go through the motions kind of thing

going thru the motions

N: Like, CSR no, it wasn't like some sort of PBL but it was a group learning thing and then they brought new students from... I dunno [J: Other Master's] other courses and it was, I dunno, I didn't feel the need to say anything in any of the class. I didn't feel the need to prepare for any of our session or anything, and it was kind of because there were new people and it was because they were, I dunno, it was very odd to me. Like, I dunno whether it was because there were a couple of new people and there was a new teacher and her teaching style was really odd to me. But, I didn't feel that...

*comparing classes
learning with others / learning with fresh students
being unclear
not seeing the value in contribution
not seeing the value in prep
having fresh peers
being odd
having new peers
experiencing odd teaching method*

A: More odd that ~~Lorraine's~~? [laughs]

N: Well, ~~Lorraine~~ was more of a lecturer right, and I'm kind of more used to lecture, cause I went to Hull and it was all lectures...

*experiencing lectures
being used to a particular teaching style*

Micky: So that familiarity of lectures and being in a lecture, how did that make you feel compared to this new style of doing something?

being familiar

N: Well, emm, ~~L...~~'s lecture was Company Law, and I've done company law for the most part, so I didn't think that it was horrible. Like, I thought that she was really boring as she dragged out things, and she had a million handouts and there were like 40 millions things on one page... [A: and she wouldn't breath] [All: laugh] and you were always praying for the break.

*referring to a particular course
having experience of a topic
perceiving lecturer as boring
dragging things out / having a lot of handouts
being overwhelmed
praying for the break*

A: I was just like literally waiting for a period to come.... [unclear]

praying for the break

N: But it was all sensible stuff and when she said something, I was always like "yeah yeah yeah ok that's why that happens and that's why that happens and I like to... The information... But I didn't like the delivery.

*receiving good information
becoming clear
becoming clear
disliking delivery*

J: I loved everything this year. [laughter] I did! I'm not being funny because at UG I wouldn't go to lectures. I just wouldn't go. I lived in a house with 5 guys and we all did law... We were like meh. Because you'd go in and there would be a lecture hall with like 100 people or whatever and it would be one guy talking, and again, you feel a lot more intimidated even though these are your peers, putting your hand up and asking a question in front of 100 people as opposed to like 10 people [N: 'Hmmm' agreement]. This year, I was far more vocal than if I would go to lectures and what ended up last year would be that we just ended up teaching ourselves through PBL but actual lectures as a whole, I just wouldn't go to, just because, I found them a waste of time personally. Because we had lectures and then we had PBLs

*having a positive experience
reflecting on -ve lecture experience
living with others
having lectures
experiencing impersonal lectures
being intimidated to talk
being scared to ask questions
realising the difference of small groups
being more vocal
teaching ourselves
opting out of lectures
experiencing different methods*

A; And I think that the difference is because at UG you are being taught for the first time. The subject is being introduced to you. It's literally like learning the alphabet but at masters level you are expected to have a certain level of knowledge already and then you are discussing deeper issues [Both: agreement]. So, I think that is more helpful in the sense that... To be vocal in class. Because you are able to give your opinion on something. Rather that just learning something new [both: agreement] [N: soaking it up]. Yeah yeah... So I think that also makes a difference with being vocal in class.

*seeing difference from UG
having an introduction
learning the basics
having expectations
discussing deeper issues
seeing the benefit of being vocal
being able to give opinion
simply learning something new
being vocal in class makes a difference*

Micky: Ok, yeah... And I guess that you have to be more critical or analytical when you get to master's, don't you? [A: yes]. Rather than at UG when it's absorb absorb absorb [N: and then squeeze]

*being more critical
being analytical
absorbing at UG level*

A: Because in UG, I think that most of the time. When I was taking those interim PBLs, I don't know if you figured the same

*being a UG
reflecting on PBL experience*

thing... Most of the time the UGs, they didn't know what they were doing? They were just doing... They were given a problem and they had the learning outcomes and they were just randomly going and looking for things. But, they didn't know the direction that they had to hit

*being lost at UG
going thru the motions
being given LOs
not knowing direction*

J: My groups were amazing, I didn't even have to do any work, [laughter] I just had to go in there... I'm not even joking, like I had two groups that I'd go in there, and by the time I got into the classroom, they'd already done every single outcome and I'd go through and I'd check it with them... Yeah yeah...

*being impressed by UGs
↓
being autonomous
helping others*

A: No, my groups actually didn't have a problem with the learning outcomes, they had a problem with developing their research trail sort of thing. Like if they are supposed to find something in contract law, they would literally just go on websites and type it in like they do on Google and.. It's a little random for them... Because they are like, 'what is equity?' Or 'what is...?' They are like grasping at straws, they had the direction because they had the learning outcomes and the learning outcomes were pretty straightforward but still I thought that at the beginning they were literally left to swim in the waters...

*not having a problem
struggling to develop criticality
researching
going to inappropriate sources
using Google
not getting the basics
grasping a straws
having LOs
perceiving abandonment
being left to get on with it*

Micky: Did you feel like in your Master's you were 'left to swim in the waters?'

A: No

being supported by staff

J: No, this year I feel that there was far more support, but that's maybe because I turned up to everything this year.

*experiencing more support
seeing benefit of turning up*

N: Like yeah, I went to Hull. It was a shit university [laughter]. You wasn't a lot of help... Like you didn't get any help from the teachers, they were like really cold... So you couldn't like go and speak to them. So... Yeah If you say Hull and York... And then you say there's much much more help but then if talk about the grand scheme of learning no one helps you across the learning process, so if you don't ask for help, or if you don't look for help then you don't get help. So you know how a teacher should look around and make sure that everyone is on the path and like everyone understands it... They just leave it up to the head, like we had what do you call it, the head of the group, the chair... So if the chair noticed that you weren't saying anything then you didn't say anything that day. So, there wasn't like any teacher intervention to say make sure.. "Why you not saying anything?" "What do you think?" "What do you think... Blah blah blah..."

*looking down on old uni
experiencing another uni
not getting help
teachers being cold
experiencing reticence from staff
receiving more help
not receiving help
not asking for help
don't ask don't get
suggesting teacher responsibility
deferring responsibility
having a chair
noticing reticence or silence
being reticent
articulating teacher responsibility
asking questions*

Like, I've gone to school in Nigeria and I've gone to school in England and in Nigeria, they'll embarrass you to speak, you kind of have to speak. Like, you have to say what you think and better not say anything stupid as everyone is going to really embarrass you. So that's like teacher intervention, so even when the student felt they didn't speak because no one was saying anything, the teacher made sure... They sort of made sure that everyone went along. No matter how slow you went along, it was better ask that not ask. Because if you didn't ask and they asked you, then you were in trouble for not asking. They'd be like, "why don't you know?" And "if you didn't know then why didn't you say anything from the start?" So, I would kind of say well that was the issue from the beginning, so if you weren't confident enough to ask in the lecture or have a friend or a group or whatever to ask after the lecture then you were lost... Forever...

reflecting on past education
reflecting on teaching method
being 'embarrassed to speak'
being obliged to say what you think
fearing saying something stupid
being aware of your silence
making sure / intensive scaffolding
patient scaffolding / moving along
choosing to ask / perceiving repetition
getting in trouble for not asking
being found out for not knowing
being humiliated?
identifying the issue
not being confident enough to ask
relying on peer for understanding
being lost forever

Micky: Ok... This year?

N: Yeah this year. On like, first semester... I think second semester was either easier or you had learned a degree of the university, so it was smoother. First semester, if you didn't know what you were doing and you didn't ask any questions then.. Or you didn't know what to ask...

reflecting on past year
finding second semester easier
finding term / less smooth
feeling lost / not questioning
feeling unable to find questions

A: First term was definitely more stressful than the second [N: agreement]. Because the first one was like, what the hell is going on.

finding term / more stressful
feeling overwhelmed

N: It was difficult and maybe they made us do certain courses, even if you didn't want to do it you just had to do it. And then second semester, you picked what you wanted to do so you were happier with... You were like, I picked this so I have to get on with it [A: yeah]

being forced to take core mods
being obliged to do core mods
choosing route in Term 2
making bed and lying in it
getting on with it

A: And I think like, the fact that only a few of them had done the UG from here, they had an idea about what is expected, like especially for me, I had never done critical writing before in my UG. Our university was, well whatever... [N: It was special] But but... I was really stressed about it, and second semester I was like a lot more confidence [N: You had experience]. I was a lot more confident about how things worked. So that definitely helped.

identifying others
seeing an advantage for former York
being new to criticality
looking down on previous uni
being stressed
having confidence and experience
knowing how things work

Micky: [directed at ~~Jordan~~] So, left to swim in the water?

J: Yeah it was all smooth sailing for me..

M: That's not swimming in the water, that's sailing!

J: Yeah, Uhm... No like.. I think that well first term for me was obviously quite relaxing [laughter] No it was... I mean a lot of it was really breaking the ice and getting people familiar with the process. And..

reflecting on Term 1
feeling relaxed
breaking the ice
getting familiar
realising a process

A: And did it help you more that the fact that you already new how things worked?

J: Yeah 100%, that's why I was far more relaxed [N: of course]. So I felt that the second term was far more stressful than the first [N: Really?!]. First term, we had what.. a couple of pieces of assessment..

being helped by familiarity
feeling relaxed
find term 2 more stressful
reflecting on Term 1
suggesting it was easier

A: Why was the second term more stressful?

J: Well, I mean, actually I mean second term as in [N: lectures?] after Christmas, [A: oh!] we had our exams then we had our.. But, for those first two months before we went away for Christmas it was kinda like... We hadn't done anything! Like I learnt stuff but I mean there was only one piece of assessment due... And probably for the first couple of weeks it was getting to know everyone and getting the people who weren't familiar with PBL on the right track so... Uhm... In that sense I was quite fortunate. But yeah...

reflecting on second term
having exams
reflecting on end of term 1
feeling no work had been done
feeling assessment was skint
assessing initial weeks
getting familiar with peers
getting on the right track

A: I found that as there were no exams, that was very helpful. [N: that was annoying to me]. Because I could just concentrate on learning about deeper issues. If I had exams then I would have like, approached it like, I have to learn learn learn!

find no exams useful
concentrating
learning about deeper issues
approaching differently

N: Oh I love exams... [J: I hate them] It taught me how to write essays, that's only thing that I'm thankful for. Now I know how to... I dunno [A: Now I know how to write now too]. No but, I love exams. I wish that we had at least one module that had an exam [J: no...]. Like, if there was one then I'd be on like a distinction. Like, you know what you are writing and the person is so impressed that you all this in how many hours. And you like read articles and you like rephrase the articles in the exam...

loving exams / learning how to write
hating exams
knowing how to write
loving exams
wanting a mix of assessment
feeling secure in exams
knowing the expectations of exams
knowing how to do exams

J: Trust me, if there were exams at York Law School they're like the hardest things ever. You don't know the topic and they like give it to you 48 hours and then you have to learn...

finding exams hard
describing exam method

N: They give you the topic?!

being surprised by method

J: They give you the topic

N: Hahaha!

A: They don't give you the topic, they give you those learning outcomes things...

describing method

J: They give you...

N: They give you something...

being excited by method.

J: No they don't, they basically give you 48. They'll say you've got a criminal exam. You don't know what it's going to be on...

describing method of examination

N: Wait wait wait... The beginning of the term You know that you are going to have an exam at the beginning of term. And 48 hours before, they give you something...

clar. fying examination

J: they give you a PBL problem. You don't know the outcomes but you got to PBL that...

N: So you've been reading all the law and 48 hours before they tell you what to concentrate on. Oh my god... It sounds like the best way ever!

being excited about exams

J: Trust me, it's not. One thing that Angeli was saying before though, like second term being a lot more easier than first term. I think that it comes a lot back down to people's interests. Like, you said that there were modules forced upon you that you didn't want to take. Second year, second term, you were able to pick your own modules, so naturally you show interest in that [Both: yeah] And you are probably going to want to work harder [A: Work harder; N: yeah] or create a better group dynamic if everyone kind of has the same interests and stuff which obviously showed in the negotiation module. Whereas, someone now, if someone doesn't want to be there then naturally they are not going to be [A: interested] as active as a group member.

reflecting on exams

reflecting on UG

identifying person interest as key

having modules forced upon you

being able to pick mods in term 2

being more interested when you can choose

being more driven with choice

choosing module leads to better dynamic

choosing module creates groups with same

highlighting module as meaningful interest

not wanting to be there

not being active

being a group member

Micky: Because it's about meaningfulness, isn't it? And did you feel like you understood why you were doing things?

something being meaningful

understanding why you are doing smth

A: Not in the first term. The first term was confusing.

being confused.

not understanding why

Micky: Like the what am I doing and why am I doing it was missing?

A: Yeah totally

Not understanding what what

N: In the PBL...?

A: yeah, like the PBL was literally going like, I was vocal in the class because I wanted to know what we were doing? [N; Yeah] but at the end of the PBL we had the learning outcomes and everything and I'd be like, how did we... [N; Laughs] I dunno know... This is the problem and we've come up with it...

*being at sea
wanting to be part of it
being given outcomes at end
being demotivated by process
being lost by process*

N: Even if you knew what you were asking, you didn't know why you were asking...

*Not fully getting process
asking questions*

A: Even Corporate Governance, we would come with learning outcomes and I would be like, what do I read for them?

*taking a more extreme example
finding mismatch in learning*

N: yeah... How does that have to do with... Like... yes yes

*perceiving mismatch between
reading and class*

Micky: I thought it was interesting that it's not real PBL, is it? [J: It's not PBL at all...]. Because if you don't get the outcomes then they give them to you...

discounting method

N: yeah... they help you with it

*unrealistic?
negating learning thru ...?*

A: yeah yeah... And the Law and Commercial Transactions PBL they at least had a statute in the background. So, you had a point of start that you could go through, go to the...

*drawing on a specific module
having a starting point*

Micky: Do you think that it made a difference that you knew that you would get the outcomes anyway?

expecting to be handed answers

J: Probably... probably yeah

being demotivated

A: It probably did. By the end of... You know half way into the PBL we'd be like... [looks around] looking at each other and then you know, whoever is conducting the PBL would be like "ok so we're like, you know, right at the end of the PBL!" [laughs]

*knowing a correct answer will be
looking tentatively at and given
looking to the tutor to give answer
knowing class as a time limit*

J: You know why, if I personally think that it's not our fault. I think this was a great LLM but it needs to be restructured [A: totally, I agree] because the only course that we took this year that should have been PBL was Law and Com Trans [A: yes! And

*not accepting blame
criticising structure of material
understanding limits of method*

Competition law]. And that's because it's got a lot of.. It's all primary legislation and cases and stuff like that. You can't do PBL on [A: on abstract] Corporate Governance when we are talking about theory and stuff because it becomes so ambiguous. And no one's ever going to get the learning outcomes [A: I agree]. But where as when we have a vary in the law or an issue that is going on then we are like, oh ok this person needs to go to this statute and look at this case and that's how it's run at UG level.

having tangible examples
struggling with abstract concepts
perceiving theory as ambiguous
having unrealistic goals
having variety
having tangible examples
having a clear procedure

A: I remember that Peter stopped giving us a lot of the learning outcomes that came with the problem because he said "you won't be able to.. It's useless to give you those"

observing tutor adapting methods
having unrealistic goals
tutor admitting uselessness

Micky: How do you think that changes your perception of the actual law school and the LLM or the institution?

changing perceptions
perceiving law school and uni

A: I think that there's a lot of requirement for coordination within the whole department, especially when it came to our timetabling. Like John and I were teaching assistants. They knew that every Tuesday between 2 and 4 UG PBL sessions happened, that we take, and despite that, my timetable in the second and the third term were completely interference with those PBLs, which was kinda weird as there were like 3 teaching assistants in like PGs, so they should have been able to manage it better. And then, it was really confusing.

seeing need for coordination
judging departmental performance
being a teaching assistant
knowing
timetabling
mis-timetabling
having a weird set up
perceiving underperformance
being confused

J: I guess that the Law School is still really young, it's like only 5 years old or something. And, we are technically the Guinea pigs. As for different teaching structures and curriculum [A: maybe]...

rationalising problems
being guinea pigs
perceiving different teaching strategies

Micky: Did you trust that they had your best interest at heart because the word 'guinea pigs' isn't very nice. [laughter]

having best interests
being guinea pigs

N: essentially, every teacher or lecturer whatever wanted everyone to do well. That was the end goal. So whatever teaching style they decided to come up with... It was for the student to understand what the subject entailed and come up with their own ideas and that so yes... [A: it was encouraging from that point of view] I love this law school. I think that maybe it's because I've been to another school. I thought the PBL... I didn't understand it, I understood the concept. I understood why it was this way. I feel that it helps with meeting situation, so if you were in a meeting now you would know how to handle yourself.

seeing staff as a collective
perceiving staff as well meaning
coming up with teaching styles
desiring to educate
introducing own ideas
loving law school
comparing present to past experience
not understanding PBL
taking some time
↓
handling yourself

A: It definitely helped to improve with developing your own learning sort of thing, so they would just give you the start point and then it was up to you how you want to develop your learning.

*seeing definite improvement
being given a clear starting point
being given autonomy*

N: but you didn't have to study for PBL to be there [laughs]. You didn't have to study you just have to go...

*not having to study
just going*

A: It's not necessarily dependent on PBL as such, I'm just talking the whole course. It depends on you, how much you want to learn. You can do the bare minimum...

*seeing own choices as key
seeing own effort as key*

J: Well that's what university is isn't it. It's not like back at school where "oh we're going to ring your parents because you didn't do your homework" [A: yeah]. If you don't do it, it's your problem not theirs. You know, so...

*seeing uni as clearly dif from
being treated like adults
being responsible for self*

Micky: If I could just go back for the last 5 minutes to a couple of things that have come up. I meant to ask and I was really interested... When you did the negotiation, who did you trust the most to go in there, was there any reason why you would trust that person, and did it turn out to be true... [A: Does it have to be one person?] You could choose maybe a couple... I'm interested about who you trusted going into the situation and why.

*trusting peers with
high risk activity*

J: Who we did or didn't [Micky: let's start with did] [All: laugh]

A: In hindsight, if personally, I had to choose the negotiation team, I don't know about individually but I would have chosen a consistent team. Instead of a different group every week because that sort of threw us sometimes so... but it was a small group and I think everyone had to have the opportunity to be on the front line.

*looking back
not choosing individual
differing personalities
being 'thrown'
having opportunity
being in front line*

N: I dunno.. I dunno that you had to trust anyone.. Like I think it was what the person Did that made you... You were more impressed with the results. Like going in you were like, I hope you do well. There isn't like...

*not to
actions are important
being impressed*

M: Hope is different though, as hope is sort of like faith. Like you really just don't know what is going to happen.

separating hope from faith

N: I think maybe the first group of people. Like, I was happy that it as them. They really articulate, just basically... It was James, Ben and Zane, they had been doing it ok. I was happy with the fact that James and Ben were going to introduce the group and

*pinpointing a group
being articulate
being happy with peers
having roles*

there was nothing really serious about it. It was just an introduction, so I was happy that the articulate people of the group were there to help introduce our group and introduce what we wanted and that. But I dunno about trusting anyone before that, it was more like "woohoo congrats". Thanks you...

having nothing serious
seeing value in articulate peers
fitting roles
wanting the right people in the right places

J: There was a few people that I didn't trust. [M: ok let's go to didn't trust] [laughter]. Ok, if I'm going to be completely honest I didn't trust O because my God, she's an aggressive negotiator and I thought that you can be aggressive and that's good but too aggressive can literally ruin a business relationship.. And she was like rude...

being enthusiastic
not trusting peers
being honest
distrusting aggressive peers
seeing flaws in peers
disliking rude peers

A: It was rude but she threw them off a little bit in her aggression but at the same time it could have sort of just [calm down, calm down calm down]

seeing value in aggression
seeing a different way

J: One of the things that developed and we've mentioned it already today is people really started taking on their roles and competition between the American and the English. But what a lot of people forgot was, we were actually as a whole trying to work together. To be one mutual goal [N: and build this relationship]. But there was a sense of rivalry that really developed between the Americans and the English and a lot of people yeah forgot that we are trying to work together here. So don't be slating that person off [N: Yeah, yeah] or whatever as..

seeing peers develop
coming together
uniting in competition
working as a whole
having a shared goal
having rivalry
uniting in rivalry
working the facet of sharing together

A: that was one of the things that I actually took away from the module was that in real life that negotiation would not have gone the way that it did. Any of the session in the negotiation actually wouldn't have gone the way it did... [N: well we wouldn't form] Because in real life people want to be friends with the other party... [N: there was no friendship before hand] [J: But that's got to do with]

taking something away
comparing tasks to real life
analysing sessions
comparing to real life

Micky: Hang on, there was no friendship between who?

N: Like the Americans and us. Like we didn't have a conversation with them. [A: you didn't go for a drink]. I felt that the first meeting should have been like "hi I'm this... Dah day dah!" Instead of like going straight into negotiate as just have to win and you have to lose basically was the kind of relationship. At the end when we came together and laughed about things. But in the beginning it was all tense...

not building friendship
not building rapport
comparing to real life
seeing flaw in task
seeing tasks as contrived
coming together
being tense

each week, so we didn't get to know each other on a personal level.

not knowing each other

A: yeah that's what I'm saying, like, I would have kept a consistent team.

having inconsistency

N: But then you couldn't do that... [A: yeah I know it was the way it was structured]

seeing flaws in task

Micky: Ok, so we talked about ~~Ongela~~, was there anyone else that you didn't find...

J: ~~Meng Meng~~ and X just because... They did try but..

seeing peers struggle

Micky: I wouldn't imagine that X would be a good negotiator

J: Sure, I think that she said two words... She was so inarticulate as well...

*not participating
being inarticulate*

N: Ok, so we had a group of me X and ~~Ongela~~... so There was the strongest of the strongest and then there was X [laughter].

having character mismatch

And then ok... we had a Facebook group and she was talking about how worried she was... and I was like "you know what,

having a FB group

calm down. Right, if you don't know what to say then I'll hand you something to say and all you have to do is just read out and

*being anxious
supporting anxious peers*

ask a question or whatever." And I handed her the thing and she just wouldn't say anything or she'd just really stumble. And I was

*giving peers support
spelling things out for peers*

like will you just ...They were pretty simple English words like three word questions, just ask the questions, so you can

*seeing peers struggle
observing lack of effort*

participate.

grappling to understand

reticence

A: Yeah, well I'll tell you why that was because I met with her the day before negotiation and she didn't know what you were trying to convey to each other party...

*rationalising peer behaviour
being confused*

N: But that's not possible though because we had the group

grappling to understand peer behaviour

A: But that's the thing. I met up with her before and 'this is the question that ~~Nony~~ has provided and I need to ask this.' And I

*supporting peers
not understanding task*

was like ok and I asked her "what do you understand of the things that you are trying to convey to them" and she had no

*questioning peer
trying to convey unsuccessfully*

idea. We had gone through the whole class, she must have discussed it with you guys [N: We made up the questions] and

*going thru in detail
grappling to underst. peers*

she still did not understand the structures that we were trying to make. That's the point. That's the problem

feeling exasperated with peers

identifying a problem

Micky: Would you trust her with something important like the negotiation? *questioning trust*

A: I think it's the language barrier. *having language barrier*

J: It's a language thing *having language barrier*

Micky: but yes or no, would you trust her with something?

J: No *no trusting peer*

A: No

N: No

Micky: and you think it's because of the language barrier? *language barrier ~~is~~ perceived as important to ability*

J: Yeah, it has to be

N: Well, no... You can trust MM to do stuff, like not negotiation, like... X *seeing a difference in ability between oral and written tasks*

Micky: What, because it's not her strength? *having strengths*

N: Yeah! J: Yeah!

J: Like, in generally I would trust her for things, but if we were part of a group, no. *having different dimensions of trust*

A: But not with negotiation particularly *having other strengths*

J: If we had to go back and research the law and give a brief description of what some piece of legislation said I would trust her that she would put her best effort in and that she I would trust her that she would put her best effort in. She wouldn't go off... *doing specific tasks well*
↓
putting in best effort important

N: I wouldn't particularly trust... I'd trust MM but I wouldn't particularly trust X. Because when she was came.. I don't mean to like judge her... [J: Yeah she was just sat on Facebook to be fair the whole time]. Like why are you here? Why are you studying the Masters and she said 'just because' [laughter] *trusting some more than others*
having expectations
sitting on FB constantly
questioning reason for studying
not knowing why she is here

A: I think even with MM in the last call with you guys. She sorted of flipped out at one point that was not in the discussion at all *pinpointing specific time*
being overwhelmed by pressure

because she wasn't in the discussion at all [J: Yeah it was really awkward. Everyone was like, right moving on]. [N: when was that?]. It was in the last call [J: It was in my negotiation. It was like dead silent for about 10 seconds. [Laughter]. That was again mostly because of the language barrier that she felt that she had to contribute something but she could not communicate it to these guys. That this is also a point that because that point that she raised we had already discussed it in the group discussion and ignored it. We said that "no!" We cannot bring it up at this stage because it is too late or whatever.

being out of discussion
peer group moving on
remembering specifics
extended silence
having language barrier
struggling to fulfil obligations
struggling to communicate
missing things up
ignoring
being too late

J: I remember this, because she turned ^{up} on the day and was like "I've prepared all this stuff" and Steve and I had been trying to get in contact with her for the last three days and no contact.

turning up
preparing for class
being incommunicado

A: Exactly, and you guys had finished your points I think, and in the last bit she sort of sprung it [snaps fingers] on you know.

being too late
springing to life

J: Everything had been almost finalised and everyone was happy and she said...

being too late

A: And all of us were just like... [J: no..!] [laughs]

being embarrassed

N: The Chinese negotiation system, did you guys read about the different cultures and how to negotiate [A: Yeah]. It's so much different from British or the American style [A: I agree]. So it could also have to do with the style that she negotiates with, they are more like calm and quiet and wait for you to say something and then wait and then talk.

highlighting cultural difference
↓
in communication
rationalising peer behaviour
pinpointing different comm styles
↓

A: I think that what she did that day was extremely reckless. Had it been a real negotiation it would have been quite quite damaging.

perceiving recklessness
comparing to real life
perceiving damage

N: If it had been a real negotiation then she would have been working with... [unclear]

comparing to real life

J: We'd warned her as well and said, please don't bring that up and then you're right, she probably panicked and as like omg I'm not going to say anything here. But thankfully, they didn't understand what she said

advice falling on deaf ears
rationalising behaviour / imagining panic
feeling pressured by assessment criteria

A: And these guys managed to push it away.

working around peer errors

N: I think that they are really brave. I couldn't go to China and study law. [agreement]

perceiving courage in peers

A: I'm sure they would have been much more comfortable if the language barrier was not there. [J: Of course they were] because they would be to contribute more [N: By far]. It's just the pressure of making a contribution...

*being more comfortable.
perceiving language barrier
relating lang barrier to reticence
understanding pressure in contribution*

N: They are talking a lot as girls. They have a lot of conversation with themselves. And it's kind of like... Ok you can talk this much..

*seeing chattiness
seeing difference between class and*

J: I was quite surprised though, I'd been told... I spoke to Peter... Well Peter had mentioned that apparently YLS, their language requirements are extremely extremely high.

*being surprised
hearing rumour
knowing lang. requirements
academic involvement*

N: Yeah but then you just have to write English, you don't need to write English [A: You have to speak also...]

writing in English

Micky: You do as well. You'd have to get a 7 in IELTS, which is quite high [N: Oh, I didn't do that]

A: But I think that most of the Chinese students don't have a fluent English but they are able to clear IELTS.

suggesting dichotomy in IELTS

N: I don't think that it's that hard, you just need to form an accent and... [J: send them some dirty money or something]. No no... IELTS is really strict.

A: IELTS in China they maybe have a lower expectation or something [N: nope.... IELTS is really strict]

suspecting lower exp. of IELTS in China

M: It's very strict so they can do it

A: In Indian... [N: It's just practice, you have to practice an accent and read out, it's not that difficult]

*practicing
having an accent*

Micky: Do you think then that George was someone that was [N: High risk] was high risk [J: Yeah, George and Emma]. George and Emma... [N: Emma? Before hand...] Did that change from the beginning to the end. Because MM was she high risk before?

identifying high risk peer

J: Yeah... Yeah

*expectations of peers changing
with performance
expecting low performance*

N: Yeah, I didn't think that she was going to say anything

And afterwards she was?

J: I think she said, bless her, a sentence

saying very little

A: I think that she came under too much stress, as she knew that 30% of the marking depends on her contribution, so she literally like panicked and came out with it

being under stress
knowing grade depends on contribution
panicking

Micky: So beforehand you thought that maybe she wouldn't contribute?

having expectations

A: No, she contributed in class in the sense like after this group discussion she would come up to me and ask me what we had discussed and what is the structure that we are planning in everyday. She asked questions, she understood what we were doing. But on that particular day she sort of panicked and she like

contributing
asking peers for clarification
asking peers for clarification
asking questions
cracking under pressure

N: You didn't think that she was high risk from the beginning did you? A: [no?? Unclear]

questioning expectations

J: If one day, if on the first day, someone had asked MM to take over negotiations [A: she wouldn't have]... But I'm saying would you have been happy with that? Because I wouldn't be. [N: Just on her own] [Micky: Yeah, say it was on her own, representing you]. You wouldn't feel comfortable would you? She would be able to convey the same information you would. [A: Yeah ok... Well] It comes down to language barrier, it's not because she less smarter than you are...

hypothensising about weak per
digging into expectations & risk
having a language barrier

A: In writing I would trust her but in this meeting... Not

trusting in certain tasks

Micky: Ok, and how about George then?

J: ~~George~~ yeah, because a lot of time he doesn't think before he speaks and he will just blab out whatever is on his mind and in negotiation situation that is extremely damaging [agreement] or it can be...

not thinking
blabbing
harming task

A: But he was really good.

being good
being calm and precise
being impressed

N: he was so calm and he was so like precise [J: I wasn't there that day] Oh you weren't there, I was like wow

A: I was confident that ~~George~~ would handle himself because ~~George~~ is generally a very calm person and he doesn't get like....

being confident
handling self
being calm

Micky: So you think that he's predictable in how he will to behave.

being predictable

A: Yeah, like in terms of what you are going to say and [N: professionalism] But George is like...

being unpredictable

N: Especially because he was saying "like I'll walk out" and if they don't agree to it, I'm getting up from this table... And it was like 'shit!'

making big statements
causing worry

Micky: There were alarm bells

having alarm bells

A: And every time that we'd put our call on hold, he'd be like, depending on the team who was there, "I'm telling you guys, you should walk out! Walk out!" [N: And we'd be like, George no, we can't walk out]

recounting specifics
performing to specific people
worrying about actions of peer

Micky: And E... as well... So George changed and became more trustworthy [agreement] [J: I can't comment as I didn't see him]. And E... was high risk at the beginning?

going up in estimations
being trustworthy
being high risk

A: I wouldn't say that...

not being high risk

Micky: Medium risk... Low risk?

A: I wouldn't say that as I worked with him on the written things as well as the call.

working with others

N: E... was disappointing to watch [J: yeah, he was disappointing] as he had this little black book with all this information in it. And I was like, "omg, E... is going to kill it. E... is going to be amazing!" And I thought, "You know what E... and A... And A... talks a lot! And E... has all this information.. It'll be..." And then on the day, he was like a little puppy [J: He was]. Like a little puppy [makes a puppy noise] [All: raucous laughter] "say something, say something, you should say something..." And then, you know that he knew what to say because he had all this information in his book, but then he didn't say anything.

being disappointed
expecting
having high expectations

↓
being disappointed
not having expectations met
wanting to intervene
having expectations
↓
being disappointed

J: But then he'd say something and like, he would agree on something before speaking to the group. [impression of American students]. And like... No!

contributing
going out with boundaries
being frustrated

N: We're negotiating, how about you say something else...

being frustrated

A: I wouldn't call him "high risk" though [N: He was high risk by the end]. I would say that... [N: He gave the negotiation to them, he just gave it to them].

defending peer performance
being disappointed
giving up

Micky: So after the experience for you he was high risk for you?

N: Yeah, he was high risk [A: I wouldn't say that]

being high risk

J: After the experience he was high risk but before maybe not... But after... [N: yeah before was ok because he had all this information]

going down in estimations

Micky: ~~Agreed~~, you're gonna have to argue hard here

J: You do't think that afterwards he was high risk?

being surprised at peer's judgement

A: No, I don't think he was... I'll tell you why... I think it was because I was with him, so it wasn't like just him highlighting the issue and then keeping quiet. [J: but we're talking about E... as an individual, not as...] I'm talking about, like if he was alone he would have done it quite differently [N: I don't think do] I think because [Micky, are we talking about negotiation, ~~Agreed~~?] Yeah, negotiation... Because I worked with him the day before, about what we were going to talk about, so he knew his stuff, so I think that if he was alone, he would have approached the whole thing quite differently [N: I don't think so]. Because I was with him, I'm much more vocal and I'm much more sort of

defending team mate
being with peer
keeping quiet
being alone
doing things differently
working together
knowing his stuff
approaching correctly
being vocal

N: You're not really *that* much more vocal than E... is in like actual sense, like in classes. E... will like talk if he had a good point, he'll bring up his point even if he had to wait for you to talk he'll still want to you "oh I think you're right".... Alright alright... no...

being more vocal
talking
bring up a point
waiting

A: Yeah, and that's what I'm saying, that if he was alone just him alone on the camera talking to the American team, he would have been quite different.

performing differently

J: He was agreeing things that he shouldn't have been and that's because he was under pressure. [laughter]

acting inappropriately
cracking under pressure

A: Yeah, he was agreeing, he was agreeing but it was sort of like a litigation, and he'd say, yes I agree but.... Blah blah blah... But the only thing was that when he said 'but' and kept his point forward, I had to take it *really* aggressively forward otherwise and because he would just sort of lay it out and I would have to

agreeing
litigating
being weak
working hard for the team
being weak

say 'look at this!' Sort of thing. [J: It was the numbers thing...] [N: *recounting a specific event* if he was alone..]

N: If he was alone right? [J: yeah?!] He would have offered them *not trusting a peer* more! [laughs]

A: If he was alone I don't think that he would have been so bad

Micky: Okay okay okay... Finally then, the last thing, the other person we mentioned was ~~Roman~~. Was the risk level with ~~Roman~~ the same at the beginning as it was at the end?

J: I didn't see ~~Roman's~~ negotiation but I know him on a personal level [A: ~~Roman~~ is very predictable] and he's [A: reliable] he's reliable but in a way he is too nice.

*knowing personally
being predictable
being reliable
being too nice
being decent*

N: ~~Roman~~ was a bit like ~~Elliott~~ in a way. He was a decent negotiator...

A: ~~Roman~~ was not at all like ~~Elliott~~ actually because ~~Roman~~ has a very [N: calm demeanour] a calm demeanour, but he's not soft spoken like ~~Elliott~~. He has a strong voice. Voice modulation I think plays an important role in negotiation I think.

*being different
being calm
having a strong voice
having what it takes*

N: Elliott doesn't have a small voice [A: No ~~Elliott~~ has a softer voice]

Micky: Sorry, going back to ~~Roman~~, did you see ~~Roman~~ negotiating? Was he a decent negotiator?

N: He was a decent negotiator

being decent

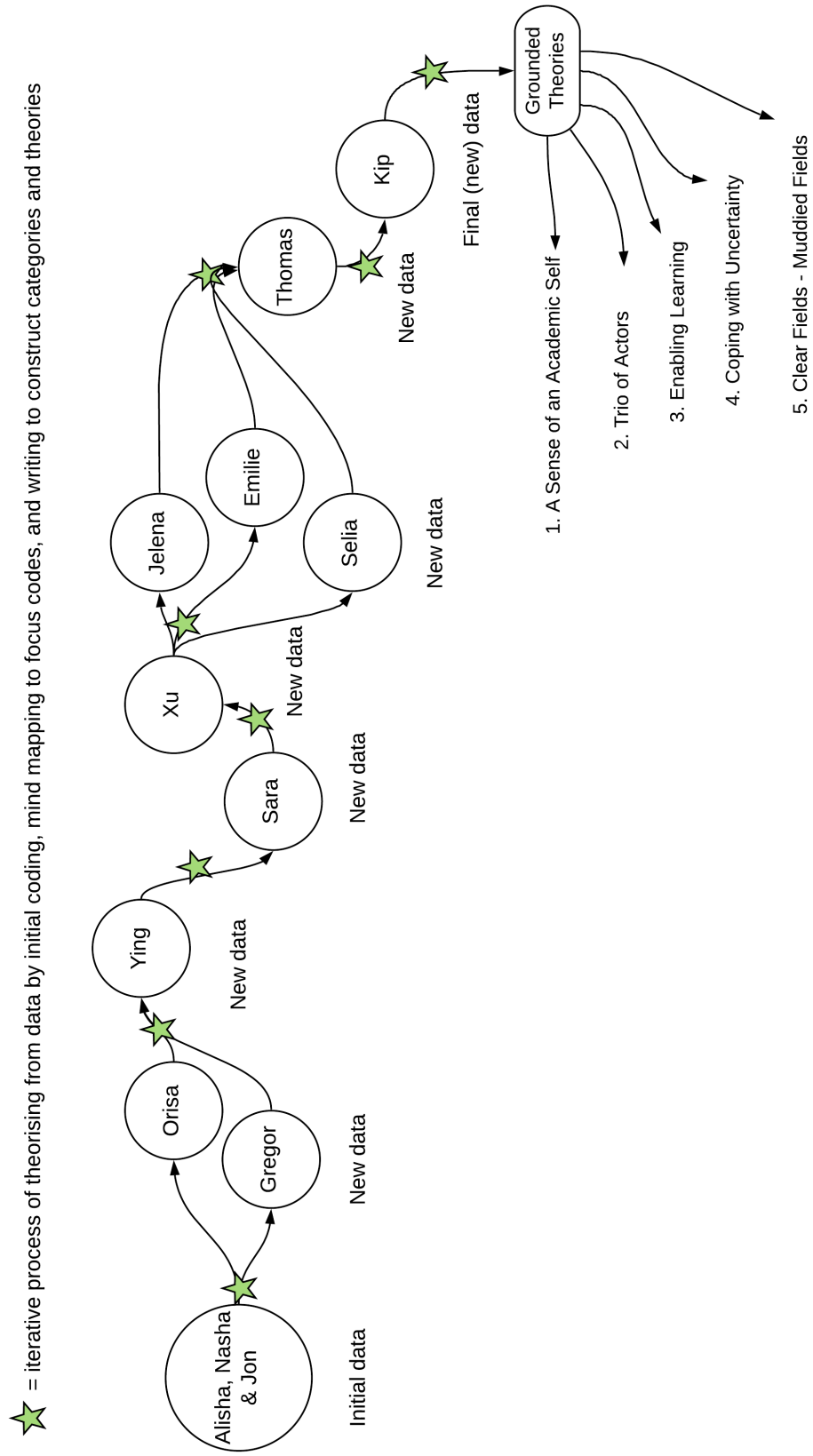
A: He was very confident, like his hands were on the table and he was like using his hands.

*being confident
using hands*

N: I think it's what you expected of him, he was ~~Roman~~. And he didn't give out on negotiation [A: at all]. He made his points clear and he was negotiating. And because, who was with him? [A: ~~George~~] ~~George~~ was with him and he was like a force, he was so good and because we the week before, had struggled so much, he kind of like set us back to the level and the place that we wanted to be and because ~~George~~ was such a great force... You might have overlooked ~~Roman's~~ negotiation skills ~~Roman~~ was just as good

*fulfilling expectations
being clear
negotiating
being a force
struggling earlier on course
setting group back
being a force
being overlooked*

Appendix 3: Map of the Journey of Data Collection



Appendix 4: Transcripts

Transcripts with coding appear from next page.

Interview Transcript
With Digitally Recorded Line-by-line Codes

Ying

Micky: I'd like to ask you about how you felt when you started your new programme and maybe how you felt guided or maybe unguided by other people when you started your programme.

Y: Start the programme with someone else I don't know?

M: Yeah, so when you started it, how did you feel when you started it?

Y: Hmmm... If I start a programme with someone I didn't know, it's a little bit nervous because I don't know about the person, their professional knowledge and how their logic... Or... Maybe it's hard for me to start a programme with some that I didn't know.

Feeling nervous
Not knowing about other people
Not knowing about how they think
Hard to get started
Not knowing people

M: And is that what happened when you started your master's programme (Y: Mmm Hmm) Did you know any other people?

Y: Yeah, because there were many Chinese students and we were with each other in the (unclear). So, there was more security when you are in the same programme because sometimes I found some local people in the same programme... We have a topic that we should discuss it... But, it's hard to discuss it with them because we have different levels of professional knowledge. They see things in different ways with us, so it's a little bit different...

Not knowing people
Being with other Chinese
Being secure with other Chinese
Being in the same programme
Finding familiarity
Discussing a topic
Find it hard to discuss
Different levels of knowledge is problematic
Seeing the world differently

M: And when you say "us" who is "us"?

Y: It's the Chinese students from the same country. Maybe we think in the same way, but some students, from another country, for example the local students, it's a little bit different from how we are thinking and how to understand the topic. It's a little bit like a difference about their knowledge.

Seeing the Chinese as "us"
Thinking is the same way
Seeing nationality as relevant
Seeing difference
Different cultural ways of understanding
Different sources of knowledge

M: So that sounds as if it's a cultural issue?

Y: Not only a cultural issue because... The knowledge, you know the professional knowledge, because we have the occasion in China. Maybe we learn something in the same area, but it is in different, like how to say it, you have to learn some theory in the area, but from different author. Most I learnt is from the Chinese author and Chinese researchers, but they know something in here. So that's one problem. And another problem is the language. Sometimes the students use the normal language, all language... But we are not very familiar with the language, we can't get the point, during the conversation.

M: Ok, and what did you do about that? Did you do something when you said that you couldn't get the point in the conversation? Did you ask for clarification, did you not ask for clarification? What did you do?

Y: Not really, sometimes I will ask them, could you repeat or ask them to explain it to me but most times I just did nothing, just pretend that I understand them. Because too many times I ask them to repeat, so not very polite, so I just keep quiet. Maybe, the next time I am not discussing with them because we cannot communicate or understand each other.

M: Ok. Why...? You just....

Y: Let it go...

M: Let it go...

Y: I think that it's maybe to do with my personality. I'm a little bit shy. And I don't really want to admit that I cannot understand them. I am not very confident with my language. I think maybe it is my fault because I can't understand. Not because of another problem and maybe it's because I think like... I'm not a very good student in the area and that's why I can't understand them, so maybe it's my fault.

Experiencing more than cultural issues
Highlighting importance of prof knowledge
?
Learning differently in the same area
Struggling to articulate differences – language?
Experiencing cultural differences from authors
Learning from own academic community
Having a depth of knowledge
Having problems
Language as a barrier
Experiencing language barrier
Being excluded by language
Being unable to understand conversation

Occasionally asking for clarification
Requiring explanation
Doing nothing – pretending to understand
Having to ask for clarification too often
Feeling of being a burden to others
Opting out next time
Being unable to communicate
Not understanding each other

Letting it go

Attributing blame to own personality
Being shy
Feeling ashamed to admit short coming
Blaming self
Not understanding
Considering problems
Not being a good student
Blaming self for not understanding
Blaming self

M: Ok, so maybe you weren't a good student in Sociology and Management?

Y: Yeah, so maybe it's my fault... I didn't read my literature properly, deeply, so I don't want to let, because of my fault, to influence someone else.

Not being a good student
Not reading properly and deeply
Guilt to negatively affect another thru own failings

M: Do you think now that it's the end of the programme, because you are at the end of your master's, do you think that it's... That that was true? Because you weren't a good student? Or do you think it was because you were shy?

Y: Actually, I don't think that I'm a good student.

No feeling like a good student

M: Really?!

Y: Yeah...

M: Sorry, sorry... Because when I met you... I met you on the pre-sessional the first time and then I met you in term two, and you seemed like a great student, you seemed like a really good student.

Y: No. I maybe pretend that I'm a good student, but I'm really not. Eh.... I'm not... At first I don't know how to prepare in my programme I don't know how to read or understand the literature or the information that the professor gave to me. I don't know how to study this materials, how to study, so that's the problem why I can't understand what is being said, so... Then, in term 2, I start to work hard but sometimes even when I read the papers very very carefully, I still can't understand the whole thing sometimes.

Pretending to be a good student
Admitting to being a poor student
Not knowing how to prepare
Not knowing how to handle the literature
Not understanding info from staff members
Not knowing how to get into the materials
Knowing the problem in retrospect
Not understanding instructions
Having work ethic in vain
Reading carefully and arduously
Feeling the need to understand everything and failing

M: So, in that case then... Let's go back to one of my questions about guidance, so did anyone else help to show you the way and guide you with how you read and what you should do?

Y: Not actually. Mostly, I discuss with my Chinese friends and they have the same experience with me, and sometimes when we read a paper we even... It's like... I know the title, I know the introduction... I should know what the paper said,

Not been shown the way by staff
Looking for guidance with friends
Reading papers
Know the basics of a paper
Needing to know the content

but when we finish reading the paper it's hard to understand what are they talking about. And Erm, I never think about to ask for help from my... The local students. I felt that it's my problem.

Struggling with reading
Struggling to recall texts
Not considering asking for help
Not asking home students – Retaining problems

M: So, when you say that you did think about it but you didn't do it or "you just never thought about it".

Y: Hmm... I don't know how to ask them to help me. So... Most situations I was study myself, it's my fault or my weakness in understand the whole thing.

Not having the skills to ask for help
Studying alone
Seeing self as weak

M: Do you think that they would want to help you?

Y: No, not actually.

Not believing others wanting to help

M: No? Why do you say that?

Y: Because in the Sociology, because we are joined half in Management and half in Sociology. Most of students in Sociology... I think that they don't really want to talk to us. Maybe, I think, maybe it's my... I just think that they stick together and that they discuss with each other... And they just keep to avoid to sit with us. I can't follow them. They just go too fast, you know... And so maybe a few times, we don't want to interrupt each other. Sometimes, I try actually, I asked my classmates, asked her about "what's he point in a paper?" and she circled some points I never noticed before, so... It's totally different I think... I just noticed some points that I just circle it, and it's different with their points, so I think, it's a little bit like... It's a little bit sad because I can't follow and they have... It's my ability is not very well in the programme.

Doing a combined Master's
Viewing certain department negatively
Being othered by home students
Being othered by social groups
Being shunned by home students
Feelings avoided
Not following and keeping up with UK students
Not interrupting other social groups
Attempting intergroup contact
Reaching out to others for help
Finding help from other social groups
Noticing more because of contact with others
Seeing things differently thru interaction
Feeling sad about the situation
Feeling unable to follow others
Not being good enough

M: And do you think that they could follow?

Y: Yeah

Feeling that others are more capable

M: Are you sure?

Y: I think so

Feel sure others are more capable

M: Why?

<p>Y: Because they can answer every question that the professional... Yes... They can answer the questions professional... talking about... They can analyse the questions in a very deep, very socially (unclear) way.</p>	<p>Not being able to answer every question Not having the knowledge Analysing Not having the level of knowledge to analyse</p>
<p>M: So, did they have more professional knowledge than you?</p>	
<p>Y: Yeah, I think so</p>	<p>Perceiving others as having more knowledge</p>
<p>M: And do you know that or do you just think that?</p>	
<p>Y: I'm not sure but actually Sociology is hard for me because I never learned that before and some... The professional terms, I never heard about before, so that is why I think that they were more professional, they learn more, because I don't know that...</p>	<p>Finding the discipline hard Never having learned matters Having no knowledge of key terms Believing that others knew key terms / more Starting from a lower point in knowledge</p>
<p>M: Ultimately, it's an assumption. You might be correct but you're assuming that they know more because of the speed that they can do it?</p>	<p>Assuming that others know more</p>
<p>Y: Yes, they are the native speaker, so they can understand something that we couldn't understand, so that's how I see it...</p>	<p>Native speaking understanding more quickly NS having an advantage Perceive NS as having an advantage</p>
<p>M: And did they get higher grades than you. Because you are saying "we" and I take it that you mean the Chinese students?</p>	<p>Talking as a collective</p>
<p>Y: Higher grades?</p>	
<p>M: Yeah</p>	
<p>Y: I don't know, but I do know one classmate is... Yeah... I think that most of... Oh yeah! In Sociology, we have 30% of the grade is based on the presentation and in our group, my friends in the group have 8 people, 6 people are local students... They have higher mark... Like 80% but in the group most Chinese students, like my group, only got 30%, so that's the reason why I think they know more because...</p>	<p>Not knowing what grades other got Assuming other grades were higher Having coursework Recalling assessment Being grouped with UK students for assess Getting higher marks with NS involved Attaining lower grades in Chinese groups Working out what grades folk have</p>
<p>M: and what did the staff, like the professors or the</p>	

lectures or whoever, what did they do to help or to guide you?

Y: You mean in that programme? [M: yeah] When we have the group discussion she would come over and listen to what we discuss and ask us if we have any problems, but most of Chinese students say "No we don't have any problems" because we don't know how to... Explain that we have a problem to the professor. Most of the problem are not in the professional. It's about how to understand the topic or how to conduct the whole process of the presentation. So, the most time we say, "no we don't have any problems".

Having group discussion
Coordinator listening into discussion
Being asked questions by staff
Being asked impractical questions
False answering
Not knowing how to express problems
Having fundamental issues
Not understanding the greater picture
Not knowing how to process works
Normally falsely claiming understanding

M: But it wasn't true?

Y: Yeah! We have many problems. But, because this problem is not only related to the professional, so we just keep shut up.

Having many unvoiced problems
Having academic literacy issues
Keeping mouth shut

M: Ok (both laugh) [Y: Pretend that we are understanding] And that was because you didn't want to admit?

Pretending to understand

Y: Sometimes...

Not wanting to admit problems to staff

M: Ok, so you didn't want to feel...?

Y: Not a good student

Not wanting to feel like a bad student

M: ok, so... Did you go each other, as in the Chinese students, did you go to each other for help?

Y: Yeah! A lot. Maybe ask my friends to explain it in Chinese. I would tell, "OK, what is she talking about, I don't understand". [M: Ok]. Yeah...

Going to other students for help
Asking others for clarification
Confiding in social group

M: And was that like later on after the class?

Y: Later on. It was later. Sometimes, I don't know either. So, we just let it go.

Patching up later
Letting it go in the moment

M: Ok, and what did you do in that situation?

Y: Asked another friend. If they all said that they didn't know either then we just let it go I think	Asking friends for help Letting go completely is collective non-understanding
M: Ok...	
Y: Maybe it's because of my personality, maybe not every Chinese student.	Attributing problems to self
M: Sorry, it's a general feeling or it's not just you?	
Y: having to understand everything is not just me, it's very common among our friends. But... Being able to discuss with the local students is maybe my problem I think... Because I'm too shy sometimes!	Assuming the need for universal understanding Issues not being common Discussing issues with UK students Personal problems with communication
M: But your fellow Chinese students, they are not shy?	
Y: Yeah, they have a lot of conversation with one of my classmates, he is from Scotland too. And they talked a lot, but it's not really about the professional, it's more about the daily life.	Chatting with UK students Chatting with Scottish student Talking a lot Chatting about daily life more
M: And was that helpful?	
Y: Yeah, I think it's helpful, just talking about the logic I think. The most helpful is the logic, how the local people to talk to each other, how the local people... It's like how to get along with each other. Different.	Finding meaningfulness is chitchat Finding logic helpful Seeing UK students interacting Getting along by chatting
M: Yeah, yeah... Ok... Because I feel a little bit, when you tell me this stuff about your experience of learning, it makes me feel a little bit kind of [Y: Disappointing?] Yeah! Like downhearted... I feel a little bit like... Do you feel like that about it?	Feeling disappointed Feeling downhearted
Y: Yeah! Sometimes, I think that am not very improved in my professional area because all things about... I didn't understand how to do the thing, precise.	Feeling sad about experience of learning Not really getting anywhere Not knowing how to do things Not knowing exactly what to do
M: Because it sounds like, sometimes did you disengage with the learning process... Because	Disengaging with the wider process

you couldn't get in?

Y: Yeah! I couldn't get in. I couldn't adapt the the.... Education... How they are studying something, how they are studying I don't know. When I start to write an essay, most my logic on the theory is based on my undergraduate knowledge, and I found some literature and theory based on the thing that I already know and explain it in English. It's this way so... Yeah yeah... Just I not think that I understand what I am learning here (thinking that she meant have learned). Sometimes, I can't follow the professor and I am already to ask too many questions, so I am like ok shut up and pretend that I understand. Yeah. And another thing, the most problem is my language, sometimes I can't totally understand people, and that's a little bit feel upset, so I just let it go. I can't understand, so that's my problem. So, why keep to try it, just keep it, stop it...

M: So, it sounds like you think that everything is your responsibility.

Y: Mostly

M: Like, how much is it your responsibility? Like a percentage or something...

Y: 70 to 80%

M: Ok, so the other people have smaller responsibility? [Y: Yeah]. And how did they perform in that responsibility? Did they do 20 to 30%? [Y: Yeah]. And what did they do to try and help you?

Y: I'm not sure... Like in pre-sessional programme, she's a good teacher, and she tried her best to tell us how to write an essay and how to understand a paper... What's the main points in the paper. She tried to help. But we forgot everything that we tried learned in the pre-sessional because every time we practice to read or to write... She told me "no, here... No, hear... No, hear... No, hear" when we start the master's programme, no one to remind me, so I have some bad habits come here again. It needs time to get the whole things, but we have too quick. The programme has a lot of work to do in a

Not being able to get in
Not being able to adapt
Not getting how they learn
Not getting their study skills
Starting to write
Basing on undergraduate knowledge
Basing ideas on UG theory
Knowing how to explain in English
Not understanding
Not know what I have learnt
Not following
Not being able to follow
Being quiet and pretending to understand

Having language problems
Feeling frustrated with language issues
Letting understanding go
Losing faith and giving up

Taking all responsibility for learning

Taking on majority of responsibility for learning

Not knowing how academic staff did their bit
Knowing clear instruction
Finding main points of paper
Forgetting everything that learned before
Forgetting skills learned
Having guided practice in skills
Having clear guidance
Having no support, no guidance
Bad habits returning
Needing time to "get it"
Feeling the workload

short time, so we didn't have enough time to get the whole things in here and that's the reasons that I don't feel very confident in my whole programme.

Not having enough adjustment time
Know the reasons
Not feeling confident

M: Ok, so therefore, on your master's programme, the educators had a responsibility to remind you about things and to understand your background?

Y: Yeah, but I can understand because the educator does not have time to educate every student. They don't know their ability.

Not being able to understand
Educator not having time
Educator not knowing student ability

M: Do you think it would have helped if they knew your ability beforehand?

Y: Yeah, yeah, it would have really helped

Seeing need for educator to know student ability

M: And how many students were there in total in your... You went to a class... Was it huge, was it a big Management one or was its small cohort?

Y: Actually, we have 16 classmates in the same major. But most of my class were joined with Management students and they were huge. It's like... Too many. But in the Sociology... 20 or 30 classmates. But most of Sociology students are local students, so they had the good ability to understand the whole things. So, maybe the professor thinks that we are the same level. But it's not.

Having 16 classmates
Having joined up classes
Having huge classes
Having too many in the class
Having Sociology classmates
Locals having good ability
Locals getting everything
Prof confusing ability of locals and internats

M: It sounds like you've had quite a lot of negative learning experiences?

Having negative learning experiences

Y: It's not negative... I just start to understand now that it is finished. I just start to understand the whole thing and how it works... How to study... How to manage the whole things.

Getting it too late on
Understanding at the end
Getting the system and how it works too late
Finally understanding how to manage things

M: and why have you just started to learn that at the end?

Y: Because it is time to understand, I have many time to write a thesis and have the feedback from the professor. After finish the whole things.

Needing time to get it
Learning about the process through doing it
Getting feedback too late

M: And is that because you can reflect on what you have done?

Reflecting on experiences

Y: Yes, like a reflect...

Reflecting on past year

M: Because you said something to me at the beginning, just when we came in... You said that you felt you had changed...

Being aware of change in self

Y: Yeah, yeah....

M: Could you talk a little bit more about that? How do you know that there has been a change?

Y: In the term 1, I submitted my essays and most of the feedback it based on my grammar and the logic because I don't know how to combine my thoughts with the literature. And the term 2, I improve the problem in that one, and I do know how to write essays with my thoughts and the literature, but the feedback in the term 2 is that I am not totally understand the reference in my essays, so I know that in the grammar and the logic I have improved a lot but how to understand the paper, I am still no good. So, that is how I know I learnt. And the grades, in the term 1 one the grades are about the logic problem and in the term 2 they are because I don't understand the title, the topic or the literature... So that's why you use the points.

Looking back to original submissions
Getting feedback on grammar and logic
Not knowing how to combine thoughts
Not being able to draw on literature
Improving as time passed
Knowing how to write
Getting negative feedback
Not understanding referencing
Improving on grammar and logic
Improving in writing
Seeing that learning has taken place
Reflecting on grades
Comparing grades between terms
Not understanding the title
Not understanding the literature
Getting there in the end

M: So, now at the end do you feel that you understand...

Y: Mostly... if I have one more year in the master I would do better.

Speculating about better performance
Needing another year

M: Because you said that at the moment you felt like you still didn't have confidence...

Feeling low in confidence

Y: Mmmm Hmmm

M: Because for me it seems important that you will have confidence with something.

Y: Mmm Hmmm, I have confidence with my abilities to understand how it works, but I don't think that I can do better if I start again... I am not confident

Having confidence with abilities
Needing to know how it works
Would know how to do it again

that I have the confidence to do better. But I actually understand how it works. SO, maybe better I think. I think the most problem is that the education system in China is teacher tells us how to do it... "One two three" But here you are left to do it by yourself and you can ask the professor for help... What you understand what you don't understand... Adapt the whole thing at the beginning. Do you think that your lecturer here understood the difference of what you were trying to go through...?

Having confidence to do better
Understanding how it works
Seeing the bigger problems
Comparing to education system in China
Being "instructed" in china
Being left to your own devices in UK
Being required to ask
Needing to adapt
Misunderstanding the role of the lecturer
Understanding the cultural gap

M: Do you think that your lecturers or tutors here understand the difference or what you were trying to go through?

Y: The pre-sessional tutors?

M: Mmmm hmmm

PS tutors understood cultural gap

Y: Yeah... I think that my tutor know about that. [M: the PS tutor?]. Yeah... But most of the professors on the master's... Maybe... the management professors know or understand better about the Chinese students. But Sociology, no.

PS tutors understand cultural gap
Management tutors understand cultural gap

Sociology tutors did not understand the cultural gap

M: How do you know that Management understood more?

Y: Mmmm.... For example, when we began the new class, the professor would told us the essay... She told us some mistakes of some students before. And we know that it's the Chinese students because we have had the similar experience. And because, yeah... The Management professor can understand the Chinese students' essay more easily. But most Sociology professor, she told me don't understand what I'm talking about.

Seeing clear examples of cultural awareness
Being clear about essays
Sharing common mistakes with students
Understanding the visiting students
Drawing on past teaching experiences

Being able to understand Chinese students
Being able to make a transcultural move to understand essay
Sociology being unable to make transcultural move

M: How did that make you feel? How did you feel if a Sociology lecturer turns around and says, "I don't understand anything?"

Y: A little bit disappointed and upset because maybe there are some mistakes in my grammar or

Feeling disappointed with department
Blaming grammar for mistakes

my logic a bit I try to understand... But still don't understand... So, it's a little bit about the confidence. But the Management school is better because maybe the professor isn't confident what I am talking about but she tries to understand because she has seen many students essays in this area, so they can find the logic in this area. It's helpful if the professor has many Chinese students but sometimes it's not a good point. It's because we go to here because we want something absolutely English, it's not only about how to understand Chinese. We need to understand how English work... So yeah... But if there were not many Chinese students here... We fill all the programmes I think. All the programmes! Sometimes I think that my essay is shit, I don't know what I'm talking about because I am not understanding the whole things. I just use something that I learned before and translate into English.

M: Were there any more positive learning experiences? [both laugh] ... I think I've got a good idea that there were unfortunately a lot of not so good experiences...

Y: I think because my major. Maybe of my friends from TESOL for the Education department, they have improved a lot about how to educate people, how to display themselves in the class. So maybe it's about the major. Perhaps sociology is too hard for us.

M: So, what about positive learning experiences. Were there any classes that you took that you thought... "Oh wow! I'll never forget that!"

Y: Yeah.

M: Could you talk about that?

Y: Actually, we had a module called business Information Systems, and the professor is very funny sometimes. She teaches us something like, the VR technology. It's maybe hard to understand at first because we cannot understand how it works, so she just gives some very vivid examples. Like

Still not getting it after trying hard
Being somewhat about confidence
Being TYMS as better
Making an attempt to get it
Attempting to meet the student half way
Drawing on experience of teaching to help
Finding the logic thru experience
Having taught many Chinese before is a plus
Wanting something absolute
Not just about language
Needing to understand how the language works
Being one of many Chinese
Seeing yourself as one of many
Producing shit essays
Pinpointing reason for shit essay
Not moving on with skills
Sticking to old skills
Translating into English

Having negative experiences

Not enjoying programme
Seeing others have better experiences
Seeing others improve
Seeing others learning culturally
Seeing the topic as too hard

Recalling a positive learning experience

Having an entertaining tutor
Recalling specifics
Not understanding how it works
Giving vivid examples
Giving clear examples
Drawing on everyday examples

IKEA the company. For example, I want to buy a sofa, so I can use the app to make the sofa in the picture at home, so she did it in the class and everyone is very interested about that. And ... Like to make some things easier to understand, so it is very positive. And the thing is... Most professor, they want to do that job very serious. They want to really tell students something, not just for job, they really want to experience their thinking, how they understand things for students, not just my job. Just like they were talking about when they first learned the theory and their problem or questions about theory and discuss it with us. It was like, we had the same feelings about theory and it's more easy to understand. [M: and was that helpful?]. Yeah it helped a lot. And... I think that most theory is easy to understand but in Sociology it is hard to understand. Sometime the professor wants to help us, but sometimes it is not easy to explain to use, so sometimes they just introduce us to some papers. And try to help, so I think it is like the teachers here, they would like to help students. To offer and provide some help. And maybe no in the class but you can ask help from them and they will give you feedback and help you, but most Chinese students don't want to ask them...

M: Ok, so going back to what we said at the beginning when you I said that you didn't want to ask for help, or you or us, didn't want to ask for help... That help was available, but you didn't want to ask for it.

Y: Yeah, I think so because I think it is both confidence. Because sometimes I don't want to admit that I am not a good student. If I ask for help from my professors or to classmates, admit that I don't understand the point because I'm not working hard but I think that if I ask them they would like to help mostly. I think that the different professors in different departments have different skills. Half my classmates have the supervisor in Sociology, they not really want to help actually. Because the whole dissertation period, some of my classmates can even get in touch with their supervisors. Some guys on vacation, some guys of them never... Just can't get in touch... Never a response. But most

Doing something practical
 Generating interest in class
 Being interested
 Making easy to understand
 Feeling positive
 Taking it seriously
 Communicating something meaningful
 Wanting to experience something
 Understanding student perspective
 Being able to grade lesson/knowledge
 Remembering how it was to be a student
 Discussing theory with students
 Having a same feeling about theory
 Being easy to understand
 Being helpful
 Having accessible knowledge
 Having inaccessible knowledge
 Struggling to explain
 Introducing a topic
 Trying to help out
 Wanting to help students
 Offering help
 Knowing that help is available
 Knowing you can get feedback
 Chinese don't ask for help

Help being available for not asking for it

Not asking for help even though is needed
 Not wanting to ask
 Not admitting struggle
 Asking for help is admitting not knowing
 Asking means not working hard enough
 Knowing that they would help
 Seeing different tutors
 Seeing different skill sin people
 Having a sociology supervisor
 Not wanting to help
 Not being able to contact supervisor
 Not being able to get in touch with supervisor
 Having supervisor out of touch
 Not getting an answer to email

supervisors in Management are very helpful, they will get in touch very frequently.

Having helpful supervisors
Getting in touch frequently

M: And what does that make you think about the Sociology Department?

Y: I'm not really feel very well at all about the Sociology programme actually. Because I think that most professionals are not really help the Chinese students because we sometimes we could follow the class, the whole programme, we can't understand who thinks deeply, seriously, so they don't really want to help, that's only my opinion. So that's why I chose Management for the supervisor.

Feeling negative about a department
Feeling negative about a programme
Not getting help with gatekeepers
Feeling abandoned
Feeling left behind by professionals
Being perceived as a lost cause
Not wanting to waste their time on you
Making strategic choice of supervisor

M: That maybe sounds like it was a good choice.

Making a good choice

Y: Yeah! It made my dissertation easier for me, he discussed with us each strange, how to prepare it, how to write it, how to finish it, don't panic don't worry about it, just follow my step and it will be easy.

Making life easier
Getting good advice
Getting advice on structural matters
Getting reassurance
Seeing advice as meaningful

M: So, he gave you a step by step guide of what he wanted you to do.

Getting step by step guidance

Y: Yeah, for example, like the Methodology, when we just start the methodology part. (unclear) she had like a lecture, and write some bullet points in the blackboard to tell us "1, 2, 3, 4 how to do that". We just followed this point to study your methodology part more easily. She also gave us some papers, she said that these were good papers, she gave us some tables, and she told us that this might give us higher grades, so I think it was really helpful. So that's why I can finish my dissertation, it's mostly that.

Getting help with methodology
Getting started with methodology
Getting bullets points
Getting clear bullet points
Having points to follow later in studies
Getting a foot up
Getting pointers
Getting accessible info
Getting tips for better grades
Seeing the benefits of good advice
Getting good help

M: Ok, so I'd imagine then, and don't let me put words in your mouth. I'm just imagining from what you've said. The Chinese students must have been quite stressed. [Y: Yeah]. It sounds stressful.

Having a stressful year

Y: Yeah, on the same major one of my friends was very stressed because she failed two... yeah... two modules and felt very upset and very disappointed. And she really didn't want to study the new term

Seeing fellow students stressed
Feeling very stressed about failing
Feeling upset about failed modules
Wanting to give up because of failure

because she felt so disappointed about the old things.	Feeling unbelievably disappointed
M: And what did she do? Did she speak to someone in the department, did she speak to other friends, did she speak to you? What did she do?	
Y: She didn't really want to talk about it because she was a little bit ashamed. She just dealt with it herself I think. And when all the things were over, she told me about this. I said that I have the same feelings with you at this time. But it's all over.	Not being able to share pain and stress Feeling ashamed Dealing with shame alone Keeping stress and shame inside Expressing shame at the end
M: But you weren't able to share at the critical point?	Not sharing feelings at the critical point
Y: Right. Even though in that time, when it is all finished, we would like to share.	Sharing when it's all finished
M: Why?	
Y: A little bit ashamed about that	Feeling too ashamed to share
M: It's interesting for me because other students have talked about this. I've not spoken to any Chinese students, but I've spoken to lots of other international students, and they often talk about the stress of something and it actually brings them together and it actually brings them together because it's a difficult situation. So, someone says "oh I'm so worried about this, I don't understand" and then someone else says "I'm so glad that you brought that up because I'm so worried" and then someone else says something too and they 'pull together' and they feel so much better because they've talked about it.	Being brought together in stressful times
Y: Yeah, we talk about it. I don't understand that... (unclear) But when we talk about it in the end the problems can only be solved by ourselves you know? We can complain about the problem but we can't solve the problem together.	Speaking to friends on some level Confessing at the end Seeing problems as own Sharing problems not seen as solution Solving can't be together
M: But it sounds like to me that the actually expressing of how you feel and the pulling together with other students... with the other	

students that I have spoken to, it seems like it happens at a stage of the process... It sounds like it was the beginning of term 1 or term 2... but from what you are saying the same thing happened, but it wasn't until the end of the programme.

Y: Well, we talked about it when the term began, like the first time when we had the feedback. Some of my friends failed and we worked hard but we still failed, how to deal with that? But when we finish this conversation. The problem can only be solved by ourself. We can say something together but we can't do something together. Like... she didn't pass the essay, but I have a better grades. I can't give her any comfort because I have passed and she didn't. So, something it's like the different even though we both failed the essay. The problem can't be solved together. The problem should be solved by myself. So, we maybe complain about something or have a conversation about the whole modules but we actually need to write essays by ourselves. So, the problem is still here. We can't share points in our essays. We complain about it but we can't do anything. It's not about how to share it's about how to deal with that.

M: But do you think that it would have helped you deal with it? [shakes head] Ok... Is it easier to deal with it if you know that other people are also struggling?

Y: Yeah, it's helpful

M: And did that happen, or did that only happen at the end of the programme?

Y: Yeah, it happened at every stage of the programme. But... we talked but it's not really helpful I think because you still need to do you work on your own. Sometimes I was stuck in the library for three days just working on an essay. She had the same experience with me. So, I have a companion to go with to the library. Yeah that made me feel better.

M: If we could go back just briefly to that thing that we were talking about with IKEA. I'd like to talk a

Talking about problems at start of term
Getting feedback for the first time
Failing despite hard work
Not knowing how to deal with failure
Speaking doesn't solve the problem
Speaking together
Can't act together
Having better grades than friend
Not being able to give advice
Feeling in a quandary
Feeling unable to problem solve together
Attempting problem solving alone
Not feeling able to complain
Not conversing about the modules
Having to write assignments alone
Not seeing the benefit of talking thru problems
Complaining to no end
Not seeing value of sharing problems
Seeing value of dealing with problems

Feeling it could be helpful to see that others struggle

Only understanding general struggles at the end of the programme
Needing to get on with it
Being stuck in the library
Working for days on end
Having similar troubles
Sharing burden in some ways
Feeling better from sharing

little bit more about that module, that class and that lecturer. So, she used an example that was real life... Did she do that once or did she do that continually?

Using examples from real life

Y: Continually. Like, because it was based on information. Like University of York or the VLE. So, if you were the designer of a website of the whole university or the website or the student card. What are your ideas to improve that? That's very helpful to understand the topic I think. And another module the professor gave us the international company and case studies of how they work and it's more easy to understand the theory.

Having a tangible basis for learning
Using tangible relatable examples
Giving students a role
Giving students a realistic task
Understanding the topic

M: Ok, so in other modules do you feel that it was abstract what you were talking about?

Using an international company
Using effective case studies
Making theory easy to understand

Y: I can't remember (didn't understand)

Comparing to other modules
Talking in the abstract

M: What was the module that you talked about IKEA?

Y: Business information system, by Philip.... Somebody (50.20)

M: ok, so in Philips module, how many people were in the class?

Y: Many... Like 80 people. It was in the big lecture theatre. Many students think that the class was a little bit boring because sometimes he talked about the professional theory. And that was a little bit boring really. But he talked about something like IKEA. It was just very interesting and I can listen and remember.

Having a large class
Being lost in the class
Being bored in the class
Learning about theory
Finding theory boring
Being interested despite boring theory
Remembering

M: Ok, so... even though it was a bit lecture. People were engaged because it was something that you could relate to?

Being engaged despite big lecture
Relating to good examples

Y: Yeah

M: And then did you have a seminar after? How many people were in the seminar?

Y: Like... 12 or 15

Being in a seminar

M: And were the seminars any good?

Y: Sometimes.... They told me to design the uni system. Like the student card. He asked us how we could improve it. For instance, the student card isn't very convenient for everyone because we can't use it to consume in the university shop or at the laundry.

M: Mmmmm ah ok, actually at Edinburgh you can use your card to buy food, it's like money as well.

Y: And like the Constantine college doesn't have a postcode because it's a new college. It's difficult to get online delivery. They will cover a very heavy bags... Sort of things like that. So, it's like the practice of the theory in the real life. It's very good to help us think about how to deal with problems. [M: it's meaningful] It's not only about academic theory, it's like how to solve problems in the real life.

M: I think it's about how you approach academic theory as well. You can approach it with meaningful real life examples.

Y: And it's much easier to understand.

M: Yeah sure

Y: Sometimes the academic content is hard to understand because it's not really related to real life. That's why I can't understand it mostly I think. Matrix?? In the Sociology department. The lecture in this was very awesome. He told everything in website. In Facebook etc... everything related to the theory was done through the social media. Even though the theory was hard to understand. He did his best to describe it thru the social media... How to do the matrix, how to manage everything in social media. Like, how many people use Facebook, how do you feel about that? And sometimes we think... wow! We never think about that. The data can be collected in that way so that was very helpful. The problem is that my academic level is not very high. So, it's a bit

Recalling good seminars
Recalling interesting tasks
Having a meaningful task
Seeing a clear problem that needed solved
Drawing on real life to learn
Drawing on real life to learn

Drawing on real life problems to learn
Drawing on real life examples to learn
Drawing on real life problems to learn
Drawing on real life examples to learn
Relating real life to theory
Getting help to think
Having meaningful learning
Solving problems
Relating to real life

Approaching theory the right way

Making it easier to understand

Finding academic content hard
Finding academic content removed
Understanding own learning

Using social media to explain theory
Using social media to explain theory
Finding theory hard to understand
Doing best to explain theory
Making something tangible
Using tangible examples
Being asked opinion
Being stimulated to think about real issues
Seeing a way to collect data
Seeing practical stuff as helpful
Feeling inadequate in academic level

harder for me to understand the whole thing. It's helpful in the real thing, not only in the academic

Understanding everything
Needing to know more than just academic

M: I'm interested to know how you feel you were recognised as an individual and as a person. So, for example, you're Chinese, you're a woman, you study sociology and management, you're an international student. You're many other things... Do you feel like other people, that could be other people or that could be lecturers? Do you think that they knew who you were?

Y: [quiet voice] Not actually

Not being recognised as an individual

M: Could you talk a little bit more about that?

Y: I'm a student but not many "tasks" [unclear] about being a Chinese student or an Asian student... I think that you're just a student here. And... Mmmmm.... People not really want to know each other I think. Very... [Deeply?] Yeah... You are a student to many professor. Maybe you're a Chinese student but that's all. They maybe not consider your ability your own problems and how you problems are influencing you in your academic study. You are just student I think. We had, I just talked about the problems with my friends about the problems that we met... but... it's only amongst my Chinese friends. I actually don't really have any foreigner friends.

Feeling like a student
Feeling like just another Chinese student
Just being a student
Feeling others are not interested in you
Feeling people do not connect deeply
Feeling faceless to profs
Feeling like just another Chinese student
Not feeling your problems matter
Not feeling recognised
Just being a student
Discussing identity with friends
Discussing problems with friends
Not having any foreign friends

M: Did anybody no your name? Like your educators?

Y: No

Nobody knowing your name

M: No

Y: they can't even pronounce my name in Chinese. It's not very easy to understand...

Not being able to pronounce you name

M: I'm sure that I don't always pronounce it properly but I try!

Y: Yeah... it's good! I can understand that it's hard to pronounce. I can't understand everyone's names in English. It's confusing about the name. You

Knowing that Chinese names are hard
Not knowing all names in English
Feeling confused about names

know? But sometimes the professor is like... "you!"
Or "the person next to you," erm yeah...

Being called "you" by professor
Being called "you next to her"

M: How do you feel about that?

Y: Actually, some of my professors asked, "do you have any English name? It's easier to pronounce. Sometimes, they don't want to know your Chinese name because it's hard to pronounce.

Being asked if you have an English name
Being told your name is hard to pronounce
Not wanting to know your Chinese name

M: Ok... Maybe! But you can try and it's not hard, you can have a go! I actually try and discourage my Chinese students from using other names. I'm just like, I had these two law girls and they made these English names and one of them was Ting Ting and one of them was Xin... I was like, ok... maybe we can't say it perfectly because of the tone, but surely your name is important to your identity.

Y: Yeah, yeah, I think that name is important... But all I heard was "You!" "The person next to you!" Some professors just asked us if we have any English name. But the tutor in Pre-sessional she did it really well. It's hard to remember everyone's names, so we had a label on the table. This helped her to remember everyone's name.

Feeling your name is important
Being called "you!"
Being asked about your English name

M: Yeah, and at the beginning it's hard, but after a while you remember. I know this from teaching. But if everyone puts their name out on the table, in the end you just remember.

PS tutor doing well with Chinese names
Having names on tables
Creating interventions to remember names

Y: Yeah, but professors maybe have too many students. They have many students and they don't want to remember every name every year because I think that most professors are very busy. They maybe have another class after they finish. I don't really mind... I'm not really unhappy about that.

Finding names hard at the beginning

Believing that there are too many students to remember
Not believing tutors want to remember names
Being too busy to remember names
Accepting that your name isn't important

M: And that's about the name or that's about you and your identity. They didn't know your name... but how about you?

Y: I don't think that they had the responsibility to know me because the students just learning is fine. About the personality, we want to be friends... I think in that way.

Not feeling that they knew you

M: Do you think it would have helped your learning if they knew about your identity?

Knowing identity would have helped learning

Y: [immediate] Yeah. Definitely. It would have been very helpful

Knowing identity would have helped learning

M: Why?

Y: Because, we have different logic in some things. Like a topic is a sentence ... We have different ideas and are interested in different points. If the educator knows about that they she can teach us about that area. I think it's much more helpful. Some students don't want to show when I don't understand the point. But if the tutor knew, she would know that I don't want to talk, so she could ask me a lot more often: "What do you think about the point?" And then I would learn more. Like to help me when I don't want to talk about that.

Knowing identity helps to understand logic

Understanding different ideas
Getting to know student would help tutors
Knowing identity would help teaching
Not wanting to show nonunderstanding
Knowing about shame would help practice
Knowing identity would help practice
Knowing identity would help learning
Knowing identity would help learning
Knowing when I don't want to talk

M: And did you feel that you wanted to talk more?

Y: [Immediately] Maybe not in the class but like, maybe the first time I don't feel like I want to talk about that... or the second time... but maybe the third time I have the confidence to talk about that with you....

Not wanting to talk in class
Not wanting to talk the first time
Not wanting to talk the second time
Finding confidence, the third time

M: Ok, thanks very much

Y: Thank you

Sara

S: I'm doing a master's degree in Women's Studies in the centre for Women's Studies here the uni. And... basically it's a one year taught master's programme and it's more grounded in Sociology and is Sociology related. And basically, I chose this particular programme because it relates to my previous academic experience and my academic interests / research interests. How it has gone for me so far... I guess I found it quite different to what I'm used to in my home university because my UG degree, of course we weren't asked to write as much. Like obviously PG education will demand more. But if I were doing a taught Master's at my home university in Cairo I would have been required to write a lot less. So, that's one interesting part of the experience. I find that my academic writing, like it has improved much more than I would have expected over the year. That's probably got to do with the amount of reading that we had to do and we had to write a lot of papers. I also think that, it's quite different here, that the teachers aren't constantly in touch with the students. By that I mean like, I was expecting much more closer contact with my supervisors. But my understanding now is that PG degrees are much more about independence research... And I mean like they are accessible. Like my teachers have been very friendly and supportive on all levels. In terms of the programme it's not structured so that you get in touch so frequently with your supervisor...

M: Why did you have that expectation coming in? Was it because of your UG?

S: Partly because, yeah... partly because of my UG and partly because of what I heard from other students but... they haven't been doing their postgrads here... like not in British education institutions. Erm, like... most of them are studying at American universities and they told me like "they get in touch a lot more with their professors" so I guess in that context I expected...

M: Ok I guess then that could be within your UG, the American context and the experiences of your friends... the UK context, or at least at this uni, the tutors are quite distant.

Doing a Master's

Describing programme
Understanding the grounding
Having rationale for doing programme
Relating Master's to experience
Having intellectual interests
Find things different academically
Having experience of UG as ref point
Not needing to write much in UG
Realising that PG is more
Seeing UK context as more challenging
Being required to write less
Having interesting experiences
Improving
Improving more than expected
Having amounts of reading and writing
Things being different
Teaching staff not being in touch
Expecting more contact
Expecting closer contact
Knowing what PG degrees are about
Being independent
Teaching staff being friendly
Teaching staff being supportive
Not structured for contact
Supervising

Having expectations from UG

Having expectations from UG
Hearing about what it's like from friends
Having friends doing PGs in UK
Hearing about UK institutions
Hearing about American institutions
Contact being more in US system
Expectations skewed by other contexts

Comparing to American context
Comparing to UG

S: In a sense yeah, it's a lot more independent and you don't get much contact with the faculty as much as you will get at other systems I would imagine because based on what I heard from my friends and my peers

Needing to be more independent here
Not getting much contact
Being less than other systems
Hearing from friends and peers

M: What impact do you think that has in terms of the student experience? Do you think it would have been better if you had had more contact?

S: I mean, I would definitely have appreciated more contact and more consulting, more space for consulting with my teacher, especially with regards to developing my writing and my sociological perspective and my research and stuff like that. But of course, I can't deny the fact that I have been working independently and they gave me so much liberty with navigating my research and that that...

Needing more contact with teaching staff
Needing more consultation
Needing advice on developing writing
Needing help w/ sociologic perspectives
Not denying facts
Feeling liberty
Navigating own research

M: And I guess it's that tough part of liberty that you have to...

Find liberty tough

S: Yeah, it's too independent sometimes... Sometimes, I felt a bit lost like I needed some direction from my teachers...

Having too much independence smtms
Needing direction
Feeling lost

M: Ok so what did you do in those situations when you felt lost, you needed some direction? Did you seek it out or did you just get on with it on your own or did you turn to colleagues?

Taking action in -ve situations

S: Just a bit of everything really, well I mean like, I'm not going to lie... Whenever I reached out to my supervisors they were accessible, especially if it was electronic communication... it was so much easier like to send them an email with enquiries. They would suggest readings or schedule office hours. Well of course my peers are the most accessible. We would exchange ideas or read each other's writing and stuff like that. And then sometimes, like especially when I am working on my dissertation when I go about on my own for the most part... and I just reach out to my supervisor if I absolutely need to so.

Drawing on all skills to survive
Reaching out to teaching staff
Teaching staff being accessible
Communicating with ease via email
Getting reading suggestions
Having access thru scheduled office hrs
Exchanging ideas
Drawing support from peers
Working on research
Being on my own
Reaching out to supervisor as last resort

M: And the issues that you had to reach for, you mentioned your sociological perspective. In that case are you talking about ontology and your view on the world?

Reaching out on specific issues

S: Erm... I guess it could be a bit more about ontology and epistemological approach with my research just because...

Reaching out for research issues
Looking back to experience

basically before this Master's, I have been working for 8 years on sort of, I was orientated with the action based research. Like I was looking for particular findings to just implement programmes. But this is not the case here. I have basically had to reach out to my supervisors to basically ask for recommendations about readings, for previous theses that I can sort of get ideas from.

M: And was it quite difficult to get your head around sociological perspective?

S: Erm yeah definitely. And of course, the fact that my supervisor made some time and set up some meeting with me to discuss my research question to make sure that I have a particular route in my research.

M: Because I think that those kinds of things are what usually master's students struggle with... like the sociological perspectives, like the ontological perspectives, epistemologies... Like it's pretty tough. And I think sometimes I still don't understand it even though I spend a lot of time talking about it with students.

S: Yeah but like it is a bit hard to navigate sometimes

M: What is interesting in there, is your past experience as someone who has been in the workplace and who has been in the field and how has having experience of employment... having employment experience influence that sociological perspective... Or what you have done here, because you've said that you've had to alter it slightly. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

S: Yeah, it's basically like that throughout both terms I've been engaging with a lot of theory and I try so much, and this is how my brain kept working because of my previous experience. It is like I am trying to apply theory to what is actually happening in real life or at least to what has happened in my working life and my social context.

M: And I think that that is quite difficult and I find that hard because I come from that point of view as well where I have practiced for a long time in education from teaching English language to going into academic support then to argumentation and these things and then the theory aspect of it I'm like "what a load of shit" (both laugh)

Having a practical research skills set
Looking for particular things
Having practical ideas
Reaching out to supervisor
Needing recommendations for readings
Needing to see previous theses

Finding it hard to understand perspectives

Needing time for epistemological issues
Getting time from supervisor
Discussing research with teaching staff
Finding a route for own research

Reflecting on experience
Struggling with epistemologies

Struggling to navigate methodological issues

Past experience being a barrier

Having experience as a continual barrier
Engaging with theory
Understanding own cognitive processes
Applying theory willingly
Referring to real life
Drawing on work experience

Seeing barrier between practice and theory as ironic

S: yeah sometimes it feels so disconnected or that there is so much difference.

Feeling theory is disconnected
Feeling a distance from theory

M: yeah absolutely! Sometimes I feel like it is... like "that's theory!?" "That's so simple" and I feel like "that's just common sense mate"

Finding theory obvious as a practitioner

S: Yeah. Sometimes it's like that... Sometimes I just felt complete detachment between studying and engaging with an academic theory, and what's actually related to my previous experience as a professional working in social work and feminist work. So, it was a bit of a struggle honestly because as I said I was more oriented to action-based research like I'm trying to get to these findings to find out how to work out the problem. To give you particular examples when we were talking about gender-based violence for example... I document testimonies, I find certain patterns, then look for answers in social policy... that's how I work with it. So, coming here, I engage with theories around gender, I read Judith Butler and I think "how does that help me with gender based violence?" You know, sometimes it was difficult to navigate.

Feeling completely detached
Feeling detached from theory
Reflecting on previous experience
Drawing on deep work experience
Struggling with theory
Being drawn to action based research
Being a problem solver
Being able to give particular examples
Having strong work experiences
Being practical and procedural
Being drawn back to work experience
Having to completely change ways
Grappling to make connections
Finding theory hard to navigate

M: OK and did you manage to navigate because Judith Butler is hard going... like it's like a different language for me.

S: Yeah and like well I mean at some point I just had to let go of my previous experience and get soaked into the academic setting like basically "ok let's stop thinking about the real world and let's think of how the academy understands things or presents things for our understanding"

Having critical moments with theory
Letting go of previous experience
Breaking from cognitive patterns
Rewiring brain to deal with theory
Understanding matters

M: And how did you manage to do that?

Finding solutions for tough situations

S: Erm... Well... I just tried to create an imaginative world based on what on what I'm thinking. Seriously, I mean looking at the sex gender binary. Well ok I can think of this theoretically as in a perfect world where women don't have to struggle as being physically women I can think of it or try to detach myself and honestly being here and being away from home helped a lot with that. I'm not engaging with any hands-on experience...

Creating an imaginative world
Going to extremes to connect
Stepping back to find solution
Thinking theoretically
Rewiring brain
Detaching self
Seeing benefits in being away from home
Seeing benefits of being away from work

M: Ok, so you were kind of removed from the reality in some way by being here. You are away from your own culture, you're away from your own work, you're away from your own society.

Being removed from reality
Being away from own culture
Being away from work
Being away from society

S: And I wasn't engaging here at all like with any feminist groups or organisations or anything like that to sort of remove myself from any setting that would want me to put pressure on myself to connect theory to practice. I'm distancing myself from all this.

Not engaging with outside groups
Not engaging with organisations
Removing self from distraction
Pressuring self to engaging with theory
Distancing self

M: Was that a common experience? Like how many people were on your programme?

S: For the MA I think that we were about almost 30

Being in a small programme

M: Right ok, and do you think that that experience was unique to you?

S: No, I think that some of them shared the same sentiments as me. For example, one of my colleagues was a psychologist. And she kept telling me how her positivist perspective takes over whenever it is she tries to understand whatever theories it was she was...

Sharing experience of removal
Sharing sentiments
Sharing concerns with another practitioner
Positivist perspectives taking over
Understanding theories

M: Wow that's a big epistemological shift, isn't it?

Shifting epistemologically

S: Yeah, she was really struggling with it

Struggling with shift

M: You're moving from one end of the spectrum to the other

Making a big epistemological shift

S: So, she shared some sentiment. It was a common experience with her as well because she was thinking she wasn't sure how theory... how I could take theory into practice in my real-life situations.

Sharing sentiments w/ fellow practitioners
Sharing experiences of learning
Being unsure about theory to practice
Considering real life experiences

M: Right and... again was that common that some people were trying to take theory into practice or was it that there were some people who were just there for the theory?

S: One thing that I noticed was that some people who had just finished their UG degree and just moved into their graduate education, they were less preoccupied with taking theory into practice. They haven't had much hands-on experience to reflect on from their own study. You

Noticing the behaviour of others
Considering those fresh from UG
Noticing difference between fresh UGs
Not being preoccupied by practice
Not struggling with theory so much
Having no experience to block understanding

know what I mean? It felt like they were still ready to engage with theory, like engage with the readings.

M: Ok then, so in a way, the experience of practice was acting as a barrier to engaging with the theory.

S: Yes, sometimes it was and like sometimes I guess our teachers were trying to help us reflect on our experience in a more theoretical manner, which in my opinion wasn't always successful but they tried in this regard like basically to abstract our practical experience to think in a bit more of a theoretical manner.

M: OK. Wow and I wonder if... abstraction I always think is a more positivist kind of thing to rather than interpretivist?

S: I guess maybe I'm not choosing the right words. I guess by that I mean that for example like from my experience if I would bring in examples of real life situations where I had to work with survivors of gender based violence or something like that and I would interpret it in a way that would I guess would focus on patriarchy and patriarchal systems and then they would ask me to think of patriarchy as a social system and its interactions with other aspects like masculinities and how they are established. I'm not sure that I would call it as an abstraction or like interpretivism. Maybe I'm just...

M: Yeah there is some sort of removal there from it or trying to get you to look at it in a different way.

S: Yeah

M: Alright, when you said that you had some issues with say, sociological perspectives. When did such issues themselves?

S: It particularly during the autumn term because I was so so new to the setting and I was still trying to engage with the readings and get to know new theorists and being exposed to them and stuff. And I can tell from my grades as well that there was a huge shift between the first term and the second term.

M: When did you get the first grades back?

Seeing UGs as non-corrupted
Being ready to engage with theory

Work experience being a barrier

Finding experience a barrier to theory
Being encouraged to reflect on experience
Being encouraged to reflect theoretically
Failing to facilitate theoretical reflection
Being unable to abstract experience
Struggling with theory

Struggling to describe experience
Grappling with meaning
Bringing in examples from real life
Drawing on experience to evidence
Drawing on experience to understand
Trying to focus mind
Drawing on familiar schemas
Looking at familiar situations in a new way
Taking theory to experiences of practice
Being unsure
Struggling to articulate experiences

Removing experiences to grapple with theory

Struggling with perspectives autumn term
Being new to the environment
Getting to know theorists
Getting exposed to new readings
Seeing grades as an indicator
Seeing shift from terms 1 to 2

Getting first grades back

S: My first grades... My autumn term grades, I think were in Feb.

Getting first grades back in Feb

M: So, you had been at the university for about 6 months until you got your firsts grades back. If you think that you were half way through your programme, were you shocked by your grades, were you ok with them, were you expecting it?

Being at uni 6 months before grades

S: It was exactly what I was expecting because I knew that I was struggling a lot like the readings and working with this programme and I expected to not do so well. I'm also happy to disclose that I had a mental health crisis over the Christmas break, so it was a bit of a bit of a struggle to actually get thru the programme and to finish my assignment, so I expected the kind of grades that I got. I'm sure that I can improve a lot more if I can... of course part of it, 6 months away from home and 6 months away from working and it allowed me to reflect on a different level and engage deeply and on a more deeper level.

Getting expected poor grades
Realising that I had struggled
Expecting to do poorly
Having mental health crisis
Being unwell
Struggling to get thru programme
Realising problems and expecting grades
Knowing I can do better
Being away from home
Being able to engage deeply
Finding a new level of engagement

M: And you mentioned readings there and for a lot is Master's students reading is the hardest parts for them. Would you agree with that?

Finding readings hard

S: Yeah definitely at the beginning. I know that in the autumn term I was struggling to finish even quantitatively. I would be assigned 4 readings and I wouldn't even get through two. I would struggle to even read the readings let alone engage with them deeply. Later on, with the spring term I was doing a lot better with them.

Struggling with readings in the beginning
Being unable to cope with amount of read
Not making half the readings
Being nowhere near a deep understanding
Seeing reading proficiency improve over time

M: Ok, so reading got better as you were going on and do you think that as things went on you managed to work out the system, as the way that academia works

Managing to work out the academic system

S: Yeah pretty much yeah.

M: In that case, do you think it could have been made clearer to you in the beginning?

S: I think that the only problems that I had in the programme, and I think that this is specific to our programme, the readings in terms of the kind of theorists that we are reading for... Especially in the first term were Eurocentric. So that was one thing that we brought to the

Identifying problems
Having a specific problem
Having specific types of reading
Reading for a reason
Being unable to engage do your cultural reference point of texts being alien

department. The students brought it to the department that we actually wanted more diversity in the readings and we thought that it would add to the quality of the programme. Perhaps we needed more time with the tutors. You know the first week you get no class, and then out of class time it's not that often that we have contact with our tutors, so more contact would have been quite an improvement.

M: Overall it sounds like it has been satisfactory?

S: Yeah, it's been excellent and really like my experience here a lot. I have been looking at it overall and it has definitely helped me navigate through different spaces. It definitely improved me as a researcher, I got more access to resources that I could never have got at home. And my teachers definitely had an impact, I just wish that I had more time with them.

M: So, more contact time. Would that be in the classroom, or more one to one... lecture?

S: I think more seminars would have made a difference. Basically, instead of one seminar per module a week. If we had had two instead it would have made a difference. I wouldn't have said lectures as with the kind of MA that it is more about discussing and like to try...

M: And what value is there any way in lectures, like most of them are just useless. And what about your impression of other people on your programme... what was the split like home international?

S: In the master's group particularly, I would say about 50%... Chinese, a lot of European's like Swedish and Spanish... a few other nationalities... Mexican American... It's a really good mix considering that we were only about 27.

M: Amongst that group do you think there was a sense of space and belonging? Considering that it was about 50-50, do you feel like you belonged in that space? In the physical space and academic space or did you feel like you were visiting?

S: Hmm... I think that for the most part I felt like I belonged because with Women's studies you had shared concerns and shared perspectives originally before we start the

Bringing issues to department
Wanting more diversity
Suggesting improvements to quality
Needing more time with tutors
No class in the first week
Not having much contact hours
Seeing more contact as a clear improvement

Feeling satisfied with the programme
Having appositve experience
Feeling able to navigate thru spaces
Feeling improved as a researcher
Having access to wide resources
Teaching staff having an impact
Feeling more contact time is crucial

Needing more seminars for discussion
Needing more than one per week
Needing two seminars
Not needing lectures

Having a diverse international group

Seeing the diverse group as +ve

Feeling a sense of belonging mostly
Having shared concerns with peers
Having shared perspectives
Having shared starting points

Master's so I did feel like I belonged. You know experiences aren't identical but you can tell that there are some shared ideas both international and home. And of course, it has an impact on me that there are other internationals who are trying to adapt to the academic setting here. Especially if they hadn't done their undergrad here. It helped us formulate a support network.

Having a sense of belonging
Having parallel familiarities with peers
Sharing ideas
Having an impact on self
Academic adjustment needed for internat
Needing adjustment if UG was at home
Shared belonging and need to adjust help
for support network

M: Did the support network happen organically? Was there any kind of critical incident where... before I've spoken to some participants where there've been in situation where... one person has said "I don't understand something" and then another says "thank god you said that As I don't understand anything either"

Bonding in frustration

S: yeah it was actually something similar... the first instant in the autumn term, we had a problem with one of our module leaders. We moved around this idea that we had to bring it up to the department and at a different point it was a sort of support group for each other and it both home students and international students. We would exchange ideas or having a group on Facebook to bitch about the hard it was to get thru these assignments or having gatherings for coffee or meals sometimes.

Having issue with programme
Bringing students together
Coming together in stress
Coming together internationally
Setting up a Facebook group
Discussing concerns of assignment
Gathering over coffee

M: And do you think that helped you to come together and form relationships having that common experience or negative...

S: It's stress I guess or trying to adapt culturally to the different setting attributed to it as well. Feeling like we are estranged in this space.

Going together in stress
Feeling unfamiliar with setting
Feeling othered in space

M: Right, you are all other and it brings you together... I think that it's a really interesting aspect of the master's experience which has come up in the research and what I find to hilarious about it as it would be unmarketable... (both laugh). That the things that really brings people together is that they get really pissed off...

S: Or that they just get really stressed out. (both laugh). Yeah and brings them together... you know misery loves company.

Getting really stressed out

M: Imagine being honest and marketing and telling people about the... the real students experience and that what

actually gets people thru it is coming together in these moments of crisis and feeling stressed.

Getting thru it by coming together
Coming together in crisis

M In terms of marketing then, were you influenced by marketing? What did they tell you before you got on the programme?

S: Actually, they didn't need to reach out to me because I looked up the different programmes in the UK at postgrad centres and departments for women's studies and here is marked number one or two. So, I didn't think that I would manage to get in there because it's a very difficult spot based on the rankings, so I sought this uni in particular because of how prestigious it seemed in the rankings.... So, they didn't really need to sell it to me.

Not being influenced by marketing directly
Searching for programmes
Considering options
Going for the top ranked
Managing to get accepted
Basing decisions on ranking
Equating prestige with ranking
Not needing to sell it to me

M: Or the ranking sold it to you... [S: Yeah!]

Being sold on the ranking

S: Because I knew that I was going for this master's strictly for the professional development. Not seeking an academic career... I was just seeking a Master's from a very strong institution to add to my professional marketability...

Knowing myself and my direction
Knowing why I was doing this
Seeking a Master's from top uni
Adding to self-marketability

M: Because you are going to go into another market afterwards... Once you have leave one market... what a horrible neoliberal world... which you have done very well in as you are already employed. So therefore, let's go back a little bit and talk about the other students that you were on the programme with. So, there were a mix of international students and about 50% international students. How was the relationship cross-culturally?

Moving form market to market

S: It was a bit hard to navigate when we first started the programme as there was a bit of a distance there... erm... I didn't know how to set expectations towards people making new connections and making friends it was a bit hard to navigate as like to get you specific examples because sometimes it was hard for me to understand that people would tell you that we are willing to have some coffee sometime or go out for coffee or have a night out or something and then they would just disappear, so it was a bit difficult to navigate at first. And sometimes I was a bit I guess like thrown off because some people had individualistic tendencies but getting thru the programme I started to realise that it's part of PG life, people have to worry about their jobs and their

Having cross-cultural relationships

Finding intercultural navigation hard initially
Seeing intercultural distance
Not knowing how to set expectations
Making new connections and friends
Finding it hard to navigate
Drawing on specifics
Taking people at face value
Suggesting social gatherings
Suggesting social gatherings
Disappearing
Being thrown by unfamiliar cultural quirks
Observing individualistic tendencies
Realising the process over time
Having real life concerns while studying

education, so a social life doesn't come on the top of their list I would say. So, it was a bit difficult to navigate at first.

Socialising not priority of home students
Finding it difficult to navigate

M: Ok, so then how about in terms of learning in seminars or in the support groups that you talk about. So, for example in over coffee, was that an international group?

Learning in groups

S: Sometimes they did but sometimes they didn't. We were mostly international but sometimes we had a couple of international students joining in. and it was like an addition for us because they could tell us about how the education system works because we were not familiar with it and they were participating but not as consistently. I guess that British students probably have jobs and they have family some of them have partners so they have a lot of time on their hands so it's different. Like for us we are away from home and have a lot more time on our hands. We have a lot more time on our hands.

Having varied experiences
Mostly connecting with int students
Having home students join sometimes
Finding it a welcome addition
Finding home student insight valuable
Having HS input sporadically
Assuming HS had jobs
Assuming HS had family responsibilities
Having time on hands
Being away from home
Having more time on hands than HS

M: And you mention cultural distance, which is really interesting as I actually have those exact words written down here. And do you think it's a factor in learning? Like the cultural distance you have to travel.

Observing cultural distance

S: Yeah, I mean... I would say that most of us among the internationals... mainly if I were to compare with examples who were like me... My classmate who was Mexican and my other classmates who were Chinese... can tell that we were struggling a lot more than our European peers for example. One of my housemates, who is actually Spanish and on the same programme, she already familiar with the system because she has friends here and she doesn't see it as that different from the Spanish system. So, there are at least some commonalities, so I guess... the cultural difference as you were speaking language wise I wasn't probably struggling as much with English as my Spanish friend but in terms of like the social interactions it was less of a shock for her. It was less of a challenge for her to navigate social interactions with tutors and peers for her.

Observing cultural distance as a factor
Comparing experiences
Identifying similar peers
Making cultural comparisons
Seeing struggles going on
Having European peers
Having a Spanish peer
Being culturally familiar
Being only a small cultural distance away
Having a familiar system
Seeing cultural distance as relevant
Language not being a factor per se
Seeing language as a problem for some
Observing levels of social shock
Being challenged by social shock
Observing differing levels of social shock

M: So, it's not just language it's definitely a cultural issue. It's a weird thing isn't it. How do you when you are studying something Sociological... How do you get someone onto that similar playing field to begin the studies and to all interact and to build knowledge? It's quite tough. Were there any times that you found it really

Cultural being an issue rather than language

Getting a level playing field

tough?

S: Hmm... except for this one module that we all had issues with I don't think that we have had that we've had these issues. We've always had these suggestions about ways to move forward with the programme because we can see that in terms of the academic theories that were presented to us and the theories and the readings and theorists that we had to engage with were not... to be very explicit they were not engaging with global south theorists as much and we brought this as an issue to the dept.

M: And they listened.

S: Yes. They were very responsive that.

M: Ok, in that case then, do/did you feel part of an academic community.

S: At this point yes definitely.

M: Has it always been like that?

S: Mmmm... not earlier. I think that at the beginning in the first time I was very resistant. I think that part of that was me. I was quite resistance. I thought like "I'm not turning into this theoretical academic who is just writing papers I still want to keep my identity as someone who engages on the activist level. I was always like that but then I gave in to the academic ideas. And I found it a bit indulgent [both laugh]

M: So why did you decide to give into it or did you have no choice?

S: Well part of it I had no choice and I want to improve my grades and get the most out of it on a practical level. And the other bit is that I liked it. I thought that I would try to engage with theory and mental masturbation would be really interesting.

Being able to critically reflect on prog
Not having major intercultural challenges
Moving forward with programme
Seeing in terms of academic theory
Being presented with theories
Having to engage with theories
Ignoring global south context
Bringing issues to department

Department listening to concerns

Department being responsible

Being part of an academic community

Being part of an academic community

Becoming part of an academic com
Resisting the academic community
Resisting change in identity
Resisting 'academification'
Wanting to keep identity
Giving in to academic community
Finding academia indulgent

Having no choice but to give in
Wanting to get the most out of the prog
Enjoying the indulgence
Engaging with the indulgence
Finding it interesting

M: What I find really interesting is that the practical experience has been such a big factor in trying to get to... you have had to put it away in a box so that you could play with these other things. I also imagine that having someone on a Master's programme that has as much experience as you would be so valuable in terms of group work and drawing on experience and building knowledge.

Putting practical experience in a box

Having a lot to contribute

S: I have the space to do that but like it's just because it is not a social policy programme, it's about sociology and you really have to distance yourself at some point because it's theoretical and intellectual kind of... because like the work that I do at home if I'm campaigning for a law I'm sitting with a bunch of politicians imagine that I said Judith Butler says that... and I'm quoting... it's not going to happen and I know that I'm going to be screaming at their faces and telling them that gender based violence is bad and you have to oppose it.

Having the space to learn

Seeing behind the programme

Unpicking practical and theoretical

Seeing the need to engage intellectually

Reflecting on experience from home

Drawing on experience

Seeing the impossibility of drawing on theory in real life

Seeing theory and practice as outwardly incompatible

M: Ok, that's really really clear thank you! So, do you feel that you are the same as when you started? Do you feel that your identity has changed?

S: My identity I guess it's a very hard word to deal with... I guess yeah there is a shift and I am enjoying the intellectual side... and enjoy reading a lot more about sociology and feminist theory...

Finding identity as hard work to deal with

Feeling a shift in identity

Enjoying intellectualisation

Being able to access theoretical texts more easily

M: And you weren't engaging with that before because you didn't enjoy it because you found it hard or you weren't interested?

S: I found it very hard and it was not very relevant to the day to day things that I was dealing with as a professional

Finding theory hard

Finding theory lacking in relevance

M: Ok right and maybe as a professional maybe you that that it was indulgent.

Finding theory indulgent

S: At some point, I felt like I could spare the time to read a book.

Feeling that time could be spared to read

M: So, going back again to identity or you can change that word if you like... there has been a shift?

S: Yeah, I definitely think there is a shift and the researcher part of me is enjoying herself now.

Experiencing a clear shift in identity

M: Is that a change of the better?

S: Erm... I guess I can't tell how better or worse it is for me going back to my professional field. Like it feels like I am a lot more informed now going back to the professional field and that I am a lot more informed and how much I am going to use these tools and how much I am going to use these tools in the practical field... I don't know yet...

M: And about you as you are now going back home and going back into the society that you came from. How do you feel about going back to Egypt? For example, when I was traveling around and when I came home I felt quite estranged, but I felt I could view my culture differently...

S: I did go home for like during Easter time a bit in the summer and there was a little bit of reverse culture shock I think that it was there in the minute detail and stuff it is like sometimes I felt overwhelmed. Like in our culture we are very warm and very touchy-feely and it's hard to navigate personal space where I come from so on that level of social interaction yeah. And another thing is an interesting comment that I got from my friend when I was home was like "you are an intellectual now!" and "this kind of thing is not something that we would have heard you speak of in the previous year!"

M: And how does that make you feel when someone says that?

S: I actually like it a lot. So far, I feel like... I mean I don't know if it is going to stop me from shifting perspective back again to the social policy kind of engagement, but I definitely like the fact that I have this intellectual side because I've just not had enough time before to explore it.

M: How about family and friendship, could you slot back into them? The reason I'm asking this is that is because higher education should be transformational and you should come out different and I wonder if we have considered the consequences for that with people... because ultimately students are people and what happens when we spit them out the other side.

Not sure if the change is for the better
Going back to the professional field
Being more informed going back

Wondering about using tools gained
Not being able to connect the dots in the future yet

Returning home to new context

Having gone home already
Experiencing a reverse culture shock
Experiencing culture shock in small detail
Feeling overwhelmed
Seeing differences in culture
Navigating personal space
Expecting changes in social interaction
Receiving comment from friends at home
Being labelled as intellectualised
Seeing that as a clear change
Seeing change in self over the year

Enjoying the intellectual label
Being uncertain a/ shifting perspectives
Considering moving back to the practical
Uncovering intellectual side
Realising that time had never been allowed to explore it

Moving back into an old space

S: Yeah one observation I had over the changes that took place for me was my self-worth and self-perception has changed and one of the consequences has been for example my boyfriend was Egyptian and I started perceiving our relationship in a whole new light and I think I dunno if it is my education or is it only that or that I had a distance from home and a space to reflect or maybe it's a mix of both. My education has helped improve like the fact that I saw myself in a different light and helped and influenced me in thinking about my personal life.

Clearly observing change in self
Feeling changes in self-worth
Feeling changes in self- perception
Seeing consequences to changes
Looking at personal relationships in new light
Seeing whole experience as significant to changed self
Seeing self in different light
Academification affects view on self in personal life

Xu

X: I am a postgraduate in women's studies and what I'm doing is working on Chinese women's lipstick practices. It's for personal reasons being I'm a fan of lipsticks and women's studies fashions and lipsticks is an evil things for feminisms as it is the stuff of oppressions. So, I want to fill the gap in westernised concepts in Chinese experiences. Ok so that's what I'm doing and also women's studies focus more on women's fashion practices and also, I think... I read some articles of these fashions and clothes, so why don't we focus on more than clothes.

Studying for personal reasons
Having an interest in the subject

Seeing a relevant gap in knowledge

Reading articles
Understanding how you got to a point

M: And how do you feel it's going

X: It's quite hard as I can't find some references on this because it is brand new in this social science field. So, when I'm writing the literature review I can't find any lipstick references. What I found is all about marketing and how to sell lipsticks or business or marketing. So, I turned to my supervisor for help but she said that she didn't come across any lipstick literature either so I try to seek help from my peers but that also didn't... so I'm working on my own and I'm trying to make things right but it's still

Finding it tough
Being new to social sciences
Struggling to write
Struggling with sources
Finding parallel literature
Turning to supervisor
Finding dead ends
Unsuccessfully turning to peers
Working alone
Struggling

M: and you talked about seeking help from you peers...?

X: First, I wanted to know more about theories about fashion and about beauty, so I asked my classmates, but they didn't know and also, I met another challenge when I tried to get my Chinese participants. Perhaps Chinese are cautious about being volunteers so actually I asked everyone and tried to persuade them to participate but they all treated me like strangers and outsiders or they don't want to open their door to me so I turned to my classmates and will interview them.

Wanting to know about theory
Asking peers to input
Meeting challenges
Asking Chinese students
Finding fellow Chinese reticent
Persuading others to participate
Being treated with suspicion
Being rejected by compatriots
Feeling disappointed by research

M: And were they Chinese?

X: All Chinese.

M: So, you got your participants in the end, but they were not the original people that you asked.

Getting participants in the end
Having to settle for second best

X: Not. So, all my participants were my friends and not the strangers that I wanted.

Compromising to get participants
Not getting what you wanted

M: OK, and when you turned to peers. You said they were western. What did you mean by that?

Having an international group

X: One American... Mother and the other guys are European.

M: Does that include the UK...?

X: one was Swedish and one was Spanish... American

M: It sounds like you are having a difficult time with your research. How about the rest of the programme?

Having a difficult time

X: Actually, I had a very difficult time last term because I got a very disastrous feedback. One of my modules called Qualitative Research Methods I got 16%. I also overwrote it. Because this module is not a module with our centre, I didn't figure out the rules of this department. For example, they require us to write 2050 words and you have to write exactly these words and I overwrite but hundreds, because I don't know that there is not a flexible limit.

Having a difficult year
Getting disastrous feedback
Receiving a humiliating grade
Studying external module
Not figuring out the rules
Having a word limit
Overwriting hugely
Not knowing the system

M: and why did they not know that? Did they not tell you?

X: NO, they didn't tell me but after I got this mark. My supervisor read my essays and tried to find a solution for me because it's too low and she said, "you didn't know the rules" and she logged in the website and tried to look at the student handbook and the rules are on there. But I didn't know that this thing exists.

Not being informed about the system
Getting help from supervisor
Getting a low grade

M: But you didn't know that this was here before?

Being shown the rules later
Not knowing the system existed

X: No, and the programme leader said you can overwrite if you... I did a life history narrative and you have to quote something... and I think it's my problem...

Not knowing about the rules

M: Ok, so that sounds stressful?

Write a narrative
Placing blame on self

X: yes, so stressful.

Being under extreme stress

M: And what support did you get with feeling like this?

X: My supervisor suggested me to work harder on my other essays because I got this result on my autumn term and I have to work harder in the spring term and my dissertation. And they do help me because they keep writing to the Sociology department and arguing for me but the rules are strict.

Being told to work harder
Getting bad results early
Being advised to work harder
Receiving help
Being a student advocate
Facing inflexible rules

M: Ok so Women's studies is part of the Sociology department.

X: But we are independent and we have our own rules...

Being unclear about complex rules

M: Ok so your supervisor gave you support and he support was "work harder"

Being advised to work harder

X: [laughs]... yeah because when I found out this result I was quite anxious and I wrote to her at 10pm and she responded immediately. So, she made an appointment for me to speak to her.

Finding out results
Being anxious and reaching out
Getting response quickly
Getting advice quickly

M: and the suggestion was that you need to work harder?

X: [laughs] yeah

Being advised to work harder

M: was this in February?

X: I can't remember but when I was studying in the spring term so probably about then.

Not being aware of important dates

M: Did you have any feedback before February. You had 6 months. In the programme, had anyone seen your writing.

X: Our centre has a semi-semester essay. It's in the middle of the first time so they ask us to write a draft essay. And I dunno, maybe feminists are so harsh on their students, so I got a really terrible feedback and they said that it's not at any level, so... it's kind of destroyed all my confidence a little bit but it also inspired me to work harder. You know my BA is not English because my BA is in Arabic studies, so I don't know how to write a reference and I don't know everything so I kind of sought help from my peers and tried to find a solution. So, at the end of the semester in autumn term it is better.

Getting a formative mid-term essay
Writing a formative draft
Being harshly critiqued
Getting terrible feedback
Not being good enough to even register
Being destroyed
Blaming self for academic deficiency
Having an irrelevant UG
Not knowing about references
Asking help from peers
Getting better as term progressed

M: So there has been some improvements?

improving

X: Because of the harsh comments I think

Improving thru harsh comments

M: And after the harsh comments did they give you some advice or support or did they say work harder?

X: My supervisor met me and hugged me and said that I did a very good job as I am not a native speaker and all my classmates are really good English and for the future I need to structure my essay and provide references... how to write in English style and they said that my critical thinking is not enough and I need to think harder and not just describe in my essays.

Getting a hug from supervisor
Being consoled as a non-native speaker
Believing you are the worst in the class
Needing to structure essays better
Being forced to change rhetorical style
Not being a good enough critical thinker
Being told to think harder

M: Ok, could we talk about then about transitioning from UG study to PG study. Because it seems like there is a gap in expectations because if you got a shock it seems like your expectations were misaligned or wrong.

Being shocked by transition
Having a gap in expectations

X: Actually, at first, I wanted to learn things from my seminars. We just have seminars and not lectures. The website says that this programme is suitable for students who don't have experience of women's studies or gender so actually I knew nothing when I came here but they gave me some resources, but they were pretty difficult. And in the first seminar we talk about some feminist theory and my classmates talked about some post-structuralist and some postmodernism and new liberal British theory and I was totally shocked as I knew nothing about any of this. And... so at the end of the seminar our prof asked us "what else did you want to ask me" and everyone put up very interesting questions... and what I asked is "what is neoliberalism" because I wasn't into this and she said neoliberalism is equalled to new individualism and it's about economic and liberal things and yeah... And at that time, I thought I should read some more. Because for my classmates these kind of things are taken for granted but for me it's not. I hadn't heard of this sort of thing before.

Wanting to learn
Not having input
Being misled by marketing
Not seeing it coming
Knowing nothing coming in
Getting resources
Thinking back to first seminar
Talking about theory
Discussing theoretical frameworks
Being shocked by unknown terms
Knowing nothing

Feeling inferior
Not knowing the basics
Being removed from taken for granted frames of ref

Needing to read lots to even get started
Being so far from the starting line
Never having heard of most theories

M: And what did you do to fill that gap in knowledge? Did you read?

X: yeah read a lot and I read every day and after class I came to my prof to ask some questions and gradually I kind of made some sense of these terms and it's maybe a process.

Reading a lot
Asked teachers questions
Making some sense of terms
Getting closer over time

M: And did you do it on your own?

X: I think you did it on your own... because I asked my professor and I think they try really hard to explain but I dunno it is maybe too complex to be explained in some conversation. So, they suggested some references, so that if it does not make sense then you can read this.

Doing it alone
Seeing the teachers are trying to explain
Believing that concepts are too hard to explain
Being suggested readings
Being given last resort texts

M: and you said something earlier before when we started the interview, you said something about sociology being very different... or removed from China and the Chinese context.

Seeing the cultural differences in subject matter

X: I think that there is also a gap in the language because sex and gender in China is one word. We don't have biology sex and social sex. We don't divide it into two... so women is your biology sex and you will have a fluid identity... we just have the one things. So actually, when we discussed sex and the gender binary in the seminar I feel I had been confused for such a long time... Because gender construction... because we don't have some word to describe some words like agency. Agency in China means a place where you book something, so I was so confused when my prof kept telling me to write about agency... But actually, we don't have these words translated correctly, so I got to know these words by reading a lot and becoming familiar to the subject.

Seeing a language gap
Problems of translating terms
Grappling with nuanced terms

Struggling with linguistic lens
Grappling with complex matters
Being confused for a long time
Learning completely new cultural concepts
Struggling with translation

Grappling with fundamental terms

Getting to know terms over time
Becoming familiar

M: So, in that case the language is a barrier because it doesn't always translate the same. However, before I felt that you said that sociology wasn't established in China. Could you talk more about that?

Experiencing own language as a barrier

X: Yes, I think we don't... I didn't know well about social science until I come here so I try to connect with my friends. Actually, I didn't know sociology at all until I got to know it here. A Chinese PhD here did her BA in China and she was the first one that I knew that did sociology in China, so I tried to ask her like how sociology in China going and she said that all theory that she learnt was related to um... based on western society. We translate all the theory that explore... Studied western sociology and translated it into Chinese system. So, she says that it was quite far away from her real life because we learn something not ours. So, we feel distance

Not knowing about social sciences
Trying to connect with concepts
Not knowing sociology prior

Suggesting Chinese Sociology is less advanced

Learning from a Eurocentric context

Translating Eurocentric concepts to Chinese
Feeling discipline is far from real life
Feeling a cultural distance

M: and that distance is a cultural distance because maybe

Experiencing a cultural distance

a person from a western context feels closer in distance but a Chinese person feels further away.

X: Of example the agency we never say that in our day to day life and identity, we never use this word so... I dunno we never use identity and I never saw this word in even academic articles in my BA so I dunno so maybe we don't say this word... we say another word... we just don't say this word... so It's difficult for me to talk about this because we don't use these words...

M: how do you feel about this word now. Do you understand?

X: yes, I know what it means, and I know about gender etc... But I don't know I just feel distant from it. I know what it means, and I know that it can be applied to my writing but in everyday life and even in Chinese academic life... I talked to my Chinese classmate about this identity and we don't use this word... we never use this word.

M: so, what's the closest translation if you were to try and say it in Chinese?

X: Ok so feminism is quite controversial in China because we have a male translation of this word and it is womanism and another is about the empowerment of women. They are quite different. The difference is the practical power... the second one is about how we need to enhance women's power and the first one we Chinese think is more neutral. Like what my family think is "crazy feminists want the empowerment of women".

M: So, the language is more neutral in Chinese?

X: We try to use more neutral language to show that we are a rational beings. We are not going to rush out onto the streets and do some crazy things, we want our society to be normal and we want to be objective... we respect the scientific rational things. We honour the rational things and it is very important. If you be too emotional it's like you are not scientific and nobody listens to you.

M: wow so that's a big shift to go from that culture to go to Women's studies here

Feeling culturally far as a Chinese student

Never using terms day to day
Never considering identity
Never seeing or hearing a taken for granted concept
Having to pick apart own culture

Having to reprogramme brain

Finally getting to grips with concepts
Feeling distant from concepts

Not seeing connection to own culture
Confirming distance with Chinese peers
Never using key concept in home culture

Dealing with concept that is controversial at home
Finding inaccurate translations
Seeing difference
Considering power

Being from a neutral society

Being used to non-confrontational lang
Being programmed as rational
Being taught to keep social order
Being taught to be objective
Honouring rational things
Not being emotional is valued
Being shunned if not rational

Making a big cultural shift

X: Yes, we use I in our papers but it's not acceptable in Chinese...it might be... I don't want to generalise but in my experience it's not. Teachers there have told me to use more neutral terms to describe things.

Adapting to an inverted rhetoric
Reflecting on own culture
Having to go against everything you have been taught

M: So, it sounds like you must have changed a lot... You've certainly learned a lot. And how do you feel about that? Do you feel your own identity has changed? Your academic identity

Changing significantly

X: Everything has changed. My whole world has changed... Although I felt distant from this in my academic life...I think that they were useful and I even think that they are more advanced than in china and I hope that china can advance our own social science and I even thought about doing a PhD and I feel interested in it.

Changing dramatically
Having your world change
Feeling distant
Seeing discipline at home as less advanced
Considering further study

M: Do you feel that you could be part of being a part in changing the way china thinks.

Wanting to be part of change

X: I'd like to think so, but we are quite stubborn and if I can't change my parents' minds... like marriage for example is the biggest things for women and everyone has to do it and if you didn't get marriage then you didn't get a happy life so 30 is the final line... yeah... So actually, I dunno... I accepted all this liberal terms and thoughts, but I just can't tell my parents... oh I won't get married because I think may it's a cultural difference. They support us thru BA and MA... I have spent all their money and... I dunno I feel if I say that I don't want to get married and I don't want children then it's so cruel to them... I dunno... We are too close we are not like the British and when you are 18 you are independent. We are always bonded together.

Seeing compatriots as stubborn
Seeing parents values as rigid
Seeing women's rights for what they are
Seeing own culture in new light
Having developed new ontological lens
Accepting liberal values
Hiding new values from parents
Seeing cultural differences
Spending all parents' money
Being indebted to them
Being unable to disappoint parents
Being different
Being bound to parents

M: So how do you feel then going back to that culture. You are going back to china. So, if your identity has changed in the last year, how do you feel about going back to china when the programme is finished.

Going back home

X: I dunno I must oblige. I won't say I'm a feminist and I won't change. It's like my lipstick... I'll still wear my lipstick but I'll wear a more conservative colour. I will compromise but I won't really change.

Going home with a changed identity

M: Ok I understand. Do you feel that you understand the system? Do you feel that you understand how the system work...? Like the academic system

Keeping quiet about new identity
Wearing a different shade of lipstick
Toning down the colour
Deciding to compromise but not change

X: Although I got 16% all other marks have been about 60%. I think it's tricky Chinese. We always know how to get a good mark. SO yeah, I know. Ok I had a culture shock at first but perhaps I can adjust quickly and I can work out the writing style.

Achieving good grades
Finding a way to work the system
Knowing the system in the end
Making self-adjust quickly
Working out writing style

M: And did you work that out after you got the harsh grades in October.

X: After I got the harsh feedback in the middle of term 1... It was after that... As I was an excellent student in my BA and it was the first time that I got such harsh comments. So, I must change.

Getting harsh feedback
Being an excellent UG
Being shocked by harsh comments
Seeing need for change

M: What do you think about home students from the UK?

X: [laughs] I think that they are very smart.... I shouldn't say this but I had a difficult time talking with them. They are all friendly but we don't share common interests. For example, Emma Watson from Harry Potter. Chinese people love her a lot. We had a party and I had a party with my classmates to support each other and they are quite critical of her feminist stance... Like so I didn't feel that I am quite involved in this conversation and the British election they will post some things like vote for labour and don't upset our country. And Chinese people are A-political so... I don't know how to get involved in this movement. I don't know the difference between conservatives and labour... So, we can't talk... I want to talk deeply with them, but we only talk about the weather and food... and I want to talk deeply but I don't want to show that I'm the idiot of everything, even after I've been living there for a while, so I try to avoid difficult topics.

Viewing home students as smart
Finding it difficult to interact
Not sharing common interest

Finding harsh criticism of idol hard
Supporting each other
Being in a critical environment
Being involved in conversation
Posting political views online
Making political demands
Not being able to get into interests
Not knowing about cultural systems
Wanting to talk deeply
Only chatting about shallow things
Not wanting to seem ignorant
Not wanting to seem ignorant after long stay
Avoiding difficult topics

M: Do you think that they made any adjustment for you? Because it sounds like you are adjusting for them a lot. Are they moving to meet you?

Adjusting to accommodate home students

X: Can I say this? Just one example that I feel quite upset because when we discussed some issues in seminars, I think that they are quite Eurocentric like when they ask me "so what do I want to say or express" I think that it's kind of giving me a chance to speak about something or tiny things because they want to listen to some different things about this view or this issue they don't want to hear a personal perspective they want to hear from "from China"

Feeling upset
Discussing issues in seminars
Being forced into Eurocentric discussions
Not being able to find the words

Not wanting to hear your views
Wanting to hear from China"

like you are a representative from China... say something from a Chinese perspective. I can't generalise about everyone. Yeah, I have changed as I got training from the UK. And maybe I don't blame them and maybe in China we can do better like other people from other countries, maybe we did the same so maybe it's human nature. I am Chinese, it's like my identity my appearance. My identity... Yeah, it's hard we can't blame them.

Being treated as representative of country
Not being able to fulfil role
Not blaming others
Believing Chinese can do better
Being unclear about others actions
Being a Chinese person
Not placing blame

M: Do you feel like you are part of a community, like a community of learners. DO you feel like they are a supportive network?

X: Not so much, but I don't think that it is helpful that I don't... we maybe have different learning styles. Some of us like quiet learning environments like in the library... So, they are quite different, like they will post in Facebook "does anyone want to study in the library with me?"

Not feeling part of a supportive community
Having different approaches
Experiencing quiet learning environments
Being different
Using social media
Asking to study together

M: And do you take them up on the offer and go to the library?

X: No. I don't like to be in the library. I want to be alone because I feel myself, it's weird, whenever I go to the library... it's better for me at home. It's like a guilty study. I study late when I write something... with reading in the afternoon.

Not enjoying the library
Preferring to study at home
Needing to feel guilty to study
Studying later in the day

M: How do you feel about your department? What impression do you have of them?

X: I don't see how much they taught me but they have changed me. They gave me different ways of thinking... I didn't know how complicated gender is... I think that it is maybe... it is so amazing and I think it is the thinking patterns that have changed.

Not being aware of teaching
Being changed
Not realising what was getting into
Thinking
Changing thinking patterns

M: So, you said at the beginning that you're not sure how much they taught you, but they changed you?

Not being clear about learning outcomes
Not seeing teaching

X: Yeah. It's a shortage... we don't have the lectures. For me... I know nothing... So, I feel like I need more theoretical foundation, like basic things and I need to learn step by step and they gave me very complicated articles and I need to know them... I think it is a good way to do it because it motivated me to read more and if I

Not having clear input
Knowing nothing
Needing theoretical foundation
Learning step by step
Grappling with reading
Experiencing pressure as motivation

didn't get it I read others like more basic things so I then I would return to my recommended article.

Reading basic texts
Going back to recommended texts later

M: It's difficult isn't it when you don't understand the theory and you have to read something else to help you.

Needing to read to understanding reading

X: I'm shy but I have my opinion and I don't want to be quiet like an idiot in the class and in my seminar, I want to be involved. I think I need to say something so yeah.

Holding opinions back
Looking like an idiot
Wanting to be involved
Needing to speak up

M: And how did you manage to get to grips with those theories because those theories sound like they are really hard?

Getting to grips with difficult theory

X: I'm not a smart person so first I will check the dictionary of every word I don't understand and then read the article twice... I will browse through and then search for a Chinese version and then try and read them in Chinese.

Not seeing self as smart
Looking up every word
Skimming reading
Finding a Chinese version of text

M: and you said that you are not a very smart person, I don't believe it. You are getting good grades.

X: It's normal... 60 is normal...

Getting normal grades

M: Who knows more in the class? Other people or you?

X: Other people... Yes, they know more than me. Because when we have a seminar in class and everyone has new ideas... I can't find my voice. And when I read new articles I was too involved in the article.

Believing other people know more
Believing others know more in seminars
Not being able to find voice
Getting too involved in reading

M: and where is your voice?

X: Cause when I read the article I think "wow it couldn't be better than this" but then someone else will say "it didn't look at other experience, it's Eurocentric" and I think wow yes that's amazing.

Being wowed by articles
Not being able to scrutinise readings
Being amazed by others critiques
Seeing what others mean

M: Yes, because that is then a cultural distance that you talked about...

Traveling a cultural distance

X: It's like we discussed the "Cyborg" by Harrian? It's difficult and I didn't know one of the British women said but it's whiteness is quite... it didn't look at black women's experience. I didn't find this point, I just thought that it's quite difficult...

Discussing alien concepts
Being forced to discuss British topics
Not seeing other perspectives
Not uncovering other vantage points
Reacting negatively to a difficult text
Feeling inadequate

M: So, your way of approaching a text is different.

Approaching texts

X: I get too involved I think.

Getting too involved in texts

Jelena

M: So, tell me about, sorry where is it you went?

J: a pedagogy meeting and they were looking at learning outcomes and they were producing and kind of description for the program and they were looking at their perceptions of students from the master's program to try and combine the two and to see if we agree with what was on the master's and what wasn't on the master's and stuff like that... interesting.

Attending a pedagogy meeting
Talking about outcomes
Describing the programme
Discussing perceptions of programme
Agreeing expectations
Agreeing Master's structure
Being interested

M: Ok and how were those perceptions?

J: the description was accurate but I think it wasn't the program wasn't as practical as it could be. so, for York University but they didn't really put that into words

Seeing the description as accurate
Expecting more practical tasks
Being misled about practical input

M: Ok so... sorry so it wasn't as practical as it could have been but that's a strength?

Not being as practical as expected

J: No it's not a strength

M: ok so it was a weakness of the programme

J: yeah

Seeing lack of practical input as a weakness

M: so did you expect it to be more practical

J: Yes, because when I applied to several universities I applied to for example Leeds I was choosing between these two and when I called someone at Leeds they said "well if you want a more theoretically based programme, you should choose Leeds. if you want a more practical programme you should choose York. because they are more practical

Expecting programme to be more practical
Deciding on institution for practical stuff
Deciding meticulously
Deciding between theoretical and practical

M: ok and how do you feel about that?

J: a little bit disappointed. I'm glad that I did the master's and I'm happy with the content, but I did think that some exposure to the practical work that I will be involved in would be really beneficial.

Feeling disappointed by programme
Being happy in general
Wanting exposure to practical work
Seeing need for improvement

M: What kind of practical stuff do you think they could have done?

J: I did HR management course. and one thing is that HR managers to similar work and there are examples of duties they do which are more advanced. But if we could have for example a model company and produce a report. That is something that managers do and if we could practice it over that year at least a couple of times that would be an advantage.

Recalling specifics from programme
Relating to real life
Seeing need for real life tasks

M: so did you write reports at all?

J: not really no we had some exercises in groups and I was negotiating with the team or something like that and we didn't receive much feedback.

Doing exercises
Negotiating
Not receiving enough feedback

M: so they were simplistic their reports and there wasn't a lot of feedback?

Being too simplistic

J: Yes, they were simple examples and exercises

Being too simplistic

M: So, there were no reports?

Not writing reports

J: no nothing practical I would say

Not doing practical tasks

M: ok so nothing practical at all?

Not doing practical tasks

J: That's what I would say. It was all pretty much theoretical

Only studying theory

M: Erm.... how do you feel then about the theory? Because it seems like it was all Theory.

J: Well it was theoretical, but they explain how practice works and what we may end up doing, how to create strategies but that was all put it into words not practice really. We had a few seminars where we practiced it but actual practice... nothing.

Seeing need to theory

Seeing it all as words
Having sporadic practice
Not having real practice

M: Nothing kind of real?

Not having anything real

J: No. Now, basically HR management at the Master's level is a CIPD course accredited level. That's the highest level of education for the HR, so technically we could be working as HR partners but we won't be able to do that unless we have experience.

Defining programme
Having an accredited programme
Having a high level of education
Not being able to practice at level of qualification

M: Ok I see so there is really something conflicting there.

Needing experience
Seeing conflict between ability and qualification

J: So, it's a little disappointing.	Being disappointed
M: So, you are qualified to a particular level, but you are not really skilled?	Being qualified but not skilled
J: We have to start with HR administrator or HR assistant roles in order to go up with the career.	Starting low down in real life
M: Ok, so that sounds much more negative?	
J: In terms of the practical stuff yeah.	Feel negative in some aspects
M: But earlier you said that you felt glad that you had done it?	
J: I'm glad but because I think that I can still start working in an HR environment. Even though it is a low positions. For example, an HR administrator. I can still start there and when they realise that I have got good qualifications I can then go up further that those who don't have them.	Being glad that you did course Having to start jobs low down Waiting to be discovered Knowing there is no glad ceiling
M: Ok in that case then you can accelerate your career and you're not going to hit a glass ceiling or something because you've got the qualification. OK... so going back to these expectations then. Where did these expectations come from? Like you already mentioned that Leeds told you... [both laugh]	Accelerating career No glass ceiling
J: I think well Leeds [both laugh] I have no idea what their programme is like. It might be even more theoretical, so if they think that York is more practical it is in their eyes.	Seeing Master's, a very theoretical
M: Well then what did this uni tell you?	
J: Well there were a lot of interesting modules that sounded practical, for example, skills for HR management, but in that module we had practical exercises which were called workshops but we didn't really receive any feedback from it and we didn't really have any recap sessions to let us know if "this is what you have gained - this is the skills you have learned" as something that you can show to employers. I think that we missed a little bit of guidance but yeah.	Being attracted by interesting modules Seeing practical sounding modules Recalling specifics Having workshops Not getting meaningful feedback Not having a recap session Needing to be told about skills learned Needing something concrete for CV Missing guidance
M: So, the practical skills sessions weren't practical.	Having unpractical practical sessions

J: they were a little bit useless to be honest. They were really simplistic, so I really doubt that at the management level those duties will be that simplistic. There is just no way. I mean we were at that course but after doing those modules that I am prepared for this level of work.

Finding session useless
Finding sessions too simplistic
Finding sessions too simplistic
Finding course a waste of time
Trying to prep for a high level

M: Ah ok... therefore going into work which is the next thing that you are going to be doing, do you feel unprepared?

J: For the management level yes because I really do not know what to expect. I'm just not sure what to expect from the environment, from the people I will be working with, I kind of expect who I will be working with but in terms of duties that I might be involved with... not really.

Feeling unprepared for a role
Not knowing what to expect
Trying to envisage an environment
Having many unknowns
Not knowing duties

M: OK, then the kind of assumption there is that when you leave your master's you should be able to know what to expect from your work environment.

Presuming that masters would give more

J: I was hoping to be kind of prepared and you know when I first looked at the programme online and it kind of advertised itself as there will kind of be practical workshops but there was only one module in the first semester with limited exercises so it's just kind of...

Hoping to be prepared
Setting expectations
Being misled by marketing
Being disappointed
Not getting enough

M: And do you think that other people felt the same or was it just you?

J: Erm... I think that others would feel the same and yeah. We just didn't receive much feedback from it and the exercises actually were not that advanced.

Not receiving enough feedback
Finding exercises too simplistic

M: Ok and was there a conversation between your peers about this not being what you expected or grumbling?

J: Yeah... well basically each workshop lasted for two hours and the first hour the lecturer kind of exposed us to the whole topic... told us what we will be doing the workshop and then explained the exercises... and when we were doing exercises in groups she was sitting and waiting for us to finish and when we had finished we didn't feedback.

Experiencing grumbling
Being disappointed in academic staff
Being given an overview

Feeling staff could do more
Needing more input from staff

M: And did you expect her to come around and see what was happening and to give you some advice?

J: Yeah, some advice that would be good and also criticise the work that we are doing as we are doing it for the first time, so there is no way that that is perfect. Yeah and the whole kind of what we will be experiencing as managers that would be great and that would be useful

Expecting much more good advice
Doing something for the first time
Needing correction
Needing guidance from more experienced professionals

M: OK so it's kind of almost like there is contact but it's not connecting right because they are not guiding you enough or coaching you?

Receiving contact
Misconnecting
Coaching

J: In terms of practical methods again

Misconnecting on practical levels

M: Ok so we are back to practical

J: So theoretically we had good lecturers and they guided us in the right direction but not in a practical way, so for example we were introduced to models that we should follow... but of course I can memorise it but that won't make me a manager.

Hitting the mark theoretically
Being guided theoretically
Being introduced to models
Memorising models
Not getting enough to "manage"

M: yeah for sure. You can't just pull out some theory.

J: yeah so, I think that that was the only practical thing and sometime when you are talking about strategy, and they would give us some examples like when you create a strategy you need to bear in mind this this and this... ok so I can memorise this but when I am doing it.... It's a different story.

Needing practical application
Getting examples
Getting examples
Knowing that it can be memorised
Not knowing how to apply theory

M: So, then you feel like the theoretical part of it was...

J: So, I feel like I am prepared in terms of the knowledge but the practical preparation. No. I still need to work my way up from lower positions. But then I know that I have the knowledge and that is a plus.

Being 'knowledgeed' up well
Not being prepared practically
Having to start from the bottom
Getting knowledge a plus

M: OK for sure. I'm not sure if we got to the bottom of where the expectations came from? Did you look at marketing? You looked at the programme, I guess you are a European student so then you didn't have an agent...

J: Well I've lived in Cambridge for a very long time. Well I came to England when I was 14 so I did my A-levels and UG here in England.

Living in UK extensively
Doing UG in England

M: Where did you do your first degree?

J: Anglia Ruskin university.

M: And was it is business management stuff?

J: It was in psychology.

M: Oh, I think that I remember you tell me about this before.

J: Yes!

M: ok, so how was that transition from one to the other. Have you just recently finished the UG or did you have a space for working?

Transitioning into PG

J: I had like a year gap for working and deciding what I wanted to do with my degree. So, after finishing psychology I realised that I can't really easily go into therapies and stuff because I think that I would have to do a PhD and I didn't really want to go into it that much. I liked psychology but I didn't think it was useful for any kind of work. So, then I tried to find any kind of work... the first job that I found was in York and that was in support working and I thought that that was to do with psychology and it was but not as much as I was hoping for and so... I think that that was a good experience because I worked with a variety of people, but I was still looking for something else and then I saw the advert for the CIPD level 3 which was the HR qualification, but the lowest level and it sounded really interesting because it sounded like psychology connected to business... Like being exposed to interpersonal relationships and being exposed to relationships all the time. So, it sounded interesting so that was why I gave it a go and I did its part time and once I... I almost finished it and decided to stay on for the master's and I was kind of thinking... Hey ok why not...

Getting work experience
Reflecting on UG
being aware of self
Considering future
Re-evaluating UG
Not seeing UG as useful
Looking for work
Finding a job locally
Speculating
Not getting as much as hoped
Having a good experience
Experiencing other people
Seeing an advert
Getting a recognised qualification
Being attracted by something
Connecting UG to PG
Getting exposed to people
Being intrigued
Giving it a go
Staying on for more

M: Ok, so it was kind of organic?

J: Yeah, it's kind of found its way.

Finding way organically

M: I think that that's what happens in my life as well, it just kind of works out. [both laugh]. Therefore, transitioning from the UG to the PG how do you think that went. For a lot of international students, the transition from one to the other the transition can be a little bit problematic. But you did you UG here.

Seeing patterns in life
Transitioning naturally

J: I did... to be honest with the grades that I got in first degree I wasn't expecting to get into York. but because I had some work experience in psychology and working with people and that's a big part of HR and because I did the first level of HR qualification, I think that that pushed me forward and I think that's how I got into my Master's degree here.

Reflecting on grades
Not expecting to be accepted
Having experience
Getting lower qualifications
Pushing self on
Getting onto the programme

M: ok so that is entry into it but how about you in terms of your academic ability moving from UG to Master's. So, like the difference from writing an essay... these kind of things.

J: I think at master's level I had more motivation to actually focus on it and... difficulty of the essays... erm... They were more difficult but I also kind of could find out from the lecturers what they were expecting in a way.

Being motivated
Finding difficulty with writing
Struggling to understand tasks
Grappling with expectations

M: How did you do that?

J: They had handbooks they had assessment briefs, which outlined the expectations of the assessment.... So, I think that I was trying to work towards that.... And that helped a lot.

Referring to handbooks
Getting expectations from handbooks
Accessing handbooks aligned expectations

M: So, you took that action and went and found those things?

Taking action

J: Yeah but they were also provided and we were advised to read them

Being advised to look at handbooks

M: Ok so it sounds like it was actually fairly smooth that academic adjustment from one to the other and you felt like you knew what the level you should have been writing at how to get to that level.

Adjusting smoothly
Knowing level

J: yeah and especially in the first semester we had the ability to actually send the first draft of the essays which kind of helped because if there was a major problem with my essay I kind of found it out straight away, so I was able to take the action to solve it.

Knowing expectations
Valuing formative essay task
Ironing out problems
Finding out problems before summative
Taking action early

M: And was that the formative essay or was that like an official...

J: Oh no it was the formative essay. I think that it was the first one and I kind of got the advice from you as well.

Getting advice from more than one source

M: So, the formative essay was kind of helpful for working out where you were?

Formative work vital to success

J: and that was a big difference because in my first degree I didn't really... I wasn't really encouraged as a student to read those assessment briefs.... Maybe they were available but I wasn't exposed to them along the way and wasn't directed to them. So, the guidelines in terms of the relationship between students and lecturers was much better here than AR, so that helped a lot.

Formative making a big difference
Needing to be encouraged by staff
Needing to be directed to support sources
Being made aware of vital documents
Needing to be directed to meta-info
Seeing the relationship with academics
Seeing relationship as important

M: Ok, so then therefore, when your first results came in... and that would have been in Feb? Did you get what you expected or were you shocked in any way.

J: I think that that was what I expected, they were quite ok.

Getting expected results due to formative

M: and do you think that that was to do with having the formative assessment?

J: in a way yeah, I'm not sure how much as I got help from you as well and that helped a lot and that helped me to change a lot!

Getting academic support

M: ok, so those formative structures and if I was part of that formative structure, that helped to set expectations for the grades?

Formative structures setting expectations

J: yeah but then again there was this whole programme when you taught us through the whole first semester, so we had that kind of help that we needed whereas on my previous degree we didn't have that.

Having other uncertainties
Getting academic support at the start
Getting help that was needed
Seeing academic support as vital

M: ok so this one had more support structures in place to help take you through the process.

Having support structures

J: Yeah and people kept saying that those classes were for international students, but I don't think so. I wrote essays in my previous degree and that was in England but the classes still helped that was great. Especially with critical evaluation and the things that you write, you need it.

Seeing academic support as universal need
Appreciating academic support
Needing help with critical evaluation

M: How was the relationship then with UK students.
Because what's the difference from my point of view.

J: Erm... I still think I've got more friends from different countries for example Selia or Emilie, I dunno, I got on with them better than with English students, I'm not sure why to be honest, maybe it's an understanding of different cultures or that you don't know English when you first land to this environment.

Not forming relationships with home Ss
Making international friends
Not knowing why
Cultural understandings
Excusing home students with language

M: But it's not the case now with your Master's.

J: No, it's not but I still think that it's... I'm really not sure because Sofia has lived here for years and then she went back to Greece and then she came back.

Grappling to understand Home – int dynamic

M: and actually, I thought Eli was British and then she told me that she was Norwegian, and I thought... Ah right ok...

Being culturally close

J: Well she did English when she was an UG.

M: Well first of all I didn't really realise. And I don't think that I really realised with you either but definitely with Eli I thought that's really nice that a British student has come along... Yes... success.... Then I found out that she was Norwegian

J: Well there were some people that I can talk to for ages and I feel ok with it but there are a lot of people who I don't feel as English as they do. And of course, they are English, and I am not. It just feels different. I don't really know how to describe it. It's a weird feeling, even though I'm European.

Having a connection with people
Feeling ok with folk
Dealing with the English
Not being English
Feeling weird about home students

M: And do you feel that you have ownership over the space that you were in... like the physical space. As a student who is an international student but has lived in the UK for a long time and is highly proficient.

Being proficient in English

J: I didn't feel like a visitor. No, I don't feel like a visitor any more. It's like my second home now. I've lived here almost half of my life.

Not feeling like a visitor
Feeling at home

M: Ok, in the university, did you feel like you were part of a community or...

Feeling part of a community
Being from different countries

J: Yeah but I still think that the majority of master's programme, most of us were from different countries and some of us were from different countries but knew English so we created a group. And there were English people who kind of hung out with us but they also had that little group...

Being foreign
Creating an international group
Seeing a native group

M: Of being English together?

Being English together

J: Yeah

M: And were they working outside of their Master's

Working outside of studies

J: I think so (?)

M: Were they from York?

Having local peers

J: Some of them yeah. Most of them were local.

M: Did they have their lives already sorted out?

Being close to some locals
Being an outside circle
Talking with the locals
Developing a close friendship
Seeing other friendships develop
Inferring that friendships took place
Seeing each other outside of class

J: Maybe, I mean we were close to a lot of them but not as close as they were to each other. It's like two little groups. They could talk with each other. We saw each other in classes. For examples, me and Sofia... we developed a friendship and I know that they developed a friendship between each other so they saw each other outside of classes and we saw each other outside of classes so....

M: So, you were both doing the same things but on slightly different trajectories or on parallels?

Being on parallel trajectories

Being classmates but not friends

J: Yeah, we did ok as classmates but not as friends.

M: And why do you think that was? It just didn't happen?

Not clicking
Being able to talk about anything

J: It just didn't click. You know sometimes when you talk to someone you can talk about anything but...

M: Because it's a fairly common experience. You know. That happens to most international students.

Being among a huge Chinese cohort

J: And of course, the majority of them were Chinese students.

M: of course, the elephant in the room that we haven't talked about is the Chinese.

J: And they had almost like a one group, but they weren't really confident about talking to us. I think one or two Chinese girls spoke to me fairly often but apart from that no.

Seeing a single group of Chinese
Seeing them as under confident
Having some smaller connections

M: How did you feel about that because they were such a big part of the programme.

J: I felt like I was in China actually when I arrived on induction day. Like... "is this the right building?" because there were so many of them. Like I felt ok with it, like I didn't really have a problem... erm... it was quite interesting to see because I didn't know that there would be kind of I dunno... the quiet in classes, but I know that it is a cultural thing as well, they don't really want to go for it because it is rude. But in terms of talking to other classmates there was a language barrier.

Being in China at first
Being confused
Being fine with it

Being interested in the dynamic
Noticing the silence in class
Noticing reticence
Understanding cultural differences
Experiencing a huge language barrier

M: Do you think that the language barrier was created by them? Were they a closed group?

J: Yeah. And they preferred to use Chinese like during the classes even.

Noticing a preference for Chinese
Being a closed group

M: So how did that work? Or did it work at all in terms of seminars and workshops that you were supposed to be doing?

Getting to grips with class dynamic

J: I think that there was a pressure from lecturers to ask them questions, so yeah... they felt the pressure to actually answer... and put their perspectives and views forward. That was the only way it worked, at least for the first half of the year.

Seeing the knock-on effect to lecturers
Seeing staff under pressure
Seeing Chinese under pressure to answer
Seeing pressure as the only solution for Chinese learners

M: And did it change as the year went on.

J: A little bit. Like I think that they were more confident as it went on. They have adjusted a little bit to the culture.

Seeing a little bit of change
Believing Chinese have adjusted fractionally

M: And had you adjusted to them by then?

J: Like I said all the time I had contact with them. I didn't really have a problem to go up to them and speak to them, but I didn't come up to them then they wouldn't come up to me. But of course, when I was the course rep they came up to me to talk about something.

Having contact with the Chinese group
Not having a problem engaging
Needing to make the first move
Being the course rep made a difference
Having a reason to interact

M: Because I witnessed it myself.

J: Because in your class there was this group...

M: then there was the three of you on that side.... It's quite amusing to look at it but I don't think that it was intentional. I think that they just clustered together.

Seeing clear groups forming

J: I'm just wondering if they... if it was a shame over the language barrier or it was something else. Because I remember when I first came to England I was ashamed of talking because of my accent. It just felt like I wasn't tolerated when I talked to others. "What if I say something and they don't understand me because of my accent" So I think that it could be something similar in this case.

Speculating about behaviour
Trying to understand behaviour
Relating behaviour to own narrative
Being ashamed of accent
Feeling othered
Worrying about misunderstanding
Pinning behaviour to others

M: so, has your accent changed a lot since you arrived here.

J: a little bit but I still can't get rid of my...

Changing accent to fit in

M: Because you've got quite an English accent as far as I can here.

J: I feel like I still have a Polish accent.

Feel sheepish about accent

M: let's talk about that kind of identity then... Do you feel like your identity has changed since you have gone through the programme because higher education should be transformational?

J: Yes

Feeling changed

M: Ok could you talk about that?

J: I mean for a start my communication skills have improved. My presentation skills have improved. I used to be so stressed when I stood in front of people to talk but now it is a little bit different. I know that I have gained knowledge, but I am also open to other perspectives more and open to build my own perspective more than I used to be. So, yeah, I could probably find something else...

Feel improved in terms of communication
Improving presentations skills
Feeling more confident
Feeling changed
Being more open to other perspectives
Open to build own perspectives

M: Ok so there has been some shift in how you think about yourself

Seeing a shift in self

J: Yes. And I also think that I am now ready to enter the workplace, whereas with the first degree I felt that I wouldn't be able to find a job. So, I think in terms of the feeling about being successful, I feel that it raised my confidence a bit because this qualification at this level, I don't think that I'll be stuck at administration level and have got better chances of moving forward in the future.

Feeling ready as a person
Seeing failing of UG
Not finding a job
Predicting unsuccess
Having raised confidence
Knowing that success will come
Having better chances

M: Does that contradict what you said earlier about...

J: Hmm no about knowledge I think that I feel more secure and that I'll find a job. Not straight away but with time in this perspective.

Being more knowledgeable
Knowing a job will come

M: Is there anything about you that you would be worried about that has changed? Going back to family members or going back to friends... Have you become more intellectual?

Going back to family after change

J: Yeah. There is this thing that crossed my mind well it crosses my mind a lot lately. It's a little bit different when I speak to my family. Well they were raised in a different culture and that's one thing but the other thing is that none of them have finished university. Well my brother has and it's a little bit different when I speak to my mum or my other brother, so sometimes it can be a little bit annoying because I don't... It sounds really harsh, but it just feels weird when I talk to them and it didn't use to. In terms of logic and stuff, you just used to find the logic in what they are saying now I just can't find the logic at all.

Considering **intellectualisation**
Feeling difference
Seeing how family was raised
Seeing cultural perspectives
Having more knowledge and qualifictrns
Moving away intellectually
Feeling annoyed by gap
Feeling guilty for new feelings
Feeling different about family
Trying to find the logic
Not being able to see their standpoint

M: Or maybe there was never any logic? Possibly, like I am the only person in my family to ever go to university and I used to be really quite close to my cousins but now... I just... I'm so far from them... Like intellectually and it makes conversation hard sometimes.

Moving away from family logic

Creating an intellectual gap

J: Yeah it does and it's quite sad really. It's your family and you want to be close to them but then again when you just get tired all the time.

Feeling sad about intellectual gap
Wanting to be close and familiar
Getting tired of their BS

M: sometimes I find some of the things that they talk about to be trivial.

Feeling family chat is trivial

J: yeah, stating the obvious

Being annoyed at obvious statements

M: or completely ungrounded or like not based in facts. And I don't want to intellectualise everything but... what the hell are you talking about?!

Having ungrounded opinions
Intellectualising things

J: Yeah... it makes things harder in that way

Making communication harder

M: do you think that you have an academic community to be part of now?

J: In terms of closer relationships...?

M: More on an intellectual level that has come from your programme.

J: I feel that maybe it's my partner's parent. Well I used to find it hard to talk to them because they are qualified but now it became easier. I became closer to them but yeah there is that. But there are also friends that have finished uni but I am hoping to get closer to them when I head back south.

Connecting intellectually with some

M: how about in the university itself now. Do you feel like you are part of an academic community?

J: What do you mean as an academic community?

M: so... a community is people who are supporting each other and have a common purpose intellectually

J: Not with everyone I would say. So that would be the programme leader. I'm close with Tina and she always encourages you and I could talk with her a lot as well. And, apart from that I wouldn't really say so.... Selia, I guess but I'm not sure if I could use her as an example of community.

Not feeling like part of a community
Being close with an academic
Being encouraged
Being able to talk

M: I'm just speculating but maybe you have come on a similar journey and you don't realise it but you are. So that is two people.

Being on a similar journey

J: Two of them maybe three... another person on the programme

Speculating about a small academic com

M: what is it about Tina. So, you said that she is open...

J: I mean that you can talk to her about anything whether it is a personal problem or if it's an academic problem or it's an academic idea... she's open to conversation. And she also keeps in touch so it's not just you as a student trying

Being able to talk
Knowing she will listen
Being open
Keeping in touch
Reaching out

to get in touch with someone but it's also someone reaching out to you.	Getting in touch Reaching out to you
M: So, she also makes the effort to get in touch with you?	Making an effort
J: yeah	
M: and has she taught you in class or has it only been a supervisor?	
J: She's not my supervisor	
M: Oh, she's not! Oh, that's right... that's the other one that is away.	
J: She's the programme leader. But maybe the relationship kind of developed because I was the course rep and we had a lot of meetings together.	Developing a relationship Having a lot of meetings
M: Do other people have similar... Sofia has got...	
J: Tina is her supervisor, so that's another story and I'm not sure about Eli. Yeah, I'm closer to Tina than I am to my own supervisor	Being close
M: Well it's great that you have that positive relationship that you can turn to. Do you think that on the programme is there a culture of sharing... like sharing ideas and sharing problems...? Or is it more...	Having a positive relationship Having someone to turn to
J: You mean amongst students or...	
M: yeah...	
J: yes and no. If you are closer to someone or if you were closer to someone you are more likely to reach out to them and ask if there is a problem or ask for advice. However, if you were not close on the programme I don't think that you would. There is a Facebook group, and I know that people looked for participants for example in the group and there are some responses but...	Mixed culture of sharing Reaching out to a closer person Asking for advice Not being close Having a Facebook group Seeing people looking for participants Seeing some help unfold
M: But actually, maybe not from the sounds of it? If you imagine that the culture of the university is here (demonstrates with hand) do you feel that you are quite far away from it or do you feel that you are quite close to it. Do you feel like you have travelled a distance?	Most being self-interested

J: I feel that I am closer to the whole university culture than I used to be at the beginning. I just... I dunno... maybe that's because I'm closer to Tina again because she informs us as the course reps about what's going on and what should be done... what the meetings are for and what are they.

Being close to the university culture
Being closer than before
Having travelled a culture distance
Taking a rep position
Being an interactive position

M: Do you feel a sense of belonging at the university?

J: I think I feel like I'm belonging to it. But because I was here for only what 12 months then it's... I think that I would need another year or so to kind of adjust to the whole idea of being here.

Having a sense of belonging
Having a 12 month stay
Needing another year to adjust fully

M: Ok, that's really interesting because from speaking to you that I kind of got the impression that you didn't have that much adjusting to do...

J: well not really, it's just that the idea of being part of the university. I think that I am part of it... But there is still that thing that... I dunno that makes me think... like did I work enough before the university. Because I'm from Anglia Ruskin university originally, I didn't really think I really didn't think that I would be able to get into York because of the reputation of the university. So, it still feels a little bit surreal.

Being part of something
Being part of it
Not being completely part of it
Getting used to a community
Grappling with concept
Not expecting to get into uni
Feeling membership surreal

M: I hadn't really thought about it like that but I get you

J: But you know, when there was like a really really big issue, like in that financial exam, erm... I went all the way from meeting Tina then the postgraduate director... Because we weren't informed that this exam wasn't compensated basically if someone achieves more than 40 but less than 50, like me and some other students, we weren't able to go forward and balance the grades out with the others like we would do with other modules.

Having critical moments
Going all the way
Challenging authority
Seeing wrongs

Challenging system

M: So, you absolutely had to pass it.

J: Yeah, so that's why I am doing it. And that was a CIPD accreditation and someone from CIPD was like they don't know why financial management is part of our programme. So, I am trying to get them to change their policy and split the accreditation.

Trying to enact change in programme

M: and were they responsive to you when you had gone to them.

J: Not at first. I saw Tina and I saw my supervisor, who is the acting postgraduate director, and they said that they don't really know what happened but they can't really do much about it. But I got really annoyed about it because it was like a third that failed... 13 people... it's not normal. But there was another argument that they presented that another course did the same exam and they only had 15% of people failing and that is below the 20% and they don't really know why it was 30% in our class... Yeah... but I still went forward and they took it to the top and they are kind of at the level of deciding if not this year then next year.

Meeting resistance in department
Meeting a brick wall
Getting annoyed
Fighting a cause
Seeing something as wrong
Presenting an argument
Meeting resistance
Seeing injustice
Taking it to the top
Making change happen

M: Why did you take it to that level?

J: I was the course rep and I got complaints and I got really upset about it. I prepared myself for that exam and I felt prepared when I went into it... so yeah

Having responsibility
Being prepared
Being surprised

M: And did you feel empowered to do that, did you feel no choice but to do it...

J: No actually I felt quite motivated to do it and they listened eventually because I said that I would write a complaint to someone and they said they would take it forward. But it's just... it kind of increased the feeling of being part of a university in a way.

Feeling motivated to challenge
Making them listen
Taking complaint forward
Being part of the system

M: Do you think that those kind of crises brought you together with other people.

Pulling together in crisis

J: A little bit.

M: It's something that I've noticed from a lot of people that they get really pissed off about something, or they get really stressed and it helps them build relationships with other people.

Getting close

J: Yeah, a little bit but I also think that it works a little bit the other way. Because there were people in the first semester we hung out with English students and in fact Eli and we hung out with Eli and only me and Sofia failed and... after that happened it kind of felt that we were both separated from the pack and it was a little bit weird. And by that point

Coming together
Having friendship groups
Failing
Feeling ostracized
Dividing up

I did make stronger friendships with students from the Chinese group so I think that that was a critical point.

Making stronger friendships
Seeing Chinese friendships as important

M: That's really fascinating that that crisis moment was really relationship defining. Isn't it odd.

Crisis moment defining friendships

J: yeah it is

M: and did you ever manage to come back together again or was it always go like that...?

Not finding a way back from crisis

J: no, it went the other way. It was almost like a critic point of deciding who's better and who's not. Yeah...

Experiencing a critical point
Deciding who is better and not

M: And do you think that that was only your interpretation... sorry stupid question...

Sharing misgivings about being othered
Happening quickly
Evolving into a separate trajectory
Migrating by level/strength

J: No, we (me and Selia) kind of spoke about it as we noticed it. It was like a week that kind of separated us on separate path. I dunno if it came from the evolution like those who are weaker go together and those who are stronger.... It's interesting

M: It must be quite hard when it is actually happening because you've got your own ego and pride.

Dealing with othering

J: Yeah but I knew that from the beginning that it just didn't click. It was weird. I kept thinking about it because we were in the same boat and we still are... so we should be supportive of each other.... But I don't think it was us... I dunno... it was one of our group that decided to go another way. There was one other person that kind of got stuck with us... It was almost like two groups... those who failed and those who didn't.

Knowing from the beginning
Mulling over separation
Being in the same boat
Trying to support each other
Seeing a friend move on
Being the default group
Being segregated
Being in the failing group

M: So, you said at the very beginning that you were glad that you done it.

J: yeah

M: Now after unpicking tonnes of it

Being glad to have done it

J: I am still glad. I had a good year and I learnt a lot and Sofia is a good friend of mine now and it will stay like that.

Remaining glad of the experience
Making a friend for life

Emilie

E: I'm studying for a master's degree in HRM

M: What kind of modules did you have on it?

E: IT started out with a broad module with an introduction to HR and we also had a practical course and a finance course in the first term and in the second term you could choose like three options, so I chose learning and development and reward and performance management.

Starting out broad

M: And what about this practical course what was it like?

E: Well we were mainly working in groups and we mainly had like a business case that we worked on and the different aspects of HR and related to that

Working in groups
Having a business case
Exploring aspects

M: and was the fact that it was practical important in what you wanted to get out of your degree.

E: Yes! And I think that that was one of the main reasons that I chose this particular course because you can always get knowledge from reading but when you get into the workplace, the practical things are what you really need, so that was really important.

Practical stuff being important
Choosing a course
Getting knowledge from reading
Viewing practical things as vital
Certain factors being important

M: and you've worked before, haven't you? Could you tell me a little bit about that?

Having work experience

E: Yeah, I have worked for about 10 years in project management in a company called Lionbridge, which is a translation company, so very international and we were working for mainly big international clients within IT, especially mobile phones and our biggest clients were Microsoft, Apple... Nokia... yeah.

Having significant experience

M: And how long were you there for?

E: Nearly 9 years. Yeah! It was an American company and they decided to close down the Norwegian branch, so that's why I am here because I lost my job and needed to do something different.

Working
Working for an international comp
Having big clients

Working for an American company
Being made redundant

M: How does it feel then to go from something which I very practical, because it's working, to something which must be mostly theoretical?

Moving from practical to theoretical

E: I must admit that it was a big change for me. Just... going back to university at the ages of 37 and leaving all my friends and family behind and going abroad for a year, it was very different.

Having a big change
Going back to uni when mature
Leaving family and friends behind
Finding things unfamiliar

M: and how about in terms of knowledge and being someone who worked somewhere and having the knowledge practical knowledge of doing something in real life and then having to transition into getting to grips with theory?

Transitioning

E: Yeah well, I think that the practical knowledge helped me enormously... The knowledge that I had. I found that a lot of the knowledge was transferable to HR. I thought that I Was completely changing my career, but I found that many of the things can be really useful.

Being helped by practical background
Finding background enormous help
Being able to transfer knowledge
Completely changing career
Finding experience useful

M: Oh, that is really interesting because I spoke to someone the other day and she was in a different subject, but she found that practice was a barrier to her in terms of understanding theory.

E: Right, and maybe that is one way of looking at it

M: And is that experience similar for you? It sounds like the opposite

E: I think for me it is the opposite as I could draw parallels, especially being in a field like HR which is about working and having been in working life I think that that really helped me because I know what it is like to be an employee and I have seen some good examples and some bad examples of HR and I could relate to that.

Experience not being a barrier to theory
Finding parallels
Having experience
Referring to good practice
Seeing good examples in practice
Seeing bad examples in practice

M: So just to confirm, it this case practice actually helped you to access theory.

Practice helping theory

E: Yeah, I think so yeah

Practice making route to theory

M: And how about the practical course how did they manage to fit a practical course into a theoretical programme?

E: Well it started out with some theory for example theory about negotiations and then we had some group tasks to do some negotiations to try it out in practice.

Starting with theory
Having group tasks
Negotiating

M: And do you think that it was successful?

E: Mm... [hesitates] I think that it could have been better because well for me it all depends on who you work in a group with for example there were one woman in my group and she had at least 10 years' experience in HR and of course I could learn a lot from working in her group and then of course a lot of the students had never been working before and couldn't really learn that much from them so it all depends on the level that the group is at?

M: Do you think that they learnt from you?

E: It's difficult to say... you should ask them that! I tried to contribute.

M: Perhaps in that case they should have found out who has experience and put them together maybe.

E: Yeah that would have been a good idea and I also found that there were very few answers. I think that we were 6 groups and we were doing some strategic work for this company and of course every group found different solutions and the teachers said that all the solutions were very good... you know so it is difficult to know what is the solution and it would be good for me to know from an expert... What is the best solution and tell me "well if it was me I think I would have chosen this option, but you could have done this" ...

M: Ok yeah so that could have been followed up a bit more or picked apart.

E: Yeah, give us some good examples of how it could be done. Rather than just leaving it from the student to ponder.

M: Yeah... and I guess it's one of the things about studying at university that you don't really get answers to things. I think that that is frustrating.

E: Yeah, I find that frustrating

M: I think that that is a common frustration with students. And what about this financial one... is that the one with the exam [E: Yeah] [E: laughs]. I think I remember you guys talking about it ages ago. Was that as awful as it sounded?

Seeing how things could be better
Group work member vital
Seeing specific members as important
Wanting to draw from experienced others
Getting a lot from experienced colleagues
Not getting much from inexperienced
Seeing level as vital

Trying to contribute

Putting experienced people together

Not getting answers
Doing strategic work
Finding different answers
Needing something concrete
Grappling with uncertainties
Feeling like certainty would help
Wanting to hear from the expert
Getting a best solution
Getting expert perspective

Getting follow up feedback

Needing good examples
Being left to ponder

Not getting answers

Being frustrated

Finding common frustrations

E: Yeah it was [laughs] and none of us did very well on that. I'm just happy that I passed that one.

Doing badly collectively
Being glad to pass

M: Well, we'll not talk about that then. I'm interested in how much you feel like you understand the system as in the academic system and what the expectations of you are.

E: Yeah, I think I understand that quite well because I have some studied before and in the UK before, so I have already a Master's degree. That was in English, specialising in translation, so yeah, I had a pretty good idea of what was expected... and of course it was a very long time ago, it was about 12 years ago that I finished.

Understanding the system well
Having experience of UK academics
Having a Master's already
Having a good idea
Having done it before
Finishing a while ago

M: So, you feel like that experience helped you to understand what you were doing here?

Being helped along by experience
Understanding system

E: Yeah, I think so, I think that studying is like an art really and you need to learn, you need to do it and it comes with practice I think

Seeing study as an art
Needing to learn how to learn
Practicing learning

M: How about culturally as an international student, could you talk about that at all?

E: any differences...? yeah, it's difficult to say I think. It's quite a long time since I was a student in Norway but there's not so much interaction I think between the lecturer and the students. They were probably around 100 students in each module so big lecture theatres so mostly you would just sit and listen to that and ... you had some seminar groups as well who were led by older students.

Reflecting on home context
Getting more interaction
Having more intimate classes

M: The sitting listening thing, is that an UG thing or is that a Norwegian thing?

Experiencing big lectures before
Sitting and listening

E: It's probably a Norwegian thing [M: really?] yeah, I think so, but I think it is changing.

M: So how was it different here from that?

E: I think the students are asked much more questions in class so there is much more pressure to be prepared because you know that you are going to be asked. Yeah... so [laughs]. SO it's a bit more interactive even in a lecture because you are in smaller groups.

Being asked more questions
Having pressure to prepare
Knowing that you will be asked
Having interactive lectures a plus
Having smaller groups

M: And how did the seminars go? Because we talked a bit about the seminars... was there interaction?

E: Yeah that was very much about group work.

Doing group work

M: And successful?

E: Yeah, I think so and I learned a lot from that

Learning a lot from seminars

M: and there was also a lot of... The international cohort was weighted in a certain way. Most of the students were from China. How was the interaction with them as I remember when you guys came into class, you lot used to sit on one side and they sat on another side?

Learning with a lot of Chinese

E: Sadly, they didn't really try that much to contact us I feel so they kept to themselves. Speaking Chinese among themselves and sitting together there and being in the group together it was difficult.

Finding Chinese distant
Keeping to themselves
Speaking Chinese together
Finding it tough

M: I always felt like it wasn't intentional but it just kind of happened?

E: Yeah, I think that they didn't really mean to.

Not being international

M: How did that make you feel in class?

E: Well... I must say I wasn't prepared for it I had no idea I thought it would be 90% British students and only a few internationals so it was a bit of a culture shock and there were times when I felt like "I've come to study in the UK but I may have well have gone to China" but it doesn't really matter that much to me who else is in the class and you get used to that and they are very sweet and friendly people and I think that it is getting used to that... it was also very difficult to communicate with them because my English isn't that good and their English isn't that good either [M: your English is pretty good] well at least I struggled to understand them and I felt stupid when I couldn't understand what they were saying, so....

Not being prepared for so many
Expecting all British students
Having culture shock
Feeling confused
Feeling surprised
Not feeling it mattered
Learning they are nice people
Getting used to dynamic
Finding communication difficult
Having a language barrier
Struggling
Feeling stupid with
miscommunication
Not catching what they said

M: So, hang on... someone with your level of proficiency in English which is pretty good felt stupid when you couldn't understand them?

Blaming self unnecessarily

E: well we didn't understand each other and it's difficult to have a conversation with someone and in class it is difficult

Not always connecting
Misunderstanding

to have group work and have the time to try and explain to them what the task was that we were going to do, so it was difficult. It was also very interesting because China is so different and they have so much to tell.

Having to explain the concept
Having to explain the task
Seeing it as interesting
Knowing they had a lot to share

M: And I guess that it is an insight into that hugely different culture, which is just fundamentally different from our Northern European culture

Experiencing fundamentally different culture

E: Yeah, it's fascinating

Being fascinated

M: Do you think that there were any particular times that you were... because you said that you got a bit of culture shock and when you saw that... was there anything else where there was a gap in expectations?

E: No not really. It's pretty much what I expected.

Not experiencing a gap in expectations

M: Therefore, do you think that your transition into it was quite smooth?

Transitioning smoothly

E: Yeah, I think I knew more or less what I was going to do.

M: and we can put that down to what you had done before?

E: Yeah

Having done it before

M: because I'm quite interested in how international students adjust to a new environment and how they adjust from UG to PG but for you that second adjustment is fine and the second one doesn't seem to be a problem either

International student adjustment

E: No... I could have just stayed in Norway if that is what I wanted but I wanted a change. And the situation wasn't that good and I have lost my job and it was very important from me to make something positive out of that and I thought that a year abroad would do me good. There is so much... I love being in England. It's such a great place to be there is so much to experience and to see and it's just an adventure being here so it's a bit different from home and that's ok as that's what I wanted.

Consciously choosing to leave home
Wanting change
Having lost job
Making a positive move
Enjoying year abroad

M: a change but not a drastic one!?

Experiencing a lot
Adventuring
Having the desired experience

E: Haha... yeah not a drastic one.

Taking a measured step

M: In that case then do you feel any different coming to the end of it? Like, studying at PG level should be theoretically transformational and you should feel somewhat changed when you come out the other end of it. Do you feel like that has happened?

E: I've certainly learned a lot this year and I can feel it getting easier as I heard someone say that the second term is the hardest one and yeah I can kind of agree with that but for me it was easier than the first term as when I came here I had no previous knowledge of HR so everything was kind of new to me so it a steep learning curve but I think that they modules that I did in that first term helped me to get a very good foundation for the second term so when they were talking about certain authors or concepts I thought "I know what they are talking about now" so I felt that I had yeah...

M: So, if it was a graph it would go like a line getting easier

E: yeah

M: I wonder then if that is to do with the expectation and knowing because you have done it before. I think that a lot of students struggle with their Master's in the second term because they didn't know what to expect and when your grades come in and you get your grades in February and they get a shock because they didn't get what they thought they were going to get and also term two is hard, so that kind of makes sense that if you understood the system and you transitioned into it quite easily that actually it was the subject knowledge that you had to get and as you got that the subject got much easier.

E: Yeah, I think so yeah. Just acquiring all that knowledge doing all the reading and that. And also, you know I feel like the first assignment that you write is the most difficult one and then as you write a few more you get into it and you get feedback from your previous work and it does get easier.

M: In that case was the formative essay helpful?

E: Very much so I think. Yeah.

M: because that was in term 1 wasn't it?

E: Yeah. That was about a German company looking to

Having learned a lot
Feeling that it got easier
Seeing that maybe others struggled in term two
Finding term 1 hardest
Not having previous HR knowledge
Experiencing a steep learning curve
Feeling benefit of modules
Getting a good foundation
Being at sea at the beginning
Grappling with reading

Finding it easier as time went on

Acquiring knowledge
Getting the reading done
Getting thru the first assignment
Getting used to writing
Getting feedback on writing vital

Finding the formative work vital

expand into china and the UK. It was the hardest one ever [laughs] everything got easier after that.

M: and how did that go in the end?

E: It went really well in the end and I got 69, so I'm really pleased with that.

M: Let's talk about when you had problems. So, for you it was harder at the beginning and then it reduced. And was that the same for going into dissertation stage?

E: Well... yeah in a way as in the beginning I had no idea what I was going to write about and that was a big hurdle and it's quite a big piece of work and in the beginning I found it a very scary and overwhelming and at this point I could see it coming together and I can kind of see it taking form. So, it is... I feel like I am getting there and I can see which direction it is going in and how I can finish it.

M: So, it sounds like you are on course and getting there?

E: yeah but it's still a bit... You know... there's a lot of work left and not so many weeks so it is stressful.

M: And did you have some support going into that. Did they give you some courses on methodology?

E: Yes, we did. Yes. I think that that was very interesting to see different kinds of research and how it should be done. And also, the course we did with you on academic writing was also very helpful at this stage. And then also I did some other courses like in SPSS, so yeah there are resources there to do that which haven't been available at other universities that I have studied at, so that has been good.

M: Where have you studied before?

E: It was Surrey. I was more of a practical course. Not as academic as this one I think

M: Can we go back to identity and you talked about change and whether or not you had changed a lot. We got side-tracked. So, you said that you thought you had learnt a lot how about you as a person or as an academic.

E: I think that people change all the time so I think it is only natural that I should be a little bit changed and I think that I

Getting a formative grade to set expectations

Not knowing at first
Working out research topic a hurdle
Being faced with a big piece of work
Being overwhelmed
Seeing things come together
Feeling progress
Seeing things shape up
Getting to the finish line

Having a lot to do

Getting research support
Seeing different research
Finding academic support beneficial
Getting support at the right point
Having access to other short courses
Having expectations exceeded
Reflecting on past study

Feeling that change happens constantly
Feeling self has changed a bit

have grown in knowledge certainly and academically in confidence and going into the workplace and applying for HR jobs with the knowledge I have got here this year and also personally I mean... Yeah I feel proud of myself what I did Left my home and my family and friends and I moved abroad and I think that many people I know think that that's a brave thing to do and "that's not for me I would never have done that". And I think that facing the unknown challenges you and I think you always grow in that and I think that there is always something positive in doing something like that.

Growing in academic knowledge
Growing in confidence
Having the knowledge going forward
Feeling proud of self
Leaving family and friends
Moving abroad
Being perceived as brave
Doing things other wouldn't
Growing always
Having positive change

M: So, it sounds like the change that they have been is for the better.

Changing for the better

E: Yeah definitely

M: And you feel good going back?

E: I feel sad going back. I wish to stay now. I've definitely had a great year and a real adventure for me just to be here.

Feeling sad going home
Having an adventure

M: And when your friend came to see you, was it the same as it used to be?

E: Yeah, the contact was there immediately.

Feeling the same with friends

M: Because there are times when people go thru a PG experience and they go back to their own context and they've kind of become intellectualised a bit and something has changed a bit, and it's something that I have felt with family members but I don't know

E: Like they are not at the same level?

M: Yeah, it sounds really snobbish but...

E: I can understand what you mean... I think we all get friends where we are and at the same level, so yeah....

M: SO... I guess it depends on your home culture as well. I've only been to Norway once but I think that things are quite level that if you did go away and come back that you could feel anything other than level... I dunno if that makes any sense to you?

E: Mm... yeah I feel always that people are level and just being a human means that you have great value and that we are all equal in that respect, and I don't think that you should be defined by what you do...yeah I think it is something that if you have a degree and a good job but deep down you are only a person like and I wouldn't look down on people but also there are probably the people that I am around and the friends that I have are probably more at my level because it's also where you meet people because most of my friends are people that I met through my studies or my work.. For example, people with less education, it's probably not so often that I meet them. We might not go to the same places in life, we work in different places and our social circles are different... I think it's more people with my own kind of background. It's not intentional. I think that it's just like that. I don't want it to be like that. I don't look down on other people. It's just some people you don't meet so often.

Seeing people as equal
 Sharing values
 Being equal
 Not being defined by what you do
 Seeing a degree as beneficial
 Being a person at the end of the day
 Being a person
 Being a person in society
 Being in a social group
 Describing friends
 Knowing people thru work and study
 Not meeting others so often

Being in a social group
 Not being international
 Not wanting to be a certain way
 Not looking down at others
 Not meeting people often

M: What do you think about jobs going back? So, you said that you said that you acquired a lot of knowledge and you learnt a lot about HR. What kind of job are you going to go back to? Do you feel confident about going back?

E: Well I will need some training in the workplace and I will need some training. So, I'm not in the position to go straight into an HR job as I have never done that before, so I will require some training for the company so ideally. I will get a job where I can train and work together with them...

Understanding the need for training
 Being realistic about jobs
 Being realistic about jobs
 Seeing the need for training
 Having specific work objective

M: Have you scoped out jobs back home that you can maybe apply for?

E: I have started applying for jobs and I have an interview for a job tomorrow over skype. It's at a University in Norway. It sounds quite good because instead of it being and generalist HR role, they need someone who can speak English, so that is great if I can combine the HR role and English as well so, that sounds pretty good, so I just have to take what I can take, I can't be picky. I just need some experience. I think that the first job will be the most difficult one to get as everyone wants someone who is experienced.

Applying for jobs
 Having a job interview
 Feeling positive
 Looking for general roles
 Combing skills
 Feeling positive
 Being self-aware
 Being realistic
 Being realistic
 Seeing experience as key

M: Was that your expectation going into the master's that you would expect to be in that experience coming out?

E; No I didn't expect to come out as an expert. I kind of knew that it would be difficult to get a first job and it would get easier from there as you get experience.	Having realistic expectations Knowing the job market is tough Seeing experience as key
M: And what gave you that expectation?	
E: I dunno... I just... mmm... I think that... I see that I still have a lot to learn.	Having a lot to learn
M: Ok so maybe it is being self-aware?	
E: Yeah, I think so yeah.	Being self-aware
M: like you are not kidding yourself about stuff	Not kidding self / being realistic
E: Yeah, I think that this course has given me a background but there still is a lot that I need to learn. The practical side of HR and how it is actually done.	Getting a background in a subject Seeing need room for improvement Seeing uni as removed for real life
M: So, it seems that you have had a really positive experience when you've been here. Do you think that that is the same in terms of belonging? Could you talk a little bit about that?	Being positive
E: Well I feel that I have got a very warm welcome from everyone and from other students and from lecturers and everyone has just been so friendly and welcoming and I've never had any negative comments about being from another country, I've always been welcomed from people from the UK. People have just taken a positive interest in Norwegian culture and what it is like living there.	Getting a warm welcome Positively experiencing others Receiving a warm welcome Not having negative experiences Being welcomed Being treated well Seeing interest in home culture
M: It's not very often that we meet Norwegians, there used to be a lot of them in Aberdeen due to the oil industry, but you never meet that many really... but then there's not that many of you.	
E: Yeah, it's true.	
M: And maybe people don't notice either.	
E: I've been really impressed by the British students in my class and have come up to me and been like "do you want to be in our group" and I think that that is a really good thing to do to a foreigner. You know they know that my English isn't perfect and so as they want to be with me and be my	Being impressed with British students Being approached by British students Being asked to join a native group Seeing English as imperfect

friend I think that that is a really warm welcome and it made me feel good. They didn't need to do that.

Getting a warm welcome
Going above and beyond

M: So, your experience with the home students has been positive.

Positively perceiving UK students

E: Yeah for sure

M: Do you think that you are part of an academic community. Because the belonging we talked about is more friendships and environment... but how about as a scholar or an academic.

E: It depends on what you mean by that and I don't know if I can really make a contribution to the knowledge... But yeah...

Being unsure of meaning of
academic community
Not seeing that a contribution to
knowledge can be made

M: Why can you not make a contribution to knowledge?

E: Well... I've only written a few assignments and I don't think that anyone will care that much about the what I have written [laughs]. But maybe the dissertation will be different.

Seeing assignments as unimportant
Not thinking they mean much
Seeing the dissertation as more imp

M: Do you feel like there is no way that you can make a contribution, or do you feel like there is no way that someone would want to read it or...

E: Well, it's only a Master's level, it's not like I am doing a PhD...

Not seeing a contribution as possible

M: it's only a level up and it's pretty high!

E: I just don't see that what I am doing is very important to the university. Probably the university is more important to me than the other way around. I get the degree and I don't know what the university gets back from me necessarily. [both laugh]

Not seeing work as important
Seeing uni as more important to
student
Who needs who more?

M: So therefore, do you think that other people in the class, do you make any assumptions that other people know more than you or if you know more than them?

E: Sometimes, you know, it depends on who it is. Some people know more than me and then some people know less than me... so it depends on the person and the module.

Who knows more depends
Seeing class as mixed
Seeing the subject matter as key

M: In those modules was there any particular individuals or tutors that stood out to you as being particularly good, in terms of having a really positive experience?

E: Yeah, I think, you know, some people really impressed me because they seemed really professional in terms of what they did.

M: Can you think of any particular one and any aspects which helped...

E: Yeah there were several that I really liked. First of all, they seemed knowledgeable and they seemed that they knew what they were talking about, so you felt like you learned from the expert.

M: You felt quite confident then that they knew what they were talking about.

E: Also, I think that they were quite creative in the way that they thought. The classes were never boring and they tried to do group exercises and they didn't just sit and listen all the time...

M: So, there was interaction and it was quite dynamic. Anything about their personalities. Friendly?

E: Yeah...

M: So, they were friendly, knowledgeable, creative.... Anything else?

E: It was also the way that they give feedback that you can actually learn something from. Like constructive feedback.

M: Just to sum up then, you feel like it is a positive experience, and you feel that you have changed for the better and have enjoyed the dynamic classes and there have been a lot of dynamic teachers... perhaps some of it could have been a bit more practical?

E: I think so yeah. It would have been even better and one thing that I missed is that going into work I'm pretty sure that will have to use some HR software and it would have been really good to put on my CV that I had some experience with that.

Being impressed by some
Seeing some as professional

Having several positive
Feeling positive about clever folk
Drawing from clever folk
Learning from expert

Viewing creativity positively
Not being bored in class
Not just sitting there
Having an active teacher

Having dynamic interaction
Having a friendly teacher

Friendly
Knowledgeable
Creative

Getting meaningful feedback
Learning from feedback
Getting constructive feedback

Having a positive experience
Enjoying a dynamic class
Having dynamic teaching staff

Wanting more practical skills
Need practical stuff for work
Wanting to experience of software
Wanting things for CV

M: and it would have been really easy to execute in fact in terms of like teaching and learning. You could quite easily use it, so that practical aspect going forward to your job. And talking about practice... practice for you wasn't a barrier for you in terms of understanding theory actually it was helpful.

Practice helping to facilitate theory

E: Yeah

M: It's so interesting as another person I spoke to said that she had to try and switch off as a person to access the theory.

E: I think that for me all the experience that I had and because I had been in the workplace and I knew what it felt like in the situations. And I could apply that which helped me to understand that.

Drawing on experience
Drawing from work experience
Applying experience to studies

Selia

S: So, I started here in early September and came directly from Greece. It was a master's in HRM which I picked because I before I did my master's and was finishing my BA, I wanted to work in the Greek environment to see what that was like because a lot of people were saying that it was very hard to get a job and the pay isn't great... So I was going to see what it was like and I got into a 4 month position, they asked me to stand in as a swimming pool secretary for the university and college and it was basically doing subscriptions, taking payments and getting receipts and I noticed that I don't like money, so I was like I want to work with people and benefit people, so I thought managing people so it seemed like a good idea... so I started taking this programme. It's a really good programme, I really like this programme, except for financial aspect which is a whole topic, which I have described for months. Like I know that that I am not good at maths and I thought this was a way to challenge myself... maybe I shouldn't have done that at master's level... but ... because basically I could have passed the exam but because of the accreditation that the university offered I didn't... I didn't get more than 50 and in many cases if you get more than 50 you can pass. I got 41. So, I was like I could have marginally passed. I didn't pass. Even those who did pass thought it was terrible mmm... I think that about a third of us failed and it kind of felt good that so many of us failed and I know that that sounds bad... yeah because last year nobody failed it from HR and this year a third of us failed it. So that was good news on my part. But otherwise the master's was great.

M: Ok, so let's put that financial thing to one side. I hate exams, I think that exams are an absolutely atrocious way to assess people like I could go on for ages. So, tell me about the good parts of the programme.

S: Ok on an interpersonal level I met other people from within the country and from different countries. You basically have a common ground and you are all collected in the master's programme because you have something in common. You basically have a common ground where you are all doing because you like HR because you feel like it's got better career development from that perspective but you are all there for that common ground. You get to meet different people, you get a particular

Reflecting on narrative before MSc
Wanting to work at home
Listening to other people
Seeing job market as tough
Trying new things
Taking opportunities
Taking a temp post
Doing tasks
Working out what's not right for me
Benefiting people
Managing people
Viewing programme as positive

Having one overbearing part
Spoiling experience
Being too far out of comfort zone
Retreating because of one module
Knowing should have passed

Missing the mark
Not being good enough
Failing
Knowing could have passed
Feeling terrible
Being in a big group of fails

Feeling better about others failing
Enjoying master's on whole

Meeting other people
Having intercultural experiences
Having common ground
Having common ground
Sharing a purpose
Sharing a purpose
Developing career prospects
Having common ground
Meeting different people

experience, so someone going to Manchester will get a different experience from someone who is going here, so you gain from that... more knowledge I guess...

Being aware of different experiences
Getting more knowledge

M: What about on a practical level?

S: To be honest I'm actually not sure about practical level because it has not felt so much of a practical in relation to a theoretical level. Maybe financial management has felt a bit more practical because it's not my major and its exercises and you can do that but when it comes to skills and knowledge, unless you work in an office at the same time as this master's programme, so you get to apply your knowledge, I don't feel like it's practical. It's like in Marketing you don't feel like you are doing something practical unless you go to a company and do a project for them.... To come out and say this is what I gained in skills. So, for me at least that is what it feels like. So, when I do go, hopefully, if I do get into HR afterwards, I won't have the practical confidence in relation to the knowledgeable confidence.

Not getting anything practical

Getting theory
Not majoring in subject
Doing exercises
Needing to do it for year
Needing to apply knowledge
Not seeing practical side
Not doing it
Seeing practical as real life
Seeing practical skill from work

Looking forward
Relating confidence to knowledge

M: and was that what you were expecting to have?

S: No... I don't think I was expecting practical... because from my background it's worth doing knowledge and skills for one person to assess or two people to assess... you don't get a whole organisation with a goal of having its business objectives accomplished because you are just doing the project of something to get your grades up basically.... To be recognised you are not being... A company to reach its objectives. To me that would be more practical in relation to 1 2 or 3 people assessing you work.

Not expecting practical experience

Seeing a clear difference between real and uni
Reaching objectives
Having others assess your work

M: Ok so how do you feel about going into work after it is all finished?

S: I've got a BA a minor a master's because I feel like I just don't get it enough... The whole programmes in relation to being practical. Because when I go into an office people are going to be expecting things of me and I don't feel like I can actually do it to 100%. I will do my best! And hopefully I will be up to their standards. So, people have told me that it is more than they expect out of me and it might just be my insecurities but it just doesn't feel like I'm doing enough of a good job sometimes. So yeah... I just don't know a programme at university could fix that for people who do

Having other qualifications
Not getting enough
Being practical
Knowing discomfort lies ahead
Predicting inadequacy
Being below standard
Predicting expectations
Not being good enough
Worrying about the future
Seeing this as out of the scope of MSc

have that insecurity because it does feel that my old university used to have internship programmes. For example, coca cola... who would choose you out of a whole group. You'd have to have really good grades and sometimes those grades would include projects or assessments exams... And people who might have practical skills, but not really good grades just don't get the chance.

Having insecurities
Reflecting on other institutions
Being picked out
Needing to have good grades
Doing projects
Being assessed

M: Ok so practical stuff is a bit of an issues for the master's?

S: Yeah for the master's and for anything because it's more theoretical

Seeing practical as missing

M: But you think that that theoretical knowledge has been quite successful with this master's, so you feel like you've come out with a lot of knowledge.

Getting theoretical knowledge

S: I don't know if a lot of this is being critical because it's reading more more and more but I don't know when that time does come for me to get into work... how do those thoughts and all those models that I have learned can be applied to the real world.

Not sure being critical
Reading more and more
Looking ahead to work
Learning models
Applying models to real world

M: Ok, so therefore that application is uncertain.

Having uncertainty in the real world

S: Yeah, I dunno...

M: Yeah but earlier you said that you didn't know how that would be fixed in a university setting?

S: Yeah I don't know how it can be fixed because even if a programme toward the last five of six months does place you in an organisation... you'd have to get about 30 students to be placed in about 30 different organisations that are close to you or within the country and you'd have to invest so much and so many resources in that and I don't know what type of university would be able to do that.

Not seeing how to create programme

Seeing complexities in practical course
Not seeing any uni capable

M: Ok so it's kind of complex and expensive and all that. Ok, so let's go back to expectations. So, what were your expectations. Were you expecting to come out with theory and new knowledge but no practical experience?

Having expectations

S: I was expecting to have a bit more confidence about the topic... so to have new knowledge but to also have a bit

Expecting to have more confidence
Expecting to have more than knowledge

more confidence that if I do get an HR job I can apply that knowledge into practical scenario - I don't know if I still have that, maybe it is because my experience with projects and exams and all that and what I have had until now. But I just feel... probably because it is the end of the master's that I do feel a whole tonne of pressure. That is just not going away but is building up the closer I get to then end.

Needing confidence
Applying knowledge to practice
Having experience
Falling back on experience
Being at the end of a journey
Feeling a tonne of pressure
Pressure building toward the end

M: So, over the whole master's then has the pressure building, is it going up the way? Has it at any point spiked?

S: It's definitely spiked when... after I've started. It lowered after that. It lowered after I came out of my first exam because I knew I did well, but it spiked again when I knew that I did terrible in Financial management. And that set of a period of not getting more pressure but evening out... like nothing added to the pressure but I tried to ignore it. It cooled down when I realised that a lot people had the same issue. It slowly started to spike up again, the closer the resit is coming. So... now the resit is going to come up in ten days and just kinda feel like I'm on caffeine but I've not had any.

Pressure spiking at beginning
Pressure lowering after first results
Knowing that done well
Doing badly
Pressure building
Trying to ignore pressure
Cooling down
Sharing problems
Spiking up again
Feeling tense

M: Ok, so you're kind of in a state of alarm or high alert of something like that?

Being on high alert

S: Yeah, I guess. It's lower then when, I guess when I had my resit, I was supposed to give a second chapter for my dissertation to my supervisor, but I made an agreement with her that if I could give it in four days later... just to ease out the pressure from the resit. Because it was like evening it... Downwards a bit...

Being aware of stress levels
Having deadlines
Agreeing with supervisors
Being able to negotiate with supervisors

M: And was she accommodating with that?

S: Yeah I asked that because of the pressure with the resit, would it be ok if, because I left for Greece for a month and I came back about 2 weeks ago... before that I had almost finished my literature review and had almost finished my surveys, so I had kind of proved to her that "I am working hard" and that I do need some time off to see my friends. And when I come back I will spend some time on my dissertation. But because during my trip I got sick... I just needed some time to cool off some everything and she understood that I needed some time for easing out. So, she was like "it's not an issue" and I'm really really thankful for that.

Having staff who see the bigger picture
Taking a break
Coming back
Finishing an important chapter
Proving your worth
Needing time off to see friends
Recuperating
Having time away
Needing time to cool off
Being understanding
Easing out
Being understanding

M: Who's your supervisor?

S: T. I've heard from a lot of students that their supervisors haven't let them ease it out, so I'm really really thankful that T has and shared my position... really thankful.

Hearing accounts
Not being able to ease out
Being thankful for advocate

M: So, do you feel like she is an understanding person. That that's just her nature.

Being an understanding person

S: I want to say yes but at the same time it's her responsibility that her role as a supervisor or head of the department to make sure that everyone is ok in the programme. Especially after doing a PhD recently she should understand what it is like. Some other people have been sick as well and she understands on a whole and in a niche...

Understanding responsibility
Acting on responsibility
Being a PhD student recently
Appreciating what it is like
Seeing the bigger picture

M: Ok so she is looking holistically at you as a person. Ok so, going back to this stress levels. In my experience of speaking to people a lot of students seem to feel that they have a stress in term two after they get their first results back, so it's like Feb. So, some of them feel like they know what they are doing but when they get their results back and they are like oh shit... I didn't do as well... Panic.

Seeing the student holistically

Being stressed at certain times

Panicking

S: I actually usually get the opposite that I think I have done terrible and think that I have failed and then get the results and get As or Bs... and it's like a lot of friends get pissed off with me. So, like in one of my lectures it was an exam and essay, and, in the exam, I got like a 64 and paper I got a 76 and I got a 70 in my lecture so that was... ooh 76 great! FM I knew I had failed. So, I was like ok... I can do better. And looking at my grades now, I did well in a lot of things that I didn't expect to and a lot of things that like formulas... I did bad... and if I had put down the formulas right I would have got good marks, so it's kind of eased pressure to think that if I studied more I can do this. Maybe at the end of term 2 it was a bit of a shock for me because I got another 70 in my paper and then another two papers that were supposed to be a lot more practical I got like a 46 and a 58... and I had never got such low grades on papers and I was like no....

Automatically assuming failure
Getting good grades
Pissing mates off
Getting good grades
Getting good grades
Knowing have done badly
Looking back at grades
Doing better than expected
Struggling with formulas
Getting good grades
Feeling pressure to study more
Being shocked at end of term 2
Getting excellent grades
Getting poor grade for practical stuff
Getting lower grades

M: and what went wrong with those?

S: The comments said that I was too theoretical and I had put too many sources when it was supposed to be more practical. They were graded by the same lecturer, both of them, and she had made the same comment in both so I was like from the moment I had passed the lectures I'm not going to get into it with FM being the way that it is, I have now lost my... even if they were going to be put into merits... either way I have lost by grade to reach distinction. To get an overall grade to get a distinction, I'd have to get like an eighty in my overall participation... why there is no way... so I think I'm going to get a 58 or a 62 or something like that. Either way the max I can go is a merit. So, it's kind of like I'm not going to push for the papers, I'm just going to pass my dissertation and do the best that I can.

Being told too theoretical
Using too many sources
Seeing view of marker as key
Making similar comments
Passing
Being locked out
Losing way
Losing distinction
Getting distinction
Needing a colossal grade
Predicting overall grade
Seeing max as merit
Deciding not to push
Deciding to pass
Deciding to just do best

M: How do you feel now that you might not be able to get a distinction?

Accepting a distinction is gone

S: I'm a bit disappointed. I went into the master's thinking, I can get a distinction, I can do this... but after FM I just want to pass this, knowing that I can at least get a merit. After talking to a lot of my friends, I was like I'm so sad that I can't get a distinction but... a lot of my friends, especially my boyfriend, said "you just need a master's, what is the point of getting a distinction - there is no different - when you get into work they are only going to see a master's" Unless you want to be that 0.5% that is like I'm perfect in every way. And that is a good point.

Being disappointed
Having expectations of self
Wanting to pass
Sharing feelings with friends
Not being able to get distinction
Taking advice

M: I kind of agree with him.

S: Yeah... but when he put it like that, I don't know why I am applying this pressure on me... So, I just need to try and ease it...

Listening to loved ones
Applying pressure on self
Easing off on self

M: Ok so some kind of acceptance of that. And when you said you turned to friends, is that normally what you did when you kind of felt stressed... Were they friends on the course?

Accepting reality
Turning to friends
Getting counsel

S: Yeah, they were also like when I saw my grade, I was with two other friends... Jelena and Emilie and we talked it out first and then I said I need to tell my parents because they knew that my grades were coming out at some point... And they are usually very pleased, not expecting anything else. But when I told them about FM, I said I could have

Seeing grades
Bing with friends
Needing to tell parents
Sharing schedule with parents
Not wanting to disappoint parents
Admitting that you have failed

passed but for this and this it is a fail and... instantly, before I told them that I had failed they paused, and that was two weeks before I got my grades... when I told them that I probably failed they said like "it's ok don't worry about it, wait until you get your grades and we will see" and when I got the grades I was really afraid of what I would see... but instead when I said that I had failed they were like "don't worry it's fine - you will get a resit won't you?" And it just felt so much easier to accept the fail when were so understanding and I even told them like "thank you for being so understanding" and they turned to me and "it's our job" and even now when I think about it it's like "it's so sweet!" But yeah afterwards I turned to my friends, because it's easier to accept it but it's not easy to get it out of my mind unless I talk about it with these people. And they turned to me and said "just get a master's that's all you need"

M: So, you've got those sounding boards that you can hit your head off

S: I've got a lot of pressure because of my brother who is outstanding at everything that he does. He finished with 7.5 out of 10 for his UG, he went to imperial college for his master's. He went to be the presidential guard in the army.

M: So, he's a high achiever

S: Yeah, he's like really good at everything that he does, and I think that he's now a managing director or something... he married with kids. So, you know. It's like... it's me and then him and I've always tried to reach up but this master's has really put a perspective on me that I need to achieve things on my level even if that doesn't amount to him because he is trying to reach another level, but I think I need to stop and I think that this master's has put that perspective on me this year. In a short time. A year is a short time to achieve that

M: So, you sound like you have changed.

S: Oh yeah.

M: Could you talk a bit more about that. How have you changed? Do you feel like a different person?

Failing
Recalling the moment
Noticing shock from parents
Foregrounding fail
Getting support from parents
Being afraid to see grades

Being understanding
Being able to accept failure with support
Having support from parents
Feeling emotional about parents
Turning to friends afterwards
Acceptance enabled by support
Getting it out of mind
Getting the degree

Having sounding boards

Having pressure from sibling success
Having an outstanding sibling
Having high achieving sibling

Sibling being good at everything
Sibling having a good job now
Success in professional and personal
Comparing self to sibling
Getting perspective from master's
Needing to achieve on own level
Separating own goals from sibling
Needing to stop
Gaining perspective of self
Having a short time to make achievement

Having achieved perspective

S: yeah definitely, I came to England. One, with the mindset that I am never going back to Greece. I thought... I'll find a job elsewhere... England... Scotland... wales... America... anywhere else but Greece. You know getting a one year job working... I realised that the pay wasn't enough, the environment wasn't correct. Now I feel like I need to be back with friends family and the environment that I know with the support that I need to stay here again, and I don't think that I get that. I also came here with different aspirations such as the whole working thing, and I'm coming out as a different person in relation to all.... What I wanna do., like even beyond work, because I came here thinking that there would still be into game and into movies and I'm gonna go back wanting to go out wanting to take care of myself. Like I was not into makeup for example and now I really want to explore my face, which is so minor...

Feeling like a different person
 Never going back to Greece
 Finding a job elsewhere
 Anywhere but Greece
 Being aware of self as worker
 Not being in the correct environment
 Needing to be with friends and family
 Knowing that support is there
 Grappling with narrative
 Observing different aspirations
 Coming out as a different person
 Having life aspirations
 Transforming
 Going back to normal life
 Changing habits around image
 Exploring self
 Exploring appearance

M: No, I don't think it's minor I think it is major

Experiencing major transformation

S: So, I want to do different things like explore what I want to do as a person and not what I can get out of work for example.

Wanting to explore
 Wanting to explore different aspects

M: OK, so do you think that comes from an understanding of yourself, looking at yourself differently?

S: I think that this master's is really beyond just what it offers it's also shown me what my priorities should be. And this is something that I want to find out for my psychological contracts for my dissertation as well. Like what are people doing when they are studying. What are they expecting to get from a job because when I was studying I was expecting to get the short-term benefits. Get some money to be able to do some other things.... Get some other job role that I feel satisfied with... But now I feel this one-year pressure that I need to be ok with MYself, but I don't know what I am ok with... So, I think that this is what this process her taught me....

Seeing master's as beyond
 Transforming to understand priorities
 Finding out for self
 Having a major project
 Questioning actions
 Questioning expectations
 Getting short term benefits
 Getting money for other things
 Being satisfied
 Needing to fine with self
 Not knowing what I am ok with
 Learning about self

M: That's quite an incredible experience

Having an incredible experience

S: I know and it's only a master's [laughs] Well I'm saying it's only a master's but...

Seeing that there is more than just a degree

M: It's big! It's a difficult year and I wonder if it is those kinds of difficulties that allow you to reflect on what's important.

Transforming thru struggle
Reflecting being of struggle

S: yeah you really start to re-evaluate. Because when I was getting under pressure with work, it still kinda felt like I knew what was going on and I knew why I was feeling pressured, but this has really made me re-evaluate what I want and what I should expect and my environment and myself in general.

Re-evaluating
Re-evaluating because of pressure
Knowing what was going on
Being forced to re-evaluate
Re-evaluating expectations

M: When you had problems you turned to some people and they were outside the uni how about inside the programme?

S: I definitely talked to T.... Not a lot but I have talked to her about FM and my worries and so on. I have talked to Jelena as well... so far it feels like she is the person that I can connect with.

Turning to trusted staff member
Turning to trusted peer

M: What is it about her that makes you feel that you can connect with her?

S: I feel like when I make friends I try to face everything with humour. Even if someone says something really sweet (?) to me I take it with humour when I respond to it. And it felt like Jelena is very recipricative to that because when I turn to something with humour and they don't and are serious... if you can't take humour then you can't make me destress, so you kind of need to be on the same level as me... same wavelength and it seems like Jelena is on the same wavelength as me.

Making friends
Using humour
Taking things with humour
Finding common ground
Using humour
Having coping mechanisms
Being on the same level
Being on the same wavelength

M: That must be really good to have that person on board for the year then

Having a likeminded person on board

S: It is

M: how about any other in the groups. Obviously, there were a lot of Chinese students. I witnessed that whole weird them and us. Did you manage to make any friendships with them?

S: Yes, I have. With Bo... she is very sweet, and we talk about differences between our cultures... which was really funny to hear. The one thing I remember was trying to pronounce our names in our language, which was so

Connecting cross-culturally
Talking about cultural differences
Recalling specifics
Enjoying pronouncing names

funny. She said that I managed to get a decent accent but her pronouncing my name was so funny. It was impossible. Like from what I believe they can't pronounce /r/ and it's so funny her trying to... I know it sounds terrible but it was great. I've actually talked to a few others and they are so helpful like distributing my survey. Like the non-Chinese that I asked were like "yeah I could do that" and there were like two of three people that I could give it to and I was like "great". Once I asked the Chinese... every single one of them were like... I could put this on all my social media platforms and we also have a site where we help each other out and she asked if she could upload it to all of them. You know the non-Chinese were like "I can message a few friends" but the other ones were like "let's make this public". So that was nice.

Gaining intercultural competence
 Bonding interculturally
 Gaining knowledge about others
 Bonding
 Talking to other Chinese students
 Getting help
 Finding Chinese helpful
 Sharing resources
 Being positively surprised
 Getting into a collective
 Going the extra mile

Going further to help

M: So, I guess you kind of got into a collective culture there or a sharing culture. How about the home students like the UK ones?

S: Emm... it felt ... I dunno what it is... sounds so bad [hesitates] but it just didn't feel the same. It's weird as I've lived in England before and it felt that I had a Greek and a UK personality, but meeting other UK people was so... as if there was a glass, not a wall, but a glass between us. One of the girls that I talk to from the UK posted like "a day at the races with friends" and I was like "what?!" like maybe it's the different kind of UK people that I haven't come into contact with before and it's not the kind of people that I would connect with, but it just felt so off.

Not connecting with home students
 Feeling bicultural
 Meeting UK students
 Experiencing a glass divide
 Feeling removed from postings

Feeling a disconnect
 Not connecting
 Feeling off

M: You know I'll be honest with you, it's a common experience. For international student to feel like that and I like your analogy... like you can see them

S: Yeah... and it didn't feel like we couldn't talk, we couldn't share, and we couldn't help each other out. It's just like that was it until they would share experiences, but they didn't seem like the kind of people who would say "let's go out" like maybe Tom but the girls felt completely different like completely different.

Not feeling a connection
 Not being able to share
 Not being able to help each other
 Not seeming sociable
 Feeling separate
 Feeling completely different

M: Do you know why? Was it a practical thing? Were they working? Did they already have their own lives?

S: Well I guess that Crystal already had a husband and a kid so doing a master's at the same time so she had her

Assuming they had own lives

own responsibilities, so fair enough. With Becky and Hannah... too posh... would that be like... I'm too much of a Tom-boy but they felt too posh for me. Tom felt more like ground level for me.

Having own responsibilities
Being too posh
Feeling too different to bond
Being grounded

M: What exactly do you mean by posh?

S: Well one of them saying a day at the races is definitely posh for me.

Feeling cultural distance

M: So, in terms of interests then?

S: Yeah definitely, they weren't stuck up, but they were much more... Like Hannah was much more competitive for example. She was like the older sibling who was also perfect at everything and was never wrong... it was as if they felt that they were on a higher standing and I just can't with that. Not that I care about that, but it just seemed that they felt... "No, I just can't hang out with you - yeah to a certain degree I could spend some time with you, but you'd not be the first person I'd call" kind of thing.

Feeling cultural distance
Seeing them as competitive
Acting like an older sibling
Being perfect at everything
Interpreting aloofness
Feeling a barrier
Not being able to connect
Filling a void

M: Ok, so was that like that with all the international students? Did they hang out with any of the international students at all?

S: It felt like the Chinese students did hang out with two or three of the other girls, like one from Pakistan and Thailand like they definitely connect much more with us. As in the Europeans. It felt like they did connect much better. Not that they didn't try to come into the group but not that they didn't try to approach before. Like if they saw me they'd come and say hi if they had seen me before (the Chinese students). I don't think that the girls (UK) tried to connect with them as at all as they thought that there was a language barrier and they kept commenting like "the language barrier the language barrier" but they weren't really making any effort as well.

Observing Chinese behaviour

Seeing an us and them
Observing cultural friendship groups
Making an effort
Approaching others
Coming to say hi
Experiencing no effort to connect
Making assumptions
Assuming language barrier
Stating language barrier
Not making any effort to connect

M: So just to confirm it so that I've got it right. So, they saw (and in the UK students) they saw a language barrier with the Chinese but were not willing to move to meet in the middle?

Seeing a language barrier
Lack of willingness to compromise
Lack of willingness to adjust

S: Yeah it felt as if they didn't try

M: And that's with the Chinese where this are obvious cultural and linguistic differences. And how about the other ones in the group...

S: the Chinese were much more open

Chinese being more open

M: I'm talking about the British

S: Ah ok... Mmm... it felt like it was a collective, but it was depending on personalities as well. Like Tom who is... you didn't have to try but he was on the same level with everyone but Emilie was much more open to the Chinese but she's international as well, so maybe she was thinking let's all get along kind of thing.: With the British as well it felt like she was much closer but then that's because we all talked much more with them than the Chinese.

Seeing the British as a collective
Seeing personalities as important
Being on the same level
Being open to Chinese
Having particular skills
Wanting to get along
Being closer for a reason
Making an effort to talk

M: it's actually a really interesting dynamic.

Having an interesting dynamic

S: I don't know how it all started. Well I guess the Chinese felt closer because they all spoke the same language and came from the same place... and I guess the UK are just UK as well. Actually, I remember that most of us were actually introduced by Sinead. We just stuck as a group mainly from the beginning. And I think that maybe a lot of Chinese made their group as well, but that could have been from all of our perspectives but the other way around.

Not knowing the origins
Being united by language
Coming from the same place

M: ok that's interesting and you think that some of the Chinese made an effort to...

Being introduced
Sticking as group from beginning
Cementing group habits
Having multiple perspectives

S: Yeah, I think that they did... they definitely tried to make an effort with me too... If we met at the library or at the bus we would talk. Bo and I have had study sessions at the library as well. It's not like the Chinese stopped talking to us for any reason. It felt like they just didn't try.

Chinese making an effort

Making an effort
Meeting out of class
Having study sessions

M: In terms of all these complex relationships to navigate. Did you manage to navigate them... Was it an issue in your learning?

Seeing lack of effort from Chinese

Navigating complex relationships

S: It feels as if there isn't much I would have done different because I am an indoors person and I don't go out often. So, if there were types of other people and they were like mine, I don't think that it would be any different. I think because it's a master's programme as well, we all had different time pressures

Feeling satisfied with actions
Being a certain kind of person
Seeing other people

Having different time pressures

M: Do you feel that amongst those dynamics, do you feel that you belong at the university, do you feel a sense of belonging?

S: I was about to say no because I don't feel like I've connected with the people but at the same time that's partly my fault with my experiences. For example, in Greece when I was to say let's go out last minute, would say instantly if they were up for it. But in England it feels a lot more like we need a plan. We need a schedule... so that was one reason why I couldn't connect, and another reason was the master's programme.

Being unsure
Feeling mixed emotions
Blaming self
Relating to culture

Having to plan

M: How about academically?

S: academically, honestly, I know that I have said this before but honestly if it wasn't for the FM I would probably be different from how I originally was, but I would definitely be different because I hadn't failed anything before. So, this was a first and especially at a master's level, it's a whole different kind of fail, so I think that if I hadn't failed I would have connected better. Right now, it's "Ugghh"

Being honest
Attaching significance to specific exp
Looking back
Not having failed before

Having a different kind of fail

M: So, the fail has kind of been helpful in a way?

S: If it wasn't for the fail I would have connected much better.... For my expectations of how people actually connect with each other here... Again, it would be different.

Seeing the fail as disconnecting
Having expectations of people

M: So, does it feel that here is familiar to you then. Does it feel that you have a sense of familiarity with the programme with the people and institution?

S: I definitely feel a sense of familiarity with where I have been like the buildings and the library, which I have spent a lot of time in. And with the staff... Like T I definitely feel like I can connect with... And this environment, I've seen this greenery before, so it was already. And one of my first thoughts when we landed with the plane in Stansted, was that it was such a great weather in September... rainy and I felt at home and I love this weather... I've been here 6 years before... it's very familiar.

Feeling a sense of familiarity with uni
Feeling familiarity with physical uni
Feeling familiar with staff
Feeling able to connect
Feeling familiar with the environment

Feeling familiar with country

M: Do you feel like you are part of an academic community as a scholar at a master's level?

S: Emm... well the first thought that I had in my head was that I am good at writing paper so I want to say that I am good as an academic. I thought that I wasn't good at taking exams, but it seems that I am good at taking exams.... So, I want to say that I do consider myself as a good academic but at the same time I don't want to consider myself as a temporary academic so I'm not sure

Having a first thought
Seeing self as a good writer
Speculating about being a good academic
Being good at exams
Considering self a good academic
Speculating about self
Being a temp academic

M: Do you think that in those assignments that you wrote... Were you quite safe in what you did and wrote? Or did you kind of take risks?

S: No, I was definitely safe in all of them. The one that I got a 76 on and I got a friend to proofread it and he turned around and said "I can't escape a reference I can't escape a source" and for me it was basically me putting my own words with other people's words so in a way I was playing it safe and not using my own voice and using other people's opinions. So, I would say that I didn't take risks.

Being safe in contributions
Getting help to check work

Manipulating literature

Playing it safe
Not taking risks

M: Do you think you would like to have taken risks?

S: Naaah... [laughs] because someone else is grading it as well... if they don't like that risk then...

Being graded by someone else
Seeing risk as subjective

M: Because it could go all wrong and that's the risk isn't it.

S: yeah and that someone else could view it as treachery as well... so it's a matter of perspective... so I could see it as a risk but it's actually something that is common. Someone could turn around and say that someone has already said that.

Seeing ideas as subjective
Seeing marker perspective as key
Having something in common
Being unsure of actions
Being untrusting of intent

M: Because universities and especially at PG level, we are supposed to be producing knowledge or saying something from a unique standpoint, so did you manage to do that?

S: I don't think so. Like everyone said that I should be critical of someone else's work with someone else's work and it seems that I have to be critical with the face of someone else. So, I'm not criticising someone as Selia, I'm criticizing someone as Rousseau... or as anyone... I'm criticising someone as someone else and that is hypocritical in a way.

Not believing a contribution had been made
Being critical with the face of another
Not being academic self
Being academic someone else
Being an academic someone else
Feeling hypocritical

M: Ok so in terms of identity, you've been somebody else?

Having been someone else

S: It seems like that. Like all my papers have not been... They have been asking me to criticise, don't describe but it seems like I have been describing... I've been criticizing from a description. I know that sounds like it makes no sense but it feels like when I'm saying that someone else says this but somebody else says that... the only difference is what makes this not a description is the word "but". So, for me it doesn't feel like I am criticising but saying "but you know what this is another description" so it feels like I am criticising in the form of a description.

Reflecting on assignments
 Being told to criticise
 Feeling that have been describing
 Criticising thru a description
 Grappling with ontology
 Finding the literature contradictory
 Finding terms confusing
 Feeling unsuccessful at criticality
 Endlessly describing
 Not differentiating criticality and descr

M: So, do you feel like you understand those words at this stage?

S: Not really... criticising from me is using the words but or however.

Not understanding criticality

M: yeah and it's that kind of thing about... when I speak to students they say oh I've been told that my work is descriptive, and I have to be more critical... What do these words mean?

S: So, for me it feels like to be critical you just need to use the word but or however or although....

Grappling with criticality
 Using cohesive devices to shape writing

M: How do you feel about theory at the end of your programme? Do you hate it?? [both laugh]

S: that's a strong word! [laughs] Um... I think that I was always more comfortable with theory. Maybe not even memorising it... Maybe not even understanding it but I was always more comfortable about reading about what different people have said about different topics. And some are more interesting than others obviously. But I'm still interested in reading theory.

Being comfortable with theory
 Being comfortable despite grappling
 Being comfortable with reading
 Reading multiple viewpoints
 Having varied interests in lit
 Being interested in reading theory

M: And do you think that it's relevant to practice?

S: Here? Maybe some of it is difficult to practice. But I'm going to say something that all my lectures I hated to hear... it depends... all my lectures were like this but it's true some application of theory could be easier in some cultures sexes classrooms.... It depends

Seeing theory as difficult to practice
 Hating the hear that "it depends"
 Understanding that it does depend
 Seeing the social world as complex

M: And do you feel that you understand the system and the way that academia works?

S: In Greece, America and England... maybe.

M: did you know that coming into this master's or did you work it out en route.

S: no, I kind of worked it out... Cause when I was a primary student in 1 to 3 you don't really get it but in years 4 to 8 in England, moving to an educational system in Greece is completely different. Where I moved from you guys researched this on the internet and will do a presentation on this in the classroom... moving to you have a 300-page textbook for each subject and you have carried each of these textbooks with you in the backpack to memorise everything for the exam and that's how you get the grade. You have an exam at the end of the year to see if you have passed the class. You never had this in the English system... And now it says you need to do two years to get into university and in Greece you have a year of exams to see if you can get into WHAT university... even if I do say that high school is optional, nobody quits high school in Greece. And then I used to an American uni in Greece where we had an American system and then a British system. So, I've kind of understood what academia... grading policies and procedure are like in different systems.

M: Maybe moving between them has made you aware that they exist and that they are different.

S: yeah different types exist... different policies and programme. Understandings exist because no Greek student will show the same understanding of theory as an English will or an American will. Maybe they will, depending on how serious they are... But I don't think that there is the notion that for example in an English educational notion of the "forever student" there is no such thing as a forever student as you pay your lectures and in Greece it's free. So, it's so much different

M: Culturally I think that your culture is related to how you learn and how you engage with a topic and system [S: definitely] I think that the Chinese are far from it [S: Definitely] and the British as on it. Maybe they don't realise but they are. Where are you?

S: I feel like I understand it, but I don't know if I'm on it because... it felt like when we started to do our

Understanding multiple systems

Knowing what to expect coming in
Reflecting on primary school
Moving education systems
Coming from a different context
Reflecting on different conventions
Changing contexts

Memorising
Preparing for exams
Having exams
Navigating different systems
Doing two years
Having a year of exams
Aiming for university entrance

Attending an American uni in Greece
Experiencing an American system
Having broad experience of academia
Grading policies and procedures

Moving between systems

Having awareness of differing policies
Having understandings
Showing same understanding
Seeing differences

Seeing rhetorical systems
Seeing different rationales
Being aware of different systems

Seeing Engagement as culturally affected

Having a cultural distance

Understanding the system
Being very culturally close

dissertations, a lot of the Chinese turned around and said that they had never written a paper of more than 2000 words, whereas I've written a 16000 words dissertation for my BA. The only difference I've had for this system is that I have had to put in citations for my exams. Because my university and my college were trying to introduce it, but it wasn't like you had to have 10 sources in your exams... It was like 3 sources will be great and one of them said that you have to have 10 sources, I was the only one that actually put in 4 sources and got a decent grade on it. I think that that was the only differences and difficulty... and maybe the grading system.

M: Ok and if Chinese are 100% away, how far away are you culturally and academically?

S: I want to say maybe 10%

M: Ok you feel close then,

S: There was some lectures that... it didn't matter if the paper was 100% weighting on the grade because the paper shows that you have developed your paper throughout time. I think that having one exam that is 100% is not an accurate representation of what and how you have done. So, I think that that was the only thing that I didn't like about this programme that there are such cases.

M: But if take that out...

S: [unclear] 95%?

M: Ok, thanks

Observing Chinese behaviour
Never having written much
Having experience of extensive writing
Observing differences
Having to cite being different
Seeing home culture changing

Having minimal sources

Being able to adapt to new ways

Feeling culturally close

Advocating smaller assessment
Seeing 100% papers as an inaccurate representation of your work
Seeing big assignments as a negative

Thomas

T: When I decided what I wanted to do I thought of Physics and Economics and I can't really imagine myself being in the lab for the rest of my life, so I thought ok I want to work in the economy and doing something in the economics. Then I thought, ok well I really like Physics, so I thought ok what can I do with Physics? And there are many people in consulting that have studied physics and the German chancellor, she studied physics as well, so actually all I want to do with economics I can do with Physics and I feel that people are a bit more open-minded in Physics. With the Erasmus scheme here I like went to the department here and there were not like lots of applications and interviews and it all just seemed a little bit different. A bit more familiar.

M: I'm actually really interested in familiarity. Form what it seems is really important in the student experience and helps them feel at ease. Could you tell me a little bit more about why it was like that?

T: It seems like in Physics that they don't really care about position. They are not like, ok I'm a doctor etc... It doesn't really matter who you are and where you are from. We are just all interested in research and it's a bit more... it feels like they respect you a bit more egalitarian.

M: And how does that compare to studying at home?

T: It was kinda... I was in Spain for a year and I'd say that it was kind of the same as here. I mean that for example when you want to meet someone like a professor they would say that you don't really need an appointment just knock on my door. Whereas in economics and I did economics in Germany, you need to be pretty formal and do office hours.

M: In that then in Physics they were much more accessible?

T: yeah right. Not like... there was not the need for the formalities they didn't expect you to be like "dear professor" it was more familiar and that is what I like. So probably why I study physics.

Deciding what to do
Imagining self
Thinking ahead
Considering the economy
Understanding what you like
Having options
Working with what you've got
Looking up to people
Having aspirations
Being drawn to open-mindedness
Taking opportunities
Seeing opportunities
Weighing things up
Feeling familiar

Not caring
Being free from hierarchy
Being egalitarian
Being driven by research
Being egalitarian

Studying abroad before
Being similar
Meeting staff
Not needing an appointment
Seeing depts. As different
Being formal
Doing office hours

Being accessible

Not having a specific need
Having relaxed social expectations
Being familiar
Studying physics

M: So, what is your impression of the department in general?

T: My first impression here was that it is pretty international. Like we have like many Asian students here and from all over and even the lecturers I feel like most of the lecturers are international. Whereas in Germany when you get to the higher up parts like professors and doctors most of them are German. Whereas here most of my lectures are international. That was the same in economics. There is more of an international perspective, so I don't know why they are here but I expected British and lots of British academic but in fact it is quite international.

M: Did you at any point experience any academic problems

T: Not really to be honest

M: What sort of academic challenges did you have to write? Like did you have reports?

T: We had some weekly problems in Physics... You had to do some exercises and then hand them back and this was 15% of your mark. Like practical work and then we had to write a report and then it was 15% of the mark as well but not so much, we had to do more in Germany.

M: So more in Germany...?

T: Well now I'm at the Master's level I dunno

M: So, you had to do exercises and that was 15% and then there was another report that was 15%.

T: Yeah, like it wasn't that much they just wanted you to keep on working on the coursework and repeating what we are doing. Like to make sure that you understand it. Sometimes you think that you've got something and then you realise that you're not too sure, so it is good to keep on working on things.

M: And how are the other marks made up?

T: It's an exam. It's quite a lot of work.

Having a first impression
Being in an international environ
Being folk from all over
Being multicultural
Having a hierarchy
Having a monocultural elite
Having international lectures
Having international perspectives
Expecting a British academic culture
Being surprised by 'internationalness'

Not experiencing any academic problems

Having weekly academic tasks
Handing in weekly work
Having practical work
Report writing
Having a lighter workload

Comparing UG to PG

Feeling on top of workload
Having continual tasks
Having continued scaffolding
Thinking you've got it
Realising you're not sure
Working on things

Assessed by exam

M: And how did you feel about going in an sitting an exam?

T: It's different from Germany. My mates here told me that you are not allowed to take a bottle of water with the wrapping on... With the chairs and rows. They are a bit more strict here than in Germany I'd say.

M: And was it stressful doing that exam? Was there an opportunity to re-sit it if you fail?

T: Yeah but I didn't know that I would extend my stay here to work in the department, so I would have to go back to Germany and then come back here. So, I was really keen to pass it and I studied hard. I really didn't expect to fail and I thought it should be fine.

M: It's interesting because it is quite a different experience to what people in the social sciences and humanities have. Because normally they assignments to write.

T: Yeah, I see this with my flatmate and she has a slot of read and write and I think that is one reason why I chose to study physics because it is more about understanding. So, once you understand it, it is alright and then you can apply it.

M: I hate all that right and wrong answer stuff.

T: Actually, that is what I like. I would never like it in the school where you had to discuss something and it all depends on the teacher's view and you have to argue something. In physics you get a value and it's right or wrong.

M: Yeah right, you have certainty with that stuff and going into an exam you either know it or you don't...

T: And when you go out you usually know whether you failed or not. If you do lots of exercises then you should be fine.

M: And therefore, if you are doing the exercises and build up then you can try and memorise it... or did you know it?

T: I would say that I know it. Like you can try and memorise all the exercises that you got but I feel better

Noticing cultural differences
Having strict rules

Being more strict

Making changes to plans
Working in the dept.
Coming back to UK
Studying hard
Not expecting to fail
Knowing would be ok

Experiences being different from
Social Sciences

Seeing that experience is different
Having different work loads
Choosing Physics for a reason
Seeing a logic to studying

Enjoying the black and white
Discussing
Depending on subjective viewpoint
Getting an objective value
Having a right or wrong

Having certainty with exams
Knowing you have passed or not

Knowing where you are

Feeling in control
Being able to memorise

when I actually know what I am doing. It's not just like memorising it

Feeling in control of learning

M: yeah you are more confident when you know that you can reproduce it

Feeling confident

T: Yeah, I couldn't deal with like if I knew the answer but I didn't know how to get there. So, I would always try to figure out a way to get to it.

Being proactive with learning
Wanting to know the process
Figuring things out

M: I had an exam in my UG and had a blank and did nothing in the exam... If you have a blank and it's 85% you are in trouble but if you are confident I guess that you are going to ok.

T: You can always be unlucky or have bad luck, but I always try and prep myself in the best way possible and if I fail many others will too.

M: So, you feel like if you will fail others will too

T: I would say that I don't care about the mark itself I like to compare myself to the others and if I fail other will to. I would prefer a relative scale to be honest instead of saying like 80...

Not caring about marks so much
Feeling confident in self
Preferring relative scale

M: Ok, a lot of things that people have spoken to me about is expectations. And the student experience seems to be related to expectations and some students come in with completely different expectations... How do you feel like you were with these things?

T: Yeah well, I have to translate my marks back into the German system when I get back, so I would have to look and see... Like 80% is the best you can get in the German system. So, in this respect I wasn't shocked... Other things on the cultural side, well there were so many international students... So, it was pretty normal to me.

Translating marks back
Working in different systems

Not being shocked
Seeing cultural differences

M: And how was it being a German...? As in being a person from Germany.

T: So, you mean like being from Germany in particular?

M: I mean being you who is an international student from Germany

T: I would say that I am an openminded person and that I would speak to anyone. I didn't have any problems. In my home university we had a buddy programme to support international students to help them settle down and I met two girls from this university, so I had two people to connect to already. They were British. So, what I did here they had done there so we kind of moved back here together and it went fine. So, I already knew some British people and some people say that they can't meet them. Like the Chinese quite often stick together and...

Being open minded
Being open to others
Having a buddy programme
Helping international students settle
Knowing people already
Knowing UK students already
Moving back together
Already knowing some Brits
Hearing that some people struggled
Seeing the Chinese sticking together

M: One thing that I definitely notice from teaching is that Germany students speak English with each other and with everyone else and I don't know what that mentality is... like we've come here for a year and we are going to make the most of it.

Making an effort

Making the most of something

T: Yeah, I think that there are two things. First of all, it is about making the most of it and the other thing is that if you are in a different country you have to respect the culture and try to fit into it. And I feel that it is rude to speak German if there is anyone else in the room who doesn't understand you. So, I think that everyone should stick to one language that they all understand. And I actually asked my Chinese flatmates to please not speak Chinese when I am in the kitchen as I feel offended. It would be different if I knew that they couldn't speak English it would be different. But because I know that they just can't be arsed to speak English, it annoyed me. And my flatmate was quite happy that I always tried to make her try her best and teach her a little bit.

Seeing two reasons
Making the most of it
Respecting a different country
Trying to fit in
Being aware of others
Being inclusive
Being inclusive
Taking action on exclusion
Feeling offended by behaviour
Seeing things from another perspect.
Knowing they have the skills
Being annoyed by laziness
Making others communicate
Teaching others

M: And you mentioned earlier about British students and that other people have problems with them.

T: Yeah, I don't think that this is British students particularly, but I think that it is students in general. Like I had this in Spain too with Spanish students. You are somewhere, and it is your mother tongue, it is easier to stick with people that speak the same language and... Yeah.

Not being British students
Seeing a trend in students
"Being a home student"
Sticking with people
Speaking the same language

M: It's an interesting phenomenon and lots of people have talked about it and probably almost everyone I have spoken to in interview has brought up the home student issue and it is quite frustrating as a practitioner but as a researcher I find it really interesting. And I have definitely

Seeing a phenomenon
Seeing general trends
Bringing up the home student issue
Being frustrated
Being interested
Being a British student

experienced it being a British student and I have also experienced it being abroad as well when I have lived in Spain where most of my friendship group were international, including people who spoke Spanish, but they weren't necessarily with Spanish people. That took much longer.

T: I think that the newer you are in a place the more desperate you are to meet some new people. And Spanish or British people they already have their groups.

M: Yeah, they already have their consolidated groups and strong friendships

T: And they don't need anyone else. And with international students everyone is in the same situation.

M: How about in your accommodation, was it only Chinese people that you encountered?

T: No... in economics it is crazy like 80 or 90% of the students are Chinese and it is really difficult. Like they spoke Chinese all the time and I was unable to connect to them.

M: And how did you navigate that situation?

T: Well there was another German guy and a girl from Greece, but I hadn't really had any contact with Chinese people even though maybe 90% were Chinese.

M: Did the three of you Europeans end up sitting together?

T: Yeah when they came to lecture sure.

M: This is similar in Management and its markets. I've seen European students sitting on their own and the Chinese sitting all together on the other side.

T: I hate to say it but it's a bit depressing to see. And in these cases, it is really difficult for me to integrate and connect with Chinese people.

M: and did you attempt it at all or were you just overwhelmed?

Drawing on overseas experience

Having international friends

Being new in a place
Being desperate to meet people
Seeing folk settled in groups

Having consolidated friendship groups
Not needing new friends
Being in the same situation

Being amongst huge Chinese cohort
Finding it difficult
Being locked out
Seeing them as closed off

Finding another
Not having contact with Chinese
Meeting not Chinese despite numbers

Sitting with Europeans

Being depressed by segregation
Finding it hard to integrate
Connecting with Chinese people

T: The thing is from my experience is that sometimes they were not actually able to speak English that well and I wonder: how were they able to enrol to the university... even though the English is that bad... so it is very difficult to connect with them

Drawing on experience
Not being able to speak English
Questioning enrolment
Being shocked by language level
Connecting with them

M: And does that change your impression of the university or your impression of that department. For example, when I did my Master's one of the cohorts had a massive 200 students and I thought... oh you just want their money.

T: Yeah to be honest I came here and I feel that here it is all about money. I've lived in Germany, in Spain and now here and if I compare it I feel that it is all about the money rather than the education itself. That is from my personal perspective. It kind of makes you a bit meh... it's not familiar the whole living situations, like they get money from you.

Changing perception of university
Seeing money as the driving force
Being all about the money
Not being about education
Feeling put off my profiteering
Feeling unfamiliar with profiteering

M: And I completely understand that feeling and feel it myself and I feel sorry for Chinese students and then end up feeling sorry for them.

Feeling sorry

T: Yeah because what do you learn in that situation if you come here? I had quite a lot of discussions about that with my German colleagues in that department. They try and first the course to the Chinese people and sometimes in the exams they could just learn it by heart and pass the exam. It's a win win situation because the Chinese will come and they get their money and they get their degree. So, from my perspective I wonder about the education itself and the quality of the learning experience.

Questioning learning
Having discussions
Having German colleagues

Learning by heart for exams
Seeing a win win
Seeing a transaction
Questioning the education
Questioning the quality

M: Which is an old-fashioned way of learning as in by rote. Especially at Master's level. Surely it should be a bit more than that. Do you feel like the Physics dept is like...?

T: There are very few Chinese, most of the students on my course were British actually. Loads of them did integrated Master's. So, it is a UG with Master's. It's completely different from Economics where it is 90% Chinese. I can't remember any Chinese students in the Physics department at master's level... PhD yeah... but not Master's

Having very few Chinese peers
Having British peers
Combining degree
Being very different from Economics

M: Do you feel like you understand the academic system and how it works?

T: Based on my experience, I haven't really had a bad experience. I wouldn't have had to adjust for anything. I haven't had to adjust for anything. It is kind of similar. You have a lecture and you listen etc.

Drawing on experience
Not having to adjust
Feeling familiar
Having familiar teaching

M: Do you think that there is any adjustment that you have had to make at all?

T: No not really different.

Not having to adjust

M: How do you feel being away from home for this year? Do you feel different going back? It might depend on the subject.

T: Actually, talking about that there is something different from Germany like the gender issues. I dunno if we just don't talk about it in Germany, but it doesn't seem to be such a big problem for us. Here it is like you have to be careful with what you say and jokes, and you have to be careful with this gender thing, which is different from Germany. They told me that you have to be careful what you say. Sometimes people can be offended.

Seeing a difference
Considering gender issues
Not discussing gender at home
Feeling it's a hang up
Being careful
Seeing gender as an issue here
Being told to be careful
Being warned
Taking offence

M: and how do you know that gender issues can be an issue

T: I dunno... I have spoken to my friends here and you get all that stuff that you can read from the university. Yeah, it is something that they speak about more here.

Speaking to friends about gender
Reading literature from uni
Noticing gender conversation here

M: Do you think that it is an issue in Germany?

T: No not at all. It is like I have spoken to friends here when like they go out to a party and like girls get groped and touched and no one has ever told me about that happening in Germany. So, it seems that maybe men still don't know how to behave.

Not being a problem
Getting groped
Not being told about groping
Seeing differences between UK and Germany
Not knowing how to behave

M: So, they are trying to catch up?

T: I dunno it seems like they are doing things that they shouldn't do. To be honest I never really experienced anything like that but some of my friends told me that it is normal that they get harassed. They were British friends.

Grappling with cultural norms
Not having experience
Being told by UK friends
Getting harassed

M: that must be quite shocking.

T: Yeah it was. I never experienced it myself.

M: And none of your friends have experienced this at home. Do you think that this has happened and they just haven't said?

T: No, they would say it to me. Like the way that people party here, you see even a lot of girls drunk and throwing up in the streets. And that is something shocked me actually. The way that people go out here to get wasted and I find it a little bit disgusting. Like I don't really need it. When you go out people throwing up and lying in the streets. You know it is different.

M: And this city is especially bad for it and you kind of think of it as this quintessential English city, but my god tourists must be shocked when the sun goes down. Actually, drinking culture is something which I have talked to students about before and you must be really shocked...?

T: yeah once I was coming home on a Wednesday evening from sports and I was on the way home at 10pm in James college and there was someone throwing up. You know I am just coming home and I want to have dinner and he was totally wasted in 10 in the evening and really it is the two things about partying here. Getting wasted and being sick (?) I just didn't really expect it. Like the highest quality of life that I had was in Spain, even though they haven't got lots of money and even at the university there isn't lots of equipment but the people are happier and have a better life. And in those three if I had to choose, I would definitely go to Spain if there are more jobs honestly. That's the only issue that Spain has in my view. I would go to Spain then Germany and then Britain.

M: and how about your British friends that you had here. Did they get wasted?

T: Not that much. My group... you know sometimes we would go out and they would get drunk, but it was never the case that we went out and had to help someone go home. They were all fine.

M: Could we speak a little bit about jobs, how do you feel about going into a job?

Knowing friends will confide
Seeing girls getting drunk
Being shocked by drinking
Getting wasted
Being disgusted
Seeing alcohol abuse
Seeing differences from own culture

Coming home one weekday
Having played sports
Seeing someone throwing up
Wanting to have dinner
Being totally wasted early doors
Getting wasted when partying
Not expecting alcohol abuse
Seeing higher life quality in Spain
Seeing lower quality of life
People being happier
Making a choice
Choosing Spain if more jobs
Seeing jobs as an issue
Choosing Britain last

Having a friendship group
Getting drunk
Remembering one incident
Being fine

T: The things is like Physics I'm not sure how much I need after it. You are learning analytical skills and yeah, I think it is like a lot of these things that we are doing here you know that you don't really need them in a job. It is not like I wouldn't be prepared to do a job but the things that you learn at university in general are not those things that you need at work.

Analysing physics
Learning analytical skills
Liking what am doing here
Knowing that they may be irrelevant
Not being prepared to do a job
Learning general things
Needing to work

M: Is it therefore that you are getting theory and it is not like you are getting practical skills? I dunno how it is in Physics...

Getting theory
Getting practical skills

T: To be honest Physics helps me quite a lot the way I approach problems and the way that I see things and if I have a problem I don't try to put it to one side I try to think about it and I do it. I think that is why some physicists end up being consultants because they can think about problems and approach it... it's just a different topic then... for consulting you just need some more high economic background. It's just the way that you approach things I would say. So, it's more about how you handle things and not about how much you know about a topic.

Being helped by the subject
Approaching problems logically
Approaching problems head on
Crafting "physicists"
Being a consultant
Having transferable skills
Knowing about economics
Knowing how to approach things
Being able to handle things
Seeing topic knowledge as less important

M: And for you, you are trying to get a handle on economics to apply it.

T: yeah, this is why I am doing economics because I am trying to get a job in economics, I have been thinking about being a patent lawyer as well. For example, in Physics you can do quite a lot. I'm thinking about doing a PhD as well but we will see.

Trying to get a handle on economics
Considering job in economics
Weighing up job prospects
Considering a PhD

M: Why did you choose to come to here?

T: To be honest it was the only choice I had because of the twinning of our cities. I wanted to come here and improve my English. Don't get me wrong it is a nice city. I dunno, if I had different opportunities and I wanted to have a small city to get a different city. I wouldn't live in London for a year for example.

Only having one choice
Wanting to come to here
Improving English

Wanting a small city
Disliking large cities

Kip

K: My name is Pittipong but my English name is Sean, but my Thai nickname is Kip

M: why did you choose this British name?

K: Because Kip is difficult for any foreigner to pronounce. Like many people told me that it's quite hard to pronounce correctly, so...

Believing name is difficult for UK Ss
Being told name is difficult

M: Pronounce it again

K: G/K - ee - p

M: That's not hard

K: But many British people tell me that it's hard to pronounce, so I used my English name from school which I am used to... Ok so and I'm from Thailand and I'm studying a MA in philosophy, my dissertation is related to God and the topic is about a Danish philosopher and the hiddenness of God.

Being told that name is hard to pron
Using other name

M: Sorry can we return to the name thing. How do you feel about the name and having to change it... you've got three names now...? How do you feel about that?

K: It doesn't really bother me I feel neutral and I understand that in different countries we have different backgrounds, so you have to choose things which is more comfortable for your friends.

Not feeling bother by name
Understanding cultural differences
Having to make choices
Making friends comfortable

M: And does it make you... you just feel neutral

K: No

M: and how about your identity? Because in terms of you surely, your name is part of you... like I am Micky

K: OK, we gonna go deep down. For me like... yeah, the name is part of who you are, and you can be strong or weak. Micky it sounds pretty for someone and weird for another and its related to your identity for sure. For me even though it depends, it is related to my identity, but my identity is a lot more than that. I don't really care much

Getting deep
Viewing name as part of identity

Name being related to identity
Seeing identity as much more

about names so I feel neutral when someone calls me Pittipong, Sean... Kip or something like that

Feeling neutral about name

M: So, it's just a part of...

K: It's a part of my identity but it's not the all of it.

Name being part of identity

M: That's so interesting because sometimes when I have been teaching and I have taught in lots of different countries and taught lots of different people and some people have been unhappy that I have not pronounced their name properly, even if I have said it.. Made an attempt. The pronunciation of Micky can be different but I don't care because the name is the same but I don't care. And in some situations I have called someone by their name and they've told me that that's not he right pron.. isn't that so interesting ... why some people really care.

Pronunciation being important

K: Yeah, but I don't deny that influence or... it can affect you directly and... It's not about this topic... but what is obvious is the sense of humour when you are for example with your Asian friends and you have the same sense of humour you can feel like the language... are.. Chinese friends are... How they communicate it to you affects how you feel in response. Like when you talk to people and you have a different sense of humour and like you feel some sort of barrier... like between you and the western guy. And it's related directly to the language.

Seeing humour as important
Being with Asian friends
Having common sense of humour
Sharing common language
Mode of communication matters
Talking
Having difference humour
Seeing a humour barrier
Relating humour to language

M: Is this something that you experienced a lot? This year?

Experiencing humour barrier

K: Yes, this is the new thing that I have learnt.

Learning something new

M: You are giving me an Asian - European divide...

K: What i have learnt when I studied here is that we understand things differently... like for Asian people we said apologise and say we are sorry all the time and sometimes we are not taking it seriously. Ok sorry fine... ok done everything is done. For example when I went to my supervisor for the first time he talked about my writing and he said it is quite bad on this part and not good enough on this point and I said "oh David I'm sorry" [laughs] and what his reaction is like "oh nooo... you don't need to be sorry it is not a big deal" And you know what I mean like it is not that degree of apologising it just... ok I'm just sorry but it's not like the world is collapsing. And I felt

Learning
Understanding this differently
Being sorry
Being overly sorry
Seeing supervisor
Talking about writing
Getting critiqued
Recounting a story
Finding humour in situation

like "oh shit, what have I done?" And it's related to the same meaning, but the reaction is different depending on the culture.

Recounting experiences

M: And that was with a member of academic staff? Was that the same with classmates? [K: Yeah] and who were your classmates, where were they from?

K: They were all British, one German.

Having mostly UK peers

M: And how do you feel. There is obviously a cultural divide in some way in expressing things in some way, for example with saying I'm sorry, how about in other aspects such learning in the classroom. Have you been divided, have you learnt together, how do you think it has been?

Having a cultural divide

K: As I said this is still the new thing for me and I am struggling... well I'm not struggling but I'm still learning how to cope with it... And that aspect is when you try to like... talk about things or try to discuss something in your class there is a line... Of which you can talk about something which is reasonable... and the one who is too ambitious. It is a blurred line for me. I am still trying to cope with that.

Experiencing something new
Grappling with new context
Grappling with aspects
Discussing new things
Working out a line
Being reasonable
Trying to cope

M: Could you tell me a little bit about something which is too ambitious.

K: When I was in Thailand we aren't allowed to talk that much in the class and the teachers have more power than the students but when I studying here many of my lecturers told me that "we are not the ones that have power - we are not the ones who know better than we you we are the facilitator - you can discuss everything" and the UK students they are brave to talk in class to express their thoughts but sometimes when they are talking for a while.. For example... "Hey Micky tell us what is good about Thai students" and you discuss for 5 mins like you talk by yourself, like dominating the class, sometimes some of the lecturers will tell you that that is too much or too ambitious [M: like you need to shut up] yes! And that is what I am still learning. Where is the line and what is acceptable and what is the expectation?

Being devalued in Thailand
Being disempowered
Seeing different power structures
Discussing power
Being encouraged to voice
Being able to discuss everything
Being brave in class
Talking too much
Giving examples

Seeing domination as negative
Being too ambitious
Needing to shut up
Learning where the line is
Learning about expectations

M: and therefore, when you have spoken up, I presume that you have spoken up.

K: yes but I haven't had any problems yet as I am still learning from my friends as English is not my first language right and it is hard for me to talk for a long while... So, don't have it yet, it's about the other students.

Speaking up
Learning from friends
Finding it hard to talk for long
Being about others

M: and when you say that British students are brave to speak up... Why is that?

K: Why is that? For me personally? It is deep down like... it depends on your culture and your society and where you came from right. We are not ruled by the real democratic system. It's a military regime and there is power everywhere. It is so bound up with your culture. You have a military regime and you also have a hierarchy in the society. So, it means that when you contact people in all aspects of your life. Like when you wake up in the morning and you meet your father and your mother because you have to be more humble for elder people and after you finish from your house and you go to school you meet teachers that have more power than you and you have to be more humble and you spend most of the day in your school and most of you adolescence you spend lots of time in school so you can see that it is easy for someone to get used to culture and values.

Seeing culture as key
Seeing own political context as key
Being disempowered culturally
Being bound up with culture
Being from a hierarchy
Contacting people
Waking up in the morning
Having cultural habits
Being humble
Having routines
Having institutionalised power struct
Spending all day being a certain way
Being conditioned
Being institutionalised
Being acculturated
Internalising values

M: yeah that makes complete sense and when you go into Thai culture there is a social hierarchy and that exists between people for example parents and child and teacher and student and then in wider society you have a royal family as well and then a military government.

Being part of a social hierarchy

K: And you spend a lot of time with your family in (unclear) and when you meet other people outside of this you then have to be humble for other people to admire you. To value you as a good kid.

Spending time with family
Meeting others
Being socialised to be humble
Being valued in a certain way

M: and as an adult it is similar, to be valued you have to be humble?

Being valued

K: Yeah, I don't know about Western society but in Asian society we always like have people who don't express themselves that much. Maybe we don't talk to people who have piercings or tattoos or something like that and maybe we admire people who is tidy and polite and who doesn't talk trash.

Being appreciated as inexpressive
Not talking to people
Not being different
Admiring cleanliness

M: So then when you come to this culture and when you

Changing cultures

come to master's seminars and stuff like that, how does it affect how you study?

K: Actually, I prefer to study in this country because I can express my thoughts directly, I can talk as much as I want as long as it is connected to the topic. For example, in my halls I have British flatmates and they always talk about the Queen or the royal family and it's quite comfortable to talk. But in Thailand we cannot talk about this stuff. You have to keep silent all the time you have to keep quiet. I dunno why. We cannot criticise the royals.

M: I guess it's what you are saying isn't it? You would be rejected by other if you were to be critical of the royal family. I realised that as tourist as Thailand. I'm a republican. I would want a republic here. I don't think that you should expect someone to be a king or a queen. I think that... I can't see any justifiable reason to have one at all. However, when I go to Thailand I know to keep my mouth shut.

K: I don't know why, and it doesn't make sense. Criticism is not a bad thing right. You can criticise people and make them better. You can talk with reason. It doesn't mean that you will go harsh on other people you just criticise.

M: How does that affect reading for you and how you criticise when you are reading and authors?

K: It affects me like less than other Thai people, but it also has something that affects me. And I don't feel confident enough to criticise a big name. If Micky Ross is the prof in in language or something like that and I have to criticise your work, I will feel a bit nervous about my thoughts and if they are good enough. And I really struggle with the first half of this year of my study. I got only 50 something in.... I tried to criticise someone who is a big name in a field of philosophy and what I did is try to find references as much as I can to support my voice and I got just 50 and my lecturer told me that I don't need to find that much references and you can write it on your own voice. Like you can be confident and if you can write an essay which is well organised then it would be better than finding all these references.

M: And when did you get this feedback. Was it in Feb or term 2?

Preferring UK style of education
Being allowed expression
Having boundaries
Talking with UK flatmates
Being allowed expression
Being silenced
Having to keep silent
Being unable to criticise

Being reject by society

Having political opinions

Keeping quiet

Not getting rationale
Believing criticism as a positive
Talking with reason
Being harsh

Being freer than other Thais
Not feeling confident
Not criticising a big name

Feeling nervous
Struggling
Getting lower grades
Criticising a big name
Finding references
Trying to support voice
Being realigned
Writing with own voice
Being told to be confident in self
Being well organised

K: Term 1. Yeah my first two modules I was really struggling.

Reflecting on first assignments
Struggling

M: So you found the first term more difficult than the second term. When did you get these 50? Can you remember the month?

K: Yeah it was about January or in the new year

M: How did you feel when you got those grades?

K: Oh I got lost because actually this is actually another. The things that I learnt in the pre-session course is different from my department. The tradition of writing is like completely different. When I was on PS course Ellie told me like you have to use academic language and you have to write with the formal style and I had good marks on that but I think that most of the things that the dept in the university they use that style but not in Philosophy. I wrote my first two essays in academic style and it was really bad and my supervisor told me to use informal words all along. Yeah and I think this is specific to philosophy, they want me to speak in first person like a narrative. Actually the rhetorical structures and quite different. You have to continually repeat stuff to allow the reader to keep up. I've never experienced that before.

Getting lost
Learning on pre-session programme
Being unprepared for department
Being misinformed
Using academic language
Using a formal style successfully
Reflecting on department
Using particular styles
Getting bad grades
Using wrong conventions
Getting to know discipline conventions
Narrating in writing
Getting to know rhetorical structures
Continually repeating
Experiencing new rhetorical styles

M: And did they tell you about this before.

Not being told about rhetorical structures
Writing in the wrong way
Being told structures are wrong

K: No! No! And I wrote really formal English and my lecturer told me that this is not what we need in our department.

M: That must have been quite a shock??

Being shocked
Struggling
Developing coping mechanisms
Not having a support structure
Navigating difficulty

K: Yeah and I felt like I was struggling really. I get lost like how can I cope with this and it's not PS anymore and I don't have anyone to ask and I feel... what happened? How can I write?

M: Too things there that I want to talk about. Firstly, the expectations and why they didn't make it clear and the second thing is who did you turn to?

Having unclear expectations
Having somewhere to turn

K: First of all my supervisor Ben. He is really kind and a new PhD and just graduated this year and quite the same

Turning to supervisor
Having a new PhD supervisor

age as me. I don't know why but he is really kind to me and he always followed up my work how it's going and things like that and I asked him questions about writing.

Having staff of a similar age
Being kind
Following up
Having contact to ask questions

M: And he was the person that helped you?

K: yeah a lo

M: And did you reach out to him or did he happen to ask you... "Oh hey, how's it going?"

K: I don't know other dept but in Philosophy we have to write something and the conversation begins after you write something but one he has seen my work he gave me lost of suggestions.

Having a formative task
Starting a conversation
Looking at work
Getting suggestions

M: and when did you actually write something? Was that the actual assignment or was there something before this?

K: Something before this, it's quite weird in my dept as we have to submit the proposal for the dissertation in the first term. But by that time I do not know what I am going to write but you have to submit the proposal and say what you are interested in the first three weeks. So Ben saw my proposal and said it is not the style of writing we need in our department, but I could not get the clear concept about it but once I submitted the first two assignments then I knew that it is in the wrong direction.

Seeing dept as weird
Submitting proposal
Not knowing about own research
Submitting proposal
Being interested
Not having the correct style
Not getting clear concept
Submitting first two assignments
Knowing the direction is wrong

M: So just to confirm it. You wrote with the academic style that you had in this proposal. Ben say in this proposal that it's maybe not what you want to do.

Writing with an academic style
Getting feedback
Not doing what you want

K: But I didn't care...

M: So you maybe didn't realise how serious it was and then you went to do the assignment and got the results from the assignment afterand they said to you...

Not caring

K: this is something serious that you have to cope with (fix)

Not realising the severity
Doing the assignment
Getting results

M: And was it the content or the writing that wasn't good enough or just the style or both, Because if it was the style but the content was good then...

Attending to serious problem

K: yeah it was also the content, which was not clear enough for philosophy. I said it's because when I wrote on

the PS course it was good enough with the same content and the same style but when I got in the department in the first term they said it is not clear enough for philosophy.

M: Because philosophy needs some sort of special clearness?

K: Yeah you have to... you have to separate everything. For example, if I said that "micky is the one who is unhappy" this is enough for the essay in the PS. But in Philosophy "Micky is unhappy - first I will discuss 'unhappy means that...'" secondly I will interpret why Micky is related to this issue and I will find the solution.

M: So it's really like breaking up every little thing

K: You have to break up everything as much as possible.

M: So for me it sounds like an issue for you as the learner about expectation and learning about learning.

K: I'm not sure.. It's entirely different from learning on the PS. But I'm not sure whether the problem is on me... or if it's the expectation. I'm not sure. Maybe the essay that I wrote on the PS is not good also but Ellie is kind.... But I said to my PS friends and they said that they are fine, like the way that Ellie taught us is the same as the expectations of those departments.

M: It all kind of sounds a bit mysterious. It's like there's this mysterious formula. You don't find out until you get results and that seems quite harsh. I don't feel happy about that.

K: I dunno.. I don't take it as a miserable thing, I take it was an experience and something that I have to find the answer to during the time

M: And do you feel like you have worked it out and know what you are doing. In the second term had you worked out the system.

K: Yes... The other thing that in the first term I didn't know that you don't have to read everything to follow the class. You just participate the class and pick up a point here and there, which is related to your essay. It is not necessary for you to pick up every point. But this point Ellie has told me. But I feel like to be a good student I have to follow up the issues so first of all I tried to read everything and this wastes time.

Not getting it
Being good enough before
Getting to the dept
Not being clear enough for dept

Having specific conventions
Giving examples

Being specific
Finding a solution

Breaking things up

Breaking up as much as pos

Having an issue as a learner
Knowing about expectations
Learning being completely different
Considering self as problem
Being unclear about expectation
Questioning past education
Reaching out to old peers
Rethinking past education
Knowing that others are fine

Facing opaque practice
Facing mystery

Facing challenge positively
Having a necessary experience
Getting there over time

Working it out

Having a system
Reflecting
Changing attitude about reading
Picking up points
Finding key information
Being specific
Being told this before

M: and why do you feel like you have to do that? Is it because of your former education?

K: Yes, because in Thailand it's not similar to this. Before the final essay you have some homework, so it is different. It's not about attendance or being critical. You just pick up a topic that you are interested in and you write about it.

M: Ok, so you think that you have worked out the academic system for writing and also you have worked out the reading strategy.

K: Yeah, but the reading does not affect that much I think compared with the mysterious thing about writing.

M: ok, so the writing is the important thing but the reading is helpful?

K: yeah, I just realised that I waste time so I change. Yeah but the writing... you don't know where to go.

M: And do you think that the writing was a common experience with regards to the mysterious thing and the reading. Do you think that this was an experience that other students had or was this just you?

K: I think.. It's hard to say because it depends on the dept. Maybe..

M: I'm asking about philosophy students not the PS students.

K: As I told you, all the philosophy students are UK right. I don't have any asian colleagues. Only a German person, and she has studied abroad before in the states so she has realised this style of writing.

M: And how about the UK students?

K: Yeah they are ok because it is the same with their studies in their bachelor degrees. This is not different. In philosophy there are no Asian students. Even in the big class with the BA students, I didn't see any asians. Only me.

Having engrained beliefs
Reading everything
Wasting time

Attributing beliefs to schooling
Having homework
Reflecting on schooling

Working something out
Academic writing
Having reading strategies

Not being affected by reading
Finding writing conventions mysteriou

Seeing writing as important

Realising time wasted
Being lost with writing

Reflecting on writing

Seeing writing as dept specific

Dept being UK dominated
Not having Asian colleagues
Studying abroad before
Realising rhetorical differences

Home students being fine
Having done UK BA
Not having Asian students

M: DO you think the that you feel a sense of belonging with this group?

K: Yeah, I don't have any problems with like making friends. But I have some issues with the sense of humour.

M: So the sense of humour is a barrier but in fact the relationship is ok?

K: yeah when you talk with general topics it is fine but when you try and make fun it is an issue

M: therefore you feel a sense of belonging with this community in terms of friendship, what about an academic community?

K: Yeah this is also the big thing that I have learnt and it's really exciting for me... for example all of the issues and the materials are from the Western world. We don't have a philosophy system for Thailand. All the materials are from the Western world. Consequently, the academic philosophy society in the UK is fairly broad and there are many branches of philosophy to study. Then you will realise that there are many things that in this life you will never know. Like for example I study God and you study education and there is no way I will know Education. So I'm going to study God so I will not study education. There is something called colloquium and everyone has to attend it and write 500 words. So it meant that when I attended the colloquium I met many issues which are not related or that I have not heard off... Such as risk aversion... I never heard of this is this philosophy!? This made me feel really nervous because... my friend told me that in other departments they also have the colloquium that you have to attend but my Chinese friends, when they attend the colloquium, they can help each other. If you don't understand you can share the problems. But I have to cope with all of this myself.... With wtf issues. I don't know and have never heard of. So, I have learned that in academia it is really important to protect your voice and to be confident to insist or to keep what you have known. Like you will not survive if I go and study other things that interest me. You have to keep to your own thing. Some kind of identity and it is necessary for someone to keep on track and keep within a community.

Being other in a discipline

Not having a problem
Having issues with humour

Seeing humour as a barrier

Speaking generally
Joking being an issue

Learning

Seeing a Western world
Reflecting on Thai philosophy
Seeing Western world as academic
Seeing a board church
Having many branches
Seeing many things in life
Studying something specific
Not knowing a subject
Focussing on something specific
Having to attend
Writing
Meeting issues
Learning about risk
Learning new things
Feeling nervous
Having a colloquium
Speaking to Chinese friends
Getting help from Asian colleagues
Understanding together
Coping myself
Grappling with new concepts alone
Protecting voice
Being confident
Trying to survive
Studying other things
Keeping to your own subject

M: So, you want to have an academic identity as part of something.

Keeping an identity
Keeping within a community

K: I'm not sure if it is a suitable word but it is necessary to survive, and you should not become distracted by other issues.

Having an academic identity

M: Do you feel like you have a voice and an academic identity in what you are doing?

Being unsure about the term identity
Not getting distracted

K: I think the word is not identity. It is normal for someone in academia not to know about topics which are not in your field. It's ok to dip into other knowledge but you cannot lose something in another subject. For example, I do philosophy of religion which is more narrative than philosophy of mathematics. The way that you do philosophy of mathematics is that you do logic... or symbols or something like that. So, it's going to be ok if I try to study it but it's not going to be when I feel nervous... why I cannot do this... why I cannot do the logic... But then I don't belong there I belong to the religion.

Having a voice

Rejecting idea of identity
Bypassing others' topics
Dipping into other topics

M: because it is your field.

Doing something in a certain way
Having conventions

K: I dunno if it is the word identity but you can get lost... Maybe it is too strong... Maybe it is belonging... I am still learning to cope with all the things that I have said. Even when someone talks about it... If you don't know about one topic you will feel uncomfortable... It is important to feel comfortable.

Feeling nervous
Feeling lost in something unfamiliar
Belonging to something

M: And do you feel comfortable and safe with your dissertation now?

Being unsure about the term identity
Belonging
Learning to cope
Having specific knowledge
Feeling comfortable

K: I feel comfortable because I already know what is the expectation of the writing and which part I have to explain more.

Feeling comfortable
Having expectations

M: How do you feel when you think that you have come thru all of this. Like you've done a lot in the last year. My goodness... There is so much...

K: It's still fun for me.

Coming a long way

M: So, you are enjoying it?

Still enjoying the journey

K: I dunno... have you heard that a lot of students cry? Like PS students... In the first term or something like that but I have never cried from day one until now. Some things that I have to confront are difficult, but I feel that really stressed at the time, but I have never regret... or depressed.

M: And why is that, is it your personality?

K: I dunno, in the PS when we were... when it was new, even though to meet you is to meet you people, but I have never felt negative or I have never... it's not my personality.

M: Do you feel like you have changed?

K: I feel like I have changed but not a lot. I know that I have to have clear expectation or clear concepts at the beginning. And don't panic too much.

M: So, these things have changed?

K: Yeah

M: what is your impression of the dept

K: I think that they are similar to philosophy in Thailand. They are not as strict with rules. For example, referencing. They are quite relaxed... But... I dunno how to explain overall, if you asked me about your supervisor... he is really kind to me. I dunno the way that other people's supervisors, but he made an appointment every week to follow up with the dissertation. He has corrected all of my language in the drafts. He made the appointments with me. He emailed the formal email, saying that you can have 3 appointments. But then when I met him he said, "ok let's meet every Friday."

M: Was that special treatment for you?

K: I dunno he was like you do this in your second language so let's meet every Friday.

M: Ok, so therefore, surely a really positive view of the supervisor?

Knowing that students cry
Crying in the first term
Never having cried
Confronting difficulty
Being stressed
Not feeling regret

Reflecting on studies
Meeting people
Not feeling negative
Having a particular personality

Having changed a lot
Having clear expectations
Beginning something

Realising things have changed
Seeing change in self

Seeing similarities to Thailand
Not being as strict
Being relaxed
Having a supervisor
Experiencing kindness
Being contacted by supervisor
Following up
Making appointment
Being emailed
Meeting supervisor
Having weekly contact

Having an understanding supervisor

K: Yeah. Maybe it is just lucky.

Being lucky

M: Yes, quite possibly. Ok. So, to finish up, culturally, how far from the academic culture you are? I feel like there is a cultural distance that needs to be addressed.

Having a cultural distance

K: I have learned that when you are Asian you will be the "others" for any scholars in the Western world. When I attended the seminar for Philosophy. It was a prof called Michael Ray, a big name in Philosophy of religion. When we finished he went to talk to other Western students, but he didn't bother speaking to me. When I said, I am Sean and I'm studying the philosophy of god, he was like... "hi".. And just kept going. I didn't take it seriously. This is the same in every field when you are the "no name" when you attend the community which has a lot of big names. You will feel like you will be the others... it is not important

Learning about self
Being othered as Asian
Attending seminars
Big name
Speaking to Western students
Being bypassed
Stating what I study
Being brushed off
Being a no name
Having no name in a community
Being the other

M: But you have felt othered because you are Asian?

Feeling othered as an Asian student

K: Yes, because I am Asian, and my English is not good enough sometimes to discuss to discuss deep issues. Yes, and I know when you talk with someone you can talk deeper, and it feel more comfortable and sometimes when you talk to someone and they cannot speak your language fluently it can be annoying. I understand that and also another point is that if you are a no name in a field of big names then it is normal for you to feel othered.

Being Asian
Not having language for deep issues
Understanding conversational formalitie
Feeling comfortable
Speaking with native speakers
Annoying others
Being a no name
Being othered is to be expected

M: So you are a no name and you're Asian and you don't speak English as you first language.

Being severely disadvantaged

K: Yes. And as we have discussed in the first part of the interview, all of the materials of Philosophy come from the Western, so I am the new comer, so it is normal. But if you go to study Thai studies for example and you are Thai. There is some of the materials you have studied.

Being at the bottom of the pile
Seeing materials as cultural
Being a new comer

M: And I think that this is something that I was trying to ask earlier and relates to belonging and before it seemed that you did belong to this community but now after you have said this it sounds like you are outside this academic community.

Belonging
Belonging to a community
Being outside a community

K: Yes, I see what you mean, it seems like a contradiction. At first, I told you that I am ok with all this community but in the conclusion it sounds like I am othered but for me it

Seeing a contradiction
Being ok with community
Being othered

depends on how you look at it... Like, I can belong to any community as a person, but it doesn't mean that you have to be someone in every aspect. For example, I know you as Micky and I feel like I belong to you and we can make fun or talk trash... I dunno, I can be comfortable with you as Micky but when you go into the seminar and become Micky Ross and become an expert on Philosophy of Education and I study geology, so then it is not about making fun... It is about Micky ROSS the BIG NAME.

M: So, it's about context really. Its back to talk about hierarchy...

K: I think that everywhere in the world there are things like that. But it's not the same as the hierarchy that we talk about in Thailand but it is different kind of.. You have to understand the Context and the situations that you are coping with.

M: There must be some transfer tho for you as a Thai person coming from that context. If as a Thai person you have to humble, surely that transfers, when you go into a seminar and someone stands up and speaks as an authority.

K: Yeah.. when we have discussed about the hierarchy in Thailand, you feel the power, and uncomfortable. But when we talk about the context of the seminar... when I go to this, I am a no name who tried to copy the big name but it doesn't mean that I cannot say what I want to say... If it is wrong, and i am the no name then I will say "you are wrong!" I can say this right, it is quite different.

M: because there is not an uncomfortable power or a vicious power.

K: However, you have to realise that it has the line between the big name and the no name, you have to realise that and you can say "more comfortable" than in Thailand but you have to know that there are some things that you cannot say. Like I cannot humiliate you. I'm not going to say that I think I can write better than that. Maybe if you are both the big names you can say these things to a certain degree.

M: Did you worry about being wrong when you were learning here?

Seeing belonging as situational
Explaining complexities
Being someone
Belonging to certain people
Being comfortable
Having roles
Performing roles
Having identities
Being a big name

Seeing context as important

Rejecting hierarchy
Grappling with situation
Understanding concepts a contexts
Coping

Cultural transfer
Moving contexts

Feeling the power
Being uncomfortable
Trygin to imitate the big names
Having space to voice
Being a no name
Seeing different power structures

Realising a line
Being apart from big names
Being more comfortable
Believing that there are requirements
Having ontological perspectives
Relating power to ontology

K: Sure!

M: and did it stop you from speaking?

K: I am used to speaking shit.

M: And did you worry about being wrong in Thailand?

K: It's not... I think it's not the word "worry" but i try to be more cautious. Slightly more free here but you have to think here when you speak and when you think you are more careful about what you say.

--

K: You know before hand on the PS course that you have to learn English. You're going to learn english and people feel like there is something mysterious in there that is going to affect your feelings, and make you feel uncomfortable....

M: So we are trying to get to the bottom of the mysterious thing...

K: Sometimes you study something and there is no mystery. Like everyone knows what it means when you study English, but you always feel that there is something mysterious or a barrier in the field that you are going to get in. Like we know what we are going to face when we learn language. We are going to discuss and write etc... We know what we are going to face. This is about the expectation also. We feel nervous that there is something that we cannot cope with.

M: they feel a sense of risk that it is going to go wrong.

K: Yeah

M: So, in that case they don't trust the tutor or the institution...?

K: Yeah... why we always feel the sense of risk even if we know the details. And when we get the results back we will see that the sense of risk that we felt is not real.

M: yeah... It's a construction

Worrying about errors

Being used to speaking shit

Having many worries
Being more free
Thinking and speaking
Being carefully about speech

Reflecting on PS
Knowing why you are doing something
Things being transparent
Feeling comfortable with that

Studying
Knowing there is global understanding
Feeling a barrier exists
Knowing what is ahead
Knowing interventions
Having expectations
Feeling nervous
Expecting something overwhelming

Experiencing risk

Not trusting

Questioning the continual risk
Getting results
Questioning the feeling of risk

Seeing risk as a construction

K: Yeah, I try to think about this and why in the educational system we always feel this sense of risk

M: I wonder if it is to do with past experiences of education where you are judged negatively... testing... It must be experience. Your life experience has told you that in this situation something must go wrong...

Considering education
Feeling continual risk

K: In English language... You know the details but....

Drawing on past experiences

M: yeah, risk is something that comes up in this a lot. Is it not being completely familiar with something or is... it's to do with familiarity, expectation... safety... it's all tied up. But I agree with you... it must come from experience... but you could fail....

Knowing details but feeling risk

K: When you look back to the situation it is not that serious as you had thought. This is one of the things... this is it... we always feel the risk all the time. It is similar to the writer when you write something or when you have to face the blank page. You feel the risk again. This is not going to disappear.

Reflecting on experiences
Seeing trivial experiences
Feeling risk at time
Facing something
Feeling risk with blank page

M: I wonder if it is to do with failure.

K: even if you are the writer who has never failed before you will feel risk...

Fearing failure

M: maybe you expect that failure will come at some time.

Feeling risk

K: even if you are the one who has been successful for most of your life you will feel the risk.

Expecting failure at some point

M: I wonder if, you know how sometimes, there is a person who finds out that they have cancer... they suddenly don't feel risk anymore. They do these things with their lives because there are going to die. Like I don't care about that anymore because I don't feel the risk.

Having been successful
Feeling risk

K: But why can we not adjust this thing to education. We know all the details...

M: So death in education is failure and that is the end of the risk. Surely with education. Yeah it is always there, and it is always going to be judged and the risk is that they might reject it.

Adjusting education
Knowing the details

K: Maybe there is a biological factor or something. There are so many people who are struggling and have to quit the course and I am just trying to understand why we feel like that.

M: maybe we have evolved to always feel suspicious.

K: Maybe you look back and fear that you will fail the course, but the sun is going to rise in the morning. We can't feel comfortable all the time

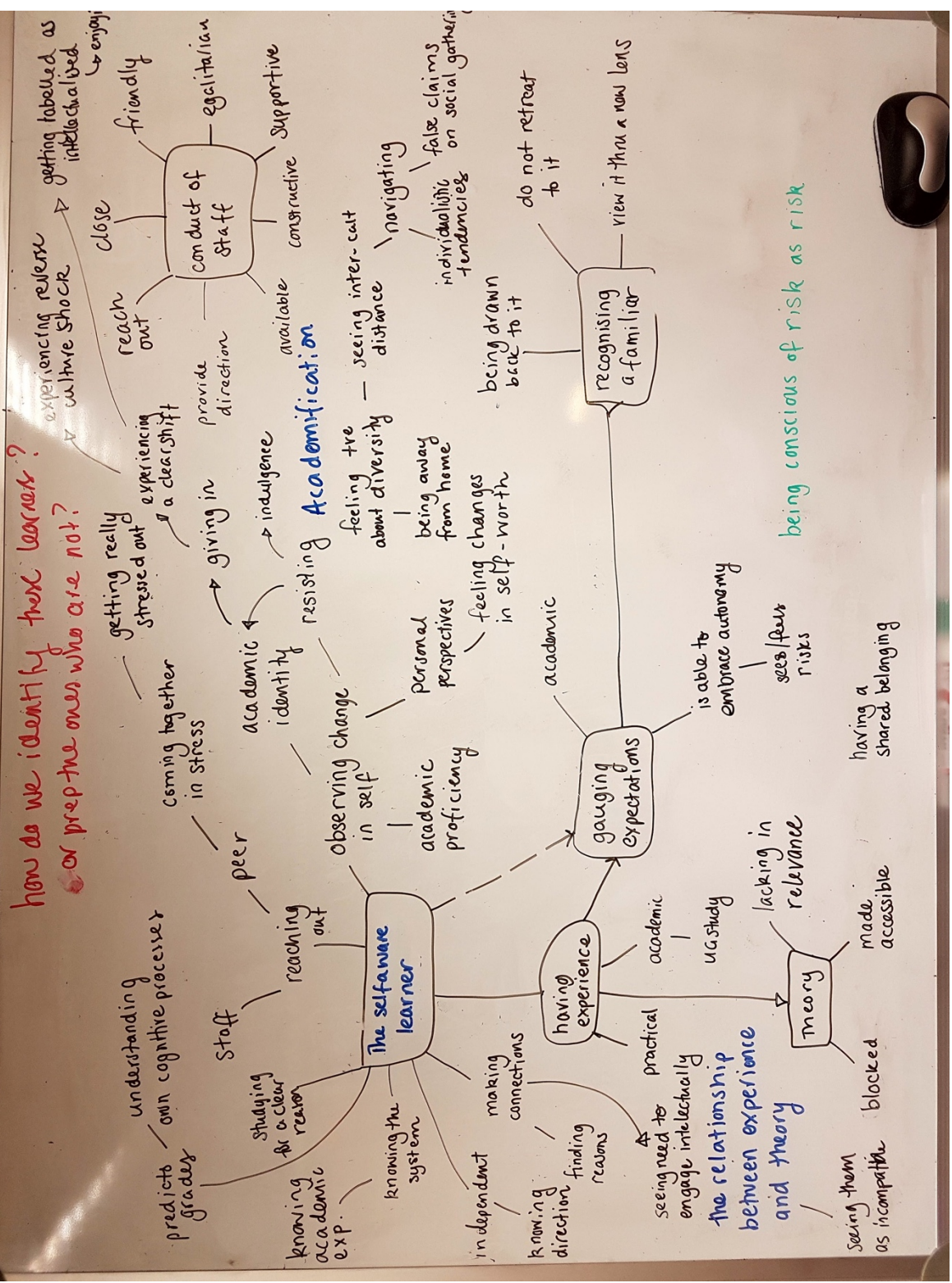
M: If you're parents have invested a lot of money in you and you fail then you have wasted their money and that must be a burden to them.

Relating biological factors
Struggling
Quitting
Grappling to understand

Feeling suspicious

Looking back
Life goes on
Feeling comfortable

Being a burden to family



being conscious of risk as risk

The self-aware learner

- What does it develop out of?
- What questions does it raise?
- What are some examples?
- What does it cause?
- How is it delineated?
- What does this lead to?

Academic Migration

needing theoretical foundation
 picking apart own culture
 experiencing pressure as a motivation for study
 getting closer over time
 being worried by articles
 getting too involved in texts
 being bound to parents
 considering power

having a start point so far behind
 feeling far from real life
 trying to make sense of stuff
 believing others know more
 having a difficult year
 not knowing about social sciences
 travelling a cultural distance
 not being informed about the system
 having a cultural disconnect
 not figuring out the rules
 facing inflexible rules
 getting closer over time
 being bound to parents
 considering power

learning from Eurocentric context
 holding back
 reaching out to peers
 finding own language a barrier
 working alone
 experiencing cultural distance
 seeing relevant gap
 struggling with linguistic lens
 finding dead ends
 believing you are the worst
 having gap in expectations
 changing dramatically
 being used to non-conformist language
 never considering identity

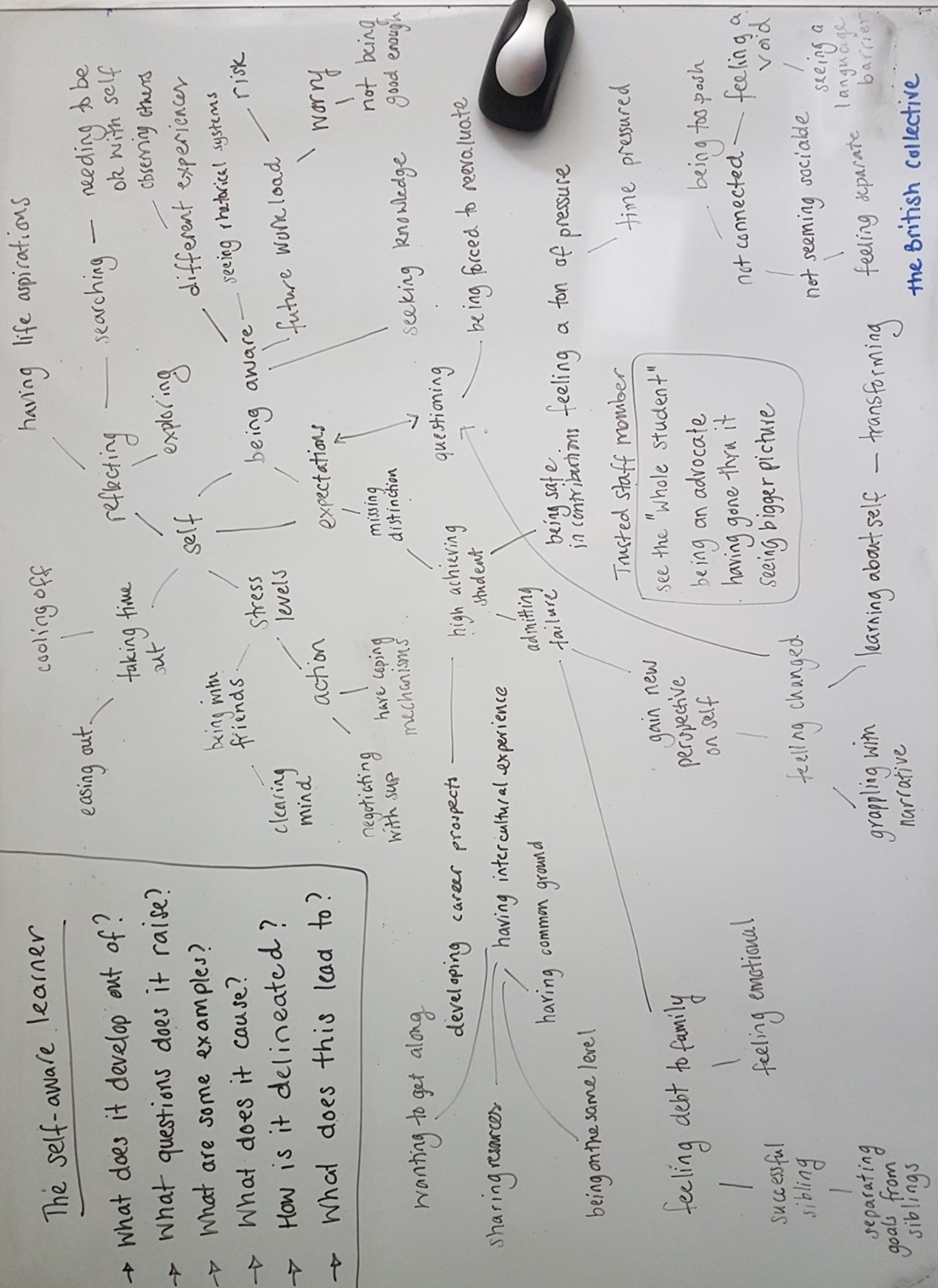
translating to Chinese
 looking like an idiot
 knowing nothing
 discussing alien concepts
 being harshly critiqued
 feeling inferior
 being rejected
 being destroyed
 feeling inadequate

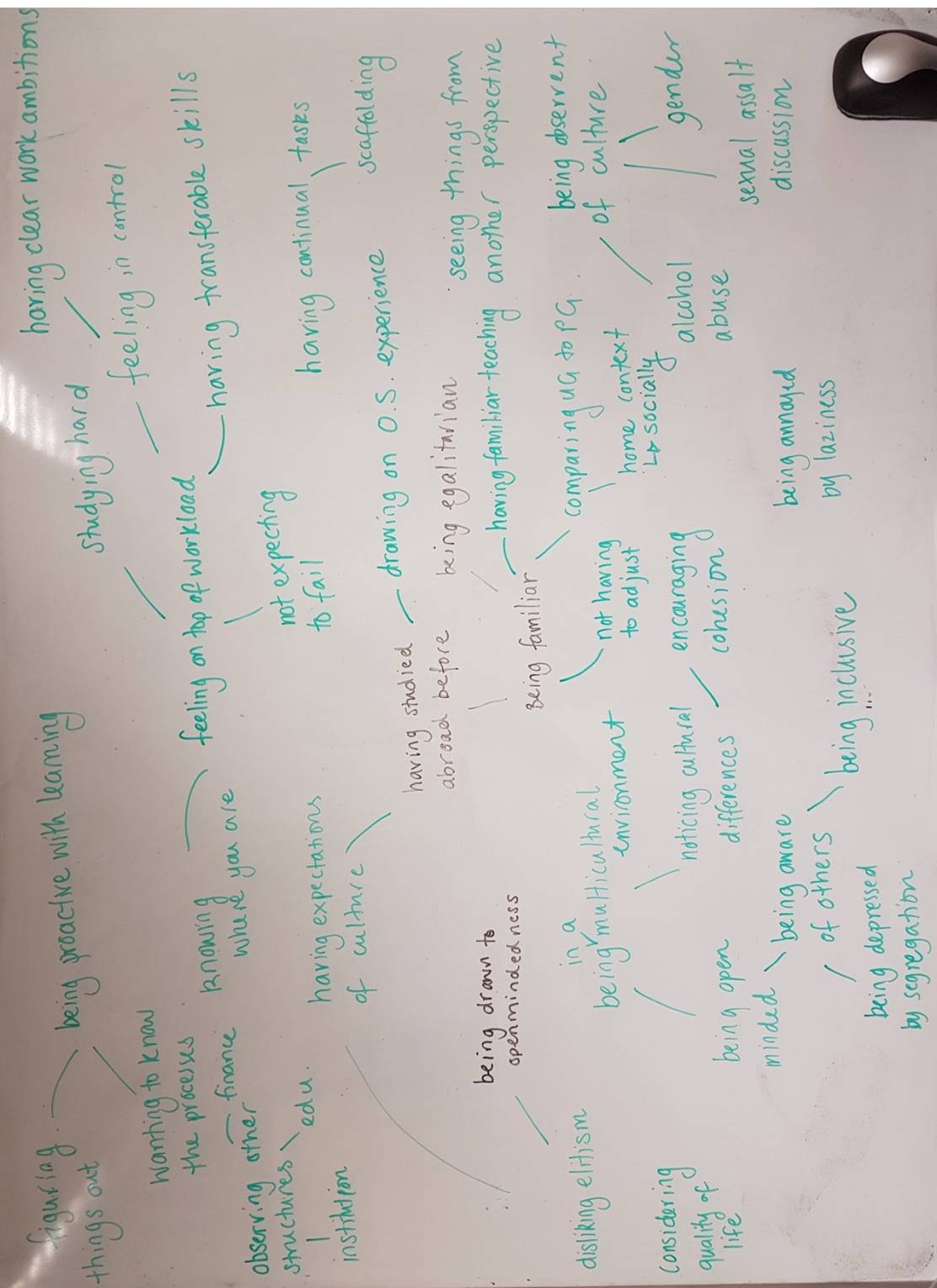
blaming self
 trying to connect
 struggling with sources
 referencing
 groping with nuanced terms
 Not being able to find voice

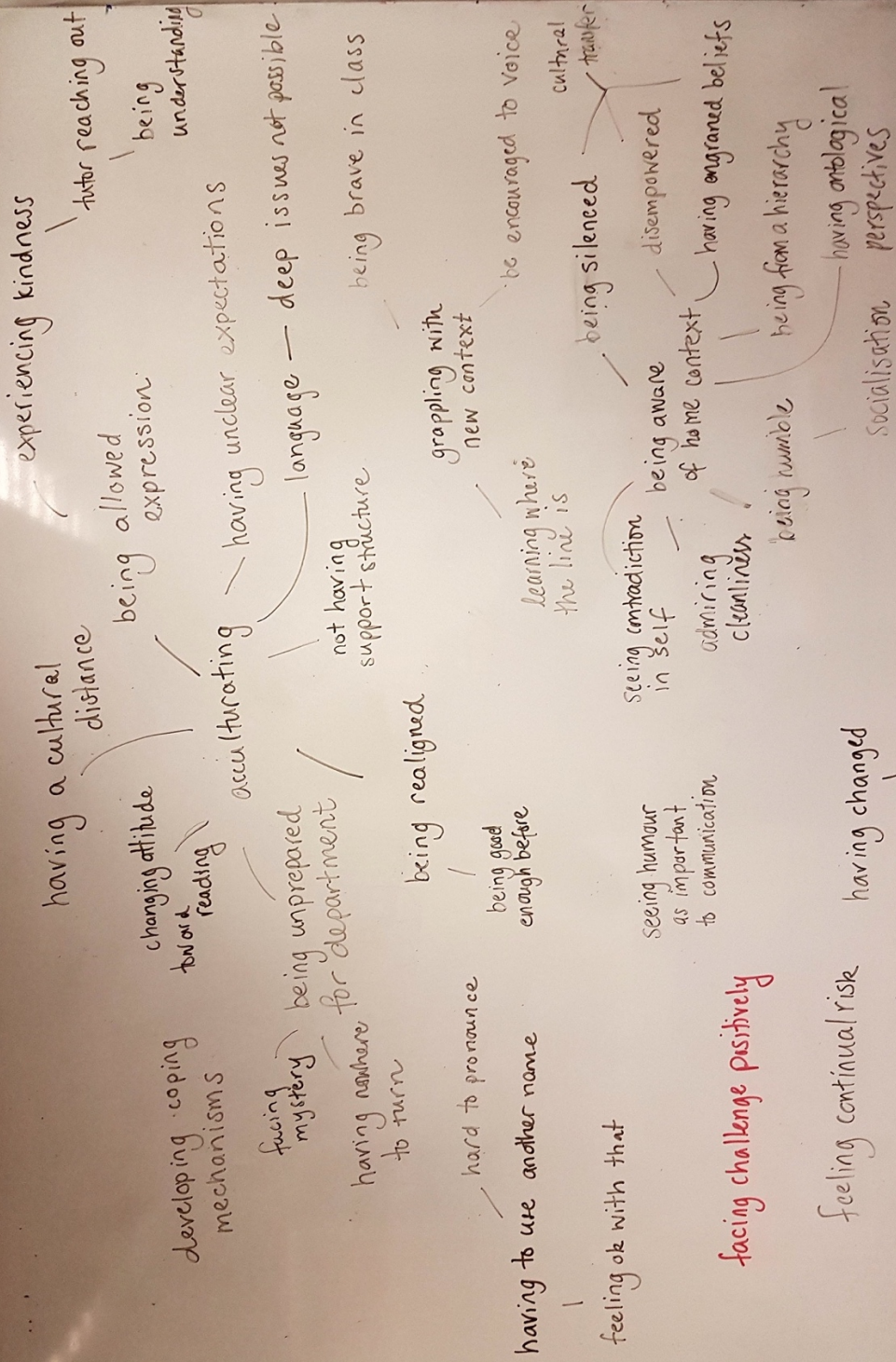
be unaware
 having to reprogramme brain
 being bound to parents
 considering power

The self-aware learner

- What does it develop out of?
- What questions does it raise?
- What are some examples?
- What does it cause?
- How is it delineated?
- What does this lead to?





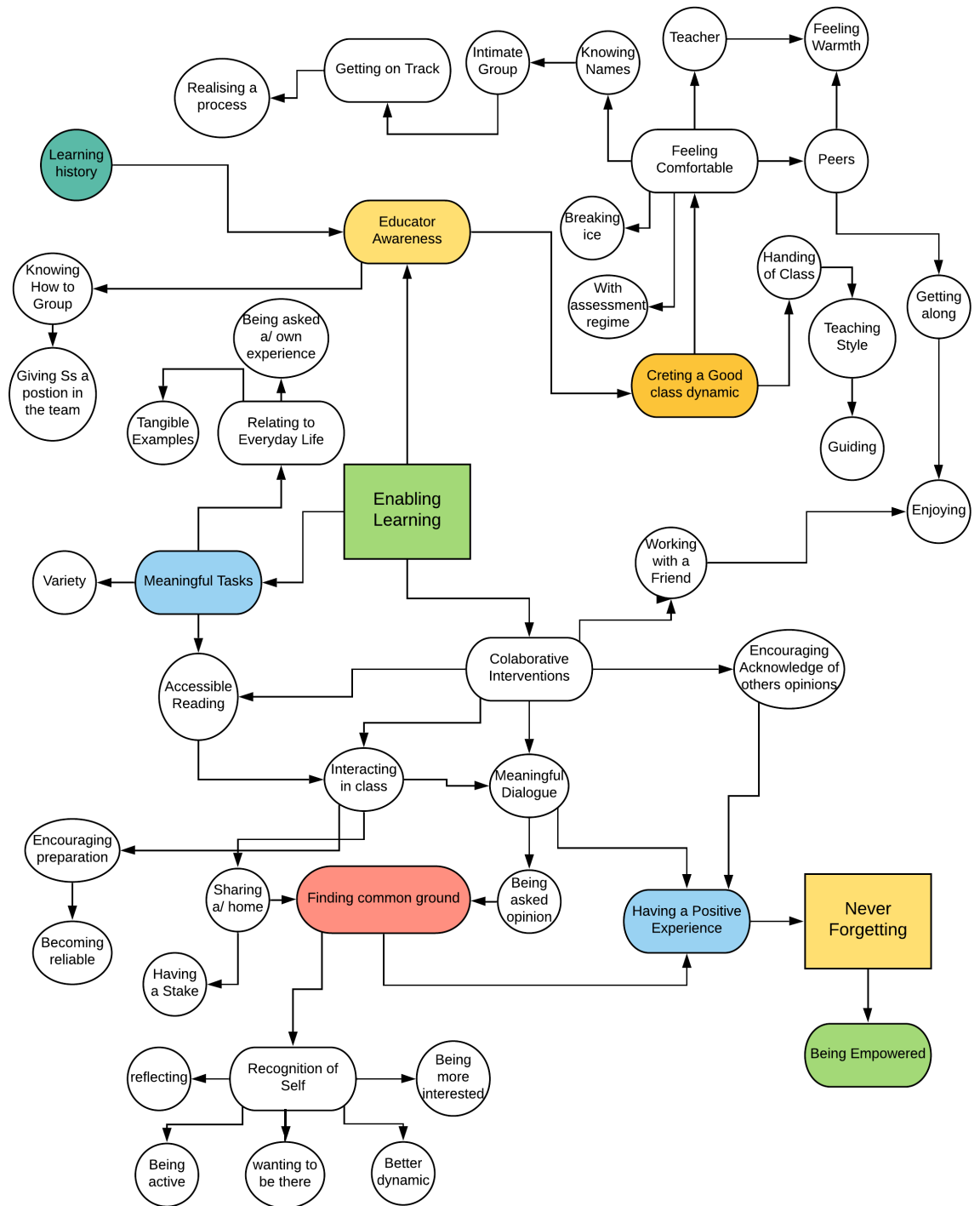


facing challenge positively

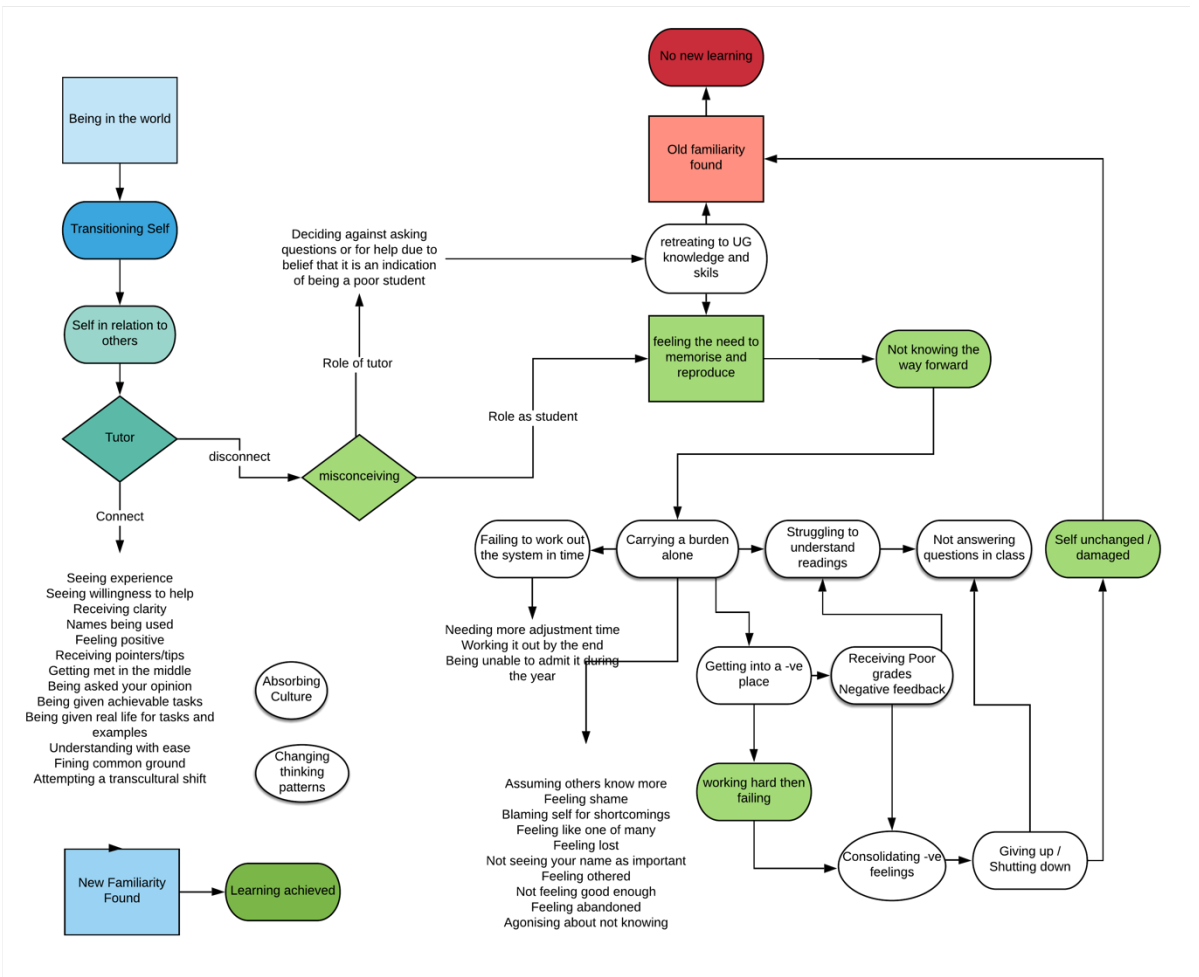
fearing failure

Appendix 6: Mind Maps

Enabling Learning

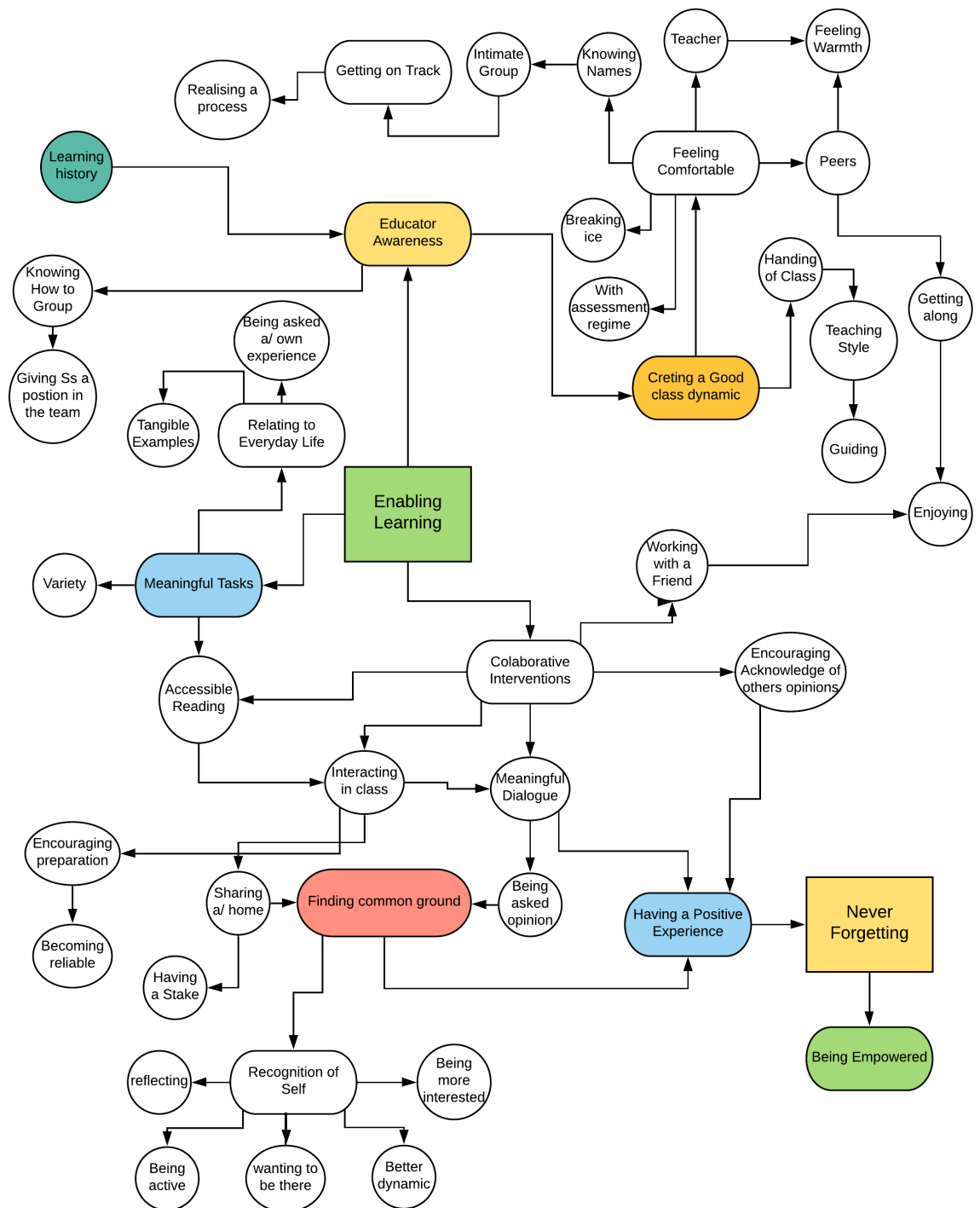


Finding familiarity



Appendix 7: Mind Maps and Memos

Enabling Learning



Enabling learning or being an enabler might be one of the most important components in what it takes to make a good educator in advanced learning. Where enabling begins has to be with the awareness of the educator. This awareness is about things such as knowing how to group students. At the beginning, this might be trial and error, but it is also about having social skills and having an

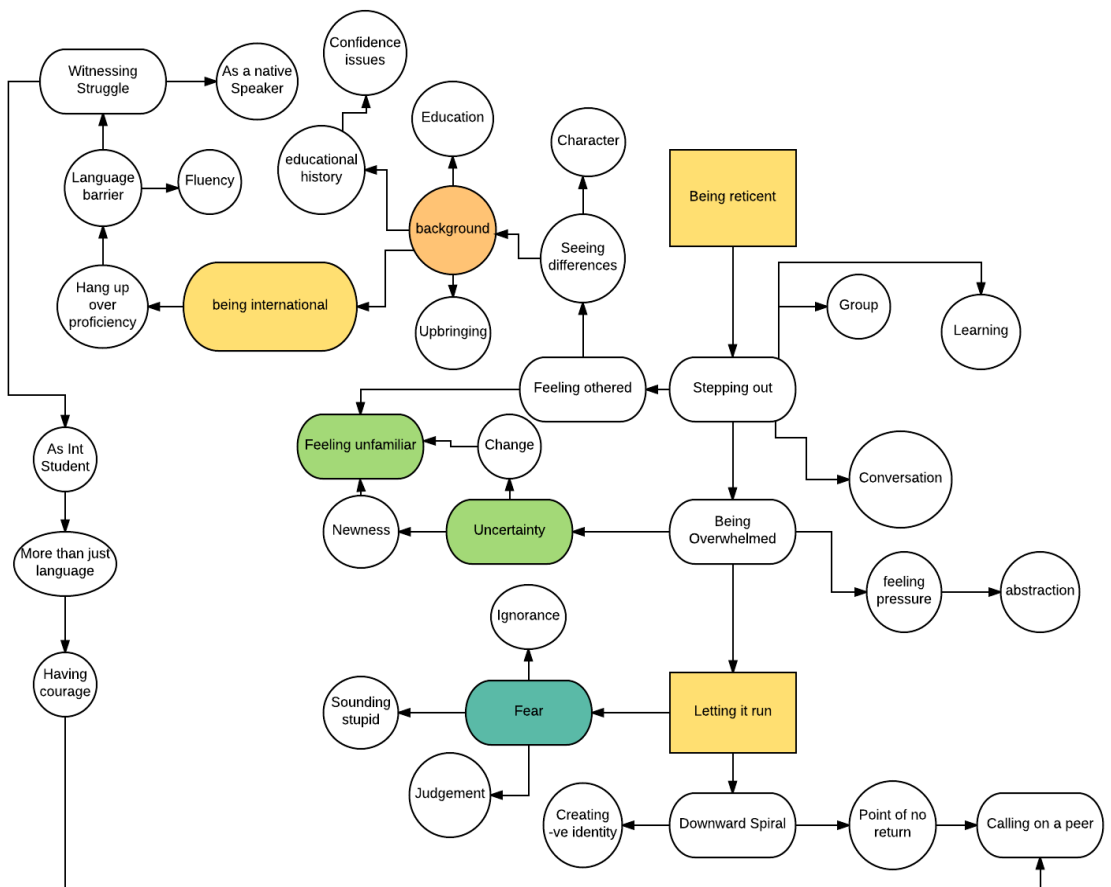
idea of who will work well with who. This could be further informed by knowing about the learner's learning history.

Having awareness as an educator then allows you to create a good class dynamic. This is the feeling of comfort that is created by teacher and peers. Aspects of this are breaking the ice, getting students familiar with the assessment regime, know everyone's names. All of this helps to create an intimate group, helping students to get on track and scaffolding them to realising the process of their learning. Success in this can be seen when peers are getting along and enjoying their learning experience.

Students have to be engaged with meaningful tasks. This may include relating learning to everyday life, giving the students variety, giving the students accessible readings and building on this and the class dynamic with integration, sharing experiences, encouraging preparation. Encouraging preparation is important because it helps students to build up a reputation for being reliable. Ultimately, with collaborative interventions, meaningful dialogue, and drawing on what students already know to help them build together.

Letting it Run

Letting it run is an interesting concept where the student misses their chance, or doesn't speak up, to stop the flow of the class to say that they are lost or do not understand. As the class goes on they are unable to



Learning history

- Background
 - Educational History
 - Being international
 - Language barrier
 - Hang up over proficiency
 - Witnessing from the other side as a native speaker
- Confidence

Differences and Unfamiliarity

- Change
- Newness
- Unfamiliarity
- Feeling othered
- Own character Vs those in class

Fear

Fear allows negative learning experiences to continue. Fear invokes a need for safety, and this need creates a desire for known teaching strategies, even if these are clearly unhelpful to the student.

- Looking ignorant or stupid
- Negative evaluation and judgement by peers or educator

Reticent

- Being overwhelmed
- Abstraction
- Stepping out of
 - Group
 - Conversation
 - Learning

Downward Spiral

- Creating negative identity
- Point of no return

Seeking out a peer

- Pulling together?

Countering Negative Learning Experiences

Pulling together counters negative learning experiences

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