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**A Phenomenological Study of
the meanings of approaches to learning
in Higher Education**

Kay Greasley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

REFERENCE

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SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY
LEARNING CENTRE
COLLEGIATE CRESCENT
SHEFFIELD S10 2BP

Abstract

This study critically examines the meaning of approaches to learning in a Higher Education setting. In particular it highlights 'how' students learn by examining the way in which they approach their studies.

The initial investigations into Approaches to Learning were conducted [in Sweden] by Marton and Säljö [during the sixties and seventies]. In their qualitative, phenomenographic work they attempted to discover the student experience of learning, focussing upon their approach to learning. Two key classifications of student's approach to learning were the outcomes of this research. These were deep level processing approach and a surface level approach. It was claimed that the approach used would affect the level of understanding obtained.

This idiographic work was developed further by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983), however they directed the research in a nomothetic direction. The main outcome of their work was the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) which according to these authors could quantitatively measure a student's predisposition to selected Approaches to Learning.

The research approach adopted for this study does not however follow the nomothetic trend set by Entwistle and Ramsden, instead it attempts to develop the original work by Marton and Säljö by using an idiographic approach. The methodological approach used in this study is existential phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) as this allows an examination of the learner as an individual. Further this approach facilitates a full description of the lived experiences so that a full insight into the lifeworld of the student may be presented. By adopting this alternate approach it is possible to develop the work of Marton and Säljö and enable a critique of the nomothetic approach used by Entwistle and Ramsden.

The method used to enter the learner's lifeworld is qualitative interviews with six students studying in the Business School at the University of Derby. Each student was interviewed three times during the course of an academic year. The analytical procedure was guided by the rigours of a phenomenological methodology and a detailed profile of the individual lifeworld was formed. The Noesis-Noema distinction was also used as an analytical tool to summarise the meaning of learning for each of the participants.

The findings from this phenomenological study demonstrated that approaches to learning is a complex and unique experience for each learner. The lifeworld descriptions of each student demonstrates this complexity, in particular it illuminates the inter-relationships which contribute to the individual complex nature of approaches to learning. Despite the individualistic nature of approaches to learning there were some issues that were common to the learners sampled. The themes were sociality and the student's approach to learning, learning as a support to wider needs, the meaning of learning and the student approach and what they do when trying to learn. All of these themes played a part in the meaning of approaches to learning for the students sampled.

The phenomenological approach enabled an understanding of the complexity and individuality of approaches to learning by extricating the meanings of approaches to learning within the context of their lifeworld. The noema-noesis distinction proved invaluable as a heuristic device, identifying how the students 'approached' the 'object' of their learning. These findings highlighted the inadequacies of the ASI which is unable to elucidate the meanings and context of approaches to learning.

This study demonstrates that if we want to understand the meanings and depth of approaches to learning then we must go beyond quantifiable variables, the nomothetic approach and instead focus on the individual's situation in life, the idiographic approach.

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Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Chapter	Title	Page
1	Introduction	1
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 Background to Study	1
	1.3 Method of Enquiry	3
	1.4 The Study Aims	4
2	Literature Review	5
	2.1 Introduction	5
	2.2 Approaches to Learning	6
	2.3 Background of the ASI	13
	2.4 Gender Differences	14
	2.5 Gender and Approaches to Learning	20
	2.6 Conception of Learning	24
	2.7 Orientation to Learning	27
	2.8 Context of Learning	33
	2.9 Psychological Theories of Learning	39
	2.10 Summary	51
3	Methodology	53
	3.1 Introduction	53
	3.2 The Phenomenological Perspective	53
	3.3 Intentionality	55
	3.4 Noema and Noesis	56
	3.5 The Lifeworld	58
	3.6 Phenomenology and Phenomenographic Approach	65
	3.7 Phenomenology and the Idiographic/Nomothetic Distinction	69

4	The Developed Method	72
	4.1 Introduction	72
	4.2 The Interview Situation	74
	4.3 Introduction to the Interview	75
	4.4 The Uneven Conversation	76
	4.5 The Ending	79
	4.6 Recording the Interviews	80
	4.7 The Development of the Interviews	81
	4.8 Preparation for the Interviews	82
	4.9 Interview Analysis	87
	4.10 Conclusion	95
5	Findings	96
	5.1 Introduction to the lifeworld findings	96
	5.2 The Noema-Noesis summaries	96
	5.3 The Lifeworld of Gary	98
	5.4 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Gary	133
	5.5 The Lifeworld of Jim	140
	5.6 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Jim	172
	5.7 The Lifeworld of Clive	177
	5.8 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Clive	201
	5.9 The Lifeworld of Ophelia	206
	5.10 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Ophelia	226
	5.11 The Lifeworld of Diane	231
	5.12 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Diane	250
	5.13 The Lifeworld of Karen	255
	5.14 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Karen	274

6	Concluding Discussion	279
	6.1 Introduction	279
	6.2 Summary of Findings	279
	6.3 Critique of the Approaches to Studying Inventory	286
	6.4 A Discussion of Appropriate Approaches for the study of Student Learning	294
	6.5 Teaching and Learning Outcomes	298
	6.6 How can a tutor help Ophelia engage in her learning?	301
	6.7 The Future	304
	Bibliography	308
	Appendices	
	Appendix A1 Interview Questions for Ophelia	1
	Appendix A2 Letter Inviting Participation in Study	9
	Appendix A3 The Interview Sample Participants	10
	Appendix A4 Ophelia's 2 nd Interview Transcription	11

1.1 Introduction

The first section in this introduction will outline the background to the study. In this section the meaning of approaches to learning will be briefly discussed as will its importance in student learning in Higher Education. A short overview of the origins of approaches to learning is presented together with the later developments of this concept and the problems arising from these developments. The second section defines the method of enquiry, in particular it indicates the starting position of the research and the methods used to support this overall approach. A brief description of the analysis then follows. The third and final section goes on to state the study aims and notes the value of this research.

1.2 Background to Study

This study aims to explore the meaning of approaches to learning for students learning in a Higher Education context. There is a general interest in different ways in which students approach their learning which is the focus of this study. There is a need to distinguish between the focus of this study and the conceptualisation of how students learn, called Approaches to Learning developed by Marton and Säljö. In this text this conceptualisation is written using capital letters to distinguish it from the more general and unrestricted notion.

When attempting to gain an insight into approaches to learning we are trying to understand the student experience of learning. In particular we are exploring 'how' students learn by examining the way in which they approach their studies. To gain a full insight into the approach to learning an examination of the context in which learning occurs should also be included (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983).

The impact of the concept of Approaches to Learning on practitioners and researchers in Higher Education has been dominant over the past twenty years, with many using this concept to guide their research and teaching practices (Haggis, 2003). This is demonstrated by the mass of literature citing Approaches to Learning as their starting point in their exploration of student learning. The impact on Higher Education Institutions has also been great with the Approaches to Learning concept being used to inform curriculum design, structure of assessment and teaching styles (Marton et al 1984, Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983, Laurillard, 1984, Willis, 1993 and Sharma, 1997). Further it is argued that certain approaches will produce more successful learning outcomes and consequently practitioners have often based their claims of pedagogic success on the approaches adopted by their students (Drew and Watkins, 1998). Thus Approaches to Learning has had a crucial impact upon the direction of research into student learning and on pedagogic practice.

The initial investigations into Approaches to Learning were conducted in Sweden by Marton and Säljö in the sixties and seventies. In their phenomenographic work they attempted to discover the student experience of learning, focussing upon their approach to learning. They used qualitative, open, descriptive interviews as their method. The outcomes of this research were to prove a fundamental starting point for future research into student learning as they classified two key approaches of how students learn. These were a deep level processing approach and a surface level processing approach. This work was developed by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) who chose to expand the approaches to learning work in a nomothetic direction. The main outcome of the work undertaken by these researchers was the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) which according to the authors could quantitatively measure a student's predisposition to selected Approaches to Learning. This inventory was subsequently the founding method of investigation for many researchers who have attempted to examine Approaches to Learning.

The ASI and the nomothetic approach which underlies this instrument have however been the subject of criticism. Problems that specifically relate to validity and reliability have been raised (Richardson, 1992) and consequently the ASI is being updated (Entwistle and Tait, 1997). Methodological issues have also been raised, in particular the move away from the idiographic approach endorsed by Marton and Säljö to a nomothetic method of enquiry. This move limited our understanding of the student experience of learning as the role of the individual is omitted in favour of classifying students into general groups.

Although the nomothetic approach allows for the attainment of a general consensus of a large population, upon which general hypotheses may be based it was not considered useful for this study. The main reason for this rejection is the inability of this approach to recognise the individuality of approaches to learning, for while the nomothetic approach attempts to gain the views of the masses it does so at the expense of the individual account. As the aim of this study was to understand the meanings of approaches to learning, from the learners situation in life, the idiographic approach was adopted. Although this approach does not facilitate generalisable results, idiography enables me to explore, in-depth, approaches to learning, showing the individuality of this phenomena and the insightful findings that can be gathered via this approach.

This research study aims to examine how students' approach their learning by developing the work of the founding authors Marton and Säljö. Thus unlike the vast majority of investigations which have used a nomothetic approach, often with the ASI, this research will look at approaches to learning idiographically by focussing upon the individual experience of learning.

1.3 Method of Enquiry

The methodological framework used in this study is based upon an idiographic approach, that is, an examination of the learner as an individual. The methodological approach selected for this study is phenomenology, specifically, existential phenomenology. Through this approach a full and rich description of the lived experiences is gained and a full insight into the lifeworld of the student is presented. While this methodology is not a complete replication of the phenomenographic approach used by Marton and Säljö it does allow for the ‘qualitative, open, descriptions’ advocated by these authors. Phenomenology is more suited to this particular study as it facilitates a rigorous individual focus and avoids the problems associated with phenomenography (Ashworth and Lucas, 1999).

The method used is a ‘professional interview’ (Kvale, 1996) as the interviews were neither a completely open conversation nor were they highly structured. Accordingly the interviews followed a guide that suggested themes and questions. The aim of the qualitative research interview in this phenomenological context is to elucidate the meaning of a phenomenon in relation to how the subject perceives it. In this case it is to elucidate the meanings of approaches to learning for each individual student.

A series of three interviews was conducted with each of the six students selected for this study. All of the six students were studying in the Business School at the University of Derby. However the course, year of study and demographics of each student were different. Through the use of a series of interviews it was hoped that a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of approaches to learning would be obtained and thus a full description of each student's lifeworld could be presented.

The analytical procedure was guided by the rigours of a phenomenological methodology, that is, to understand the meaning of learning from the context of their lifeworld without imposing any presuppositions. The first stage of the analysis occurred after every interview whereby I reflected upon the interview conversation. The second stage involved a more detailed analysis whereby a descriptive profile of the individual was formed. The final stage involved the analysis of the noetic-noematic relationships which resulted in a summary of the meaning of learning for each of the participants. The use of the Husserlian concept of the noema and noesis adds further value to the research. The noesis proved particularly fruitful as a heuristic device offering an insight into the *way* in which students approach their learning. Thus the noesis is a way of

reflecting the 'approach'. By applying this concept to this phenomenological study the value of this distinction in understanding approaches to learning may be evaluated.

1.4 The Study Aims

This study aims to explore the meaning of approaches to learning from a phenomenological perspective, specifically the study will;

1. Describe the learning lifeworlds of the participating students, further to place the meanings of approaches to learning within each student's lifeworld.
2. Explore the place of gender in their approaches to learning.
2. Critique the Approaches to Studying Inventory and the methodology that underlies this tool.
3. Contribute to the discussion of idiographic and nomothetic approaches, specifically to explore the value of idiographic research when examining approaches to learning.
4. Build upon Marton and Säljö's work on approaches to studying and thus contribute to the approaches to learning literature.
5. Evaluate the value of Noema / Noesis distinction in understanding approaches to learning.
6. To offer further critical understanding for researchers and practitioners in their future attempts to understand students' approaches to learning.

Together the achievement of these aims will enable not only a further understanding of the meaning of approaches to learning but also offer an insight into the way in which the research design can influence our understanding. By tackling approaches to learning from an idiographic perspective further understanding will be gained for unlike many other studies this research into approaches to learning will focus upon the individual. The outcomes of this original research will be of benefit to both practitioners and researchers in their future attempts to understand student's approaches to learning.

2.1 Introduction

What student learning is and how it occurs is a subject of great debate. This literature review focuses on the specific study topic of approaches to learning in Higher Education by entering the debate and building a coherent picture of research in this field. Through such a discussion a full insight into the importance of approaches to learning for student learning in Higher Education is gained and thus illuminates why this topic is worthy of investigation. In particular it will explore some of the problems of investigating approaches to learning using a quantitative method and provide support for an alternative way to understand students' approaches to learning. The introduction below segments the literature review into major topic headings which all play a part in the world of approaches to learning.

The Approaches to Learning concept was first described by Marton and Säljö (1976) who claimed that learners could be identified as adopting two distinct approaches namely, Deep and Surface. This concept was then tested and elaborated by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) and these authors claimed that further approaches can be identified via a quantitative questionnaire named the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI). The ASI aimed to provide an indication of students' predisposition to Approaches to Learning through an examination of the individual learning process and the learning environment. However there has been much criticism of this tool, both in terms of the Approaches to Learning concept and of the instrument used to measure these approaches. Notably the lack of stability in Approaches to Learning, the lack of correlation between models (Rayner and Riding 1997) and their lack of psychometric rigour and empirical evidence (Grigorenko and Sternberg 1995, Richardson 1992). The second part of the literature review critically analyses these issues.

The third section of the literature review discusses the implications of gender in Higher Education, for although traditional differences between men and women in relation to education have been well noted e.g. subject choice (Thomas 1990) there is still much debate as to whether there is a relationship between gender and Approaches to Learning and the nature of this relationship. It is within this section that gender differences in the wider context and gender in relation to Approaches to Learning will be critically discussed.

The fourth and fifth sections of the literature review discuss the ideas of conception of learning and orientation to learning respectively. The conception of learning examines what a student learns i.e. what does a student do when they are learning something. Orientation to learning is concerned with what motivates students. Why are they here? Why do they want to learn? The

answers to these questions provide the opportunity to examine the student's lifeworld. The context of learning section describes the possible effects of the environment in which a student learns. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) argue that the lecturer has a major effect on student learning while Lave and Wenger (1991) discuss the importance of situated learning where the focus is on social engagements.

The final section titled, theoretical perspectives, examines other perspectives and models that have been used to evaluate how students process information. The work of Rayner and Riding (1997) and Riding and Cheema (1991) is utilised which demonstrates cognitive styles and the integration of cognitive models. This chapter therefore provides an insight into the literature of student learning and gender in Higher Education and the debates that exist within it.

2.2 Approaches to Learning

The following discussion explores the initial investigation into how students' approach their learning, this research was conducted in the 60's and 70's by Marton and Säljö. The claimed outcomes of this research were two distinct approaches; deep and surface. Development of this research was conducted by Entwistle et al (1979) who attempted to explore these classifications further. This research produced nomothetic conceptualisations of how students approach their studies in the form of the Approach to Studying Inventory (ASI). Descriptions of the classifications held within this instrument are defined and explored here. The final segment in this section outlines the way in which the approaches to learning and the ASI is defined. It will also examine how this instrument has been applied by other researchers, specifically its use to identify and predict academic success.

The work conducted in the 60's and 70's by Marton and Säljö was essentially idiographic, specifically, phenomenographic in methodology. They attempted to examine different levels of processing information held by students using a qualitative, open, descriptive method. In the in-depth qualitative interviews (further information is included in the methodology chapter in the phenomenology and phenomenography section) the authors attempted to investigate student experiences of learning in Higher Education; specifically it focused upon approaches to learning. A key outcome of this research were two main classifications, those who process information in a 'deep' manner from those who process it in a 'surface' manner. Marton and Säljö (1976) describe learners who use a deep-level of processing as focussed upon the intentional content of the learning material, whereas those who are defined as using surface

level processing have a reproductive conception of learning, whereby a rote-learning strategy is enforced.

This concept was tested and elaborated upon by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983), whose main aim was to expand both conceptually and empirically the work accomplished by earlier authors. This was combined with the objectives of examining contextual differences in Higher Education in relation to student academic performance. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) hoped that this schema would allow an insight into the world of the learner from the point of view of the student and provide an opportunity to see the reality of student learning. This they thought was not achievable with other learning models. Of course how they viewed the 'reality' of student learning or the point of view of the student and how to gain access to these determined the methods and schema they recommended. Of fundamental importance to Entwistle and Ramsden's work is the idea of a person-situational basis to learning strategy i.e. an examination of the individual learning process and the learning environment. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) aimed to extend the work of Marton and Pask through research on students at Lancaster University. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) claimed that their study would be based upon a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques so that it would "Capitalise on the strengths of different approaches to research".

The work was formalised through three main phases. Phase one included a questionnaire, a variant of Marton's interview procedure that was revised and given to 248 first year students. A further inventory aimed at identifying distinctive approaches to studying was also developed and exploratory interviews were held in which students were asked about their approach to learning and course perception. Staff were also interviewed at this stage, however the researchers felt that this was not particularly productive and this aspect was dropped from the study.

The second phase in the study included quantitative and qualitative elements with the ASI distributed to 787 first year students. This data was statistically analysed and interviews were then completed with students who were primarily selected on the basis of their quantitative results (the sample containing those who were found to have extreme statistical scores). The members of the sample were also asked to take part in cognitive tests.

The third and final stage enabled qualitative analysis of the interview data and further statistical analysis of the test scores of the sampled interviewees. The importance of the quantitative work was again present as a study of 2208 students was undertaken throughout various polytechnics

and university departments. The students were asked to complete the ASI and course descriptions questionnaire. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) argue that it is the combination of the interviews and questionnaire which allows for an insight into students' approaches to learning.

Interviews were used in the search for a quantitative understanding of approaches to learning as the findings from the interviews helped develop both the ASI and the Course Perceptions questionnaire. However their value was not fully exploited, Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) themselves state that *"It was impossible to have all the interviews transcribed in full"*. Without full transcriptions it is plausible that key issues identified during the interviews are omitted particularly if the authors are only searching for selected themes. The actual analysis of the interviews was based upon pre-supposed categories, for example, cue seekers (Miller and Parlett 1974) and styles and pathologies (Sevensson, 1977).

In this way the interviews were used to provide support for the quantitative elements in which categories for learning were already pre-defined. Although there was some analysis of these interviews the outcomes of the study was focused on the categorisation of the Approaches to Learning concept via the use of the ASI. This under use of interview material is an indication of the future direction of this research as emphasis was shifted to a quantitative, nomothetic approach. Although this may not have been the authors' intention the ASI is often the only outcome remembered from their work. Unlike the work of Marton & Säljö (1976) where students were asked to read texts on which they were questioned, Entwistle et al (1979) opted for semi-structured interviews. The aim of the authors was to examine students' approaches to learning through their reflection on learning rather than examining the actual responses made to a piece of work. Entwistle et al (1979) claimed that their findings from this study supported the earlier work of Marton and Säljö (1976).

The conceptual model of a deep approach can be broken down into three main parts (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). Firstly personal experience, a learner allows his or her own experiences to relate to a subject, developing himself or herself personally. Secondly relationships, the learner here identifies with a deep approach by integrating information from different areas to form a whole picture. The third factor, is the attempt to understand the meaning of a particular topic. According to Entwistle and Ramsden these categories allowed for variability under the deep approach heading with the subcategories needed to define a deep approach.

Like the Deep Approach model, the components of a Surface Approach can be categorised into three items, unrelatedness, memorisation and unreflectiveness (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). The authors claim the unrelatedness concept revolves around the learner seeing the task as a separate entity both from themselves and from other information sources. The memorisation concept defines the task as a memory task with the prime intent of memorisation. The final sub-category describes unreflectiveness that is where the task is seen in an external way, the subject material is external to themselves with no incentive to reflect upon the meaning.

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) identified sub-categories for the Deep and Surface concepts as they found from their research that in different contexts students may have differences in understanding of Deep and Surface Approaches partly due to context. However the 'context' to which they refer only relate to the confines of the academic department. They argue that these sub-categories allow for an understanding of the various elements which can be identified under the umbrella terms of Deep and Surface Approaches.

According to Entwistle and Ramsden, student's who are classified as using a Deep Approach to learning are often found to be intrinsically orientated in that he/she has a genuine interest in the subject and wants to learn. The learner wants to understand the information by interacting with the data. This interaction it is claimed, allows the student to critically evaluate the text and relate it to the outside world and according to Marton (1986) this can change the person as a whole. Entwistle and Ramsden contrast this with the learner who is classified as adopting a Surface Approach. Here the main aim of a student is to simply avoid failing and gain the required grades without too much effort. Common features of this approach can include a tendency to memorise facts without any attempt to understand what they could mean, unlike a deep approach where there is interaction with the text. Those who are labelled by a Surface Approach simply accept the facts and do not try to relate the information with themselves and the world around them.

However a criticism levelled at Approaches to Learning is that it is built from an academic perspective rather than from a student's point of view. Haggis (2003) argues that by accepting the academic perspective of what learning should be is an imposition of class and social beliefs which may not be relevant to learners. Further the adoption of a Deep Approach for students may not be realistic if it takes academics years to learn this learning approach, assuming of course that students accept that this is the 'best' way to learn.

A new development of Entwistle and Ramsden's work has also been identified as a Strategic or Achieving Approach (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). Unlike the Deep Approach the aim of this approach is to gain high grades rather than understanding. These students, according to Entwistle and Ramsden could be described as those who "play the system" by aiming to please the lecturers and pass exams. It is argued that certain tactics will give them high marks and that they will avoid actions that will not. The Achieving Approach can be applied to either a Deep or Surface Approach.

Entwistle & Ramsden (1983) labelled a fourth category "styles and pathologies" from their research which aimed to give a more detailed insight into categorising learning styles. This area can be broken down into two main categories, Holist and Serialist (Pask, 1976). The student who has a Holist Approach aims to see the whole picture linking in several different areas. According to Entwistle and Ramsden the subscales that demonstrate a Holist Approach are Globetrotting and Comprehension Learning. This approach describes how there is often a lack of detail as more emphasis is placed on grasping the whole picture. The Serialist Approach is somewhat different. Here according to Pask the aim is more focused on detail, looking at parts of the whole. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) claim that two subscales, Operation Learning and Improvidence (as found in the ASI) are reflective of the Serialist Approach.

Consistent within their own particular approach, the distinctions between the categories are clearly made by the authors as are the links made between Deep and Surface Approaches. However it is important to note that certain styles and pathologies may be interpreted differently in different subject areas (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). For example what might appear a Holist Approach in a science subject area might be considered more of a Serialist Approach in an arts based subject and vice versa. They argue that demands of the subject affect the styles and pathologies used. This makes it imperative when analysing styles and pathologies to take the context into account as certain subject areas may require different approaches to learning.

The four orientations Meaning Orientation, Reproducing Orientation, Achieving Orientation and Styles and Pathologies are made up from a selection of subscales. Each subscale aims to give an overall picture of how the student learns. The table below highlights the meaning of each subscale (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). The subscales therefore play a key role in defining the orientation models as each subscale attempts to identify all features of the concept.

SUBSCALE	MEANING
<i>Meaning Orientation</i>	
Deep Approach	Active questioning in learning
Relating Ideas	Relating to other parts of the course
Use of Evidence	Relating evidence to conclusions
Intrinsic Motivation	Interest in learning for learning's sake
<i>Reproducing Orientation</i>	
Surface Approach	Preoccupation with memorisation
Syllabus-boundness	Relying on staff to define learning tasks
Fear of Failure	Pessimism and anxiety about academic outcomes
Extrinsic Motivation	Interest in courses for the qualifications they offer
<i>Achieving Orientation</i>	
Strategic Approach	Awareness of implications of academic demands made by staff
Disorganised Study Methods	Unable to work regularly and effectively
Negative Attitudes to Studying	Lack of interest and application
Achievement Motivation	Competitive and confident
<i>Styles and Pathologies</i>	
Comprehension learning	Readiness to map out a subject area and think divergently
Globetrotting	Over-ready to jump to conclusions
Operation Learning	Emphasis on facts and logical analysis
Improvvidence	Over-cautious reliance on details

Table 2.1 The Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) Subscales (Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981 pp.371)

It is argued that these differing Approaches to Learning have a substantial effect upon learning outcomes (Perry, 1981). Perry undertook a qualitative study aimed at evaluating how men learn. Through the use of interviews he found that students who they considered to have the same motivation levels, skills and abilities had different levels of success due to the way they perceived learning. Those who tried to find the true meaning of the text obviously had a greater chance of doing so than those adopting a Surface Approach who did not look for the meaning at all (Marton and Säljö 1984). Marton and Säljö also identified a link between "content" and "process". They claimed these are two parts of a whole and would have an effect on the outcome of learning.

According to Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) the concept of Deep/Surface Approaches must however be kept in context for it is important to note that learners are not Deep or Surface learners rather they can adopt Deep or Surface Approaches. The approaches that may be used by students are interchangeable varying over time and between subjects. Therefore if approaches are not fixed other variables affect the approaches which students adopt.

It is argued that the Approaches to Learning (as categorised by the ASI) a student adopts can have implications upon a student's success both in terms of actual understanding and in academic assessments (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983). The authors point to their research, which indicates that there is a significant correlation between a Deep Approach and strategic methods and degree classification. Those adopting these Approaches are more likely to achieve a first or upper second degree classification. However those identified as adopting a Surface Approach were associated with poor results. However it is important to note at this stage that Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) state the ASI has not been designed to predict academic success. This makes their later claims that the ASI has links with academic performance somewhat tenuous as this questionnaire was not designed for this purpose

Much of the research that has investigated the effects of approaches to learning which has used Approaches to Learning as defined by Entwistle and Ramsden as its basis has reached similar conclusions. Gadzella et al (1986) used the Inventory of Learning Processes (ILP) (Schmeck et al 1977), in their study which aimed to identify Approaches to Learning. Despite a different instrument being applied the authors also claimed that high achievers gained higher scores on the Deep processing scale than low achievers. Miller et al (1990), again using the ILP, found that students with high grade point averages statistically scored higher on Deep processing than did average grade groups. These authors also found that the low grade point average group is associated with shallow processing of information.

More recent studies by Kember et al (1995) support the existence of a relationship between Approaches to Learning and academic success. It is claimed that despite much effort, students adopting a Surface Approach are more likely to achieve low grades. However it is noted that even if a student adopts a Deep Approach they may still not be academically successful unless they put in sufficient work and effort.

Drew and Watkins (1998) also found that students adopting a Deep Approach positively correlated with a high achievement and those who adopted a Surface Approach with low

achievement. However Norton and Crowley (1995) argue that while it is useful informing students (via workshops) of the benefits of adopting a Deep Approach and developing their conceptions of learning, the relationship between Deep Approach and academic success is not always clear. While they found that using a Deep Approach achieved higher examination grades there is no significant difference between the groups when examining mean essay marks. The authors argue that this may be related to the methods of measurement and that coursework essays were not sufficiently discriminating in identifying a student who is adopting a Deep or Surface Approach. Further Leiden et al (1990), who studied a sample of students using the ASI and ILP found that although the relationships described above could be found in their study no correlation reached a statistically significant level. The authors go on to claim that the ASI and ILP are not particularly useful in predicting academic success and should be used mainly in a research capacity.

The wide usage of the ASI as demonstrated by the various studies highlighted indicates the dominance that the instrument has had in higher education and in our understanding of approaches to learning. Haggis (2003) indicates that this dominance has been, to some extent, to the detriment of other ways of examining student learning and this may have limited our understanding of this issue.

2.3 Background of the ASI

As noted earlier the phenomenographic work of Marton and Säljö was used as a basis of the ASI. Interviews with students were held in order to support these concepts and provide additional items and descriptions. Thus a mixture of existing concepts and further exploratory interviews were used to develop the ASI. It was hoped that the use of these methods would gauge a student's predisposition to approaches to learning.

The qualitative work on which the ASI is based has been subjected to criticism. Richardson (1987) argues that in Marton and Säljö's (1976) original study the methods they used in their phenomographic study are not detailed and points to Flemming (1986) who regards their study as neglecting the essentially social nature of the interviews arguing that the accounts used are merely stories. Richardson also points to claims made by Morgan (1984) who researched Approaches to Learning using the grounded theory methodology. While a grounded theory approach requires a researcher should not start with categories/concepts in mind, Morgan (1984) stated that one of the aims of their study was to identify Surface and Deep Approaches. A further criticism raised by Richardson is the anecdotal evidence, where informal chats are

rendered as evidence and the researchers are untrained in the pursuit of qualitative data. The author argues that this often results in a “self-fulfilling prophecy”.

The statistical development of the ASI involved Alpha factor analysis so that the subscales and orientations could be correlated with one another. The results of the factor analysis enabled Entwistle and Ramsden to claim that their results are parallel with the work of Biggs (1976). Biggs devised the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) which too aimed to measure Deep and Surface and Achieving Approaches. The SPQ also included a motivational section, which was not found in the pilot ASI. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) believed that this would be a useful addition to their own inventory and so added a motivational section.

The Inventory Learning Processes (ILP) (Schmeck et al, 1977) was also examined by Entwistle and Ramsden and they too argued that a correlation could be found between their subscales and those found on the ILP. After several further pilot inventories and further statistical tests Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) devised the full ASI which was comprised of the four main orientations mentioned earlier, Meaning, Reproducing, Achievement Motivation and Styles and Pathologies (Table 2.1). The Orientations aimed to describe a learner’s predisposition to a particular process, that is they aim to measure student intentions rather than what they are seen to have done. The orientations which are present in the ASI however aim to represent predispositions’ to adopt a particular process so they are simply measuring students possible intentions rather than what they are seen to have done.

Developments of the ASI have led to the Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory (Entwistle and Tait 1994) and more recently the Approaches and Study Skills Inventory for Students (ASSIST) (Entwistle and Tait 1997) in an attempt to move the learning style theory forward and to try to answer some of the criticisms levied at the ASI. In particular the newer version removed the vulnerable orientation, Styles and Pathologies, as this was found to be unstable in replicated studies. However it was expanded to attempt to measure how different approaches are associated with equivalent preferences for different kinds of teaching (Entwistle, 1998).

2.4 Gender Differences

The following discussion leads on from the way in which the ASI may be used and misused, using the example of Gender. The following section explores why practitioners and researchers have wished to examine the relationship between gender and approaches to learning. This section details the apparent disparities of men and women in their learning, in particular it

examines the limited inclusion of women in research studies, differences in degree classification and subject choice and finally concludes with the impact of the environment on approaches to learning and gender.

Historically universities were male dominated as traditionally only males were allowed to attend a number of universities. Today of course the situation has changed, although the foundations of many universities (particularly older ones) are made by men for men (Belenky et al 1986). Bagilhole and Goode (1998) support this view arguing that male academics decide both what students should learn and how it should be taught. They claim that academia is dominated by males in a way which marginalises women. This reluctance to accept women fully into academia is demonstrated through male resistance to accept womens' studies and feminist approaches claiming that this work is not academic (Evans 1998). The author states that there is not only resistance to feminist works but also female academics. This resistance to change and acceptance of the studies of women and female academics may be present because a new way of examining knowledge is likely to compromise the assumptions made by male academics and therefore challenge their beliefs (Bagilhole and Goode 1998).

It is argued that one of the outcomes of the reluctance to accept and encourage the study of male and female academics is the assumption that what works for men must work for women (Belenky et al 1986). Such beliefs have serious implications for women's learning with men being more comfortable in academia as they prefer the learning environment established for male learners. Evans (1997) argues that although change is occurring due to the increase in the number of women attending Higher Education and the move to mass education the changes are slow, particularly in older institutions. The author points to painfully slow changes in curriculum design, staff-student interaction and assessment. If these claims are to be believed then an investigation into this area is important for the implications of male dominated academia can play a crucial role in student's success notably for female students.

The earlier section, which described Approaches to Learning, discussed the implications which different learning Approaches can have for academic success. The possible affect on achievement provides further reason to discuss the learning Approaches of both men and women. Traditional differences between men and women are well noted in relation to higher education, for example there has always been a clear distinction in subject choice (Thomas, 1990). Women have frequently shown a preference for art type subjects and have a low presence in science, the opposite being found for males as they show preferences for sciences. These differences are well documented and can easily be shown statistically. The differences

between male and female degree achievements are also well documented with males achieving a greater proportion of the first and third degrees (Chapman, 1996). If this trend continues to grow it may have implications for both men and women. A proportion of this variation can be explained, by subject choice as science, technology and engineering award more extreme degrees i.e. more firsts and thirds and more males take these types of courses so one would expect more males to achieve first and thirds. As females favour the arts and social sciences which traditionally are more reluctant to give extreme marks, however this only accounts for a proportion of variance in grades.

Discussion of other factors which may affect this variability of degree results may lie with differences in institutions and departments (Johnes and Taylor, 1990) e.g. there may be more chance of gaining a first degree in a particular department. It is however difficult to establish these differences (Chapman, 1996). This factor could play a very important role as it would imply that environmental factors are perhaps more important than internal psychological factors. Although there is some debate as to the scale of differences in first and third degrees it is widely accepted that men achieve more firsts and thirds (McCrum, 1996). These disparities would therefore encourage further investigation as to why women are not achieving as many firsts and why males are gaining a higher proportion of thirds, looking at approaches to learning may help explain some of this variability in degree classification.

The impact of emotion has also been a factor that has been used to identify gender differences. Wertheim (1997) argues that women are excluded as subjects are taught without any social or cultural context and encourage a response which is detached from emotion. This detachment of emotion can hinder women for it is argued they often become emotionally involved. Wertheim claims that if women do become emotionally involved they can become “culturally stigmatised”.

Much of the research into bias in examination results is focused in older well-established universities e.g. Goodhart (1988), Rowell (1991), and McCrum (1996) as these institutions appear to have greater disparities in the differences between male and female degree classifications. However the distinctions can be made throughout UK institutions (Johnes and Taylor, 1992) so it does appear to be a common theme.

Examiner bias is also considered to be a factor (Bradley, 1984). It has been thought that the second marker of student projects who had less knowledge of the student and the subject marked females less extremely than males. This explanation has been disputed by Dennis &

Newstead (1994), although the authors do accept that there may be bias but on the part of lecturer familiarity with the student and subject, particularly if the student is female. They argue that older universities are more prone to this type of bias, possibly because there is more personal contact with students in older institutions. This bias does seem to support the case of “blind” marking, but the authors caution that this would be difficult to implement.

Further differences were identified by Belenky et al (1986). The author examined women’s ways of knowing through a series of interviews with women who had diverse backgrounds. This concept was developed from the work accomplished by Perry (1970) who evaluated how men learn. In Perry’s study the general themes that were found to be common were based on “separate knowing”, that is knowing based upon impersonal analysis and evaluation which is often highly valued in academic institutions. It is claimed that the men in the study were able to distance themselves from the information and would place themselves in the position of what could be classified as an “expert”.

This contrasted with the ideas that evolved from Belenky's study. The women in this study tended to show preferences for perceiving information in a less analytical way. The women tended to relate the material to themselves by using personal events and meanings to gain understanding. According to this study competition over ideas was often detrimental to these women who found that a more suitable environment was one which allowed a number of ideas to be expressed. There should be no pressure to assume that one idea was better than another, rather all ideas should be considered valid. Unlike the men in Perry’s sample the women did not want to position themselves in the place of an expert as they were happier to accept varying ideas on a subject.

The importance of competition in the environment is demonstrated quite strongly throughout Belenky’s study. Males tending to enjoy a competitive environment while this it is argued may hinder female performance. Parallels can be drawn with approaches to learning as the results here indicated that males often preferred a competitive environment as they tended to score highly on achievement motivation (Miller et al,1990). Despite these reported differences it is thought possible that through changes in the environment i.e. making environments inclusive for both kinds of learners the learning experience can be improved. One idea suggested by Belenky et al (1986) to aid connected knowing is to give positive encouragement before the start of a course so that the learners are given more confidence in themselves. Without this confidence those who could be described as connected learners may find it difficult to motivate themselves as they may fear academic tasks.

The two distinct approaches are labelled separate knowing and connected knowing with females generally favouring the latter. The differences identified by Enns (1993) are shown in the table 2.2.

<i>Connected Knowing</i>	<i>Separate Knowing</i>
Subjective responses	Objective observation
Personal application	Abstract Analysis
Awareness and consciousness-raising	Distinguishing fact from opinion
Empathising	Evaluating and critiquing
Active Listening	Debating
Co-operative and collaborative learning	Individual and competitive learning
Growth through claiming personal inner knowledge	Understanding great ideas
Mutual goals	Individualistic goals
Sensitivity to individual differences	Practical, fair application of principles
Empowerment through confirmation	Empowerment through proving oneself
Applying knowledge to new situations	Defining problems accurately, clarifying theoretical models
Teacher as role model	Teacher as knowledge source

Table 2.2 Separate knowing and connected knowing (Enns, 1993 p.8)

Feminist pedagogy supports Belenky et al's claims that connected learners need a supportive environment which allows students the opportunity to express their views whilst still querying their ideas in a positive way. The learners should be encouraged to claim empowerment by relying less on formal instruction. The classroom should provide an opportunity to share ideas while developing skills. It is argued that this kind of environment encourages learners not only to be successful in the Approach to Learning (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983) but it is also supportive of female needs which previously have not been considered (Belenky et al 1986). However it is important to note that not all men and women will conveniently fit into the categories defined by Belenky et al (1986) as each learner acts as an individual within the learning process therefore these descriptions can not fully represent how individual men and women learn.

Baxter Magdola (1992) expanded the work of Belenky et al through a longitudinal study which, unlike Perry's and Belenky et al's sample included both men and women. The author identified the same stages which are described by Belenky however it was discovered that within each stage different patterns of reasoning emerge between men and women. Baxter Magdola labelled this concept 'The Epistemological Reflection Mode'. It is claimed that differences can be seen between men and women with females more focussed on relational aspects and more

open to incorporate other people's perspectives. The model classifies the male tendency to be more focussed on their own perspective and their individual learning.

The four stages of the model include, Absolute Knowing, Transitional Knowing, Independent Knowing and Contextual Knowing. The first stage Absolute Knowing describes that knowing is construed as facts and teachers are authorities on the subject matter, students who are in the receiving pattern receive information with minimal interaction. Peers are also very important for the support they can offer; students in this pattern are more likely to be women. The mastering pattern it is claimed is often used by men and is where ideas are expressed frequently, questions are asked and authority challenged.

Transitional Knowledge occurs when students realise that the experts do not have all the answers, understanding becomes more important than knowing. Here the interpersonal pattern student focuses on openness and sharing. All opinions are considered to be valid and sharing these ideas with peers is important. This approach is more common for women. The approach which is more common for men is the impersonal pattern student. Here uncertainty can be solved through experts and logic and one must expect to be challenged by both peers and teachers.

The third stage, Independent Knowing, describes knowledge as being uncertain and the individual needs to decide what is true, unlike the earlier stage peers are considered to be valid contributors to knowledge. The interindividual pattern favoured by women leads students to devise their own perspectives by interacting with their peers, the sharing of knowledge is important here. The more male perspective, that is, the individual pattern leads students to be more interested in their own perspectives and they find it difficult to listen to others. Thinking is much more independent. The final stage Contextual knowing describes knowing as being basically uncertain but not every idea is equally valid. Baxter Magdola was unable to differentiate between men and women as only 14% of the sample reached this stage.

Severiens et al (1998) attempted to test this model using interviews and questionnaires. The interviews mostly confirmed Baxter Magdola's findings however they did conclude that gender relatedness seemed stronger for men than women. The authors did notice one important difference. In the context of assessment and the role of the teacher mastering and impersonal patterns were dominant for both men and women. The Questionnaire study however provided fewer differences and many of the findings highlighted by Baxter Magdola remained unconfirmed as no significant differences could be found.

The literature presented does appear to argue that there are apparent differences between men and women in their learning within a higher education context. Notably it is argued that gender influences the way in which learning is approached e.g. in terms of assessment, environment, discussions, subject choice etc. The apparent impact of these differences has lead subsequent researchers to investigate this area further, notably through the use of the Approaches to Learning concept and the ASI in particular.

2.5 Gender and Approaches to Learning

This section develops the exploration of gender and learning. There is an examination of the way in which the approaches to learning concept and the ASI has been used in this exploration. This discussion uses 'gender' as a topic to demonstrate the way in which researchers have misappropriated the use of the ASI. The discussion describes the various studies which have examined gender and learning through the ASI and related concepts and highlights the results obtained.

Meyer (1995) attempted to examine gender differences using the Approaches to Studying Inventory. In Meyer's study the students reported on their most recent experience in studying. Splitting the original surface approach into two parts (memorisation and fragmentation) extended the ASI and an additional construct of reflection was also added. Approximately 500 students were examined using the technique of factor analysis, in order to provide a framework. The statistical findings obtained showed that males and females differences were partially apparent in Deep and Strategic approach. The author of the study recommended that as there was limited evaluation of gender and approaches to learning more research is necessary to explore these gender variations. How this research should be accomplished is open for debate, however Meyer remained focused on understanding gender and approaches to learning through the ASI.

Meyer et al (1994), looked at the way males and females perceive and engage in both the content and context of learning. Again the full version of the ASI was used and extended by splitting the surface approach into two parts of memorisation and fragmentation a range of perception subscales was added as was an additional subscale on the deep level "reflection", the negative attitudes to studying was omitted. This inventory was administered to 410 students, the gender split was predominately male accounting for slightly less than two thirds of the sample.

The results were analysed using factor analysis, examining gender factor structures. The results from this study indicated a gender variation which appeared to be applicable in a discipline specific environment. The author confirms that there are differences between men and women and the approaches which they adopt. The study offers the suggestion that these quantitative differences more readily occur in specific contexts. An example offered by the author is of scientific disciplines, a context which could be considered challenging to female students as there are fewer women studying science subjects.

These gender differences show themselves through Deep/Strategic approaches with men demonstrating this behaviour through Operation and Comprehension Approaches. Biggs (1970) also claimed that women show their Deep/Strategic behaviour through organised study methods and not Achievement Motivation. Watkins and Hattie (1981) described similar findings as they also found that women had more organised study methods with men scoring highly on reproductive approaches.

Miller et al (1990) discovered a number of differences between the male and female approaches to learning. In this study three questionnaires were used; the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ), the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) and the Inventory of Learning Processes (ILP). These questionnaires were applied to 1507 students resulting in 1119 useable questionnaires. The results were tabled into 26 subscales taken from the three questionnaires so that significant differences between men and women could be examined.

A number of differences were found in this study. Men were found to favour Deep Approaches, Comprehension Learning (supported by Meyer et al 1994) and Use of Evidence. Males were also found to score high Achievement Motivation. These features would seem to demonstrate that the men sampled appear to have adopted more successful learning techniques as they appear to use a Deep Approach and have higher Achievement Motivation which often rewards students with high marks and a full understanding. However the authors also found what I will call negative Approaches with males scoring higher on Extrinsic Motivation and negative attitudes which may seem to indicate that males are concerned with proving themselves to others. However these results should be taken with caution for although there appear to be statistical similarities, these studies are based upon the same quantitative instrument. Thus the concepts, which are supposed to be shared by each gender, are limited to the definitions as presented in the Approaches to Learning concept.

Meyer et al (1994) claimed that females showed other preferences namely for the Strategic Approach. This demonstrated their organisational skills (also found by Watkins and Hattie 1981, Meyer et al 1994, Biggs 1970 and Meyer 1995). Preferences are also shown for Relating Ideas and Intrinsic Motivation. The authors also claim that females score highly on Surface Approach, Improvidence and Fear of Failure. It is interesting to compare these results with those found by Watkins and Hattie (1981) as they discovered conflicting results. Women in this study were more likely to adopt a Deep Approach and men a reproductive approach. Perhaps these differences in findings relate to the difficulties in measuring gender quantitatively (Belenky et al, 1986).

A meta-analysis conducted by Severiens and Ten Damm (1994) attempted to bring together the literature on gender and learning to evaluate the different results. The authors discussed the differences between the mean scores of males and females of several studies. The authors first looked for studies which looked at direct results between gender and learning in order to highlight current ideas on gender differences in learning. The second type of studies they examined was used to provide a quantitative review using meta-analytic techniques (Light & Pillemer, 1984). The authors found 82 potential studies, however only 19 could be used as no information in regard to gender could be found in the outstanding studies. These 19 studies provided results on either Kolbs Learning Styles Inventory or the ASI.

Again the results varied and some of the results did conflict with each other, however some differences based upon the ASI were drawn. Men appeared to score more highly on Extrinsic Motivation and high on Achievement Motivation (as found in Miller et al, 1990). Women were shown to have rather different preferences. A small preference was shown for the Surface Approach. A high score was also found for the fear of failure subscale (also found in Miller et al, 1990). The conflicting evidence suggests a flawed research programme and some authors argue that the way to examine gender differences is through qualitative methods rather than the quantitative methods discussed so far.

Richardson and King (1991) examined the literature for differences between men and women in Higher Education. The authors argue in this paper that the quantitative methods used to establish differences between gender and approaches to learning are inappropriate. Richardson & King (1991) argue that there is little consistent or valid evidence for using quantitative methods in trying to find a correlation between gender and approaches to learning. They reject quantitative tools, arguing that attempting to accommodate women into pre-existing theoretical frameworks is by association sexist. Further these quantitative methods are unable to account

for the any gender differences that may exist, in the world generally and within Higher Education specifically. By adopting a qualitative methodology it is possible to be sensitive to the experience of all individuals, including women.

Feminist authors (e.g. Baxter-Magdola,1992) also support the view that qualitative methods are the most appropriate methods as they allow more sensitive information to be gathered. The authors concluded that although quantitative methods do not reliably show gender differences, they did believe that there are differences which can be shown in distinct developmental schema in relation to which males and females take different approaches. Richardson (1993) criticised previous studies on methodological grounds and like Wilson et al (1996) found no consistent evidence of any significant differences between men and women.

As can be seen the literature has some contrasting views on whether there are differences between men and women and the approaches they use and if there are differences what exactly they are. On the assumption that there are differences several authors have looked at the implications of the differences for both male and female students.

McCrum (1996) found that the overall academic performance in maths has declined, however male performance has improved. The author offers a number of possible explanations for this anomaly, faulty female admissions, an increase in the number of female students draining all the female talent and a general national decline in female A-level scores. A number of these points are dismissed but one of the most interesting claims made by the author is that the decline of the female performance occurred at the same time as the merger of single sex colleges. This lead the author to discuss the probability of returning to single sex colleges which would appear to benefit the female student as they would no longer be in such a competitive environment. This of course may not be possible but an argument is offered in support of providing less confrontational tutorials particularly when competitive males are present. The style of teaching may need to be changed to encourage such an environment (Belenky et al, 1986). The author also claims that the typical male style of writing was rewarded more fruitfully than female styles as the male style tends to be more argumentative, therefore a more fair approach would be to accept the different styles and reward on equal merits.

Richardson (1993) similarly claimed that the environment may have implications for academic female development. Richardson indicated in his study that the differences between male and female students will vary between subjects especially in science courses, where males are the

majority (Thomas, 1990). The author also discussed the relationship between gender, subject and learning context. The author makes the claim that women based in an environment dominated by men are more likely to use a Deep Approach.

The literature in this area demonstrates the wide usage of the Approaches to Learning concept and the ASI for an examination of gender and Approaches to Learning. However it is argued by numerous feminist authors that this type of approach is not suitable for identifying gender differences. Consequently gendered results produced from the ASI are contradictory and unreflective of how men and women learn. This has been recognised by a number of authors who insist that the research into this area needs to be made on a qualitative basis. This discussion highlights how the ASI may produce inaccurate findings, particularly when it is used in an inappropriate way. The next section defines a concept which clearly relates to Approaches to Learning, that is, conceptions of learning.

2.6 Conception of Learning

Conceptions of learning, like approaches to learning is concerned with how learning takes place but unlike approaches to learning it is also concerned with what is learnt. Learners can perceive what or how learning takes place either in isolation or together. It is the way learning is seen by the individual that determines the conception of learning. The ‘what’ aspect of learning could be described as the skill aspect (Marton, 1986) with the how describing how students learn to learn. The combination of these two areas leads to a slightly different perspective of student learning.

Säljö conducted many studies to discover what students learn rather than how much. This initial study (Säljö, 1975) included a group of Swedish students who were asked to read a piece of text and their responses were monitored in order to gain an understanding of how individual students can interpret the same piece of work quite differently. The aim of this work was to reveal qualitatively the way in which people experience and conceptualise the world. The world, in this case, is an academic piece of work. Further studies by Säljö (1979) led to the development of key questions which students have been asked these are:

- * What do you understand by learning ?
- * What do you mean by learning ?
- * What is involved when you learn something ?

According to Säljö (1979) and Van Rossum et al (1985) there were five steps, each stage demonstrating a more complex conception of learning:

(1). Learning as the increase in knowledge. This is perhaps the most basic as the student has no understanding of how or why information is learnt. They believe that knowledge simply grows in time.

(2). Learning as memorising. The students who fall under this category feel that they have learnt something when it is stored in their memory.

(3). Learning being seen as the acquisition of facts, procedures, etc., which can be retained and/or utilised in practice. The student in this case realises that learning isn't just a case of short term memorising, rather the information should be stored and made use of in the long term.

(4). Learning as the abstraction of meaning. This occurs as the student attempts to understand the theories etc. The learning is now considered to be constructive.

(5). Learning as an interpretative process aimed at understanding of some personal reality. This is the final step under the conceptions of learning. Like the fourth step, understanding of peoples work is attempted but a further step is taken as the learner tries to relate his/her personal experiences.

Ramsden (1992) argued that the first three levels are external to the student while stages four and five are internal and emphasise the personal aspect of learning. Further Phenomenographic research (outlined in methodology section) enabled Marton (1986) to identify a sixth classification known as learning as a changing person. By extending the categories, the sixth classification is used to describe a learner where the attitude towards themselves and the world has changed.

The first three categories are defined as concepts which try to identify approaches that do not attempt to gain real meaning from the text. Similarities can be drawn with the Surface Approach, especially categories two and three, as learning is described as an acquisition of facts which need to be memorised. This parallels with the work done by Entwistle & Ramsden (1983) as they too identified the conception of learners with similar approaches. The latter categories differ as they describe learners who attempt to gain meaning. This again could be compared with approaches to learning as the descriptions could broadly fit under the heading of

Meaning Orientation. References are made to relating ideas with the aim to gain full understanding of the material.

Therefore according to these authors the most important distinctions lie between the first three and four and five. Marton (1986) claim that the distinction related to the role of meaning is of particular importance to the later categories (four onwards) but it plays no real part in the first three categories. Again this would appear to indicate the conceptual relationship which conceptions of learning have with Approaches to Learning, notably Deep and Surface Approaches.

Conceptions of learning have been identified in a second format. Pask (1976) categorises students as either Holists or Serialists. Pask identified these two concepts by using a selection of cards which contained background information on two imaginary species of Martian animals. The students were asked to turn the cards over one at a time giving a reason as to why each card was selected. A record was kept of the order of the cards selected. The student was then asked to report back their findings.

Based on how the respondents answered Pask found he was able to categorise each learner into his conceptual model. The serialist would read back the material in a logical step-by-step manner often only approaching the information a detail at a time sticking to the bare essentials. A difficulty which Pask suggests that Serialists' encounter is that they find it difficult to move between ideas and tend to have difficulty in forming an overall picture. The Holist looks at information as a whole and tries to gain the whole concept so that the subject can be understood. Unlike Serialists, Holists are able to move between areas quite easily and are able to describe a subject through anecdotes, illustration and analogy. However a downfall of this approach is often that the details of a subject are missed and can lead to overgeneralization.

If the conception of learning is accepted, it does have certain implications for teaching. Daniels (1977) describes an experiment where Serialists and Holists were matched with a Serialist and Holist style of teaching respectively. The academic performance of students who were matched improved but the group of students who were mis-matched performed badly. This however is difficult to achieve in every day practice as often the teaching style is influenced heavily by the subject. Generally though it is recommended that more of holist approach is used in teaching (Morgan, 1993).

Like the work of Säljö the model is based upon two component parts, a way of seeing 'what' is learnt and how it is learnt. However it is important to understand that a student may focus on one or more conception at the same time. If it is accepted that a number of conceptions can be held at any one time, that is, a learner can be labelled both a Holist and Serialist and it is evident that further investigation is required. This will enable an understanding of the situation in which these two conceptions may occur so that greater awareness of approaches to learning is gained.

2.7 Orientation to Learning

The following section examines a further issue which is intertwined within the Approaches to Learning concept. This is orientation to learning. Essentially it is what motivates a student to learn or as Taylor et al. (1981) wrote,

"all those attitudes, aims and purposes which express a student's relationship with a course and with the University".

Motivation is associated with the amount of effort put into a task and the aim of the task itself. However it is not just the amount of effort that is significant, but also the type of effort which demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between motivation and achievement. The level of achievement varies between individuals with each person having a different achievement need and this can affect their orientation to learning (Beatty et al 1997). The type of motivation can vary according to performance and perceptions of the learning tasks (Entwistle, 1997). They both affect and are affected by the environment. The situational factors are however not the only factors. Internal elements like personal history, habits of thought and study routines of that person (Entwistle, 1997) also affect the type and level of motivation. Pintrich and Strauben (1992) argue that there is a relationship between positive motivational beliefs and greater cognitive engagement both in terms of academic performance and metacognition. Thus a student's orientation to learning according to these authors has a serious effect on their success.

Motivation has been divided broadly into two main categories these being intrinsic and extrinsic. The stimulus for intrinsic motivation is internally derived where the person initiates the activity for personally valued reasons like interest and enjoyment. The learner who is extrinsically orientated is more concerned with proving something to others.

This concept was developed further by Deci et al (1991) who added additional categorises, identified regulation and introjected regulation. Identified regulation has similarities with intrinsic motivation as the learner values the learning experience but it is initiated for extrinsic reasons e.g. assessment completion (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Introjected regulation is closer to extrinsic motivation, here a learner is not really interested in the learning experience. Completion of assessment is merely to achieve creditation and thus avoid punishment and they see no ownership in this action.

Fazey and Fazey (1998) identified intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as one of three theoretical perspectives the remaining two named competence motivation and goal orientations. Competence motivation is used as a way of understanding why people act in certain ways. Nicholls (1984) claims that people will act in a way which enables them to appear competent but avoid tasks which make them seem incompetent. Therefore those who believe that they have a high competence level will accept more challenging situations. The final theoretical perspective, goal orientations can mediate competence motivation (Dweck and Leggett 1988). The concept of goal orientation was used to explain why children acted differently in relation to the same task. Fazey and Fazey (1998) argued that this was related to their differing goal orientations. These goals are classified as performance learning goals.

According to this study those who use a performance goal are more concerned with gaining a positive evaluation of their performance. When offered a challenge which they perceive as difficult they are likely to refuse the challenge as the risk of failure is too great. In contrast those with a learning goal orientation want to develop their own personal abilities and therefore welcome the opportunity of challenges. Failure would not affect their self-esteem (Dweck and Leggett 1988). However these orientations are not fixed and can be heavily influenced by the environment and learners can adopt both goals. The earlier work of Clark and Trow (1966) with University students emphasised the importance of the environment (i.e. the education institution) interacting with the student, however this work examines the sub-culture which can evolve through this relationship. These sub-cultures are labelled as academic, non-conformist, vocational and collegiate.

The academic culture describes students' attempting to gain understanding and gain knowledge. The non-conformist, sub-culture is much more detached from the university and learning occurs elsewhere. The vocational culture's emphasis however is on gaining the qualification in order to pursue a career. The final culture collegiate, describes students who are mainly interested in the social life which is offered by universities. Like the work of Dweck and

Leggett (1988) Clark and Trow point out that these sub-cultures do not describe a particular type of student rather a student may adopt different or several sub-cultures.

Much of the work in orientations to learning has focussed upon earlier motivational theories and has not been particularly focussed on orientation to learning in the Higher Education context. Based upon his definition of Orientation to learning Taylor claimed to identify four types of orientation, which was refined by Beaty et al (1997), (see table 2.3). Like earlier studies presented, Beaty et al (1997) emphasises the importance of not typing students to a particular orientation for often students will adopt a mix of at least two of these orientations. However they do offer an insight into what can motivate students.

<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Interest</i>	<i>Aim</i>	<i>Concerns</i>
<i>Vocational</i>	Intinsic	Training	Relevance of course to future career
	Extrinsic	Qualification	Recognition of qualification's worth
<i>Academic</i>	Intrinsic	Intellectual interest	Choosing stimulating lectures
	Extrinsic	Educational progression	Grades and academic progress
<i>Personal</i>	Intrinsic	Broadening and self-improvement	Challenging, interesting material
	Extrinsic	Compensation or proof of capability	Feedback and passing the course
<i>Social</i>	Extrinsic	Having a good time	Facilities for sport and social activities

Table 2.3. Student's Learning Orientations (Beaty et al, 1997)

Under the vocational heading the extrinsic motivation centres around obtaining qualifications which will help the student to gain employment. This is their primary aim and the learner will use the minimum amount of effort to achieve this goal. The attitude held here is quite unlike the description of a vocational intrinsically orientated learner who is aiming for specific training in order that this may help them in a future career of their choice (Gibbs et al 1984). Here the choice of course is of particular importance as it must be relevant for their future career.

Academic extrinsic orientation may be related to "syllabus - boundness" (Parlett, 1977). Parlett states that this is based on the assumption that gaining high grades motivates students. He claims students associated with this approach become experts of their learning environment and are therefore able to "play the system". Their main aim is to fulfil the requirements of the syllabus to gain the high grades without any interest in the subject. Academic intrinsic orientation occurs when a student simply learns because he/she has an interest in the subject and is therefore pursuing this interest for intrinsic satisfaction. Students here are not syllabus-bound and indeed enjoy freedom in their learning (Beatty et al 1997).

The third orientation personal, again is divided into extrinsic and intrinsic components. The intrinsic category describes students who are interested in developing themselves personally and see the university as a way of facilitating this change. The challenge of self-improvement rather than the subject choice is most important. Students using Personal extrinsic orientation feel that they have something to prove perhaps because they feel that they have been deprived of opportunities in the past (Beatty et al 1997). Successful completion of the course proves to themselves and others that they are capable. The final orientation social, is extrinsic as it is concerned with the social life and not the course. The students here see university as an opportunity to socialise.

Beatty et al (1997) claim that students put a high priority on tutorials, however it could be argued that this is not necessarily extrinsic. For example collaborative learning (Belenky et al 1986) views learning as a shared experience therefore tutorials and interaction are essential. It is argued that these orientations affect study patterns and this relationship is described as a study contract (Beatty et al 1997). This study contract is not agreed between people but is negotiated within the individual. The study varies from each individual and is not only affected by their learning orientation but also the perception of the external environment.

Later work by France and Beatty (1998) identified a further orientation which they labelled independence orientation. This latter orientation refers to students who want to become more independent often by leaving home and this enables them to develop, understand life and gain more confidence. The authors distinguish independence orientation from social orientation as they argue that here (independence) the experience enables their development but not as an opportunity to build an exciting social life. They also claim it is dissimilar to intrinsic personal orientation as it is the other aspects of university life which are the focus thus this orientation is described as extrinsic. This type of orientation it is argued affects learning as the students do

the minimum amount of work for the course because much of their efforts go on other aspects of student life.

Entwistle & Ramsden (1983) developed a simpler construct to analyse motivation. The construct was developed from the work of Biggs (1979) who found that three main factors were related to motivation and cognitive ability.

FACTOR	COGNITIVE	MOTIVATIONAL
Utilising	Fact-Route Strategy	Extrinsic, Fear of Failure
Internalising	Meaning Assimilation	Intrinsic
Achieving	Study Skills and Organisation	Need for Achievement

Table 2.4 Factors related to motivation and cognitive ability (Biggs, 1979)

Entwistle (1997) describes Intrinsic Motivation as motivation which is formed from genuine interest in the subject, often with personal goals in mind. Intrinsic motivation it is argued is best achieved if the learner is feeling competent and confident. As there is often a personal involvement in the learning process students are often able to transfer their learning to different situations thus enabling them to be flexible in their learning. Like earlier descriptions of Extrinsic Motivation Entwistle & Ramsden (1983) found that this analytic category would be used to describe those who found rewards from external sources i.e. successful completion of the course. Students with this motivation are strongly influenced by external rewards and punishment. Entwistle (1997) argues that often learning in this context is not transferable and therefore limited.

The final category, Achievement Motivation differs from Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation as this concept focuses more on the competitive elements of motivation with the aim of achieving high levels of personal performance. An individual labelled as having Achievement Motivation according to Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) enjoys challenges but can often be selfish and insensitive to other learners as they are more focused on themselves. It is claimed that learners labelled as adopting this approach often achieve good grades due to these factors and their good time management skills.

Like Biggs (1979), Entwistle (1997) found that there are often strong links between what motivates students and their Approaches. This indicates that motivational factors are crucial to a student's success. Extrinsic motivation for example has been linked with Surface Approaches and Fear of Failure, whereas Intrinsic Motivation has strong links with Deep Approaches and conceptual understanding. Achievement Motivation has slightly more complex links with

Approaches to Learning, although it is linked with well-organised study methods i.e. the Strategic Approach. It is claimed that this orientation allows a more versatile approach to learning, as the learner adopts the most appropriate approach as and when needed. Entwistle (1988) also claimed that different categories in relation to orientation to learning can be made with the earlier work of Taylor et al (1981). The categories are defined as Achievement, Fear of Failure and Self-Actualisation. The first two fall into the areas of extrinsic orientation with the third having strong links with intrinsic orientation.

Achievement orientation as it is described is similar to Academic and Personal Extrinsic Orientation as students aim to produce high results in order to prove their worth, especially in relation to other students. Where there is Achievement Orientation a competitive atmosphere is often prominent. Those who Fear Failure as the name suggests try to avoid failure at all times, feeling that assessment is simply present to emphasise their weaknesses (Schmeck 1988) and are therefore reluctant to be creative and they consequently stick to the basics in order to avoid failure. The students who are categorised under this heading, it is argued, are insecure in their abilities. The final area pinpointed by Entwistle is that of self-actualisation which again has corresponding elements with academic Intrinsic Orientation as these students want to learn simply because it interests them, seeing education as an opportunity to grow as a person.

Many of the theories highlighted in this section indicate that there are several different perspectives of orientation to learning, however much of the literature does appear to overlap e.g. extrinsic academic orientation and Achievement Motivation, with nearly all utilising the intrinsic and extrinsic concepts as a basis. The perceived implications of these different orientations are demonstrated throughout with each having an impact on the perspective of the environment, study patterns and Approaches to Learning.

If these claims are to be accepted the orientation a student has towards learning can have a fundamental effect on how and what they will learn. In reference to Approaches to Learning, Entwistle (1997) clearly identifies a relationship between Extrinsic Motivation and Fear of Failure, Intrinsic Motivation and a Deep Approach, and Achievement Motivation with a Strategic Approach. These Approaches tie in closely with orientation to learning that can in turn have a negative or positive effect on a student's academic performance and cognitive development.

The different orientations to learning offer an opportunity to gain a broader perspective of student learning and how this impacts on Approaches to Learning. It provides an insight into why students are in Higher Education and of their complex reasons for being there.

2.8 Context of Learning

This segment of the literature review explains the way in which students' approaches to learning is influenced by the environment in which they learn. The discussion focuses upon the inclusion of assessment, the impact of various teaching styles, the social climate, the academic department and collaboration as key environmental factors that influence the approaches to learning.

The environment in which a student learns has a fundamental effect upon the approach taken. This was identified by Marton et al (1984) who concentrated on the area of assessment. They discovered that the amount of assessment had an effect on the approach used , for the more assessment tasks there were the more likely the student was to adopt a Surface Approach. Marton and Säljö (1984) also found that if a factual question is asked the more likely response is that of one at a Surface level. The authors identified this response through their study, where questions were asked after reading a passage. They found that the factual questions were often anticipated by the students and they would frequently respond adopting a Surface Approach. However they also claim that although it is easy to induce a Surface Approach, it is not so for a Deep Approach. Where the questions are not factual a Deep Approach would not necessarily follow as they claim that the approach a student adopts depends upon the differing interpretations of what is demanded of them. The authors argue that this anomaly can be related to the educational contexts and the mechanisms operating within. One of the effects of assessment is reinforced by Biggs (1979),

"Getting a presentable assignment in by the deadline is institutionally more important than spending time on an excellent one..."

Laurillard (1984) also suggested that assessment played an important role in student learning. Different assessment methods and excessive course material can have a negative effect on their approaches to learning. The amount and type of assessment is also strongly affected by the subject. According to Laurillard science based subjects often require more factual answers. The use of such techniques has been considered to encourage a Surface Approach. Again a contrast can be made with art departments which allow less specific questions allowing a development

of a Deep Approach. Therefore it is clear that it is not only the amount of assessment but also the type of assessment which can affect the learning approach.

The environment in which a student learns holds an important key in explaining why students are considered to adopt certain approaches while rejecting others. Fransson (1977) argued that the most critical variable in the environment is the student's perception of it. Although students in the same department on the same course may view the environment completely differently, it is important to understand that the perception of the environment is much more relevant to the students' approaches to learning than what may be considered to be the "real" environment. Sharma (1997) reinforced this view highlighting in their study the importance of the students' perceptions. Here too it was clear that perceptions of the learning context influence students' approaches to learning. This finding provides support for further investigation into how student's perceive the academic environment.

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) argue that the second level which affects learning is that of the individual lecturer. Here the authors state that if a lecturer is to induce a positive approach he or she must have enthusiasm for the subject and students and be concerned that students do understand particularly new and perhaps difficult topics. The final level in which the context affects learning is that of the academic department in the way that they are organised and most importantly in terms of assessment (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983)

Recognising the importance of the context of learning the authors recommend that there may be ways to improve the environment. One such method is the development of individual study strategies for students who are encouraged to develop their own study strategies. However this approach may be limited unless the academic also deals with assessment and teaching issues. They argue that both teaching and learning need to be considered when aiming to improve approaches to learning. Students who have been made aware of the differences in Approaches to Learning are also found to benefit (Entwistle 1991). The author claims that those who can recognise their own Approaches are more likely to accept responsibility for their own learning.

Other environmental factors which affect the approach taken were identified by Ramsden (1979). Ramsden claims on the basis of a series of factor analyse of student responses that different environmental factors could be ranked in order of importance. The table is ranked with the most important factor first and so on.

Relationship with students	Closeness of lecturer/student relationships: help and understanding shown to students.
Commitment to teaching	Commitment of staff to improving teaching and to lecturing students at the appropriate level.
Workload	Pressure placed on students in terms of demands of the syllabus and assessment tasks.
Formal teaching methods	Formality or informality of teaching and learning e.g. lectures v individual study.
Vocational Relevance	Perceived relevance of course to a student's career.
Social climate	Frequency and quality of academic and social relationships between students.
Clear goals and standards	Extent to which standards expected of students are clear and unambiguous.
Freedom in learning	Amount of discretion possessed by students in choosing and organising academic work.

Table 2.5 Dimensions of learning environments (Ramsden 1979 pg. 416)

Of these factors Ramsden was able to identify the extreme importance students placed upon the relationship which they had with their lecturers. This was reinforced by studies undertaken by Bliss and Ogborn (1977) who asserted that,

"A strong element of reacting well to the personal qualities of the teacher as well as his teaching ability as such" (students reactions to undergraduate science).

Vivien Hodgson (1984) undertook further work in this area. She was able to identify the "vicarious experience", where it was found that a larger number of students would be encouraged to adopt a Deep Approach to learning if they found the lecturer interesting and were able to identify with him/her. The use of a Deep Approach may also be more wide spread if they perceived interest, enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by the lecturer in their subject. It has also been claimed that students adopting different Approaches to Learning prefer differing lecture styles (Entwistle and Tait 1990). Students with a Deep Approach prefer more stimulating lectures whereas those who adopt a Surface Approach show a preference for lecturers who offer 'pre-digested' learning.

The effect of the lecturer has a role to play in the approach used, however it is not the only factor. Workload was also identified as being a factor, this not only includes assessment demands but also demands of the syllabus. Although work may not actually be assessed the differing demands which each syllabus makes can affect the approaches used. A further element identified by Ramsden is vocational relevance, here the author indicates that to be a successful learner the student must be able to see the relevance of the course. If this is not apparent students may become uninterested in the course and may therefore find it easier to adopt a Surface Approach. Fransson (1977) highlighted a similar idea finding that students had a greater chance of using a Deep Approach if they could see the relevance.

The social climate is perhaps a little more complex. This examines the nature of relationships between students. The importance of the relationships between students can work in a positive and negative way. If the relationship is supportive with students sharing ideas (Belenky et al, 1986) then it can be helpful, however if the relationships detract from their studies the effects can be negative. Belenky et al (1986) highlighted the different emotions felt by students when placed in a competitive environment. Males felt comfortable with this but often the females felt uncomfortable and intimidated preferring to share ideas.

Ramsden (1979) argues that clear goals and standards are important to a student's success in academia. One might need to be careful when setting goals and standards that they are not too specific otherwise syllabus-boundness could be encouraged. The final element, freedom of learning is highlighted by Ramsden as important as he argues that students are more likely to adopt a Deep Approach to learning as they will not feel restricted by highly structured objectives which induce a surface approach.

In the later work of Ramsden (1992) the author raised the issue of the institution as an important factor in influencing students' Approaches to Learning. It is suggested that students with high Surface Approach scores were often under too much pressure (from their departments). Students who scored highly on the Deep Approach are much more likely to experience more effective teaching methods.

The fact that students can be influenced by lecturers and the departments places a great responsibility on the university in providing an environment which encourages a Deep Approach to learning. Not only must the University provide this environment but in order to be effective the student must "perceive" the existence of such an environment. However despite the claims that Approaches to Learning considers aspects of the learning environment it is

argued that concepts like Approaches to Learning do not consider the full context of learning as it does not consider the learners (Haggis, 2003).

Altering academic departments may be difficult as many of the decisions made are based strongly on the subjects taught. Different subjects may require different environments, for example as noted earlier art departments may be able to allow more freedom in learning and more informal teaching methods (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). This may however make it more difficult to see clear goals and standards. Science type subjects may encourage a tighter control on freedom of learning but clearer goals and standards may be set. Therefore it may be difficult for academic departments to adopt all of the suggestions made.

The introduction of modularisation has made this issue increasingly important as now students are encountering more than one academic department as they move from subject to subject. Newstead (1997) indicates in his study that this has a negative effect on students as they find it difficult to adapt to each new environment which often results in the adoption of a Surface Approach.

Several authors have examined the impact of the environment on student learning in a more general sense in an attempt to help both students and teachers understand learning and the environment in which they learn thus facilitating and encouraging a meaningful learning process. Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise the importance of the environment under the heading of situated learning, here the authors focus on the necessary social engagements. Rather than examining the cognitive process their emphasis is much more focused on the social situation in which learning occurs. Lave and Wenger describe situated learning as a concept which bridges cognitive processes and social practice. The resulting concept identifies a, *'generative phenomenon and learning is one of its characteristics'*.

Lave and Wenger argue that a learner develops by actually engaging in the process which is facilitated by Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). The legitimacy aspect of LPP is a constitutive element that examines the characteristic ways of belonging. Peripherality discusses various ways of being located in the social world. Legitimate peripherality is very much concerned with social structures and power relations with peripherality as an empowering position. The final element, participation, allows for the diversity of relations within the community membership.

The central concept is the engagement of a learner who participates in the actual practice of an expert but only achieving participation to a limited degree and only accepting limited responsibility for the final product. This learning is not viewed as a one person act rather they argue that learning needs to take place in a community with co-operation. For LPP to occur it is argued that it is necessary to have one party more skilled than another, thus allowing LPP to occur in many different situations. The roles which can be adopted by the learner can and do vary depending upon time and space. As LPP is interactive the apprentice engages several roles sometimes simultaneously e.g. aspiring explorer, status subordinate and learning practitioner etc. Each of these roles encourages different active involvement, however the way the learner places himself or herself to the whole remains the same. Hence LPP describes ways of acting which can vary substantially under different conditions

Lave and Wenger argue that learning occurs when the master and apprentice engage in interactivity in complementary ways, with the apprentice enabled to understand and the master allowing participation. The authors claim that LPP is not a pedagogical strategy it is more of a conceptual idea in order to enable understanding of student learning. They particularly emphasise that learning through LPP will occur no matter what the context. Although the LPP construct should draw the attention to key aspects of learning and the requirements necessary for LPP to occur. Without this engagement in the social and learning worlds Lave and Wenger argue that learning will not occur. Notably situated learning and LPP makes it possible to acknowledge the impact of the relationships which occur in the learning community, relationships which are necessarily gendered.

The work of Belenky et al (1986) supports the view that learning occurs when students and teachers interact. It is suggested that learners will benefit from learning environments in which teachers allow the students the opportunity to expand upon their ideas and provide supportive challenge (Pearson 1992). The role of the teacher is important in providing affirmation for the student at the beginning rather than at the end of the course. Belenky et al argue that teachers need to use this classroom interaction and like the work of Lave and Wenger encourage contributions from each member in order to develop the learning experience. The sharing experience of learning is fundamental, it is essential that the teaching methods allow for the exchange of various perspectives which should be welcomed. The teacher's efforts should be directed towards encouraging the sharing of this knowledge, trusting their students' thinking and acting as a role model (Belenky et al 1986). It is important that the teacher should show fallibility and reduce their all-powerful expert image (Gallos 1991). Belenky et al (1986) argue

that if fallibility (on the part of the teacher) is not shown the students will perceive that learning is a flawless process,

“so long as teachers hide the imperfect processes of their thinking, allowing the students to glimpse only at the polished products, students will remain convinced that only Einstein or a Professor could think up a theory”

Belenky et al (1986) pg. 215.

Several similarities as noted earlier can be found between the work of Belenky et al (1986) and Lave and Wenger (1991) as both agree that the learning process should empower the learner, with the teacher allowing and positively engaging participation where ideas are shared in a supportive environment. The teacher plays a pivotal role and the other students in the classroom play a part in developing a conducive environment for learning to occur. Participants in the classroom should emphasise mutual goals and support and care about each others learning (Belenky et al 1986, Carfagna 1994, Pearson 1992 and Gallos 1993).

What is of note in this discussion of collaboration and involvement of others is the lack of reference to the approaches to learning concept. Under the approaches to learning heading there is no real reference to the way in which others influence the approaches used (aside from those of the teacher) and as other literature indicates this may have a key impact on student learning. Thus any future research into approaches to learning needs to allow for the inclusion of the involvement of others in student learning so that a full account is given.

2.9 Psychological Theories of Learning

There is much debate concerning the differing views as to how learning occurs and the process through which learning takes place. There is no consensus as to how learning is achieved with each theoretical viewpoint having it's own identity and viewpoint. These different theoretical perspectives can be divided into three main categories behaviourist, cognitivist and social constructivist. Presenting these fundamental conceptualisation of how learning occurs and differentially emphasising the impact of internal and external factors in the process of learning, an evaluation of these theoretical perspectives will provide an insight into each viewpoint and will offer the opportunity to explore how these differing perspectives affect the understanding of the Approaches to Learning concept.

The Social constructivist position (Cobb 1990, Lave 1988) is centred around the affects of the social surroundings in conjunction with historical and cultural variants. Those who support this position argue that learners deepen their knowledge through utilising their own experiences and relating it to themselves. The social constructivist view is therefore that real learning does not take place in the traditional classroom rather learning takes place between fellow students (Allen, 1991). This supports situated learning, as here a learner develops by participating with others in the learning process (Lave and Wenger, 1991). It is claimed that learning is not an individual experience and it should not be considered as such. From the social constructivist view point learners should aim for a more personal understanding rather than formal verification (Merrill, 1991).

Some similarities can be drawn with Belenky et al (1986) concept of connected knowing for here too it is claimed that women in particular benefit from collaborating and sharing their learning with others. By encouraging the sharing of the learning experience the learning process is enhanced. This supports the theory that learning does not just take place in the classroom as learning is developed when the student can relate to the real world. Those students who found a preference for group and/or social work should also have a greater level of understanding by using a Deep Approach (Entwistle et al 1991).

The behaviourist stance is based upon the stimulus and response theory i.e. if a learner is presented with a stimulus a certain response will be given. Those who take the Behaviourist position, believe (in the extreme form) that learning is entirely dependant upon the external environment, thus making the assumption that anyone (providing they are not handicapped) can be taught anything (Gagne 1977 and Thorndike 1977). The strong emphasis which is being placed on the external environment has two fundamental practical implications. Firstly tasks should be divided into their simplest forms and secondly successful work should be rewarded, therefore there is a heavy reliance on feedback and reinforcement. The breaking down of the main task into basic components allows the student to learn step by step until the whole task is complete.

Black (1999) claims that when learning is broken down in such a way no attention is given to the role of understanding and the learner becomes conditioned to produce the appropriate response. This type of conditioned response can often lead to rote learning and out of context questions where teachers will only provide information appropriate for the test (Black 1999). The students who are exposed to this behaviourist philosophy and method it is argued are unable to place their learning in a situational context. The Behaviourist approach also ignores

other factors which affect learning as they merely concentrate on what people "do" rather than what the learner is actually thinking. The behaviourist does have some similarities to the serialist as tasks are simplified into several smaller tasks which are approached step by step.

The idea that all behaviour is learnt is extreme but if this is accepted it would have many implications. The environment would be extremely important in the development of learners. Therefore the environment should try to develop learners to their fullest potential. Entwistle & Ramsden (1983) also believe that the context of learning is important as different academic departments can and do encourage different approaches. However they consider approaches to learning to be affected by factors other than the environment position.

In contrast to the Behaviourist position is the cognitive position which focuses on how the mind works, as it is believed people learn differently because they process information differently. The theory underpinning the cognitive approach is based upon the assumption that information and experiences are processed and stored in the mind which allows for deeper understanding. Under this approach the learner is the central focus with the concept of individuality endorsed. Each learner is considered to be unique with their own set of experiences, knowledge perceptions and abilities. As everyone has a different background and genetic makeup the way in which knowledge is processed and understood will vary with each learner.

Atkins et al (1993) describes the cognitive process as going through three stages. The first stage is sub-conscious where perception and aspects of the environment are considered. At the second stage, the active stage, the information is processed to give data and personal meaning (in a selective manner). In the third and final stage the information is stored in a long-term memory bank. Those who accept the validity of cognitive process consider that through progression of these stages a metacognitive state is reached. The aim of cognitive theory is 'intended to solve the problems of the relation between individual and social' Rosenberg and Sutton-Smith (1972, pg86). By bringing together the impact of the environment and the individual mental process it is hoped a more cohesive and holistic view of learning is provided (Glaser 1992). However the coherency of this viewpoint is questioned for data may not be perceived holistically with pieces of information remaining in separate departments within the mind. A further criticism of this approach is identified by Donald (1986) as he claims that the individual differences model is merely descriptive and does not explain why these differences in cognitive processing occur. The transferability of learning is also questioned for it is possible that the way learners interact with information will vary in different disciplines (Donald 1986).

The student who could be described as a successful metacognitive is able to recognise the appropriate learning plans and is able to adopt the correct one. Certain links could be made with Achievement Motivation as this particular brand of motivation, it is argued, allows the learner to use the most profitable approach (Entwistle, 1997).

This school of psychology is often related to intelligence (Halpern, 1992) as cognitive psychology is concerned with how people learn, think and remember. These concepts are often related to intelligence which is measured by verbal and perception factors. If this proposition is accepted it could be argued that cognitive psychology is a very important area of student learning. This area has been widely explored in relation to gender as small differences have been claimed to exist. Females it is claimed tend to have superior verbal skills but males excel in nearly all aspects of visual-spatial ability (Halpern, 1992).

The debate between the behaviourist and cognitive school of thought presents serious divisions in the debate about how people learn. The emphasis of the behaviourist approach being on the external environment seeing the learner as playing a passive role which can be clearly and easily manipulated by the use of certain stimulus. The cognitive approach however defines the learner as being pivotal in the learning process, the mental process unique to each individual. The same external stimulus can provoke different responses.

Approaches to Learning appears to have similarities to the cognitive school of thought as there is much emphasis on how the student learns and how they interact with the data. However if the behaviourist approach is to be accepted it would question the foundations on which Approaches to Learning is based, for in behaviourism no consideration is given to the individual response of the learner, which is key for Approaches to Learning. However the Approaches to Learning concept does require consideration of the environment, an issue which is fundamental in the behaviourist position. Thus Approaches to Learning appears to use a combination of perspectives from both schools of thought. However the cognitive perspective remains the most dominant in learning research, perhaps due to the individual involvement in the learning process.

The Learning Styles theory (Rayner and Riding 1997) attempts to classify two clear groups, the cognitive centred approach and the learning centred approach. The term Style here is described as 'a distinct notion of coherent singularity'. In this model the work of Riding and Cheema (1991) is used to describe cognitive style as a person's typical mode of thinking, perceiving,

problem solving and remembering. The cognitive style reflects the way in which a person thinks, it is considered to be stable and static (Tennant 1988).

The different cognitive styles are compartmentalised into two cognitive families the Wholist-Analytic and the Verbaliser-Imager (Riding and Cheema 1991). These models identify whether information is seen as a whole or in parts (Wholist-Analytic) or whether we think in pictures or in words (Verbal-Imagery). The Wholist-Analytic family is identified as consisting of several different concepts (See Table 2.6).

Label	Description	References
<i>Key Dimension:</i> <i>Wholist-Analytic</i>		
Constricted-flexible control	Tendency for distraction or resistance to interference	Klein (1954)
Broad-narrow	Preference for broad categories containing many items rather than narrow categories containing few items	Pettigrew (1958); Messick and Kogan (1963)
Analytical-non analytical	A conceptual response which differentiates attributes or qualities conceptualising rather than a theme or total effect	Klein (1954); Witkin et al (1977)
Levelling-sharpening	Tendency to assimilate detail rapidly and lose detail or emphasise detail and changes in new information	
Field-dependency/field independence	Individual dependency on a perceptual field when analysing a structure or form which is part of the field	
Impulsivity-reflectiveness	Tendency for quick as against deliberate response	Kagan (1966)
Cognitive-complexity	A tendency for the multidimensional or simplicity or unidimensional processing of information	Gardner and Schoen (1962)
Automisation-restructuring	Preference for simple repetitive tasks rather than restructuring tasks	Tiedemann (1989)
Converging- Diverging	Narrow, focused , logical, deductive thinking rather than broad, open-ended, associational thinking to solve problems	Hudson (1968); Pask and Scott(1972); Pask (1976)
Serialist-holist	The tendency to work through learning tasks or problem solving incrementally or globally and assimilate detail	Cohen (1967)
Splitters-lumpers	A response to information and interpretation which is either analytical and methodological or global	
Adaptors-innovators	Adaptors prefer conventional, established procedures and innovators restructuring or new perspectives in problem solving	Kirton (1994)

Concrete sequential Concrete random/ Abstract sequential/ Abstract random	The learner learns through concrete experience and abstraction either randomly or sequentially	Gregorc (1982)
Reasoning –intuitive Active –contemplative	Preference for developing understanding through reasoning and/or by spontaneity or insight and learning activity which allows active participation or passive reflection	Allinson and Hayes (1996)
<i>Key Dimension: Verbal-Imagery</i> Abstract versus concrete	Preferred level and capacity of abstraction	Harvey et al (1961)
Tolerance for unrealistic experiences	Individual readiness to accept perceptual variance with conventional reality or ‘truth’	Klein et al (1962)
Verbaliser-visualiser	The extent to which verbal or visual strategies are used when processing information	Riding and Taylor (1976)
<i>Key Dimensions: Wholist-Analytic and Verbal- Imagery</i>		
Analytic-Wholist and Verbal-imager	Tendency for the individual to process information in parts as a whole and think in words or pictures	Riding (1994) Riding and Cheema (1991);

Table 2.6 Description and fundamental dimensions of cognitive style (Rayner and Riding, 1997: pg10-11)

The Analytics are equivalent to the field-independents (Riding and Buckle 1990) they can be described as seeing information in parts and often have difficulty in seeing the information as a whole. The Wholists can be related to the field-dependants (Riding and Buckle 1990), they are able to see the information as a whole but find it difficult to distinguish the parts that make up the whole. Each of these styles has advantages and disadvantages, for example Wholists it is claimed find it difficult to separate information into its component parts but they are able to see the whole picture. Therefore they are more likely to have a balanced view (Riding et al, 1993). The Analytics although superior at identifying the component similarities and differences tend to focus on these details at the expense of the whole.

Under the category of the Wholist-Analytic family it can be seen that the Holist-Serialist thinking is identified (Pask and Scott 1972). This model was originally adapted and included in *Approaches to Learning* (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983). This was included to identify whether a learner approaches a task holistically or in a step-by-step process. This link with cognitive style theory was tested and its internal validity was questioned and the Holist-Serialist concept was removed from the ASI. This removal raises certain questions, notably cognitive concepts not identifiable via a questionnaire are removed irrespective of their conceptual importance. This model and others in the table are said to represent the Wholist-Analytic family (Riding et al, 1993).

The second category in the cognitive family styles is the Verbaliser-imager (Table 2.6). It is said that imagers prefer to learn through pictures whereas verbalisers prefer the use of words. Those who are described as bimodal are able to use either mode of representation. When engaging in the thinking process people will think in terms of pictures or words and the use of these different formats enables them to obtain the meaning of information (Riding et al, 1993). These differences in thinking affect a person's preference for certain tasks and modes of presentation.

Rayner and Riding (1997) attempted in their learning styles theory to bring together the Wholist-Analytic and Verbaliser-Imager cognitive dimensions. This is in an attempt to try and address the criticisms of these various cognitive models which are based upon the lack of psychometric rigour (Grigorenko and Sternberg 1995). However its main purpose is to develop a coherent theory of cognitive styles and link the Wholist-Analytic and Verbal-Imagery under the heading of cognitive styles.

The learning centred approach relates to the educational perspective, it is in this approach that Approaches to Learning work is situated. The learning centred approach can be described as comprising of three main elements, Preference based models of learning styles, Cognitive Skills based, Process based and (later) Orientation to study. These features attempt to reflect the measurement through conceptualisation of the learning process. Table 2.7 presents the key works which are grouped under the learning centred approach (Riding and Rayner 1998).

The preference based model examines the individual's propensity to express a preference for a particular technique or combination of techniques (Sadler and Smith 1997). The preference based models as classified by Riding and Rayner (1998) tend to focus on the learning environment and instructional elements which can affect individual's learning behaviour.

The cognitive skills based models of learning style are comprised of many different constructs which have had a significant impact on the development of the learning centred tradition. The constructs in this model aim to describe various intellectual functioning in relation to the learning activity (Rayner and Riding 1998). Under this heading a student is only deemed 'successful' when there is progressive development in skills and method made by the individual.

The Process based models form the final part of the learning centred approach. The process models tend to focus on individual differences in the process of learning rather than examining the actual learning, this is achieved by examining the process of learning and its context. Rayner and Riding (1998) identified two sub-elements under this heading the learning process based upon experiential learning and the learning process based on orientation study. The orientation to study is included in Riding and Rayner's work as a further styles model and it is here that these authors classify Approaches to Learning. Under this heading different motivation and learning approaches are described (table 2.7).

There are several criticisms of the models described, notably the lack of consistency between instruments and validity within the constructs. The Approaches to Learning concept is considered most rigorous and so has a more flexible model which responds to environmental change but it is unable to consistently predict behaviour (Rayner and Riding 1998). The analysis and grouping of such models can allow an insight into individual differences in their own learning strategy and behaviour.

Dimension	Description	References
<i>Style models based on the learning Process</i>		
Concrete experience/ Reflective observation/ Abstract conceptualisation/ Active experimentation	A two-dimensional model comprising perception (concrete/abstract thinking) and processing (active/reflective information processing).	Kolb (1984)
Activist/theorist/ Pragmatist/ reflector Learners	Preferred modes of learning which shape an individual approach to learning	Honey and Mumford (1986)
<i>Style models grounded in orientation to study</i>		
Meaning orientation /Reproducing orientation/ Achieving orientation/ Holistic orientation; later developed to include deep, strategic, surface, lack of direction, academic self-confidence	An integration of instructional preference to information processing in the learner's approach to study	Entwistle and Tait (1994)
Surface-deep-achieving orientation/ Intrinsic-extrinsic-achievement orientation	An integration of approaches to study with motivational orientation	Biggs (1985)
Synthesis-analysis/ elaborative processing/ fact retention/ study methods	The quality of thinking which occurs during learning relates to the distinctiveness, transferability, and durability of memory and fact retention	Schmeck et al (1977)

Style models based upon Instructional Preference

Environmental/ sociological/ emotional/physical/psychological elements	The learner's response to key stimuli: environmental (light, heat); sociological (peers pairs, adults, self); emotional (structure, persistence, motivation); physical (auditory, visual, tactile); psychological (global analytic, impulsive- reflective).	Dunn et al (1989)
Participant-avoidant/ collaborative –competitive/ independent- dependent	A social interaction measure which has been used to develop three bipolar dimensions in a construct which describes a learners typical approach to the learning situation	Grashma and Riechman (1975)

Style models based on cognitive skills development

Visualisation/ verbal symbols/ sounds/ emotional feelings	Learning style defined in terms of perceptual modality	Reinert (1976)
Field-dependency/ scanning –focusing/ breadth of categorisation/ cognitive complexity / reflective- impulsivity/ levelling –sharpening/ tolerant and intolerant	A cognitive profile of three types of learners reflecting their position in a bi-polar analytic global continuum which reflects an individual's cognitive skills development.	Letteri (1980)
Cognitive skills/ perceptual responses/ study and instructional preferences	Identifies 24 elements in a learning style construct grouped together into 3 dimensions. The model presupposes that cognitive skills development is a prerequisite for effective learning	Keefe (1990)

Table 2.72 Models and key features of learning styles (Riding and Rayner, 1998)

Curry (1983, 1987) devised the onion model which attempted to bring together learning styles theory and cognitive styles theory. This model is described as having three levels. Starting at the centre there is a central core made up of personality centred models, the second level contains information-processing models and the third outer layer has instructional – preference models of learning styles. These three different layers in the onion represent the inner most core of an individual to the outer levels which are much more flexible and influenced by the environment.

Curry describes the inner most layer cognitive personality styles as the individual approach to adopting and assimilating information based on relatively permanent personality factors. The theories included in this layer include the work of Riding (1994) and Witkin et al (1977) who described field dependence and independence. The information processing level examines how individuals collate information and how this information is processed in the mind. Kolb's (1984) model of the experiential learning style and other related style models (Honey and Mumford, 1986) are included in this level. The final outer most layer examines instructional preferences. Here the environment is examined in which students learn. Curry indicated that the Approaches to Learning work would be classified as the information processing level though she claims it may incorporate instructional preference.

The Approaches to Learning work can be said to link instructional preference and information processing as it examines environmental factors as well as an examination of how students try to process information when engaged in the learning process. Entwistle (1988) argues that this approach has both a referential and relational component. The referential component examines the student's intention when involved in a learning task while the relational examines the learning process and the cognitive approach.

Each of the different Approaches should represent the cognitive elements which run between Deep and Surface thinking demonstrated in the learner. The cognitive centred approach is also demonstrated through the styles and pathologies section. Here Holist and Serialist Approaches are classified which are directly comparable with the Wholist-Analytic approach discussed earlier.

The onion model is not the only typology which attempted to organise the cognitive and learning theories (Murray Harvey 1994). The work of Biggs (1994) and Claxton and Murrell (1987) found similarities with Curry's Onion model, notably in the classification of personality styles which is similar for all typologies. Curry's model and Claxton and Murrells model are

matched very closely with the only difference being the inclusion of social interaction models.

However discrepancies can be found between Biggs and Curry's model notably over the classifying information processing model. It is with Bigg's own work that a dispute arises for Curry places it between instructional preference and information processing level. However Bigg's defines his work as in the systems model (which included aspects of cognitive styles). These differences can be explained by the backgrounds of each typology, one theoretically based (Biggs) and one questionnaire based (Curry) (Murray-Harvey 1994). The important issue which arises from such conflict is the lack of integration which can occur between these typologies, for although Curry agrees that Bigg's work can be described as part of a systems model the Onion model does not allow for this integration.

These criticisms reflect some of the inconsistencies which are evident in learning theory but they do at least offer the opportunity to see how the different aspects of theory fit together. It is important to be able to understand these different learning elements as they play a key role in understanding how a learner learns. These typologies offer the opportunity to evaluate the meaning of Approaches to Learning in a much wider context of the learning world and to examine any contradictions which may exist in different interpretations of this construct.

2.10 Summary

This broad range of literature demonstrates the wide impact approaches to learning has had on various conceptions of learning. In particular it details the background of approaches to learning, the development of the ASI and the use of this instrument in understanding student learning. The discussion highlights the impact that approaches to learning can have on the learning process and learning outcomes and demonstrates the importance of this concept in our understanding of student learning both at an individual and pedagogic level.

The evaluation of this literature explains the advantages and disadvantages of using the ASI as defined by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) who attempt to understand, nomethetically, Approaches to Learning in a Higher Education setting. The problems illuminated from this discussion, point the researcher in an alternative direction away from the limited confines of a quantitative, pre-conceptualised construct so that a full reflection of approaches to learning can be obtained. This alternate approach encouraged by such problems is detailed in the following methodology section. Support for an alternative method for examining approaches to learning is also offered during the presentation of gender and approaches to learning and the context of

learning. While Entwistle and Ramsden did not claim that the ASI should be used to explore the relationship between gender and Approaches to Learning it is evident that this quantitative approach will not be suitable as it imposes pre-suppositions and neglects the learner's situation in life.

During the discussion of the context of Learning a further problem of approaches to learning is illuminated, that is, the omission of how the involvement of others influences the approach used and as demonstrated by other learning literature this is a fundamental concept in how students learn. Despite these problems the approaches to learning concept is widely used and accepted by both practitioners and researchers and its importance in Higher Education remains. Thus research into the area is valid and necessary, however the methodology and methods used needs to take into account the issues raised in this discussion.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the phenomenological methodology and explores how this methodological approach supports this research. The first section within this chapter provides a framework of the phenomenological traditional, it details the development of this approach from the Husserlian foundations to the later existentialist work. Further insight into the component parts of this approach are offered in the form of intentionality, noema and noesis and the phenomenological lifeworld. These segments indicate how phenomenology may be fruitfully applied to this study.

The place of phenomenology in relation to phenomenography is stated, this discussion explains how approaches to learning research has moved away from its phenomenographical foundations. From such discussions it is possible to understand the basis of the research design and the reasons why this approach was selected. The final section, 'Phenomenology and the Idiographic/Nomothetic Distinction' places phenomenology in a wider debate. In particular it highlights how this type of idiographic approach differs from numerous approaches to learning studies which have frequently been nomothetic in nature.

3.2 The Phenomenological Perspective

The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) had a clear aim. He wanted to provide a foundation for all disciplines, sciences, arts and humanities. This he felt was achievable through establishing the meaning of basic concepts. The main concern of Husserl originated from the tendency of philosophical movements to turn away from the expressed experience and instead prematurely label and interpret these concepts in an abstract manner. He argued that attention should instead be given to things as they appear, or as it is better known “*a return to the things themselves*” . A fundamental underpinning of this philosophy is a rejection of the subjective-objective dualism. Rather than believing that interpretation would lead the researcher to the objective truth, the one reality, Husserl considered that what appears to an individual and the way in which this is experienced is reality,

“The objective is the manifest presence of what appears and can be recognised only subjectively by the person who is perceiving it” (Husserl, 1970, p.314)

The form of phenomenology, which emphasises subjectivity, is transcendental phenomenology. Husserl’s approach can be described as transcendental phenomenology for it utilises only the

data available to consciousness, the appearance of objects. The term transcendental is used for it stays close to reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates (Moustakas, 1994). The functions of transcendental phenomenology has been listed by Farber (1943, p568),

1. It is the first method of knowledge because it begins with the things themselves, which are the final court of appeal for all we know. It is a logical approach because it seeks to identify presuppositions and “put them out of play”.
2. It is not concerned with matters of fact but seeks to determine meanings
3. It deals with both real and with “possible” essences
4. It offers direct insight into the essence of things, growing out of the self-givenness of objects and reflective description.
5. It seeks to obtain knowledge through a state of pure subjectivity, while retaining the values of thinking and reflecting.

Thus Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology is a study of the appearance of things as we view them. The aim of this philosophy is to elucidate the phenomenon by highlighting the features of consciousness and finally arriving at an understanding of the essence of this experience. As a way of accessing the essence of the experience Husserl identified a Gestalt. The gestalt is a series of interrelated meanings which when examined in their totality construe the “lifeworld” (Husserl, 1970). The lifeworld (as will be described later) allows an insight into the entire experienced situation of the person through a focus on the meanings of the lived experience. The notion of the lifeworld for Husserl as a transcendental phenomenologist relates closely to the notion of essences. From this perspective the lifeworld is an essential structure, this differed from the earlier perspectives at this time as Husserl dismissed the idea that human experience can be categorised as cause and effect variables.

The concept of the lifeworld was the focus for existential phenomenologists (Heidegger, trans.1962, Merleau-Ponty, trans.1962 and Satre, trans.1958) who developed Husserl’s original work. The concept of the lifeworld became the emphasis of their research, although they tended to set aside Husserl’s desire to develop a set of phenomenological based concepts. In order to gain an understanding of the meanings of being in the world the existential phenomenologists attempted to bridge the gap between the conception of transcendental phenomenology and the need to gain a full account of the lifeworld. They argued that if the lifeworld were regarded purely as an essence a full and rich description of the interrelatedness of meanings would not be facilitated.

Therefore the link between phenomenologically based empirical human science and transcendental phenomenology was made. Although the underpinning principles remained i.e.

the need to describe phenomena, as they are experienced, the focus of existential research was to provide a full and rich description of the lived experiences. This is unlike transcendental phenomenology which perceived the lifeworld as an essential structure which prevented a full account of the lifeworld being presented. Through this approach, empirical research is facilitated, whereby the lifeworld of research participants can be described in a descriptive study which highlights the rich descriptions of the relevant aspects of the lifeworld (Ashworth, 1997). It is this form of phenomenology that is adopted in the study for it allows an insight into the meaning of approaches to learning from the viewpoint of the learner's lifeworld.

3.3 Intentionality

Intentionality is a fundamental concept of Husserl's notion of transcendental phenomenology. Husserl concluded that all mental activity involves a link between 'inner' consciousness and the situation that one is 'conscious of'. The relationship between these mental links in the relational form of all experience is intentionality (Husserl, 1931). Husserl developed the work of Brentano who believed that intentionality is the fundamental element of psychic phenomena and used this assumption as the basis for a descriptive transcendental philosophy of consciousness (Husserl, 1977). The term intention indicates the orientation of the mind to its object; the object exists in the mind in an intentional way (Kockelmans, 1967, p.32). For Husserl the intentional act,

"is the perceiving of something ...judging, the judging of a certain matter; valuation, the valuing of a value; wish for the content wished" (Husserl, 1931, p.32)

Thus an intentional act has to be directed towards something, that is an object. Both Brentano and Husserl were consistent in their belief that the intentional act was directed towards an object. However Husserl claimed that the object could be real or imaginary, arguing consciousness could be directed to any object.

Intentionality is closely entwined with consciousness for it requires the internal experience of being conscious of something (Husserl, 1931). Thus consciousness and the object of consciousness are intentionally related. In other words we need to be present to both ourselves and to the things in the world. The self and the world are inseparable and together they allow meaning to occur.

Therefore intentionality is derived from two key connected concepts, the internal (being conscious of self) and external (being conscious of the world). These two parts of the whole are named the noema and noesis and these form intentionality. The ongoing relationship between the noema and noesis is fundamental to the functioning of intentionality, for it is through this duo the meanings are explicated. Together they provide an opportunity to discover ‘an inclusive totality of consciousness’ (Moustakas, 1994, p.31).

The bridge between cognitive, intellectualist and behaviourist views and the phenomenological argument may be identified through the work of Merleau-Ponty. He argued that intentionality locates the person as a whole within their lifeworld so that learning is always founded on that relationship between the person and the world. It is neither a total absorption in the world (behaviourism) nor a totally reflective construction (cognitive) but a creative and adaptive awareness within a lived world which is reality. Moustakas (1994, pg.31-32) identified the main challenges and functions of intentionality;

1. Explicating the sense in which our senses are directed;
2. Discerning the features of consciousness that are essential for the individuation of objects (real or imaginary) that are before us in consciousness (noema)
3. Explicating how beliefs about such objects (whether real or imaginary) may be acquired, how it is we are experiencing what we are experiencing (noesis) (Miller,1984, p.8) and
4. Integrating the noematic and noetic correlates of intentionality into meanings and essences of the experience.

Through intentionality the aim of phenomenology is enabled for it facilitates an understanding of the meanings of phenomena as they appear, through elucidating exactly what appears.

3.4 Noema and Noesis

The noema and noesis distinctions represent a particular period of Husserl’s phenomenological work whereby he attempted to further understanding of the intentional experience in his book ‘*Ideas*’. He considered that gaining an insight into the ‘consciousness of something’ was both obvious and highly obscure,

“no headway is made by simply seeing and saying that every presenting refers to a presented, every judgement to something judged, and so forth” (1931, pg. 255)

In order to grasp the intentional experience, the ‘consciousness of something’ the noema and noesis distinction could be applied. Through this conceptual distinction Husserl felt it was

possible to gain a '*transdental standpoint in its uniqueness*' (1931,pg.255) and the meaning of which is naturally hidden could be obtained. Although in Husserl's later work he moved on from the noema and noesis, as did existential phenomenology, this distinction will prove a fruitful heuristic device in this study.

The noema is not the real object rather it is the phenomenon, the appearance of the object. The noesis presents the manner in which the object appears for the individual. The relationship between these two concepts enables an insight into the *way* in which the *what* is experienced. Together the noesis and noema distinction allow exploration of the intentional experience.

The noesis offers an insight into the way in which an object is experienced, the act of perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering or judging, all of these actions have meanings, which need to be elucidated. This concept represents the subject pole with its inner horizon of meanings. In other words it describes the manner in which an object is approached and as such it is often presented in the form of an emotional response. The manner in which the object is faced is 'justified' by the individual in the light of 'perfect self-evidence'. Therefore the noesis is rationally determined for the meaning placed upon an object is reflected in the manner in which the object is approached. The noema, the object correlate demonstrates the object pole with its outer horizons and relevancies. In perception it is the perceptual meaning or the perceived as such; in recollection the remembered as such in judging the judged as such (Husserl, 1931, p.258). In simpler terms the noema highlights the meaning of the object, the *what* of experience. Within the context of a particular object many meanings may be applied and these form a picture of the total meaning.

From the description of the noesis it is evident that a key similarity can be drawn with approaches to learning for like the noesis concept, approaches to learning examines the *way* in which a student views the world and learning. Thus approaches to learning is directly reflective of the noetic intention for both concepts examine the 'approach' used and by examining these actions it is possible to see how approaches to learning is experienced and the meanings of these experiences. This distinct parallel between the noesis and approaches to learning offers further support for the inclusion of the noema/noesis distinction as a heuristic device. By using the noema and noesis in this way it provides a useful way for thinking about approaches to learning, for when examining student's approaches to learning, these particular kind of descriptions will fall under the noetic heading. The noema and noesis together allow for an account of things in their appearance,

“What is the “perceived as such”? What essential phases does it harbour in itself in its capacity as noema? We win the reply to our question as we wait in pure surrender, on what is essentially given. We can then describe “that which appears as such” faithfully and in the light of perfect self-evidence.” (Husserl, 1931, p.260)

In this study the noema noesis distinction explores what learning is for a student and how they approach their learning from the context of the lifeworld. By establishing the noema- noesis relationships we are able to view a complete insight into all of the meanings of approaches to learning. To explicate the “what” a textural description of the experience is required and this facilitates the full meaning of the noema to be explored. (Moustakas, 1994). To provide a full textural description great consideration must be given to ensure that all dimensions are included. Once the textures are elucidated it is possible to describe how the phenomenon is experienced, the noesis. The description of a how a phenomena appears can be defined as a structure (Keen, 1975), this describes the conditions that precipitate the textural qualities (Moustakas, 1994).

The relationship between texture and structure like noema and noesis is closely entwined and continual. One cannot exist without the other, for when establishing the texture one can not help but uncover structure as structures are inherent in texture. However it is important to note that while there is a continual and dependent relationship, which one constantly moves to and from, it is still possible to examine one or other during the phenomenological process (Keen 1975). Through this process the phenomena in appearance and hidden come together to present a full understanding of the meaning of the relationship.

To summarise the noesis and noema are the constituent halves of intentionality. They describe the way in which the what is experienced respectively; this provides a structural and textural description of things both hidden and in there appearing. The relationship between the noema and noesis is unbreakable and continual for neither can exist without the other for where there is a noema there is also a noesis and vice versa. While we should not expect to see the noema and noesis separately in the phenomena, as they are so interconnected, it is possible to make the distinction. The object or noema being the study material and the study situation and all that this entails for the student and the approach or noesis as the inner response to these. This distinction will be used as a heuristic device with the noesis mirroring the student approach to learning and an uncovering of meanings is facilitated.

3.5 The Lifeworld

The lifeworld as described by Husserl investigates the way a person lives, creates and relates in the world. Husserl assumed that through the lifeworld a structure of essences could be gained

and these essences can be applied to all lifeworlds. Thus transcendental phenomenology interprets the lifeworld as an essential structure. Later existential phenomenologists interpreted the meaning of the lifeworld in another way, arguing that a lifeworld is comprised of meanings of being in the world. Merleau-Ponty (1962), an existential phenomenologist, debated whether it is possible to give a full account of the lifeworld if it is only presented in essence form and this leads to the an alternative view of the lifeworld. He argued that it is necessary to examine the entire lifeworld if meanings are to be explicated and essences do not allow for this full exploration.

The key focus of the lifeworld is to establish an understanding of the meaning of a phenomenon in the context of their whole lived world (Husserl, 1970). It is of crucial importance that the lifeworld is considered in its entirety for it is the interconnectedness of the lifeworld which facilitates the understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon in question (Ashworth 2002). Through this complete description of all parts, the meanings to the individual in the context of their lifeworld are uncovered in descriptive form. By returning to the basic meanings of phenomena the primary experience of the world is demonstrated,

“All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or forms some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of it’s meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experiences of the world of which science is the second order description.”

(Merleau-Ponty, 1962,p.viii)

The use of existential phenomenology in this study provides the opportunity to gain an understanding of approaches to learning in the context of the whole lifeworld. Instead of focussing on concentrated elements, as indicated in Husserl’s essences, the focus is on achieving the engaged, lived experience of how students approach their learning.

The lifeworld itself provides a way that I, as the researcher, can encompass the meanings of the particular experienced concerned, in this case ‘whole’ experience of approaches to learning for each individual student. By dwelling with the whole it is possible to see the inter-playing factors that exist and how these inter-relate to form student perceptions of their approach to learning. These descriptions are not distorted by strong interpretations and reflect instead descriptions that the students themselves would recognise. By remaining in the existential phenomenological lifeworld it is therefore possible to obtain an insightful commentary on the complex nature of approaches to learning without losing sight of the meanings which each individual student

holds. On entering the lifeworld it is essential that one does not move from description and stays close to the lifeworld for this allows the uncovering of the real meanings of a particular phenomenon. By staying immersed in the lifeworld personal meanings can be described in context and the whole of the lived world is elucidated.

The most common (but not exclusive) route to establishing the lifeworld is through the qualitative interview (Kvale, 1996). These open qualitative interviews allow an insight into the experiences and lived meanings of the subject's lifeworld. Through the use of interviews the individual is allowed to describe the meanings which are relevant to them and are able to choose their own words and perspectives. The qualitative interview enables a descriptive focus of a phenomenon, a factor essential when entering the lifeworld of a subject if we are to take things in their appearing.

To enter the lifeworld of a subject and to be open to their responses in meaning Husserl in his work claimed that if this is to be achieved then it is necessary to exclude presuppositions of a 'natural attitude'. It is only by bracketing or using an 'epoché' that things may be given as they appear to the individual. The epoché is taken from the Greek word meaning to refrain from judgement, to abstain from or stay a way from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things (Kvale, 1996). Husserl considered that we all hold a natural attitude which is judgmental and presupposed by suspending these perceptions through an epoché we are able to see the meanings of a phenomena through the eyes of the subject.

Schmitt (1968, p.59) considered the epoché to invalidate, inhibit and disqualify all commitments with reference to previous knowledge and experience. While the presupposed world is placed out of mind a naive and fresh view may be placed upon the phenomenon. However it is important to note that epoché does not bracket out everything as discussed earlier it is only the natural attitude, the biases of everyday knowledge, as a basis for truth and reality (Husserl, 1931),

"Thus the epoché gives us an original vantage point, a clearing of mind, space, and time, a holding in abeyance of whatever colours the experience directs us, anything whatever that has been put into our minds....."

Moustakas (1994, p.86)

From the epoché we are able to view things in their appearance and be open to the lifeworld so that we are able to see the world of the subject through their own eyes. Whatever is presented in the lifeworld of the subject should be accepted at face value and all that appears should be accepted as the 'truth' (Husserl, 1977, Cairns trans.). To access the lived world it is essential

that the validity of the lifeworld should not be questioned and all aspects should be treated equally.

The aim of epoché for Husserl was to establish a method of bracketing out the claims of science so that the essences of the lifeworld could be exposed. However as previously noted existential authors considered this an inappropriate way of viewing the lifeworld, therefore they needed to interpret and develop Husserl's work to accommodate their own goals. Merleau-Ponty in particular developed a method of bracketing which was consistent with the existentialist aims.

Through an interpretation of Husserl's work in an existentialist manner Merleau-Ponty was able to use the process of bracketing to reveal the lived experience of the subject (Ashworth, 1999). Instead of turning away from the world and focusing on detached consciousness, here bracketing would set aside research presuppositions and this would facilitate a complete and unbiased immersion into the lifeworld,

"Because we are through and through compounded relationships with the world that for us the only way to become aware of the fact is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity...to put it out of play. Not because we reject the certainties of common sense and a natural attitude to things...but because, being the presupposed basis of any thought, they are taken for granted, and go unnoticed, and because in order to arouse them and bring them to view, we have to suspend for a moment our recognition of them" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p.xiii)

Through his work empirical studies, phenomenologically based, could now be achieved for it allowed a descriptive study of individual lifeworlds. These authors consider the aim for essences an impediment to entering the lifeworld and as such the aim for essences should be bracketed out.

Husserl's work on the lifeworld identified two categories that must be bracketed. The key presuppositions that require bracketing are: those that relate to the imposition of validity, that is querying the validity of the lifeworld as presented by the subject and the imposition of claims from objective science or other authoritative sources (Ashworth, 1999). When attempting to enter the lifeworld the researcher should not attempt to query the validity of the lifeworld. In essence this means that the statements made by the participant should not be questioned as to their correctness or falsity. Rather the information given in the lifeworld should be accepted at face value and taken to represent their lifeworld. Each lifeworld should be seen as unique, just as individuals themselves are unique and as such it can not be assumed that the meaning of the same situation is similar for different people.

The second key category that requires bracketing is science, a body of 'known facts', this prevents theories being incorporated into the lifeworld which would in turn contaminate the descriptive nature of the lifeworld. Only when the subject raises issues which '*echo the scientific concepts naturally ...would it be permissible to include them in the description*' (Ashworth, 1997 p.13). However should this duplication occur it would be independent of the fact that these concepts exist in the scientific world.

Authors who use bracketing in empirical studies have expanded and refined the presuppositions that need to be subjected to the epoché (Denne and Thompson, 1991; Ablamowicz, 1992; Vacek, 1989). These authors have explicitly described the use of bracketing as a methodological principle. What must be bracketed are descriptions,

- A. Based on theories or earlier research findings- so that the research participant's expression of the experience is in danger of being squeezed into the pre-existing or interpretations
- B. Which assume a theoretical structure or particular interpretation- again distorting the expression of the experience, tempting the researcher away from careful listening
- C. Drawn from the investigator's personal knowledge and belief – it is the research participants experience which should be revealed, not the researchers expectations
- D. Which would dictate specific research methods- the methods must be attuned to the purpose of securing descriptions of experience which support a tendency to order experience on external grounds- Kelly's (1955) assumption of 'bipolar constructs' would be such a tendency; and
- E. Which include questions of "cause" as relevant – although the research participant's assumptions about the "causes" of their experience might be a valuable aspect of the meaning of the experience for them, and should be carefully heard by the researcher, it would be a distortion to import researcher's notions of cause- and-effect into the description of the experience.

Ashworth and Lucas (1999)

These presuppositions were explicitly held when examining approaches to learning. Thus existential phenomenology allows a full insight into the lifeworld and approaches to learning without imposing judgements from the outside world.

While there are several presuppositions which must be bracketed when becoming immersed in the lifeworld certain presuppositions need to be held if empirical phenomenological research is to be conducted. The first presupposition that is necessary when engaged in empirical research is the assumption of a shared topic. This means that the interview has to be about something

and this has to be communicated to the participant. This topic must be shared if the discussion is to focus on the issue of investigation otherwise the discussion would be lost and directionless. Here the students were informed that the study sought to explore learning and what they mean by approaches to learning.

However certain steps can be taken to prevent this presupposition from contamination of the subject's lifeworld. While it is necessary and indeed imperative that there is a shared topic of investigation it must be made clear, there must be constant questioning as to the relevance of this topic within the subjects lifeworld. Consideration must be given to the thought that this topic has no place or relevance in the individual lifeworld (Ashworth, 1999). So while discussing approaches to learning I was open to the idea that this may have many meanings or limited relevance to their lifeworld, however it is accepted that they will hold a position with regards to learning.

The second key presupposition is related to social interaction. All phenomenological investigations involve interpersonal experience, thus all the presuppositions which are necessary for social interaction must be present during an empirical phenomenological study (Ashworth, 1996). Included in these assumptions is that social interaction is meaningful (Schutz, 1962). Schutz described meaningfulness as embodying a range of knowledge, which we have at our disposal, the most important of which is language.

Thus meaningfulness is intersubjective for it indicates that others are similar minded and they perceive the world in a familiar way to ourselves (Ashworth, 1999). A further assumption is also implied, the reciprocity of perspectives. While it is accepted that objects in the world are open to understanding it is assumed that individuals interpret and understand the world from their own unique viewpoint. However Ashworth (1996) argues that we are able to reciprocate mental perspectives and it is this reciprocal nature of understanding which is essential to entering the lifeworld. Listening attentively is necessary if I am to enter into this reciprocal arrangement. It is essential that the subject's are able to share their view and feel that I understand their viewpoint. Thus it should not be assumed that all presuppositions need to be subjected to the epoché, for several are necessary if the lifeworld is to be understood. However the presuppositions that prevent a meaningful understanding of the lifeworld must be bracketed if the description is to be truly representative.

The concept of the lifeworld holds further assumptions about the nature of consciousness known as 'universal essences'. Introduced by Husserl these essences are considered to exist in both transcendental and existential phenomenological lifeworlds; the temporality of experience, assumption of the existence of others (intersubjectivity), spatiality, the lived body (embodiment)

and selfhood. These fragments of the lifeworld provide a way in which we can turn our attention to particular themes of a person's circumstances and so further our understanding of the lifeworld.

The temporality of the experience relates to the concept of time. All humans have a permanent relationship with time, even though they may not be consciously aware of this relationship (Boss, 1979). All of our lived experiences take place in a point in 'time' and as such our lifeworlds have many meanings steeped in temporality.

The concepts of self-hood and intersubjectivity will be considered together as they are intrinsically related. The intersubjective nature of the lifeworld links with the ideas that others in their appearing are ever-present in one's lifeworld for in our lived experiences we are made aware that other people exist and that we are a constituent part of their lifeworld. Self-hood relates very much to our view of our own identity and how we view ourselves. However how we see our self-hood is very much dependent upon our view of others in the world. For we are heavily influenced by how we feel others perceive ourselves and this helps to inform how we view our place in the world. Thus our perceptions of others and ourselves are intrinsically related as both inform each other,

"If I look at my whole stock of lived experiences and ask about the structure of this knowledge, one thing becomes clear; *This is that everything I know about your conscious life is really based on my knowledge of my own lived experiences .My lived experiences of you are constituted in simultaneity or quasisimultaneity with your lived experiences, to which they are intentionally related. It is only because of this that when I look backward, I am able to synchronise my past experiences of you with your past experiences*"

Schutz (1967, p.106)

The fourth fragment, spatiality refers to the idea that we place ourselves in the world both in mind and body, as such we put meanings on our places in the world, for example we may question whether we 'belong' in a certain experienced situation.

Embodiment the final fragment describes the lived body and our experience through the eyes of the body in which we live. Gender provides an obvious example for we view ourselves and the world in which we live from the lived body of a man or woman. Thus we all place meaning on this body through which we participate in experiences. When engaging in the phenomenological lifeworld and explicating the meaning of approaches to learning the fragments, temporality, self-hood, intersubjectivity, spatiality and embodiment may be used as a guide. They do not

impose external presuppositions and allow for a full explanation of the meaning of learning both during the interview and during the analytical process.

3.6 Phenomenology and the phenomenographic approach

The meaning of phenomenography can be derived from its name. In Greek *phainonmenon* (appearance) and *graphein* (description) essentially translate as a description of appearances (Hasslegran and Beach, 1997). The roots of phenomenography have been traced to modern phenomenology founded by Husserl. Hasslegren and Beach (1997) argue that phenomenography is a branch of this form of phenomenology and they consider the philosophical assumptions held in phenomenology to underpin the crucial foundations of phenomenography.

Phenomenography emerged from the educational research conducted in Sweden in the 1960's and 1970's. The objective of this research was to establish the way in which the student views the world (Ashworth and Lucas, 1999). It was originally developed to investigate student's experiences of leaning in Higher Education, notably it focussed upon their approach to learning. Marton one of the key authors involved in this research defined phenomenography as,

“The empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which various phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around us are experienced, conceptualised, understood, perceived and apprehended”

(Marton 1994 p424).

The work of phenomenographic research according to Marton (1986) followed three main routes. The first area of interest is in the general aspects of learning, here the focus is on qualitative approaches and outcome of learning (Dahlgren, 1975; Marton, 1975; Säljö, 1975; Svensson, 1977). The second concentrates upon student conceptions and learning in the bounds of a discipline. The third key route explores a more general line of research, which is how individuals conceive various aspects of life (Ashworth and Lucas, 1998).

The main aim of those using a phenomenographical approach is to discover and classify people's conceptions of reality (Richardson, 1999). Thus the final outcome of phenomenographic research is categories of description whereby understanding of a particular phenomenon is logically and hierarchically linked in order to establish a typology. In other words the goal of phenomenographic research is to achieve a categories of description that contains all conceptualisations of the relevant concept in a structured format. Therefore it is able

to represent a qualitative change from one conception of a specific aspect of reality to another (Marton, 1988).

While attempting to see the world from the student's perspective it was recognised that it is necessary to focus on their experience. To achieve this the participant must be able to reflect upon a particular experience so that they could then discuss it and describe it (Uljens, 1992). The reference to reflected experience according to phenomenography, indicates a 'second-order' approach which means that the emphasis is on the experience as described. This is in place of the psychological process behind the experience of the 'objective facts' (Ashworth and Lucas, 1998).

The name of phenomenography would seem to indicate a link with phenomenology however the closeness of these two methodologies is at the centre of a debate. The work undertaken by the Swedish researchers was not initially underpinned by an established methodology indeed it was not until much later that these researchers attempted to establish epistemological foundations. In fact Marton (1988) himself said that phenomenography,

"Did not develop from any of the schools of thought that provided the scattered attempts with epistemological foundations (such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and symbolic interactionism)." (P.192)

Critics of this work encouraged a revision and explication of the philosophy behind this work and this has led some authors to make the link between phenomenology and phenomenography, for example, Marton (1981), Giorgi (1986) and Uljens (1992). Those who adopted this approach considered that the established methodology of phenomenology would provide a rationale for the earlier work. Marton (1981, 1986, 1988) argued that both phenomenology and phenomenography are relational, experiential, content-orientated and qualitative. This connection is strengthened by the work of existential authors, who facilitated empirical studies, a necessary function of phenomenology (Richardson, 1999) and like phenomenology these accounts are frequently gained through semi-structured, individual, oral interviews using open-ended questions (Marton, 1986, 1994).

However the main aim of phenomenography is inconsistent with the goals of phenomenology. For while existential phenomenology is concerned with entering the individual and unique lifeworld, phenomenography aims to devise a set of categories of description which are logically and hierarchically interrelated which results in a repertoire of ways in which people conceptualise a particular phenomenon. The end result of phenomenography is therefore something that phenomenology recommends should be subjected to the epoché. Hasslegren and

Beach (1997) take the distinction further and concluded that only two modes of phenomenography can be considered phenomenological; hermeutic and phenomenological phenomenography.

Although the use of phenomenographic research is widespread and it would appear to have an established tradition it is argued that little attention has been paid to both theoretical and practical issues (Ashworth and Lucas, 1999). Clearly there are issues with a methodology designed after the research event, notably the lack of philosophical foundations which should underpin and guide the research process (Richardson, 1999). The lateness in application of a methodology has made it difficult for a philosophical underpinning to be applied to this research method.

However this is not the only issue with phenomenography, Ashworth and Lucas (1999) argue that the discussion of this methodological approach is severely limited and where discussions of such an approach are conducted this work is not widely referenced despite the large use of this approach. According to these authors, the outcome is that current phenomenographic work does not consider the methodological issues raised. A phenomenographic researcher himself validated this view,

“Some qualitative research, claiming to be phenomenographic, has been conducted without the necessary rigour, either in design or analysis. One of the reasons for that, however, may be the lack of precise descriptions of what is necessarily involved in phenomenography. The practical details of the research procedures used in identifying categories were not explained sufficiently fully in the early publications to allow other researchers to ensure the quality of their own methods. And still the path from interviews through inference to categories can be difficult to follow, leaving the findings unconvincing. It is thus quite a challenge for researchers coming fresh to the field to see, and utilise effectively, the crucial strengths of the approach” (Entwistle, 1997. p.128)

A further issue can also be linked to the lack of clarity in the phenomenographical methodology. Some researchers have associated this approach with grounded theory claiming that it has many similarities with this approach and as such have adopted a grounded theory approach to their research yet their studies claim to be phenomenographic (Richardson, 1999).

The lack of detail in the actual engaged process of phenomenographic research is also debated. Ashworth and Lucas (1999) argue that while there is considerable literature on the outcome of phenomenographic research little attention is paid to the actual process of this type of research programme, they claim without such knowledge the research may not be ontologically and

epistemologically valid. The difficulties outlined above have encouraged a number of writers to link phenomenology with phenomenography. This link has attempted to bring the benefits and experience of phenomenology to phenomenography (Ashworth and Lucas, 1998). In particular the use of the epoché could be utilised to improve the validity of this form of work.

To reveal the individual conceptions about the world, which is grounded in the lived experience of the research subject, the phenomenographer must be sensitive to features which hinder or bias access to the lifeworld. Earlier descriptions of phenomenography have touched upon this issue, for example, Säljö (1988) recommended that researchers should use the following questions to guide the process, “How does the respondent construe the phenomenon?” “What concepts does he or she use to explain it?” “What types of similarities with other phenomena are introduced?”

However later authors have criticised these guides as being vague and do not give clear stipulations of the phenomenographic epoché (Ashworth and Lucas, 1999). Without such explicit instructions it is unclear whether the descriptions of experience will truly represent the participants own. The same authors developed guidelines to clarify this situation. They claim that using these guidelines allows an empathic understanding of the lifeworld of the student;

1. The researcher should identify the broad objectives of the research study, the phenomenon under investigation and the degree to which these may be tentatively held;
2. The selection of participants should avoid presuppositions about the nature of the phenomenon or the nature of conceptions held by particular types of individual;
3. The most appropriate means of obtaining an account should be identified given the presumptions made about the phenomenon or participant (and such presuppositions should be stated);
4. In obtaining experiential accounts the participant should be given the maximum opportunity to reflect and the questions posed should not be based on presumptions about the phenomenon or the participant;
5. The researchers interviewing skills should be subject to on-going review and changes made to the interview practice if necessary;
6. The transcription of the interview should be accurate and attempt to reflect the emotions and emphases of the participant;
7. The initial analysis should involve the setting aside of presuppositions and the development of empathic understanding;
8. Further analysis should avoid premature closure for the sake of producing logically and hierarchically-related categories of description; and

9. The process of analysis should be sufficiently clearly described such that it is apparent how bracketing and empathy have been achieved and how findings have emerged.

These guidelines which have been adapted from phenomenology aim to provide phenomenographers with a rigorous and explicit methodology. Entwistle (1997), a self-proclaimed phenomenographer also reiterated some of the points illustrated above, notably the emphasis on the posing of questions. He argued that they should allow the students to account for their actions within their own frame of reference rather than have it imposed by the interviewer. Similarly Entwistle emphasises the importance of clarity and transparency in the analytical process when establishing categories of description. Entwistle argues that this is best achieved through the use of interview extracts and careful reflection during the categorising process.

The following section leads on from the phenomenology / phenomenography debate and explores the place of phenomenology under the idiographic and nomothetic headings.

3.7 Phenomenology and the Idiographic / Nomothetic distinction

One of the ways phenomenology differs from the traditional Approach to Learning methodology can be summarised by the idiographic and nomothetic distinctions. In my view the study of the learner must begin with the actual situation in life, in this case the lifeworld, rather than a quasi-scientific abstraction. Gordon Allport expressed this succinctly when he wrote,

“I object strongly...to a point of view that is current in psychology. Eysenck states it as follows: *To the scientist, the unique individual is simply the point of intersection of a number of quantitative variables.*

What does this statement mean? It means that the scientist is not interested in the mutual interdependence of part-systems within the whole system of personality...[and] is not interested in the manner in which your introversion interacts with your other traits, with your values and with your life plans. The scientist according to this view, then, isn't interested in the personality system at all, but only in the common dimensions. The person is left as mere 'point of intersection' with no internal structure, coherence or animation. I cannot agree with this view.” (Allport, 1961,p.8; his italics)

In Allport's description of the idiographic approach to psychological research he expressed how it is essential that the individual should be studied as a unique case. Allport stated that the

idiographic approach examines the interaction of various factors that relate to the individual. By focussing upon this interaction rather than 'variables' the uniqueness of the individual could be drawn as this interplay of factors could only be specific to the individual in question. In essence even if it is perceived that individuals share a particular personality trait the interplay of other factors will affect the nature of this trait,

" It may be that the factors take their specific form only in this person: Certainly they are uniquely patterned in a given person's life" (Ashworth 2003)

The idea that individuals are unique is in vast contrast with the description of the nomothetic approach which instead concentrates on the perceived similarities of groups of individuals. The focus of nomothetic research is to generate generalisable laws that are applicable to all with science as the enabler to reveal these laws. Thus the Approaches to Learning construct and the ASI in particular could be defined under the nomothetic heading as here too the assumption is that the individuality of learners can be ignored. Instead the ASI groups learners' approaches into generalisable headings which it assumes is applicable to all.

The popularity of the ASI may well be linked to the nomothetic approach as it is often considered easier to ignore individuality and instead look for group norms. The generalisable, broad brush approach that characterises a nomothetic approach does therefore offer a certain advantage, in that, it can give an indication of the general attitude of a large number of people. This overview may then provide an insight into the general standing of a particular issue either for the population as a whole or for large groups of individuals. This overview is difficult to achieve using the idiographic approach as instead the focus is on the individual and this prevents grouping individuals to present a more general picture. Despite this difficulty it is argued that the nomothetic approach is not the most appropriate way to understand human nature,

" Individuality is a prime characteristic of human nature. To develop a science of personality we must accept this fact. But it is easier to construct an artificial man out of universal norms than to deal adequately and scientifically with a real man" (Allport, 1961, p 21)

Allport (1961) clearly identified a relationship between idiography and existentialism. He concluded that ultimately existence is only available in the individual's point of view, *"Thus at bottom the existentialist approach to man is urgently idiographic"* (Allport, 1961, p 557)

The existential phenomenological approach adopted for this study does therefore have its roots firmly based in an idiographic approach. The fundamental starting point of existential phenomenology, like idiography is from the individual, unique, perspective. This is achieved by

examination of the learner's lifeworld which enables a rich insight into the unique way each learner approaches their learning.

4.1 Introduction

The research design is embedded in the phenomenological methodology and as such reflects the considerations important to this philosophy. The most widely recognised method that is employed when using a phenomenological methodology is the qualitative interview. While this is certainly not the only way to enter the lifeworld the qualitative research interview allows a deep exploration of approaches to learning within the context of their lifeworld and as such its use was essential. The fundamental aim of the qualitative research interview in this phenomenological context is to elucidate the meaning of a phenomenon in relation to how the subject perceives it. In this case it is to elucidate the meanings of approaches to learning.

The research interview when considered at its basic level, is a form of conversation. Kvale (1996) distinguished three forms of conversation, everyday interactions, philosophical dialogue and as a professional interchange. All of these forms of conversation involve a common language of understanding and an *“oral exchange of sentiments, observations, ideas, opinions”* (Webster’s, 1967). However they do contain crucial differences in regard to the forms of interaction and levels of reflection on both the form and content of the conversation. The interview as professional interchange can be identified through,

“Methodological awareness of question form, a focus of dynamics of the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee and a critical attention to what is said”

(Kvale, 1996 p. 20)

In other words greater consideration is given to both the questions asked and the responses given, for here I consciously sought out information in relation to approaches to learning. I considered the methodological position when deciding upon the questions to be asked and the social construction of the actual interview process. Thus in-depth preparation is required when undertaking this form of conversation.

A further distinguishing feature of the professional interview is the asymmetry of power. Unlike general interchanges of information, the research interview places the interviewer in charge of questioning a willing subject. Thus there is a greater emphasis upon myself, as the interviewer, asking the questions and seeking the responses of the subject instead of an equal exchange of questions. Kvale (1996) also identified the important aspects of the qualitative research interviews when attempting to investigate the lived world of the interviewees. He outlines how these interviews should be conducted and what should be their topic or foci if the aim is to describe the meanings of phenomena for the interviewee;

1. *Life World*. The topic of qualitative interviews is the everyday lived world of the interviewee and his or her relation to it.
2. *Meaning*. The interview seeks to interpret the meaning of central themes in the life world of the subject. The interview registers and interprets the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said.
3. *Qualitative*. The interview seeks qualitative knowledge expressed in normal language it does not aim at quantification.
4. *Descriptive*. The interview attempts to obtain open nuanced descriptions of different aspects of the subjects life worlds.
5. *Specificity*. Descriptions of specific situations and action sequences are elicited, not general opinions.
6. *Deliberate Naivete*. The interviewer exhibits an openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation.
7. *Focussed*. The interview is focussed on particular themes; it is neither strictly structured with standardised questions, nor entirely “non-directive”.
8. *Ambiguity*. Interviewee statements can sometimes be ambiguous, reflecting contradictions in the world the subject lives in.
9. *Change*. The process of being interviewed may produce insights and awareness, and the subject may in the course of interview come to change his or her descriptions and meanings about a theme.
10. *Sensitivity*. Different interviewers can produce different statements on the same themes, depending on their sensitivity to and knowledge of the interview topic.
11. *Interpersonal Situation*. The knowledge obtained is produced through the interpersonal interaction in the interview.
12. *Positive Experience*. A well-carried out research interview can be a rare and enriching experience for the interviewee, who may obtain new insights into his or her life situation.

Interviews which are associated with a phenomenological methodology are often semi-structured or unstructured (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). The questions in such an interview are open-ended and as such are able to probe into the lifeworld of the subject and provide in-depth descriptions of the issue in hand. Easterby-Smith et al (1991) argued that a semi-structured or unstructured interview is useful when developing an understanding of the respondent’s world.

Through this research method the lifeworld is opened up to the interviewer and the meanings of approaches to learning can be described. Provided the bracketing process is followed during all stages of the interview process it is argued that these descriptions will be reflective of

participant's perceptions.

During the interview process the subject is encouraged to describe their experiences in terms how they felt and acted in regard to these experiences. The interviewee should view themselves as a researcher themselves as they participate in observing their own experiences as I facilitate this reflection through careful questioning and listening.

The key to the qualitative research interviews within the phenomenological context is that the nuances of the experiences need to be explored and drawn out. The meaning of a phenomena is only fully described when the diversity and variety of experiences, acts and feelings are uncovered to provide a detailed and comprehensive view of the lifeworld (Kvale, 1994). The qualitative research interview in this study is focussed on establishing the meanings of approaches to learning from the context of the subject's lifeworld. The use of this method facilitates the immersion in the lifeworld of the subject, for the talk which occurs during the interview process reflects experience of a phenomenon from the student's perspectives.

The interview in this context forms a 'professional interview' therefore it is semi-structured in nature, and it is neither an open conversation nor is it a highly structured questionnaire (Kvale, 1994). Accordingly the interviews followed a guide which suggest themes and questions. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed to allow for the description of meanings to be shared (see Appendix A4 for an example of an interview transcription). The following section explores how the interviews were conducted and demonstrates the actual interviewing process. It explains how the phenomenological methodology guided this research method.

4.2 The Interview Situation

The place of the interviews is an important consideration when engaging in phenomenological research. It is necessary that the environment does not prohibit access to the lifeworld and this is best achieved when participants feel comfortable and relaxed in the interviewing environment (Kvale, 1996). If the subjects feel relaxed in their surroundings they find it easier to articulate their responses in an open manner.

As the interviewees had all volunteered independently the indications were that they were not afraid of being interviewed and the topic of discussion was of some interest to them. Therefore it was felt that the interviewees would be willing to share their experiences of learning in an open manner. However it was necessary to encourage and maintain this willingness to engage in an open interview, as it is important that the students feel comfortable in their environment.

All but one of the students were interviewed in a specially designed interview room on university premises. The room location was away from the classrooms where the students are normally taught so the participants did not feel as though the interview was between 'lecturer and student'. This dynamic was not considered fruitful to the interview process as it may limit the discussion due to the perceived power imbalance. Interviewing outside of university was considered but for the most part it was rejected. Firstly the students were familiar with the university premises and are therefore comfortable in this environment. Secondly the interview room in the university premises is specifically designed for this purpose. It is a quiet room that facilitates clear audio recordings, it contains comfortable furniture and importantly no interruptions by outside personnel are allowed. Thus the interview can be recorded in complete confidence.

Interviewing the students in their own home was rejected as there could be safety implications. Further the participants themselves may not have been comfortable with a 'representative' of the university coming to their home and been resistant to this intrusion into their private lives. The home environment may have presented further difficulties for when students share a home with other students or family members interruptions are likely. This could prevent a clear recording and may hinder the flow and openness of the lifeworld interview.

The only exception to this occurred for a part-time student who was unable to travel to the university for her interviews. In this case the interviews were conducted on her work premises. This in itself did not pose many problems as here too there was a designated interview room with which the student was comfortable. Also the safety and privacy issue was removed as the interviews occurred on work premises rather than in the home.

4.3 Introduction to the Interview

At the outset of the interviews it is necessary for the participant to be fully briefed so that they fully understand the nature of the subsequent interviews (Kvale, 1996; Greenfield, 1996). I explained to each participant the purpose of the interview, which was to explore the ways in which they approach their learning and their life experiences of this. It was emphasised that this study was to discover what learning was like for them and therefore they could relate to any learning experiences, which they believe to be relevant.

This form of introduction provided a non-threatening method of familiarising the student to the researcher and the interview situation allowing a neutral starting point for the interview. During

the introduction the format of the semi-structured interview was explained. The students were informed that the interview would follow a learning theme but they were a part of this process and as such could play a part in the direction of the interview. This informality was also recognised in the interviewee and interviewer dynamic as the students were encouraged to question my intentions or to raise further issues that they perceived to be relevant.

This format was agreed with the participants (Greenfield, 1996) who found these terms acceptable. The purpose of the tape recorder also required explanation and agreement with the student interviewees. It was explained that only the supervisory team, an independent transcriber and myself would have access to the tape and the transcripts. It was important to reiterate that no other members of staff at the university would have access to the tape recordings. This issue of confidentiality and anonymity was also explored during the introduction. As noted above other lecturers would not have access to the tape recordings, however as an extra precaution the names of the participants would be changed when the findings were presented in the thesis. These steps were necessary if the participants were to feel confident that their comments would not have academic consequences with other lecturers and this encouraged them to be open with their responses.

After all the details were explained to the participants they were asked whether they were happy to continue and if they had any questions before the interview commenced. Kvale (1996) recommends that this stage is completed to ensure that the participant is still willing and any anxieties that they may have can be soothed. It also sets the precedent for the interview as it is reinforced that the interviewee should question any points of which they are unsure.

Once the tape recording commenced the participants gave background details; name, course of study, year of study, ethnicity and family background. While the first two details required specific responses the latter points are more flexible allowing the student to focus on elements which are important to them. The first few minutes of an interview is crucial if the interview is to be successful (Kvale, 1996). He argues that particularly at this point, the participants will want to have some understanding of the interviewer. This was achieved by being knowledgeable and clear in my intentions and assuring the interviewee that I was interested in their thoughts. Thus it is essential that the introduction is carefully planned if the subjects are going to share what may be private learning experiences to a relative stranger. The considerations discussed above should facilitate appropriate conditions for this to occur.

4.4 The Uneven Conversation

As noted earlier the qualitative research interview is not the same as an everyday conversation and this was true for the interviews in this context. The balance of the conversation is heavily skewed towards the interviewee, it is important for the interviewer to recognise that their role is primarily to listen,

“The most important thing a researcher should remember to do in an interview is to listen. Interviews are primarily a way to gather information, not a conversational exchange of views”

Howard and Peters (1990,p.29)

In phenomenological research the role of listening is especially important (Kvale, 1996). If the researcher is to discover the descriptions of experience and become immersed in the lifeworld interruptions must be kept to a minimum and concentrated attention to listening is required at all times. These recommendations were followed closely during all of the interviews and it can be seen from the transcription (appendix 4) that the vast majority of the ‘talk’ was on the part of the subject, thus the interaction was not equal. The transcript also demonstrates the coherent and in-depth flow of the interviews thus indicating the attention paid to listening to the student.

The interview focus was centred on exploration and description (Kvale, 1994). As defined in phenomenology the interview should not be seen as an opportunity to test a hypothesis rather it should explore the lived experiences to establish the meanings of approaches to learning. Similarly the interviews are a mechanism for providing a description of their experiences. Thus during the interviews the focus was on obtaining descriptions and careful attention was given not to interpret the participant responses. This was achieved through the openness of the interview structure and questions, which probed to explore these descriptions in-depth. The use of the epoché provided a mechanism for preventing over-interpretation of these descriptions.

As discussed earlier the epoché must be used if the phenomenon is to be uncovered in the lifeworld (Ashworth, 1999). The key presuppositions, which were bracketed, are firstly, those based on theories or earlier findings or evidence from other authoritative sources. Earlier research on Approaches to Learning is extensive, with many studies using this concept as a base to their work, often with positivistic overtones e.g. the Approaches to Studying Inventory. It was imperative that during the course of the interviews all conceptions related to this model were set aside and a *deliberate naivete* (Kvale, 1996) imposed allowing the researcher to be open to new and possibly unexpected phenomena. These pre-supposed categories must not have been introduced into the discussion by myself nor should I interpret meanings of descriptions with this theoretical framework in mind. While this is necessary for all phenomenological work it was essential in this study that attempted to critique the widely accepted and traditional

Approaches to Studying work.

The tendency to construct hypotheses was set aside during the interviews particularly when the student made apparent connections with the Approaches to Learning literature. I made a conscious effort to bracket these presuppositions, instead these points were explored through probing questions to elucidate the actual experience. This helped to avoid distractions through the construction of hypotheses where attention is drawn away from the lifeworld of the interviewee.

The need to bracket assumptions based on personal knowledge and belief is a further consideration. Ashworth (1999) claims that researchers who are over-concerned with morality find this task most difficult. While this research is not particularly moral in nature it is likely that the students interviewed will have very different views of learning to myself who has experienced learning from both a student and lecturer perspective. Therefore it is necessary to bracket out these experiences so the student can be heard and my own personal beliefs do not impact on this, either positively or negatively.

Similarly the issue of the relation of the experience to “objectivity” (Ashworth, 1999) must be subjected to the *epoché*. The notion that there is some external ‘truth’ with which the student responses can be measured, is rejected under the phenomenological approach. To open the reality of the student lifeworld the interviewer must not question the validity of statements made, particularly when the statements oppose our own ideas of ‘truth’. Again this point demanded careful attention for as a lecturer within the university it would be easy to become defensive to any negative comments made during the discussion. Thus the interviewer must accept the information given as the ‘truth’ as seen through the eyes of the participants even if it appears contradictory, for the lifeworld is steeped in ambiguities.

The theme of approaches to learning may mean very different things for individuals therefore during the interviews it was necessary to allow for the possibility that their experience of approaches to learning may have many meanings. Thus the researcher needs to be accept that it is possible that an ‘alternative’ view may be presented. Thus the theme of approaches to learning needs to be thought of as ambiguous, or multi-faceted, or referring to more than one phenomenon. Setting aside questions of cause is a further requirement when engaging in the interviews. It is necessary to avoid abstract causal accounts of behaviour (Ashworth, 1999) and this must be considered during the interviewing process. If a student makes a statement as to ‘why’ they approach their learning in a certain way this should not be taken as a causal account rather they merely present the conditions present in the student’s lifeworld when they approach

their learning.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature for while a number of questions were pre-determined, there was opportunity for freedom and variation, particularly as the questions were designed to elicit an open description of the student lifeworld. The descriptions that were sought were of a specific nature rather than gathering general opinions and this goal was facilitated through a focus on the individual experience e.g. *'What does learning mean to you?'*

The use of follow-up questions that expanded the descriptions raised allowed for deeper insights into the lived experiences of the students, without an over reliance on a highly structured interview. This mixture of structure and openness was continued as the interviews developed for, the while the interviews contained 'standard' questions they also held questions of a more personal nature based upon issues raised by the individual participant in earlier interviews. The topic guide for the interviews allowed the discussions to be adequately focussed on the issue in hand but also facilitated an understanding of full meanings of the individual lived experiences of the subject. Through this mixture the goal of the understanding of the meanings of approaches to learning from the context of the student lifeworld was achieved.

4.5 The Ending

The debriefing at the conclusion of the interview eliminates the possibility of an undesirable abrupt ending (Greenfield, 1996). At that this time I asked the students if they had any questions, which they would like to ask. This type of question not only provides a signal that the interview is coming to an end, but also allows the interviewee to give further information and express any issues that have been worrying them. Kvale (1996) argues that this is necessary when the interviewee has divulged possibly personal and emotional experiences and may be wondering what this information may be used for. This concluding process also alleviates fears of 'performance' as participants may want confirmation that they have been a 'good' interviewee. Any anxieties the student may have had in regard to any aspect of the interview were clarified at this time.

Practical details were organised at this point, the participants were informed that a copy of the transcript would be sent to them and they could take this opportunity to amend or clarify any statements they felt relevant to ensure that what was presented is representative of their lifeworld. Arrangements for later interviews were also agreed on a provisional basis. The debriefing continued after the tape recorder had been switched off as the interviewer asked the students again whether there were any issues which they wished to raise. Kvale (1996)

recommends this action as a way of ensuring that the participants have the opportunity to raise any issues they did not want to be recorded on tape.

On the final interview this process was lengthier as by that time relationships had developed and no further meetings would occur (although they were advised that if they had any queries they could contact me at any time). At this time greater interest was shown in the outcomes of the research and in the impact of the interview experience. This final interaction gave a sense of closure and hopefully satisfaction for both parties.

After the interview, time was set aside to reflect on what was gained from the interview particularly the interactive elements, which are difficult to record on audiotapes. This opportunity to record immediate thoughts and feelings provides a useful tool when analysing the data at a later date. These notes were useful in aiding the researcher goal of bracketing as any potential weaknesses are noted and appropriate action can be taken for later interviews.

4.6 Recording the Interviews

The most usual method of recording interviews is through the use of a tape recorder (Kvale, 1996) and this method was incorporated in these interviews. This mechanical method of recording allowed me to concentrate on listening to the lived experiences of the interviewee. The focussed efforts on listening would be difficult to achieve if I am distracted by note taking or attempts to remember the interview. Recording via an audiotape in an interview scenario provides a permanent record of the discussion, which can be returned to as often as necessary. The tape recordings facilitate frequent returns to the 'interview situation' whereby all the meanings and nuances within the lifeworld can be explored by intensive re-listening. Thus this record is an essential tool for the process of immersion into and reflection of the student lifeworld.

The words and their tone and the very important pauses are recorded by an audiotape and this provides the researcher with accurate information not only in regard to the exact words but also measures the way in which the words were said. The recording of tone is essential if the researcher is to describe the way in which learning is approached. Documentation of the interaction is also recorded and this too provides useful information for the researcher in their efforts.

The limitations of an audio recording, notably the lack of visual information, e.g. body language, facial expressions, were somewhat overcome by the notes taken after the interview

where particular moods and movements were recorded. It was considered that despite this limitation audio was preferable to video taping because interviewees were more familiar with this method of recording (Buchanan et al, 1988). Use of a video may have distracted from entering the lifeworld as it can be an intrusive and cumbersome instrument.

When and how the audiotape would be used needed to be confirmed prior to the interview. To ensure the participants were confident and relaxed with the interview situation the recorder was not be operated until informal introductions were over (Greenfield, 1996). At the conclusion of the interview the tape was turned off and this provided the interviewee with a chance to speak again without their comments being recorded. Howard and Sharp (1989) argue an opportunity to speak 'off the record' encourages the interviewee to raise issues they were not comfortable having recorded. It also allows the chance for more personal interaction, which gives reassurance to the interviewee and may encourage openness.

4.7 The Development of the Interviews

All of the participants were interviewed three times over the course of the academic year, these were roughly equally spread occurring in November, March and June. Each interview took approximately two hours thus each participant provided up to six hours of detailed information in regard to their approach to learning. This wealth of information would not be possible if only one interview had been conducted and possible nuances and meanings would have been omitted. The interview schedule was set to occur within a manageable time period while still allowing time for reflection for both the student and the researcher. The use of the repeat interviews was not however to establish time based change as in a longitudinal study, rather it was to allow further exploration of approaches to learning. Using a series of interviews I was able to become immersed in each lifeworld.

The fact that the interviews were conducted over a year required the interviewee's commitment and may be taken as an indication of interest in the topic and their willingness to share their experiences openly. This openness developed as the students became familiar with the researcher and the interaction became more relaxed as we built a shared relationship. The sequential nature of the interviews also meant that new insights and perspectives were made possible and notably the subject was given the opportunity to change their minds and produce detailed descriptions and meanings about approaches to learning (Kvale, 1996). Thus a deeper insight into the complex was illuminated.

Follow up questions were also enabled as the breaks in between interviews meant the researcher

could reflect upon the interview and use this information to explore key points in later interviews. However it was not just the researcher who had the opportunity to review the interview, the student was also encouraged to question or clarify any points made. This was most useful if certain issues were not explored fully or if clarification of certain aspects was required. Perhaps more fundamentally it meant that the interviewee informed the direction of the interview process, which ensured that the topics discussed were relevant to their lifeworld.

4.8 Preparation for the Interviews

The Interview Questions

The interview guide used during these interviews aimed to establish a full and in-depth account of the participant's lifeworld in relation to how they approach their learning. As noted earlier the interviews in this study were semi-structured, which provided an outline of the areas and contained suggested questions. However the sequence of these questions was not strictly adhered to as I used my discretion on how closely the sequence needed to be and where to pursue certain individual responses.

Kvale (1996) considers that if an interview guide is to provide both structure and freedom the questions should contain both a thematic and dynamic dimension. The thematic dimension relates to the relevance to the research theme, i.e. approaches to learning. The dynamic dimension relates to the interpersonal relationship that exists within the interview context.

The interview guide in this study aimed to devise questions that contained both a thematic and dynamic dimension. The thematic questions were devised from the research questions and these were translated into recognisable language, which was understandable for the interviewee. The questions were based upon providing descriptions of the students lived world in relation to their approaches to learning. To achieve this aim the questions aim to be both somewhat structured and spontaneous. At the same time the dynamic factor was also considered as the questions are designed to encourage interaction and keep a smooth flow of conversation and so academic language was avoided. It is important for this study that the questions are dynamically designed if the students are to feel comfortable discussing their experiences and feelings.

The types of interview questions used in the interviews varied so as to gain as much depth as possible. The questions asked at the beginning of the interview may be categorised as *Introducing Questions*, (Kvale, 1996) for example, "*Describe in as much detail as possible a*

situation in which learning occurred/ didn't occur?" Through the use of such questions the interview opened up the lived world of the student providing rich descriptions of how they approach their learning.

Follow-up questions also formed a key part of this exploration through direct questioning or more often through simply repeating a key word from the respondent's answer, nodding, saying "mm" or simply a pause. This approach encouraged the student to continue with their descriptions illuminating their experience further. For this action to occur the interviewer was required to listen attentively so as to be aware of important issues while at the same time considering the relevance to the research topic. Similarly further insights were gained through the use of probing questions. For example the students were often asked "can you think of an example?" This type of question was facilitated further by having a series of interviews that allowed the researcher an opportunity to reflect on the previous interview. From this considered reflection probing questions were devised to explore key issues raised in the previous interview e.g. "In the earlier interview you talked about 'absorbing' when learning, is that how you see your learning?"

Kvale (1996) highlights a further type of question, namely, specifying questions, and these were also utilised in the interview scenario. These operationalising questions opened up the lifeworld, for example, in one interview we discussed a particular piece of coursework and the following question was posed, "*So how did you actually feel while you were working on this assignment, once you had started it?*"

Certain projected questions are also applied, e.g. "*Do you think women have a more difficult time reaching the top of their profession?*" These indirect questions may reveal the student's own attitude which may not be stated directly. This questioning provides a wider view of how they view their approach to learning from their own lived experiences.

Structuring questions used in the course of the interviews indicated to the student that a particular issue had been exhausted, "*That is all I have for questions so I thought we could have a look at the assignments you have brought*". The need for such questions keeps the flow of the interview focussed on approaches to learning and ensures that the entire interview guide is covered. However I was careful not to introduce new topics before a full exploration of a particular experience was gained. The progressive nature of the interview process ensured that I had the opportunity to review earlier interviews to establish a full description is given of each lived experience.

Silence as a way of questioning was used widely in the interview scenario. The use of pauses allowed the students time to reflect on their previous comment and indicated that further explanation and detail was in order. This provided a useful way to explore the lifeworld further without introducing any presuppositions.

Kvale (1996) defines interpreting questions as a further way of rephrasing an answer or attempts at clarification. The phenomenological nature of the study precluded interpretation and so these questions were only used to clarify the student's meaning, e.g. "*So do you think, are you saying that you want to be disciplined (when learning)?*" The researcher needed to ensure that as well as listening closely to the experiences, she was aware of any issues that required clarification while avoiding interpretation. An example of the interview guide used for one interview participant is presented in appendix A1. Although the term 'interpreting questions' has been used here it is important to outline the boundaries. The level of 'interpretation' is only to ensure that I am able to make sense of what is said so that I can understand what is meant. It was still subject to the phenomenological epoché and no well established views are imposed on the student descriptions.

The Interviewer

The interviewer plays a crucial role in the interview process as they act as the research instrument. Acting as the interviewer I needed to be able to investigate how students approach their learning as well as facilitate interaction if rich descriptions of their experiences are to be gained. As recognised by existential phenomenology by adopting the role of the interviewer I became a part of the interview conversation. Thus I was not an abstract figure, detached from the research process rather I became a part of the student's lived experiences. Due to this involved relationship it is necessary to provide an overview of my own position so that my role within the student lifeworld is clarified.

During the course of the interviews I was an employee at the University of Derby as a sessional lecturer in the Business School. Being perceived as an academic member of staff by the students sampled may have impacted upon their responses to myself. However they were reassured that all information would be treated confidentiality and their responses would not be disseminated to other lecturers. The image that may have been held by the students I interviewed was not however the way I considered myself as I had a dual role as research student and part-time lecturer. Coming from this perspective meant that I was perhaps more able to empathise with the students than they would have expected. As a woman interviewer I saw the world from a female perspective and this had a certain impact upon the interview conversation. Firstly as a

woman I had an interest in exploring the nature of gender in approaches to learning and this had an influence on the direction of the conversation. Secondly the students were responding to me, as a woman and this may have impacted on the conversation, particularly when asked about gender and their learning. Thus as the interviewer I played a key role in the interview conversation both in terms of how I am perceived and the interests and experiences which I hold. By explicitly stating these issues it is possible to keep in mind the complexity of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

To be a successful interviewer Kvale (1996) recommends certain qualifying criteria, which should guide the interviewer and these points were considered both before and during the interview process. The interviewer needs to be knowledgeable of the interview theme and is able to converse about the topic. This criteria was enabled due to my previous experience of approaches to learning literature intently and investigated the topic using other research methods. It could be argued that this opens a discrepancy with phenomenological presuppositions; that is searching the literature after the analyses are complete. However I ensured that although the interview was focused on a particular issue any theories or concepts were bracketed from the interview.

I was also aware that gentle and sensitive questioning was required, this encouraged the interviewees to feel that they could be open in their responses and that they were able to answer the questions in their own time. Empathy and understanding of the subjects' position was also required to ensure that the interviewer was aware of any nuances in their lived world descriptions. One method of checking that I had grasped the meanings of the student was to repeat my understanding of their experiences and ask them to respond to my description.

As the interviewer I needed to be able to remember earlier accounts given by the respondents and ask for them to be elaborated and related to different parts of the interview. This requirement was eased as I had an opportunity to review comments from earlier interviews, however it was still necessary for the interviewer to have the ability to remember information given for a full description is to be obtained.

The multitude of qualities an interviewer needs to conduct a successful interview can not be learnt simply through reading a textbook. Kvale (1996) argues that the only way a researcher can gain the skills and confidence necessary is to actually conduct a pilot interview. On such advice a pilot interview was designed and conducted with a female mature student who was known to the researcher. Like the following interviews the focus was on how she approached her learning. It lasted approximately one and a half-hours and was recorded by audiotape. As I

was familiar with the student the interview took place in the interviewee's home. The interviewee was informed that her interview would be used as a practice exercise and would therefore not be included in the final set of analyses.

The results of this interview were analysed and used to improve my skills as an interviewer. Notably this allowed an opportunity for reflection and insight into my ability to subject selected presuppositions to the epoché. I demonstrated an ability to question and prompt which encouraged the interviewee to divulge in detail her lived experiences. However the review did indicate some challenges, the need to include further details in the introduction and avoidance of using my own meanings in place of the subjects. These problems were then noted so that I, as the interviewer, could take steps to avoid these problems being repeated.

The pilot not only allowed an insight into the structure of the questioning which was used to inform the design of the research interviews but it also provided a chance to practice my interviewing skills in a safe environment. This increased my confidence as I was able to test my competence as an interviewer by reflecting and comparing my skills with the qualifying criteria identified above. Once satisfied that I was able to meet these expectations (while still be aware of my limitations) I felt able to go on and investigate students' approaches to learning via the interview method.

The Sample

The sample was selected from the entire population of students in the Derbyshire Business School. The students were contacted via a letter which invited them to share their views on their learning by participating in a series of interviews (appendix A2). From these letters 18 students responded and indicated that they were interested in participating in the study and of these 6 were selected. Those who were not chosen were thanked for their interest and a request was made that if necessary I could ask them to participate at a later date should a problem arise with the selected participants. All students seemed happy to agree to these terms although some felt disappointed that they were not included in the study as they were eager to explore their learning.

The sample number of six was selected on methodological and pragmatic grounds. When undertaking empirical phenomenological research the aim is not to produce statistical generalisations or to test hypotheses thus a large sample size is not necessary or indeed desirable. For in this phenomenological study the aim is to explore and describe in detail students' approaches to learning and a larger number of interviewees may not produce any new

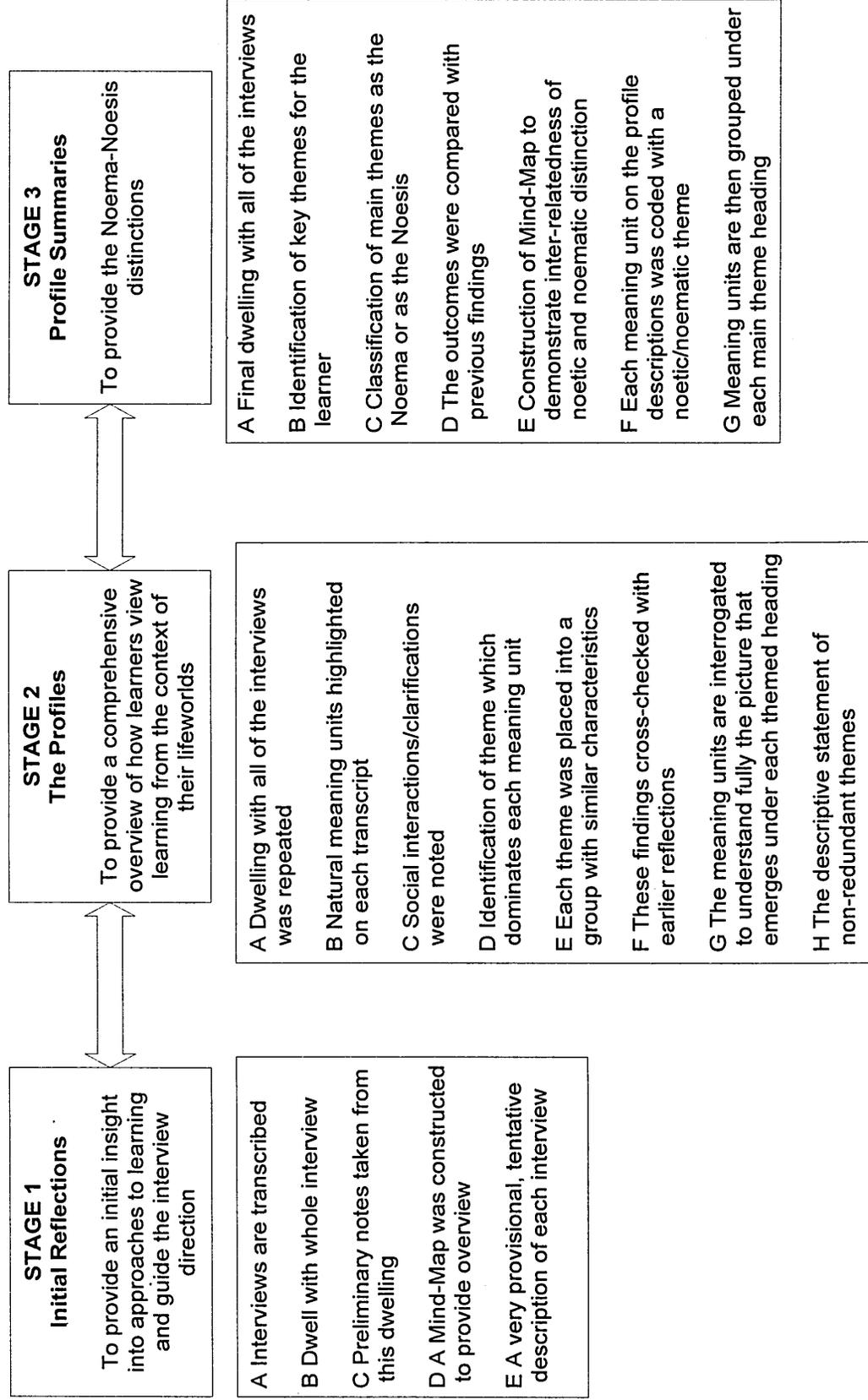
information (Kvale, 1996). If I am to explore approaches to learning from the context of the student's lifeworld then it is essential that the sample is not so large so that I am practically unable to delve and thoroughly explore their individual experiences.

As already explained the sample was selected from a self-selected population who volunteered to participate in the study. Thus these participants were suited for the purposes of the study as students in a Higher Education establishment that are accessible for the study. The interview subjects from the group of volunteers were selected on the basis of their differences. Factors used as a way of deciding the sample, included, gender, age, year of study, mode of study and ethnicity. In order to understand a number of different lifeworlds a range of students with different qualifying criteria was selected. While this was not an attempt to produce a 'representative' sample of the student population it did aim to reflect some variance in students' approaches to learning (Appendix A3). Thus a varied understanding of the meaning of approaches to learning in the context of an individual lifeworld should be gained.

4.9 Interview Analysis

The analytic procedure is designed to thoroughly explore and reflect the participants individual meaning of learning from the context of their lifeworld. The ultimate aim of this process is to understand what learning means to each of the students and to present a full description of these meanings and experiences. To achieve this depth of understanding the analysis was conducted in three main stages. The first stage occurred after every interview, to provide an opportunity to reflect on what was said by the learner. The second stage involved a more detailed analysis whereby a descriptive profile of the individual could be formed and the third and final stage was an analysis of the noetic – noematic distinctions which resulted in a summary of the meaning of learning for each of the participants. During the entire process the researcher was careful to ensure that the phenomenological descriptions were not contaminated by presuppositions and interpretations (figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 The Analytical Process



Stage One – The Initial reflection

The first stage of the analytical process occurred after each and every interview that was conducted. This stage aimed to provide myself with an opportunity to reflect on the interviewee's responses to gain a provisional understanding of their view of learning. Through this reflection I was able to gauge whether access to their lifeworld was being achieved. Notably I was able to see what learning meant to these students by listening to the tape recording and reviewing their transcriptions. By conducting this reflective process after each interview a complete and coherent picture of their learning was being built.

This reflection also offered the opportunity to review my performance as interviewer to ensure that any improvements that need to be made are incorporated into later interviews. This information was also utilised to inform future questions so to allow the participant's responses to inform the direction of the interview. Thus this initial reflective stage provided essential guidance not only for future analysis but in directing and informing the later interviews. The key phases in this stage are listed below;

- A. After each interview the recordings were transcribed by an independent transcriber.
- B. The transcripts produced were then read in conjunction with listening to the tape recording. By reading the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings I was able to dwell with the experience and gain a sense of the whole interview. This reflection provided an opportunity to cross-check the recording with the transcript for inaccuracies or omissions.
- C. From dwelling with the whole, rough notes were taken to provide an overview of each interview.
- D. The notes taken were then used to form an overview of the key learning issues for the student. The overview map provided a way in which the researcher can view the entire reflection in summary form. Each of these maps provides a way of seeing the inter-relatedness of the issues that had been raised during the course of the interview, so again the whole of the interview was presented.
- E. At the final phase of the initial reflection tentative steps were made to note a very provisional description of the interview, highlighting the potential key issues. During this stage it was important that the analysis was not conducted too soon to prevent the researcher introducing certain presuppositions. This ensured that it was only the lifeworld of the

participant that was reflected in the descriptions rather than any initial impressions.

Stage Two - The Profiles

The second stage in the analytical process occurred after all of the interviews were completed. This stage was designed to explore in greater depth the meaning of learning for each of the participants. It was at this stage that all of the interviews were brought together to provide a complete and comprehensive overview of how each student viewed their learning from the context of their lifeworld.

Similar to the phenomenologically based work of Giorgi, the method of analysis applied in this study was meaning condensation. Here the interview text was reduced into more succinct formulations (Giorgi, 1975), this allowed the reader access to a full and rich description but one which is much more manageable in size than the one hundred and forty pages of transcribed text. Giorgi (1975, 1985) indicates that the empirical phenomenology method of meaning condensation is directly related to phenomenological philosophy. Notably it allows the researcher to stay close to the lifeworld and unlike interpretative methods the situation is expressed from the viewpoint of the subject and the focus of the search is for meaning. Fischer and Wertz, (1979) and Giorgi (1985) argue that this empirical phenomenological method allows the researcher to analyse large and complex interview texts by searching for the natural meaning units and explicating the main themes.

Kvale (1996) identifies five main steps when engaged in meaning condensation. Firstly all the interviews are read to gain a sense of the whole. The next step is identification of the natural "meaning units" as stated by the students. In the third stage the theme that dominates the natural meaning unit is highlighted as a possibility but the penultimate stage involves an interrogation of the meaning units in relation to the specific purpose of the study, i.e. what does learning mean for this student. In the fifth and final step the essential themes are linked to provide a descriptive statement, any redundant themes are disregarded at this stage. Through such rigorous and thorough analytic techniques it is assured that the findings presented in these descriptive statements will be a real reflection of the meaning of learning.

The list below describes how the process of meaning condensation is incorporated in the analysis of the interviews. This analysis is used as a basis for the individual profiles that present a rich description of the student's lifeworld.

A. Each of the interviews were reviewed and reflected upon by reviewing the transcripts and

the audio recordings. This repeated action of careful listening to the viewpoints of the subjects ensured that the researcher was able to dwell with the experience and gain a sense of the whole (step one, Kvale, 1996). It is through this reflection that I am able to understand what learning means to each subject.

- B. On each of the interview transcripts the paragraphs were numbered and the natural meaning units were highlighted. During this phase I highlighted quotations as expressed by the students which appeared to elucidate their experiences and views of learning (step two, Kvale, 1996). The paragraphs were numbered to provide easy reference for later analysis.
- C. The social interactions and clarifications were noted during this time as they also provide indications of how each student perceives the world and their learning. It is important to note how the relationship of the researcher and the student was defined as this plays a fundamental role in the interview process. In addition by searching for interactions I was able to gauge whether the subject feels able to clarify any issues, an essential requirement if the interview is to be a reflection of their lifeworld.
- D. The next step in the analytic process relates to Kvale's (1994) third step, whereby the theme that dominates a natural meaning unit is stated as simply as possible. Here each meaning unit in the form of a quotation is read without prejudice and the statements are thematised from their own viewpoint. It is essential at this stage when attaching themes to the meaning unit that the main theme(s) which are linked to each unit are simple and free of presuppositions.
- E. In order to gain an overview of all of the themes explicated from the natural meaning units the themes were grouped. The groupings were based upon the shared characteristics of the sub-themes and each of these groups was given a main theme heading. However it should be noted that although the sub-themes may share similar characteristics it does not mean that they are mutually supportive, for as found in the lifeworld an individual may hold many views on a similar theme. Once the themed groups were determined a mind map was drawn which demonstrates how these themes inter-relate and provided an overview of the entire profile.
- F. The sub-themes and theme headings were then cross-checked against all earlier analysis that occurred during the initial reflection. If any anomalies were found the interview recordings and transcripts were returned to and clarifications could be made. If the initial reflections were supportive of the profile analysis it indicated that the later analysis was reflective of

the lifeworld.

- G. The next step involved interrogating the meaning units in terms of the specific purpose of the study (step four, Kvale, 1996). The main analysis of the study is to establish, “*what does learning mean to this student?*” and “*how do they approach their learning?*” using these questions as a basis for interrogating the meaning units questions were asked such as “*who is this learner?*”, “*How does this student approach their studies?*”. To help answer these questions universal essences were applied to guide the researcher in their understanding of the student.

To achieve this phase each transcript that had been previously annotated with highlighted meaning units and their related themes was used to provide meaning unit ‘sheets’. Here all of the meaning units which related to one particular sub-theme or theme were brought together to provide the researcher with an insight into all of the different meaning units which relate to the individual theme. Each meaning unit is given a reference code so that I could easily locate the appropriate quotation. During this time I constantly questioned what the interviewee means and to try to explore the meaning of the themes by an in-depth exploration of each and every meaning unit. In addition to unpicking the themes and meaning units a focus on the purpose of the study was also maintained. Consideration is also given to the contradictions and similarities across themes so as to show the inter-relatedness of the lifeworld. Any links identified through interrogation of the meaning units is also noted on the meaning unit sheets.

- H. The final phase in the profile analysis used the meaning unit sheets to provide a descriptive statement of essential and non-redundant themes (step five, Kvale, 1996). The profiles were used as my method of presenting the essential meanings of approaches to learning for each student from the context of their lifeworld. Through following this rigorous analytical process the themes and their relationship to each other, can be seen in the comprehensive and detailed profiles.

Stage Three - Profile Summaries

The third and final stage of the interview analysis provided a summary of the profiles which described in-depth the meaning of approaches to learning for each student. This was considered necessary as it presents a concise representation of each student’s experiences and views of learning. The method of this stage of the analysis was based on the two fundamental constructs of intentionality, that is, the Noema and the Noesis. These two concepts can be used to explicate

the inner horizon (Noesis) and outer horizon (Noema) of learning for each of the participants. Together they identify the manner of being and the object for learning and through this dynamic the totality of their intentional experience is demonstrated and a concise view is gained of the relationship between the 'what' of the experience and the 'way' of the experience. In addition to identification of the noema and noesis relationships the universal fragments were also reviewed and included. The inclusion of such essences allows for a deeper insight into the 'what' and 'way' of the experience as this enables the researcher to answer the question "who is this learner".

The summaries that define the noetic and noematic relationships are able to elucidate what learning is for the participant (noema) and how students approach their learning (noesis), from the viewpoint of their lifeworld. Using the noesis as a heuristic device it is possible to understand how a student 'approaches' their learning for the noesis reflects the approaches used. However where there is a noesis there is also a noema and this dynamic enables a thorough investigation into approaches as it is possible to see how the student responds to the object of their learning, thus both parts of the distinction are presented. By using this method of analysis a concise understanding of the meaning of learning was gained as it showed both the student themselves and their relationship to their learning world. By reviewing what the object for learning was and how they approached this learning, a complete understanding of the meaning of learning is obtainable.

The third and final interview analysis offered yet another opportunity to examine earlier analyses and ensured that the descriptions offered in the profile were reflective of the student experience. The list below describes the key phases involved in this process;

- A. The transcripts and audio recordings were reviewed to allow a further opportunity to dwell with the experience and gain a sense of the whole.
- B. From this reflection the researcher noted what appeared to be the key themes for this person. These themes were noted as the researcher listened carefully to the interview(s) to gain a sense of the whole. During this time I constantly questioned "*who is this learner?*" and "*what does approaches to learning mean to this student?*" Careful consideration was given to ensure that the themes which dominate were stated simply and without prejudice.
- C. The key themes identified were utilised to reveal noema and noesis relationships that exist in the student's lifeworld. The themes were categorised on the basis of whether they identified the object of learning for this student or if they highlighted how they approached

their learning, the noetic and noematic themes were then linked together to form an intentional experience. The links were formed by reviewing the sense of the whole interview and establishing which particular object(s) for learning could be connected to how they approached their learning. However while these direct relationships between the inner and outer horizon of their learning are discovered the researcher was also careful to search for the inter-relatedness of these intentional experiences. Thus the detail and the overall picture of the noematic and noetic relationships was established and exposed. Once these relationships were explicated they were charted and briefly explained to ensure that they were truly connected.

- D. Prior to any further analysis the results were compared with all earlier analyses that occurred during the previous two key stages. This comparison provided the researcher an opportunity to check that the findings presented in the profiles were representative of the student's lifeworld. Should the results indicate contradictions then the transcripts were returned to. If the findings were similar this was taken as an indication that both descriptions were accurate, comparable and reflective of the lifeworld.
- E. Once the analyses were confirmed a mind map was designed to demonstrate the inter-relatedness of the noetic and noematic relationships. As well as presenting the reader with a chance to view the entire profile summary it enabled a way of exploring the connections between these relationships which together form a picture of the learning lifeworld.
- F. The next phase in the process involved a review of the profiles devised from the stage two analysis. The key quotations (natural meaning units) were highlighted and coded in each individual profile. Beside each of these units a noetic or noematic theme was attached. In addition any universal themes which were deemed applicable were also noted on to the profile. Instead of the transcripts being annotated this time the profile descriptions were used thus providing the researcher with a check point to compare what is found in the transcripts with the profile descriptions. Should any discrepancies be found both the transcripts and profiles would be reviewed. During this phase the meaning units were again interrogated to examine how they related to student's approaches to learning.
- G. Similar to the final stages in the profile analysis the themes and meaning units found in the text (lifeworld descriptions) were written on separate meaning unit sheets. The meaning units are grouped under each intentional relationship identified, so that all of the quotations which are applicable to a particular theme can be seen in their entirety. As noted previously the universal fragments which were identified were also highlighted to enhance the

understanding of their lifeworld. The meaning units were again interrogated to confirm that they are relevant to the research question and that they elucidate the lifeworld for the participant. The completed meaning unit sheets were then utilised for descriptive statements that summarise the noema-noesis distinctions for each individual.

4.10 Conclusion

Through this discussion I have stated the nature of the professional interview used in this study. I have explored how this approach fits with the phenomenological tradition, notably how it allows access to the meanings of the phenomena, approaches to learning. The repeat interview scenario is described which included details of the interview, the interview situation, introductions, the interview as a conversation, ending and recording of the interviews. From these details I have clarified how the methodological argument influenced all aspects of the interview.

The phenomenological position as an influence on the preparation of the interviewer, interview questions and the sample is also stated. This discussion explored the rigours of ensuring the phenomenological tradition was applied throughout the entire process. The final segment details the in-depth analytical procedure and I have demonstrated how this ensures that the findings reflect the approach to learning used by each student.

5.1 Introduction to the lifeworld findings

The following descriptions offer a detailed insight into the learning lifeworlds for each of the student's interviewed. In particular the profiles provide an insight into the role of approaches to learning within the context of the lifeworld.

By focusing upon the lifeworld it is possible to gain an understanding of the meaning of a phenomena, that is, approaches to learning in the context of their whole lived world. By presenting the findings obtained from the interviews in this way it is possible to view the interconnectedness which facilitates full understanding of the meaning of approaches to learning for each learner. Thus using the lifeworld enables a full contextualised account of the meaning of approaches to learning for each student.

A full and in-depth description of approaches to learning in the context of the lifeworld is presented in this section. Each of the learners, Gary, Jim, Clive, Ophelia, Diane and Karen is discussed individually, within their own lifeworld context. By focussing upon each learner individually an idiographic approach is maintained and it is possible to gain a comprehensive insight into the individual nature of approaches to learning.

Each of the profiles is divided into sub-headings to guide the reader as to the key issues for each student as they approach their learning. It may be noted that the headings contained in each profile are often different and this is reflective of the idiographic approach. Rather than relying upon a pre-categorised headings, the profiles are directed by the responses of each of the learners questioned. Thus the lifeworld profiles are distinct for each learner and consequently represent the individuality of approaches to learning in their lifeworld.

5.2 The noema-noesis summaries

The noema-noesis summary follows each lifeworld profile. The noema essentially describes the appearance of the object, in this case learning. The correlate, noesis, however presents the manner in which the object appears for the individual. Together these distinctions offers an opportunity to view the *way* in which the *what* is experienced in a concise, summarised format.

The noema, the object of learning is presented on the left hand side of each column, this exposes the study material, study situation and all that this entails for the student. The noesis represented on the right hand side of the column indicates the 'approach', that is the inner response to the object of their learning. Using the distinction in this way the noesis represents the 'approach' to learning and the noema indicates how the object of learning influences this approach.

The use of this conceptual tool, as a heuristic device, allows a view of the object of learning (the noema) as well as providing an insight into the manner of being (the noesis), that is, the way in which learning is approached for each of the learner's interviewed. The noematic – noetic relationships explicated from the interviews demonstrate the complexity and detail of each lifeworld. However it also allows an overview of the meaning of learning for each student by identifying how they approach their learning from the context of their lifeworld.

The noema-noesis relationships identified from the interviews are also presented, in diagram form. The diagram demonstrates how these various relationships interconnect to form a coherent map of each student's learning. This presents an overview of what approaches to learning means to each student in the context of their lifeworld.

5.3 The Lifeworld of Gary

Learning is a step by step process- A military operation

During the course of the interviews with Gary a detailed exploration was made of his actual process of learning, one such process that was raised by Gary is the adoption of a step-by-step approach.

"Making step 1 so secure er, so I feel confident and happy that I'm actually able to do step 2 very well without getting caught out. t... do you see what, how the logics working? I'm making myself feel comfortable with what I'm doing now erm, getting myself, preparing myself to move onto the next stage."(p3,pg21,1)

The description of the step by step approach here refers to how Gary approaches his life, almost as if he separates his life plan into several smaller stages, in this case the stages are centred around achieving qualifications and career. It is only when Gary feels that he has accomplished a particular stage that he feels enabled to consider the next stage in his life plan. It is the accomplishment of these aims that allow Gary the confidence and self-belief that he can achieve his next aim on his metaphorical ladder. Although Gary is able to identify aims for his future life he is unable to view these ambitions with any certainty and so concentrates on achieving one aim at a time which he hopes will allow him to build a future in the direction of his choice. This step by step approach is also represented on a narrower level as Gary adopts this approach for dealing with assessment,

"I just worked methodically from number 1 to number whatever it was, 20, down the list, one by one, achieving each step at a time. And once I'd achieved it, I'd put it to one side of my tray, or whatever it was and then in the final weeks I got it all out and I put it all in the different sections that I wanted it to be in... And then I obviously found all the various different bits of paper and slotted them all in, in the right place. And bingo, I'd got an assignment."(p4,pg16,2)

By segregating the tasks into smaller sections Gary finds the process more manageable as like with his life plan he is able to deal with one part at a time. Thus for Gary the learning process is not focussed upon understanding the whole of the subject rather he concentrates on understanding the component parts. However this concentration on smaller aims prevents Gary from being overwhelmed by the assessment and through the completion of each stage confidence is gained. This step by step approach is represented in two quite different circumstances and therefore could be taken as an indication that this type of approach, where aims are compartmentalised until they are achieved, is inherent in Gary's learning process.

Learning takes time to “fix things mentally”

This approach suits Gary as he finds the learning process is relatively slow and one that requires a certain amount of repetition,

“like I say for me it’s quite a slow process learning and getting things in, I have to do things 2 or 3 times before they’ve sunk in.”(p4,pg3,1)

The need for a slower learning pace and repetition may be more achievable through a step by step approach, as Gary may feel he has more control over the speed of his learning when he can separate it into smaller parts ensuring he has learnt one stage before moving on to another.

Learning requires structure

Similarities can be drawn with Gary’s representation of structure and the place it has in his learning with the step by step approach for here too Gary feels that if structure is to be gained the task needs to be broken down into its component parts. In the example below Gary alludes to the difficulty in dealing with assessment which he argues is difficult to structure,

“Because I like – I obviously like the reports because they’re structured and that’s obviously going back to relate to absolutely everything that I’ve said about doing work. A report’s a very structured piece of work. An essay, in my mind, isn’t so structured you know. People say oh it’s a given, it’s a middle and an end and, you know, you could say that’s a structure but it’s a lot – a structure’s a lot smaller than you could break down a report or anything else.”(p5,pg23,2)

The way in which Gary distinguishes between essays and reports in this context is purely upon the basis of structure. This difference is important for Gary for in a report format he is able to adopt a more structured approach that incorporates his step by step approach to learning. If Gary feels he has to look at a subject in its entirety he may find the task daunting, for he may not be able to recognise the small steps in completing the work. The meaning of structure for Gary could be described as twofold, as described earlier it represents the reduction of information into its component parts and it also could be interpreted as structure imposed from external bodies,

“Yeah, I like everything to be structured. Yeah. I often think I probably – I perhaps think of freedom as being a little inefficient really just cos that’s – I think I would find it a bit of a waste of time, you know. I want to be told what to do or I want to be told how to do something. Do

this and that's the way to go about it or erm, because I'm not very good at sort of – erm it's hard, it is quite hard but then it's quite hard to answer because I also like to be able to think of the best way to do it myself.”(p5,pg28,3)

For Gary the meaning of structure can be related to the external demands placed on his learning which he feels provide boundaries for his learning and in doing so offer a structure that is already designed by, in this case, a lecturer. By being alert to the demands of the lecturer and using the perceived structure offered Gary finds this strategy beneficial to his learning for he feels that he is able to focus purely on the assessment demands. In doing so he not only is able to ensure that all the demands are met (using their structure) but also the process is an efficient one as no time is wasted on what he perceives to be irrelevant material. However there is also a need for a mixture of structure and freedom which indicates that Gary requires a balance in his learning for in his answer he highlights his desire for free thought without being directed by an external person. This idea of a more independent creative approach is also reflected in Gary's discussion of imagination,

“Yeah, imagination is very important in my life. And I've got a reasonably vivid imagination. Cos it starts the thought processes. Yeah, it is very important to me.”(p1,pg24,2)

The use of Gary's imagination not only starts the learning process it also brings the subject to life something that may be difficult to achieve within the confines of a perceived rigid structure. However he goes on to clarify that while he does require some room for his own ideas which allow the use of his imagination the emphasis of his learning is on structure.

Structure and freedom; exams and coursework

Gary argues that certain assessment methods can also be grouped according to structure and freedom believing that exams allow a more structured approach whereas coursework encourages greater freedom in thought,

“Yeah, I think that, you know, the – that the assignment and the exam run quite well together which I think you can see the assignment perhaps as sort of the freedom aspect, . You can form your own idea and get on with it and in exams it's a sort of structured job, yeah. So yeah, I think it works quite well really.”(p1,pg29,3)

Gary claims that this balance between exams and coursework allows for his two needs to be satisfied as he receives both structure and freedom thus supporting his claim that he does require both in his learning, even if the desire for structure is stronger.

Learning; hearing versus reading

These however were not the only learning processes alluded to for Gary also placed a great emphasis on oral learning. Gary felt that he could learn more effectively through listening and speaking rather than reading and writing,

“So yeah, that’s certainly helps and also we’re looking now into dictation, so erm, for me absolutely ideal because I can read something or I can talk to somebody about erm, a particular point and then I can think about it and I can dictate it, which I think I’m alright at dic...talking verbally I’m alright at. It’s just, like I’ve said before, I tend to get myself in a bit of a mess and a bit confused, so busy trying to make it, make the spelling right and the grammar something like correct.”(p1,pg5,1)

As a dyslexic learner Gary finds written work more difficult as he requires an awareness of processes usually rendered automatic and so he constantly assesses his spelling and grammar, a task he does not feel a student without dyslexia has to face. This leads Gary to prefer a learning method which avoids this extra pressure and allows him to concentrate upon learning, he believes he has found such a method through dialogue. Here Gary believes he can learn without any hindrances as he can simply concentrate on the topic and engage with the material either through dictation in place of writing and conversing/listening instead of reading. This preference for listening rather than reading is demonstrated by Gary when he describes how he enjoys viewing business programmes unlike his views on reading,

Text as the enemy

“I quite like watching Business Lunch because I quite like watching the articles on various different things and that might prompt me into talking to somebody, like having a word with my dad.”(p5,pg30,1)

“But to read something in a book, it can be very, it’s there, it’s black text, it’s – unless you’ve got a very vivid imagination, you can’t really make anything out of it, so you tend, it tends to sort of whirl around inside your head and disappear after a length of time.”(p5,pg2,1)

The quotations indicate the way in which Gary differentiates between hearing and reading. He clearly describes how conversing or listening enables him to engage in the learning process and in later statements he explains his desire to learn using such a dynamic approach. This is quite different to the way in which Gary approaches text which he feels is distant, something separate

from himself. For Gary reading involves a relationship with an almost tangible enemy that is there in 'black text' and is therefore something which should be avoided. Gary also hints that the information he hears he retains whereas he finds after reading the information never really settles nor can he remember it at a later date and as will be discussed shortly this is very important for Gary.

Activity: Role play and practice versus reading

This may in part help explain Gary's preference for a more practical/active approach to learning in the example below he explores how he benefited from a negotiation exercise,

"So that I learnt a lot from, but also because we were actually doing the thing in real life – we were acting a role play, whereas opposed to having something described – it can be very black and white and sometimes quite hard to understand."(p2,pg2,1)

Again Gary reinforces his attitude towards reading and especially text as an activity that has no meaning and relevance to himself unlike his feelings when involved in active learning. Through acting out a particular role play scene he is able to see the meaning of his learning on a practical basis and this physical interaction with the material facilitates understanding something Gary feels is not possible through reading. This emphasis on practice is reiterated by Gary when he states that when revising he uses practise essay questions and note taking rather than passive reading.

Motivation, interest and relevance

Gary also explores the impact of having an interest in a topic on his learning for he finds the greater his interest the greater his disposition to learn. Primarily Gary selected the business course in part because he has an interest in the subject area,

"but I know I can do it when I'm actually really, really interested in something like the business plan for an example. That was something that enthused me"(p1,pg12,1)

Thus having an interest in the subject area encourages Gary to engage in the learning process an activity he goes on to state he finds difficult if he holds no interest in the subject. Thus for Gary being interested in the subject benefits his learning as it makes him eager and willing to participate in the learning process. However this relationship is not automatic and even if he is interested this does not necessarily motivate him to participate in the learning process,

“I’m interested in Personnel and this is the most related assignment that I’ve done since I’ve been here on this course, that’s related to that practising HRM. It’s there in the title. Erm, so the motivation, for me, should be there because it’s something I’m interested in, something I want to learn but it obviously wasn’t there enough for me to sit down and read the quantity, and learn the quantity of knowledge that I needed to produce the piece of work to get a good grade.” (p1,pg19,2)

So although being interested in a subject can motivate Gary to engage in the learning process it does not necessarily follow that he will always be motivated to learn. Without any interest he will not be motivated and finds the learning process a long and arduous one thus it is essential for Gary that he studies an area that does interest him.

Understanding and memorisation

From engagement in the learning process Gary hopes to achieve both understanding and memorisation believing the two concepts are inextricably linked. The notion of understanding for Gary can be defined as when he feels he has learnt something in-depth,

“You can talk in more depth. I mean I could maybe talk about things on a very shallow depth but it’s – getting more into, getting deeper into the subject erm, in question”(p5,pg3,1)

When understanding occurs Gary feels that he has explored the subject by going beyond what he describes as shallow depth. This may imply that Gary believes understanding occurs when he becomes more involved with the subject and when he looks beyond first impressions of the subject matter. However this is not the only meaning of understanding that is offered by Gary as he also indicates that understanding occurs as an immediate realisation,

“But yeah quite a lot of – quite a lot of the time when I’m doing a piece of work like that I will be sort of a bit lost and a bit sort of, uh, uh, uh, I don’t really know what I’m doing here. And then all of a sudden something will click in and everything – then everything yeah, falls into place, yeah, yeah.”(p1,pg36,3)

This process of non-understanding to understanding is expressed as something that occurs almost spontaneously rather than an evolving process. This may perhaps indicate that Gary is unsure of how understanding occurs as he implies that it happens without his conscious involvement and so Gary’s process of understanding is a mystery to himself.

“I don’t, I don’t know what understanding means to me really.”(p7,pg24,2)

Memorisation and regurgitating

Gary clarifies how memorisation impacts upon his learning, claiming that this concept is more important than understanding as remembering represents learning,

“Er I found the revision a learning process and I didn’t find the exams a learning process, really. No. Erm, it’s (exams) sort of just regurgitating everything that I’d learnt, if you like. And then coming out of there – thank goodness that’s over whereas with the revision I was actually learning, it was – I’d structured it, I was memorising it and I was remembering it and I can still remember a fair proportion of it now. So that to me is definitely learning, yeah.”(p5,6,pg6,2)

The ultimate definition for Gary that learning has occurred is based on the fact that he can remember it, if not he assumes that he has not learnt. In the quotation he differentiates between memorisation and regurgitation seeing the two as distinct from one another, referring to revising as providing an opportunity to remember and exams as a simple process of regurgitation. Gary argues that repeating knowledge is not learning and so dismisses the usefulness of exams which is interesting as earlier he claimed that exams provided a useful structure indicating that Gary is able to see both advantages and disadvantages of different types of assessment. However later Gary goes on to claim that he does not differentiate between regurgitating and memorising,

“No, I think it’s all the same (remembering and regurgitating). I think you remember it and then you regurgitate it. And then you forget it (laughs). Yeah.”(p4,pg4,3)

The distinction between the two ideas is dissipated as Gary explains that it is a process in which he experiences memorisation then regurgitation. The many meanings of memorisation and regurgitating are representative of Gary’s view that at times they are separate entities and at times they are part of the same process. However what may be concluded from both statements is the fact that Gary is able to define the two concepts and recognise the different elements.

Condensing and memorising

The aim to remember is incorporated into many aspects of Gary’s learning including his revision strategy,

“I’ll make lesser notes and lesser notes till I get it down to, to an amount I can actually remember in there.”(p1,pg5,2)

Here Gary explains how his actual learning methods are influenced by this aim to memorise, he claims that through condensing his notes to a more compact form he is able to remember the information he requires. Gary also refers to how a more practical type of learning method aids his memory,

"If you actually do something in real life, then, then obviously you can relate back to it more and I find it easier to remember, it seems to sink in if I can and think back – oh, you know, I remember saying that in the negotiation and that worked well."(p2,pg2,1)

For Gary the measurement of learning can occur in three key ways; firstly by being able to relate back to the situation from where the information was originally gained, secondly if Gary is able to remember and finally when he feels the information has 'sunk in'. Gary's relationship between active learning and memory may help explain why Gary prefers such a learning method for if active learning encourages remembering it is ever likely it will be a favourite method for Gary. Through visualising a particular situation Gary is able to 'hear' himself and as discussed earlier speaking and listening is very important in his learning process. Gary goes on to argue that he feels other students should find it easier to remember and this ability should make them more successful learners,

"I think to be able to remember things, have a good long term and a good short term memory in some respects, is the key – I think is the key to learning in whole, as a whole. Erm, not just me but everybody. Erm, and if they haven't got a very good memory then, then you're gonna struggle. Erm, and that's the same with people who are dyslexic, who aren't dyslexic. If your memory's shot then you haven't got much chance."(p4,pg5,1)

The emphatic response of Gary demonstrates the importance of memory placing this concept at the core of his learning, implying that without memory learning can not occur. This he argues is accurate not just for himself but for all learners which is why he feels at a disadvantage to those who do not have dyslexia as this process he feels is on the whole much more difficult for dyslexic learners. If Gary believes that remembering is the key to academic success, as implied in the quotation, it is unsurprising that his focus in the learning process will be upon achieving this aim.

Understanding and remembering

The relationship between understanding and remembering is explored by Gary he claims that they are a part of the same learning process,

"I need to understand it to be able to remember it. If I can't understand it, I can't remember it. But some things I can understand to acquire initial level, if you like, but not in very much depth, and if I don't understand it in very much depth then I do tend to forget it quite easily."(p1,pg25,2)

For Gary the learning process must include both understanding and remembering but what is of particular importance is the order in which they occur for he needs to achieve a level of understanding before he can realise his ultimate ambition of memorising. Gary identifies that when understanding is minimal he finds that remembering is hindered and so will return to the information until he is satisfied that understanding has occurred.

Learning is a 'real life' experience

Through the application of knowledge Gary feels his learning process is easier and the learning experience is enhanced,

"If you actually do something in real life, then, then obviously you can relate back to it more.."(p2,pg2,1)

Similarities can be drawn with Gary's preference for a more practical form of learning as identified in the earlier section as here too Gary highlights the importance of bringing a topic to life through using the information rather than simply reading it. The application of learning is however not limited to textual information as Gary explains how learning allows him to apply newly acquired skills to his everyday life,

"The education is giving me erm, the ability, academically, erm, but also it's giving me the experience of life and meeting people and different pressures; presentations, deadlines, hand-in dates, that kind of thing. It's given me that kind of experience as well as the academic knowledge, preparing me for work and when I've finished it off, I'll feel confident"(p2,pg22,1)

Gary distinguishes between the different types of skills that he is able to apply referring to some as specifically academic whilst perceiving others as more general skills. For Gary all of these skills will support his confidence as he feels equipped to deal with all situations that may occur in his personal and professional life.

Gary is unsure whether much of his academic learning will be relevant to future positions,

“ I think often when you get into the workplace, things change – the academic information actually disappears and it’s more practically based – what you’re doing there and then. And you actually forget a lot of the academic stuff you’ve learnt. But certainly to start with, it helps you but it, to a certain degree things will stay with you, like that negotiating exercise that I first referred to, will probably stay with me for the rest of my life and I’ll end up negotiating the future”(p2,pg21,1)

Gary refers to the temporality and spatiality of the learning experience, explaining that he believes some of academic learning will not be relevant for his future place in the working world. He argues that by the time he is in employment much of what he has learnt will have been long since forgotten, a claim which substantiates his emphasis on memorisation and the notion of information disappearing. However Gary argues that the more active learning situations will be recoverable again supporting the earlier indications that practical learning encourages him to remember through dialogue. This perceived relevance of the subject is demonstrated elsewhere in the interviews as Gary reiterates the importance he places upon the future relevance of a topic,

“Relevance, I think is probably something that - it’s gonna happen in my life – something that, that is very possible and may come up in future – that I think is probably relevant, mm and that is again going back to this practical thing. If it’s not relevant and I can’t relate it to real life then I can’t – you know I can’t, I struggle to question the importance of learning really.”(p4,pg11,2)

Thus relevance for Gary means being able to utilise the information and skills learnt in his future life. If he is unable to see a connection between what he is learning and his future it makes the learning process very difficult as negates the material as irrelevant. When this occurs Gary can distance himself from the material and may cease engagement in the learning process therefore this perception of relevance has a fundamental impact upon his learning.

Links may also be made with the earlier discussion of practical learning for here too Gary expresses his desire to learn so he can utilise this knowledge on a practical basis. Later Gary also alludes to how relevance helps him to remember finding that the more relevant he believes a subject to be the more likely he is to remember. As Gary’s aim when learning is to remember it is not surprising that he agrees with methods that support this aim.

Gary finds that one of the ways in which he is able to test the relevance of the subject is through the currency of the information, claiming the more recent a piece of work the greater it's accuracy,

"Some of it is still based on very, very old stuff, like I don't know, 1939, or something – there was a quote I read the other day and I thought bloody hell, what's that got to do with the course I'm doing. It's donkeys years ago, you know. You think it's so old, what on earth has that got to do with the present day climate."(p3,pg25,1)

Learning should relate to the outside world

The views Gary holds of relating learning to the outside world are supportive of his attitude towards practical and relevant learning as Gary expresses his desire to relate what he has learnt to the world around him,

"I like the expression keep it real. I think it's a good expression, I know it sounds a bit naff but, it is, I'm quite good at these things er where it is related to real. If it isn't related to real, I struggle to understand it, or even be bothered to understand it, because it's not real, you know. What's the point? And all the rest of the rubbish put to one side because what's the point in understanding or learning it if it's not real."(p4,pg26,3)

Gary dismisses information that he feels irrelevant to the outside world arguing that if it has no place in the world around how can it have any relevance to himself? It is perhaps for this reason that Gary takes great satisfaction when learning a topic that he believes can be transferred to the real world,

"And I, and my tutor said I could have actually handed it in to the NatWest bank for example and probably started a business on it. And that, I mean that was just – you know (laughs). They may have well just given me a hundred, thousand pounds or something. That was just massive amount of motivation for me."(p1,pg16,2)

The excitement evident in the quotation is almost palpable as Gary explains the joy and enthusiasm he felt when his tutor declared that his work was at such a standard that it could be transferred to a real business situation. It could be argued that this sense of achievement may not have been quite so vivid had the topic not been directly transferable. When Gary tackles a topic he feels is relevant he is enthusiastic in his approach particularly when this is rewarded with affirmation, which results in feelings of increased motivation and confidence. Thus the

opportunity to apply his learning supports both his learning process and his motivation to engage with the topic.

Learning as a way of understanding the world

The relationship between learning in an academic context and the real world is also explored through Gary's belief that what he learns broadens and deepens his view of the world in which he lives.

"the more, the more you learn and the more you understand, it represents ...so the more wider your knowledge and understanding of what happens, why things work, why things happen, and your ability to understand more about life"(p1,pg31,2)

Through his academic learning experiences Gary indicates that he is able to gain a deeper understanding of the world around him a task that would be difficult without such knowledge. While the learning process is relevant to the outside world it may also offer the opportunity to extend Gary's understanding of it.

Academia versus practical learning

The selection of the course may also have been influenced through this need to apply learning to a practical situation as he claims that a business course contains elements of both academic and practical learning,

"well academic learning comes into it because I suppose, to a certain degree, it can speed up the process of practical learning and practical learning is quite often trial and error whereas academic learning is, is what it is, if you see what I mean. You know there's no trial and errors in academic learning."(p2,pg30,3)

In his statement Gary describes academia as presenting a series of definite facts, implying that there is no room for doubt or debate when learning academic topics. This description of learning is supportive of his view of academic text, which he also believes presents indisputable 'hard' information. Gary believes that a business course contains both practical and academic elements however he hints that a practical orientation is stronger as academic learning only enters the equation 'to a certain degree'. If Gary finds that business allows for practical learning then by association it should support his learning also as he too enjoys a practical approach as this enables him to learn in such a way that he feels confident and positive. This differs from his

attitude towards an academic approach as this he feels is just a tool to allow him to learn on a practical level i.e. when in employment,

“Practical learning often, for me, tends to be learning something that I really want to learn whereas academic learning is learning what I have to learn in order to achieve a goal.”(p2,pg29,3)

For Gary real learning is practical learning as this type of learning is what develops the working world. However Gary goes on to claim that practical learning can then inform an academic perspective,

“And then when it works and they use it for a while then I think academics look at it and think well why is this working, and then they analyse it and say, well actually it’s not working for this, this and this reason but it can be seen to work for this, this and this reason.”(p5,pg29,3)

Gary goes on to claim that he does not see the relationship as entirely one way, conceding that academia may inform practice. The separation and distinction of practical and academic learning influences Gary’s approach to his learning. He approaches practical learning with enthusiasm and eagerness for he believes he is able to transfer this learning to the world and thus influence the world outside academia.

Achievement and motivation

The concept of motivation as mentioned in the previous section plays a key role in Gary’s learning for without feeling motivated he finds it difficult to participate in the learning process,

“ So if I’m motivated then I’ll get on and get it structured and then I’ll do well but if I’m not motivated and a little bit daunted then I tend to try and hide it, forget about it almost.”(p3,pg21,2)

If Gary feels that he is unable to win the war, that is, if he is not motivated he attempts to avoid the battle of learning and not engage in the learning process at all. Gary also exposes his belief that he feels this approach is not limited to an academic life only for he argues that he uses the same tactics in his broader everyday life thus highlighting the importance and commonality of such an approach in his lifeworld. The impact of learning on Gary’s motivation was also raised as Gary explained how learning could make him a more motivated learner,

“it (a learning experience) motivated me to then learn more about that particular subject. Erm, I felt quite excited that I’d sort of discovered something new if you like – a new subject, a new key. It motivated me to go on and study it more”(p1,pg3,1)

Learning as a facilitator of success- Monetary rewards

Motivation is also gained from the promise of monetary rewards and the status that can be offered with a business degree.

“I’m quite motivated by money to a certain degree. And also, erm, status and that sort of thing,, I opted for business, business the one with the opportunity and draw really”(p7,pg9,2)

For Gary business is directly related to money and so Gary is able to identify a direct relationship between a business degree and financial success in business. Gary also clearly expresses his desire to achieve status thus he wants more than just monetary rewards from his job as he wants recognition of his success from others, a concept that will be discussed later in the chapter. His choice of learning is therefore influenced by the potential financial outcomes in a future time and place. The more probable a financial reward the greater his motivation to learn. Although career success is important to Gary he does not believe that it should come at the expense of his well being and happiness and says he will refuse to continue up the career ladder even if there is an opportunity for increased pay and status.

“I mean if I get to a Personnel Assistant on £15,000 a year, I’m stressed and I can’t handle it, I’ll draw the line. I’ll say, you know, those things will be dreams like everybody else if you see what I mean”(p3,pg23,1)

Despite this Gary feels he is ambitious and will continue on his career path until he has gone as far as he can while remaining happy. Like his step by step approach Gary feels that once one goal is achieved he will aspire to reach the next until he reaches a level where he feels he can go no further.

Learning as a facilitator of success-The Provider

A possible reason for this ambitious behaviour may be linked to Gary’s perception of his future role as being one of a provider, that is providing money for his future family,

“yeah it’s probably going back to the status and money and having a nice car and being able to provide your, you know, if you ever have a family, provide your family with nice things, you

know; nice holiday, nice house, that sort of thing...And I'm not saying that, and that's not from a chauvinistic point of view that all males should be the provider – not from that point of view at all – but just from the point of view that in the situation I would like to be able to be comfortable. And any dependants also be comfortable, if you like.”(p7,pg10,2)

The provision of financial security in the home is implied to be Gary's responsibility and this is a role he is happy and willing to accept, as he expects to keep all of his future family wants satisfied. For Gary the role of a provider is traditionally fulfilled by men rather than women and so this statement could be interpreted as one of gender stereotyping, inferring that Gary would be the bread winner while his wife would stay at home and look after the family. However Gary recognised that this statement may be interpreted in this manner and so emphasises that he does not mean provider in the old –fashioned sense of the word.

Learning as a facilitator of success -The Grades

Gary indicated that he feels motivated when he obtains a sense of achievement,

“I'm hoping that my assignment grades, this semester will be a bit better and that will bring me – I don't need, I don't need to improve massively on what I've got already. If I can get, say a C and 3 B-'s, a C, a couple of B's and a B-, I'd be happy then. I'd feel that I was pretty much achieving what I was capable of, with a little bit of opportunity for improvement.”(p1,pg28,2)

For Gary the sense of achievement that he feels is obtained from a certain satisfaction that he has learnt to his own acceptable standard and this is measurable through grade classification. Thus there is a clear relationship between grades and achievement as this provides Gary an easy way of measuring his learning. What is interesting from the quotation is Gary's attitude to when this sense of achievement can be realised for although he expects certain grades to be within his grasp he does not anticipate achieving A's. Therefore the sense of achievement is purely dependant upon his attitude towards his own capability and his personal expectations. Gary explains that had he not been dyslexic his expectations may have been much higher as he claims that if he exerted the same efforts as a student without dyslexia he would expect to be achieving A grades. Gary alludes to why grades are so important to him when he explains his reasons for studying a degree course,

“I think, probably more a case of keeps me focussed cos I just want to get the qualification. I'm focussed because I want the degree now I choose to do it, in this particular subject, because this subject is something that I'm interested in”(p5,pg10,3)

If as Gary claims his main ambition is to simply achieve the degree qualification rather than wanting to understand specific topics then it is understandable that good grades have become crucial in his learning as obtaining good grades will enable him to achieve this goal. Although Gary is motivated to obtain a degree qualification it would be inaccurate to believe that this is all that motivates him for he states that he has an interest in the topic and as discussed previously this impacts on Gary's learning. Gary also hints at the effect of studying out of his personal choice, this could perhaps be taken to indicate that as he has selected to come to university he feels he should be motivated.

The role of grades was also raised in specific relation to learning as he uses the grading system as an indication that he has learnt,

"A"'s good, I've learnt very well, I've been interested. C's not so good."(p8,pg26,1)

Thus grades for Gary do not simply refer to the achievement of his degree for he uses this information to measure the quality of his learning. A further explanation for this emphasis may be in regard to the relationship between grades and Gary's motivational level,

"I knew I could get a distinction, so it was another motivating factor. So when I got it back and saw that I'd got a distinction in it, I was incredibly satisfied, incredibly relieved and thoroughly fine, you know."(p5,pg17,2)

The comment that Gary felt capable prior to starting the assessment infers that on reflection, Gary requires self-belief prior to engaging in his learning if he is to be motivated.

Text avoidance

Gary spoke of a strong propensity to be influenced by the suggestions of the lecturer, especially in regard to the amount and direction of academic reading,

"I want to be already told exactly what I've got to read so I don't waste my time slogging through books and when I say slogging I mean slogging because it takes so much of an effort and energy for me to read, so I don't want to waste my effort and energy reading stuff that I don't need"(p1,pg16,3)

Gary expresses his desire for his reading material to be dictated by the lecturer on the basis of efficiency. He argues that as reading is such effort with dyslexia he can not afford to 'waste' his efforts on information that is not directly relevant. It could be argued that the emphasis on

relevant material relates specifically to syllabus boundedness as it may be the relevant material is that which is covered in the syllabus. Gary believes however that this is not the only reason why he uses this particular approach for he claims that this approach is also supportive of a lazy approach and as discussed earlier it is a view he holds of himself. Further reasons for relying upon the syllabus are also referred to by Gary as he describes how his lack of confidence prevents him from expanding beyond the syllabus boundaries,

“I wouldn’t really be confident enough to – er, really get in there and mix my own ideas up with what academics have said”(p6,pg5,3)

This may also relate to Gary’s perception that academic ideas and texts are made up of facts and as such are not open to his personal input. Whether there is a desire to go beyond the requirements of the course is questionable for although the indications are that it may suit Gary’s learning approach he does claim that he wishes he could or would read more widely,

“if I was to just read the lecture notes – it’s not giving me a very wide area to go, to go on. Where, on the other extreme, to make it better for me, I would prefer to be able to have 2 chapters out of this book, a few chapters out of that book, something here that I’ve found in a newspaper or something like that, a journal article here and all my lecture notes as well (yeah) and then just sort of get it down, get bits of all of them at the end. (right) That’s – I mean, how I’d go about it.”(p3,pg36,3)

Utilising wider sources offers Gary the opportunity to gain further perspectives on a topic rather than the narrow base of a single set of lecture notes. However his text avoidance approach to learning limits Gary’s opportunity to read on a wider basis.

However what is key in Gary’s statement is that although he feels using wider evidence would be beneficial the inclusion of the lecture notes is a fundamental source. Therefore this quotation does not contradict Gary’s earlier statements, rather it demonstrates that even though Gary may use other sources he still bases his learning around the syllabus. A further concept is also raised here as Gary again refers to memorisation for even when expanding his circle of knowledge his ultimate aim is to condense this information until it is an amount that can be committed to memory. Although Gary relies upon the syllabus he finds that if he only pays attention to the demands of the lecturers he feels he is behaving in a deceptive manner,

“because basically this here, these answers – I mean I’d probably go as far as saying if you answered higher than this – I mean you’re looking to create a sort of illusion, aren’t you, of doing a good piece of work?”(p2,pg9,3)

It is almost as if Gary feels that by being alert to assessment demands he is cheating the learning process as instead of concentrating on the learning process the focus is on meeting the assessment criteria instead. This he feels creates an 'illusion' of learning for although a good grade may be gained he feels that all he has achieved is fooling the lecturer that he has understood, when in fact all he has done is fulfil the demands of the lecturer. This may contradict with Gary's earlier view that grades are representative of understanding however it could be argued that although Gary aims for high grades he does this without simply trying to meet assessment demands as he also tries to learn in the process. This claim has further support when Gary explains that he did not use the notebook I gave,

"I mean I could have sat down yesterday and written an 8 or 10 pages of things, but it wouldn't have been a true outline because I hadn't done it over a gradual period of time. So I just thought well best to come clean"(p6,pg2,2)

It is interesting that Gary felt that he had to 'come clean' as if he had done something wrong. Again this could be taken as an indication of his perception of cheating for had he not confessed Gary may well have felt that he had 'cheated' in his interviews, something he was not prepared to do.

The Learning aims of men and women

Gary felt that women are not as ambitious as men and indicates that this may be related to women having different motives and interests

"I think sometimes, erm well female's ambitions as far as going into the workplace, and their progression up a ladder are not quite so high as men's. I think women are quite happy to stay at the lower level, erm, working in a working environment and men aren't happy with that – they want up, you know. They want to increase the status"(p2,pg25,3)

"men tend to be focussed on getting the degree and getting the piece of paper that says you've passed whereas women actually – I think perhaps enjoy more the modules"(p5,pg24,3) .

Here Gary alludes to the difference in aims between men and women, he reinforces his view that men are motivated by the qualification whereas women are much more interested in what they are learning. This difference he argues makes men more focussed on the task of achieving the degree however in his view women take a more short term view dealing with each module as to occurs. This again is supportive of his view that men are more ambitious than women as

throughout their learning they are focused on a single aim which Gary believes will enable future success. This distinction is clarified when Gary explains that he feels that men often only have one aim during each time in their life and will exert all efforts in order to achieve this goal, this he argues differs from women who he feels have multiple aims,

“Yeah, well I think the key thing I’m trying to say is that women tend to have more things they aim at rather than this one big thing – more smaller things.”(p3,pg24,3)

Although not explicitly stated Gary implies that if women have several aims it would be difficult for them to be very successful in all as he believes that to be successful in all areas in life one needs to be focussed on a single specific aim. Although Gary previously stated that he would sacrifice his career if it had a negative affect on other areas of his life he indicates that this may be more likely for his female counterparts.

The learning efforts of men and women

Despite the claims that men are more ambitious than women this Gary feels is not reflected in the amount of effort exerted in the learning process, for Gary feels that men are considerably lazier than women and this is reflected in academic outcomes,

“women tend to put a lot more work into things and the only real proof that I’ve got for that is the fact that often females, in my experience, have done better in erm, academic qualifications and that.”(p6,pg13,2)

This does appear to contradict Gary’s earlier indications that men are more ambitious and focussed upon achieving the degree qualification, as here he states that women achieve higher academic qualifications. He believes that women are more successful learners because they are prepared to put in the work and are more organised and detailed in their studies, something he believes is lacking in men. This perhaps could be related to Gary’s earlier statement that women enjoy the learning process more and focus on one step at a time rather than concentrating on the degree overall and this approach encourages a greater involvement in the learning process.

Pressure is an external force

Gary explained how pressure impacts on his learning as he finds that the inclusion of some form of pressure motivates him to learn,

“pressure is, is a good thing, for me, because then I sort of get a bit of a buzz from it, if you like. Motivates me. If there’s no pressure on me I just tend to sort of dawdle about, put it off.”(p4,pg31,3)

The impact of pressure for Gary holds two key benefits, that of a sense of an emotional high and the motivation to engage in the learning process. In this context Gary is referring to pressure as incorporated through deadlines and without these external demands he feels he would neglect his studies. Thus pressure for Gary here comes from an external force, implying an acceptance of a non-intrinsic motivation rather than a self-starting motivation. However there are limitations as to the amount of pressure that is felt by Gary as he feels that too much only serves to hinder his learning. This feeling he notes is particularly prominent during examination periods,

“with exams I feel sometimes I’ve got too much pressure on me and I’ve left it too late and I feel too pressured and start feeling a bit emotional about things, so yes, I do sometimes feel I have put too much pressure on myself.”(p7,pg31,3)

The quantity of pressure does therefore have a crucial impact on the way in which Gary responds to it. What is notable about this quotation is he indicates that some of the pressure is not from external sources rather it is self-imposed thus he is in direct control of the amount of pressure that he feels. Even though he recognises the fact that too much pressure hinders his learning when certain external situational factors occur he unintentionally imposes greater pressure upon himself because he feels uncomfortable with particular circumstances. This self-imposed pressure felt at examination time may be related to the fact that Gary finds exams stressful particularly pre and post exam,

“But before the event I tend to worry and quite often afterwards as well. Cos then I think oh well I don’t know if I’ve done that as well as I could have done. I could have done more work, I could have done this, I could have done that, so certainly pre and post anything – exams, presentations, handing in assignment”(p2,pg6,1)

The pressure affects Gary’s approach to learning in the form of stress which manifests itself in worry, where Gary ruminates upon the work he has to do or has done, however he does not experience these emotions during the task believing that at these times he should just deal with the task in hand. He demonstrates his generally strong dissatisfaction with his performance and often criticises himself that he has not put in sufficient effort to achieve the level to which he aspires. Gary believes that stress also has a negative impact on his dyslexia causing the

condition to worsen re-iterating Gary's belief that stress has a negative impact upon his learning.

Learning is a time management activity

Due to this dyslexia Gary finds that he needs to organise his time more effectively as academic tasks he argues take longer for a dyslexic student,

"I'm relating to dyslexia because obviously I think about it in even more detail than the normal person. But just in time management, in view of getting books out the library in enough time, because it takes the time to read, and journal articles and that kind of thing."(p2,pg5,1)

For Gary his dyslexia distinguishes him from other students and he sees himself as having extra challenges that are not faced by students without dyslexia whom he classifies as 'normal'. The most prominent feature is the extended length of time needed to read and due to this Gary believes he has to be vigilant in organising his time effectively. Time for Gary is therefore something to be managed, which he finds a difficult task. Despite this need Gary often finds that although he has a plan of action he will not always follow it as he can find it difficult to motivate himself. The end result of such procrastination is that Gary feels he has not fully completed the learning process,

"but I still didn't give myself enough time. I was still struggling to remember, to get the notes down, to remember the full amount if you like. I was perhaps halfway through the process that I'd ideally like to get to."(p2,pg5,2)

A possible explanation for this perceived difficulty in managing time and engaging in the learning process may be related to Gary's confession that he believes he can be a lazy learner thus motivating himself to engage would be difficult. However this may not be the only possible reason as mentioned in the previous section outside distractions may detract from the learning process,

Balancing distractions

"I distract myself, I get up and go and make a cup of tea or I don't know, I'll look out the window or something and that's quite bad enough without other things like music or television on or somebody hanging around outside, fiddling with something cos you – I'm mentally quite inquisitive to know what they're doing like."

Gary finds it very easy to find distractions and will at times consciously seek out these to distract him from the learning process. Here he describes how he has to limit his temptation to become distracted, this task he argues is easier if the place in which he learns is quiet. Physical elements are however not the only form of distractions as Gary finds that if he is going through some form of emotional upset as this also offers a distraction from the learning process. During these times he finds it difficult to focus as his mind is elsewhere. Although Gary finds some external interests a hindrance to his learning he also argues that some distractions are necessary to balance his academic and social life,

“a good social life, whatever and – I don’t know – doing my walking or my shooting or whatever I want to do, as well as the work side of things you know . So I think that’s quite an important balance really, for me, as a person. It’s a personal state of well being. I need to have that balance. If it gets too much of one or other then I start feeling guilty. Or, or like if I spend too much time on degree work, study, I get a bit bogged down”(p1,pg14,1)

The balance between a social and work life is crucial for Gary if he is to be successful in either, for too little provides Gary with a sense of guilt and too much study prevents him from learning as he feels weighed down by the weight of the work. The balance of the social and work life are therefore mutually supportive of one another making each a more enjoyable process. Perhaps more importantly this fragile balance needs to be maintained if Gary is to feel a sense of well being in the world. Thus the impact of this balance transpires well beyond the boundaries of learning as it has a fundamental effect on all aspects of Gary’s life.

Learning in particular places

The question of where Gary prefers to learn was also answered during the interviews as he found certain places more suitable for learning. The newness of a particular place can make Gary feel uncomfortable until he is familiar with his surroundings,

“basically I went into the library here and I felt a bit daunted, because it’s obviously quite a big library and there is an awful lot of information in that library – an awful lot of information in there and I didn’t know how to get it, basically.”(p6,pg37,3)

The vastness of the place and unfamiliarity with the procedures used in this place makes Gary feel uneasy with the library. This could be why Gary generally prefers to learn at home where he is familiar with the smaller surroundings, so much so he selected the university in part because it is close to his family home. Further evidence also points to Gary’s preference to learn at home,

“when I’m in my bedroom or whatever I can just lie on my bed and shut my eyes and think about it and you can concentrate a lot more than you can in the lecture... when I’m gonna concentrate I need a lot of peace and quiet. I don’t need any distraction whatsoever”(p2,pg7,1)

Gary provides a vivid description of what he actually does when attempting to concentrate. The requirement for silence Gary argues is not achievable in university and so he uses his own environment in which to learn for as discussed earlier he can control distractions in his own home much more easily than in the university premises. Gary offers further explanations as to why he prefers to learn at home in the quote below,

“because when I’ve got a day off I don’t think ooh, good I’ve got a day off, I can go and sit in the library all day. I think ooh I’ve got a day off for, I’ll go shopping or something, because that’s the way I look at things. So yeah it does but if I had a lecture at some stage, during the day, every day, then I would be more motivated to stay in the Uni and do a few hours in the library and you know...”(p2,pg30,2)

Gary associates the library place with work and for Gary work is not necessarily a pleasant experience thus he is not motivated to learn in such a place. He finds he is often tempted to travel to alternate places which he does not associate with work and is only able to utilise the library when he happens to be in close proximity.

Learning is a social matter

The theme of sociality was strongly identified throughout the interviews with Gary, as others played a fundamental role in his learning. Gary feels that through collaboration with his peers he is able to develop and understand new perspectives,

“we were working as a team so we were discussing ideas and different ways of looking at things and obviously everybody has a different outlook on, or how to tackle a problem”(p2,pg2,1)

Through this experience Gary realised some benefits of learning with others as he found that other students would have differing approaches and attitudes and that these differences could support his learning as they opened his eyes to new ideas. Thus Gary has a great interest in learning new ideas from differing perspectives and this he argues is one of the reasons he volunteered for the interviews,

“if I had chosen not to do the interview and not to meet you and have this discussion I wouldn't be as good would I? I wouldn't, it wouldn't, I would have no benefit, if you see what I mean. So the more things you do the more benefit you've got, the more things you can talk about to people i.e. if I go home tonight and go to the pub or sit there, oh I did an interview today and I'd sit there, cup my eyes telling somebody all about, you know, what I think about things. And it's something to talk about and people are interested. Somebody'll say oh well that sounds interesting. What did you do? And, you know, we've all got something to talk about and that then incites other conversations and makes you, I feel, an interesting person, to a certain degree.”(p3,pg20,1)

The quotation re-iterates earlier suggestions of the importance of dialogue for Gary and highlights his enthusiasm for this form of learning, in this case his enthusiasm is evoked through the interviews which we shared. As discussed earlier Gary also alludes to his desire to seek out new learning opportunities whether they are academic or otherwise and he argues this is one of the reasons he wanted to participate in the interviews. In the quotation Gary defines why he enjoys new experiences, he argues that through learning new things he is able to discuss and test this new knowledge with others. This he feels is important as it allows him to feel interesting and that others are interested in what he has to say, collaboration for Gary could therefore be cyclical as he provokes their interest and he is interested in them and so the process is mutually supportive and fulfilling. Discussion is however not the only way in which Gary learns from others for he finds that observing others performing a task generally benefits his learning,

“The best way for me to go about learning something is to get somebody to show me how to do it, in front of me. Erm, in a practical term that is. Erm, going back to the pipe cleaning as an example. But because I've seen her do it, then I can – it almost, like a process, I can log it in the process of my mind and then I'll go through it and I'll do it exactly the same as she's done it.”(p2,pg17,1)

Through visualising the process Gary is able to understand what is required and finds the retention and accessibility to this information easier. As indicated in the example this however is easier to achieve when the topic is more practically based which is supportive of Gary's earlier claim that he prefers a more practical approach to learning.

Learning is an opportunity to demonstrate superiority

This is however not the only way in which Gary collaborates as he describes examples of when he demonstrates his learning to others,

“Do you understand what I’ve showed you? Yeah – brilliant. It’s a good one, you can do it again yourself next time. That, I get a lot of satisfaction out of that. I think again it’s the ability of being perhaps better than somebody else.”(p1,pg17,1)

From teaching others Gary feels a great sense of achievement as he feels he has taught others something new which they can utilise elsewhere, an achievement he takes credit for. The benefits that Gary feels when he has taught others may help explain Gary’s future interest in teaching as a career. Gary indicates that this is not the only reason he enjoys collaboration for this act, via demonstrations, provides Gary with an opportunity to prove his superiority to both himself and the individuals involved. The reason why Gary enjoys teaching others is directly alluded to in the concluding sentence, as he feels that this allows him to feel superior to his peers as he is able to demonstrate his broader knowledge base to others. It could therefore be argued that on some level Gary feels that he is in some form of competition for he feels the need to be better than others.

The theme of competition is re-iterated throughout the interviews as Gary finds that this form of collaboration aids his learning. By measuring himself against others Gary feels able to gauge his learning success,

“Then, when you get really good top, you think, you know, the excitement of it is just fantastic but I think yeah, probably, for me, it’s the excitement of being better than those other people. Those people have always been better than I have, if you see what I mean. Erm, it’s not a particularly nice thing. I don’t think that, when you find something that does interest you and you do like, then it gives you a massive amount of motivation, a massive amount of motivation”(p2,pg12,1)

Gary is able to compete with his peers by comparing grades and should he believe he has been more successful he feels elated and satisfied. This feeling does not arise exclusively from the achievement of a good grade itself, rather it is because others have not achieved the same standard as himself so again he can feel superior to others. This need to compete could be related to Gary’s previous temporal insecurities while learning at school as he implies that in the past he has been an unsuccessful learner in comparison to others and so he feels the need to compensate today.

The sense of achievement is felt to be an incentive to continue learning as he wants to gain the same feelings of elation when he feels he is winning. However he later explains that he is happy and more motivated when he feels average in comparison to other students as he feels better than some but still has something to aspire to. He finds that making this intersubjective

comparison via grades is easy as he is permanently on display in a hierarchy of merit in relation to learning.

Learning is a shared, supportive experience

The knowledge that his peers are suffering the same trials and tribulations offers support to Gary as he engages in the learning process as he finds they can be mutually supportive of one another,

“whereas if I went out and did it on my own then I’d be completely solely reliant on myself; doing all the research myself and finding the books myself whereas if I do a similar one to other people then it’s oh I found this really good book in such and such, you know, there’s some more there go and find one yourself.”(p6,pg27,3)

Through collaboration Gary feels no longer isolated in the learning process, instead of pure self-dependence Gary is able to consort with his peers and use this as a guide for information. Gary indicates that collaboration may help motivate him to seek out new information as he feels encouraged and supported by his peers. Gary finds that if he does not have a supportive network of peers he feels very uncomfortable in the learning environment,

“Say I was sitting in a tutorial and I don’t know anyone in the tutorial, sitting on my own and I feel on edge, then I won’t work as much as I would if I’m sitting with 2 of my mates. And I vaguely know the girl sitting on the back row then there’s a possibility I might have to work. I’ll learn more then because I’m more at ease, more relaxed, more ability, more able to learn, I suppose.”(p7,pg30,2)

This apparent discomfort when learning in an environment where fellow learners are strangers to Gary seriously impacts on his learning. His unease is obvious as he feels tense and so is unable to relax, a feature which he claims is necessary to his learning. He describes his feelings of unease as if on a continuum as the more familiar he is with the others the more relaxed he is and the more he feels he will be able to learn.

Learning is a conversation

The issue of who Gary wishes to collaborate with was also raised as Gary has specific ideas about who he should share his learning with. Generally Gary argues that through learning he is enabled to discuss issues with a broader range of people than he otherwise would have,

“Different people have different interests and different fields of knowledge and learning and the wider you can make your field of knowledge and learning, the more people you can communicate with, the wider the level you can communicate on.”(p2,pg31,2)

Thus through learning Gary feels as though he has enough knowledge to hold an ‘educated’ discussion with a wider span of people an accomplishment that Gary feels he would not be able to achieve without education. It could be argued therefore that learning provides Gary with the confidence to collaborate (an issue that is explored further in the next section).

Although Gary argues that he wishes to share his learning with a broader range of people he does have certain preference as to the ‘type’ of person he enjoys collaborating with. A definite preference Gary holds is working with older people, he relates this to his desire to collaborate with people who have a deep interest in or have experience in particular subject areas,

“Because, you know, their, it’s obviously something that’s quite close to their heart and they’re passionate about it because they’re doing it and I learn a tremendous amount from that, a tremendous amount from that discussion.”(p1,pg7,1)

If as Gary argues he values the experiences and interests of others he finds that this is obtainable in older people who have had greater opportunity to experience life. If Gary perceives that others are excited and passionate about what they are discussing he feels uplifted and inspired to learn enthusiastically, particularly if he feels that the person has a qualified opinion from their own lived experiences. Thus there is a great impact on Gary’s learning depending upon his perception of the person who he is collaborating with the more he believes the person is an interested expert the more enthused he is to learn from their narratives.

Due to the nature and the structure of the course Gary feels that the opportunities for collaboration are limited and so he does not collaborate with other students as much as he would like,

“And 3 hours a week isn’t a great deal of time to integrate and get in with a group of people. So that’s really why and also I’m not the most erm (pause) sort of outgoing person – not outgoing but the most sort of, erm, kind of like —what’s the word? Conversationalist really.”(p6,pg29,2)

The fact that there are only a few hours each week where students have to meet limits the times available to Gary to share his learning and this problem is exacerbated because of Gary’s self-confessed shyness which makes it difficult for him to take the first steps to collaboration. This

combination of factors make collaboration (at least initially) very difficult for Gary and as he relies upon a feeling of belonging to ensure his comfort and success when learning this lack of collaboration can have serious negative implications.

Collaboration limits control over learning

The discussion so far has focussed upon the positive aspects of collaboration but Gary points to certain examples where collaboration is not useful. Gary identifies group work as inappropriate as although he enjoys collaborating with others this does not extend to assessed coursework,

“No, erm, I don’t like working in groups because erm I don’t like having to rely on other people to, to do things. To a certain degree to – often you get let down so you think well, you get let down here.”(p5,pg32,3)

Gary feels that group work does not provide the benefits discussed previously instead it removes his control over the learning situation. He argues that when working with others he often feels that this lack of control results in lower standards than if he worked individually, this he feels is very important if the work is for assessment purposes. Thus Gary does have boundaries as to when and where collaboration is beneficial and useful to his learning.

Collaboration does not just occur with peers as Gary expresses the importance of collaboration with the lecturer. Gary feels that without the lecturer he would be unable to learn as he is dependant upon them disseminating information that is relevant to the syllabus, thus the lecturer is fundamental to Gary’s learning success. However Gary claims that some lecturers are more effective in enabling him to learn than others,

Learning as a way to share enthusiasm

“For some reason, er enthusiasm rubs off, if you like and that, that is definitely a contributing factor as to why I might learn that subject a little bit better than I might learn another subject. Erm, you know, I might, I might decide that I like erm systems analysis and design. And the lecturer – I like him, you know. He’s interesting, he intrigues me to the subject, he draws me to actually open the book and read it”(p4,pg24,1)

The interest a lecturer has in what they teach is directly reflected by Gary, the more enthusiasm and interest shown, the greater is Gary’s interest in the subject. He indicates that the lecturer can motivate him to learn by increasing his interest and enthusiasm for the subject which in turn encourages him to participate in learning tasks. He later argues that at times a lecturer has given

him the motivation to continue with his studies thus defining the impact of the lecturer on his learning.

His willingness to learn is also affected by Gary's personal opinion of the lecturer, that is, whether he personally likes the lecturer and believes that they are interesting people. This idea of needing to like the lecturer implies the belief that he needs to develop some sort of relationship and understanding of the tutor, without which he finds engagement in the learning process difficult. This view is given greater credibility when Gary describes the importance of humour,

"The, then they're interested in them as a person because they've got your attention, made you laugh. (mm) so if they've got your attention, you become more interested in them and more focussed on them and what they're telling you – there's a possibility they're gonna make you laugh again, if you listen to what they're saying."(p5.pg31,2)

Again he refers to a personal element believing that the personality of the lecturer is reflected in their humour and on this basis he can make a judgement of his like/dislike of the lecturers personality. He finds that humour when presented encourages him to be more alert and pay greater attention to the tutor as he enjoys this form of interaction. By being alert and listening Gary ensures that he can gain further understanding of the lecturer and enjoys the actual process of learning.

Similar to Gary's preference for learning with experienced peers he also expects the lecturer to be an expert in their subject area, if he believes that they are not familiar with what they teach he finds his motivation dwindles as does his interest in the subject,

"Somebody else, who I feel isn't quite as on top of their subject or isn't quite so confident with the subject, might be more ooh, trundle through, trundle through, or that sort of thing"(p3.pg24,1)

Parental Affirmation

Gary is influenced by his family when learning, as he finds his parents of particular support in his academic endeavours. As he comes from a highly academic family Gary is able to accept and value their views however this also causes Gary some unease in his own learning aims,

"I've only got a very small family erm as I say father's a PhD, mother's a degree, both auntie and uncle, masters I think. Both cousins very intelligent – sponsored by the RAF, in jet pilots.

Both done Aeronautical Engineering or something. You know, you start feeling a little bit insecure, you start thinking well God you know I'm – what's happening here? Why can't I do it if all they can do it? You know, a brother done a masters at Cambridge, in Engineering. Sister studying Psychology at York. And you say that and you feel, God, you know, what is happening here? Why can't I do this?"(p4,pg10,1)

For Gary learning exposes him to a potentially negative comparison with his family therefore Gary's approach to learning is quite fearful as he does not want to be seen as the only 'failure' in the family. As much of his immediate family is educated to at least a degree standard Gary feels obliged to also obtain a degree qualification so that he can feel on a par with his family. Unlike the rest of his family Gary believes he finds learning very difficult and this leads him to question himself as to why he can not obtain the same qualifications and expertise so that he can be the same as the rest of his family. He argues that if he does not acquire at least a degree he will feel like a 'lesser person' and feel somewhat excluded from his family as they have 'proved' themselves and he needs this degree in order to prove to his family that he is capable.

Thus Gary's learning is strongly influenced by his family background, for while his family are able to offer academic support at the same time they also unknowingly create uncertainties and create extra pressures for Gary. Although he believes he will not achieve all of what his family members have he must reach a certain acceptable level both for himself and his family.

Learning equals affirmation

The emphasis on satisfying other peoples expectations of him in order to gain a sense of acceptance and recognition is representative of his attitude towards learning and life generally as he hopes that through learning others will admire him personally,

"if I do this qualification, that qualification, maybe I'll be able to do what he's doing and maybe I'll be like him and somebody will admire me."(p3,pg22,1)

For Gary the ultimate affirmation experience occurs when someone aspires to be like him as they respect him and his achievements. This is not however the only form of affirmation as he feels that grades are a source of validation, thus substantiating the importance of grades in his learning. He feels that this need for affirmation may have originated from his past experiences at school where he felt he did not receive the respect he deserved,

"But I didn't get a great deal of respect from the teachers and I think I probably always have been brought up to, to deserve respect but also to respect others. I feel that I am a respectful

person and I feel that I deserve that in return. And when I don't get it, I get very upset about it" (p3,pg10,2)

Without mutual respect Gary feels he is in an inequitable situation and needs to feel that others, notably those in a position of authority demonstrate respect for him. Gary argues that the mutuality of such an arrangement is crucial if the relationship is to be successful as he feels that if he does not respect lecturers or they do not respect him his learning is hindered.

Self-esteem is an intersubjective state

During the course of interviews the theme of self was raised in many different forms, one of which was self-esteem. Gary feels that in the past he has had a generally low level of self-esteem, notably during his school days,

"So if your self-esteem is low and your motivation to learn is low, and you're with a bunch of people that aren't particularly interested in learning either, then you're on a downwards spiral and it's hard to get out of that. The majority of it is my own fault because if I had more of an ability, a better concentration to sit down and study and study and study, there would obviously, you get up to the higher set stake, and you get in, and you mix with people and do better things and you feel a lot happier with yourself because you're in a situation you feel you should be. I never thought I should have been in any of the bottom sets. Maybe, arrogantly but I didn't. I know I'm intelligent erm, cos I've had psychological tests for my dyslexia. So I know I'm a real, quite a reasonably intelligent person." (p1,pg9,1)

Gary defines his self-esteem during this time as low as was his motivation, his explanations for these feelings are related to both himself and the world in which he lives. In part he apportions some of the blame to the other pupils in his group. However he later explains that he felt his teachers affected his self-esteem as the teachers did not believe he was intelligent and would directly indicate this message to Gary. Thus again the importance of collaboration is raised as Gary directly relates the impact of others on his self-esteem, in this case negatively.

Gary accepts some responsibility for his feelings of self-esteem believing that he needed to put in more effort both into the time he spent studying and developing relationships with people he considers to be more intelligent. Despite all the signs that point to low self-esteem the concluding sentences indicates contrary evidence for Gary clearly identifies his view that he feels he is intelligent and able. He believes this to be true as an external IQ test demonstrated he was of certainly average ability. The acceptance of the test results highlights Gary's ability to accept expert testimony.

Learning provides confidence

Gary also presented his ideas on how his confidence is affected by the learning process. Gary felt that his confidence level would be increased through learning as he would feel more enabled to discuss ideas with his contemporaries,

“if I feel I’ve learnt something I would feel confident. If you, if you maybe mentioned something or brought a conversation up, I’d feel confident enough to have a conversation with you about it.”(p3,pg15,1)

Again the theme of collaboration is raised as Gary identifies discussion with others as a method of checking his confidence, the greater his ability to have an in-depth discussion the more confident he feels. Without the learning experience Gary is dubious as to whether he would feel confident in an intense discussion particularly with people he considers experts and so would not take part in such conversations. However he argues that dyslexia prevents him from being as confident as he wished as it limits his reading ability,

“I know that I’m not confident enough in that particular subject because I haven’t researched it in enough detail because I don’t want to read or I struggle to read and what I do read I find very hard going so, you know, that’s where that comes from.”(p3,pg20,3)

There are some obstacles that Gary has to overcome if he is to become confident, should these challenges be successfully dealt with he feels even more confident than had he not faced them at all.

Failure is an underlying fear

Gary is however not always satisfied with his learning performance as in the past he has had experience with failure and this has made him very much aware of the feelings of failure,

“I’m frightened to death of failing basically – so that’s pretty accurate. Just cos I won’t let myself down.”(p6,pg13,3)

The quotation explicitly defines Gary’s fear of failure as he finds this experience deeply upsetting and one that undermines his self-esteem and belief in himself. Due to the negative impacts on Gary when he feels he has failed Gary attempts when learning to avoid situations where failure may occur,

"I mean if I'm frightened by them and I don't like the question, then I'll put it off and I'll try and forget about it, till the last minute, when I know I've really got to do it or else I'm gonna fail."(p4,pg21,2)

Although procrastination does not solve Gary's fear of failure it does allow him to avoid confronting his fear until he can not delay the task any further. However Gary indicates that this approach is rather counter productive as by leaving work until the last moment it may actually increase his chances of failure. The idea of fear of failure does not have completely negative connotations for Gary though as he finds at times limited failure can motivate him to put in the extra effort that is required,

"But at the end of the day, also, I think, that sometimes you need to have a bit of a kick in the trousers, to make you realise what is expected of you, in order to get good grades."(p1,pg15,3)

Learning enables self-awareness and development

In relation to the concept of self, Gary discussed his increased awareness of himself as he undergoes the learning process. As he learns he finds he is more aware of his own learning approach. In the example below Gary describes how a role play exercise alerted him to his own learning preferences,

"Erm, well it was very good for me because it was a slow, it's been a slow reality sinking in, that practically based things are better for me, personally."(p6,pg2,1)

Gary claims that this self-awareness process was a slow one as he realised that he preferred practical learning as this benefited his own personal approach. He claims that the interviews held with myself have also been a tool that has aided his learning awareness as it has encouraged Gary to think about how and why he learns in particular ways, something he previously was unaware of. This awareness of his approach to learning has not just affected his knowledge of his learning process but also how he now sees himself,

"They have affected me as a person because they've made me think more about the way in which I learn and more about why I learn in particular ways, like this thing of thinking that I have to understand to be able to remember."(p7,pg39,3)

The learning process allows Gary the opportunity to not only explore his own self-awareness which may in turn affect his own views on self-hood, but it may also encourage Gary to take a

different outward perspective of the world in which he lives. Gary argues that he is now much more analytical in his perception of the world as he now refuses to simply accept the opinions of others, insisting that he needs to come to his own conclusions. He feels that this development has occurred due to his learning experiences. Similar to Gary's claim that learning enables self-awareness is his belief that it also allows for self-development which is represented when he communicates with others,

"if I didn't learn I'd become stagnant and I wouldn't have anything to talk about and I wouldn't be, I wouldn't have much of a personality because I wouldn't have learnt anything, I'd just be the same as what I was before"(p8,pg38,3)

For Gary learning is not simply an academic experience for it has a fundamental effect on himself, for he perceives learning as a mechanism for change. Through the learning process Gary feels that he becomes a more interesting person as he argues that he is able to develop his personality through the new knowledge and perspectives that learning encourages. This need to develop is crucial to Gary as he feels that he must change so that he does not stay the same for without change Gary feels that he would 'stagnate'. It could be argued that the need to develop is closely related to Gary's wish that he will always continue to learn, as this will enable such development,

"I think I'll probably always continue to learn and I'll always think, find a reason that's important to learn in life, because it motivates me, intrigues me gives me something to talk about"(p5,pg31,2)

It is clear that Gary perceives learning and self-development is very much entwined, as he requires the continuation of his learning to facilitate the development of himself. Thus the impact of learning goes far beyond the parameters of an academic education for this process changes who Gary is and how he perceives himself.

Conclusion

During the course of the interviews with Gary an in-depth insight into the meaning and its wider impact on Gary's life was explored. Much of Gary's present day attitudes and feelings about learning have been informed by his past experiences of education. These experiences have on the whole been rather negative for Gary as he felt his teachers did not respect him. This has inspired Gary to now feel the need to compete and seek out affirmation in order to compensate for these past experiences.

This need for affirmation was not the only indication of the importance of others in his learning, for Gary strongly emphasised his need to discuss and share his learning with both his peers and perceived experts. He found that this process not only broadened his knowledge but also provided him with a certain amount of reassurance. However he found that at times comparing himself to others, particularly his family members, did not provide reassurance but raised questions as to his own ability.

This question was not however the only question raised in regard to Gary's self-belief as learning also affects how Gary perceived himself and the world around him. Although learning provides an opportunity for self-development and growth it could also negatively affect Gary's self-esteem if he felt that learning had not occurred and he believed he had failed. Exploration and analysis was also made of Gary's actual process of learning, that is, how he learns. The overall approach indicated learning occurred in a linear step-by-step process, this was facilitated through more oral forms of learning.

Gary differentiated between male and female learners and claimed that there were certain key distinctions between the two, notably the singular achievement and dedication to study. Gary felt that like him many men were focussed on achieving a high degree classification so that they would have a successful career. However he believes that men are not as committed to their studies as perhaps women are and therefore are not as successful in their studies.

In conclusion it can be seen that Gary is a constantly evolving learner who seeks out new learning opportunities not just for the sake of learning but also for the development of himself. The factors that affect the meaning of learning for Gary are as much internal as external as he finds the learning process a constant exchange of information between himself and the world around him.

5.4 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Gary

Application of Knowledge and an Active approach

NOEMA-APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE	NOESIS-ACTIVE APPROACH
<p>The object of learning for Gary is to apply his knowledge in a 'real' world situation and it is this ambition which motivates him to learn. Thus Gary needs to believe that what he is learning will have relevance for him in his future life, anticipating that in a certain time and place his learning will enable him to contribute and participate in the world around him.</p> <p>If Gary considers learning not to be applicable to the outside world either presently or in the future he rejects the information as irrelevant and no longer is motivated to learn.</p>	<p>The need to apply knowledge to the 'real' world encourages Gary to use an active approach in his learning. He believes that the only way he can test whether his learning is relevant is by actually applying knowledge in a practical situation.</p> <p>Through such active participation Gary is not only able to achieve his aim of utilising knowledge but is also able to boost his self-esteem. As a dyslexic student he finds less active approaches more difficult and argues that he can be much more successful when placed in a 'real' or 'live' situation. Such success supports his self-esteem</p>

Learning is a managed/focussed activity and a step-by-step/structured approach

NOEMA-LEARNING IS A MANAGED/FOCUSSED ACTIVITY	NOESIS-STEP-BY-STEP/STRUCTURED APPROACH
<p>Gary believes that learning should be a managed and focussed activity. The ability to focus on a singular aim is considered to enable success. Gary feels that when focussed on individual achievements success is facilitated at each stage and this in turn provides him with the necessary motivation to continue with his learning.</p> <p>It is on this assumption that Gary proposes that men are more ambitious, arguing that unlike women they are able to focus on an individual goal rather than multiple aims. Through the achievement of small goals Gary gains the confidence to move on to the next stage in his learning. The belief that he is prepared for a future time and place supports Gary's self-esteem.</p>	<p>Gary approaches this aim by using a step-by-step structured learning process. By breaking down his overall learning aims Gary is able to tackle each stage, one at a time, as if climbing a metaphorical ladder. He is able to recognise each of these steps as an achievement. These steps continue until he reaches the top of this ladder, i.e. achieving his degree.</p> <p>Through this approach Gary is not only able to manage his learning but also his life, segmenting his self-development into various timely stages.</p> <p>Through this segmented approach Gary feels his time is effectively managed, however it may also prevent Gary from understanding how all these segments interrelate to form the whole picture.</p>

Learning as an opportunity to be successful and an enthusiastic approach

NOEMA-SUCCESS	NOESIS-ENTHUSIASM
<p>The purpose of learning for Gary is to demonstrate that he can be successful. He finds that the process of learning provides numerous opportunities to prove his success from the achievement of high grades to more indirect rewards such as status and money. Measurement of this success is gauged through Gary's own belief in his abilities and when he feels that his own standards have been met or surpassed he is motivated to learn and his self-esteem is supported. Such is Gary's eagerness to prove himself as a success he seeks out new learning opportunities, which he feels, will allow him to achieve this, i.e. a practical learning situation and will if possible avoid situations in which failure is probable. If this success is achieved in a way that is visible to all Gary feels all the more proud of his achievements and will endeavour to ensure that his success is shared with others.</p>	<p>The idea of learning as a provider of success encourages Gary to approach learning enthusiastically and in the most part Gary is an enthusiastic learner, providing of course he can see the relevance of the subject matter. This enthusiasm may be rewarded through a bodily response of a "buzz" like sensation, when success is felt. Gary finds that when this enthusiasm is shared with others who hold similar interests, his desire to learn is increased, as he feeds from their interest. This form of collaboration provides Gary with the necessary motivation to explore his interests further. This approach is however not only used in the context of a learning environment for Gary feels that he needs to be enthusiastic in all areas of his life if he is to be successful.</p>

NOEMA-AFFIRMATION/SUPERIORITY	NOESIS- COLLABORATIVE/INCLUSIVE
<p>Gary views learning as a way of gaining affirmation from others. His desire to receive affirmation is a strong driving force, which motivates him to learn.</p> <p>He feels that this need is derived from past experiences of non-validation which have left him feeling insecure.</p> <p>Those who may provide such affirmation vary but include, family, friends, peers and lecturers. All of these groups can allow Gary to feel validated but perhaps the most influential of these is his family as they have all achieved a high level of academic success. Until Gary has reached 'degree standard' he will not feel affirmed and may not hold a valued place in his family.</p> <p>One form of affirmation clearly identified by Gary is self-superiority. He consistently demonstrates his desire to prove to others that he is 'better' than they are. This intersubjective approach is achieved either through teaching others or gaining higher grades, both of which highlight his superiority.</p>	<p>Clearly Gary can not achieve such affirmation or feel superior without the involvement of others in his learning process. Thus Gary finds an inclusive or collaborative approach is required if he is to achieve these aims. The relationship between inclusion and affirmation could be described as cyclical for the further Gary is affirmed through collaboration the greater his want to share his learning with others.</p> <p>Through collaboration Gary is able to draw comparisons of his own ability with others and where possible highlight his superiority by achieving higher grades or through teaching others new skills/knowledge. This action gives Gary the self-esteem and affirmation required to continue with his learning.</p>

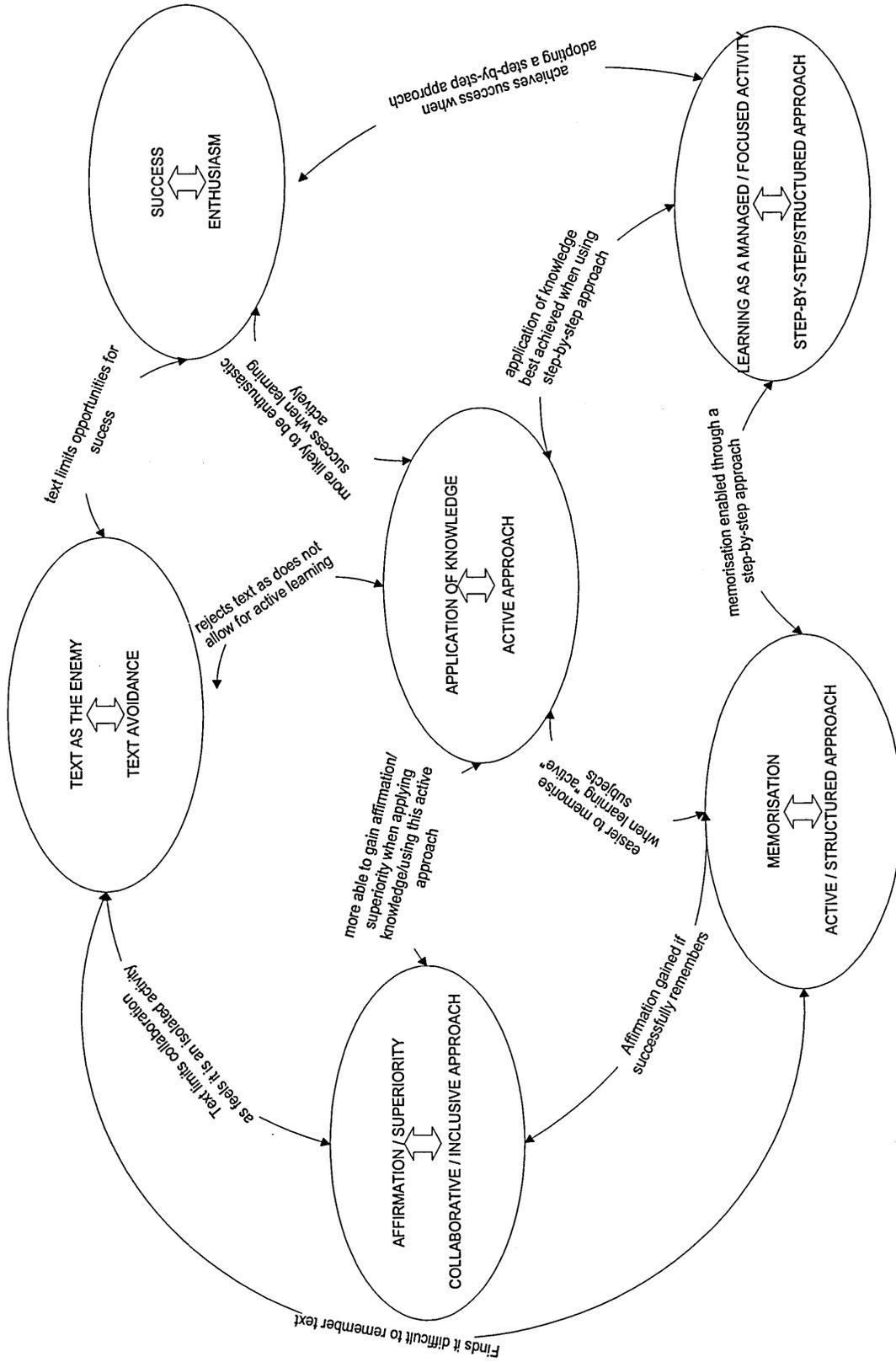
Text as an enemy and an avoidance strategy

NOEMA-TEXT AS AN ENEMY	NOESIS-TEXT AVOIDANCE
<p>Learning for Gary relates very much to the necessary inclusion of text. He views the academic process as being closely tied with reading and this causes Gary some difficulties.</p> <p>As a dyslexic learner he finds his relationship with text an acrimonious one and sees text as the enemy, something completely unrelated and distant from himself.</p> <p>Gary finds that this poor relationship results in low self-esteem as he finds it difficult to perform (academically) as well as he would like, feeling that a fruitful relationship is required if he is to be successful academically.</p> <p>Gary feels that the issue of time is a further reason for this view of text as he feels that reading is too time consuming. This results in great resentment of text as this slows his learning process.</p>	<p>In dealing with this negative view of text Gary adopts an avoidance strategy, which helps him deal with this fictitious enemy. By limiting the amount of reading required and seeking out other methods of information gathering, e.g. through conversations, he is able to limit contact with text.</p> <p>Gary describes procrastination as a further technique employed to avoid text, finding distractions in the form of others or places as a useful excuse for not engaging with text (the enemy).</p>

Learning is memorisation and an active/structured approach

NOEMA-MEMORISATION	NOESIS-ACTIVE/STRUCTURED APPROACH
<p>For Gary the key meaning of learning is memorisation. He feels that this is his primary aim when learning, arguing that those who are able to remember are successful and as noted earlier being successful is a likely motivator and self-esteem booster for Gary.</p> <p>Although Gary aims to understand this is a small part of his learning process. He argues that memorisation is his ultimate aim as this represents learning.</p>	<p>Through Gary's learning experiences he is able to define the learning process/methods which support this aim.</p> <p>He believes that if he learns actively and uses a step-by-step approach memorisation is facilitated. By separating information into component parts he finds it easier to commit the information to memory. Likewise he finds he can remember practical learning events more than textual academic exercises.</p> <p>These approaches have been noted previously in other noema-noesis relationships in Gary's lifeworld and thus support Gary's overall approach to learning.</p>

Gary's Noema Noesis Relationships



5.5 The Lifeworld of Jim

Part-time learning limits collaboration

Within the context of our interviews one of the main issues that arises is collaboration. Jim's attitude towards collaboration is very mixed and diverse however he is clear that the impact of others on his learning is great. There are several indications that Jim enjoys and benefits from collaboration although he finds that the part time mode of study limits his opportunity to share his learning with others,

"Well I think it'd be nice, wouldn't it? Get to know people, and then its all part of the sort of, you know, human experience. Sort of talk to people, understand people, and then – we don't have a tea break. We don't go down and sit and have a cup of coffee and talk about things very much. I mean there's one girl that I've spoken more to her while I've been waiting for exams than perhaps I've spoken to her the whole of the time, simply because we just never – our paths never cross. We see each other, we smile, hello, how are you? All the rest of it, but we've spoken more about – while we're standing outside exam rooms than we've – than the whole of the year. You know, that's pretty poor really, isn't it?"(p3,pg19,3)

The opportunity to collaborate Jim argues is curtailed due the nature of the part time course. As the course is designed with no breaks between seminars Jim feels unable to collaborate in the apparent time constraints. He feels that as he has not had this opportunity he has missed befriending others on his course a fact that he appears to regret, one possible reason for this maybe his interest in understanding people and unless he gets to know them he can not achieve this. He is unsure though whether that this collaboration would aid his actual learning but he is clear that it may make the experience of being at University a more enjoyable and beneficial one. The benefits of collaboration may also be found through Jim's work experience,

"that was very useful because what I used to be able to do was, if I did get into a problem, I could pick the phone up and talk to the guy and get a one to one with him and get the benefit of his experience on those sorts of things. That was quite a good way of learning"(p2,pg2,1)

Collaboration should be interactive?

The experience in this example is a positive one as Jim felt that through collaboration with his colleague he was able to gain the benefit of his knowledge and so the experience became a learning one. Jim also indicates that through collaboration reassurance may be provided particularly when a common difficulty can be shared,

"if somebody else says I found that hard. You say I found that hard, well everybody found that hard, and you're all happy again, aren't you? Because at least you realise that everybody else found it difficult as well"(p2,pg20,3)

Jim claims that interacting with others through the medium of dialogue ideas can be shared and elaborated upon. The discussions may not however be with his student peers (due to time pressures) rather many of his discussions are with family members. When Jim is confident enough to discuss issues with others he interprets this as meaning he has understood the issue. Thus collaboration is one method that Jim uses to measure his understanding.

For Jim the meaning of interaction is not necessarily focussed on a two-way discussion it may include a more passive form of interaction where he can listen and then question if necessary. The act of interaction supports his learning not just in terms of enabling clarification but importantly it makes the process of learning interesting to Jim. However Jim argues any interaction notably in a classroom environment should be controlled and enclosed in specific periods of interaction, otherwise he finds that the lecturer can be distracted and all the material may not be covered,

"one assumes they have to give you an hours input and then half an hour to talk about it. Erm, if you're trying to interact while they're lecturing, all that does is delay and they don't get it done,"(p4,5,pg35,3)

Jim indicates two issues here firstly the need for interaction and secondly the need to cover the syllabus. What is interesting about this quotation is that for Jim the completion of the syllabus requirements is more important than his desire to interact.

One of the key figures that Jim feels it is important to collaborate with is the lecturer. He expects that he will be given the opportunity to interact with lecturers in a way that brings the subjects to life,

"Tutorials, I think, can be very good or they can be absolutely dreadful. And I think that's often down to how the lecturers lead the discussion. Erm, you know if they sort of sit on the corner, say watching you talk about today, that's not terribly useful I don't think."(p1,pg28,3)

Jim perceives the role of the lecturer when interacting, as one of a facilitator allowing discussions between all the students attending. It is important that as well as performing this task the lecturers should take control of the interaction and ensure that the syllabus is covered. However being able to interact with lectures is not always possible as Jim describes how accessibility of the lecturers can be difficult especially when studying on a part time basis.

The lecturer is the expert practitioner

When discussing the lecturer Jim referred to their role being one of an expert practitioner. If Jim is to respect and listen to the opinion of the lecturer he needs to feel that the information they are providing is from an expert stance,

“This person knows what they’re doing – obviously they’ve done a PhD or whatever. They understand what it’s all about, you’ll take it in. Erm, because it’s, very soon it’s quite evident they’d know their subject – they may not know much about anything else but they know their particular subject, so you respect them for that.” (p4,pg29,1)

The quotation indicates that Jim consciously seeks out confirmation that the lecturer is indeed an expert, at least in their subject areas. Once established as an expert Jim feels enabled to respect the lecturer for their knowledge although he appears dubious that they are experts in any other matter. One of the ways Jim argues that is essential for lecturers to present themselves as experts is involvement in industry which keeps them up to date with current practices.

Learning facilitates the adoption of a paternal role

When collaborating Jim seems to adopt the role of a teacher or mentor, this apparent role is demonstrated in numerous examples. One of the key indicators that he assumes this type of role is his willingness to offer an opinion of how other students should organise their work,

“I think that they are (other students) – they don’t plan their work very well. we’re talking, always talking about doing the assignments and whether they are talking a load of tosh or not, I don’t know, but it seems to me that they always leave it till the absolute last minute before they do anything. they don’t, they don’t seem to be able to plan it. Don’t seem to think ahead.” (p5,pg10,1)

The adoption of what may be interpreted as a paternal role may be related to the fact the Jim is older and more experienced than his student counterparts and so he feels comfortable being somewhat critical of their learning methods. This paternal role is also demonstrated in his concern for others when in a classroom environment,

“I’m always concerned, I think should I or should I not be saying anything? Or, should I talk and try and get the thing moving or do I just sit there like the rest of them? You know, but, er,

cos I mean I could sit and talk for hours – what are they gonna get out of it, I'm not sure. Would they get anything out by just listening or would they...I don't know.”(p4,pg19,1)

Thus Jim demonstrates his concern that the other students benefit from the tutorial experience. He sees himself as a key player in this situation and with this position comes the responsibility that while he should encourage debate he should not take over and bore his students. Jim feels he has an understanding of the other students and can empathise with their difficulties,

“I would imagine it must be quite difficult for those undergraduates straight out of school. It really must be very hard. I don't know how they do it.”(p3,pg23,2)

It is on this particular point that Jim feels most strongly as he believes that without industrial experience the students must find a business course very difficult to understand. This is at times a confusing point for Jim is studying on a part time basis and the students in his learning world are also part time as they are in full time employment. Thus his fellow students have industrial experience. Jim dismisses this idea as he feels that generally their experience is limited. A further indication of a paternal role adopted by Jim is his description of his actions when involved in a group assignment,

“I've taken the bull by the horns and nicely but – in the best possible way – it actually got them to do things. Why don't you perhaps go and do that? And why don't you perhaps go and do that? And we'll do this and we'll bring it together. So I've ended up sort of like trying to direct the troops a bit.”(p5,pg24,2)

Here Jim takes control and acts as a leader delegating specific tasks to individual members he alludes to his approach to this as being subtle as rather than ordering actions he makes suggestions and cajoles his peers into acceptance. Jim argues that in all situations there needs to be a leader in fact he goes on to suggest that the working world cannot operate in a democracy. This is perhaps one of the reasons Jim can have a negative opinion of collaboration is due to the fact that there may not be an appointed leader and this is a concept he finds difficult to accept. The final and perhaps most significant example of Jim adopting a teacher type role is the fact that he actually states that he would like to become a teacher in the future and this is one of the reasons that he is studying for a degree.

Much of the discussion so far has focused on how Jim collaborates and the benefits of sharing learning, however Jim also has some firm views on the problems with collaboration. One of the key issues that Jim has with collaboration is his difficulty in trusting others,

“one checks as much as you possibly can – because you have to get it right and then it becomes second nature, doesn’t it, to double check what’s going on.”(p6,pg34,3)

The process of double checking the work completed by others provides Jim with reassurance, as he is unconvinced that they will have met the assessment criteria satisfactorily. This may in part be related to Jim’s opinion that he considers himself to be a stronger candidate than his student counterparts,

“ I mean if the other 3 people were equally as strong, and therefore prepared to go out and do it. Great – wouldn’t it?”(p2,pg26,2)

He indicates that he is perhaps more proactive and capable than the other members in his group and if he finds himself in a situation in which he is reliant on others he believes that he will be let down. This problem he argues is prevalent when collaboration occurs for group assessment and it is on this issue that Jim is adamant in his views. He considers himself the stronger candidate but only one group grade is given, according to Jim this is unfair, as implicitly his grade has been lowered due to the perceived weaker performance of the other group members. As a result of his negative experience Jim has on occasion refused to work within a group setting for assessment purposes.

A further criticism Jim finds in the group assessment system is related to the part time mode of study, where the logistics of actually meeting up with other students is difficult and communicating to each other can be a long and arduous process. Thus the pressures of assessment are increased when working in a group and this he feels hinders the learning experience. Jim describes how he also faces difficulties when trying to correct apparent mistakes made by others,

“It’s difficult because that’s why I say it could be better, because you look at something and say that is, like that is plainly wrong or it’s written in such a way that it either doesn’t make sense. So you don’t want to offend the other person so what do you do? Do you tweak it? Say well let’s just change this and use the right word there perhaps or a better word there and perhaps we should rearrange it a bit, but you don’t actually want to say, well this is total rubbish, let’s

throw it away and let's start again. So it would've been better if you'd done it yourself, in the first place."(p1,pg35,3)

Again Jim demonstrates his belief that he is able to produce a superior piece of work in comparison with the other students and this could be the source of his frustration. Jim explains that he is wary of upsetting others and so will not ask for a rewrite, this again demonstrates his paternal role as he avoids upsetting others but will still advise students. Ultimately Jim argues that when working in a group for assessment he does not learn. In fact Jim goes on to say that he believes that learning is an individual experience,

"because learning surely is something which you do on your own, by yourself, either you do or you don't learn. It's either going into your head or it's not. Or the understanding is going into your head or it's not, you know."(p7,8,pg31,3)

The quotation above does seem to highlight the perhaps central view held by Jim that although working with others can offer insights the actual process of learning as perceived by Jim occurs on an individual and internal basis.

How men and women learn

Jim was able to identify several other differences between male and female learners. One such difference is practical learning, Jim argues that women may be more impractical than men,

"the male students seemed to be able to like roll their sleeves up and get into that. That's something they could understand, get hold of. Erm, er, the girls seemed to stand back and think hey, what's all this all about?"(p5,pg10,2)

Thus for Jim the emphasis of practical learning is based on the ability to be hands on in the learning process rather than to reflect and evaluate the subject first. Jim does not believe that the difference is genetic rather it is social conditioning. Despite these apparent criticisms Jim states that as a manager he prefers female employees as he finds they are more accepting of instructions and are conscientious with a hard working attitude. This is in contrast to his experience of employees who are male,

"when I've had boys or men working for me, they want to change everything all the time. ALL the time changing it and never do it properly in the first place, so (right) rather than actually sort of sit down and think, let's try and do what we know works now and then we'll adjust it, then we'll change it, oh no."(p3,pg22,3)

It is evident that the male employees Jim describes challenge both Jim and the working practices in place. Jim does not appreciate these challenges to his authority particularly when he feels those challenging are not experienced enough to pass judgement. This attitude he finds is less common in women as they are more accepting and perhaps even subservient than their male counterparts. This could be related also to Jim's association with a paternal role as he wants his employees to accept his advice at least initially.

A further distinction drawn by Jim is the apparent lack of confidence of women learners,

"some (women) will say I'm sure, you know, it's terribly, terribly hard, don't understand a word about it and yet, when it comes round to the exams, they'll still get a reasonable mark. So one assumes either they do understand it and are being terribly coy or they really genuinely didn't understand it and have done an awful lot of cramming in between times."(p3,pg18,3)

According to Jim some women deny their knowledge and plead ignorance to understanding. This leads Jim to reach two conclusions either they have since done a lot of studying or more likely they will not admit they do understand. Jim implies the latter situation is more likely, a feature he does not think is present in men. Although Jim was able to discuss gender differences in both university and work environments he did stress his experience was impeded by the fact there are few men on the course. So to draw comparisons could be difficult as women heavily dominate the learning environment.

The return to learning

Through the course of our interviews the issue of motivation was raised and discussed. An initial motivator for Jim originated in the workplace where all employees were encouraged to participate in a re-learning scheme,

"The company we're working for at the moment is doing a re-learning scheme, which I think is quite good. And yes, I suppose, when that actually came along, is what inspired me. I thought, yes, why don't I have a bash at this? Why don't I – I've been thinking about it all these years, why don't I go and do it and they're prepared to pay all the fees, so fine, I'll go."(p4,6,pg27,1)

Although Jim indicates that he had been considering a return to education it was not until his organisation 'inspired' him that he acted upon his desire. Jim is also motivated by the fact that his organisation was prepared to pay the fees and this together with organisational encouragement that led him to return to Higher Education. Thus the risks of returning to education were now limited particularly as the organisation was to pay the fees.

Learning provides career protection

Despite the organisational involvement Jim does not feel that the degree will aid his career in his present company, however he feels that it may be useful in other future careers,

“I mean if I went for a job and said that I’m a, you know, 52 year old dinosaur, can I have a job please? He might say no. If you say I’m a 50 year old dinosaur, I’ve just taken a degree, a BA, oh well I’m quite interested yes sir, perhaps it would.”(p9,pg33,3)

The attainment of a degree while it may not specifically aid his current involvement it may act as a safety net should he be made redundant. With a degree he would be more employable and this is particularly important for someone of his age who he describes as a ‘dinosaur’ and so a degree would aid his employment chances. This search for career security may also be linked with the type of organisation for whom he works as it often undergoes major restructuring. A further reason can be linked to the earlier section where Jim describes his possible ambition of becoming a teacher and the degree makes this possibility more real.

“Only a personal, just a personal desire, yes, I don’t think it’s going to make all that much difference to me now, in my working life and career. I don’t think, not now. Only, if as I said, I might have to do some teaching perhaps, in my job.”(p3,pg8,2)

Jim does not believe that his income will increase through the completion of the degree, certainly not in his current employment. Thus the motives for attending university are not monetary rather they are perhaps more based on survival which again makes the dinosaur analogy more appropriate. However it would be incorrect to say that Jim is not motivated to some extent by money he does not find this to be his main priority.

Exciting learning

Jim is also motivated by actual enjoyment of the learning process. Jim explains that he finds learning generally enjoyable and if done well possibly exciting,

“Learning, erm, yes, I think so, definitely. Otherwise I mean – everything should be exciting shouldn’t it?”(p1,pg21,1)

Therefore the rewards for learning are internal rather than external and so are essentially intrinsic, this motivational approach is emphasised as Jim goes on to explain how learning provides a source of self-satisfaction as hinted at in the earlier quotes. This theme of self-satisfaction and development is explored in more depth in the self-esteem section

Jim also demonstrates an interest in the subjects he is studying, highlighting how he selected this particular business course as it was of interest to him. However his intrinsic motives do have limits,

“If I’d have said ooh that was interesting, I want to do that, I’d have done something like anthropology. I find that far more interesting than business”(p6,pg8,2)

The extent to which he would select a course would not be based entirely on interest as he needs to be able to see some temporal relevance also. This implies that although he values intrinsic rewards this will not influence enough to change subject focus if he does not feel it will be of benefit in the future. The next section leads on from motivation generally to focussing on Jim’s attitude towards achievement.

Learning facilitates achievement through competition

Jim’s description of achievement encompassed several meanings and is alluded to in numerous examples in both a higher education context and in a wider setting. Jim aptly demonstrates his high achievement focus when he describes how his present position (in employment) requires him to achieve,

“One’s career – at my age – becomes more about, I suppose, how you, how you get to actually do things. Putting a big tender together so, because if you win that or if you do it properly, then that has more significance than whether you have a degree or not.”(p6,pg22,1)

The quotation exemplifies how Jim may view achievement, for here he refers to how when successful i.e. having a tender accepted, he feels that he has won. Thus for Jim his sense of achievement is affirmed through competing and indeed beating other ‘contenders’. However caution does need to be exercised as this terminology may just be indicative of the jargon used in his employment role. However there are indications that the need to compete and win is not exclusive to the workplace as he describes how he aspires to beat his son’s computer games,

“I also think it satisfies, because one gets pleasure out of actually being able to do it, yes. I’d hate to be beaten by it.”(p8,pg16)

Further issues are also raised by Jim notably he notes how his age has impacted on his attitude to achievement now he believes that achievements should be perhaps more practically related (to his employment) with measurable outcomes. What is particularly pertinent about his earlier statement is that this type of achievement he feels has more value in his life than the academic achievement of a degree. This may be linked to his belief that he will be more successful in the workplace if he “wins” his tenders than if he is successful in his degree.

Learning facilitates achievement through high grades

In a more educational setting Jim also refers to being motivated by achievement. Achievement in this environment has a slightly different meaning for Jim, here many of his references to achievement were linked to the obtainment of high assessment grades.

“What you see is a much better mark and I suppose that’s the sort of standard, which I’m aspiring to. If I don’t get a – you know, if it’s not an A or a B, I’ll get most dischuffed with the whole thing.”(p8,9,pg15,2)

Here Jim sets himself levels of achievement that he expects himself to reach and it is through these self-imposed levels of achievement that Jim is able to measure his success. If Jim does not feel he has achieved his motivation can be seriously affected,

“That one (an assignment he was unhappy with), actually, could be total de-motivation. If you had 2 or 3 of those, you’d think well there’s no point in now, in concerning myself with any more decent grades, because you’re not gonna get a first, or an honours degree with that.”(p6,pg18,2)

The resulting implications of a poor assessment on Jim’s motivation are immense. He feels that although he has only received one assignment that he is unhappy with if he should gain further relatively low grades he would no longer be motivated to achieve high grade as his ultimate ambition of achieving a “good” degree he feels would be unobtainable.

Learning facilitates achievement; through the demonstration of ability

However it would be to simplistic to present Jim’s sense of achievement as being satisfied through high grades. The obtainment of high grades does not just offer the opportunity to gain a high degree level. Jim also believes it demonstrates his ability,

“If you can achieve or if you can, you know, sort of – what’s the word? You know if you can meet the grade – here – one assumes you know, it must be measured. One assumes it’s not, not terribly easy. It must be at degree level and if you can do it then fine. We have achieved”(p4,pg15,3)

Thus achievement is also gained through the established recognition of the degree qualification. Jim argues if he obtains a high grade it demonstrates implicitly to himself and the world around

that he is able to accomplish degree standard work. According to Jim this is an achievement in itself as it is assumed that work of degree standard should be difficult.

Learning is a formulated game

Jim's focus on high achievement is reaffirmed when he describes how he approaches assessment. For Jim there is a certain logical formula that can be used when approaching assessment and this formula will in his experience always ensure success,

"Erm, yes I do think that they're as much of a game, for this place, definitely. There is, I think, in most of these, of these, there is a set format that if you fill it out, if you, if you fulfil the format, then you are guaranteed to at least pass the darn thing. Again going straight back to the children, when they do their laboratory reports, on work they do, they start off with doing all the various things like going right back to what I said, you start off with introduction, method, apparatus, results, conclusion. You do that and you're gonna get – you're gonna pass, you know. It's just making – filling the gaps in. And er, it works, because that's what's wanted. And it's exactly the same on these assignments, you know. You want an introduction and they want to understand what you have to try and achieve and providing you do all those things and you have a conclusion, and you have a decent referencing and bibliography, it's very difficult to get less than a sort of – well I passed and it's absolute nonsense."(P6,1,pg23,24,2)

Thus for Jim the accomplishment of assessment is not so much of an intellectual task rather it is more akin to completing a form and by completing each of the sections then it is almost impossible to fail and generally should ensure a high grade. He compares his experience at University with his children's experience of coursework at school and finds very little difference between the two. Although Jim accepts a formula based approach to assessment he appears dubious as to whether this type of assessment adds any value to his learning to such an extent that he dismisses the process as 'absolute nonsense'.

Although generally successful Jim has found an occasion when his formula did not prove as fruitful as he may have wished, he describes below how he felt when he received the assignment he was unhappy with

"the guy (the lecturer) didn't like it, He felt it, he wanted more of a, some sort of combined document. So that was, that was unsatisfactory. I suppose unsatisfactory because the ground rules weren't properly set."(p2,pg13,2)

“well I suppose, that’s – isn’t that the difference between these 2 (assignments)? I find it easy providing we’re working to a standard formula, which I know and understand. Where it goes all wrong is when you have to do something, which is quite different, isn’t it? I mean that’s why the 2, that’s why they are different”(p2,pg24)

The perceived change in the ground rules by Jim causes him to feel a sense of unease as he feels unable to rely on the formula that has supported him so well in the past. He appears to blame the lecturer for the failure of his formula as he implies that it is unfair of the lecturer to change the ground rules without informing him of this change. It could also be inferred that Jim sees this change as somewhat subjective, perhaps without any logical reasoning on the part of the lecturer. Jim identifies his dissatisfaction as being solely based on his belief that the formula had been changed, thus indicating Jim’s high dependence on a formulaic based approach to assessment.

Successful learners seek out clues and follow the syllabus

One of the methods Jim utilises to achieve a high grade is through clue seeking. By being alert to the assessment demands of the lecturer Jim finds that he is more successful and so will seek out the lecturer,

“it’s just a matter of er, she (lecturer) offered, she would review what we had (assignment). So, er, I got her to review the plan and er, she didn’t think it was quite the right way to do it, so a quick change and I got on with it. “I think that’s a – it’s, it makes sense to do that, so they know what they’re after. Sometimes, at times, there again, they’re just not available.” (p1,2,pg17,2)

Jim feels that contacting the lecturer and discussing the assessment supports his aim to be a high achiever for through this discussion he is able to understand the exact requirements set by the lecturer. Jim appears to readily accept the suggestions made by the lecturer and does not seem to question their comments thus supporting the view that to be successful in assessment you should meet the lecturers’ demands. The issue of achievement may also be represented through the emphasis on the syllabus. Jim seems to place a high value on the lecturer completing the syllabus requirements,

“And if they do get distracted if one particular point’s laboured or something like that, it doesn’t matter, you didn’t reach the end of the – the end of that particular lecture because you’ve actually got it there, written in front of you, you know.”(p2,pg31,1)

Here Jim is referring to lecturers becoming distracted during lectures or tutorials and so not the entire syllabus set that day may be covered. Jim finds this especially frustrating if he is unable

to access the information that should have been examined in the syllabus. This emphasis may be related to Jim's desire to achieve and clue seeking behaviour. By ensuring that the entire syllabus is completed he feels he will be more likely to meet the lecturers assessment requirements. The focus on the syllabus also aids his opportunity to gain high assessment grades as Jim believes that this will also help him avoid irrelevant material,

"Er, cos nothing's worse than telling me to go and read up on this subject. Who? Where? What? You know, you need to know, understand what they're doing, otherwise you can waste an awful lot of time, you know. Life's short, you can't keep on wasting time reading a load of nonsense, can you? If it's not totally relevant. I've got painting and decorating to do and gardening and ..."(p4,pg38,3)

Temporal and spatial changes affect motivations for learning

Although much of the evidence points to Jim being motivated through achievement there are also indications that there are limitations as to the extent of this motivation. He believes that his attitude towards achievement has altered over his temporal and spatial experiences as he now feels he is less ambitious than he once was,

"I was always trying to strive to get into a better position, to try and earn more and do better. Erm, I'm not comfortable off by any means but I'm certainly not going to spend my life, I don't think, pressing the time, move on all the time. It either happens or it doesn't, you know."(p8,pg24,1)

The priorities in Jim's life have now changed; he feels established in his career and is able to support his family comfortably. Jim now would not object to progression in his career however he feels it is more important that he is happy and healthy and believes that being overly ambitious would put this contentment in jeopardy. Further Jim explains that he prefers certain learning methods because they limit the amount of work and time he would spend on studying, he describes this as his lazy approach to learning,

"I suppose being lazy I prefer to have structure. Yes. I do these things. Freedom, where there's freedom you tend not to do it. I don't know whether that's just me but I think if you're given the option to do 2 things, do you or don't, you tend not to."(p7,pg24,3)

This statement could be interpreted in two ways, either in support of the earlier supposition that Jim's perceived laziness prevents him from being strongly motivated or it could also be related back to Jim's ambition to achieve high grades. Although Jim describes his behaviour as lazy (relying on structure) he may find this strategy successful in terms of gaining high grades.

Learning and its relationship to self-esteem

The earlier section that discussed Jim's attitude towards achievement is reflected in his comments in regard to self-esteem, as Jim found that by achieving a level of understanding his esteem is supported,

"I suppose you get – certainly a degree of satisfaction, when you finally understand something. I suppose you always get that, always get that point of fear when you don't understand something. You think gosh do I, am I really this silly that I can't understand this? And, but then I suppose that is resolved and you do understand it and you're happy – you know, the satisfaction factor comes in again."(p4,pg32,1)

The fears that Jim describes here generally dissipate as he finds he is able to understand much of his work and thus the sense of satisfaction prevails. However this has not always been the case as Jim has had experience of failure in his past, that is failing his English 'O' level and this experience may help explain why Jim holds these fears. When exploring this experience Jim describes how he was unable to relate to this failure almost as if it belonged to another, unable to recognise the work as his own,

"And, to me, the person that had done the exam, er, it wasn't even myself, you know, I just did not recognise any of these responses that come back"(p5,pg6,2)

A possible reason for this separation between Jim and failure may be because he finds it very difficult to accept, particularly when he is unclear as to why he failed. This could be linked to his need for a formula and in this case he was unable to find one leaving Jim lost and this confusion made it difficult for him to recognise himself. Jim feels that if he does not obtain understanding his self-esteem may be at risk, notably in the workplace where he argues without appropriate understanding he may look incompetent in front of work colleagues and clients. A high value is placed on the achievement of understanding and this desire to understand can be very closely linked to self-esteem. If Jim believes that he has not understood he internalises this "failure" assuming that he is perhaps not intelligent enough to understand,

"I mean, one assumes, one accepts why, because you're not good enough"(p1,p[g7,2)

However should Jim feel that understanding has occurred he feels validated as an individual,

“When you say, yes, week 1 of the course and you stand there and you think God, what is analysis about? One like’s to think that by about week 10 you can actually understand what’s going on and start to feel more of a person. I could argue with you now about what’s quantitative and what’s qualitative.”(p3,pg18,1)

Learning is the key for the development of self-hood

The impact of learning on Jim’s self-esteem is great in the short period of 10 weeks Jim describes his view of himself as being more complete as if learning has enabled him to fill in gaps that were missing within himself. This enables Jim to become more assertive in his views as he feels much more able to vocalise his opinions as he feels he has grown as an individual. The concept of self-esteem for Jim could therefore be related to self-development for as his self-esteem increases so to do his feelings of personal growth and completeness. The idea of self-development was constantly reiterated throughout all of our interviews. Jim is very much aware of how learning alters and develops him and this development is something that he positively strives for, indeed that could be identified as the primary motive for Jim’s return to Higher Education,

“I think really to be, if you were totally, totally honest it’s something just for me. Yes, it’s a personal thing, personally I wanted to learn. So I think that’s – yes, apart from that it must be a way forward, mustn’t it? It’s a way of unlocking the door.”(p7,8,pg32,3)

When questioned Jim explained that for him unlocking the door was not a metaphor for his career rather it alluded to his desire for self-development. He finds that as he learns and develops as an individual his desire to learn and grow increases in an ever-increasing cycle and this is true of his experience in Higher Education. One such experience was the participation in these interviews. These interviews, he feels, have allowed him to review his self-development from perhaps a more objective perspective, whether this was one of the reasons he volunteered for the study remains open to debate.

Self-development is a continual process

One possible explanation of Jim’s emphasis on self-development may be explored through his attitude towards continual learning. Jim argues that as Business is so closely linked to the real world, that is continually changing, it is essential that one be on a continual learning curve,

“But I’m sure if I had done it, it would be out of date with what I’ve done today (yeah) so it’s a very much an ongoing thing. Somehow you have to – when you’ve finished here it can’t

possibly be the end, especially for the younger people. A person's got to keep going."(p6,pg26,pg26)

Jim feels that the information learnt in the past will have limited value today and as it is this learning process that enables him to develop personally, this too will suffer. To avoid such a situation Jim believes that all learners should continually learn and one of the methods used should be through educational establishments, thus much of Jim's self-development arises through external sources. The paternal role that is described earlier is also demonstrated in Jim's quotation, for here too he makes recommendations for the younger students giving them the benefit of his personal and learning experiences.

Understanding makes a confident learner

Like self-esteem, confidence was also raised as an important issue for Jim as this too could be affected by the learning process. If Jim believes that he has gained a satisfactory level of understanding (for himself) he feels more confident especially when applying this new knowledge,

"You feel more confident, that particular piece of knowledge I suppose and one lodges it away and hopefully you can use it at the first opportunity I suppose."(p1,pg19,1)

Jim uses these feelings of confidence as indicators that he has actually understood a particular topic, if this intangible feeling is not present it becomes difficult for Jim to accept he has understood at a satisfactory level,

"I suppose it's going back to confidence isn't it? I suppose when you feel confident about it, You know, when you can sit down and talk to somebody about it or he can demand some questions."(p5,pg17,1)

Jim states that when he feels confident in his understanding he is able to discuss this knowledge with others, either other students or a work colleague. This collaboration can take different forms and may simply be an informal chat with another student or may perhaps be more aggressive in the form of demanding questions. An increase in confidence may allow Jim to become more challenging and encourage him to question accepted views. Much of the commentary provided by Jim points to him being generally a confident person. The more Jim learns in a structured course the greater his confidence grows, probably because he has been generally successful while studying for his degree,

"I think the first time I came what 2 ½ years ago now wasn't it? Erm, that first, the first semester – I just did the one thing which was er accounts. I think the whole – during that period, one felt a little bit – what's the word? Er, unconfident, I suppose because it was the first time, I hadn't done it for years and years and years and years. Erm, but by the end of the course and having passed exams and things, yes, one sort of felt an awful lot better about it because, well one had achieved."(p1,pg15,3)

Clearly there have been times when Jim has been unconfident in particular subjects but he has found that this time (unlike his English 'O'level) he has been able to overcome these problems and pass this potentially problematic module. However it is through these once worrying experiences that Jim's confidence is enhanced, as he now feels more confident and validated. The concept of self-esteem for Jim is one that is very much entwined with self-development, confidence and achievement with all of these themes contributing to the state of Jim's self-esteem, which at that time appeared to be at a high level.

Authority and control is enabled through learning

The concept of authority has been alluded to in the exploration of collaboration where Jim expressed how he viewed younger students in comparison to himself, however the concept of authority was also exposed in other areas of Jim's learning lifeworld. One possible example of how Jim aspires to reach an authoritative position is through controlling situations with others,

"It certainly (knowledge) makes you feel more in control. I'm quite happy to sit down whereas before you felt you might have been on – at a disadvantage, now I think, you feel that you have more of an advantage because you actually understand what you've got to do."(p3,pg3,1)

Through knowledge and understanding Jim finds he is able to place himself in a position of power and control and so is able to dictate the direction of, as in this case, a meeting. He describes how this knowledge almost puts him in a more powerful position than others seeing himself being placed with an advantage thus placing others at a disadvantage. Through this control Jim is able to place himself in a position of authority, this has striking similarities to his role as a paternal figure for here Jim can see himself as perhaps more suited to an authority role. This could be perhaps linked with Jim's view that he is a superior learner to his student counterparts as this may support his belief that he should adopt an authority role,

"But I'm sure it could've been an awful lot better. I think it would have been better if – mine would've been better if I'd done it on my own. I'm sure it would have been. Yeah, I don't know – it's terribly arrogant, isn't it, to think that someone – they would've done, perhaps they did it better because we did it as a group."(p5,pg30,3)

Jim believes that the other students would not have been as successful if he had not been a member of the group, he goes so far to state that he believes they had a negative impact on his assessment grade. This could be inferred by Jim as supporting his view that he is more knowledgeable and should therefore be able to adopt a more authoritative role. The constant adoption of such a role may have made it difficult for Jim to perform the role of a student and accept the lecturer as the authority figure. Indeed Jim states that he had to be “prepared” to listen and be taught by lecturers and this acceptance has been a recent development. As raised in the collaboration section this adjustment has been particularly hard when the lecturers are younger and have perhaps less industrial experience than himself.

Respect for authority

The quotation below indicates that Jim feels able to challenge in a very assertive manner that ensures the other party is in no doubt as to his views. It may be Jim’s perceived position of authority that allows him to feel comfortable when challenging the opinions of others and if he feels his opinion is not considered he feels his authority is not being respected and this is especially disconcerting for Jim when he believes he has a valuable contribution to make.

“Where I thought he was making the wrong decisions I would say so. I say I think you should always be very blunt and I was quite prepared to say if I didn’t, if I didn’t like, didn’t agree with it.”(p4,pg8,1)

The need to challenge is directly represented when discussing assessment as here too Jim demands that Lecturers are able to justify their grade, if he is to accept their judgement,

“You need it because you want to understand how they’ve justified their mark and thing.”(p4,pg18,2)

Despite Jim’s apparent strong beliefs he does at times question whether holding such strong opinions prevents him from learning new perspectives,

“Whereas I would perhaps have preconceived ideas already on those things – erm and one has then been, I am persuaded away from those, if you like, or reinforcing those ideas. So, it’s difficult to know whether you’ve actually learnt something”(p2,pg35,1)

Here Jim concedes the possibility that his experience may not always provide benefits for his learning as it can prevent him either knowing if he has learnt or prevent him from seeing new

perspectives. The fact that Jim is able to reflect on the accuracy of views does seem to indicate that although he adopts an authority role he is able to accept and consider the opinions of others.

The learning process should be relaxing and receptive

The actual process of learning provides Jim with the opportunity to relax from his stressful full time job,

“In the workplace it’s actually coming out of you, isn’t it? So you’re actually sort of putting it out and doing things, whereas college it’s a change, it is a change, it’s coming back in at you, yes. I suppose it’s refreshing, I suppose.” (p1,pg15,1)

The learning process that Jim defines is clearly in reference to learning in Higher Education and it is when he is learning in this particular circumstance that Jim feels replenished and revitalised by the learning process. Jim compares his experience of learning to that of working and whereas he finds employment a drain on his internal resources the actual process of learning could be said to have been replenished. Thus if he feels that he is not learning and not gaining any input and his work is demanding output he may feel unbalanced, therefore it could be argued if Jim is to feel centred in his work and within himself it is essential that he continues to learn.

Learning requires practice

When tackling learning Jim employs several techniques that he believes support his learning and these methods form a key part in his learning process. Repeating learning tasks is one method used by Jim, this he argues is the only way he is able to learn particularly complicated issues,

“When we were doing that accounts thing repetition was all important so I used to try and get as many old papers as you can find and work through them. Start at one end and go through about 4 papers and then really the next thing to do was to throw all the answers away and start again. Until you could do it like that and understand how and where together, that was the way to, that was, for me, that was the way to learn it.”(p4,pg12,1)

Through practising on old exam papers Jim found that he was able to discover the complexities of relationships between ideas and only when he was able to answer the questions set was he able to reassure himself that he had reached a level of understanding. Jim appears to have accepted that he may not be able to learn an issue first time round and adapts his learning

process to accommodate repetition of tasks. Jim describes this approach as one with which he is familiar and comfortable, in fact he states that it has not altered since his school days.

A further method employed by Jim when learning is note taking, although perhaps a primitive concept Jim had firm ideas on how and why appropriate note taking is important. He expects lecturers to provide basic pre-prepared notes that he will annotate during lectures,

“the idea of having either pre-prepared notes or copies of the slides is, to me, at the moment, seems the best way of doing it. Do you remember that writing out notes is, you know, I think is er, is not a good use of time.”(p2,pg5,2)

Although earlier Jim affirmed his reliance on repetition of tasks he feels that this is not applicable to note taking. One possible reasoning for these differences may be that through practice he is able to in some way apply his learning and as will be discussed later this is important in his learning whereas note taking is considered by Jim to be more of a passive activity. Jim only accepts that note taking is useful to his learning as this allows him to be focussed on the lecturer and he can then choose when to make additions. Jim also argues that prepared notes offer a further advantage in that they prevent poor time management as he views note-taking from scratch as a waste of energy and time. This concern demonstrates Jim’s aim for his learning process to be efficient and effective.

The aim of learning is to understand

The main aim of Jim’s learning process is not memorisation but understanding,

“They are much better (open book exams), I think, the open book ones, even if they mark them harder because you’re not looking at facts. It’s how you interpret the facts. You know to go into an exam thinking to yourself, Phillips 1994, Symonds in 1955, I mean that’s totally irrelevant to be honest. Yet you get marks for it because you’ve remembered it, haven’t you? Whereas if you had an open book or you had er, well we had one it was a crib sheet, so you could write all those facts down. So when you went in you could still quote them if you felt necessary, but it was how you interpreted those facts and your reasoning around using those facts”(p3,pg11,3)

He rejects the notion of closed book exams on the basis that they serve as a memory test and he feels very strongly that ‘real’ learning is when understanding is achieved. For Jim understanding is demonstrated through interpretation of facts and the level of analysis used to discuss and debate theories. The repetition of names and dates do not present understanding all they demonstrate is an ability to remember. He feels that if the exam relies on fact retention this

limits the opportunity to apply theories as much of the examination time is spent on efforts to remember.

The ambition of understanding however can be a slow and arduous process as Jim states that for understanding to occur he needs to analyse all the information before understanding can take place,

"I think I'm a slow reader because engineering background and because you tend to analyse everything, from an engineering point of view. Erm, when you look at every formula on the page, one has to understand exactly where it comes from and all that sort of thing, so I tend to be very slow. Erm, I watch my wife read and she can finish a novel off in, you know, in an evening. And I think she speed-reads it basically. I can't live with that I have to understand it."(p3,plg13,1)

When engaging in the learning process Jim adopts an analytical stance, examining all information in order to gain understanding. He needs to be able to place the information in some form of context so that the full meaning can be grasped. He is definite in his view that although this process may be slow, he feels unable to alter his reading approach, as the ambition to understand is unshakeable. This understanding can only be achieved if Jim feels he has analysed the material fully thus analysis is one of his key methods in obtaining understanding.

Learning requires a holistic approach

Jim's general approach to the learning process is holistic in nature, by viewing the subject as a whole Jim feels he is enabled to understand,

"Yes, rather than the details get an overall picture first. Try and understand what's going on. Because then the detail falls into place. Whereas if you try and learn from detail up then you don't really understand the context of learning then." (p6,pg23,3)

The learning process is therefore developing a broad framework for the topic and then filling in the framework with the details that eventually complete the picture. The order of this process is crucial should Jim have to deal with the detail first he finds it very difficult to gain understanding. Jim offers an explanation as to why this is so important in that without understanding the broader perspective he can not place the information in any sort of context and as discussed later he benefits most when he is able to see how the information relates to the real world.

One may view this holistic approach somewhat at odds with the earlier description of his reading style where each piece of information is thoroughly analysed. However it is important to point out that Jim adopts this analytical approach to the detail once he has established the broad picture thus it is when completing the detail that Jim examines each small piece of information. The theme of relating ideas is supportive of the idea of Jim using a more holistic approach to learning as here too Jim claims that it is important that he can find links between concepts,

“That’s why I think it’s a jigsaw puzzle rather than big blobs. If it was all big blobs linking together then they wouldn’t – they’d only touch the corners, don’t they? (mm) But if it’s done properly they should all link together and then you get cross-linking, you can understand how all the bits and pieces fit together.”(p2,pg37,3)

The metaphorical jigsaw elucidates Jim’s perspective on how ideas should link together forming a clear and detailed picture of the area as a whole. Jim has a clear and firm idea that the learning jigsaw should not leave any missing area no matter how small and so the parallel is drawn with ‘blobs’. He goes on to explain that this is not limited ideas within subject areas but also includes links across the course and through this linkage understanding can occur. Jim expects that these links should be emphasised by the lecturers as a body of people within the School,

“Now if they were smart, one assumes you’d actually make that link, wouldn’t you? (mm) You know. So they haven’t even understood what, where all the links are coming together. They ought to be obvious but perhaps it might not be obvious, or you could actually bend the content to make the link.”(p7,pg37,3)

Jim in part abdicates his responsibility to search and find the links between topics expecting the lecturer to seek out how their topic relates to that of others and this then can be explained to the students. Although Jim hopes that this occurs he does not believe that this actually happens but despite this believed lack of communication Jim feels that there is a coherency within the course. The quotation however highlights again Jim’s tendency to adopt a mentorial role as here too he offers advice to lecturers informing them of how to perform their duties.

Examinations test memory

The role of assessment is seen as completely separate to the learning process for Jim as he views assessment as having very little to do with learning or understanding. The meaning of assessment in this context (as defined by Jim) strictly refers to examinations. He believes that examinations are in no way there to benefit his learning or indeed designed as a learning tool

rather he feels that exams are present merely to serve the university as a mechanism for student evaluation,

“I don’t think assessments are terribly good as a learning – I don’t think they’re a learning – I think calling them assessments is right. I think it more is, if you like, what shall I say? – a way of the college understanding your understanding of the product, of the course. So I think assessment is the right – personally, I think is the right name for it. But I don’t see it as a great learning.”(p1,pg12,1)

Jim applies an industrialised view on assessment almost referring to the process as on a par with a production line referring to knowledge as a product. The term of assessment is debated by Jim, he concludes that the term is accurate as all it offers is the opportunity to assess the student. The difference between the assessment and learning process becomes clearer when Jim describes how examinations simply extract information,

“exams are basically a way of trying to extract what you, what you’ve learnt. So you might learn in one particular way, but an exam is there to extract some, some information from you, isn’t it?”(p6,pg10,3)

Jim considers examinations as an activity that merely extracts information. As Jim considers real learning as providing inputs it is unsurprising that he rejects activities that do not replenish and revitalise. A further possible reason for Jim’s disapproval of examinations may be the element of risk. He argues that as exams contain somewhat of an unknown element that make it difficult to plan for thus he finds it more difficult to devise a foolproof formula and as discussed earlier formulas play a crucial role in his learning.

Coursework can support understanding

Jim distinguishes coursework from examination assessment, defining coursework as generally a learning experience,

“coursework I think is definitely a learning because you can – because it’s new, and new, and you have to understand how you do it. You have to have text books and all the rest of it so you – unless you, and if you, if you don’t take advantage of coursework, I think you are certainly not getting the benefit of the course – definitely.”(p2,pg12,1)

Unlike examinations he views coursework as presenting an opportunity to gain understanding and this differs from some examinations as he argues that they only test memorisation. As Jim’s ambition when learning is understanding it is ever likely that he will be supportive of methods

that he feels enable understanding. His affirmation of coursework is alluded to when he states that it is something that needs to be taken advantage of otherwise learning and more importantly understanding of the subject may not occur.

Cheating versus understanding

However Jim also claims that coursework may not always be an experience in which one learns as he feels that it is very easy to cheat in these circumstances,

“If you do it just as coursework you end up a little bit of, I suppose, cheating to yourself. You know, if you’re prepared to keep turning the pages, saying oh how I did it last time, you’re not actually understanding, you’re not getting it in”(p6,pg12,1)

Jim refers to cheating as in the personal sense rather than in terms of breaking university rules. Although it is not entirely clear how this cheating occurs it may be inferred that as he believes there is a formula for coursework that can be copied the experience may not result in understanding. Cheating appeared to be an underlying theme throughout the interviews for Jim felt that the decisions and actions that he took may be a way of cheating. Again his version of cheating did not refer to cheating as defined by university policy rather he felt that he cheated when he selected the business course,

“I suppose cheating really the fact that I thought I would have some good experience in a lot of it, so it would be easier to do”(p5,pg4,1)

As he made the choice of course on the basis that he felt it would be easy and an achievable goal he felt that this could be interpreted as cheating as it is not really testing him and so he is not getting the most from the learning experience. The concept of cheating was not something new to Jim as he refers to how, when at School he felt that if one revised this was cheating as learning should occur throughout the school year not at the last minute,

“ I used to think revising was cheating because the whole of the exercise was you learnt through the year and therefore the idea of the exams was to see what you’d learnt. Erm, and it – I had a great problem of sitting down, swatting. Well you should’ve learnt that – that’s what the test’s all about, to see what you’ve learnt, not what you can suddenly cram in, in the last couple of weeks. It took me a long time to get used to the idea that you had to do that.”(p8,pg10,3)

Jim felt that if he revised he would not demonstrate his understanding but he would be fooling the marker into thinking he understood by cramming at the last moment. This is why he felt that to revise was in a way cheating as the marker would not see what Jim truly understood.

Although Jim eventually accepted the need to revise this was a difficult transformation perhaps because he felt he would be more removed from his main ambition of understanding.

Learning should be relevant

Jim considered that learning should be relevant to himself and his employment and he selected a business course for this very reason. Jim declared that much of what he had learnt through the business course was of relevance to both his current position and future positions he may take,

“Oh definitely, yes, yes. I think this has been a very relevant course, mm. Hmm, definitely, yes. And again I suppose that’s really down to the, the course material isn’t it?”(p10,pg13,3)

Due to this perceived relevance Jim has found his learning to be transferable to the outside world both in terms of his employment and his ability to understand and analyse the outside world. However he does not believe that the achievement of this learning will result in career development with his present employer thus the relevance to his employment relates to Jim on a more personal level. Jim’s understanding of relevance however can be expressed on another level as he argues that subjects may be relevant even if they are just relevant to the degree,

“So if, so for instance er, what I was doing with Andrew last year, which was operations management that wasn’t terribly relevant but it was something which needed to be done, so we did it. So I suppose it’s part of the package, really. So it goes, it goes with the rest of it and it, it all does fit in” (p1, pg10, 2)

Although Jim felt this module was not relevant personally he was able to identify how it may be relevant in terms of achieving the degree and in relation to other topics. As Jim could identify these aspects he was able to justify the relevance of this particular module. However what is interesting about the operations management module that he described is that in theory this should be of direct relevance to Jim’s employment as certain elements may be directly transferable. One possible explanation for this may be that Jim has already understood these principles and so the information may not be relevant. It may also be worth noting that the module to which Jim refers is led by the interviewer’s husband (which was known to Jim), whether this had any significance is debatable.

Jim argues that learning should be relevant to himself so that he will have the opportunity to use the knowledge,

“you know, I suppose I should’ve, if I was going to be true to what I’d done before, I should have done engineering. But I haven’t done engineering for years now. I don’t see that point of (?) whereas I have done an awful lot of work on the commercial side of things – in business, as such. So it seems, even if it was going to be of some use, it would seem more sensible to do it in business. I think again, last time as I said to you earlier, I think it’s a shame if people learn things and then don’t use it.”(p5,pg8,2)

Jim ponders over his choice of course, presenting his internal debate of whether to remain with his traditional interests or whether to select a business course. He concluded that the most appropriate subject areas for him would be business as this holds more relevance and can be applied in his work. Thus the selection of the course was not based upon a personal fascination with the subject the overriding factor for Jim was that should he learn he would have some use for it. However Jim goes on to express that relevance is only of consequence when studying a subject in depth,

“But I would be, I suppose, frustrated if you took it too far, like taking a degree, which might be seen as taking it too far, and then not using it all. That, perhaps, would be a bit daft do you know what I mean? It wants to be worthwhile.”(p1,pg9,2)

The level and intensity of learning affects Jim’s perspective of relevance, a degree he feels would have to have some use as this requires a high level of involvement whereas less exacting learning he feels could be engaged even if it could not be applied. Jim places a value on his learning, expecting it to be worthwhile which for him may mean applicability. The importance of application of learning is highlighted through Jim’s admission that he will actually seek out opportunities to apply his learning instead of waiting for these situations to occur.

Learning should relate to the wider world

Through applying his learning Jim finds that he has a broader and more in-depth knowledge of the world around him,

“So when Mr Humphreys (Jim refers to a well known radio news presenter) starts talking about, you know, the councils and the courts and all the rest of it, I actually understand where they all fit in or what they all are. And I suppose one sort of thinks, yes, I understand that, therefore I learnt that.”(p4,pg35,1)

The act of being able to apply his knowledge to current news allows Jim to evaluate his understanding. The accomplishment of holding a perhaps broader and more informed

perspective of topical issues provides Jim with the evidence he need that he has in fact learnt and understood. Jim finds he is able to apply his learning to his employment also although much of this application is from a retrospective perspective as he is able to relate what he knows now to his actions in the past,

“Last year we did marketing communications and in my time I have done marketing – erm, and it was all done from the seat of the pants. You know, that seems a good idea let’s do that. Last year we did marketing and it was interesting to actually see erm, it thought about in a structured way. And you could see that some of the things that we did were right and some of the things we did were wrong and some things we did which were right for the wrong reasons.”(p2,pg4,1)

The application of learning may be retrospective and not as may be presumed purely based on future applications. Jim finds that through learning he is able to reflect on decisions made in the past and understand how effective these choices were, he feels he is now in a more informed position that allows him to judge the merit of these actions. Jim may find applying knowledge important to his learning as many of the learning events he describes have occurred when he is actually applying his learning in a ‘real’ situation. Jim argues that he often learns more effectively through experience,

“that was very much a learning experience because you were learning on your feet. You actually had a job to do, they had orders for locomotives and you had a timescale and you had to get designs done for structures and all that sort of thing. That was quite a good way of learning.”(p2,pg2,1)

The experience that Jim describes could have been quite stressful as he was expected to perform however Jim appears to thrive and enjoy a more live learning experience. This he feels ensures that he has to achieve a level of understanding as the situation forces the achievement of learning otherwise failure will occur. The sense of achievement that is gained may also be a further reason as to why Jim enjoys learning in such a way. Jim argues that learning through his working life has been similar to this experience and this may be why he finds learning in Higher Education a more relaxing experience.

Jim argues that all experiences are an opportunity to learn and so should be treated as such no matter what the experience may be,

"I think virtually in everything you do, you ought, one ought to learn – even if it's bad experiences. Even if you meet people you don't like, or don't get on with, you, I think, you are, you're learning there all the time."(p8,pg6,1)

Thus learning can occur absolutely anywhere and at any time and this ensures that Jim is constantly learning through all of his experiences whether that be at work, at university or even from his children as all offer a unique opportunity and insight from which Jim can and does learn.

Pressure has an impact on the learning process

As a part time student who is also employed in a full time position Jim feels that the pressure of learning can become intense so much so that his learning is hindered,

"It's always done at a haring rush rather than time to sit down and do it, carefully. You need a clear mind sometimes to actually understand what they actually want and what you're committing yourself to, I suppose"(p1,pg3,2)

The constant pressure of work and university demands may prevent Jim from reflecting on the learning process and without this time he is unable to gain understanding (in this context understanding of what his colleagues expect from him). The pressure that Jim feels prevent him from focussing his mind and as mentioned earlier Jim requires clarity in his learning process. However Jim argues that pressure may not necessarily be negative for it can provide an incentive,

"but I think, occasionally, a bit of pressure doesn't do you any harm and in fact I think it sometimes focuses the mind a bit...And I think, you know, if you do that and you achieve then I should imagine it probably gives you a bit of buzz, doesn't it? If you've actually done it. You know, you've had a sort of mountain, you've climbed it, you've done it – been there."(p1,5,pg29,3)

Here Jim identifies the importance of the level of pressure on his learning, too much prevents clarity of thought but a contained level actually focuses his mind and motivates him to participate in the learning process. The pressure that is felt makes the completion of learning a more satisfying event as Jim then feels that he has achieved and as noted earlier this drives Jim to perform. This positive emotional event is aptly compared with climbing a mountain as the result leaves Jim on a high. It is also appropriate in another sense as Jim finds that pressure should be applied in peaks and troughs allowing the opportunity to reflect on his achievements before moving on to the next goal.

Time management and the learning experience

One of the ways in which Jim tries to manage pressure is through good time management, a skill he has developed during his time in employment,

“And it always ends up that you spend the last 2 or 3 days working 24 hours to get it out of the door. How well you plan it, so if you don’t plan it you’ve got no chance. And I think that certainly is very good experience when it comes down to doing assignments. So many of them seem to think oh well, I’ve got 10 weeks, well I’ll do them the last 2 weeks you know – sorted out. And it is deadly, but that’s experience, I suppose”(p1,pg11,1)

By incorporating time management into his approach to learning pressure although not completely removed becomes reduced to a more manageable level. The theme of paternal behaviour is also confirmed as Jim wants to share this knowledge with other students so they too are not over burdened with pressure. However this is not Jim’s only motive for by encouraging others to manage their time more productively Jim argues he is able to reduce the pressure on himself, particularly when working as a team on whom he is reliant,

“it seems these days that I get in on a Monday morning and then wait for it to hit before you then have to try and sort out all the problems. Erm, normally what happens is instead of hitting you at 9 O’clock, and you have all day to sort it out, it hits you about half past 2, half past 3. Someone will say, can I have it by 10 tonight?”(p4,pg3,2)

Relaxation in the learning process

The avoidance of unnecessary pressure has become increasingly important to Jim as he now feels it is essential that he does not become pressured on the grounds of health,

“You know, when I go and have my annual check up, I’ve still got a very low blood pressure and all that sort of things. I’m sure that’s probably better for me than it is if I’d been totally stressed up erm, would I be any better? Would I be earning another 10,000 a year? I don’t suppose so.”(p5, pg24, 1)

Jim considers the possible consequences of stress on his physical self and concludes that his tactic of stress avoidance has been a factor in his continuing good health. Jim draws a distinction between good health and success indicating they are two competing concepts. One

strategy Jim employs to combat stress is through the incorporation of relaxation in his approach to learning which he feels not only benefits his health but also his learning,

“When lunchtime comes across, comes along, I just push everything out of the way and do my college work for half an hour. Erm, and that, that seems quite a good way of doing it, for me because it’s a stress reliever that I can forget about work for half an hour, so that’s as good as walking round the block or doing something else. But, also because it’s fresh I can seem to be, it seems to go in better.”(p4,pg13,1)

Again Jim refers to the learning process as one that provides him with the opportunity to relax from the pressures of employment and it is this relaxation that allows stress relief. Jim identifies how this learning activity actually boosts his embodied health.

The spatiality of learning

In the previous quotation the time and place of Jim’s learning is also raised as an issue. Here Jim finds the ability to learn in the middle of the working day a welcome relief from the stresses of his employment and by clearing his desk of any work related matter he finds that he is able to learn in his place of employment. This process while supportive of his learning also allows Jim to learn in a quiet and non-distracting environment something Jim finds very difficult to achieve at home,

“Well it’s just interruptions and noise, isn’t it and the other things you have to do. You know, I don’t know if you have a family but once you’ve sort of hit home, you have to – still do all the things you have to do at home, don’t you?”(p5,pg28,1)

Thus when learning Jim needs to feel that he will not have any pressing distractions that prevent him from focussing on his learning. Jim also found learning difficult when in an unfamiliar environment. In the quotation below Jim describes his feelings of learning in the Learning Resource centre,

“But I suppose that’s where the environment does make a difference. It actually, when you feel out of your big space, you know you’ve got to have your little bit of space, because it’s a different environment I suppose you sit down there and you’re not quite...”(p9,pg28,1)

In this place Jim feels uncomfortable and unfamiliar with his surroundings, finding it difficult to identify his own personal space in such a large environment. This lack of ownership of his place in the resource centre prevents full learning for Jim and so he prefers to learn in his own

environment where he feels in control of his own space. However learning in a Higher Education context does provide intangible qualities for Jim, notably a feeling of youthfulness,

“ I suppose erm, I suppose embarrassing things and I suppose it just makes you feel younger really, considering you know... I don't know, having young people about I suppose.”(p3,5,pg13,3)

Although Jim clearly is wary of expressing such views he is able to identify that feeling younger is enabled through socialisation with younger students who are in abundance in Higher Education. This does pose some contradictions with earlier claims that Jim acts in a paternal role with these younger students as here it is almost as if he wants to gain something from them perhaps even be like them. One possible explanation may be that Jim at present feels unable to see himself as a fully fledged student and so adopts this parental role until he feels young enough to identify with them. This may explain why Jim has some regrets that he did not study for a degree when he was younger,

“I wanted a degree, it's something which I wish I had had studied for earlier, when I was younger, and er, there is now time in my life to do it, I suppose. It wasn't, there was when I began.”(p8,pg5,2)

It is only this time in Jim's life he has felt enabled to undertake a degree mainly due to other time and perhaps financial demands Jim has had earlier in his life. Although Jim now has the time and resources to participate it does not stop him reflecting on some perceived lost opportunities.

Conclusion

The interviews with Jim have allowed for a deep exploration of his learning and it's impact upon his life. One of the fundamental factors that has strongly influenced his view of learning is his age and life experience. The fact that Jim is older than his peers has encouraged him to adopt a more parental role in relation to fellow students, this self-imposed distinction that Jim draws may also explain why Jim finds it difficult to collaborate with younger students. Jim's emphasis on age may also be related to the importance of the physical self, as at this time in his life he feels it is important that he learns and works in stress controlled environment if he is to stay healthy.

The numerous experiences that Jim has lived through supports his supposition that he should adopt a more authoritative role and this is reflected in his very firm views on how and why learning should occur, both for himself and for others. One of the key methods for such learning

to occur for Jim is through applying his knowledge to real life situations. Without such an opportunity Jim feels his learning will die as will his opportunity for self-development. Through engaging in the learning process Jim is enabled to fulfil a lifetime ambition of achieving an Honours degree. It is this sense of achievement that encourages Jim to continue to learn and drives him to offer himself to new learning experiences.

5.6 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Jim

Understanding and a holistic approach

NOEMA-UNDERSTANDING	NOESIS-HOLISTIC APPROACH
<p>The object of learning for Jim is to achieve understanding and this is his prime aim when learning.</p> <p>For Jim understanding occurs when he can relate the subject matter to specific contexts that he himself has experienced or has knowledge of. Thus understanding for Jim is very much related to the temporality and spatiality in his life world.</p> <p>When understanding is realised Jim feels validated as a person and this supports his self-esteem and identity. This is reflected through Jim's increased confidence and ability to converse with others.</p> <p>However should Jim feel that understanding has not been achieved he questions his ability and this can result in low self-esteem.</p>	<p>Jim's responding holistic approach attempts to meet his desire for understanding.</p> <p>If Jim is to be successful in this particular approach it is important that the first stage provides him with the context and framework of the subject matter. The second stage of the learning process involves the procurement of details. Together these stages provide Jim with a complete picture that enables understanding.</p> <p>Jim compares his learning process to completing a jigsaw for he expects all of his learning to fit together to form a detailed complete picture. He rejects any notion of incompleteness believing there should be no 'gaps' in his understanding.</p>

Learning as a way of gaining control and a paternal approach

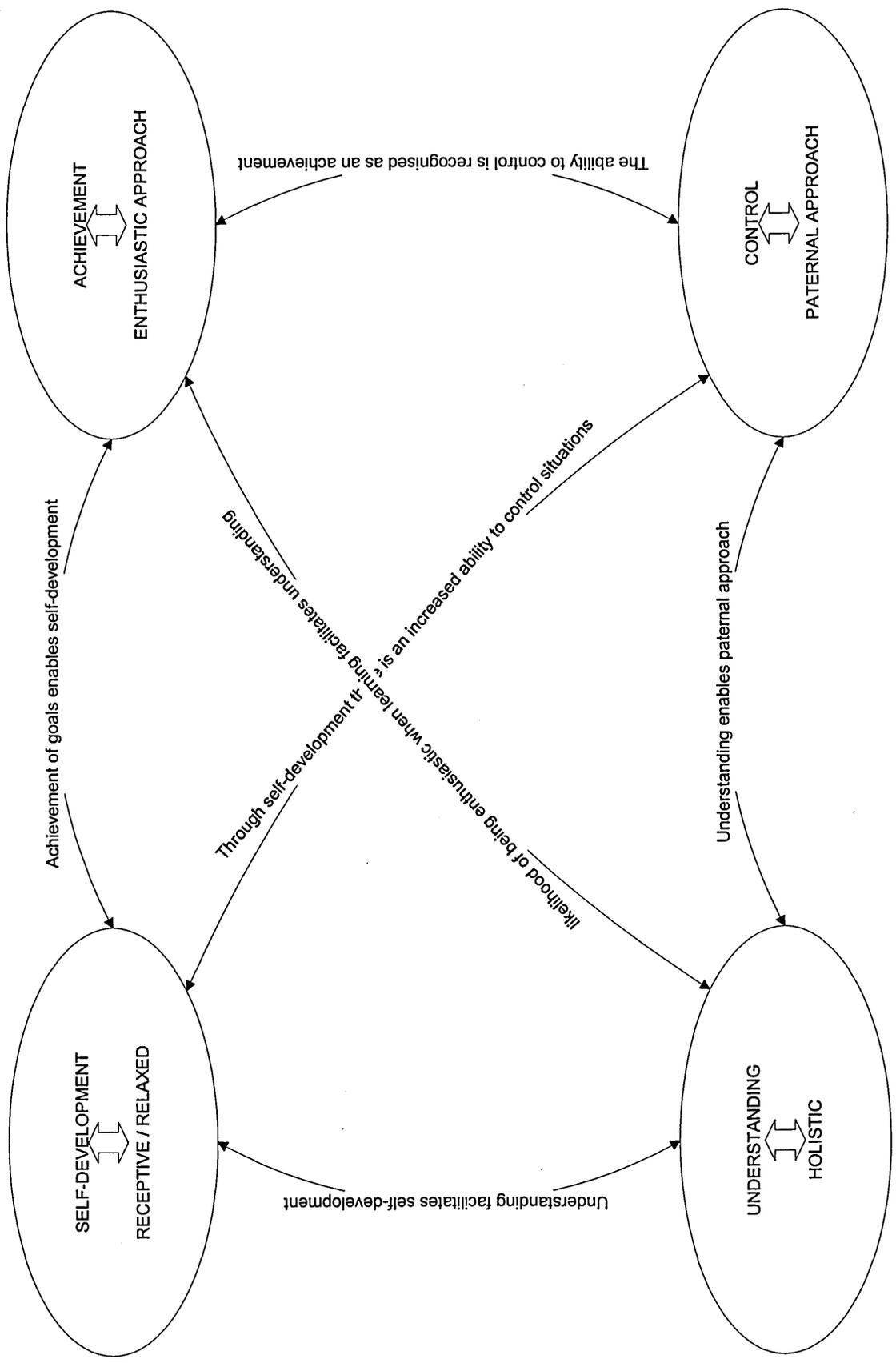
NOEMA-CONTROL	NOESIS-PATERNAL APPROACH
<p>Jim views learning as an opportunity to control the world in which he lives as knowledge provides him with the power to control various situations.</p> <p>This is achieved through the adoption of an authority or leader role where Jim is able to collaborate with others without losing control of his environment.</p> <p>For Jim this form of intersubjectivity is reflective of his status and place in his lifeworld. Thus the need to control forms a key part of Jim's personal identity.</p> <p>The role of the controller does however depend upon the co-operation of others and Jim relies upon others to respect his authority. If this is not forthcoming his self-esteem is dented and he feels vulnerable. This situation is much more common when Jim feels he is in an unfamiliar place.</p>	<p>In order to seize control and be perceived as an authoritative figure Jim adopts a paternal role when engaging in the learning process.</p> <p>This behaviour is evident when Jim is collaborating, particularly with younger students. Jim believes that his lived experiences place him in a position to advise others who have had more limited experiences.</p> <p>While Jim is motivated by the belief that a paternal approach benefits others, this role also leads him to reject the views of others unless he feels they are equal.</p> <p>Thus Jim believes himself to be a superior learner and it is through this belief that Jim feels able to adopt this strong paternal role.</p> <p>This paternal place is mirrored in Jim's home life where he adopts the role of provider thus supporting his view that this is his role in the world.</p>

Learning facilitates achievement and an enthusiastic approach

NOEMA-ACHIEVEMENT	NOESIS-ENTHUSIASTIC APPROACH
<p>For Jim learning allows him to feel a sense of achievement and this feeling is one that Jim constantly aims for.</p> <p>This sense of achievement is realised through a number of different sources notably, good grades, understanding and employment. Thus the need for achievement is evident in many areas of Jim's lifeworld and these lived experiences motivate him to perform.</p> <p>Once he recognises he has achieved Jim feels more confident within himself and his self-esteem is supported for he has met his internal goal.</p> <p>Although Jim believes good grades are an achievement he does not believe that they represent learning. He argues that good grades may be reached through a learning process that is formulaic. Therefore it is knowledge of the formula rather than the content that is important for assessment purposes. Despite this belief Jim still aims to achieve high grade as this confirms his ability to study at a degree level and thus supports his self-esteem.</p>	<p>The sense of achievement that is felt when learning occurs may help explain why Jim is an enthusiastic learner.</p> <p>He is very much motivated by learning, finding the whole process exciting and so constantly seeks out opportunities to learn and apply his new knowledge. For Jim this application indicates his learning has been worthwhile. The use of knowledge at various times and places is fulfilling for Jim, providing him with an opportunity to boost his self-esteem.</p> <p>The pleasurable experience of achievement makes learning an exciting prospect for Jim and thus he is eager and enthusiastic to participate in the process.</p>

Learning as an enabler of self-development and a receptive/relaxed approach

NOEMA-SELF-DEVELOPMENT	NOESIS-RECEPTIVE/RELAXED APPROACH
<p>A key purpose of learning for Jim is self-development. He feels that learning provides the opportunity for personal growth enabling him to feel 'more of a person'. He indicates that this development secures his identity to himself and to others.</p> <p>He views this development as a way forward as if it unlocks the door to his future, allowing him to undergo further lived experiences.</p> <p>This development is perceived as being essential if he is to continue having a recognised place in the world, as he believes the world around is constantly developing and changing.</p> <p>He finds that this development can be a shared activity for through the interviews he achieved a deeper knowledge of himself and his development.</p> <p>Without self-development Jim feels excluded from the world and this results in low self-esteem and low self-confidence.</p>	<p>Jim feels that for him the best way to achieve this development is to 'adopt a relaxed and receptive approach.</p> <p>He views the process of learning as an absorbing and replenishing activity and this feeds his self-development. He rejects assessment as a learning activity as this he argues is an extracting process. Thus the process of learning for Jim is one of a series of inputs which support his development and his self-esteem.</p> <p>For his self-development to be successful Jim finds a relaxed, stress free approach is necessary. This he feels is particularly important for a man of his age where health concerns are a priority. Consideration of body and mind is of key importance for Jim and this is one of the steps he takes to ensure it remains in a healthy condition.</p>



5.7 The Lifeworld of Clive

Learning facilitates self-awareness

One of the key themes that is important to Clive and his learning is self-understanding. The role of self in the context of Clive's lifeworld is twofold, awareness of himself and self-development. Clive describes how in the past his awareness of himself has been limited, in part due to lack of interest in himself,

"I didn't actually know who I am – I was – at the time, you know. I was thinking and I didn't really spend much time trying to find out, you know, who I was, what my talents were, you know.. I think I wasn't really interested in myself."(p6,pg3,1)

The concept of self-awareness is inextricably linked with the notion of identity. For Gary his identity is based upon his interests and talents in life and he is made aware of such issues through periods of self-reflection. From the quotation Clive clearly points to the possibility that during this time he felt he had limited knowledge of his own personal identity i.e. knowing who he is. The consequences of such an attitude appeared to hinder both the development of his talents and his approach to learning as he believes that unless he possesses self-awareness his ability to understand the world around him is also impaired. This lack of self-awareness, that is, lack of interest in himself has led Clive to avoid reflection by attempting a form of escapism through distractions offered by others,

"I mean I was always, I was always concerned about what they (his friends) were doing and you know, if they were having problems, I'd like to sort their problems rather than think about other problems that I was actually having myself. I was trying to sort of escape from myself and being with myself, it's like, you know, I just wasn't interested in myself"(p5,pg3,1)

Through involvement with others Clive finds that there is an opportunity to escape from himself. This idea of escapism allows Clive to leave behind the uncertainty of not knowing who he is as he can become absorbed in other people's lives and problems. Clive describes these feelings and events as being predominately in his past although there are several indications that as he learns his self-awareness grows. For example the interviews with myself provided him with one such opportunity to learn about himself,

“When we first started I was saying things which I never actually thought I was thinking about, if you see what I mean, when I was in the positions I was in. But, so I’m learning new things, yeah, I’m learning more about myself...”(p2,pg12,1)

Learning enables an understanding of the world

Part of Clive's determination of self-awareness is related to his ability to appraise the world around him, for the greater his awareness of himself, the greater his ability to understand the world.

“well your eyes are opened to a lot more things around us, after sort of what we read and what we’re told. Erm, it makes you a lot more – well I’m certainly more critical about what I read now and what I’m told and what I see.”(pg19,p4,3)

Clive describes how through learning his self-awareness has grown, he is able to recognise this change through his increased scepticism and astuteness in how he views the world. Thus for Clive self-awareness is more related to how he is able to understand the outside world rather than an introverted action. As he becomes more self-aware he finds he is less accepting and more cynical about the world around him.

Learning is a tool for self-development

Under the heading of self Clive also raises the topic of self improvement/development. The concept of self-improvement is very important for Clive as this is one of his key aims when learning. The idea of learning for self-improvement is a relatively new experience for Clive as in the past he felt that much of his learning was for his parents benefit rather than his own,

“but now, this final year, I’ve actually come back for myself, to improve myself, to increase my knowledge about the world”(p3,pg4,1)

Through learning Clive feels that his awareness of his self-development is defined by increased knowledge about the world. This may be enhanced through particular types of assessment which require self-analysis and also through the feedback he receives from his tutor. This form of self-development is not just on an academic level for Clive as he believes it affects how he views himself.

Criteria for self-development

Clive identifies two key elements which both identify and enable his development, these are an increase in his knowledge base and recognition and improvement of his natural talents. The first aspect identified by Clive is essential for his learning development for if he feels that he must be able to access new information,

“I was giving people advice in the club. Anyway, erm, yeah so he (the manager) decided to send me on a few courses and I think before I went on a course I was thinking oh you know, I’m going on this course, I just didn’t hold my knowledge because I mean I just read so much from the magazines, I got to a stage where I wasn’t actually learning any more, so obviously, as one would say, I’d plateaued or whatever. So I thought go on this course, but anyway because of the expectations that I had, prior to going on the course, erm, sort of came to an anti-climax because the course wasn’t as in-depth as I thought it was going to be. Therefore, I didn’t actually learn anything so...”(p6,pg8,1)

From this quotation it is evident that self-development is achieved when Clive’s talents are recognised by others. When learning Clive’s expectations are that there should always be further information. When Clive encounters a situation where no new information is available Clive feels he has plateaued. Clive feels learning should not be repetitive so he can continue his self-development. The second element, ability, plays perhaps a less certain role in Clive's learning due to his belief that he is still unclear as to what his natural talents are. Without this knowledge Clive feels that his talents are wasted as he is unable to focus his efforts to refine and develop these natural abilities. However he is clear that learning is based upon talent (whatever that talent may be) and that this ability can be improved with practice, thus the more he learns the greater his learning ability.

Self-Esteem; learning is an insecure process

From our interviews Clive appears to present a mixed picture of his self-esteem levels, however what remains constant is his desire to have a high level of self-esteem which for Clive means security and confidence. A possible indication of low self-esteem could be gained from the interviews we shared,

“But er, I know, half the things I’m probably saying to you aren’t making any sense, cos I’m sort of

(pause) because it's something which I haven't actually thought about, for some reason, so I'm trying my best, trying to make it sound as, as fluent as possible, but it's not very easy. It's er, sorry."(p4,pg12,1)

From the quotation Clive's insecurities are displayed, these insecurities could be taken as an example of a relatively low level of self esteem. His concern about his coherency and difficulty in articulation and perhaps more importantly his constant apologising could be taken as being indicative of a person who does not have high self-esteem as he does not appear comfortable with his commentary. A further indication of low self-esteem is also represented when Clive discusses his opinion of friends who he believes are far more intelligent than himself. Clive finds that learning can play a key role in his self-esteem for he feels learning has occurred his self-esteem rises and vice versa,

"Disappointed (feeling when not learnt) but like I say, sometimes you do – well I personally have learnt something even though without realising I'd actually learnt it. Then when I do think well I haven't learnt something, I do feel very disappointed. I feel as though I've let myself down."
(p3,pg33,1)

Assessment: Friend or foe?

Clive also discusses a fear of failure that is present when he learns, this fear is more prevalent during periods of assessment either prior to receiving assessment grades or when he receives feedback of a critical nature,

"If it's positive feedback then it gives me a lot more confidence. And obviously I've – if there's need to then I feel, they, very, you know the criticism, you know, useless and I just feel like a failure."(p3,pg35,3)

However should the feedback be positive the reverse is true as he finds positive comments to be a source of reassurance and thus provide comfort for him in his learning environment. Thus the impact of feedback can either serve to increase or decrease his sense of failure.

The achievement of self-esteem requires effort

The accomplishment of learning or not as the case may be, affects how he views himself on a

personal and emotional level. Due to this deep impact learning has on his self-esteem Clive strives to learn in all situations,

“And I didn’t think I was very good at maths but I spent a lot of time just studying and started to be very good at it, because it was one of the hardest modules there, in that year and when I actually learnt what I had to do, I just realised, you know, it’s very, very logical thing. No I just learnt that, you know, I can, I can achieve anything if I spend enough time on it, you know. If I actually, if I am actually very determined to actually learn or I’ve got to learn to survive. You know, I just realised, at that point, that I can achieve anything.”(p2,pg6,1)

For Clive the achievement of high self-esteem involves a large amount of effort and time. The realisation that learning is not beyond him but something that can be achieved through determination and hard work serves to bolster his self-esteem and gives him confidence that in the future he will be able to succeed. The key feature which is facilitated through learning is that Clive feels he has actually achieved something and it is this sense of achievement that is crucial to his self-esteem. It is also of note that Clive describes learning as a logical process which requires time and effort if he is to achieve or even survive.

Confidence affects the learning approach

This same sense of achievement can also be linked to Clive’s confidence for when he believes he has achieved he is more confident and vice versa. His opinion on his confidence can be quite mixed depending upon his emotional and mental state at the time,

“I mean at times, I mean, there are times when I feel really, really down for no reason in my head and obviously feeling down makes me lose confidence in, when I’m sitting in a lecture or classroom or something like that and I just keep myself to myself because I don’t feel comfortable till I answer questions in lectures. Although I know it, erm, I don’t feel confident to answer certain things. And sometimes even when I’m confident and I don’t actually know the answer, I’ll still get up and say something. I mean whether it’s right or wrong, I still feel good about myself for saying it. So I do feel like, you know, confidence must play a big role in that.”(p6,pg6,1)

Thus for Clive the feeling of confidence affects not only his perception of himself but also how he behaves in the classroom, becoming more vocal if confident. Even when he is unsure of the correct response his attitude when confident is to take a risk and participate which boosts his confidence

further. However it appears that Clive is not very confident for a number of reasons, as noted earlier he at times appeared to have difficulty articulating his opinions. A further indication is expressed by Clive himself as he proclaims his desire to become more confident,

"I wouldn't say I'm the most confident person in the world so you know, I would like to learn how I could be a lot more confident myself. I mean, although I said like now, learning has gained me moderate, a bit of confidence, but I need – I feel as though I need to be a bit more confident."(p7,pg21,3)

Confidence is affirmed through others

Part of his aspiration to become more confident is based upon his wanting to have the same confidence as his friends whom he believes are far more confident than himself. One method that Clive uses to help his confidence is pretence, by pretending he is confident when he is with others he feels that others will perceive him as being confident. The role of others plays a key part in his self-esteem as Clive relies upon affirmation from others to support his self-esteem. It is important for Clive that other people like him and hold positive opinions about him, this could be reflective of his concern that he was saying the "right" things to myself as demonstrated when I asked him if there was anything he wished to ask,

"No, I think we've covered everything. As long as you're pleased."(p4,pg40,2)

The emphasis for Clive here is more about my own personal satisfaction with the interview rather than thinking about himself and any issues he might have. He indicates in an earlier interview that the reason he enjoys such affirmation is because it supports his self-esteem, described in this context as a positive emotion,

"It's nice to feel special, you know. Obviously the only way to do – well it's not the only way but, yeah, realising that you know, the others have acknowledged that you've done the reading and know that you've got the knowledge to say something. It just makes you feel really good."(p2,pg8,1)

By receiving affirmation Clive feels more like an individual and his individual and unique talents have been recognised in this example by both the lecturer and his peers.

Learning is a way of reaching certainty in the world

When learning Clive finds it important to have certainty in his learning both on an internal and external level. This issue is raised in several different circumstances one notable example is his uncertainty during our interviews,

“But like I said, because there was things I’d never actually thought about or spoken about erm, yeah being uncertain about some of the feelings I had in the past. Erm, you know, it’s a bit of an issue really.”(p4,pg3,2)

Through the interviews Clive is made aware of issues which previously he had not considered and so at times found it difficult to be certain of his opinion. This issue is mirrored in his difficulty accepting contradictions in his statements for he felt that this was also indicative of a person who is unsure of their thoughts. During our interviews Clive would seek direction from myself, constantly checking whether his responses are satisfactory and relevant to what I wanted, thus again he was seeking certainty that he was responding “correctly”. In order to provide certainty in his learning Clive will use evidence and consciously seek out information to ensure he knows what is the correct answer. The theme of certainty can also be reflected in Clive’s discussion of structure in learning. Clive enjoys and indeed requires structure in learning, particularly for assessment as this offers some form of certainty that he is meeting the necessary requirements. However he also states that it is equally important that this is measured against freedom as he believes that learning is an individual experience,

“There should be some sort of freedom for – to let the individual allow themselves, you know, for the sake of trying out something, but also there should be a structure because I think previous experience of others will help to guide others, so, yeah, it’s definitely, definitely some kind of balance.(p3,pg30,3)

So although Clive appreciates certainty in his learning too much structure can hinder his learning by hindering individual creativity. Thus there is a certain amount of conflict in Clive’s learning which needs to be balanced so that he is supported by this security without limiting his freedom in his learning.

Awareness of assessment demands can be mutually beneficial

The theme of alertness to assessment demands is common throughout all of our interviews as this issue strongly affected Clive's approach to learning. Clive will adapt his learning, notably assessments so that the lecturers are impressed with his work,

"just try to find out the bits which I thought (pause) would go –well beneficial – not beneficial for the assignments but er, which I thought were gonna be geared, which were gonna give me grades. Well good marks, good feedback. I just looked for areas, which I thought, might impress the lecturers."(p1,pg25,2)

In order to impress the lecturer and receive affirmation Clive stringently abides by the guidelines given as he argues that he is more likely to achieve good grades if he follows this process. Clive feels that this process not only benefits himself but it also benefits the lecturer as receiving a good piece of work rewards them, thus the process is a mutual one. However if the guidelines are not clear and the lecturer is not specific about the course requirements Clive may find it difficult to learn. This does appear to be somewhat contradictory to Clive's earlier claim that freedom is necessary in learning which may mean that for Clive finding the right balance is a difficult one.

Several parallels can be drawn with some of the other issues raised. A comparison may be made with Clive's need for certainty as by following the direction of others provided he is secure that he is meeting all requirements without taking any risks. As this strategy has been generally successful for Clive in the past it also protects his self-esteem and confidence as failure is less likely. A further link could also be made to how Clive behaves in the interviews for here too he looks for guidelines. However in this situation there is no assessment which may raise the question of whether Clive's views the interviews as something which is another method of testing, thus he needs to know the requirements.

Successful learning equates with high grades

The aim of high grades is demonstrated strongly in the interviews with his ultimate aim of achieving a 2:1 degree, a level which he believes symbolises academic success. Thus for Clive a high grade indicates that he has been successful, this can also be linked to alertness to assessment demands, for if his ultimate aim is to gain high marks it is almost inevitable that he will use an approach which provides him with this end result. However these are not the only motives for high grades, Clive also feels that grades are indicators of learning,

“..when it comes to assignments obviously if you’ve learnt something you get a good grade – well you feel as though you’ve learnt something yes”(p6,pg33,1)

Thus if Clive receives a high grade he interprets this as meaning he has learnt. A third reason Clive offers for wanting high grades is confidence, if a high grade is achieved his confidence is increased.

Learning facilitates financial security

A further purpose for learning for Clive is the chance to obtain employment in the future. The knowledge and information that he gains at university he feels will be of use in his chosen employment as will his increased ability to learn. If he is success in employment this will ultimately lead to financial security,

“Just being happy like, you know, cos I wanna be successful in term of like being financially comfortable and just having a nice life style. (p8,pg14,2)

What is interesting about this quotation is that while Clive strives for financial success and the creature comfort that this brings there is also an intrinsic element, in that he wants to enjoy his working life.

Passionate interests: a driving force?

Interest in the subject is also represented as a motivator. It is not only the idea of employability and high grades that motivate Clive to learn but it also his actual interest in the topics that he is studying. Without interest in the subject that he is studying Clive finds it difficult to become motivated and thus finds it difficult to learn,

“And, you know, if you’re interested in something then I’m sure you’re prepared to, you know, put in the time and the effort. With me, you know, I couldn’t just – I couldn’t like sit in there doing something which I don’t want to do.”(p3,pg35,2)

Although Clive expresses the importance of interest in his learning and the impact that this has on both his motivation and learning he maintains that at present he has no passionate interests. He compares himself to his friends who he believes have passionate interests and wishes that he too could be so passionate. Further examples which may demonstrate lack of motivation is the internal

questions Clive asks himself, *“am I on the right Course?”* His explanation for the choice of a Business topic is that it is broadly based and he felt that his chances of finding a topic of great interest to him would be increased. This topic has not been found yet.

The time of interviewing may have affected Clive’s apparent low motivation as Clive has been in the educational system for a number of years. He feels the need for a break from the academic arena if he is to consider a return to academia,

“..but now I’ve actually come towards the end of my course, I think I’m sick of this, I’m really, really am tired of it..”(p7,pg2,3)

However it would be incorrect to portray Clive as an unmotivated student, he feels more dedicated to his studies and feels that he wants to learn but this development is a recent one,

“Because I actually want to learn it. I actually want to, you know”(p4,pg19,1)

Learning should be active and interactive

The theme of active learning occurred frequently within our interviews with Clive articulating the importance of applying what he learns to more practical situations. Clive is more interested in practical topics where his body and mind are involved in the learning process,

“I’m very “hands on” and that’s when I’ve learnt best. That’s when I’ve (?) in practical situations I suppose, when I’m actually involved in a situation, or something. That’s how I best learn.”(p5,pg13,1)

Thus for Clive the actual lived experiences brings his learning to life. The actual presentation and demonstration of his knowledge in a real situation is when he feels real learning occurs. Because of this attitude Clive feels that he does not actually learn whilst studying, it is only when in the spatiality of the working world that his learning is validated and confirmed,

“I only actually realised what I’d learnt, yeah until I’d finished. I mean everything started to make sense, if you see what I mean. Cos, I mean it’s a very, very vocational course, where everything was like very work related, within, you know, the working environment. Erm, and I only realised what I’d learnt when I started working”(p8,pg9,1)

Learning should have a place in the outside world

Clive also hints at the reason he selected vocational courses in preference to what he perceives are more traditional academic subjects and is the link of vocational courses to the real world. The perceived relevance of information that Clive receives will also affect how he approaches learning as he will take less of an interest in topics that he believes will not be of use in the future. However he finds that this can be difficult as he is unsure what temporal experience awaits him therefore how can he know what is relevant? The skills that have been gained while at university he argues will have applicability to his employment life but he is unsure whether much of the theory learnt will be of use in the working world as it can be difficult to apply to real situations.

Without the opportunity to experience situations both in his own personal life and within the working world Clive finds it very difficult to learn. It is the actual ability of being able to transfer knowledge to an alternate spatial situation which offers Clive the opportunity to both develop and test his learning. Without experience Clive feels that both he and his learning would become stagnant.

Memorisation is a key process when learning

Clive views the learning process as one which necessitates memorisation and so his approach to learning is geared to meet this aim. This is represented when Clive is both making notes and when he is simply reading for in both tasks he is conscious of his desire to memorise the material. A possible reason for the importance of memorisation is due to the belief that for certain assessment methods remembering is the key to success,

“..with exams you’ve got the pressure of like retaining all the information that you’ve learnt”(p6,pg33,3)

If Clive feels that to be academically successful one needs to memorise it fits that he should adopt a memorising approach. Clive defines his learning method as one that involves a certain amount of regurgitation as he believes that this too allows him to meet the assessment criteria.

To understand is to learn

It would be inaccurate to describe Clive's learning style as one purely based upon regurgitation and memorisation as he also refers to his learning method relating to understanding. Clive classifies his understanding as meaning that the information he is learning makes sense to him personally and he is able to relate himself to it. This Clive feels is necessary as learning and understanding is an individual process. He also finds that if he is able to discuss issues with his peers this is a further indication that learning has occurred. Another key factor that highlights Clive's view that understanding is not simply about grades is alluded to when he talks about a particular assignment,

"as far as I was concerned I worked really hard for it, but I didn't understand it as much as I would have liked to, but still I came out with a "B", so I must have understood it to a certain degree which enabled me to achieve a "B" but probably not to a degree which I, you know, desired to understand it"(p7,pg36,3)

This example clearly indicates that Clive sees differences between understanding and assessment grades for although he received a good or comparable grade with other assignments he was less satisfied with this one as he felt he had not understood the topic as fully as possible. So although Clive describes high grades are indicative of learning they are not representative of understanding as it does not necessarily mean the topic makes a personal sort of sense to him.

Learning is a practical, step-by-step process

The actual approach that Clive uses to learn and understand is primarily an active one, preferring to take notes rather than be a passive listener. He tackles the learning process in a step by step approach,

"I just broke down the title into like the certain areas, which I may need to include like, such as – bits of the parts which, you know, learning part of this. I just went round those few areas and er, tried to bring everything together really."(P5,pg24,2)

In this context Clive is describing how he approached a piece of work that was to be assessed. He felt that by tackling the assessment in parts he would ensure that all requirements were met, in doing so he felt reassured that he was doing the "right" things and would achieve a high grade.

The approach that Clive adopts is consistent whether he is learning a practical or academic subject. Although Clive favours and finds it easier to learn more practical based subjects he feels that the essence of learning remains fundamentally the same. The only difference lies in Clive's expectations as he anticipates he will be more comfortable with what he considers a practical subject.

Although Clive is able to identify certain elements of his learning process he states that he has not yet developed a system for him to learn,

"I mean I personally haven't got one (a system for learning) because all I do is just really – I write down notes again and again, but I keep thinking I'm sure there's a system. I don't know – it's probably different for me"(p4,pg1,3)

Clive hints that he would like to have his own structured and classified system that meets his learning needs. However as he is unsure whether that is possible or indeed preferable it is ever likely that he has been unable or would want to classify his own.

Self-imposed pressure

Through his learning experiences Clive explicitly identifies pressures in his life as a hindrance to his learning. The pressure that Clive works under is however generally not from external sources rather it is self-imposed pressure which is ironic as he states that this restricts his learning,

"I suppose it (pressure) makes me want to learn but the pressure I feel myself is far too much, which prevents me from learning."(p1,pg18,1)

The quotation demonstrates that it would be too simplistic to dismiss pressure as a purely negative force as indicated some pressure can aid and motivate him to learn. However too much pressure only stops Clive from engaging in the learning process. A further aspect to Clive's view of learning is based upon whether he is learning for his own interests or whether he is learning for the academic course,

"I'm learning for myself, which I know there's no pressure for me to learn, then I'm, I am a lot more relaxed but when it's like, er, OK I suppose, revising for exams, and various things like that, I

mean I, obviously I'm under a lot of pressure. Therefore, it's making me a lot less relaxed and therefore it makes it less able to retain a lot of learning." (p7,pg17,1)

The self-imposed pressure is removed when learning for himself, as is the desire to retain and remember information, for he will not be assessed when learning for his own interests. The quotation also raises a further element important in Clive's learning that is relaxation. When too much pressure is present he is unable to relax, this is important as relaxation is a necessary part of Clive's learning. Conflict arises when he tries to retain and relax at the same time for the act of memorising places stress on Clive.

External pressures occur from a temporal source

The pressure that Clive experiences is however not always self-imposed. The temporal pressures of time management also serve to increase the pressure that Clive feels. He must manage his time effectively and ensure that all his work is not left to the last minute, this experience is described vividly by Clive,

"I mean obviously, at the moment, there is pressure there for me to revise, you know, for my exam on Monday but there's not that much pressure. The pressure's on me to actually like start revising before Monday whereas I have a lot more – if I hadn't revised by Sunday and I've got these on a Monday, there'll be a lot more pressure on me, therefore I'll try probably panicking and actually I won't take anything in."(p5,pg32,3)

Here he describes how he will behave if he has not prepared for his examinations. If he finds he has not enough time to adequately prepare he is unable to learn anything at all in the limited time he would have left. This is particularly important to Clive at the time of interviewing as he had recently been employed in a full time job while still studying a full time course.

The place of learning

The spatiality in which Clive learns has an impact on his learning so much so that it influenced his choice of residence. He chose to live in a shared flat with his friend as he knew he would be able to gain the peace and quiet he needs. Clive's awareness of the importance of place of study is also demonstrated when he describes how he can learn in the learning resource centre as it is here he can relax,

“the only way I can feel, anywhere I feel relaxed – well less distractions basically, then I feel relaxed, then there’s less distractions. I mean I can work in libraries only in certain places. When I go into a library I prefer to go on the lower floor, the ground floor where there’s a lot less people, a lot less distraction, and make sure there’s separate cubicles as well. Just the only way I feel, I feel comfortable and I, I know I’m not going to be distracted”(p6,pg19,1)

The place of learning necessary for Clive is described in great detail here, indicating that he needs to be in a precise place if he is to learn. It is not enough for Clive to be in the learning resource centre, he must be in a certain position within the building if he is to feel comfortable. The key reason for the choice of an isolated cubicle is simple, to limit distractions as he may find it difficult to concentrate. At times though Clive has to leave his working environment if he us to relax and therefore learn,

“Yes, just walking away. Just taking my mind off things. I mean even if it’s sort of like half an hour or something, you know. Just walking away and just coming back to it, relaxed.”(p4,pg35,2)

Thus for learning to occur Clive may need to leave the place he normally learns. By leaving that space Clive feels more refreshed and inclined to study therefore moving between places generally benefits his learning

Learning is a shared experience

The act of collaboration is important for Clive not just for his own benefit but also because he feels that through collaboration others also benefit from the experience. The quotation below is an example of how Clive perceives others responding when their learning is shared,

“you can see that, you can hear it in the tone of voice. Like, you know, you can hear that they’re actually interested because they er, yeah, yeah, I think they are, sure. It’s never mentioned, it’s never said”(p3,pg34,2)

Clive does not use verbal confirmation of collaborative benefits, he relies upon intuition and embodied signals that others have learnt. Clive has found that as he has developed and his learning has increased he is able to collaborate and socially interact with more confidence and greater ease as his social status is confirmed.

Clive's collaboration offers him and others the opportunity to share skills, for when participating in group work tasks can be shared according to group members strengths and weakness and so produce a profitable piece of work. Although Clive argues that this is a positive element he also points to the conflict that this can cause as individuals may resent being given the same role all of the time. Despite the problems Clive feels that the sharing of learning can also improve creativity, as members of the group spark ideas from one another's suggestions.

Clive demonstrates concern for how others are affected when collaborating as he is concerned that others who are participating in the process are happy. Without this assurance Clive finds it difficult to be happy within his own learning. This concern of others is highlighted when he describes the impact of working in a group for assessment,

"in terms of groupwork, I would say with that there's a lot more responsibility on you to get the work done. Because if you don't get it done you're letting the whole team down and that's the last thing you want to do. Therefore, you try and keep in synch with what everybody else is doing because – I know everybody works completely differently and obviously at different times. So I think it's harder sometimes, you know, there will be times when the rest of the group want to work and you don't, maybe because you've got other – you know well a different agenda of course. So I think you've got to be a lot more flexible, you know, when it comes to like group work."(p3,pg33,3)

Thus when learning Clive feels a greater responsibility than when he is working as part of a team. In order to accommodate others Clive must communicate and reach an understanding with other members so that he is aware of their expectations of the group project. He must be flexible to accommodate the differences and expectations of others and importantly meet the deadlines set on an informal level.

Clive is able to utilise others as a source of reassurance through measuring their responses with his own. If he finds there is a consensus agreeing with him he is reassured, if not he will have to review his opinion. He also finds that reassurance can be gained if he feels that all of his peers are having the same difficulties,

"when I'm finding something difficult to learn, erm, I find that right, I find that other people find it just as difficult. I mean it's like reassurance not – well, yeah, it just reassures me to know that I haven't got problem, you know, it's not just something which I've got a problem with, it's like – you

know – a general thing.”(p4,pg28,3)

If Clive believes that the learning problems he encounters are not a personal but rather a shared issue he is able to depersonalise the difficulties, as the problem is not his rather it is the subject or the lecturer. For Clive the belief that he has similar difficulties and abilities as his peers is crucial as through these comparisons his self-esteem is boosted as he feels on a par with his peers. He wants his peers to appreciate his knowledge as this affirms his self-belief and this encourages him to learn more in the future.

A collaborative approach enables him to gauge his understanding through the use of dialogue. Through this process Clive becomes aware of what he has or has not learnt and also it indicates whether issues make sense to him. Through the act of conversing Clive can actually feel the sensation that something is happening to his learning,

“I’ve got to actually speak to them, so you know, just to get that feeling, yeah. I can feel, something, something’s happening here”(p5,pg14,1)

The interactive nature of collaboration

The actual process of interaction is important for Clive and he explains why he prefers tutorials (rather than lectures) as they offer the opportunity to interact with both other tutees and the tutor. However the process of interaction for Clive does not have to directly involve others as he also considers the act of note taking as an interactive one. Clive perceives the act of interaction to be a physical, embodied one, in which, mind and body respond to information,

“ I think it’s just the physical, you know, contribution. Physical application to what you’re doing”(p3,pg32,3)

The people that Clive associates with affect his learning and so will choose his peers carefully,

“you’re - basically they don’t want to have to hang around with thick people only, sort of thing, so in case of these, so constantly, obviously they’d like to be around people which probably have the same ability to learn as they have, if you see what I mean. So they’ve got something in common”(p1,pg35,1)

By relating to people who he presumes are on a similar academic level benefits his learning and so he tries to avoid those who do not fit into this profile. The main explanation for this attitude is on the basis of common interests and how they complement his own. However Clive does not explain how he determines the academic aptitude of others but there is an indication that he measures the ability of others against his own. The relationship that Clive and the lecturer have is also an issue when collaborating. For learning to be fruitful the personality of the lecturer needs to be compatible with his own and most importantly the lecturer must be willing and seem eager to teach. If these elements are present his learning is enhanced however if he finds the personality of the lecturer to be negative his learning is hindered,

“I mean he was just very sarcastic to blokes, he was very patronising, just everything about him, he just made it so irritating, therefore I mean I missed half of his tutorials because I just didn’t like the guy not because I didn’t like (yeah) the subject. I loved the subject, I really did but it was just him and it just made me – it just made it harder for me to learn, going to his lessons and obviously listen to what he was saying. I produced very, very good assignments and he gave me the lowest grade possible – D minuses. And obviously, because, you know, I didn’t trust his academic judgement because of the way he was, I took it to another lecturer and they obviously – well it wasn’t obviously at all but erm, they gave it much higher grades.”(p3,pg27,1)

Because of Clive’s dislike of the lecturer it actually affected his attendance he did not want to listen to this particular lecturer speak. The key criticisms thrown at this academic member is his patronising attitude, an attitude Clive does not feel was presented to all students. Thus as raised earlier Clive needs to perceive the learning environment as being fair to all. A further issue raised is the fact that due to this dislike Clive’s opinion of the lecturer’s academic opinion is called into question. As Clive does not respect the lecturer personally he feels unable to accept his academic judgement, especially when a low grade was received. Clive later explains his work was re-marked and a higher grade was given thus vindicating his position. The context within which, this action was taken, is however worth noting. Clive argued he would not have contested the results but because his fellow students felt the same he had the confidence to challenge the grades. It is questionable this action would have been taken if Clive was acting alone.

Collaboration versus competition

The involvement of others in Clive’s learning was a dominant theme throughout the interviews and a further way that this occurs is through competition. The way in which Clive competes his twofold,

firstly he sets internal targets and so competes with himself and secondly he competes with his peers aiming to achieve higher grades. If he successfully meets these aims Clive feels more confident within his learning. Although Clive states that at the present time competition encourages him to perform he perceives a massive growth of competition amongst his peers.

"I'm not reluctant to share information but I'm just – well I'm reluctant to people who, erm, sort of share information with me, if you see what I mean, therefore, why should I share information with them. Mm, yeah, yeah, but also it's the wrong attitude to take, I would say, because everything's getting their own degree, if you see what I mean. But I think it's just like the fear of someone doing better than you are."(p1,3,pg29,3)

As he and fellow students progress into the final year the use of collaboration shrinks as he believes they may become more competitive striving to achieve a good degree classification. The importance of the qualification does therefore appear to take over the aim of learning, particularly if this means a higher grade than Clive's peers. The cycle of non sharing is demonstrated as Clive himself claims he is unwilling to share information with those who do not share. One can perceive that if this is a common belief it is ever likely that collaboration will become increasingly limited. Although Clive himself indicates that he does not collaborate as often as he could he seems to regret this as he sees the benefits of sharing information. Thus there is a conflict for Clive as he enjoys competing and collaboration but he can at times find the two concepts mutually exclusive.

Learning supports the need for parental affirmation

Clive's parents have had a great influence upon his learning and Clive highlights this in numerous scenarios. Clive's feels that his attitude towards learning is strongly influenced by his parents' opinions and beliefs, especially as he wishes to please his parents,

"so there was me trying to sort through like, you know, please my parents and at the same time try and realise what I actually wanted to do, which was very depleting at the time, it was, you know, there was certain thing which I wanted to do but I didn't do because I knew my parents wouldn't like me to do them, you know."(p4,pg4,1)

The aim to please and meet parental expectations is not an easy task as Clive feels that as he was trying to find his real interests he had to consider what his parents wanted. Agreement between the two groups was difficult and Clive agreed to his parents' decision. This example highlights Clive's

need to please which reaffirms the analysis in self-esteem, in which the same conclusions are reached. It may also link to Clive's claim that he has not found his passionate interests as he has been influenced away from subjects that really interest him and this is the subject of regret.

Clive believes that his parents have very high academic expectations of him because of their very well educated background (Clive's father is a consultant doctor and his mother is a qualified accountant) and thus expect similar standards from him as the eldest child. Their strong influence can be seen through this quotation,

"I was sent to college, er because I was very unsure about what I was gonna do." (p1pg1,1)

What is key about this statement is the word sent as if this was not something he chose to do rather this was a task he was commissioned to do, presumably instigated by his parents. Clive feels that he should incorporate their opinion in his academic decisions as they have invested a lot of time and money into his academic training,

"just the amount of money they've invested in me, you know. I just keep thinking that everything – they've invested so much in myself and obviously they want some return from it" (p2,pg5,1)

Thus Clive believes a certain implied agreement between Clive and his parents that as they have invested in him they expect a certain return on their investment i.e. a good academic degree, perhaps in a subject area of their choosing. Their influence on Clive was resented, initially, and made him reluctant to learn as he then felt that he was not learning for himself rather he was learning for his parents,

"I feel pressurised by my parents (in the past) to do certain things which I don't need to do. Therefore, maybe, it made me, you know, very rebellious and therefore there was quite an emotional battle which affected me from an early – because I didn't feel as though I was meant for myself. It just felt like I was just being talked about, like I was forced to. I think that's the most significant time in my life where I fought an emotional scene." (p2,pg18,3)

Parental and personal conflict is aroused through learning

The use of the term 'battle' gives some indication of the level of conflict between Clive and his parents at that time, again he states that he was forced to learn rather than something that he chose.

The basis of the arguments was upon Clive feeling he did not have freedom to learn what he wanted and so he rebelled against his parent's wishes and consciously decided he would not learn what they wanted.

This does seem to conflict with Clive's earlier statements that he wants to please his parents, but what needs to be considered here is the temporality of his attitude. Clive identifies how in the past he was rebellious and resented his parents' choices but today he sees the benefits in what they tried to do, most importantly he now feels he is learning for himself and taking more ownership of his learning,

"I just wish I'd realised it, what, much sooner. So therefore, yeah, it's just made me more dedicated to learn, to make up for lost time I suppose. You know, times where I didn't actually learn for, you know. I know it sounds selfish, but learn for myself as opposed to learn because I had to learn, because I was asked to learn"(p2,pg30,2)

Clive now is able to recognise why his parents put so much pressure on him and regrets that he resisted learning for as long as he did. Despite criticisms of his parents' choices in the past Clive is wary of using this an excuse for his learning today, accepting that he should accept some responsibility for the decisions made in the past. Despite this change in attitude towards both his parents and learning Clive identifies one aspect of his learning that he believes he has inherited from his parents, that is competition. Throughout his early years Clive can remember his mother making comparisons between himself and other members of his family and it was made very clear that he is competing with them,

"My mum, I'd say word for word, I'll quote , she actually used to say, you know, you're in competition with so and so, and so and so, and so and so, make sure you do really well."(p6,pg30,1)

Thus the concept of competition is one that Clive has been introduced to at a very young age and he remains competitive today. However today Clive sees himself not only competing with other family members but also with his peers and so he consciously aims to beat his peers (in terms of assessment grades). This supports Clive's description of competing with his peers as highlighted in the previous sub-section.

Competitive learning as defined by gender

Clive identified gender differences in his learning experience, notably differences in how men and women compete,

“cos it’s just a male sort of thing, you know. You’ve always got to get one up on yourself, and make sure. And I think it’s just one of those methods to keep yourself motivated, to actually do something – it’s just cos you always – you know – you always want to be better than somebody else I suppose, don’t you?” (p7, pg29, 1)

Clive feels that when men learn they compete in a overt conspicuous way that is obvious to all believing that all men have a similar view to his own that self-esteem is gained by achieving better academic grades than others. He differentiates this from the ways in which women compete, based upon his experience Clive feels that women may compete more covertly with any competition amongst them generally better hidden. A further difference identified by Clive is organised study methods and close attention to detail, a skill that he believes is present in females but not in males. He argues that women are much more likely to plan and organise their studies. He puts forward the reason for this as being due to the fact that he believes that women are more dedicated to their studies and to be dedicated it is necessary to be organised and thorough

Men; the practical learners

Clive also highlights how he views the differences between men and women on a practical level arguing that men tend to be more practical,

“I don’t want to sound too general because it isn’t always the case, so I’ll say some men – well the majority of men are quite practical in their approach to learning, thinking and so forth, whereas women are probably more intuitive like – well I can say this to you, it’s a general sort of thing – women are far more a lot more emotive in their approaches to thinking and more intuitive and yeah, men are more practical then.” (p3, pg23, 3)

Clive alludes to an example he recently experienced when on an outward bound course where he felt that the men in his particular group (including himself) had different learning aims. He felt the women were not really interested in achieving the task rather they were more concerned with the aesthetics. Clive felt the embodied gender differences between men and women in the group caused

conflict as he considered that the women in the group were not focussing on the appropriate issue whereas the men, he argued, were focussed. Differences between the genders are also identified in terms of logic, defining men as the more logical and sequential learners. He believes that women operate on a different set of logical beliefs and as they are different to his own he can not understand the basis to female logic, finding the “male” approach far more suitable. He defines the male approach as more effective and thus defines a more logical approach as one that is the most effective.

Women; the intuitive learners

He also feels that as women are more emotive and intuitive in their learning they do not feel the need to use evidence to support their claims. He argues that men have to back up their claims as they lack this “intuition”,

“women sort of always know, if you see what I mean and they don’t need anything to sort of justify it or back it up or anything like that – they just know. All women – like, I don’t want to sound like I’m generalising but er, men, from discussions and conversations and this, that and the other, we always have to sort of support everything” (p3,pg24, 3)

Conclusion

The interviews with Clive offered a deep insight into his lifeworld, exposing the many different aspects and influences in his life.

As Clive developed both personally and as a learner he has found that he is not the same person he once was. Clive has become an ambitious learner striving to achieve the goal of a solid degree, as it is this he believes that will provide him with a financially secure future. His competitive nature which may have originally been introduced by his parents, is accepted by Clive as a way of becoming a successful learner. The parental influence he now feels is not as important in his life today as he believes he has taken much more ownership of his learning.

Despite these ambitions Clive can still be insecure in his learning, he at times is unconfident in his opinions and seeks out reassurance from others whether that be from his peers, lecturers or indeed myself. It is this insecurity that may have made it difficult for Clive to articulate his feelings, particularly about gender. Clive recognises his insecurity and raises his need to become more

confident.

The lack of certainty may have played a role in this lack of confidence as Clive felt that he should have clarity in his responses, without this certainty Clive is not confident in the answers he gave. It is perhaps the lack of certainty that led Clive to believe that he needs to become more focussed. This he believed could be achieved by finding his "passionate" interest. Thus for Clive his learning needs to continue to develop until he is both confident and fully interested in what he is learning.

5.8 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Clive

Learning as self-development and an uncertain approach

NOEMA-SELF-DEVELOPMENT	NOESIS-UNCERTAIN APPROACH
<p>For Clive one of the key purposes of learning is to achieve self-development. He believes that all of his lived experiences facilitate this development and over time he learns more about himself. He classifies the interviews as one such experience that has increased his awareness of his own identity.</p> <p>Through learning Clive is able to undergo personal development and this motivates him to engage in the learning process.</p> <p>Through the self-development process Clive becomes more confident and his self-esteem is supported. This is a crucial process as he feels he is not a confident person and he aspires to gain a high confidence level, which he perceives to be equivalent to his peers. Thus confidence for Clive operates at a highly intersubjective level.</p> <p>One of the key tests of the existence of development for Clive is the ability to achieve goals. When these goals are reached he is satisfied that self-development has occurred through feelings of increased confidence and self-esteem. Without this sense of development Clive may withdraw from the learning process feeling that he has 'failed' in some way.</p>	<p>Although self-development is important for Clive the process is fraught with uncertainties which result in feelings of insecurity.</p> <p>These feelings are represented in many forms but are notably evident during the interview process. Here Clive presented various ambiguities in his life and this he found difficult to accept as he constantly seeks a world in which he can be secure and certain.</p> <p>These feelings are also represented in his desire for structure and guidelines in assessment as this too provides a 'safe' environment.</p> <p>For Clive these feelings of uncertainty are magnified due to his lack of clarity over his 'natural talents'. He feels that if he was aware of his passionate interests and talents his self-development process would be simplified and uncertainties as to his life direction and identity would be removed.</p> <p>Clive hopes that this uncertain process of self-exploration will lead to a more certain identity.</p>

Learning as an opportunity to understand and a collaborative approach

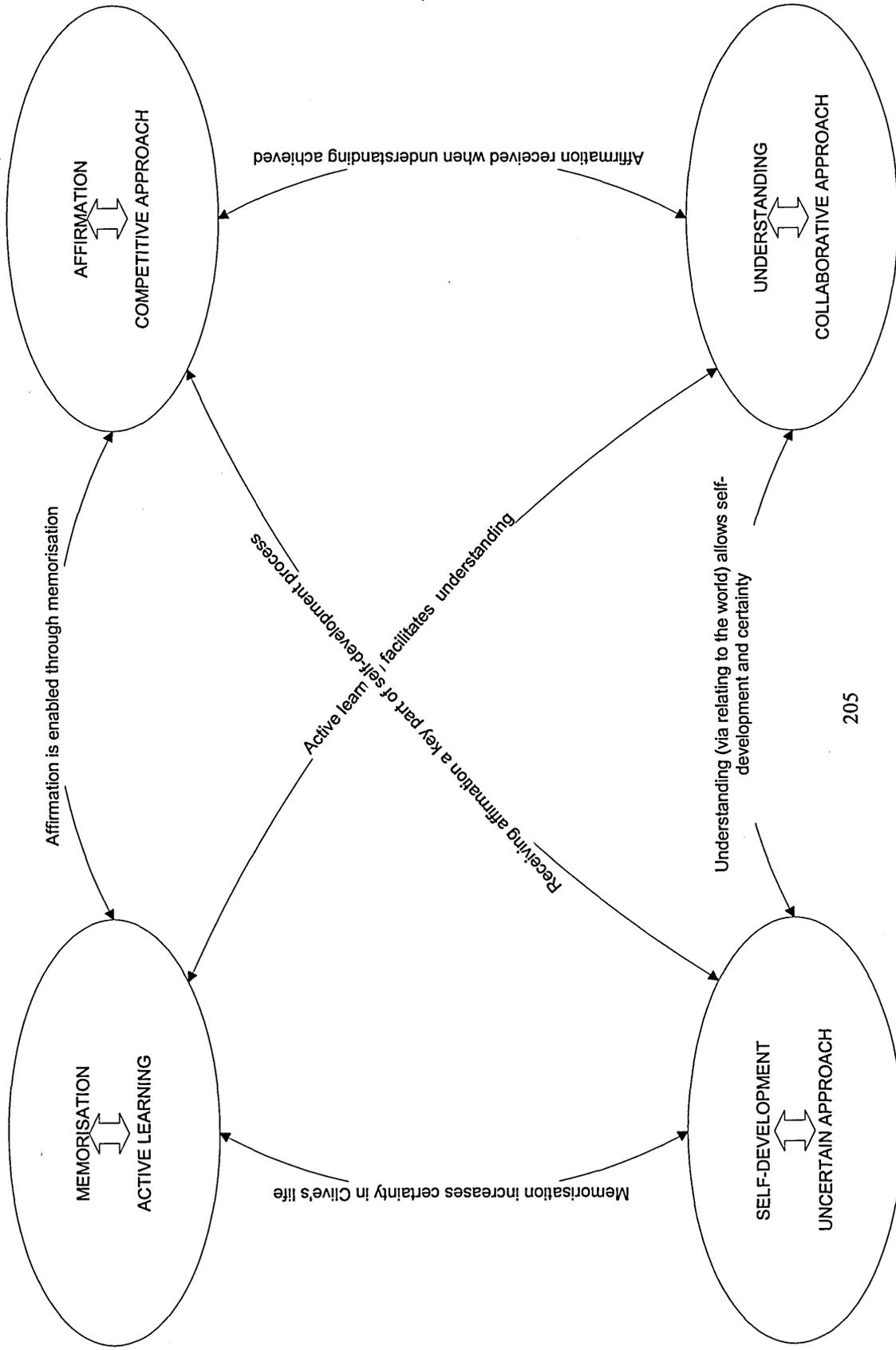
NOEMA-UNDERSTANDING	NOESIS-COLLABORATIVE APPROACH
<p>The object of learning for Clive is to achieve understanding and it is this aim that motivates him to learn. Understanding holds a number of meanings for Clive notably, high grades and relating to information on a personal level. However the most important measure of Clive's understanding occurs when he attempts to apply his knowledge and relate to the world around him.</p> <p>When understanding is achieved Clive feels able to interact with the world from an informed and critical perspective and this encourages him to continue in the learning process and seek out many life experiences.</p> <p>Through understanding and relating to the world Clive is able to gain future employment and secure his place in the working world. Consequently Clive has a tendency to reject any learning which he feels will not relate to his future lived experiences.</p>	<p>The aim of understanding leads Clive to adopt a collaborative approach to learning.</p> <p>When conversing with others Clive is able to gauge whether he has indeed understood a topic. If he can contribute to the discussion, Clive perceives that as a sign that understanding has been achieved, particularly if he is able to explain an issue to another.</p> <p>This learning process not only tests Clive's understanding but also supplements his knowledge as he argues that through sharing the learning process creativity is improved.</p> <p>During collaboration Clive is very much aware of the needs and wants of others who participate in the learning process. It is important to Clive that all members feel that they belong and that their contributions are valued if the process is to be fruitful.</p> <p>The ability to successfully collaborate during the learning process persuades Clive that he will be able to collaborate with the outside world.</p>

Learning is an opportunity to gain affirmation and a competitive approach

NOEMA-AFFIRMATION	NOESIS-COMPETITIVE APPROACH
<p>The object of learning for Clive is affirmation. Clive seeks this affirmation from other people, notably his parents and his peers.</p> <p>Clive believes that affirmation from his peers is received when they recognise he has made a contribution to their learning and they acknowledge his awareness of the world. Should Clive receive affirmation through this collaborative process his self-esteem and confidence is boosted.</p> <p>Clive also seeks parental affirmation and this he feels is best achieved by being a successful learner. Many of his academic choices have been influenced by parental expectations and this at times may have hindered his learning, as he was unable to follow his passionate interests. However he found achieving their expectations established a high status place for him and this motivated him to learn.</p> <p>High academic grades are also a source of affirmation as Clive feels that this demonstrates that he is a capable learner, which in turn supports his self-esteem.</p>	<p>In order to receive affirmation Clive has to involve others in his learning process and the method that he employs is a competitive one.</p> <p>He feels that like men in general he is openly competitive as he wishes to be perceived as superior to his peers and this is a key motivator for Clive. Over time Clive has found his experience of intersubjective learning has altered for now his peers are more competitive and this has limited the number of collaborative learning experiences.</p> <p>The competitive approach was in part learnt through parental example, as his parents would explicitly state that he was in direct competition with his peers and family members. For Clive and his parents the way to win this 'battle' was to be successful academically and if this was achieved Clive's place in the family would be affirmed and his self-esteem would increase.</p> <p>To be a successful competitor Clive adopts a cue-seeking approach as by following this learning process he is able to achieve high grades and therefore 'beat' his peers in the academic game.</p>

Learning is memorisation and an active approach

NOEMA-MEMORISATION	NOESIS-ACTIVE APPROACH
<p>The purpose of learning for Clive is memorisation and this is a key aim when engaged in the learning process.</p> <p>For Clive the meaning of memorisation is the retention of information which he hopes can be used in future lived experiences. Through memorisation Clive is able to achieve academic success, particularly when undertaking exams and this outcome provides both motivation and self-esteem.</p> <p>However Clive finds this process is highly pressurised which places both the mind and body under considerable stress, which at times hinders his learning process.</p>	<p>To facilitate memorisation Clive adopts an active approach to learning. This approach is demonstrated through an active approach in classrooms via contributing to discussions and through note taking. Clive feels that through repetition of these actions he is able to retain the information which he is learning.</p> <p>An active approach is highlighted through Clive's preference for more practically based subjects. These subjects allow a physical application of knowledge where both body and mind are engaged in the learning process.</p> <p>For Clive this approach suits his learning process for he feels confident when acting as an active learner and this process also facilitates memorisation.</p>



5.9 Lifeworld of Ophelia

Ownership is a necessary part of learning

Ophelia's interest in learning is demonstrated when she talks of how in the recent past she has developed an awareness of her learning approach and devised a strategy to take ownership of her learning,

"One day, I just suddenly realised that all the people that I'd started college with – they were doing really well, it was coming up to exam times and I knew absolutely nothing at all about the work. So I learnt then that if I wanted to make something of my life and education, I was going to have to do it myself. I couldn't just follow everybody else so I made a conscious decision then that I would take my learning into my own hands."(p3,pg2,1)

This conscious change in attitude was an important step for Ophelia as it not only allowed for her to concentrate on her learning but on a more fundamental level it allowed her to take ownership of her life and learning. Ophelia believes that this ownership needs to be achieved in her learning and in the wider world, in her reference to life and education. The constant use of terms 'my life and education', 'in my own hands' and 'do it myself' indicate that this is indeed an ownership issue as she feels that what happens in her learning and wider life is within her own control. To do this however she feels that she must recognise her own responsibilities and make her own choices. For Ophelia it is particularly important that she regains control over her life as she often describes how she has been influenced by her friends which has at times led her astray from her desired learning path. A further example of this temporal change is shown when she describes how she chose a different assignment question from the other members in her group. By asserting her independence Ophelia found that her learning was enhanced as she selected a question that suited her needs and interests rather than her friends.

The theme of ownership was fairly constant for Ophelia and it is demonstrated in various temporal and spatial circumstances. For example, when she took ownership of making new friends when she started university, to a more personal example of how, when with her boyfriend, she found that to feel confident she had to take charge and present herself as an independent woman. Thus for Ophelia taking ownership of her learning and her life allows for her to develop both on a learning level and a personal level as the changes that occur through this ownership extend far beyond the boundaries of learning.

Learning; the development of self-hood

The concept of self-development is represented in the interviews, as Ophelia recognises that she no longer panics over her learning as she has changed and developed a better understanding of her learning. Ophelia feels that one of her main learning aims is to develop personally and feels that she has been successful to a certain extent in this aim,

“it meant that I could develop myself as person through knowledge or experience that influences how I – I feel, how I think... I don’t know how useful it will be but I do feel as though I’ve broadened my, for me – myself, yeah.”(p5,pg36,p2,pg37,3)

For Ophelia self-development is closely linked to the development of her knowledge and experience so that she broadens her insights of the world and learning. This development does not have a specific purpose and Ophelia is unclear what temporal and spatial relevance this development will have. However she anticipates that learning will enable self-development and this she feels will be necessary in the future. If Ophelia considers that she has developed through her learning she receives a positive emotional response,

“That makes me feel much better about the day and I feel as though I’ve achieved something. If I’ve listened and just made a few notes, I think I’ll be alright, I’ll be able to understand this when it comes to revision and it’ll help me then. And that’s a nice feeling but it doesn’t happen that often.”(p1,pg30,1)

Ophelia feels that when she has understood she feels confident and secure she will be able to respond to any assessment that she encounters. She argues that this development results in a sense of satisfaction that her learning efforts have not been in vain. How she values these efforts is of note for she indicates that the reward will be evident when she is assessed. However the frequency of this sense of achievement Ophelia feels is very limited, indicating that Ophelia rarely feels satisfied and secure that she can successfully undertake assessments.

Learning is a fearful activity

The activity of learning appears to be a fearful process for Ophelia as she feels that the experience leaves her vulnerable and open to criticism,

“I think I just get quite embarrassed really. It’s the same with having a photograph taken – it’s bare evidence of – when you’ve had your photograph taken – of what you look like and, and

erm, evidence of what I've said, and I didn't really want to look to see what I'd said to be honest"(p2,pg5,2)

By being able to physically see her thoughts Ophelia felt vulnerable as if what she wrote would somehow reveal her weaknesses, she uses the term 'bare evidence' almost as if that by presenting her learning to others she is bearing herself to them. This photographic image is then fixed, permanently on show and no longer within Ophelia's control, hence she feels vulnerable and exposed. Her difficulty in reviewing her interview transcript is similar to her reluctance to review assessed pieces of work as Ophelia avoids reflecting upon her work to such an extent that she eschews collecting her assignments. Ophelia feels that she will not only feel exposed by re-reading her work but also she believes that if she does alter anything it will only make it worse (even though she is sure improvements can be made) and thus increase her chances of failure.

Learning is a procrastinating process

As learning is a fearful process for Ophelia she often procrastinates to avoid engaging in the learning process, this she feels delays opportunity for any presentation of failure,

"And I've known all along and then, that scares me because I know I should have done it. And so then I'm too frightened to mention, to talk to anyone about it, so it's putting me back again."(p1,pg8,1)

This fear encourages Ophelia to procrastinate and she delays starting her assignments until the last possible minute. This only serves to increase the fear as she then feels worried or even depressed that she will tackle the task when it is too late. Despite this apparent high fear of failure Ophelia is fairly confident that she will pass her degree as she is optimistic that there are always elements which she can tackle competently. When and if failure occurs Ophelia internalises this and places all of the blame on herself rather than on anything external such as the lecturer,

"And it was easier to blame the lecturers because it's a bad lecturer but I'd, I'd already done them myself so it obviously wasn't his fault I couldn't do them because I knew them. It was my own fault for not finding out, again, how to do them."(p2,pg29,1)

This self-criticism is a frequent response to any perceived failure in her learning as she accepts all responsibility for any difficulties that she encounters. She believes that most of her problems occur because she does not put enough time and effort into her studies. Even if Ophelia does

believe that she has been successful in her studies she can find it difficult to accept good grades, as she feels she does not deserve them. Although Ophelia recognises her procrastinating approach and the frustration this causes her she finds it difficult to change her approach even though she would like to.

Due to her perceived lack of effort Ophelia is often unsatisfied with her academic performance believing that she has not given her best effort to her studies. This sense of dissatisfaction again only serves to lower Ophelia's self-confidence so much so that she even feels a sense of shame if she feels she has not applied enough effort. The only time that Ophelia does take some sort of satisfaction from her learning is when she has completed an assignment, however even this is short lived as she feels the experience is an anti-climax.

Learning is inextricably linked with self-confidence

The theme of confidence is reiterated throughout our meeting as Ophelia describes how learning has both increased and decreased her confidence levels. She now feels able to communicate with people more confidently and has the ability to learn but she feels she is not sufficiently confident for the workplace. She argues that more is expected from learned graduates and wonders if she will be able to meet their expectations, so her confidence in the workplace is lower than perhaps it would have been had she not undertaken her degree. Thus her confidence is very much affected by the spatiality of the experience, for when in the working world she has a greater concern of failure and therefore her confidence level is lowered.

To develop her confidence Ophelia uses the ploy of pretence, by pretending to be confident she eventually feels confident. Here she describes a social event that she attended with her boyfriend,

“ it would be more beneficial for me to go down, on my own, to introduce myself and give an aura of confidence, sort of almost pretend I was confident rather than go down with him and be his shadow. And it worked fantastically because it was almost like I was playing a part for the first part of the day but because I went down, hi, my name's Ophelia, David will be down in a minute, it, it gave me some confidence so that I could cope with the rest of the day with all his work colleagues and clients and things.”(p1,pg11,2)

Throughout the act of pretence Ophelia feels able to behave in a way she would be unable to do if she went as herself, as her confidence in reality grew she was able to detach herself from this pretence role and behave as herself. Thus this pretence enabled her to gain control and confidence in a situation which would normally have made her feel uncomfortable.

Learning can make Ophelia feel resentful

Ophelia describes how she is resentful of the time and effort that studying requires. Ophelia is resentful of the time she spends learning, as she would rather be socialising with her friends and perceives the time spent studying as something of a sacrifice. Her resentment increases when with her friends who do not have studying commitments,

“So they don’t give up their free time to do the work, so I resent staying here, doing the work when I know they’re out, I think. And again it’s me, just being selfish because they work during the day, so they get no free time during the day whereas I do but I know when they’re all out, at night, that I want to be there doing that but I can’t because I’m doing my exams.”(p4,pg23,1)

Ophelia finds it difficult to focus on her studies if her friends are enjoying themselves and although she can enjoy learning she would rather be socialising with friends. Within this quote Ophelia is again self-critical, she views this resentful attitude as being selfish as she recognises that her friends have different commitments. Ophelia relates her resentful attitude to her general lack of interest in her studies, as Ophelia states she is really only interested in one particular aspect of the course thus the remaining topics are of little interest. Without an interest in the subject she is resentful of the time it consumes,

“as I said as well I don’t like to give up the time to do things that I’m not really very interested in. So if it’s an assignment I’m quite enjoying, I’m not so bothered but if it’s one that I hate, I will leave it till the last minute for that reason, because I don’t want to spend time on it.”(p2,pg35,3)

The curse of procrastination

This lack of interest encourages Ophelia to procrastinate and she will seek out distractions instead of studying, for example watching television or tidying her room. The outcome of this approach often leaves Ophelia dissatisfied with the results of her studying as she claims that she does not devote sufficient time to satisfy her own standard of learning. Procrastination also leaves Ophelia with feelings of inadequacy as a learner, she believes that this approach is closely associated with laziness. Again the theme of self-criticism is evident as Ophelia demonstrates dissatisfaction with both her approach and the outcomes of procrastination.

Ophelia has recognised the difficulties that poor time management techniques have caused her and has taken steps to rectify this problem through making specific deadlines. Although she

finds this to be a successful strategy she at times will consciously avoid specific targets so that she can procrastinate, a strong indication that Ophelia is reluctant to remove procrastination from her learning. This theme of procrastination leads Ophelia to believe that her learning would be enhanced if others organised her learning life,

“But I don’t ever have a sense of urgency. I think I need a little bit more discipline – that’s – I need more discipline. I need someone to register me in, in the morning, at 9 O’clock and then not let me go home till 5, like at school. And if I have to stay within this building, then I will do the work. But as soon as I get home I’m not very good at disciplining myself unless it’s the last minute.”(p1,pg10,1)

She feels that if she is made to work and work on a nine to five basis by lecturers she would do the necessary work. However she feels that the university encourages her to discipline herself, a task which Ophelia finds very difficult. At face value this requirement of discipline from lecturers may seem at odds with her earlier demand to take ownership of her learning and life. However as Ophelia comments, she feels she is not fully accomplished at taking ownership of her learning in particular and so the balance of discipline and ownership for Ophelia are delicately poised, as she works towards her goal of ownership of her life and learning.

Finding the motivation for her studies is an issue for Ophelia as she feels that she has no real focus or reason for studying, it was something that Ophelia fell into as it allowed her to delay joining the working world. This lack of motivation is reflected when she describes how she only does enough work to pass the assessment set and rarely will do any extra work other than what is required. However Ophelia is motivated enough to ensure that her assignments are completed on time and that all the theories she includes are correct and current. Therefore she is motivated to a certain extent, that is to pass the course. It is the pressure of assignment deadlines which is a key motivator for Ophelia as this results in feelings of urgency,

“ I only do it when I’ve got a deadline and then it’s almost as if I need it, I think. It’s an urgency to start taking things in and to make an effort to do a lot of things, otherwise I do 1 or 2 things and forget about it and go back.”(p3,pg8,2)

Despite this assertion that pressure and deadlines improve her motivation, Ophelia is not certain that pressure always benefits her learning for the simple reason she has never worked without pressure,

“But I’ve always said, oh I work better under pressure, but I’ve no idea really if I do because I’ve never done it not under pressure.”(p2,pg5,1)

This issue is highlighted when she describes how she finds it easier to learn when no pressure is present as she enjoys reading in bed when she can relax with the text. Therefore it would be too simplistic to say that pressure does or does not motivate Ophelia as it is highly dependant upon the circumstances, for assessment deadlines seem to offer an incentive but if learning is for understanding the information a more relaxed atmosphere is suitable.

Learning rewards through personal satisfaction

Although Ophelia can be motivated by assessment deadlines she is not focused on the attainment of high grades. It is important for Ophelia that she feels she has done her 'best' attempt and has gained understanding. At times she is reluctant to alter her work even if she believes that her grade could be improved as she just wants the assignment completed and handed in. Despite this lack of ambition for high grades Ophelia expresses regret that she didn't always work to the best of her ability. She is especially concerned about her grades in the final year as this contributes greatly to her degree classification,

"Now, if I got that (an assignment) I would definitely make the effort to do it. I know that I would but I think maybe because it's my final year. Because it contributes more and there's more worry now and it's here, I'm finishing and if I do badly, I haven't got another year to write it. I've got to do well, this year. All the marks go towards it and I've not got another chance" (p1,2, pg22,2)

The quotation demonstrates the temporal complexity of achievement motivation in Ophelia's lifeworld. When Ophelia reflects upon what motivated her to learn in the past she cites the pressures of deadlines as a key reason. However she feels that this approach has not encouraged her to achieve high grades as she, today, would like to achieve. This reflection indicates that over time Ophelia's motivations have somewhat broadened to include, at least in part, the attainment of what she perceives are high grades. Ophelia's main motivators when learning are however more focused upon the achievement of personal satisfaction, which for Ophelia equates with happiness. She describes a lack of career ambition for like the friends she describes, she does not necessarily want a high powered job and all the perceived stresses which that would entail. It is more important for her to be employed in a position in which she is happy and it is this aim that motivates her, she believes that through learning she will be allowed choices in employment so that she can find a position which she enjoys,

"But now I'm doing it because I want to have more choice in a job, especially after – I mean, I've been in education now for 17 years or something and I don't particularly want to be doing

something, work wise, that I'm not happy at. I want to be able to decide where I feel I would enjoy working and then look for jobs in that area, ideally”(p2,pg26,1)

Thus the rewards for learning via her degree relate to her belief that when she enters the working world she will be rewarded through job satisfaction. Ophelia thinks that this is only likely to happen if she engages in the learning process as this will enable her to have freedom in her choice of employment.

Men and women learn for different reasons

Ophelia believes that men have different motivators to herself and women generally for she feels that they are more likely to respond to monetary and status rewards. In the course of our interviews she describes how her boyfriend is very influenced by these factors,

“He seems to want everything and if he – he would never take a drop in wages. Never in a million years, even if it made him happier. Because he can't, he can't even – he hasn't got that responsibility, but his problems are not big problems. But, and but they don't make him happy but he would never take a drop in wages to be happier.”(p2,pg28,3)

Here she talks of how in her experience men, when learning, are more motivated by external factors such as money and perhaps more importantly they are prepared to do this at the sacrifice of happiness and job satisfaction. Ophelia feels that as men aim for status and financial rewards this may explain the disparity of more males than females holding senior positions. She concludes that men are more career ambitious generally, therefore there will be more male managers than female. Ophelia describes the motives of women generally as falling into one of two camps either they have the same aspirations as their male counterparts or like herself they are not very concerned about a career as it is more important that they are happy,

“Well 50% (of women)- half want the same (as men), want the status – that I spoke to – but the other half, surprisingly, aren't, aren't motivated. They want to be happy and that doesn't involve a career. Well that might involve a career but it wouldn't bother them if it didn't, if they didn't work again, if they got married tomorrow.”(p3,pg26,3)

To demonstrate her point that some women do not want a high-flying career she uses the example of her sister who was unhappy when temporarily promoted. Her sister did not enjoy this new role which involved managing her friends as she felt she had too much responsibility. According to Ophelia she missed the close collaboration which she previously had with colleagues, now she was seen as management not a friend and this caused some conflict. Thus

one of the key features which Ophelia believes is important for her sister and women generally is the need for collaboration and the difficulty to obtain this at a senior level. When the opportunity arose for her sister to step back down to her previous position it was welcomed, Ophelia expresses doubt that a man would make the same decision even if they too were unhappy.

Ophelia also identifies gender differences more specific to university life. In the classroom although there are more women than men in her groups Ophelia finds that men are more dominant in discussion, particularly when they take the lead in a group debates. This may be in part related to men having greater confidence to speak in a tutorial setting, which Ophelia finds very difficult to do,

“I’m alright once I’ve said the first word. When – it’s actually opening my mouth, to get the first word out, and the sound of my voice and knowing that other people are listening. Once I start talking I’m fine. But it, I find it very hard to actually start talking”(p4,pg17,2)

Ophelia feels that this difficulty in starting discussion is common to women far more than it is to men. The males in the group seem happy to lead the conversation and do not appear concerned that others are listening as they may enjoy the attention. This attention may prevent the women in the group from speaking although Ophelia clearly indicates that this feeling of insecurity dissipates after a short time.

Although Ophelia has certain images of gender differences she is at pains to point out that she may use stereotypes which are evident in society, for example men are lazy as women are busy both at work and in the home. She also points to her limited experience of working with men as many of her groups women outnumber the men and most of her group work has included all female members. This lack of experience raises questions for Ophelia as to whether her reflections are accurate, for she expresses concern that her perceptions may be based upon stereotypes. This concern may be reflective of Ophelia’s insecure approach to learning as here too she feels insecure that her opinions are truly reflective. This comment also indicates that Ophelia looks beyond surface impressions for she questions her gendered perceptions and does not accept them at face value. Despite these concerns the gendered differences that Ophelia describes do represent her experience.

Learning is an insecure process without the involvement of others

The issue of collaboration discussed in the context of gender has a very personal influence on Ophelia as she finds collaborating with her peers of crucial importance when learning. Ophelia

finds she gains considerable reassurance and security from collaborating with her friends particularly when she has done little study,

“I feel like crying because I’ve not done any work – phoned Jo and Carol, they’re other people at University. Jo had done some work, Carol had done none. So that made me feel better erm and I said to Carol I’d phone her tomorrow to check how much she’d done. And we do that quite often – we both do it – we phone each other ‘cos she’s as bad as me.”(p4,pg6,2)

Here Ophelia describes the deep emotional turmoil that she was going through, to find consolation and more importantly that she is not alone, she relied upon her close friends to provide this necessary support. It appears that Ophelia has established a support network that provides her with reassurance in the learning process. The emphasis on reassurance and support rather than the content of learning indicates that this sense of belonging relates more to her need for emotional rather than educational support. This collaboration also allows Ophelia to benchmark her learning process which she often finds comforting as the people she contacts she believes will have done no more than herself. This insecure approach and need for reassurance is reflected in her description of her wanting company when she enters the lecture theatre for without she feels insecure. Thus it is not just for learning purposes that Ophelia depends upon her friends but also for emotional support when she feels under pressure and perhaps a little depressed.

It is not just friends and other students that influence Ophelia. She often refers to the impact of her parents on her learning. The parental influence encourages Ophelia to continue with her studies in times of difficulty as she wants her parents to be proud of her achievements. She often talks of how she would be letting her parents down should she not complete the course, feeling that if she was not to finish they would be more disappointed than herself and she would not receive their affirmation. Although they do not apply pressure and would not express disappointment, Ophelia believes that they would be.

Learning provides a sense of belonging

Her need to collaborate with friends has led Ophelia to select modules that she herself did not really want to study but she felt it would be too risky for her to choose a module that she would study alone,

“I thought to myself now do I want to go into a group, people I don’t know and, if I struggle with something, have no-one to talk about it with? Or no-one to ask if I don’t understand something? Or, shall I change my module for something I would not particularly want to do but

know that I would have the support there if I struggled? And that's what I did, I changed my module and did it with everybody else because I didn't want to take the risk, with it being the final year and I'd have my dissertation and everything. I'd be struggling with the subjects and having nobody around that I felt I could talk to about it."(p4,pg18,2)

The role of others in her learning is so influential that Ophelia selected the full time mode of study so that she could collaborate as she doubted whether she would have successfully completed the course without interaction with others. The ongoing emotional and practical support that Ophelia shares with her familiar group of peers provides a sense of belonging.

Without this familiarity learning becomes a risky prospect. Thus for Ophelia to be comfortable in the learning process and avoid the risk of failure she must believe that she belongs in the learning cohort so that any problems she may encounter can be shared with her peers. This dependence on others is supported by Ophelia's earlier claim that at present she does not feel sufficiently confident to take complete ownership of her learning. Further as Ophelia believes learning may be a mutually supportive process then this need to belong may not be considered to be a contradiction for her desire for ownership, for ownership does not mean the negation of others.

This desire to belong, so that she is part of a supportive environment encourages Ophelia is a concerted effort to build relationships, although she wasn't comfortable introducing herself to others and building relationships it is necessary if she is to feel secure and accepted by her peers. By making these friendships Ophelia believes she has obtained a level of affirmation by the others on her course and she needs this if she is avoid feeling like a conspicuous newcomer.

Learning is a shared experience

Ophelia describes further benefits of collaboration as allowing her to share ideas with her friends, which allow her to view differing perspectives on issues. This benefit is a temporal revelation to Ophelia as in the past she has not really utilised collaboration specifically for learning purposes. It was not until her final year of study when she got together with her friends to discuss a topic that she fully realised all of the benefits that collaboration can bring her. Ophelia finds that in her group of friends the sharing of learning is supported by the differing roles that each of them adopts when collaborating. These differences emerge from a personality and approach to learning basis, for example Ophelia provides humour and one of her friends

offers common sense. The different perspectives encourage group unity and cohesion as each provides individual elements which when combined ensure all members needs are met.

Due to the structure of the course Ophelia finds it difficult to collaborate with other students as much as she would like. Many of the people that she worked with during her second year of study she has not seen since. This has occurred for two main reasons, firstly, there is limited contact time where students gather and meet with the lecturer and secondly the modular scheme means that students are studying different modules therefore are frequently in different classes. Even if Ophelia does not utilise all opportunities of collaboration she finds it reassuring if she can share her learning. Ophelia does not feel the course structure allows for both the real and imagined opportunity to collaborate.

Collaboration may be a distraction from the process of learning

Collaboration can at times hinder Ophelia's learning as others may distract her from her learning. She describes how previously her friends were not interested in learning and spent their time socialising rather than studying and she found it very easy to follow them. The reassurance that she receives from friends is at times misplaced, for if she is incorrect in an assumption it is not always highlighted by her friends,

“And when I spoke about it to other people they said, they said, oh it's all in the case study, so I thought, this'll be alright, it'll be quite easy. And then I started to look at my notes that I'd done, in the lectures, and I thought, I don't really understand any of this. And then when I came to do the assignment I just thought to myself – as I was writing it – it can't, this can't be the real correct answer 'cos it's there in, in the case study. Surely, they don't just want me to put what's in the case study? But still, whether it was because of the people who said it was just – it was all in the case study – I tried to reassure myself I didn't need to do any more. But I knew, I did note, in myself, that I should have put more theory in it. “(p3,pg22,2)

The end result of this reliance was an unhappy learning experience in which Ophelia felt insecure and an assignment that she was dissatisfied with. Another problem that Ophelia encountered is when working in a group they will consistently work in their own specialist areas, which she felt resulted in students limiting their learning as they would only focus on their areas of strength. She feels that unless they learn all areas learning can be limited.

Interaction with the expert lecturer facilitates understanding

Although she respects her parents and requires their support she does not feel they are able to provide expert support as they themselves have not experienced Higher Education and so if she receives specific advice from them she is unlikely to use it. This differs from her perception of the lecturer whom she believes is an expert in their subject area. Through interacting with lecturers she finds understanding is enabled, particularly when this interaction is personal. The personal attributes of the lecturer are also important, notably, humour and if they demonstrate interest in the subject. If these features are present she finds it an enjoyable learning experience which results in understanding.

The development of a relationship with lecturers has not yet occurred for Ophelia finds it almost impossible to gain personal interaction as there is limited contact time with the lecturers and also she finds it difficult to gain access to a tutor outside of class time. She finds it difficult to access the lecturers not necessarily because they are always unavailable but because she lacks the confidence to approach them and it would take some effort for her to find them. Even though she has not built a personal relationship with lecturers she has recently at least been able to approach one to ask questions. She found this experience to be very beneficial as it not only gave her confidence but it supported her learning as the lecturer was able to clarify some misunderstandings, by which she is able to understand the intrinsic nature of the materials and understand what is expected of her (in terms of assessment demands),

“she just gave me the ability to go up and just say, would this be relevant to the assignment? Which isn’t a lot to ask but I wouldn’t normally have done it to any, I wouldn’t have even said, would this be relevant to the assignment? Whereas I would with her.”(p1,pg29,2)

Learning is a habit

The learning process that Ophelia adopts has now formed into a habit and she finds it now very difficult to change how she learns even though she is critical of her learning approach. Despite her desire to change the way in which she learns, force of habit prevents her from changing and she is often left feeling frustrated as she feels her process can be unproductive. This feeling of unproductiveness is particularly relevant for Ophelia as she wants her process to be as efficient as possible,

“I felt frustrated because there didn’t appear to be that much. Just because I only listed the titles down and I thought it’s taken me so long to do this and I hadn’t really got that much.”(p2,pg4,2)

Ophelia had given much thought to her learning process and is still undecided if she did alter it whether it would benefit her, when she has tried her results have been the same as in the past. She is also wary of altering her learning process in the event she should fail, as her current process has been reasonably successful in terms of grades. Again indicating that Ophelia's measurement of learning is closely involved with assessment.

Learning requires a specific focus and structure

To be successful when learning Ophelia requires two elements, focus and structure. The first issue is important for Ophelia, as she needs to be able to have a specific focus whether it is for a particular topic or for assessment. By focusing on a specific issue Ophelia finds her concentration is sharpened and her propensity to understand is increased,

"But because I knew where I was going, from the start, I could get books around it and get a real thorough understanding and then pay attention in magazines and newspapers and I got loads of articles there. And I had to, and I just had loads of things to write about "(p1,pg24,2)

The initial impression that may be taken from this quotation may be considered to be a contradiction to Ophelia's earlier claim that she does not put sufficient effort into her studies. However it is necessary to put it into context of Ophelia's self-critical attitude which often results in a negative portrayal of her approach. Thus Ophelia's claims of lack of effort need to be considered within this background and so her perceptions of lack of effort may be harsh.

The focus that is offered by knowing what is expected of her provides Ophelia with a clear direction and she is able to take security from that which supports her learning. By having focus and direction Ophelia feels secure in her learning and enjoys the process much more. Although Ophelia wants her learning focused at times it is difficult, particularly, when starting assignments or when in a lecture theatre and her mind begins to wander.

Similar to her need for focus Ophelia requires a structure in her learning, when note taking Ophelia uses numerous techniques to place order in her learning. One of her key tactics to structure her learning is through reading everything that relates to a topic and then colour coding her notes to which different points are referenced. Through this complex and in-depth preparation Ophelia tries to structure her notes so that she can build a complete picture. By engaging in this thorough process Ophelia feels less insecure in her learning approach as she is more confident that she will complete her assessment satisfactorily by doing what is expected of her. This process provides comfort for Ophelia as she can see all of her answers for an

assignment question before writing her response. Thus she needs to be able to see her final conclusions at the start of writing rather than at the end,

“It’s like I would rather know, before I’ve written, finished my literature review, I would rather know what the answer to my analysis and conclusion are. Because I’m not comfortable with doing a literature review, not knowing that I’ve written about the right things, which is a bit of a problem really.”(p1,pg3,2)

However this need to structure does not always produce the outcomes Ophelia hopes for as she argues that she makes so many notes that she can find it difficult to order and structure them so that a coherent answer is produced. So while this process enables understanding it can cause some confusion as to how to bring a massive wealth of information together.

Learning should be an equitable process

Ophelia has strong feelings about the fairness of the learning process as she believes that effort should be rewarded via grades and those who put in more effort should received a higher grade. The need for fairness is not presented as a case for herself rather she feels at times her friends are treated unfairly as they put in a lot of effort and this is not always reflected in the grades. When this occurs Ophelia feels very guilty as she feels that her friend who she felt had put in more effort should have received a higher grade,

“she deserves to do really well because she’s working really hard but she got one of her assignments back and it was a “D”. And we’d all done better than that and we’re – and it makes us feel like, our other friends – me and my friends, feel terrible about it because she deserves to do really well. And I hope, at the end of the course, she does better than all of us cos she’s, she deserves it for all the work she puts in for it.”(p1,pg5,1)

Thus Ophelia does not want to do better than her friends as she feels that she has not earned a higher grade than her friend for she has not put as much effort into the learning process. From this example it can be seen that Ophelia does not find the assessment process fair for if it were, her friend would have achieved the higher grade. Only when effort and grade are equal does Ophelia perceive the learning process to be fair for all, even if that results in her receiving lower grades. If fairness is achieved Ophelia would not feel guilty and would be satisfied both her friend and herself would receive a grade they deserved, however Ophelia’s self-critical approach may have an impact on what Ophelia perceives is a deserving grade. Until equity is achieved assessment grades can serve as an emotionally dividing dilemma which Ophelia feels can separate friends.

Learning occurs in particular places

The spatiality in which Ophelia learns also affects her learning, when actually in the university Ophelia finds it easier to learn than when trying to learn at home. Due to the few contact hours Ophelia does not attend university as much as she would like and thus finds her learning negatively affected. Ophelia identifies two reasons for this preference, firstly she believes it would introduce improved time management and secondly she finds there are many more distractions at home,

“ And I know, I know that I would have more than enough time to do all the work I should do if I stayed within University but as soon as I get home, I’ve been in University for an hour, for a lecture, and I just want to go home. And then if I switch the television on, that’s it. I’ve had it, I’m watching all the rubbish on TV and just switching off totally.”(p1,pg10,1)

The distractions and poor time management are issues that Ophelia wishes to avoid as she finds it easy to be distracted and procrastinate . By being in the university these problems to a large extent are removed. However she finds that some tasks are exclusive to particular places e.g. research can only occur at university and the writing up of assignments only takes place in her home. For her learning to be most beneficial Ophelia needs to find the right place for the right task, if this match is not made she is uncomfortable in her surrounding and her learning is restricted.

Memorisation versus understanding

A further key issue that was raised through the course of our interviews is Ophelia’s learning process. Her basic learning process involved three key stages, reading, note taking and reviewing, although she finds the last stage the most difficult to accomplish as often there is little time to review. Ophelia finds by making notes she is able to condense the material and this enables her to memorise the material, however she is only able to memorise if she understands the topic in a way that makes sense to herself.

The order of assessment affects Ophelia’s learning also as often she is assessed by coursework and then this is followed by an exam,

“.. when I do my coursework, it’s the first stage I will have reached in having to understand it. Up to then I will have just copied notes out. Then I will have to understand it and I’ll do reading around all my coursework and by the time I get to my exam, I know a bit more because

I've had to understand it for my course work so then I'll be able to start, concentrate more on my revision."(p6,pg33,3)

The term understanding for Ophelia often relates to assessment, in particular coursework. When she has completed the coursework aspect Ophelia feels that she has a better understanding of materials. It is interesting that for Ophelia the learning process involves both memorisation and understanding. The process is however quite distinct, Ophelia argues that her learning involves firstly understanding the materials and this is often achieved through the accomplishment of coursework. It is only when understanding is achieved that Ophelia feels ready to condense notes so that she can memorise materials for her examinations. Further exploration of Ophelia's lifeworld indicates that understanding is of greater importance to Ophelia than memorisation,

"I can't remember the name of the 5 points but I can talk about all the 5 points. Whereas everybody else revises and learns the name of them, I can, I know them – well I probably know them – but I couldn't probably remember them in an exam. I would just have to write what they were – 5 points. Point 1 is to do with this."(p3,pg3,3)

The example refers to Ophelia discussing her approach to learning in an exam setting. She perceives her approach differs from her friends as her aim when revising is not to remember the key names but it is to understand what these issues mean to her. While she does associate exams with memorisation, in terms of the revision process, this is not to the exclusion of understanding. The expectation of understanding can be increased or decreased depending upon her own expectations, for example, Ophelia has no expectation of being able to reach a level of understanding of quantitative subjects. Whereas she believes she is able to and so tries to understand more qualitative subjects. If understanding is achieved Ophelia gains a deep sense of achievement that makes her feel happy and content.

Understanding is a holistic process

Ophelia's approach to understanding could be described as holistic. She often talks of how she needs to be able to see the whole picture and understand the subject in its entirety before she can put pen to paper,

"I'm not too good at finishing stages or anything. They have to – cos I tend to think of, of my assignments as a whole, not different parts in it and I think that must be, just again, because I need a full understanding. I cannot think of my assignments within separate sections. I think of them as the whole assignment to be put in at the end."(p4,pg10,2)

Through thinking holistically Ophelia is able to see the subject as a whole and perhaps more importantly for her she is able to plan the whole of her assignments and know what the conclusions will be. Thus she is able to take security and certainty from this approach and as discussed earlier this is crucial for Ophelia.

Reading is often utilised in order to obtain understanding as it often provides depth to her understanding. However Ophelia feels that she in the past has not done enough reading and this has prevented her from understanding. Paradoxically if she believes she has read too much this also prevents her ability to understand as this can lead to confusion. Despite these difficulties the act of reading supports her learning in two ways, firstly it allows her to explore the topics in greater depth and secondly it provides her with evidence that justify her opinion.

The use of examples when learning is a further aid, they provide her the opportunity to see how theory can apply in the real world. It is the examples that remain with Ophelia long after the theory has been forgotten. These real life examples allow Ophelia to see how the theory that she is learning is relevant to the outside world. Without the belief that what she is learning is relevant Ophelia often finds her interest waning and frequently she will not understand the topic. However Ophelia's attitude towards a topic's relevance is highly dependent upon her difficulty in understanding this topic, for if she finds it difficult she will dismiss the subject as irrelevant,

"Some things are totally irrelevant to me and I just haven't got any interest in them, sort of like I've said before – several times – I don't like quants – that's totally irrelevant to me, I've got no idea why I would need it and I don't want to learn about it."(p2,pg16,2)

Ophelia claims that much of her learning in Higher Education will not be relevant for her in the future. She finds it difficult to apply her past work experience to her learning presently and believes that this will be true of her future working life. Only in exceptional circumstances can she imagine applying her learning to her employment life.

Understanding can be measured

If understanding is achieved Ophelia recognises this through certain indicators. Firstly she is able to understand the material in a way that relates to her own experiences and this personal emphasis encourages Ophelia to reach her own conclusions and opinions on a topic. The second indicator that demonstrates understanding is when the information makes sense to her. She describes how when things do makes sense to her she has the feeling that she has always known what is being described,

“some things seem so obvious, I think, I must be missing the point. They can’t seriously want me to write that down when it seems so obvious really. but, on the other hand, those theories that are obvious and that I understand, I become interested in because I can talk about them and I can write about them.”(p1, pg17, 2)

When understanding is realised Ophelia describes how she is not learning anything revolutionary, rather it is almost as if she feels what she is learning is so obvious she is bewildered that she did not already know it. The third and final indicator of understanding occurs when she can explain it to others from an informed perspective and go on to defend her position should anyone challenge it. Although she has understood to an extent that she is able to discuss issues Ophelia has not been able to understand a topic to a point where she can defend her opinion as she is at present only able to see her own perspective. Thus Ophelia has not yet reached a stage at which she can be completely happy that full understanding has occurred.

Conclusion

The phenomenological analysis derived from the series of interviews held with Ophelia present many different aspects of Ophelia’s learning lifeworld. Much of Ophelia’s descriptions relate the involvement of others. She considers that to be successful in her learning she must feel a sense of belonging with those with whom she learns, without such assurance Ophelia is insecure in her learning. Paradoxically Ophelia also wishes to take full ownership of her learning and reduce her reliance upon others by taking responsibility for her choices and actions. However, this at present, has not been achieved as Ophelia is fearful that any change to her learning may result in failure. This fear of appearing a failure often results in Ophelia adopting a procrastinating approach to her learning. She considers that if she delays her learning, failure is in turn delayed.

The learning process according to Ophelia should be an equitable one, that is, it should be fair to all involved. Presently she considers that effort is not always rewarded in terms of assessment grades. She indicates that this can result in an emotional divide between herself and her friends. Ophelia’s aim when engaging in the learning process is to gain understanding. She is able to measure her understanding when she can relate her own personal experiences to the information and relate it to the world around her. A further aim of learning for Ophelia is the sense of achievement she obtains when she develops personally through knowledge and experience. As a woman she considers intrinsic achievements, in terms of self-satisfaction as being the most valuable achievements.

In summary it can be seen that for Ophelia learning is a complex matter which relates greatly to other aspects of her life. Generally she appears to be self-critical and is dissatisfied with certain aspects of her learning approach, which she hopes in the future will change. Despite such claims Ophelia also considers that she completes her learning satisfactorily, again indicating that for Ophelia learning is a deeply complex matter.

5.10 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Ophelia

Ownership of learning and a fearful approach

OWNERSHIP –NOEMA	FEARFUL APPROACH –NOESIS
<p>For Ophelia learning provides an opportunity to take ownership of her lifeworld. Her temporal experiences have taught Ophelia that if she is to take ownership of her life and education then she must make her own decisions. This process is difficult for Ophelia as she relies heavily on collaborative support and finds the individuality of ownership daunting.</p> <p>The notion of ownership leads Ophelia to internalise any perceived failures in her learning and this may result in low feelings of self-esteem.</p> <p>Despite Ophelia’s aim to gain ownership of her learning she indicates that she is unable to take full control. She finds that much of her motivation to learn is derived from parental expectations. Ophelia is keen to be a successful learner not for herself but for her parents, so that her place is validated.</p> <p>She also points to her need to have discipline imposed from external sources, notably her parents and the university. Thus Ophelia feels she has not realised full ownership of her learning and life, however she still seeks to achieve this goal through her learning.</p>	<p>Ophelia’s approach to ownership is generally a fearful one and this can at times prevent Ophelia from taking full ownership of her life and learning.</p> <p>This fear is demonstrated in several ways in Ophelia’s lifeworld, notably in her reluctance to amend her assessed assignments for she feels this may lead to failure. She is also fearful when she procrastinates for this prevents her from learning until eventually she becomes “too frightened to mention it”.</p> <p>These feelings have in some ways grown for now she has nearly completed her degree. She feels that expectations placed upon her have grown thus increasing her chances of failure. These feelings of fear often leave Ophelia with feelings of low motivation and self-esteem.</p> <p>To overcome these fears Ophelia requires courage and this facilitates ownership. One of the key ways Ophelia takes ownership is when she collaborates with others. When interacting with others Ophelia requires courage to present herself under a false persona of a confident person with high self-esteem. This pretence of confidence can ultimately lead Ophelia to feel confident and thus regain ownership of her life.</p>

Learning as a way of achievement and an equitable approach

NOEMA-ACHIEVEMENT	NOESIS-EQUITABLE APPROACH
<p>For Ophelia learning facilitates a sense of achievement. She argues that achievement is realised when she develops personally through knowledge and experience and she has broader horizons within her lifeworld. She feels that as a woman she recognises achievement differently to men. She argues the embodiment of gender leads men to feel achievement is related to status and money. Whereas women are more interested in enjoying life and see education as offering a way to reach this goal.</p> <p>Achievement may also occur in the short term, for example when she completes assessed work for her course. When achievement is realised Ophelia feels confident and her self-esteem is supported and this provides motivation to engage in the learning process.</p> <p>However Ophelia finds that opportunities for achievement are rare and short lived she believes that until she becomes more confident then this will continue to be the case.</p>	<p>It is important to Ophelia that she perceives the learning process as being equitable. She argues that real achievement is only realised when the process is deemed to be fair.</p> <p>For Ophelia fairness is represented in the learning process through effort and grades the higher the effort the higher the grade and vice versa. Through an equitable approach the emotional divisions that can separate friends are removed.</p> <p>The importance of intersubjective equity is also emphasised, for Ophelia feels it is important that others are treated fairly in the learning process. She describes her feelings of guilt when she receives higher grades than her friends who made greater effort.</p> <p>She feels that if her place is to be secure with her peers then she needs to be accepted and she questions whether this can occur if she is resented for her success.</p>

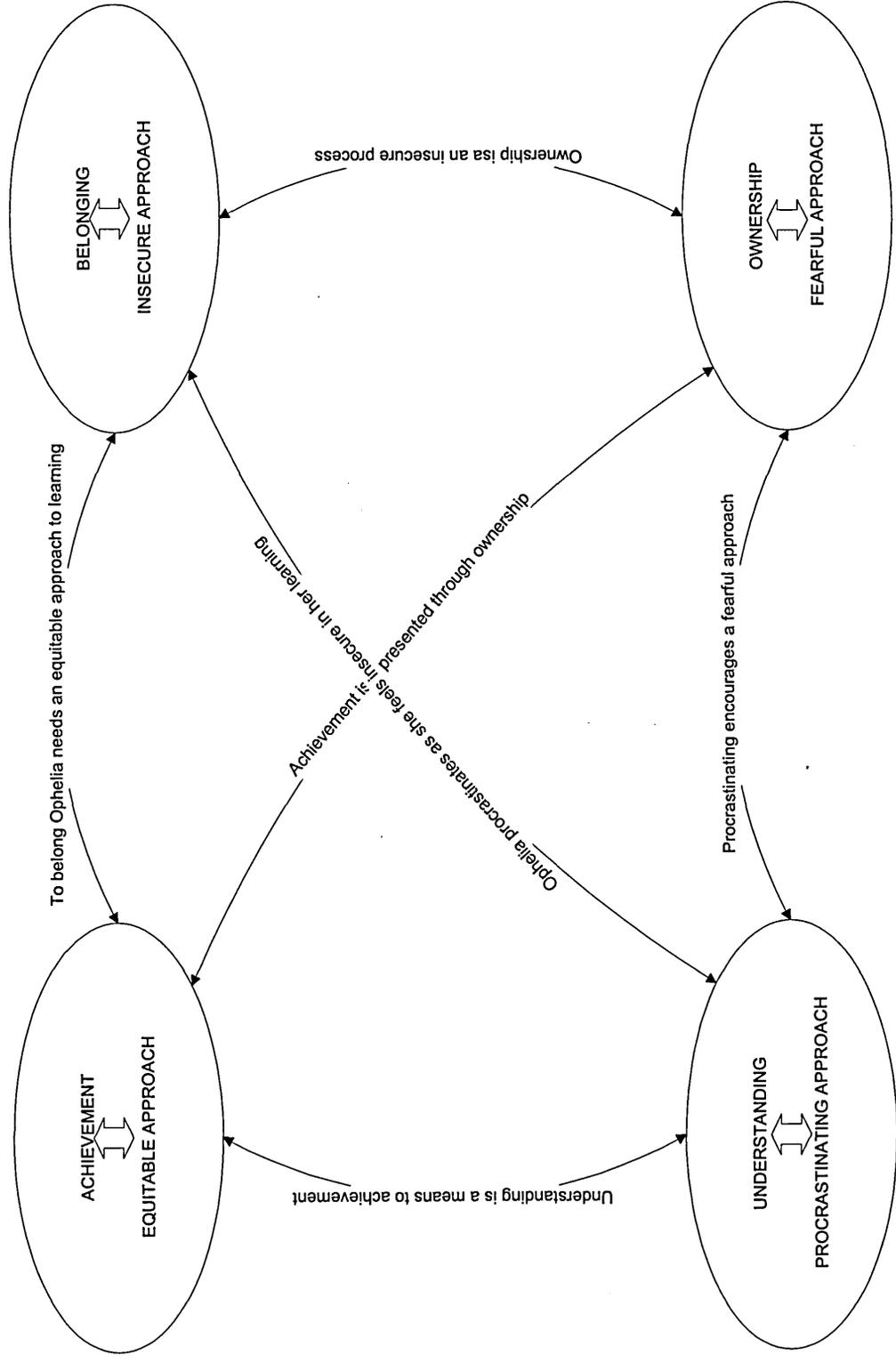
Learning is belonging and an insecure approach

NOEMA-BELONGING	NOESIS –INSECURE APPROACH
<p>The object of learning for Ophelia is to achieve a sense of belonging in her learning environment. Many of her life choices have been based upon her need to belong. She places great emphasis on being familiar with those she collaborates with and considers it too great a risk to study with those she does not know. She argues that collaboration with those outside of her clique is difficult, as there are limited opportunities to befriend those in her broader learning environment.</p> <p>When removed from her clique Ophelia can feel exposed, however her recent lived experiences have indicated that she can belong in other social groupings.</p> <p>Ophelia also describes belonging in more spatial terms, as she needs to be familiar with the environment in which she learns also. When entering an unfamiliar lecture theatre with unfamiliar people Ophelia feels conspicuous as she is not sufficiently confident to do this. However through adopting an alternate identity a playing a confident part Ophelia is able to feel that she has a recognised place within her lifeworld.</p> <p>She argues that her need to belong is much stronger because she is a woman and she feels a greater need for acceptance as this confirms her identity and boosts her self-esteem.</p>	<p>For Ophelia belonging removes some of the insecurities in her lifeworld but paradoxically the process of achieving belonging is an insecure one.</p> <p>Ophelia’s need for security in her learning is demonstrated in her structured approach to the learning process for she establishes all of her responses before tackling any questions. Although Ophelia wishes to participate and belong in her academic environment her feelings of insecurity may initially prevent her from collaborating. However once in a familiar place she is able to contribute.</p> <p>The interview process provides a further example of how Ophelia can feel insecure, particularly in the presence of others. She felt that the interview transcript presented “bare evidence” and left her feeling somewhat exposed and vulnerable, as this evidence was available for myself to read.</p> <p>Collaboration with others is a key tool employed by Ophelia to overcome these emotions as she has found that surrounding herself with familiar people and places is reassuring and provides her with confidence.</p> <p>Without assurance from others that she does belong Ophelia finds these emotions of insecurity are heightened and her self-esteem lowered.</p>

Learning is understanding and a procrastinating approach

NOEMA-UNDERSTANDING	NOESIS-PROCRASTINATING APPROACH
<p>The object of learning for Ophelia is understanding and this is her aim when engaging in the learning process.</p> <p>She feels that she has achieved understanding when she can relate the information to herself and draw her own conclusions about a particular issues in a way that makes sense to her. A further indication of understanding is given when she can relate the information she is learning to alternate times and places in her lived world.</p> <p>Ophelia believes that real understanding can be measured when she is able to discuss an issue with others from an informed perspective and she can defend her position if challenged. She feels that at present she has not reached this level of understanding.</p> <p>To achieve understanding Ophelia shares her learning with others arguing that through collaboration she is able to gain an insight into various perspectives.</p> <p>Her overall approach could be described as holistic as she needs to view the whole picture.</p> <p>Although Ophelia's main aim is understanding she recognises the part memorisation plays in her learning. However if Ophelia is to memorise material she needs to understand it first.</p> <p>For Ophelia the ability to understand is the true test of learning and is more valuable than academic grades.</p>	<p>Although the aim of Ophelia's learning is understanding she finds that she is not always able to achieve this goal when she adopts a procrastinating approach.</p> <p>Ophelia argues that time and understanding are intrinsically related for the more time she spends learning the greater her opportunity for understanding. However as she has a tendency to procrastinate she feels that she does not spend sufficient time on her studies to achieve understanding. Her procrastinating approach is heavily influenced by spatiality as she feels that when learning in the parental home there are too many potential distractions. Furthermore Ophelia indicates that certain learning tasks are suited to specific learning environments.</p> <p>Procrastination is more likely to occur when learning subjects which she dislikes as she finds gaining the motivation to learn these topics difficult. In these situations feelings of resentment can materialise.</p> <p>In order to avoid procrastination Ophelia incorporates deadlines into her learning however she often finds they are not effective unless imposed from an external source.</p> <p>The result of procrastinating often leaves Ophelia feeling pressure and while this may motivate her to engage in the learning process it may on occasions prevent Ophelia from understanding, which may be why Ophelia is keen to change her procrastinating approach.</p>

Ophelia's Noema Noesis Relationships



5.11 The Lifeworld of Diane

Learning enables personal development

During our interviews Diane demonstrated a strong interest in her own personal development, indeed this was one of the key reasons Diane volunteered her participation in this research. This focus on personal development was demonstrated in a number of ways alternate to our interview dialogue. Diane felt it necessary to record the interviews herself (even though she would receive a copy of the transcript) and similarly she photocopied her completed ASSIST questionnaire. When asked why she wanted this information Diane stated that it would help her development, personally.

Self-development can be measured through others

The theme of personal development is continual throughout our meetings as Diane would refer to how learning facilitated her development. If Diane felt that personal development had been achieved then she considers her learning as successful. One of ways she is able to measure her development is through comparison with her peers,

“ She’s really changed and other students I see them changing and developing, and I’m thinking am I keeping up with them? ... but it’s again the way you look at yourself sometimes isn’t it, too critically and I’m thinking I don’t think I have changed as much as they have.”(p3,4,pg6,2)

The meaning of personal development for Diane is alluded to in this quotation for she describes it as a temporal change. As Diane learns she expects that over time she will change and this represents to her, personal development,

“Yes, I think you go through stages and you go through several weeks where you feel you’re not learning anything at all. And you look around and you feel that everyone else is moving on, that you’re not, that you’re somehow stuck. But if you actually voice that, you find other people are thinking just the same thing and they think you’re getting on a lot better than they are.”(p4, pg7,2)

For Diane personal development is achieved when she considers that she has changed which she measures through feelings of continual forward development and this is achieved by her involvement in the learning process. The measurement of personal development for Diane

requires the involvement of others in her learning process. By reflecting upon the changes she sees in those with whom she learns Diane feels enabled to benchmark her personal development as she measures how much she perceives she has changed in comparison with others. Thus for Diane personal development is highly intersubjective in nature.

When this comparison has been made in the past Diane often felt dissatisfied with her personal development and learning performance. She argued that she often felt others were developing more rapidly than she herself and for Diane this meant that they were learning more than herself. Diane's temporal experiences have however changed this perception as Diane now feels that she is keeping up with her peers, as she considers in the past she felt that she was too self-critical. Thus currently Diane feels her learning and personal development are satisfactory and this she feels will continue in the future, providing she remains in the learning process. The theme of learning facilitating change was re-iterated for when Diane was questioned as to why she had brought a particular assignment to discuss,

“ it seemed more important to talk about today”(p3,pg34,1).

The response given indicates that the same assignment may not have been selected had we met at a different time is indicative of her expectation of her to personally develop and change in the future. Thus for Diane she does not accept that her choices in the here and now will be the same in the future and this change is something which she anticipates and is fully aware of. Therefore the relationship between learning and personal development for Diane is temporally and spatially dependant.

Learning should have personal meaning

The personal nature of learning is reflected in her attitude to the world and how Diane sees it. As Diane learns she finds that she understands more of the world in which she lives and through this increased knowledge she is able to apply her own personal meaning. She indicates that through her learning she is able to apply a personal meaning to concepts that previously were abstract,

“I'm interested in wider issues perhaps than I was interested in before. Perhaps because they mean something now whereas they didn't before” (p6, pg14, 3)

Similarly unless Diane is able to put her own individual mark on her learning she feels detached and uninvolved in the learning process. By relating issues around her to her own individual experiences Diane is able to understand further aspects of the world as she relates them to her

own perspectives. Diane requires learning to have personal meanings for two reasons, firstly, to make sense of the subject and secondly so that her interest in the subject is retained. Without this personal meaning she becomes distant from the learning process.

The 'human' side of lecturers

The importance of personal meaning is not however restricted to herself, Diane often refers to the importance of lecturers making personal references during the course of lectures,

“ But I do like the person (lecturer) to give a little bit of themselves (p1,pg23,2) ...Just to see the human side of them really” (p3, pg23,2)

Thus for Diane when learning from others it is important that they too seek out the personal meaning of information as it is through imparting personal perspectives that Diane feels that they are involved in the learning process. It is also evident from the example that for Diane personal meaning is very much equated with involvement for she feels that one can not exist without the other.

Learning is like a sponge, an absorbing process

As Diane's personal development grows so does her awareness of her own learning process and much of the conversation refers to her reflecting on the understanding of this process,

“It's a process by which, for me, I absorb information. And it happens, it's a gradual process, it's a build up. And for me, it then means that I am able to apply that information, when I've understood it, when I've learnt it, I can then apply it in any context.....a transfer of information from the outside to the inside and then I can use that information and put it back outside the body again in the areas I want it to be used in.”(p7,8 pg. 38,3)

Again the process that Diane describes involves a personal element, that is, when the information goes “inside” the body. From this initial step Diane is then able to apply her absorbed knowledge and relate her learning to the world around her. She sees her learning as a continuous process which has both an input, that is information and an output, that is application, using herself as the central key in allowing her to understand. In essence Diane describes a spatial metaphor whereby she internalises information in order to achieve a form of external reality. Diane uses the term absorbing as a way of describing this internalisation of information implying that she is ready and willing to soak up information that is presented to her in various temporal and spatial situations.

This continual cycle of learning may be perceived as being somewhat different to her earlier description of learning from human interaction. However for Diane the information which is provided by these exchanges is the start of this process as she absorbs this knowledge and begins the internalisation process.

Diane's definition of deep and surface learning

Like her views on personal development, her description of the learning process has a personal element ingrained in the centre as an awareness of her own personal development and learning process appears to aid her learning. The aim for Diane in her learning process is to achieve personal understanding of the subject and she emphasises the importance of this personal meaning when she differentiates her learning from what she describes as surface learning,

“Not just for it to be on the surface. Not just for it to be something that you repeat word for word parrot fashion. But something you really deeply understood and applied in any context. So it's not just something that – that you'd remember for 5 minutes, but something that hopefully will stay with you throughout life.” (p7,pg35,3)

Diane defines a temporal distinction between 'surface' learning and 'deep' understanding as she explains how more surface learning will only stay with her for a short period whereas deep understanding will remain for a life-time. She also distinguishes between surface and deep learning by the way in which this understanding is recognised. She considers surface learning as something that relates to rote learning and memorisation, whereas deep learning is transferable to any spatial and temporal situation.

However if Diane does not feel interested in the subject she is studying she does not try to attain a personal level of understanding and may switch off from the learning process altogether. Thus her aim to gain a personal meaning is changeable and is very much dependant upon whether she sees the topic as relevant and she will not attempt to study subjects in which she has no interest. Therefore if Diane has a lack of interest in her learning she will distance herself from the learning process.

Diane's interest in the topic and perception of relevance is highly dependent on whether she can apply her learning now or possibly in the future. If Diane can see no use for the information then she will not want to engage in the learning process. This was partly the reason she selected her current course, for Diane felt it was relevant to her employment and would be a recognised qualification by employers. The relevance of a subject also has a role in her learning process as she finds the experience of applying increases her level of understanding,

"..I think it is really important (applying her learning) because it shows that you've taken it that step further; you understand it at an academic level, but you can also apply it" (p7,pg26,3)

This description indicates that for Diane learning may be a staged process, whereby the first level is the achievement of understanding academically. The second stage that Diane identifies is the application of this academic knowledge, she feels that if this information is applied she has demonstrated superior understanding. When this has been achieved Diane feels that her confidence is increased as she can use this knowledge in any future temporal and spatial situation.

The balancing act; assessment demands and personal meaning

Although Diane is very much concerned with the personal meaning of learning she will not do this at the expense of meeting assessment criteria. Her focus on assessment criteria is expressed when she is discussing her necessity to understand, whilst she emphasises the importance of personal meaning she also talks of the need to meet syllabus requirements,

"you'll have your own interpretation and slant on it but you have got to make sure that actually fits in with what's required. What the marking criteria are" (p4,pg10,2)

The approach to learning used by Diane needs to balance the need to achieve high grades with the desire for personal understanding. Thus Diane's aims in the learning process are two fold as she feels the need for not only a very personal understanding but also to achieve good grades and satisfy the requirements of the assessor. Diane will try to ensure that the assignment she completes will be successful, (in terms of grades) by using information which she feels will gain her extra marks. Diane does not consider these two goals as being incompatible for she argues that as long as all assessment demands are met she is then able to apply her own personal meaning. She indicates that generally she is satisfied that she fulfils the assessment criteria. She measures this through the grade she receives.

“Even if the mark isn’t brilliant then, you know, I’m happy with it. (Yeah) that doesn’t really matter too much. I mean I know it’s gonna do alright. I mean I know it’s gonna be OK, but if it’s not like the top mark of the group, it doesn’t matter” (p9,pg33,2)

It is of note that the way in which Diane considers the grade as satisfactory is gained through the means of comparison. Like her measurement of personal development Diane uses others as a way of benchmarking her own progress.

An organised, segmented approach to learning

Diane also finds that her learning is aided by her organised study methods, and that this is very much a part of her learning process. One side of this approach is reflected in her claim that she can access information, which she argues is due to her background of secretarial training,

“I make sure that I keep them all in a very tidy sort of format, so they’re always accessible if I need to go back to them. It is very important to me. I suppose because I have worked, I have got sort of secretarial training initially. I thought, go back to that, you know. It’s got to be filed, it’s got to be orderly Yeah, mm” (p2,3, pg9, 2).

This organised approach can also be identified in how Diane tackles her assignments, as she segments the assignment in order to provide her with an organised structure.

“So I started to think about all the different people that you could work with and I had to break it down into groups to give the essay some sort of structure. So I had to learn a little bit about lots of different groups sufficient to put into this essay to give the reader a sort of flavour of what I was talking about.” (p 5, pg9,2)

Thus structure and study methods are a fundamental part of Diane’s learning and this enables her to meet assessment criteria demands and personal understanding.

Reflection is an internalised process

Diane’s approach to her learning is very much influenced by her reflective nature, one which she has been made increasingly aware of through the completion of Honey and Munford’s learning styles questionnaire (this was completed on Diane’s course),

".. you were asking me about the way that I learned and that made me think about that, and I think perhaps I've realised since then more about the way I do learning. And that I am very much a reflector, I like to reflect on what's being said and then sort of go over it, in my head, and I'm also interested in theories but I'm not much of an activist" (p4,pg1,2)

The diagnosis as offered by the learning styles questionnaire confirms Diane's pre-existing belief that she does take a reflective approach to her learning. This diagnosis has also made Diane increasingly thoughtful of the approaches that she uses when learning. Again Diane talks of how the information on which she reflects is going on 'inside her head'. This re-iterates her earlier statement of learning being an absorbing, internalising process.

Detachment as a means to reflect

Diane uses reflection in her learning approach as she talks of needing to step back from a learning situation and reflect on what is happening and by going through this process she is able to learn from the situation. Both the counselling course and these interviews are used as an opportunity to reflect on her learning and the meaning of learning. This approach allows her to evaluate both how others learn and how this may affect her own learning. Below Diane describes an event when she was working in a group and the impact of reflection on her understanding of the group dynamics and her role within the group,

" So, because I'm on this counselling I was trying to bring in the other person – and then I started thinking well what's going on here? Why are they actually sort of listening to me but not listening to her? ...And, and it was only by sort of stepping back and examining what had happened that I realised perhaps my own potential in group situations, I didn't realise I had." (p2,pg4,2)

Thus reflection for Diane requires her to detach from the learning process, whereby she is able to act more as an observer rather than a participant. This experience demonstrated to Diane that reflection could be the path to understanding and she could realise her learning potential.

The battle of learning: challenging preconceptions

Although there are several references to reflecting Diane also enjoys being an active participant in her approach to learning and will challenge presuppositions that exist both from colleagues and literature. Diane feels that it is possible to have both a reflective and active approach in her learning and this combination is beneficial to her learning. However Diane feels that it is important that these two approaches are used in appropriate temporal and spatial situations. She

utilises the experiences of challenging to improve her experience of learning, one of the examples she uses is of a disagreement which occurred between herself and a fellow student,

“she spoke about how her father – people who lived in particular areas of Derbyshire, you know, that kind of area – the mining communities, where there was a lot of incestuous relationships, in fact, and I felt really challenged about that because I grew up in that area and you know, my family were from that area, and I just felt she’d got no right to be making a sweeping statement because her father had said it was true.... I think we’re on a learning process, on the course, and it should be challenging us to look at things we’ve accepted that our families have told us” (p3,4,pg33,3)

Here Diane talks of challenging both her peers and families, this could be looked at in reference to her own background. After Diane had finished her schooling she expressed an interest in attending college and had *“quite a battle”* with her father in order to do this. Thus Diane has faced challenges in the past and has had to overcome them in order to achieve her ambitions. Although the examples used describe a form of conflict, Diane feels that challenging is a necessary and positive experience which enriches her learning,

“The positive side of it (group conflict) is that we have challenged each other and we’ve probably learnt a lot more from it actually than the ones that go smoothly” (p2,pg36,2)

By using challenging in her learning Diane feels that personal perceptions will be challenged and from this experience the learning process is enhanced. This reference to change in perceptions provides support for Diane’s earlier statement that learning should enable personal development as this too provides the opportunity for change.

The considered challenge

Although Diane feels the need to challenge it must always be done sensitively and other peoples’ feelings need to be taken into account. She needs to feel that others are aware of the fact that she challenges for her own personal interest, not because she wants to disparage them. These interpersonal issues of challenging require Diane to carefully consider the sensitivities of challenging,

“But sometimes I’m aware that I have to be really careful here or else they’ll think I’m really sensitive if I start questioning them about this. But I do want to know. If somebody makes a statement now about something relevant to work, then I’ll think well, where does that come from? How does that come about?” (p10,pg27,2)

For Diane the meaning of challenging is intertwined with the ability to question the beliefs and opinions of others. She feels that through this questioning she is able to challenge their perceptions by asking them to justify, from evidence, their beliefs.

The temporal and spatial challenge of learning

One of the challenges faced by Diane that she expresses quite clearly is that of pressure both in terms of finding time for learning and locating a suitable place to learn. As a full-time employee who is also studying two part time courses, Diane finds at times it is difficult to maintain her enthusiasm for learning,

“If you’re feeling overworked and stressed at work you’re not really going to have a very good time at collegeyou don’t contribute as much ..I just tend to sit there quietly that night and think that someone else can do the work” (p2,6,pg21,2)

Thus Diane’s attitude to learning alters when she is feeling pressured and tired, her conscious reaction to this pressure is withdrawal from interacting within a tutorial setting. The lack of interaction often causes Diane to feel that she is not being as creative and interested as she otherwise might be and so is not getting the depth of understanding to which she normally aspires. This feeling that she is not fully gaining the learning experience she wants may be related to her need for human interaction, which is omitted if she is too tired. Her normal learning process is therefore severely disrupted if Diane feels overwhelmed by extensive pressures and her enjoyment in the learning process is also considerably reduced. The affect of this amount of study has caused Diane to question whether it is advisable to study two courses at once whilst being employed on a full time basis, and so she has decided in the future to continue with just one of the courses. The second pressure, which Diane identified, is that of place,

“I’ve just had to give up trying to do that here really (studying, at work) .. I just found that it made me more stressed trying to concentrate on something , knowing I’d be interrupted and go back to it. It was less stressful to do it in the evening, at home or at the weekend” (p6,pg29,3)

The difficulty that Diane faced in finding a place to learn put her under increased pressure and so she had to make a decision as to how she could alleviate this pressure. She concluded that working in a place that frequently held distractions and so felt that working at home, where she had the opportunity to work without distractions was more appropriate. She considers her own workplace is too full of distractions that do not allow her to give her full attention to her

learning and without the security of knowing that she will not be disturbed Diane finds it difficult to learn. Thus the integrated pressures of time and place may, if not resolved, hinder Diane in her approach to learning.

Sharing learning provides development for all

A further key element in Diane's learning is that of collaboration. Diane perceives the role of others to have a great impact on her meaning of learning. The importance of others in her learning is constantly referred to in all our interviews, Diane generally finds that collaboration aids her learning in a number of different ways. The opportunity to share and incite ideas from each other introduces creativity into her learning process as it allows for her to see issues from differing perspectives, which she claims benefits all involved,

"I feel it's important to be honest within the group that you work with and to have to develop a good working relationship within the group, and to, to identify each other's strengths and weaknesses, to find the best person to do the best tasks. I think it's important because it helps the individuals to, to realise their own potential in the group and not only just to do the things that they're good at but maybe to be supported by the other members of the group in trying the things that they're not so good at". (p4.5 pg24,3)

Thus for Diane the learning experience is not a solitary one but one which very much includes the input of others. Diane feels that it is important that everyone involved in the learning process benefits from sharing their learning. She believes that this can be achieved in part, from recognition of weaknesses and strengths which are exposed through collaboration as this allows for improvement of all learners by developing their strengths and weaknesses and this she feels encourages other learners confidence. Diane emphasises this view point when she talks of how all students should be made to interact with one another even if they do not want to as without this interaction she wonders how their development can be achieved. It is interesting to note that Diane repeats the term 'own potential' indicating that this realisation is a fundamental aim of her own learning and by inference should be the aim of other learners.

Collaboration should be a reciprocal arrangement

However Diane also feels that in a collaborative environment there are certain obligations on group members notably that they should be able to trust each other. If this trust is undermined then she feels unable to continue to work with those people again and for Diane learning is a reciprocal arrangement,

“ We had to design a training course and deliver it. So we did that, we did the delivery– well we had, we drew the short straw – we went last. So we didn’t go on until twenty to nine at night. By which time everyone was exhausted and we’d made a real effort to contribute to everyone else’s training delivery by asking questions etc, being really positive, hoping that knowing we were going last, that they would give it us back. And do you know we – we really didn’t get it back the way we should’ve done. Everyone just wanted to go home and they were all exhausted and fed up really, so I think we were on a bit of a downer after that” (p4,pg34,3)

Here Diane expects other group members to support her group as she supported their efforts. Although she understands the reasons why she did not receive that support she still feels let down by her peers as she made a conscious effort to contribute to their presentations and in doing so expects the same in return. The fact that this did not occur left Diane feeling disappointed and dejected which affected all members in her presentation group. Thus without the expected support of peers Diane can feel negatively about the learning experience and so demonstrates her need to be supported by other members of the group. If trust and expectations are not supported conflict may arise and group members whom she feels have let her down may be excluded in future collaborations.

Classifying others by role enables collaborative awareness

When collaborating with others Diane sometimes identifies others and herself as performing a particular role(s), she classifies fellow students according to their learning styles and their own particular strengths and weaknesses. Diane feels that this allows her a better understanding of others place in her learning and gives her a better understanding of group dynamics,

“I started to think, oh why is all this going wrong? And then it’s because I realised that certain of the other group members were very much activists, they wanted to do it in a certain way, and because the rest of us were looking at it from our angle, that’s why it wasn’t going too well. So it made me feel better about it, cos I realised what was going wrong.”(p4,pg1,2)

The purpose of role classification serves several purposes in Diane’s lifeworld. Firstly it allows for de-personalisation of conflict within a group for she now feels able to rationalise any conflict as differences in learning styles rather than a personal conflict. Secondly it allows the segregation of work according to each members key skills which allow for both good assignment grades and personal development of all. Thirdly she uses the concept of role play as a tool in her learning and fourthly it allows for Diane to control situations by identifying her role and the role of others which she feels empowers both herself and the individuals involved,

"I think I see people's worlds more clearly whereas before I might have had this desire to help people all the time. I'm still like that to a degree but I think I look now at what their role is, what they're supposed to be doing, and if it's up to them to help themselves, to empower themselves, then I realise that rather than just going out there and wanting to help them." (p1,pg15,3)

Through role classification Diane feels that her approach to learning has changed. In previous temporal experiences Diane has found that she has actively assisted in group situations, now however also feels that this approach is not always appropriate. Today Diane believes that once the role of others has been observed she should allow them to fulfil that role, rather than assisting them, which she feels will prevent them from being empowered.

Self-perception of own role in learning

As Diane develops through learning she feels more able to clearly identify her role and the role of others and this has improved her confidence and learning experience. However for Diane it is important that all benefit from role identification as she reasserts that learning is a collaborative process not an individual one. While she feels that in the short term others may not be happy with this assertion she feels it will benefit them in the longer term. At times it appears that Diane almost sees her role as one of an expert as she feels very sure of her learning process, indicating that she knows what is and is not appropriate in her learning. She also indicates that she is aware of people's emotions earlier than others due to her counselling training,

"I could tell she was getting quite upset and at one stage she said, oh I actually feel like ripping all this work up now and I could tell she was, you know, near to tears almost. Erm, I think it was only when she said that, that some of the others realised that she was feeling not part of it and perhaps tried to, you know, include her a bit more." (p6,pg5,2)

The need to be understood

Diane's need to be understood and understand others is demonstrated in different ways, her shared understanding with myself is apparent, particularly when difficulties with recording our interviews occurred. Diane understood the difficulties that I faced with recording our interviews and because of this empathy our rapport grew. An example of Diane's need to be understood is demonstrated when Diane described an event in which her group was discussing assignment changes. It was not enough that the group members accepted her recommended alterations she needed to be understood as to why the changes were necessary,

"I felt they were just accepting my changes but not really understanding why. And I needed them to understand why they'd got to go in, wanted them to be able to see it from my point of view, not just say yes, we'll do it, which they did and which was very nice that they did that, but in some ways that wasn't quite enough." (p4,pg35,2)

This reference may indicate that for Diane it is important that not only she recognises her own role but that this role and position in learning is recognised by others with whom she is sharing her learning.

Validation from others is no longer a priority

Diane's relationship with other students also allows for her validation of her own learning, as she uses her relationships to test her understanding and if they confirm that she has understood she finds it easier to accept that she is progressing. She will also compare herself to the other members in the group to provide a measure of her learning, if she feels she compares favourably this too offers her a form of validation. However her dependency on others to boost her self-esteem has been reduced. Presently Diane implies that her self-esteem is at a higher level than it has been in the past and because of that she no longer feels the need to support colleagues beyond what her role requires

"I don't need to feel that I'm helping everyone to feel good about myself in any way. Maybe before I just wanted people to like me and now I like myself more so I don't need other people to like me so much. That's just about it."(p2,3,pg15,3)

This change in attitude has led Diane to alter her approach to learning. Instead of feeling that she should actively assist others in their own learning Diane now considers that by clarifying her role and the role of others she no longer has the responsibility to help others in the learning process, for they should be empowered to fulfil their own roles. This comment provides support for Diane's earlier claim that through roles the learning process is de-personalised for here too she indicates that she no longer requires personal affirmation from the learning process.

Diane is able to identify one of the reasons for this change as being awareness of her learning process as she no longer takes conflict in a group as a personal criticism of herself. Her understanding that people have different approaches has enabled her self-esteem to grow as any criticism she now receives no longer has a personal impact on herself. Despite these changes in her attitude to learning, Diane feels that at times criticism she receives can have an impact upon her self-esteem,

"Yeah, it felt like it actually mattered to me whether I got this job or not. It sounds really bizarre but some of the others who made up the details on their application form, giving themselves false names, addresses, qualifications, it didn't matter to them because it wasn't really them. But I seemed to take it quite personally, so I learnt a lesson through that. Bizarrely I felt quite disappointed, cos I'd done my best and it was really me on that application form. Had it been some character I'd made up it wouldn't have mattered one bit."(p2,9,pg32,2)

This apparent contradiction does seem to imply that for the most part Diane considers that she is able to de-personalise conflict and criticism which the learning process sometimes contains. However this is not always possible for Diane, particularly when she feels that she has given personal information. Thus for Diane the way she deals with criticism is spatially and temporally dependent. An important note however is Diane's recognition that she learnt from this experience, implying that such criticism should not be taken personally.

The power of being heard

Power, respect and equality play a part in Diane's lifeworld as they support learning and play a role in her self-esteem. Diane needs to be respected by her peers as without it she takes no enjoyment in the learning process, when respect is given her self-esteem is boosted,

"I started thinking well what's going on here? Why are they actually sort of listening to me but not listening to her? And I've always thought that I didn't really have much power in groups, you know that I was a quiet person, no-one would ever listen to me that much. Erm, and then it occurred to me that maybe I have got more power in groups than I thought I had. (yeah) And, and it was only by sort of stepping back and examining what had happened that I realised perhaps my own potential in group situations, I didn't realise I had. ...And I suddenly thought wooo, you know, power!" (p1, pg5, 2)

For Diane the concept of respect and power are entwined, when respect is gained so is power. The realisation that she has obtained both power and respect from her fellow students is a new experience for her as she felt that she was heard and her views were recognised as important. This provoked a strong positive emotional response. It is interesting that recognition of this power that Diane holds when learning was achieved through 'stepping back' and reflecting upon this shared experience. Thus again reflection and detachment are represented as a key part of Diane's learning approach.

Diane's enjoyment of feeling powerful is reflected in her account of her changing attitude towards presentations. Instead of feeling apprehensive and powerless when presenting Diane

now feels powerful as she is in control of the situation and people have to listen to her. However Diane also expresses an understanding that all should feel powerful and that all members of the group should be treated equally and no-one should feel powerless. By feeling powerful in a group learning situation potential has been realised and this provides her with a deep sense of excitement and satisfaction.

The gender balance in learning – sharing perspectives

Diane believes her gendered perspective affects her attitude towards the meaning of learning. As a woman Diane feels that she sees things differently than men and because of these differences it is important to have a mixture of both male and female students. However the courses which Diane is studying is heavily dominated by women which she feels does not benefit her learning,

“I really wish there were more men in each. You know, sharing of ideas and things, it’s just the way it’s gone, but yeah. It’s a shame it’s like that really”. (p4,pg28,2)

It is this aspect of collaboration that Diane feels is missing for her learning, although there is a limited opportunity to share ideas with men she feels that she is missing out on their varied perspectives. Diane emphasises this view when she talks of the influence that her mother, sister and herself will have on her nephew. As a female presence dominates his life, Diane wonders whether this will affect his outlook and personality. Thus for Diane the requirement of an equal gender balance expands beyond the walls of university life. Diane considers it especially important that children have both men and women in their life as she believes that this will enable them to have a broad outlook and not stereotypes according to gender roles. Diane believes this to be achievable as she feels we are not born with gender stereotypes rather we learn from others,

“I think sometimes perhaps they’re forced into their way of thinking into gender roles, from conditioning from an early age.” (p5,pg36,3)

Thus again roles play a key factor in her learning, what is notable in her statement is the idea that this gender identification is not one that is willingly entered into but one which is forced on an individual. Once this nurtured cultural identity is formed she feels that it can be difficult to change and this may limit their outlook, as they may use gender identity as a reason as to why males and females are restricted to certain preconceived gender roles. This is one of the key reasons why Diane feels learning is important as through this process she feels that these stereotypes are challenged.

Challenging stereotyped roles

One example of stereotyping is that offered by Diane is an assumption by a male manager that as a woman Diane should be more caring and nurturing than himself. This is an assumption that Diane disputes, she argues that just because she is a woman that does not necessarily make her better qualified than her male counterparts. She puts forward the proposition that men and women do not have inherent skills simply because of their gender but believes that everyone is different and these differences are not based upon being a man or a woman,

“it might be assumed that the woman should assume the personnel issues, just because she’s a woman – it’s more suited to her. My boss actually said to me, “you sort this out with this person, she’ll only – I’ll only start shouting at her, erm, she’ll start crying. You sort this out.” And it’s put onto me because I’m female... It shouldn’t just be assumed that there will always be a woman who can take that on. Or that the woman is better because, in some instances, they may not be.”(p1,2,pg20,3)

While Diane is keen to use role classification this should be made on an individual basis not on gendered stereotypes. Thus for Diane when learning roles need to be based upon learning styles and approaches and not simply because of their gender.

Men and women in dialogue

The ability of men to articulate their emotions is raised as a difference between men and women. Diane feels that men feel unable to express their feelings for fear of losing their macho pride,

“they (the two male students) admitted, when they came into our class, they were absolutely terrified. A class full of women. it’s counselling, so it’s talking about personal experiences, self-reflection and things like that, and they’d got to sit there and open up – how they felt – to all these women and they were scared.”(p4,5,pg27,2)

The men she describes also seem to have difficulties forming relationships with other members in the group, as they just wanted to do the studying rather than see it as an opportunity to bond with other group members. Diane offers a possible explanation for this in that she wonders if their female partners would be happy with new friendships that their partners may make. In fact the male students requested that when contacting them at home the women should clearly identify themselves as a fellow student, so that there are no misunderstandings. This could be taken to imply that maybe they do want more interaction with fellow students but are unable to

due to circumstances at home. As a woman learning Diane feels that these men she describes are not gaining the full experience for as noted earlier Diane feels that learning should be shared if it is to be successful. Unlike the men in her group Diane describes how the women in her groups do look to build relationships,

“ I think possibly the women also wanted to build relationships and whatever, within the groups, rather than men. I think the men are probably quite happy to just go home again and be independent whereas the women there are always exchanging phone numbers” (p4,pg21,3)

Thus the women in the group not only seek to obtain the qualification they also seek out relationships with others, emphasising the importance of collaboration in their learning. However Diane differentiates herself from these women as she consciously refused to become too heavily involved in collaboration as she felt unable to commit herself for her time was limited.

Presently she feels able to collaborate and build relationships as she is continuing with only one course and so will now make that effort to collaborate with others. This does seem to indicate that although collaboration is important to her as a woman and to women generally it is something that she herself is prepared to sacrifice if she feels unable to spare the time. Despite this claim Diane will collaborate in specific situations as she indicates that within the classroom environment she is prepared to bond. However she will not develop this bonding in situations external to the classroom. Thus Diane does not exclude bonding from her learning rather she limits its inclusion to certain situations. This limit on bonding when learning, Diane feels is imposed from temporal limitations rather than from her own personal preference.

Men need to feel powerful

A further gender disparity is explored in Diane's workplace as she explains how many of the powerful positions are occupied by men and that others observe men rule the organisation in which she works. Diane accounts for this by explaining it is only a small organisation and therefore staff turnover is low and until the existing male managers leave there is no opportunity for women to progress. With the introduction of staff development schemes which benefit women she feels that the situation will change. The fact that the majority of managers are male affects Diane's behaviour in the workplace as a woman she feels that when she asks questions she has to pretend that she has no knowledge of the subject in question,

“I think they (male managers) get quite put out sometimes if you know something and they don't. And if you then need more information about it, you actually feel quite put down, you can

feel put down by them, because they like to be superior. So it's best to play a bit dim a bit, and ask their opinion right at the outset but not pretend you know too much about it."(p7,pg39,p2,pg40,3)

Thus some of the male managers in her workplace seem to feel threatened by female knowledge and see questions posed by women as a challenge to their authority, particularly if the women come prepared with some background knowledge. Diane feels that the only way to combat this problem is to play the game and pretend to have no knowledge. At first Diane felt this was selling herself short but as her self-esteem grew she is able to be satisfied with her own awareness that she knows more. Instead of feeling powerless she feels in control for now she gathers more information and the managers do not learn anything from her.

This example offers an insight into how some male managers in a superior position feel threatened by female progression and will only assist them if they do not feel their authority is being challenged. It also demonstrates how Diane may feel forced into behaving in a particular way to obtain the information she requires and the easiest way to do this is to pretend to be ill-informed so that the male ego is not threatened.

Again the issues of power and challenging is raised by Diane, only in this context Diane feels unable to demonstrate her power. For Diane power is shown through knowledge and by hiding this knowledge Diane perceives that others, in particular men, perceive her to be in a less powerful position and therefore not a threat. Thus for Diane learning, knowledge and power are closely linked as one leads to the other. The more Diane learns the more knowledge she acquires and this can facilitate the acquisition of power. Whether Diane chooses to demonstrate this power is however based upon the intersubjectivity of the spatial situation, however just owning this knowledge is enough to make Diane feel powerful.

Conclusion

In summary the profile presented here indicates that learning plays a pivotal role in Diane's lifeworld. Further it is evident that of crucial importance is the involvement of others in her approach to learning. For Diane the involvement of others provides the opportunity for sharing the learning experience which produces a creative and supportive environment for all. To be fully effective this process should be made up of both men and women in equal numbers as Diane feels this will balance the learning experience. Further Diane considers collaborative awareness an essential component of her learning. She argues that by being aware of others and herself she is able to understand the learning process.

Collaborative awareness is achieved through the classification of roles whereby Diane determines the roles of others and herself in her learning. This she feels provides the opportunity for everyone to develop strengths and weakness and importantly for Diane de-personalises the learning approach for now any conflict is based upon the role rather than the person.

A further learning approach used by Diane is one that involves reflection, whereby she detaches herself from the learning process. The information obtained through this approach and collaboration is absorbed by Diane. The learning process does not however end there for ultimately Diane feels she has learnt successfully when this internalised information is applied to external temporal and spatial situations. Through this process Diane feels confident enough to apply her own meaning to the information she has digested. When learning is achieved Diane feels that she has developed, personally and this is of essential importance for Diane and one of the key reasons she engages in learning.

Thus many different issues are explored in our interviews, with Diane articulate in how these issues effect her experience of learning, perhaps the most striking of these being the way in which Diane welcomes learning and its impact in her life.

5.12 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Diane

Learning is personal development and a reflective approach

NOEMA- PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	NOESIS-REFLECTIVE APPROACH
<p>The object of learning for Diane is personal development and it was this goal that motivated Diane to engage in the interview process.</p> <p>As she participates in the learning process she expects her lived experiences will allow her to develop personally and her view of the world will grow.</p> <p>Challenging assumptions is a key way in which Diane's development is enabled. This experience should be positive for both her and for others as for Diane challenging is intersubjective.</p> <p>As a woman Diane feels that challenging is necessary if stereotypes are to be questioned and dismissed. Her lived body experiences have taught Diane that when challenging men she should behave as if she were ignorant/powerless. Through such an approach she feels men do not feel as though they are challenged and she is placed in a position of control.</p> <p>Through collaboration Diane is able to evaluate whether she has developed as much as the other students and this provides a key test for her personal development.</p> <p>When personal development occurs Diane feels confident that she is a successful learner and her self-esteem is supported.</p>	<p>To achieve personal development Diane reflects upon her lived learning experiences.</p> <p>Diane's identity is linked to this view that she is a reflector and this affects both how she views herself and the world around her. Many of her life and educational choices have been influenced by the opportunities for reflection and this was in part why she became involved in counselling and why she volunteered for the interviews.</p> <p>The temporality of Diane's experiences allows Diane to reflect over her past experiences and contemplate her future development. Through reflection Diane is able to increase her own personal awareness and this facilitates her personal development.</p> <p>The process of reflection occurs when Diane detaches from the learning process and views her learning from a metaphorical distant place. This reflective process is common in collaborative situations where Diane tries to understand both her and others.</p> <p>Diane believes that gender embodiment affects the reflection process as she argues that the different lived experiences of men and women make it difficult for men to reflect upon themselves personally.</p>

NOEMA-SELF-PERCEPTION	NOESIS-COLLABORATIVE AWARENESS
<p>The purpose of learning for Diane is to achieve an increased level of understanding of her own identity.</p> <p>Diane's own self-perception is strongly influenced by her relationships with others. She feels that her own self-perception is formed through the opinions of others, for the way in which she sees herself is reflective of how others perceive her.</p> <p>Through role classification Diane is able to define her self-perception and this gives her clarity on her personal identity. This act also allows Diane to determine the roles of others and this makes the process of collaboration and learning successful. Diane feels that when all are aware of their individual roles the learning process can be empowering and this is a key motivator for Diane.</p> <p>As she develops Diane feels that her self-perception has changed and she now views herself as a powerful and respected person. This belief provides Diane with confidence and self-esteem that she is prepared for any future experiences.</p> <p>Thus Diane is less reliant on others to provide her self-esteem as her self-perception develops.</p>	<p>In order to achieve awareness of her own identity Diane places great emphasis on understanding how others perceive her as this informs her own self-perception.</p> <p>A collaborative approach provides Diane with an opportunity to understand both herself and others. Through this process she is able to identify her role and the role of others, confirming her place in the academic community.</p> <p>Once Diane has established places for those involved in her learning she is able to de-personalise any conflict and therefore her self-esteem is validated.</p> <p>Through empathising with the needs of others Diane feels that she is able to achieve a high level of collaborative awareness. She then feels more in control of her lived experiences for this approach allows her to have an increased level of self-awareness. It also facilitates an understanding of how others influence her lifeworld. This process she argues is reciprocal as she hopes others gain the same benefits from such an intersubjective relationship.</p>

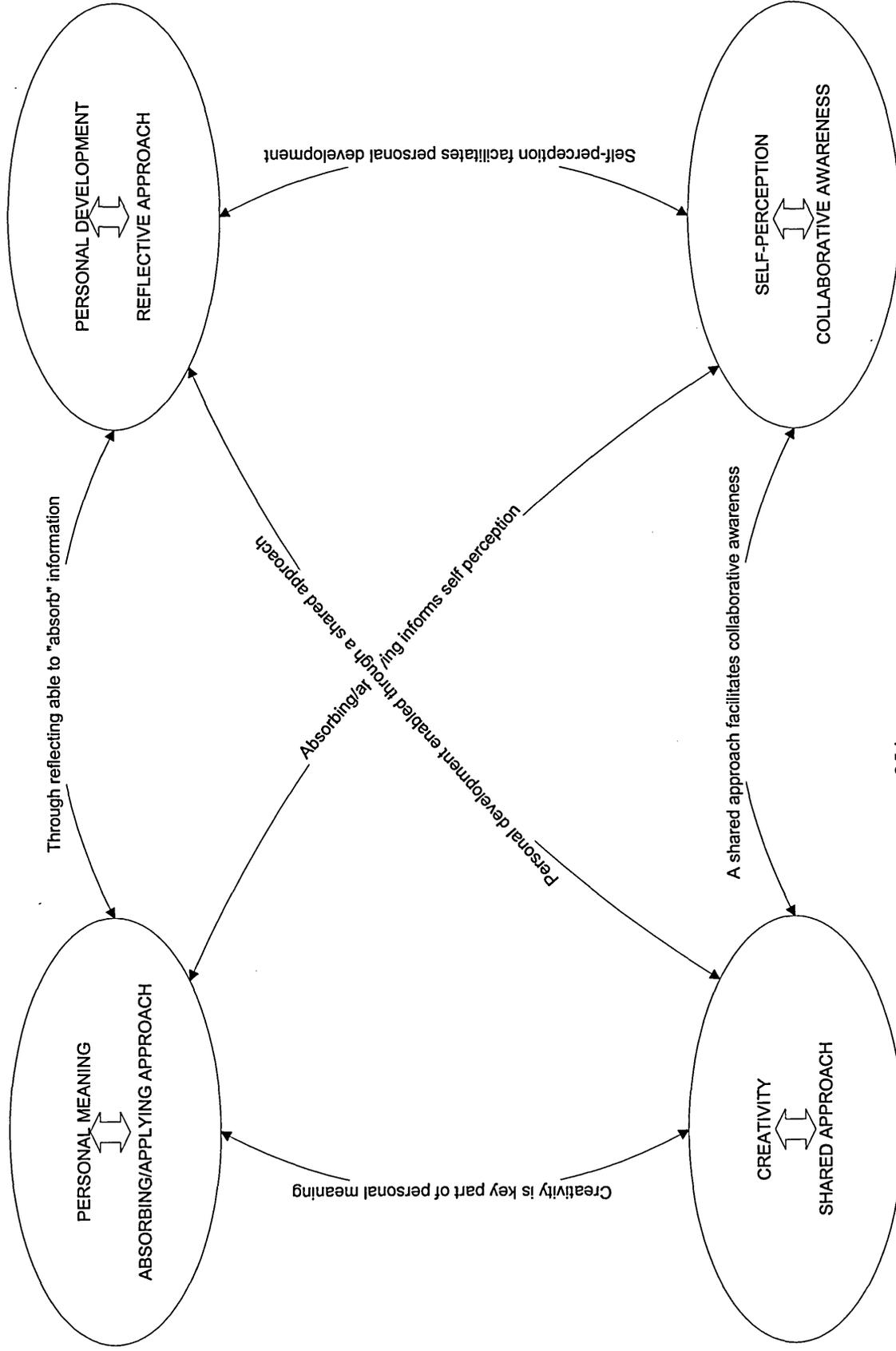
Learning is personal meaning and an absorbing/applying approach

NOEMA-PERSONAL MEANING	NOESIS-ABSORBING/APPLYING APPROACH
<p>The achievement of personal meaning is a key aim for Diane when learning. She finds that through relating issues to her own lived experiences she is able to gain a personal understanding of the issue.</p> <p>For Diane personal meaning occurs when she feels involved with the material and the information actually means something to her personally. Likewise Diane expects others to also seek out their own personal meaning and this should be communicated during the learning process.</p> <p>She finds that when personal meaning is achieved she is able to relate and understand the world and her place in it. This increased awareness motivates Diane to participate in the learning process so she can learn more about the world.</p> <p>When personal meaning is achieved the information becomes a part of her lived experience as the object of knowledge is entwined in her lifeworld.</p> <p>However Diane is not oblivious to academic demands placed upon her and so limits her personal meaning within the context of these demands.</p>	<p>To achieve personal meaning Diane adopts a two staged learning process. The first stage in this process involves Diane gradually absorbing information until she has built a coherent body of knowledge.</p> <p>This process requires Diane to look outside of her mind and body to acquire the relevant knowledge. This information is then internalised and placed inside her lived body.</p> <p>The second stage involves the transference of information from the lived body back into the outside world. It is only when both stages are fully complete that Diane feels she has really understood and she can understand in a personal way.</p> <p>Once this is achieved Diane feels confident in her learning abilities and believes she can apply her knowledge to any situation.</p> <p>If Diane feels that her learning will not be applicable to a future time and place she is not motivated to learn.</p>

Learning is an opportunity to be creative and a shared approach

NOEMA-CREATIVITY	NOESIS –SHARED APPROACH
<p>For Diane successful learning must encourage and allow creativity.</p> <p>Diane feels that creativity can be measured via the number of perspectives she incorporates into her learning. The more numerous and varied the ideas the greater the level of creativity.</p> <p>Thus Diane requires interaction in her learning process for the more people she collaborates with the more creative her learning may become.</p> <p>To be creative Diane requires certain temporal conditions notably she requires sufficient time so that pressure is limited. If Diane feels pressured in her learning she is unable to take a relaxed leisurely approach to her learning and this is essential if her learning is to be creative.</p> <p>Presently Diane is unable to spend sufficient time on her studies and this limits her creativity.</p>	<p>To achieve creativity Diane needs to share her learning with others, for it is only through collaboration that Diane is able to understand various perspectives.</p> <p>Diane feels that through intersubjective approach and those who participate are able to share skills. This she argues enables all to develop their strengths.</p> <p>During this collaborative process Diane needs to be certain that her efforts to share her learning will be reciprocated by others. If not Diane loses trust in the collaborative process.</p> <p>However should this process be successful Diane feels that all of those involved will feel a shared sense of achievement and this provides confidence and self-esteem for all.</p> <p>Diane indicates that she wishes to share her learning with men more frequently. She finds that the embodiment of womanhood encourages collaboration however for men the reverse is true. She feels that if her learning were shared more with this group of people greater creativity would follow.</p>

Diane's Noema Noesis Relationships



5.13 The Lifeworld of Karen

Collaboration enables shared understanding

During the course of the interviews one of the key issues that plays a part in Karen's learning is collaboration. She considers that if she allows a place for others in her learning she is able to share her understanding by the medium of dialogue,

"I like getting the different ideas and stuff. I think you get better work if you've got more people working on it, because you've got different angles... they made me expand my mind like cos they put an idea into my head, that I wouldn't have thought of and then I went off and said ooh, yeah. On a tangent. So we got a really good scope of all the different things that we could have entered in it."(p1,3,pg24,3)

Karen describes how sharing the experience of learning allows for the development of many more ideas than would have been generated if she had been learning individually. It is the generation of diverse ideas which she feels produces a higher standard of work. Karen directly correlates the number of people with the number of ideas generated and she indicates that the greater the number of ideas 'the better the work'. She argues that this creativity does not end there as she is inspired and stimulated by such interaction and in turn is herself more creative. She internalises this process as 'expanding her mind' as if to indicate that this process broadens her knowledge and understanding of selected topics.

Learning involves the classification of others

For this process to be successful Karen feels that the people collaborating need to have a range of abilities and she measures their ability in comparison to herself,

"(people) at different levels, preferably higher than me, not too much and then people lower than me, that bring out the basic points. Cos sometimes I go off on like a little trip and I miss the whole point of the whole thing and I need someone who's thinking at a bit of a lower level to go well what about this? And I think yes, that's a starting point, what am I doing?" (p3,pg21,1)

Thus the type of people she collaborates with is important for Karen, for while it is important that a range exists, she insists, that the variance must not be too great and that their interests need to be broadly similar. She finds that those she perceives of lesser ability keep her grounded

and focused on the issue whereas those she feels have a higher ability enable her to develop more sophisticated ideas.

How Karen defines this ability appears to be on a linear scale in which she places herself somewhere in the centre. She considers that those who have a lower ability use knowledge at a basic, simplistic level which provides the bare bones of the concept. For Karen the information offered by those she considers of lower ability is not fully sufficient for while she requires this knowledge she also needs the input of those of 'higher ability'. She indicates that this ability is again measured by the sophistication of knowledge. This allows for the development of the basic information. For Karen this classification of others is useful as a way of developing her learning as she is able to gain insights into basic and more sophisticated knowledge. This classification also ensures that Karen is confident of her place amongst her peers, a place based upon her learning status.

Learning to learn collaborative skills

Karen also identifies the need for collaborative skills which are necessary when sharing learning, notably the ability to understand and empathise with others. Karen feels that awareness of others needs is not one that comes naturally, but which has to be developed and enhanced,

"I think you've gotta give both ways and you've gotta realise when you've got to input and when you've got to shut up. I think that's a skill that you learn. Picking up on vibes from other people... When you get the looks or, you know, when they're not happy about an idea or something like that"(p5,pg24,3)

The process of collaboration when learning is reciprocal in nature for Karen describes how if learning is to be shared she needs to develop an approach that is sensitive to the needs of others. The embodied signals that Karen receives from those with whom she learns are taken as a signal that she has been successful in the collaborative process.

The superior social status of being the 'teacher'

Karen has adopted the role of a teacher when collaborating with her peers by both trying to encourage and inform them. This role is one which she enjoys as she feels it enables development in others and provides a source of self-satisfaction,

"I want to then help somebody else and say, well look, I'll actually come and help you and I'll tell you how to do this or I'll tell you about this. And if they sit there and go really? And then

ask me questions, I think yeah, someone's actually appreciating what I'm saying to them now"(p4,pg13,1)

Karen finds that collaboration in her learning enables her to adopt the role of teacher. She feels that this role is recognised when others are interested in her demonstration of knowledge and from this dialogue they will learn something new. This desire to act as a teacher may also be linked to Karen's classification of learners. Here too she classifies herself and others implying that she has superior ability which places her in a position to adopt the role of teacher. Karen offers a number of examples of where she has adopted this role in her learning, for example, she talks of how impressed her friends were when she informed them of the details of the Second World War,

"I'm infatuated with Second World War and my friends don't really know anything...All they do now is come and say Karen, I'm gonna ask you questions about it. And I'll go, I'm not quite sure, I'll learn, let me just go and find out. So I find out to tell them and when we're all drunk we sit there and I'll talk through it all to them. And they're all fascinated by it. So like they're respected then, respecting me in terms of – oh you know, I'm so proud of her, she knows this."
(p4,pg29,3)

This quotation highlights the benefits that Karen receives by adopting the role of teacher, primarily this is respect. By using and imparting her knowledge to her peers Karen feels affirmed and respected as she feels people are interested in her knowledge and respect her because of it. Karen refers directly to the term respect and highlights that this can be achieved by using information to demonstrate superior knowledge which in turn results in feelings of affirmation and satisfaction.

Collaboration is an interactive experience

Karen finds that one of the best places to collaborate is in the tutorial setting as interaction is encouraged. This interaction allows Karen to concentrate on the issue in hand as she is able to discuss the issues rather than take notes, listen and try to understand which is necessary in her lectures. Thus the tutorial settings allow Karen the opportunity to focus on learning rather than concentrating on taking notes and keeping up with the lecturer. For Karen note taking and 'just listening' is a distraction from the learning process, as she must use dialogue if she is to learn. Despite Karen's criticism of lectures she does provide an example of how in a lecture theatre some form of collaboration can occur,

“Because people are going like this. Well, they don’t even nod, you can just see with their eyes that they can actually understand. You can see a little bit of shaking and I think what? What? You know, come on, someone share it with me. And I turn round and I do this as well, I say “what?” And she’ll – and all my friend’ll have to do, or whoever I’m sitting next to, will point at something. she’ll actually point to something, a key phrase, and I’ll read it, and I’ll go, oh yes, yeah. That’s it.”(p7,pg27,1)

The reliance on Karen’s peers to clarify and reassure her in the lecture theatre is evident, she firstly evaluates whether her peers have understood, in an almost instinctive way, using bodily signs of understanding. Secondly when she thinks her friends have understood she has no qualms asking them for clarifications and explanations on the points raised by the lecturer. If her friends have understood they are able to interpret the information for her in a manner she can understand. Through this action Karen feels reassured and the learning action is clarified. Karen feels that the clarification offered by her peers is reliable and will enable a successful learning process

The expert practitioner

Peers however are not the only people Karen finds it important to collaborate with she also talks of the importance of lecturers when learning, who she believes are experts on the subject matter. Karen relies on them to present the information accurately and needs the information to be presented in an unbiased manner so that she can reach her own conclusions. The style in which information is presented by the lecturer is described as important, Karen feels that the lecturer should explain the issues and give relevant examples so that understanding is enabled. If no attempt is made to provide this Karen feels the role of the lecture and the lecturer is pointless,

“I also look forward to the lecture because I think I’m actually gonna learn something really good here because I’ve got a lecturer who’s really, really effective. And I’ve got other ones that I sit there and I think I might as well just skip it because some of ‘em are just – you get a handout given out at the beginning of the subject and then some of them just read through the handout, with their OHP pointing up at the board”(p1,pg18,1)

Learning can be inspirational

The lecturer is not just a source of information, in the right circumstances they can be a source of inspiration and motivation, Karen describes how lecturers have achieved this using quite different methods, one praising her and one coaxing her to work harder. Whilst there are clear

distinctions in the approaches used by these lecturers Karen describes the one common denominator, personal interaction and interest in her progress,

“Yes, it felt like someone was actually looking at my progress, individually like actually taking a step back from being a teacher and saying, oh yes, you’re doing really well here. He actually inspired me.”(p3,pg2,1)

It is the personal nature of the relationship which Karen feels she has with lecturers that seems to be key for Karen. She needs to feel that she is understood as an individual and that she has established a rapport with the lecturer, who she may no longer see as just a teacher but as a non-judgemental friend. In Karen’s experience a limited number of lecturers have established this rapport. Therefore some lecturers are more beneficial to her learning than others, if the lecturer is perceived to be unapproachable she finds it difficult to discuss issues with them and finds it almost impossible to develop a working relationship. Thus Karen needs to feel that she has been invited to develop this rapport.

“Perhaps people don’t want to approach you, you know when everyone’s there, perhaps they want, you know, somewhere – a private word. So she used to be out the door usually, so I didn’t think that was very good.”(p5,pg3,2)

Selfish actions; collaborative avoidance

Although Karen enjoys and benefits from sharing her learning she reveals that it is not always appropriate for her learning, below Karen describes a situation which has occurred when a group of students were reading,

“I wouldn’t participate in group learning if it meant oh we all sit and read together and ask questions if we need to, because you’re guaranteed someone will ask me a question in the middle of a sentence that I’m trying to understand, and it’d just hold me back. I know it sounds selfish and perhaps someone else needs to do it, but for me it wouldn’t work.”(p7,pg24,1)

Thus for Karen there is a time and a place for collaborative learning and not all activities should be seen as suitable for collaboration for in this circumstance her learning is actually hindered by interruptions from her peers. Although she feels that it may benefit some learners she resists being drawn into further reading sessions as she recognises that there are many collaborative opportunities which do benefit her learning, but this is not one of them. She considers the attitude as somewhat self-centred as she is focussed upon her own needs and places those as having more importance than the needs of others. Perhaps this self-criticism is linked to Karen’s

earlier need to share her learning sensitively. However she will not do this if she feels that this is at a cost to her own learning. Therefore for Karen collaboration needs to benefit all involved and she will not become involved in collaboration if this is to the detriment of her own learning.

The validating experience of being heard

However collaboration for Karen generally is an activity that she enjoys and one that provides support for her learning. However the impact of others on her learning does not end there, it has in some respects a more fundamental affect on her own self-perception. Karen needs to feel that others are interested in her and what she has to say and her knowledge is appreciated her self-esteem is boosted, the example of a presentation below demonstrates such an experience

“So I got up there and it was supposed to be a 3 minute talk and it went on for 25 minutes on President Kennedy’s assassination. And he was telling me to sit down and I was going well no, no, no. I know this – let me get it out, I know what I’m on about and I just don’t stop talking about it. And people are asking me questions and people are fascinated and because people listen to me, it made me go even more and more in depth”(p4,pg13,1)

The quotation alludes to Karen’s self-esteem as being influenced by others. For Karen her self-esteem is closely linked to the affirmation she receives when others take an interest in her learning. The greater the interest in her learning the more her self-esteem is supported as she feels validated that her learning has been recognised and this is what supports her self-esteem.

Expert validation is a motivation to learn

The role of the lecturer is important here also, for she responds to their self-belief in her performance. If this is not present Karen will question her ability and lose confidence in herself,

“if I’d actually believed in myself and not this old English teacher I could have been somewhere different now and I could have started my English when I was 12 because someone would’ve believed in me. If I’d’ve done terribly, I doubt very much I’d have been in University now. Not just purely through the grades but through not having the self-confidence and not knowing, well I can actually do this.”(p1,4,pg4,1)

The requirement of others to validate her learning is heavily emphasised in this quotation. Karen describes how without such validation she is not confident enough to believe in herself and in her own learning abilities. Her example demonstrates the extent to which she depends upon lecturers for without the support of a former teacher who validated her understanding she

doubted whether she would be attending university. Thus Karen recognises her need to be validated and reassured whilst learning and when she receives such praise her self-esteem is high.

For Karen the most influential source of this affirmation is from the lecturer whom she considers to be the expert and as such they have the right to validate the worth of her learning. This belief encourages Karen to approach her studies in a way that she is likely to gain affirmation from considered experts. Again Karen refers to the notion of respect, however in this example she talks of respecting others, indicating, that for Karen learning should be a mutually respectful process. Although Karen argues that it is important that she is satisfied with her learning she states that she gains much greater pleasure by gaining affirmation from others and this is a strong motivator in her learning,

“you want to push yourself and when you do push yourself people praise you, so you’ve pleased yourself and you’ve pleased somebody else. And if you respect that person then it’s just 100% better.” (p2,pg9,2)

Armour as protection from negative exposure

Although Karen feels generally positive about her learning and many elements of her learning boost her self-esteem, there are examples of where Karen has low self-esteem. She describes how her self-esteem is affected if others perceive that she lacks knowledge on the subject and she will only speak on subjects which she feels confident about,

“cos I’m really scared of people asking me questions and me going mm, mm... They think that I don’t know what I’m on about. They think that erm, I’m talking about something that I’m not educated enough or qualified enough to talk about.”(p2,6pg14,1)

The reference to be educated and qualified reiterates Karen’s earlier comments about the importance of expertise, as again Karen indicates that to avoid exposing herself a certain amount of expertise is required. This need to be perceived as knowledgeable by her peers has led Karen to pretend that she had understood when she had not. In order to keep up the pretence of understanding Karen would act as if she was working on a particular task and when the correct answers were disseminated she would simply write these answers down rather than attempting the questions herself. Karen felt that by taking these actions she was protecting her self-esteem by not allowing others to see her perceived weakness. Protection of her self-esteem is demonstrated consistently throughout the interviews as she deliberately has low expectations of her learning in order to prevent disappointment should failure occur and she believes that

some topics are beyond her capabilities and so does not attempt them and thus failure is avoided,

"I never expect too much – ever – from anything. Cos then I don't get let down. At work, my personal life, everything. Always have done though. I don't get excited very easily. I'm quite laid back in terms of that"(p1,pg26,3)

Karen's claim of low self-expectation may offer a protection mechanism from any perceived failures. This strategy employed by Karen does have certain implications, notably the avoidance of criticism. Although Karen wishes to gain affirmation she will not put herself at risk of criticism as this may be detrimental to self-esteem and in effect her learning. Thus Karen must feel competent with her learning if she is to share it with others.

The feeling of understanding

When Karen feels that she has learnt her deep sense of personal satisfaction and well being is immense,

"Suddenly it all works out, the penny has dropped you know, ching! Then the feeling is phenomenal. I mean I, you know, it's like yeah I know now, I know what you're on about. Let's talk about it. And if that ever happens – if something is actually sunk in and I've actually learnt something, I feel wonderful, I feel really good. I feel like I've achieved something. I feel like my day's been worth living,"(p3,pg26,1)

When Karen realises full understanding there is a strong emotional response which is the outcome of this feeling of understanding. The excitement and enthusiasm evident in the quotation is almost palpable she describes the far reaching consequences of learning. The recognition of learning can be described as a eureka moment as instantly Karen understands. As her understanding of the topic is assured her confidence in her abilities rises and it is this confidence and positive emotion that provide support for her self-esteem, which goes far beyond the parameters of her learning lifeworld.

Recognition that learning has been achieved is noted, by Karen, in two key ways. Firstly she identifies how if she has learnt when she memorises material it 'sticks in her mind'. Secondly she refers to learning as occurring when she has 'expanded her mind' which allows her to view topics from diverse, creative perspectives. Thus learning for Karen has two main aims, memorisation and an expansion of various knowledge perspectives. Through the interviews Karen's insight to her own learning process has been increased and she is now more aware of

how she learns and gives more consideration to the learning process. This she feels has benefited her learning and generated further interest in her learning,

“Come to think of it, I never realised I did that. Yes, that’s what I do!” (p3,pg12,1)

Knowledge as weaponing; the need to challenge

Karen’s confidence in her learning can also be seen through the issue of challenging. Karen frequently refers to the theme of challenging as important in her learning and life generally and often finds that by challenging her confidence is improved. Karen describes how she relishes the opportunity to challenge when she talks of how she will return faulty products to a shop,

“I’ve always got my money back, doing that. I can be quite forceful in a way; I’ve not got a very polite tone when I don’t want to have, do you know what I mean? But, it helped knowing that – made me feel more confident. I always take all my friends things back for them.(p1,pg17,3)

However Karen feels that if she is to challenge successfully she needs to adopt an alternate role, in place of her student self, by dressing and speaking differently. She feels that in doing so her challenge will more likely be successful. The theme of challenging is very much present when learning also, Karen challenges the preconceived ideas of how students are assessed and is particularly vocal when discussing exams, which she feels are pointless as they do not reflect ‘real understanding’. Perhaps is linked to Karen’s avoidance of risk as examinations are perceived by Karen to be a risky activity and therefore one in which she may fail. Karen is also critical of some teaching methods,

“I think well there’s no point me even going to that lecture. You know, it’s pointless. Why don’t they have microphones? They can avoid this situation, you know. Why don’t they do this? Why don’t they do that? Why don’t they, instead of staying at the front, walk up and down the aisles and ask people questions, you know. Why don’t they do something different? That annoys me and then I feel like I’ve got to read up on, I’ve got to read up on it because I’ve missed out something that everyone else’s got.” (p5,pg26,1)

The quotation demonstrates Karen assertiveness when challenging as she can feel deeply frustrated if these methods hinder her learning and require her to spend more of her free time studying. She feels particularly strongly about these issues as she feels that changes can easily be made (by the lecturer) with minimum effort. What is interesting in this statement is the frustration that Karen feels when this situation results in her missing out on information, especially if others have obtained it. This comparison with others indicates that Karen needs to

feel that the learning process is fair, that is, she should not have to do more work than her peers simply because of the inefficiencies of the lecturer.

Challenging stereotypes

Although challenging plays an important role in her learning and it is an experience that she enjoys Karen needs to feel that when she challenges it is to serve a purpose and it should not be used flippantly. As a woman, Karen feels that challenging is necessary as if women are to be successful in the workplace they need to challenge male assumptions,

"I want to prove people wrong. (the world) it's just still taken over by men and I just think well I know I could do as good his job"(p2,pg16,1)

This need to challenge could be related to Karen's family background for she feels that her father is sexist. She describes him as believing that certain tasks should be completed by women, e.g. cleaning and will ask the women in his employment to undertake this task. Although Karen is confident and happy to challenge her father and refuses to accommodate him, it may explain why she feels it so necessary to challenge perceived male assumptions as her experience has taught her that the workplace can be sexist and oppress women. Thus by challenging the situation she can prove to the world and perhaps her father that gender stereotypes should not be accepted. Although Karen rejects the use of stereotypes there are indications that she herself uses gender stereotypes when talking of some of her female peers,

"they're just basic bimbos, really, really say like ridiculous things and then they just make you laugh and they're there for you that, you know, they're on this planet to amuse you cos they say such stupid things. And they come out with something extraordinarily intelligent and you're going like, God I really underestimated you – I'm sorry."(p4,pg17,2)

Although use of stereotypes is evident it is equally evident that Karen feels these preconceived ideas are invalid and she is proved to be incorrect in her assumptions and this again supports her view that stereotypes, particularly those of gender should be rejected. Karen feels that she can challenge the notion of gender stereotypes by being successful in the workplace and that this achievement will not only "prove them wrong" but will also allow her to be used as an example to encourage other women that they too can succeed.

Learning as a facilitator of power and respect

Karen feels that when successful in the workplace, that is achieving senior management status, she will obtain power and respect from those who doubted her. Karen feels that by gaining recognition and praise from others this will in turn develop her confidence and self-esteem. Karen feels that as a woman the achievement of respect and power is more difficult than it is for men. Thus the rewards of achieving such status are greater, particularly when this achievement is recognised by both men and women,

"I want to have influence on what people do and the decisions they make because they'll ask me for an answer which, hopefully, will be backed up and educated enough for them to listen. It's respect at the end of the day I suppose"(p3,pg16,1)

The theme of respect is repeated as Karen alludes to how as a woman the need for respect from others is particularly strong. Karen feels that women are frequently not recognised for their achievements whereas any achievements made by men are very much noted and praised. She believes that women have been oppressed by men, as they try to stifle attempts women have made to achieve equal status,

"I do think women are the stronger sex – up here. I honestly do. Not even in, yeah academically as well. But like then everyone says yeah, with these big famous scientists like Einstein and Galileo and all this, but it's only because women were never taken seriously in those days and if they had their own thoughts then they were burnt at the stake for being a witch, weren't they? You know, I just think, I don't think women are given the opportunity or taken seriously – STILL don't think that."(p6,pg20,3)

The lack of recognition of female achievements is thought to be particularly unfair as she feels that women are more capable than men in their learning. Karen claims that women are stronger, more intelligent and adopt a more mature approach in life and specifically towards their studies. It is in part due to the dedication and hardworking nature of women generally which Karen feels demonstrates this mature attitude and which may contribute to their increased intelligence. Karen feels that in her experience men do not take learning seriously being more preoccupied with social distractions, for example, drinking and watching football. Although Karen is quick to explain that this phenomena is not unique to men, she feels that it is more common to them. The outcome of these differences, according to Karen, is that women are more successful learners.

Knowledge justifies learning position

Karen's individual learning process relies upon the use of justification as she feels that when learning all of her actions need to be justified to her own personal satisfaction, to the extent that Karen requires specific reasons as to why she should learn. Similar to when Karen challenges, she will question the lecturer as to why a particular subject is necessary and unless they can justify its inclusion she rejects the need to study the topic. For Karen the inclusion of a topic may be justified if she can see future temporal and spatial applications. If she can not relate the information to herself or the world around her she rejects its inclusion.

Karen also uses evidence as a method of justification, she describes how she can come to a conclusion using evidence and therefore is able to justify why she holds certain opinions and beliefs. Karen feels that that there are two steps to full justification, firstly when she can justify her beliefs to herself and secondly when she can then justify these beliefs to others. When this is achieved Karen feels that she has full understanding and is confident enough to defend her opinion even if it is not a popular one,

"When I know about something. If I can justify it in my mind, I could justify it to anyone. If I myself believe in something, then I don't find a problem, even if the whole world is against me. I don't find a problem talking about it because I've justified it to myself. And at the end of the day, although it's not the right way to look, that's all that matters. As long as you can sleep at night, that's all that matters to me. So if I can do that, I'm not saying I'm gonna go out and be a serial killer and I can justify why I've killed these people, do you know what I mean? I mean it's got to be reasonable and logical" (p2, pg14, 1)

Karen is firm that once she is satisfied and has justified her stance to herself she will not be shaken from that position as she is convinced that her reasoned, logical position is the 'right one'. Thus her view of knowledge may be different to others, even experts, and she will stand by this view unless there is justification to the contrary.

Understanding equals value for money

In order to achieve full understanding Karen will question the lecturer and request that they clarify any misunderstandings, this she feels not only benefits herself but also others who she believes have also not understood (perhaps again reiterating the role of teacher). Although earlier Karen describes the unapproachable lecturer that she was reluctant to question, she also expresses how her own attitude has temporally changed and she now would find the answers from any lecturer. Part of her reasoning as to why it is important for her to question, is to gain

value as she (that is, her parents) pay fees. Karen puts great emphasis on gaining value for money and believes that if she is paying to study she will ensure that she does understand. It is almost as if the more she understands the better value the course is. The concept of value for money is also reflected when she describes the high cost of text books and her determination that she will benefit from them,

“if I spend all the money on books, which I have done, I’m gonna read them and I’m gonna appreciate it, do you know what I mean? Cos it’s hurting, it’s hurting.”(p6,pg13,2)

Learning is a puzzle

Karen describes her learning process as very much an individual one as everyone learns in a different way, she believes that by adopting the right method her learning will be successful,

“I don’t know an effective method so I haven’t,... If you find a method it’s like, that works for you, then it’ll be good because that’s one of the main things that’s worrying me, at University” (p1, pg11, 1)

At present Karen is not satisfied with her approach for tackling exams and feels that because of this her learning is hindered and this is a cause of concern. Her need to obtain a learning formula for examinations may be related to her understanding that learning is like a puzzle and once the appropriate formula is found the puzzle can be cracked and thus her learning will be successful. It is interesting that Karen feels that she has not established a successful learning strategy for examination and that earlier in the analysis she rejects examinations, leaving open the question are these two points related?

The learning process; balancing structure and freedom

Although Karen has not yet found a method for exams she does adopt a step-by step approach for her learning generally. Provided Karen feels that she is directed in her learning she is able to utilise this approach which will support her understanding. On a similar note the use of structure is evident in Karen’s learning as structure provides her with direction and encourages the use of a logical step-by step approach,

“I much prefer structure. Because free... it’s really bad with freedom you have to think for yourself, isn’t it? But with structure, you still have to think for yourself, but you just know what lines you’ve got to think along.”(p7,pg26,3)

This quotation can be interpreted as indicating the security Karen gains in adopting a structured approach as it prevents a loss of focus which is very important for Karen, especially when assessment is involved. Despite her apparent need for structure Karen needs some freedom as she can find that too many rules do not help her learning, thus her learning although dominated by structure does not mean that all freedom and flexibility should be excluded. The inclusion of structure and freedom requires continual balancing for Karen in her learning process. Although she places great emphasis on structure, in this particular example, this must not prevent the inclusion of freedom, for as commented upon earlier Karen believes that successful learning involves the generation of diverse ideas which may be obtained through collaboration.

Learning should be a focussed activity

When Karen is trying to learn it is a process which she may find frustrating if either she is unable to understand or if she is attempting to accomplish too many things at once.

“And you don’t – you can’t, you haven’t got time to digest it because, as you write it, down on the board, they’re explaining it. You’re not concentrating on what they’re saying, you’re concentrating on what’s on that board because you can’t – you haven’t got the durability to do both, you know. I’m not some kind of Superwoman.” (p1, pg19,1)

Here she describes how when in a lecture she is expected to listen, take notes and digest the information. This she feels is impossible and so becomes frustrated. Karen however has developed a mechanism for dealing with this frustration by accepting that some subjects are not for her and therefore she should not try to understand and the frustrating situation is avoided. Again Karen attempts to avoid experiences which she feels may result in failure. Like her comments on her avoidance of dialogue if she does not feel that she has sufficient expertise, Karen will avoid engaging in activities that may encourage criticism from others and remove affirmation from her learning process. This comment may appear at odds with Karen’s desire for challenges however it could be inferred that Karen will only challenge if she feels she is confident that she can do this successfully.

The temporality and spatiality of learning

Her learning is strongly affected by the time and place in which she learns. When Karen is working under time constraints she finds that the pressure is increased and that this pressure only serves to hinder her learning, although she believes that meeting deadlines is something to which she will need to become accustomed.

"But it's just something you've gotta do if you're gonna have at work, you know, you're gonna have deadlines all coming at once – you can't expect them to be scattered out can you? It's just something you've got to do with pressure, haven't you? You've got to take it in your stride."(p1, pg31,3)

The place in which she learns may perhaps affect Karen to a greater extent for she finds that living in halls of residence often means that there are many distractions,

"Can't get away from it, in halls of residence, you're always with other people. You've not got any personal space whatsoever. You're in your room, but then there's other people coming in to watch your telly."(p1,pg25,3)

The noise and constant interruptions when living in halls can often mean that learning is difficult this is especially problematic for Karen as she requires silence to study. Although she enjoys the company that others provide and is happy to share her space when she does want to spend time studying it can be very difficult to do so. This has led Karen to return to the parental home where she feels more comfortable and relaxed, here she finds there are fewer distractions and greater creature comforts. The familiarity of her parental home supports her learning greatly, to the extent that Karen feels if she is to be successful in the exam room she will pretend that she is at home in familiar surroundings,

"I'm hallucinating where I am, you know... If I'm in my own little world, I'll be fine, if I'm in my bedroom... Fool myself and I'll be fine. I'll just have to, won't have to think of an exam, that's all."(p2,4,pg32,1)

The aesthetics of learning

The importance of place is again demonstrated when Karen discusses the importance of aesthetics, for she likes the environment in which she works to be aesthetically pleasing, for example she needs the lecture theatre to be clean and comfortable if she is to learn. The importance that Karen places on aesthetics is demonstrated quite clearly when she talks of her rejection of a particular institution because of the environment in which it is situated,

"I very nearly went to Teeside but I was told and then I found out that it's a very, very industrial area. It's not very picturesque. It's very grey, very depressing.."(p2,pg18,1)

Karen selected business as a subject on the basis that it was an area that she was very much interested in and she needs to have an interest in anything that she studies. Karen also feels that when she is interested in a subject she finds it easier to remember and this is key to her learning. Although Karen needs to have some form of intrinsic motivation, in this case interest in the subject. She identifies a much more powerful motivator, that is, the opportunity to have a successful career. When asked why she came to university one of her reasons was to achieve the goal of a career, for without a degree Karen felt it would be very difficult to reach the high management positions she wishes to obtain.

"I mean a couple of years ago I was in a pub and this bloke says, you won't even be let into the front door, of a big company, if you haven't got a degree. And that's what made me think, oh shit, I'd better go and get a degree."(p8, pg16,1)

Karen also believes that the achievement of a degree qualification will not only allow her to become a senior manager but it will also allow her to have a choice of employment and this is important because she can then choose a position in which she can be happy.

As Karen needs to feel that her learning should be applied in future temporal and spatial situations she is heavily reliant upon the use of real life examples to support her learning. She consequently claims that most effective lecturers will include such examples in their teaching. Through the use of examples Karen is able to identify the future relevance of the topics which she is learning if the lecturer is unable to provide such evidence Karen does not consider the topic worthy of learning. It is on the basis of relevance that Karen rejects the concept of exams believing them to be unrepresentative of the real world, however Karen's perception of relevance can be strongly affected by the level of difficulty,

"So I started and I worked and I worked and I worked and then I just thought, oh I can't do it. It's not dropping. The penny is not – it's not doing it – and then I switched off a bit... Because then I convinced myself that it didn't have anything to do with it."(p2,3,pg10,3)

Here Karen demonstrates her reluctance to accept subjects which she may see as relevant if she finds them too difficult. Thus her acceptance of a subject is not just related to its perceived relevance, as she explains that she may use this reason as an excuse for not trying to learn when she finds the subject difficult.

Learning needs to be applied- lived knowledge

Although Karen feels that learning should relate to the real world and that some of the skills she learns at university will benefit her, she is quite certain that no matter how much relating is done there is no substitute for experience and real learning only occurs when applying knowledge,

“I reckon it’s like when you pass your test, you never learn to drive until you’ve passed your test, do you? I don’t think you’ll ever learn, or you’ll ever be able to adapt to the workplace, until you’re in the workplace.”(p7,pg15,3)

Thus Karen feels that attending university is just a stepping stone which allows her to reach her career goals and it is only here (in the real world) that real learning occurs, which may imply that what she learns in higher education is not real or relevant for her at the present time. Through applying her knowledge Karen feels she will receive monetary rewards and money is a strong motivator for Karen. She hopes that if she is successful in her degree, this will be reflected in financial rewards. Although remuneration is important it should be noted that this should not be done at the expense of job satisfaction.

High grades indicate learning

Money however is not the only external motivator as grades are also an issue for Karen, as one of her learning aims is to gain a good grade, as this is a tangible recognition of her learning. Through grades Karen is able to demonstrate that she has the ability to learn and this will be recognised by employers who will reward her with a high salary. Karen also uses grades as feedback for her own learning as she feels that this is a good indication that she has obtained a certain level of understanding,

“in my BTEC, you’d get a distinction, merit, pass, fail. If you got a distinction, you were brilliant, if you got a merit you weren’t bad, if you got a pass, you’re OK.”(p2,pg29,1)

Karen is happy for her learning to be measured in this way, as it allows for understanding to be gauged in a format that can be related to herself and perspective employers. Similarly the final motivational aspect that Karen referred to could be described as the desire to achieve. Karen has a strong will to achieve and be successful in her learning and will adopt strategies that she believes will ensure this success and limit effort on what she considers unproductive exercises,

“because I know I’ve only got to get into the 2nd year, which is not even going towards the final grades, I’m just skimming the surface of what I could actually achieve. I’m a bit annoyed with

myself for doing that but then I just think well, it's just laziness but, you know I'm not as dedicated. I could be but I'm just not because I know it's not going to show it on paper as such, it will either be a 2:1 or 2:2 not a first, and it's not gonna go towards it."(p3,pg15,3)

Here again there is reference to grades but what is perhaps more pertinent is the strategy which Karen adopts for she consciously limits her level of involvement with the material as it will not be recognised in her overall degree classification. Thus indicating that it the achievement of a good degree is perhaps more important than understanding at the moment as she herself states that she knows she is only scratching the surface of topics. Karen will do whatever is necessary to pass but no more until her efforts contribute to her degree classification.

Learning requires a clue-seeking approach

In order to achieve and be successful academically Karen is very alert to assessment demands and makes concerted efforts to meet lecturers expectations and impress them with her knowledge,

"they're marking (lecturers) it then you've got to meet their expectations.....because it was his pet hate, now I know not to write it, so he's probably gonna find my essay a little bit more reader friendly, to him, which always helps if you keep on the right side, isn't it?"(p5,pg4,2)

Karen uses any clues given to her by the lecturer and will integrate anything they suggest into her assessment as this she believes will boost her chances of receiving a good grade and therefore achieve a good degree classification. The example above indicates that these clues do not necessarily need to be major but demonstrate her belief that assignments should be adapted slightly to suit the marker if she is to receive the highest grade she can. Without reassurance and help from the lecturer Karen finds it difficult to focus her assessment and may lose direction and focus.

Conclusion

The analysis of Karen's interviews demonstrate the important features of her learning lifeworld. One of the most notable issues that plays a part in Karen's learning is the involvement of others. Karen describes how when sharing her learning she is able to broaden her horizons through the input of diverse and creative ideas. During this collaborative process Karen finds that at times she can be inspired by those with whom she learns and this motivates her to learn. Further Karen finds that by including collaboration in her learning process she has the opportunity to receive respect and validation by demonstrating her knowledge, which as a woman Karen feels

is especially important. When confident of her learning Karen feels enabled to challenge others and this too is supportive of her learning.

Similar to the theme of challenging, Karen refers to the use of justification in her learning. She considers that she has successfully learnt when she can justify her position to herself and to others. However for Karen 'real' learning can not occur until she applies her knowledge to the wider world, in particular, the working world.

As a woman the ambition to be successful in the working world is particularly evident in the analysis. To achieve this goal Karen believes she must achieve high grades and so adopts a clue-seeking approach, which she believes, will be effective in achieving this goal. The achievement of these goals is important for Karen if she is to gain the respect and validation she requires and this is a key motivator for Karen in her learning. The future ambitions of Karen do therefore play a major role in why and how Karen learns.

5.14 The Noema-Noesis Distinction for Karen

Learning as application of knowledge and a clue seeking approach

NOEMA-APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE	NOESIS- CLUE SEEKING APPROACH
<p>Application of knowledge is the object of learning for Karen as she views real learning as lived knowledge. Until she can actually apply her knowledge in employment situations she feels she has not achieved full understanding.</p> <p>Karen feels that while university education may be useful it does not represent a true form of learning. However a degree qualification allows access to the working world where Karen can really learn. Higher education also facilitates a high status position in her future working environments. She argues that such a place in the working world provides high remunerative rewards and this acts as further motivation.</p> <p>The emphasis on application of knowledge influences Karen's learning process through her choice of subject. She rejects topics that are not applicable to the outside world arguing that if they can not be applied to a time or place they are irrelevant to her. Karen is able to confirm future relevance of a topic if she is able to relate her learning to a real life example.</p>	<p>Karen argues that the only way she can achieve lived knowledge is via a university education, as this she argues will open doors to the working world and here she can truly learn.</p> <p>However if this aim is to be realised Karen feels good grades are a prerequisite as these indicate to both herself and potential employers that she has the ability to perform a high level job. Thus Karen is motivated by high grades as this not only supports her self-esteem but it also confirms to others that her lived experiences are proven and that she is suited to a senior place in any working environment.</p> <p>To gain high grades Karen adopts a clue seeking approach, searching for assessment clues and tailoring her work to satisfy individual lecturer's expectations. She argues that learning for assessment is much like a puzzle and once you have the solution high grades will follow.</p> <p>This learning approach is also represented in her desire for structure as this limits digressions and ensures she stays focussed on lecturer and assessment demands.</p>

Learning is shared understanding and an collaborative approach

NOEMA-SHARED UNDERSTANDING	NOESIS-A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH
<p>The purpose of learning for Karen is to reach an understanding that is shared with others. Karen uses bodily signs as a method of gauging shared understanding. These embodiment signals, which she sends and receives from her peers, demonstrate whether understanding has occurred. This form of interaction provides Karen with reassurance and assures her place in this academic environment.</p> <p>Karen finds that through sharing her learning she is inspired and excited to learn. This motivates her to engage in the learning process. Through such recognition Karen's self-esteem and confidence is supported as she continues to learn.</p> <p>Despite the strong reliance on shared understanding Karen feels that at times individual understanding is more appropriate as others may prove distracting. At times the imposition of others leads Karen to find alternative places to learn, notably her parental home where she can retreat to her 'own world'.</p>	<p>To achieve this goal Karen uses a collaborative learning process, which not only facilitates understanding but also allows Karen to view issues from new and varied perspectives. This provides Karen with a broader outlook on her learning. This intersubjective experience is particularly common in a tutorial setting where interaction is encouraged.</p> <p>To be effective there needs to be an awareness of others needs and wants. Karen argues that this collaborative skill needs to be learnt if it is to be effective for all.</p> <p>Karen feels that this collaborative approach can be inspiring and through listening to the ideas of others a more creative approach to her learning is facilitated.</p> <p>Without relating to others during the learning process Karen would lack the inspiration she requires, thus it is somewhat unsurprising that one of her learning aims is to achieve shared understanding. This collaborative approach provides Karen with opportunities to gain the inspiration which she requires.</p>

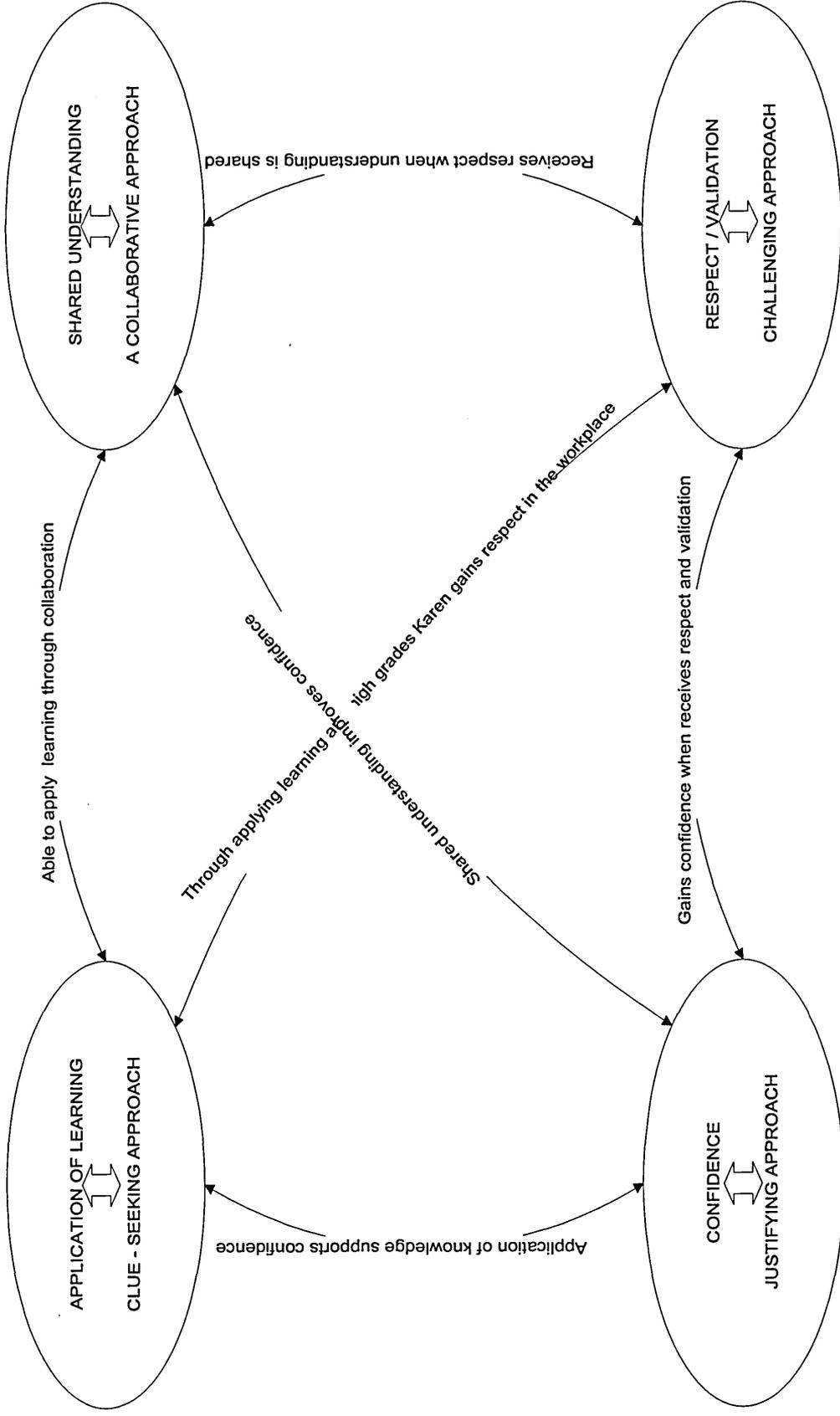
Learning is an opportunity to gain validation/ respect and a challenging approach

NOEMA-VALIDATION/RESPECT	NOESIS-CHALLENGING APPROACH
<p>For Karen the object of learning is to achieve validation and respect. This aim is achieved through the acquisition of knowledge as this allows Karen to receive respect. She argues that if she is knowledgeable others will have to respect her and it is this that motivates her to learn.</p> <p>Karen places great emphasis on gaining respect, particularly in the workplace for she equates respect with success, i.e. the more successful she is the more respect she will receive. This validation facilitates feelings of belonging to the working world and her self-esteem is supported.</p> <p>Karen constantly seeks out validation from perceived 'experts' in many of her learning experiences. It is only when validation is received from others who are knowledgeable that Karen feels properly respected and her self-identity is confirmed.</p> <p>The intersubjective nature of respect also allows Karen to influence the behaviours and attitudes of others and this is a further motivator for Karen.</p>	<p>The way to achieve validation and respect for Karen is through a challenging/questioning approach. As a woman Karen feels that challenging preconceived ideas and stereotypes is necessary if she is to gain respect and be successful in the workplace. Her lived experiences have persuaded Karen that the physical embodiment of womanhood limits the opportunities available to her and it is only through challenging established rules will she be able to prove herself and feel validated.</p> <p>This learning process increases Karen's confidence and self-esteem as it establishes a high status place for Karen in the outside world. However Karen feels that to challenge successfully she may have to alter her self-presentation, for she argues that little respect is gained when she presents herself as a student. However should she hide her student identity respect and validation are more easily enabled.</p> <p>One of the key ways in which Karen challenges intersubjectively is through questioning. Karen will constantly question the lecturer's until she is satisfied that she has understood, arguing that as a fee paying student she is in a placed position to question.</p>

Learning as a way of gaining confidence and a justifying approach

NOEMA-CONFIDENCE	NOESIS-JUSTIFYING APPROACH
<p>The learning process provides Karen with a way of gaining increased self-confidence.</p> <p>When understanding is achieved Karen feels as though 'her day has been worth living'. Thus the impact of learning on Karen's self-esteem and confidence is profound as it can give meaning to Karen's lifeworld as a whole. This increased self-confidence may also result in feelings of self-belief for Karen who then feels she has the ability to learn and understand.</p> <p>Much of Karen's confidence and self-belief is based upon the actions of others, as before she can believe in her own self-worth she requires expert validation. When this is realised Karen is motivated to learn both individually and collaboratively.</p> <p>However Karen finds that she requires some initial confidence if she is to participate in discussions. She feels that if she is to interact with others self-assurance is necessary if others are to believe she is capable. Therefore the acquirement of confidence is a key object of Karen's learning.</p>	<p>In order to gain confidence and self-belief Karen adopts a justifying approach to her learning.</p> <p>When Karen is able to justify her actions and beliefs she feels a more confident person. She argues that until she is able to justify her beliefs to her own personal satisfaction she lacks confidence and self-esteem. Karen feels that if she is confident in her beliefs she will not only be able to defend them to herself but also to others.</p> <p>A means of justification for Karen is the utilisation of evidence. She feels that evidence from an expert source provides the support she requires.</p> <p>Once Karen can fully justify her actions a sense of satisfaction is felt and her identity is secured for now she can resist any challenges that may be made on her.</p>

Karen's Noema Noesis Relationships



6.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with an overview of the lifeworlds and discusses the major findings which have arisen through these descriptions. A critical evaluation of the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) is then presented. A discussion of appropriate approaches for the study of student learning is included which evaluates the most beneficial methods and methodologies for understanding students' approaches to learning. The following section explores the teaching and learning outcomes of this study including a discussion of the value of approaches to learning. The practical implications of these findings is then explored as I examine, using Ophelia as an example, how a tutor may help her achieve genuine mental engagement in her learning. The final section explores the implications for future research and practice.

6.2 Summary of Findings

The summarised findings discussed in this chapter are based upon the analysis of major themes explicated from the lifeworld interviews with six Higher Education students presented in the lifeworld profiles and noema-noesis summaries. The analysis was derived from the empirical phenomenological interviews which provided a rich description of what approaches to learning means to these students. By using this methodological approach the interviews enabled an uncovering of the many complex meanings of approaches to learning (Kvale 1996).

When exploring the lifeworld the aspects of temporality, spatiality, embodiment, intersubjectivity and selfhood were continually present during the course of the interviews and these are reflected in the profile descriptions. These parameters were present in the student experiences (Ashworth 1996) and extend the understanding of students' approaches to learning. From the rich profile descriptions I was able to identify the noetic and noematic relationships that exist in each lifeworld. By searching for these unique relationships I was able to define the intentional experience (Kvale 1996). It is from this extensive analysis that an overview of the research participants is presented. Through this critical summary the reader is able to view the main approaches to learning themes, while simultaneously exploring the individual nuances. The main themes are presented below with a summary of the related findings.

1. Sociality and the student's approach to learning

All of the participants felt that learning could not or should not occur in isolation. Their experiences of collaborative learning are very mixed. Jim approaches his learning in a paternalistic manner seeing himself as a superior learner to the other, younger students. He feels

his lived experiences place him higher in the learning hierarchy and so he is able to guide others through their learning experiences. Similarly Gary feels that learning is the place to prove his superiority, however for Gary this supports his need for affirmation. It is only through 'proving' himself in the eyes of others that he feels confident with his learning abilities. The notion that learning can be used to enhance social status is identified in the lifeworld interviews and this example demonstrates that while these two learners have a similar noema when learning, the project and meanings are quite different.

Clive offers a further insight into how others impact on his approach to learning. He feels that his learning benefits by the inclusion of sociality through both collaborating with and competing against other students. Through collaboration Clive is able to ascertain whether understanding has been achieved. However when he competes with his fellow students his noematic intention is to receive parental affirmation.

Ophelia describes intersubjectivity as a way of achieving a sense of belonging. This often affects her approach to learning as she only feels comfortable and confident when learning with familiar, friendly faces. Without a sense of belonging Ophelia claims that learning is a very risky prospect and so will try to ensure that she will learn mainly with those in her clique. Thus for Ophelia the involvement of others in her learning not only aids her understanding but also provides emotional and self-esteem support. For Diane and Karen a shared approach to learning is adopted. Karen argues that if perspectives are shared with others then she can achieve a shared level of understanding and this benefits her learning. In order to share her learning however Karen feels she must first learn collaborative skills.

Certain similarities can be drawn with Diane's view of collaboration as she too feels that the sharing of perspectives is useful in her learning. Diane strongly emphasises the reciprocal nature of collaboration, expecting all to be both givers and receivers in the learning process. It is important for Diane to believe that everyone has a place in her learning and that all concerned feel they are making a valuable contribution. For Diane collaboration enables an improved understanding of her own identity which can inform her own self-perception. Once Diane feels that a high level of collaboration and self-awareness has been achieved she feels in greater control of her learning. Here again it is evident that while both Karen and Diane feel that collaboration should be achieved by a shared approach the meanings and context of this approach are quite different. It could be argued that sharing learning for Diane has a much greater impact as it affects her view of herself, for this influences Diane's perception of her own identity.

From the evidence I am able to demonstrate that the participants recognised the role of sociality in their learning. Further others are not just present but that they also hold a position in the lifeworld of the learner's interviewed, for example, for Gary others are a form of competition and for Ophelia it was to gain or give support. However what the summary identifies is the many meanings that collaboration may hold and how it is often the object of learning (the noema) which influences the perception of this theme.

2. Learning as support for wider needs

As my understanding of students' approaches to learning grew, it became increasingly apparent that learning can support various needs. These needs would frequently go beyond 'academic boundaries' for I found their learning supported many emotional, self-esteem and self-development needs which were frequently linked to their perception of selfhood and identity. This section outlines the way in which students in this study describe their approaches to learning as being influenced by their desire to support various needs. These are frequently founded upon selfhood and intersubjectivity. One of the most dominant themes described here is self-development which is referred to by Diane, Clive and Jim.

The project of learning for Gary is linked more closely to the emotional, embodied response which may be achieved when learning occurs. Like Karen, Gary also finds his learning supports his noematic intention of receiving affirmation from the sociality of the learning experience. Ophelia however finds that her approach to learning supports her 'wider needs' in terms of her intersubjective need to belong.

For Diane, learning fulfils her need to understand who she is, as it provides an opportunity for personal development. She finds that by challenging assumptions her learning is enhanced and she develops her understanding of herself, as a woman. Her perception of self is informed through the opinions of others which she utilises to define her intersubjective role. By engaging in this process Diane feels powerful, respected and confident. It is clear from Diane's description that her approach to learning is adapted to enable a fundamental understanding of her selfhood which in turn leaves her with positive emotional feelings.

Similarly Clive uses his learning to support self-development however for Clive self-development means the achievement of goals and this motivates him to learn further. Once these goals are achieved he feels that he is a successful learner and is then in a position to receive affirmation from his parents. Recognition of his achievements from his parents and peers is a key need which may be satisfied by his learning achievements. What is evident from these examples is the difference in meanings of self-development. For Diane self-development

is achieved when she reaches a greater understanding of her own identity. However for Clive this process is realised when he is satisfied that he has achieved his self-determined goals.

The theme of selfhood is referred to by Jim when he describes how learning facilitates self-development. He defines this development as occurring when he has a place in the world and he becomes 'more of a person', thus learning influences his perception of selfhood. As the world constantly develops he feels it is necessary that he too adapts and learning presents a forum for this to occur. This for Jim is a key project in his learning as he feels that as he learns within a changing world, he too, must change. Feelings of excitement are also possible for Jim and this offers a further reason for learning. Gary also considers learning as a mechanism for achieving excitement for when he feels successful he has a physical 'buzz' like response. Learning fulfils his ambition for superiority and affirmation as he may be able to prove himself to be a 'better learner' and this when recognised by others provides him with affirmation. For Gary sociality does have great relevance for this interaction enables him to achieve his project for learning, that is, affirmation. Through such intersubjective recognition Gary feels his perception of his selfhood is enhanced.

Learning supports Karen's needs for respect and validation as she feels if she is perceived as knowledgeable she will earn the respect of others. She argues that once this is achieved she becomes more confident. Further she finds that as a woman it is important that her learning incorporates a challenging approach and so Karen constantly questions stereotypes and assumptions. If confident in her ability to challenge Karen incorporates this approach in all areas of her life.

Ophelia however takes quite a distinct view of how learning supports her as she defines learning as a way of taking ownership of her life. Her temporal experiences have taught Ophelia that she should not be overly reliant upon others but this move to independence is difficult as she finds the process very uncertain and risky. However she feels that she is, gradually, reaching her noematic intention and is gaining greater control over her learning and her life. Thus for Ophelia her project is to obtain some sort of ownership of her learning as her previous experience has not previously enabled such ownership

The descriptions of each of the learners presented demonstrate that learning can fulfil wider needs. These needs could be described as drivers which encourage them to participate in the learning process. However these needs do vary considerably and where there are commonalties, e.g. self-development, achievement etc. it is clear that different meanings can be applied to these themes.

3. What learning means and the student's approach to learning

During the course of the interviews the students identified what learning means to them. Some of their descriptions define what they believe learning 'is' and others relate to their beliefs of what learning should be and these definitions are not always compatible. However they do present a comprehensive view of what learning 'means' to them. For Ophelia the noema of learning is achieving understanding whereby she can relate information to herself holistically in alternate temporal and spatial experiences. Complete understanding is achieved when she is able to defend her position to others. The noetic approach applied is a fearful and insecure activity as she feels learning exposes her weaknesses and she may not reach the expectations of others and so be perceived a failure. Therefore for Ophelia learning equals fear and so she requires courage to present a 'persona' of confidence and through this identity she feels able to overcome her fears. Although she feels learning should be an equitable process she argues it is not as effort is not always rewarded. What is notable about Ophelia's comment is that she feels that the current system favours her approach and so results in feelings of guilt. Thus the current situation of learning, as perceived by Ophelia, does not achieve her noematic intention of equity.

Like Ophelia, Jim also defines learning as understanding. However his meaning of understanding relates to transferring his learning to the outside world, into a context with which he is familiar. He views learning as a holistic process whereby the framework is first devised and then he procures the details that complete the 'jigsaw' of learning. While both view learning as holistic for Ophelia the process is not a puzzle rather she feels she must know the totality if she is to be secure and comfortable in her learning.

For Diane learning refers to personal meaning, that is, when learning has occurred she can relate her own personal issues to the wider world and she is able to recognise her place in it. Thus for Diane learning is a deeply personal experience whereby the process becomes a part of her identity and her life. According to Diane learning should be a creative process however she feels that frequently this is not the case as there is too little time to relax and engage in the learning process. Consequently Diane is not always able to obtain her project for learning as she considers her situation of learning prevents this from occurring.

The project of learning for both Clive and Gary is memorisation, as they share the view that learning is achieved when they can remember. However Clive also considers learning to include understanding for it is this understanding which will allow him to interact with the world in the future. Paradoxically he believes that although learning is an ambiguous process it is only through learning that he is able to gain certainty and so learning provides Clive with a sense of

security. In Gary's accounts of his lifeworld his focus is not on understanding but like Clive he too believes that learning means application of knowledge and skills to the outside world.

'Real' learning has occurred for Karen when she is able to apply her understanding in future employment situations. The meaning which she applies to her learning often influences her approach to learning for she varies her approach on the basis of the perceived relevance of the subject. Thus similarities may be found across students beliefs of what learning is, for example understanding, memorisation and application of learning. The nuances that are present in these descriptions however are able to expose the varying meanings of these broad themes.

4. What they do when trying to learn

The final major theme explores what the learners actually do when trying to learn, that is the physical and mental act of learning. Clive for example takes an active approach to his learning. He feels learning is a practical experience in which both the mind and body are engaged. His favourite methods of learning include hands on demonstrations, note taking and discussions. Similarly Gary describes his approach as an active one and he constantly seeks out opportunities to participate in his learning, he explains that this need may be driven through his dyslexia. In order to manage his learning Gary uses a step-by-step approach dividing his learning according to small goals. He finds that by staging his learning he can be singularly focussed.

During the interviews with Karen, she describes how in her attempts to learn she clue-seeks by searching out information which could aid her various assessment activities. A method favoured by Karen in this approach is to contact the relevant lecturer and request further information for the assessment, she feels that this is appropriate as assessments are no more than a puzzle which can be 'cracked'. Karen also tries to justify her knowledge using evidence from an 'expert' source for when learning she tries to justify her position to herself and to others.

Ophelia takes quite a different approach to her learning for she procrastinates when trying to learn. Often Ophelia procrastinates as she is fearful of failing in the eyes of others, notably her parents. She is also resentful of spending time and effort learning subjects that she does not enjoy and will attempt to delay or distract from her learning. It is evident therefore that Ophelia's approach is heavily influenced by her noematic intention of failure avoidance.

For Diane the process of learning occurs in three main stages. Firstly she reflects, here she metaphorically detaches herself to a distant place, secondly, she 'absorbs' the information for this to occur by looking outside of her mind and body. The third and final stage describes Diane as transferring her knowledge from her lived body to the outside world to any future temporal

and spatial experiences. Her abstract description is quite different to earlier accounts as while the others (especially Clive's and Gary's) describe the practicalities of learning, Diane's description is much more conceptual. Jim's attempts to learn follow a somewhat similar process as he relaxes his mind and body. He feels it is essential that he relaxes when he learns as it allows him to absorb and replenish both mentally and physically and this process feeds his self-development.

Again it is evident that what the learners do when trying to learn can be very different with the interviewees' highlighting alternate learning process. It is also important to note that what they do when attempting to learn is not necessarily beneficial to their learning and may hinder their achievement of their own learning goals.

The main themes discussed highlight the many different views on what learning means to these students but what is especially significant is the varying meanings which are applied to the same terminology, as it is in the nuance that real understanding of the meaning is made. From this sample of students it can be seen that learning has much wider implications than those that exist within the classroom. For example, learning may support emotional needs. Further it is clear that their attitude to life informs their attitude to learning and vice versa, thus learning cannot be separated from their wider existence. Intersubjectivity is also dominant with the students' providing rich descriptions of their perceptions of collaboration. Similarly selfhood was ever present with learning often associated with self-perception and development. All were able to locate their learning in various times and places (temporality and spatiality). For example, many referred to their approach to learning relating to future relevance in the wider world.

Finally I was able to recognise embodiment through these descriptions as the students described the physical act of learning and would often refer to gendered embodiment, for example Karen linked her challenging approach to the gendered embodiment of womanhood. It is evident from these descriptions that these features are present in the lifeworld and thus it is necessary to investigate these features in an individual case to establish whether these learning parameters have an impact upon students' approaches to learning.

While I have divided the descriptions into themes it is important to note that as in the student's own lifeworld, they do not exist in isolation and all parts inter-relate with one another. However by examining these themes individually we are able to gain a sense of the commonalities in our understanding while still retaining the aspects of individual differences in the learner's approaches to learning. The summary also draws on the noetic and noematic intentions of the students and demonstrates that while they may share a similar object for learning, the approach used may be quite different, for the meaning of the object differs.

Although the learning lifeworlds are unique the learners the themes described were identifiable in the lifeworlds of the student's interviewed. In this context the participants were able to identify four main issues which were relevant in their approach to learning. These issues included, the meaning of learning and the student's approach to learning, what they do when trying to learn, sociality and the student's approach to learning and learning as a support to wider and varying needs. Therefore future researchers may find it fruitful to use these themes as an initial starting point as they are evident in the lifeworld of the small number of student's I interviewed and they may well be relevant in other student lifeworlds.

6.3 Critique of the Approaches to Studying Inventory

This section evaluates the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) in the light of the phenomenological findings presented earlier. These findings expand our understanding of the ASI and enable a critical evaluation of this instrument as they expose the potential inadequacies of the ASI when attempting to understand approaches to learning. The inventory was originally designed to identify distinctive approaches to studying, Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) define the purpose of the ASI as,

“..not to improve levels of prediction of academic success; it was instead an attempt to understand students' approaches to learning. In particular, the intention was to measure and to investigate the inter-relationships between the explanatory concepts identified by the work of Marton and Pask” p.35

It was therefore hoped that the ASI as well as providing a tool to measure quantitatively students' approaches to learning, should also further our understanding of approaches to learning. It is important to note that the founding authors appeared to be wary of claiming that this instrument could be used to predict academic success, however they later say,

“Although the current inventory was not deigned primarily to predict academic performance, it is still of interest to examine the relationship between approaches to studying and academic progress” (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983)

Despite claims that the inventory was not an attempt to predict academic success the authors could not resist using this instrument as a predictor. It was perhaps statements like this that encouraged other researchers and practitioners to use the ASI in that way. The use of the ASI as a method of measuring student approaches and as a predictor of academic success rapidly became widespread and it has remained dominant in understanding student approaches for the

past twenty years. This is evident through the number of practitioners and researchers who have used the ASI in attempts to understand approaches, for example, Miller et al, (1990), Kember et al, (1995), Drew and Watkins, (1998), Solomonides , (1998) and Magee et al, (1998).

The growing interest by both practitioners and researchers in approaches to learning may in part be attributed to the development of the ASI. The simplicity of the instrument has enabled widespread usage, particularly as the results could be quickly calculated and student approaches apparently made immediately identifiable. However the dominance of this tool and lack of alternate ways of understanding approaches to learning has limited our understanding of how students learn (Haggis, 2003).

The results obtained from the ASI have had far reaching implications for pedagogic policy both at a departmental and individual level. Teaching success has often been measured by the frequency of Deep, Surface and Strategic approaches (as defined in the ASI) and as a consequence pedagogic policy has been adapted to encourage students to adopt the most 'preferential' approach (Haggis, 2003). Thus the ASI has had a great impact not only on our perception of approaches but also on actual teaching and learning policies in Higher Education institutions. Despite the widespread use of the ASI, questions have been raised as to the adequacy of both the instrument and the methodology on which it was developed. Entwistle himself has recognised certain inadequacies with the ASI and is continually refining the inventory. Currently a new inventory has been devised, the Approaches and Study Skills Inventory for Students (ASSIST) (Entwistle and Tait, 1997) in an attempt to overcome some of these issues. The critique is divided into sub-sections based on the key problems identified.

1. The ASI is unable to fully place approaches to learning in context

The ASI does not examine wider influences which affect students' approaches to learning. The findings from my study indicate that learners attitude to life can have an influence on their attitude to learning and vice versa. For example, Jim requires control in his life and he is able to achieve this through control in his learning, and Ophelia's desire for ownership in her life this informs her attitude to learning. While Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) and Entwistle (1988) explore the impact of the lecturer and academic department (Curry 1983,1987) on student approaches they do not examine the much wider world in which the learner lives. Similarly Ramsden (1979) and Hodgson (1984) focussed upon the importance of the lecturer for student learning and although this was raised by a number of interviewees it was subsumed under the much wider influences of life in general.

The wider needs that learning may support are also not considered in the Approaches to Learning work. Clive's description of his approach being influenced by his need to gain parental affirmation is not identifiable purely from the ASI. Although the ASI tackles motivational issues, under the headings of, Extrinsic, Intrinsic and Achievement (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983) it is unable to measure motivating factors which are not necessarily related to the learning lifeworld. For example, Karen wishes to prove to the world that as a woman she is a capable and confident person and this desire motivates her to learn. It could be argued that this motivation can be labelled under one or more of these categories however this still does not identify what motivates Karen in particular.

One of the main issues with the ASI is its inability to contextualise learners' approaches. As Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) themselves identified learners may adopt different approaches according to the situation in which they are learning. However the questionnaire cannot allow for this variance as it does not give the opportunity for the student to say for example "it depends upon the situation". Clive's approach is heavily influenced by his varying feelings of self-confidence for the more confident he feels the more likely he is to participate in collaborative discussions. Diane is only able to be creative in her approach if she has the time to relax and Gary is only enthusiastic in his approach to learning when he feels he is learning something practical and relevant to himself.

Only by viewing approaches to learning in its entire context, that is, by examining the way a person lives, creates and relates to the world (Moustakas, 1994) are we able to gain a complete understanding of students' approaches to learning. Although there is some attempt to contextualise approaches to learning in the form of academic departments and lecturers (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983) it is unable to place approaches to learning within their entire contextualised experience (Haggis, 2003). This omission is perhaps unavoidable from a nomothetic instrument as rather than starting from the situation in life it is assumed that approaches to learning is an inter-section of variables. Approaches to learning occurs within an entire lifeworld framework and therefore it requires an idiographic approach if we are to fully understand how students approach their learning.

Within the lifeworld context we are also able to view how various approaches inter-relate. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) explained the human world is not made up of variables but meanings that intrinsically relate to other meanings. Clear examples of the relationships that exist within the lifeworld can be found in the noema-noesis relationships (Moustakas 1994), for example Gary uses an active approach (noesis) so that he is able to apply his knowledge (noema). The diagrams at the end of each profile summary indicate how these relationships interact with one another giving an overview of the meaning of approaches to learning. It is plausible that the ASI

offers a basic framework of approaches, but this instrument is ineffective at relating the meanings of various approaches. It is important to note however that it was not the authors intentions for the ASI to facilitate an understanding of inter-relatedness. Nevertheless this idiographic study has demonstrated that without this understanding full recognition of approaches to learning can not be gained.

2. The ASI does not address the meanings of approaches to learning

The focus of phenomenological research is to identify the meanings of a particular phenomenon (Mearleau-Ponty, 1962). This work attempts to identify the meanings of approaches to learning for the interviewees. It is through the acquisition of these meanings that a real reflection of students' approaches is gained. The ASI's nomothetic approach, limits our understanding of the meanings of approaches to learning, for at best it can only identify and measure a limited number of approaches. This broad brush does not enable an exploration of meanings and it is of note that Entwistle and Ramsden never made the claim that the ASI should be used to identify meanings.

Examples of variance in meanings are present throughout each lifeworld but certain obvious examples can be drawn, for example Pask's (1976) description of a 'Holistic Approach' that was included in the ASI. Here both Jim and Ophelia's approach could be described as holistic, however they apply quite different meanings to this term. For Ophelia it means security and certainty. For Jim a holistic approach means perceiving learning as a game whereby the pieces fit together like a jigsaw, with the ultimate ambition being a complete picture. The meaning of understanding is also open to question as Karen feels understanding occurs when it is shared with others. However Jim feels that understanding means being able to relate to familiar contexts.

The notion that there are variances in meaning was explored by Meyer and Shanaham (2003) using the Reflections of Learning Inventory. Like this study their findings support the idea that one particular term does not necessarily have one meaning, notably, they evaluate how memorisation and repetition can have many meanings and influences upon a students' approach to learning. For example they identify 'memorisation as a rehearsal' as being associated with rote learning, whereas 'memorisation with understanding' has quite different connotations. Thus using a broad term like memorisation does not adequately describe the variance that can exist under this heading, hence the phenomenon itself can be camouflaged by such a broad description.

Although the ASI may be able to identify a limited number of approaches this is very much at the surface level for it does not allow for variance in meanings. Arguably this instrument may have some uses for a broad, distant, nomothetic look at approaches to learning but it cannot be used to represent the meanings of approaches to learning. Indeed Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) state,

“ ..It seems essential that an understanding of student learning should be built up from an appropriate alternation of evidence and insights derived from both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research” (p.219)

As found in this study, Meyer and Shanahan (2003) indicate that gender plays a role in approaches to learning, notably in how students' approach memorisation. They recommend that researchers should be sensitive to this differentiation. However some authors have used the ASI to try to identify a relationship between gender and the approaches and contradictory results have been found e.g. Miller et al (1990) and Watkins and Hattie (1981). This inconsistency may be related to the fact that the ASI is an inappropriate method to understand how men and women approach their learning, a view shared by Richardson and King (1991), who have previously tried to use the instrument to measure gendered approaches. This contradiction in results offers further support for a phenomenological approach for it differs from the ASI and related instruments which are unsubtle and therefore reach contradictory conclusions. This lifeworld approach enables us to pinpoint how an individual's gender does or does not have an influence on approaches to learning. The evidence from this study indicates that gender plays a role in the approach to learning. However the extent and type of influence is individual to each learner. Further Belenky et al (1986) and Baxter-Magdola (1992) claim that a quantitative tool such as the ASI does not allow women in particular to express themselves and make themselves heard as they are confined by the pre-imposed categories. Thus using the ASI to identify gender differences is inappropriate.

Through my research experiences and findings I also found the ASI an inappropriate tool for understanding the relationship between gender and approaches to learning. I discovered that gender cannot be used as a variable which predicts the adoption of particular approaches.

Through the rich descriptions I was able to explicate the influence gender has on the meanings of approaches to learning. For example, for Diane learning means to share her learning and this she feels is easier as she is a woman. This indicates that gender plays a role in the learning lifeworld as it impacts on her view of learning. However gender does not predict a students'

predisposition to learning as each lifeworld is unique. Thus attempts to uncover meanings of approaches to learning for men and women via the ASI will ultimately be unsuccessful as to understand the role of gender the approach needs to be accurate and detailed to exactly pinpoint the part this plays in student's approaches to learning.

3. The ASI is a partial and limited instrument

The ASI claims to represent the various learning approaches that students may adopt (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). However the results from the phenomenological study indicate that there are many more approaches than represented in this inventory. One of the key issues that arose during the interviews which is not included in the questionnaire is collaboration. Similar to the authors Belenky et al (1986) and Lave and Wenger (1991), the study found that learning is not an isolated activity and can require social engagement. For the most part this engagement was seen to be highly influential on the interviewees' approach to learning. For example Ophelia's desire to belong to her social and learning groups plays a fundamental part in her approach to learning. Diane also feels that collaboration is key to her approach as she feels that to learn fruitfully she must share her learning with others. As the ASI ignores what is a key issue for all the learners interviewed the ASI is left as a partial and limited instrument.

A further approaches to learning theme that is not included in the ASI is selfhood, in terms of self-development and self-awareness. The interviewees often referred to how their learning would or could affect their self-perception or development. For some learners, notably Diane, Clive and Jim this was a principal focus in their lifeworld. For example Diane engaged in the learning process mainly because it enabled her to answer questions about herself and provided an opportunity for her to develop her sense of self-esteem. Similarly Clive was clear in his view that his learning facilitates a greater self-awareness, in his case understanding his own talents and interests. Jim however finds that while self-development lies central to his approach he needs to do this so he retains a current place in the world. The remaining learners while not as strong in their emphasis were still able to identify the place of self-development and awareness in their learning. For example Karen considered that her learning enabled her to develop so that she could then challenge the views of others and Ophelia described how her learning may facilitate growth of self-esteem.

Although Säljö, (1979) referenced the impact that learning may have on selfhood his work was based upon a qualitative study. While links have been made by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) with this conception to learning work and the ASI none of the questions or approaches contained in the questionnaire specifically ask the students to locate the place of self in their

approaches. Therefore an issue that can have an impact upon students' approaches to learning is left unexplored.

The final key theme omitted in the ASI is the impact of the environmental context. As raised in the earlier section the only environmental issue that the ASI focuses upon are those related to the academic department (Entwistle and Tait, 1990). However the interview findings highlight many other contextual issues which may affect how students learn and these wider issues are not encompassed in the questionnaire.

As the ASI is unable to locate itself in temporal experiences, that is, it can not identify past, present and future experiences it is unable to provide a full description of the learners approach. For example, Gary's competitive approach may be revealed via the ASI. However it would not link this approach to Gary's previous experiences of failure and it is this relationship that allows an insight into his comprehensive approach.

It is possible that the categories contained in the ASI demonstrate and recognise approaches that may then affect attitudes and behaviours which can be linked with various other approaches. However because of the nomothetic nature of the ASI it is unable to identify these other numerous approaches. A possible benefit may be gained over more idiographic methods in that it allows for a total overview of approaches used by large groups of students. However this study attempts to demonstrate that too much is lost for no certain gain and the most appropriate way to view the variety and meanings of approaches to learning is through an idiographic approach. The ASI's inability to identify the numerous approaches used may become increasingly important as Higher Education institutions move to increase widening participation (Haggis, 2003). This may result in there being an even wider range of approaches which students use in their learning, therefore the problems with the instrument are magnified.

4. The ASI has moved away from original foundations of the Approaches to Learning work

The original Approaches to Learning work was conducted in Sweden by Marton and Säljö (1976) who based their research on qualitative interviews with students studying in Higher Education. They attempted to discover the student's experiences of learning, notably it focussed upon their approach to learning and they considered a qualitative, open, descriptive method the most successful in achieving this aim. This work while not initially underpinned by a particular methodological approach was later related to phenomenography (Marton 1988). The authors argued that this methodology meant that the research would be relational, experiential, content orientated and qualitative (Marton, 1986, 1988). The same author considered semi-structured, individual, oral interviews using open-ended questions (Marton, 1994) an appropriate method

for achieving an understanding of approaches to learning. Entwistle and Ramsden had the opportunity to develop Marton and Säljö's work in one of two directions, idiographic or nomothetic. The authors selected the latter.

Although the work of Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) did initially include qualitative interviews in their exploration of approaches to learning their focus soon shifted to devising a positivistic tool. They aimed to produce a questionnaire that contained pre-existing categories that could statistically predict a student's predisposition to learning. Therefore the move from a method that allowed respondents to provide open qualitative responses to a statistical questionnaire was diametrically opposed to the original authors intentions. It indicated a fundamental shift in the methodological stance from phenomenography to positivism.

The move away from the methodological basis of the Approaches to Learning work through the introduction of a quantitative questionnaire raises questions as to the philosophy underpinning this tool. Unlike the qualitative work the ASI can not be said to be based in phenomenography as it does not produce descriptions of all conceptualisations relevant to the individual. Thus the work of the ASI is far removed from the foundations of phenomenography.

Concluding Critique

In conclusion the ASI can be seen to have been a dominant force in understanding approaches to learning. The reasons for this are clear enough, it offers a basic framework which is readily available and easy to use. The concepts which are contained in the inventory are broadly recognised by both academics and practitioners and there is widespread acceptance that approaches to learning is a useful way to gauge pedagogic success. However this study demonstrates that the nomothetic approach that underlies the ASI does have several drawbacks when attempting to understand approaches to learning. One of the key issues is the broad-brush approach which is taken when using the ASI as this prevents an individual, contextualised viewpoint from being obtained. The phenomenological interviews contained in this research demonstrate the importance of the lifeworld context in aiding our understanding of approaches to learning.

Similarly the partial and limited nature of the ASI is also reflected in the study. Although the ASI may be able to identify and measure a limited number of approaches it omits several fundamental issues that may be prevalent in students' approaches, notably collaboration, selfhood and the wider environment. The nomothetic direction adopted by Entwistle and Ramsden during the development of the ASI has rendered the inventory ineffective at determining the underlying meaning of approaches. The quantitative basis of the ASI leaves no

room for meaning interpretation and as this study demonstrates much of our understanding is obtained through such analysis.

Finally the movement away from its original methodological foundations can also be critiqued. The apparent rejection of this methodological underpinning leaves the ASI with no real philosophical basis. The resultant outcomes of this questionnaire, that is, statistics, is not what the founding researchers intended, as they considered the most appropriate method of understanding students' approaches to learning is via qualitative descriptions.

These combined issues provide a comprehensive critique of the ASI which is made on the basis of this idiographic study. This critique explores the place of the ASI and highlights some of the pitfalls of this particular approach. This critique offers further support for the idiographic approach used in this study which attempts to overcome the shortcomings identified with the ASI. This debate is continued in the following section which discusses the most appropriate approaches for examining approaches to learning.

6.4 A Discussion of Appropriate Approaches for the study of Student Learning

The methodological direction of this study was developed from the founding work of Marton and Säljö who conducted phenomenographic research in the sixties and seventies. The objective of their research was to explore the way in which a student views the world, notably it focused upon their approach to learning. To conduct this research a qualitative approach was used and this facilitated an individualistic insight into how students may perceive learning. This style of research was continued in this study, that is the focus on the individual approach to learning. However in order to overcome some of the problems associated with phenomenography (cited in the methodology section) a phenomenological methodology was adopted. By using a rigorous methodological approach I was able to stay close to the idiographic individual experience and have this supported by a solid philosophical grounding.

This approach was considered more suitable than the 'broad-brush' approach offered by the nomothetic ASI, endorsed by Entwistle and Ramsden. These researchers were no longer concerned with achieving open, qualitative descriptions of approaches and so rejected the methodology of phenomenography. Instead the methodology adopted was positivistic in nature as the authors of the ASI attempted to devise an instrument that quantitatively measures learning approaches (Hussey and Hussey, 1997).

It was hoped that by developing Marton and Säljö's work in an idiographic direction the problems associated with the ASI and its underlying methodology could be overcome. Further if

the study was to explore the meanings of approaches to learning for the individual it was essential that an idiographic approach was used, in this case, existential phenomenology. The following discussion illuminates the value of idiographic research, in particular empirical phenomenology and the noema/ noesis distinction. This discussion may add to the nomothetic and idiographic debate when examining students' approaches to learning.

As the fundamental principle of the existential phenomenology is to provide a full and rich description of the lived experiences, (Ashworth 1999) this methodology is appropriate for the study of students' approaches to learning. The focus of this methodology lies in establishing the meanings of a particular phenomenon (Farber 1943, Ashworth, 2002). Also as my study highlighted, to explore students' approaches to learning, an examination of the meanings is required. Through this idiographic search the researcher is able to understand approaches from the perspective of the student and thus present an accurate reflection of what learning means to the student. This is essential for as my interviews have identified there are many different meanings that may be applied to what at first sight looks like the same approach.

Many existential phenomenology authors including Heidegger, (1962), Merleau-Ponty, (1962), Kvale, (1996) and Ashworth, (2002) have explored how these meanings can be viewed in a specific context, that is, the lifeworld. The qualitative interviews demonstrated that it is necessary to understand the meanings of approaches to learning in the context of the lifeworld for two main reasons. Firstly I discovered that learning may not be confined to academic boundaries as it can interact with their attitude to the wider world. Secondly the lifeworld provides an opportunity to view how meanings inter-relate with one another to form a comprehensive picture of each person's approach to learning, particularly when the noema/noesis distinction is emphasised. As illuminated in the interview findings it is through the full and detailed description of their entire view of learning that a comprehensive understanding of a learner's approaches to learning is obtained.

By starting with the student's situation in life it meant the whole person could be understood and presented as a coherent structure. The rich descriptions highlight clearly the individuality of learners and their approaches, in particular they expose how approaches inter-relate and the underlying meanings of each approach is described. The findings from the study enable a rejection of the view that a person's approaches to learning can be defined in terms of quantitative variables. Only through an idiographic approach, in this case existential phenomenology, is it possible that an understanding of the meanings of approaches to learning can be obtained. Similarly the lifeworld profiles show that the approaches held by a student do not exist in a separate sphere which have no connection with other aspects in their life.

Approaches to learning can be fully understood when we view the entire situation in life through the recognition of complex relationships and meanings.

As can be seen in the profiles and the noema/noesis distinction the use of the 'lifeworld' has proved a fruitful tool in this idiographic exercise. It has allowed an insight into the approaches learner's use without losing sight of the uniqueness of each individual participant. Each of the lifeworlds is described in the profiles and is then further analysed by the presentation of the noema/noesis distinction. These offer an insight into the meaning of approaches to learning for each learner. It is evident that contained in these analyses are numerous meanings that relate to approaches to learning that are best described in qualitative form. It is only through an examination of these relationships in the lifeworld that the meanings of approaches to learning may be established.

The use of lifeworld interviews as a method for investigating students' approaches to learning proved useful in establishing how these interviewees' approach their learning. As Kvale (1996) identified this phenomenological method provides a way to carefully listen to the participant and become immersed in the interviewee's lifeworld, which produces descriptions of the experience. Although this is not the only phenomenological method (Kvale, 1996) I found the interview method invaluable in understanding each student's approach to learning.

As anticipated the phenomenological lifeworld descriptions showed each student to have a unique approach to learning (Ashworth 1998). The interviewees all described quite different learning lifeworlds based on their experiences and perspectives on learning. The students identified many different approaches which they use in their learning and while some approaches may have been shared the meanings applied to these approaches could be quite different. The individuality of the learner was also demonstrated by the unique way the approaches were inter-related in the context of their lifeworld. If we accept that approaches to learning is a unique individual experience then the methodology needs to allow for a focus upon the individual. The idiographic approach which facilitates such focus would appear to be the most appropriate method when exploring students' approaches to learning.

In order to analyse the lifeworld profiles further the concepts of noema and noesis were employed. The noema and noesis ideas allows us to view the object of learning (the noema) and the manner in which it is approached (noesis), to quote Idhe (1977)

"Noema is that which is experienced, the what of the experience, the object-correlate. Noesis is the way in which the what is experienced, the experiencing or act of experiencing, the subject correlate"(p. 43).

This particular analytical approach proved invaluable in establishing the meanings of approaches to learning for each student. In particular by using the noetic/noematic correlates it was possible not only to understand the object for learning and the manner in which it was approached but also it facilitated an understanding of the inter-relationships that exist. For example as Gary views one object of learning, as the acquisition of affirmation his noetic approach is collaborative/inclusive. Without the adoption of such approach it is impossible for Gary to obtain his object for learning, that is, affirmation from others.

Thus the study is able to demonstrate the usefulness of the noema and noesis concepts as a heuristic device. The noetic and noematic distinctions enable the researcher to further analyse the profile descriptions by asking the questions, *'What is the meaning of learning for this person? How then do they approach it?'* By drawing on this distinction it is possible to see the 'object' (noema) for learning, that is the study material and the study situation and all that it entails and the approach (noesis) which is the inner response to these. In using the distinction as a heuristic device the noesis reflects the approach to learning while the noema indicates the focus of this learning. The noesis proved particularly fruitful as a heuristic device as this was used as a way of reflecting the approaches to learning. By examining the *way* in which an object was approached it was possible to explore further the 'approaches' for each learner. Thus the noetic descriptions provide the approaches to learning of each student.

Although the noetic importance is highly emphasised, the noematic content offers insight into student learning, for without the noema it would not be possible to view the object of learning and the influence this has on the approach. Combined the noema and noesis provide a complete overview of the meaning of approaches to learning. By looking at the profiles in this way I was able to illuminate further insights into the meaning of approaches to learning and also gain an understanding of the complex relationships that exist within each student's lifeworld.

While I accept that the usage of the noema and noesis distinction has been limited, even within the phenomenological field, these two concepts provide an ideal mechanism for exploring approaches to learning. The idea that there is a distinct relationship between what learning is and the manner in which it is approached has been identified in this study. Further the way in which this distinction can be used to aid our understanding of approaches to learning by explicating the meanings of relationships which exist in the lifeworld supports the usage of this concept.

In conclusion it is evident that when examining students' approaches to learning an idiographic approach, in this case empirical phenomenological methodology is most appropriate. This is

demonstrated in the findings which illuminate approaches to learning as being a rich, unique descriptive experience for each of the students questioned. The positivistic, nomothetic methodology of the ASI is therefore rejected as it does not allow the researcher to understanding the meaning of approaches to learning as it can only produce statistical results on a limited number of approaches. The value of idiographic research is demonstrated, with phenomenology enabling the uniqueness of the learner to shine through in the form of qualitative lifeworld descriptions.

6.5 Teaching and Learning Outcomes

The importance of approaches to learning has been expounded by many authors during the past 30 years and much research has been conducted in this area. This study supports the notion that if we are to be student centred then we must gain an insight into how students' approach their learning. The findings from this research demonstrate the value of approaches to learning as it is through such an examination that an understanding of how students learn is obtained. This discussion reiterates why approaches to learning is considered to be a valuable component in understanding student learning. Importantly it illuminates what this study adds to this literature based upon the findings produced.

One particular reason approaches to learning is considered valuable is the contribution it makes to pedagogy. On a broad, strategic level approaches to learning has been used to define what 'good' learning is and practitioners have adapted their pedagogy to encourage a whole cohort of students to adopt these perceived 'good' approaches (Haggis, 2003). For example the approaches to learning concept has been highly influential upon curriculum design, structure of assessment and teaching styles (Marton et al 1984, Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983, Laurillard, 1984, Willis, 1993 and Sharma 1997). Much of the research has suggested that by adapting the curriculum strategy students can be encouraged to adopt more appropriate approaches that will benefit their learning.

Frequently learners have been grouped according to their gender, age and subject choice (Thomas, 1990, McCrum, 1996, Meyer, 1995, Richardson, 1993) and approaches to learning has influenced pedagogy for these particular groups of students. The argument behind such a stance is that by segmenting students into selected groups we can adapt the pedagogy to suit individuals with supposed shared approaches to learning characteristics. Thus the influence of approaches to learning on pedagogy has been considered important as it had great influence upon academic departments at strategic and segmented levels.

Approaches to learning has aided pedagogy through its perceived ability to evaluate the success of the pedagogy employed. This is through defining certain approaches as more conducive to effective learning, notably Deep and Strategic approaches (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). This identification of apparently successful approaches both in terms of degree classification and learning experience has provided practitioners with a mechanism to measure their success as teachers. The more frequently these successful approaches are presented the more likely it is that a practitioner will consider their pedagogic strategy a success (Drew and Watkins, 1998 Kember et al 1995 and Ramsden, 1988). Thus the Approaches to Learning concept and the ASI in particular have been highly influential in not only the direction of pedagogy but also in measuring the success of that pedagogic strategy.

A further reason why approaches to learning is considered important relates to the notion of student centredness. If we accept that the job of education and the practitioner is to enable the students to *learn how to learn* then we must understand what learning is. Approaches to learning offers us one way to gain an insight into how students learn by an examination of the individual learning process and the learning environment (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). Therefore to be student centred we must know the student and approaches to learning is felt to be a key tool in the achievement of that goal.

The discussion above highlights why, based upon previous literature, the approaches to learning concept is considered valuable in our understanding of student learning. The outcomes from this study provide an opportunity for further insights into this discussion and will therefore add to the academic debate on understanding students' approaches to learning.

As discussed earlier it is necessary to understand approaches to learning if we are to become student centred. However the findings from this study demonstrate that to do this we must examine the individual, idiographic situation. It is important that this approach is taken as the nomothetic work of Entwistle and company only superficially deals with this demonstrably important issue. Therefore it is essential that an individual understanding of approaches adopted is recognised to gain a fully comprehensive picture of approaches to learning.

Haggis (2003) indicates that manipulating the learning environment will change the way a student views the world is questionable and argues that it may be almost impossible to induce a particular approach. Based upon the findings of this study, the idea that adapting a pedagogic strategy will have a major influence upon students' approaches to learning is questionable. While it is perfectly plausible that the influence of pedagogic direction and teaching strategy may affect students' approaches, the impact of this may not be as great as once thought. The study demonstrates the complexity of the learning lifeworld and shows learning to be

inextricably linked with wider aspects of life, therefore any changes that are made to strategic pedagogy, e.g. curriculum design, are just small changes in their entire lifeworld. In essence the students attitudes and motives towards learning do not just exist in the classroom for their beliefs about learning and are closely tied to their attitudes to other elements in their life.

Altering pedagogy for specific student groups may also prove ineffective, if the aim is to direct approaches to learning. Much research has attempted to group students and their approaches (via the ASI) according to, for example, gender. By collating students into variable groups we lose sight of the individual nature of approaches to learning and are unable to view a coherent picture of their approaches. This may, in part, help explain why nomothetic studies that have attempted to examine approaches to learning and their relationship with gender (when using the ASI) have often produced contradictory outcomes. For by using this approach the researchers appear to expect some common characteristic which will occur simply on the basis of their gender. This study however amply demonstrates that approaches to learning is much more complex than this. To explore this issue the approach needs to be sensitive to the intricacies of the impact of gender on approaches to learning. Thus a heavy handed, nomothetic approach such as the ASI is inadequate in this exploration. Therefore when it is claimed that certain groups have particular approaches, as identified by the ASI, it is necessary to be somewhat wary of the results. This is of increased importance if the pedagogy is adapted in accordance with such findings for the results cannot reflect the individual characteristics of these students.

The use of approaches to learning as a way of measuring teaching success, the evaluation of pedagogy, is also open to question. A key method of evaluating student success is by an examination of the approaches that they adopt for it is considered that successful practitioners will encourage students to adopt the most appropriate approaches. Through this research the Deep and Surface approaches as identified in the ASI are too simplistic in the evaluation of the quality of learning and as a consequence the ASI is unable to fully evaluate the quality of teaching. If the ASI is inadequate in its reflection of this complexity then judgement of teaching on the basis of the ASI is by association inadequate. Practitioners should be wary of accepting responsibility for any approaches adopted, for as noted earlier, the impact of practitioners on approaches to learning may be limited. Therefore any approaches used may not necessarily be a reflection of their pedagogic influence.

The last argument included in this discussion examines what this study can add to the idea that approaches to learning is valuable in aiding students to learn how to learn. This study supports the notion that we must understand approaches to learning if we are to teach students to learn how to learn, however, it is considered that this is best achieved through an idiographic approach. The existential phenomenological methodology used for this study illuminates the

depth and complexity that is contained in learners' approaches and through this in depth understanding it is possible to gain a full account of how students' approach their learning. Without such detailed insights it could be argued that it is not possible to fully understand approaches to learning and therefore it is difficult to teach students to learn how to learn. The findings from this study enable a rejection of the nomothetic approach of the ASI as being able to understand the approaches used by students and as a consequence this tool does not allow us to aid students in their efforts of learning how to learn.

This discussion has provided an insight into why approaches to learning is considered important and what the findings from this study have to add to this discussion. The following section explores how, using Ophelia as an example, her idiographic findings could be used by a tutor to help Ophelia engage with her learning and thus demonstrates how idiographic findings can be applied to a pedagogic situation.

6.6 How can a tutor help Ophelia engage in learning?

This section takes Ophelia's idiographic case study and discusses how a tutor may be helpful in bringing her to a genuine mental engagement with the learning material. Using Ophelia as an example it is possible to view how specific idiographic findings can be applied to Higher Education practice. This example demonstrates the interpersonal sensitivity that is required on the part of the tutor if approaches to learning are to be authentically addressed. The suggestions described in this example are ideas that a tutor may follow, thus the discussion focuses upon the tutor's perspective. However it should be noted that it may be difficult for a tutor to implement all of these changes due to the practical and resource implications which they face when teaching a large cohort of students. Despite these difficulties it is possible to see the variety of ways a tutor may adapt their actions to suit Ophelia's individual learning needs. Clearly these needs will be different for each learner, but by using Ophelia as an example it is possible to see one way that these specific research findings can be applied to higher education practice.

Using Ophelia's lifeworld profile and the noema-noesis distinctions it is possible to identify potential ways that a practitioner may help Ophelia engage fully in the learning process. Perhaps the most crucial support a tutor may offer Ophelia is through the encouragement of an environment to which she feels she belongs. As discussed in Ophelia's lifeworld and noema-noesis distinctions Ophelia finds it difficult to learn in an environment which is alien to her and consequently will avoid learning if she feels she does not belong.

A tutor may provide a more inclusive environment for Ophelia, by for example the inclusion of discussions and group activities. However for these generalised activities to be effective it may be necessary to consider the precise and sensitive requirements of Ophelia. In particular it may be useful for a tutor not only to conduct discussions but to encourage Ophelia specifically to participate as she can find it difficult to vocalise her views initially. Further any intersubjective activities need to be somewhat structured and focussed to limit the potential of distractions which Ophelia considers hinder her learning. Presently Ophelia feels that there are too few opportunities for collaboration and consequently it may be useful for the tutor to incorporate extra discussion time.

It is plausible that through these suggested changes Ophelia may gain a sense of belonging and as a result engage in her learning as she feels a part of the learning environment. Further Ophelia's learning experience is enhanced as through discussions she is able to demonstrate understanding to herself and to others. Thus if a tutor were to develop a collaborative, participative environment Ophelia may be encouraged to form a genuine engagement with her learning.

This collaborative environment may be developed further by the inclusion of some form of support network. A tutor may encourage a working relationship between themselves and Ophelia by demonstrating that they consider learning to be a shared experience that is enhanced when various perspectives are shared. Ophelia may also feel part of a supported network if the tutor is able to offer affirmation of her contributions during their interactions. For example a tutor should make it clear that they acknowledge her efforts through verbal and body recognition signals during tutorials. Through such steps Ophelia may consider herself to be a part of a supported network of learning. For such a relationship to be fruitful the tutor may find it necessary to take a shared approach to their teaching, encouraging discussions and openness and have perhaps an open door policy. If this relationship is established it is possible that Ophelia will be confident to engage with the tutor and thus be able to obtain the necessary information she requires.

Through these adaptations in their pedagogy Ophelia's learning engagement may be enhanced for essentially two key reasons. Firstly collaboration with other students and the tutor provide emotional support for Ophelia in her learning and secondly it frees Ophelia to make her own decisions rather than relying upon her close clique of friends. The insecurity that is dominant in Ophelia's learning may therefore be reduced and as a consequence Ophelia is able to engage in any learning activity she considers relevant. Thus learning may shift somewhat from a fearful activity towards a shared and supported one.

The fear and insecurity that Ophelia experiences when attempting to learn can prevent her from genuine mental engagement. Ophelia relates much of her fear to her belief that learning exposes her weaknesses and so a tutor may help Ophelia by demonstrating that learning is not a perfect process. This could be achieved by sharing experiences of what could be perceived as 'failures' with Ophelia. By removing the idea that learning is flawless process for everyone, even the expert tutor, Ophelia may not feel so fearful of any perceived failures. A further mechanism a tutor may use to reduce fear for Ophelia is through reviewing assessed assignments (in a supportive culture). Through such action it is possible to explain why certain comments/grades are given and so Ophelia may feel more secure by this action as she understands better how to avoid 'failure'. Further this action may help Ophelia realise equity in her learning as recognition of why certain grades are given is realised. This may help Ophelia feel deserving of the grade that she receives.

Procrastination is a further key issue that a tutor may address to help Ophelia in her learning. As discussed in the profiles Ophelia has a strong propensity to procrastinate and this has negative consequences for Ophelia. Firstly she feels that this prevents her spending sufficient time on her studies and limits her understanding and secondly this action leaves Ophelia with self-critical feelings. Crucially this is a behaviour that Ophelia wishes to change. The incorporation of time management activities may be helpful for Ophelia to overcome this difficulty as this may encourage Ophelia to plan her learning activities. The inclusion of small deadlines may also be of benefit as this may encourage Ophelia to constantly engage with her learning. If these changes were incorporated in a supportive environment it is possible that Ophelia will be able to avoid procrastination and take ownership of her learning.

Ophelia also notes how she procrastinates more frequently when she can not see the relevance of her learning. Perhaps a tutor may help Ophelia realise the relevance of her learning by using real life examples and emphasising the transferability of her learning. The tutor may also enforce how learning may open up choices for Ophelia and consequently allow Ophelia to choose a job which provides her with a sense of satisfaction. Through these steps it may encourage Ophelia to engage in her learning as she can see the benefits which relate specifically to her needs.

The tutor may also be helpful to Ophelia by devising opportunities for her to engage in the learning material and develop her understanding. One practical suggestion may be to use real life examples whereby she can apply her learning to various scenarios. Extending this example the incorporation of role play may prove useful as she already uses the act of pretence and role play in her life 'outside' university walls. Through this activity Ophelia may feel confident and capable to engage in learning and as this requires collaboration and verbal interaction it is

possible that understanding may be obtained. The inclusion of coursework as an assessment method may also benefit Ophelia in her attempts to understand. For Ophelia the use of coursework enables her to understand the learning material and provides a sense of achievement that she has accomplished something in her learning. Further Ophelia defines her learning as quite holistic in nature and therefore it may be appropriate to approach teaching in this manner. The tutor may support Ophelia in her learning by always providing an overview of the topic before exploring the details, this provides Ophelia with a sense of security over her learning, perhaps feeling assured of the direction of her learning.

To summarise this discussion highlights a number of potential ways that a tutor may help Ophelia by bringing her to a genuine mental engagement with the learning materials. It is clear that if the tutor is to be effective in addressing approaches to learning they need to be aware of various demands each learner has and adapt their pedagogy to accommodate these sensitivities. For Ophelia it may be useful if the tutor attempts to develop a supportive and collaborative environment which may reduce Ophelia's fears and insecurities. Taking steps to help Ophelia take ownership of her learning and reduce her propensity to procrastinate may also be of benefit for Ophelia. Finally the tutor may adapt their pedagogy to encourage understanding. Although the tutor does not have control over these issues which Ophelia faces it is possible that by adapting their pedagogy they may influence her approaches to learning.

Of course these comments are only speculative, but they offer a specific example of how the idiographic research findings may inform Higher Education practice. In particular it demonstrates how rich idiographic findings may be used to advise the tutor and their pedagogy in a way that benefits a learner specifically. Unlike more nomothetic methods this idiographic approach allows the tutor to understand and respond to the individual needs of their learners. While this may not always be practical this example demonstrates that idiographic findings can be used as a pedagogic guide.

6.7 The Future

The starting point of any research which aims to understand approaches to learning should be underpinned by an idiographic philosophy, that is, a concentration on the individual situation. Through such an approach it is possible to understand the meanings of approaches in a full, comprehensive, contextual account. The intricacies and nuances revealed in such accounts allow access to a fully reflective insight into the place of approaches to learning. This qualitative recommendation mirrors the founding authors of approaches to learning, Marton and Säljö in their phenomenographic research. By developing this research in an idiographic direction it is possible that further and deeper understandings of approaches to learning can be gained.

The lifeworld should be of central importance in any idiographic research that undertakes an examination of learning approaches. In this existential phenomenological study the examination of the lifeworld proved invaluable in obtaining individual perceptions of how students approach their learning. By starting with the learner's situation in life it is possible to examine in detail not only the meanings of approaches to learning but also to view the inter-relationships of these approaches. By using the lifeworld the researcher is facilitated to go beyond the "intersection of variables" and conduct thorough idiographic research. While using this methodological approach, a practitioner/researcher may wish to consider using the following questions which can guide them to an understanding of their students' approaches to learning.

1. *What is the meaning of learning to the student?*
2. *What is the student's approach to learning with others?*
3. *What does the learner do when trying to learn?*
4. *How does learning support the student's wider needs?*

The first question hopes to explore what learning means to the student, for example, memorisation, understanding etc. However it is essential that the researcher does not simply accept these terms but seeks out the meanings behind them. This question may also open up an exploration of what students' feel learning should be. This was found in the lifeworld interviews to be highly influential on learners' approaches.

The second question, '*What is the student's approach to learning with others?*' examines how the learner collaborates with others, for example, sharing understanding, competitively etc. For as found by other learning authors who are not associated with the Approaches to Learning work, (Belenky et al, 1986, Lave and Wenger, 1991 and Cobb, 1990), the study demonstrated the importance of intersubjectivity in various forms. The third question examines the process of learning by questioning what learners actually do when trying to learn. The process may involve both the mind and body, for example, reflection or active participation, and this may be illuminated through this question. This question should enable the noetic themes in particular to be drawn out as it specifically relates to the manner in which learning is approached.

The final question, '*How does learning support the student's wider needs?*' explores how learning can support, for example, emotional needs such as gaining parental affirmation. It also aims to examine students motivation to learn as they may engage with learning to satisfy needs such as achieving a sense of self-superiority. Through this particular focus it is plausible to explore the noetic and noematic intentions. What may be dominant through this question is however the identification of the object of learning, the noema, for it is possible that the object

of learning is to support their wider needs. By using all of these questions in a phenomenological interview situation it is possible to discover what approaches to learning means to students. However these questions should only be used as a starting point for research into approaches to learning and care should be taken that the interviewee is able to provide input into the direction of the interview.

When analysing the lifeworlds obtained from these in-depth interviews the noema-noesis distinction may be applied. This analytical tool offers the researcher an opportunity to delve deeper into the lifeworld situation by exploring the relationships between the object of learning (the noema) and the manner in which this object is approached (the noesis). By creating this distinction it increases our understanding of approaches to learning from the perspective of the individual learner. It also facilitates an examination of how the approaches inter-relate and in effect build a coherent picture of how approaches to learning is placed in their lifeworld. Although this distinction is not widely applied, based on the experience of this study the noema and noesis distinction is ideally suited as a heuristic device.

If the ASI or other nomothetic instruments are used to research approaches to learning then caution should be applied by the researcher. They should be aware that any results produced from this inventory are limited and so can only represent a superficial understanding of approaches to learning. However if researchers wish to research a large number of students and their approach to learning, an idiographic method has practical implications which limit the use of this approach. The recommendation remains that to understand approaches to learning the focus should be on the individual. However it is accepted that this change may not always be possible for the practitioner. Due to this practical problem the practitioner may be reluctant to relinquish the use of the ASI and in recognition of this a few cautionary notes should be raised.

If practitioners wish to discover how students' approach their learning they need to consider that approaches to learning is complex, rich in meanings and unique to each learner. The interviews have exposed the existence of noematic and noetic relationships that exist in each lifeworld. They highlight how students' 'approaches to' and 'objects for' learning inter-relate to form a complete overview of their approach to learning. Practitioners need to consider that approaches do not exist in isolation but in the mind of the student they all relate to one another to form a comprehensive and detailed perception of their learning approach. Using the ASI to offer such insights will ultimately prove unsuccessful as it is unable to provide the depth required, however the ASI may be able to offer a partial representation of learners' approaches. If a partial account is acceptable (for example if there is a large-scale measurement of students' approaches to learning in order to adapt pedagogic techniques for an entire cohort of students) then the idiographic approach may be too detailed and intricate.

However it is important that practitioners recognise the shortfalls of this method and are wary that the superficial results provided by this tool are not reflective of the whole picture. By exercising caution this tool still may be used but practitioners may now have further information as to the place of this inventory and use it accordingly. This knowledge may also reduce the assumption that the ASI provides all the answers in relation to learners' approaches and therefore practitioners will not stop at this questionnaire in their search and further questions will be asked.

Similarly practitioners should be wary of evaluating their teaching on the outcomes gained from the ASI scores, as these scores are only a partial and limited representation of learning approaches. Therefore any evaluation of teaching on this basis will, by association, be superficial and this should be taken into account when any evaluation is made. Further caution must be taken if pedagogic changes are made on the basis of ASI findings. Due to the limited nature of this tool the results can not fully reflect the totality of approaches adopted therefore any changes made may not aid students in their learning efforts. Practitioners may also wish to consider that when investigating approaches to learning, much of student learning occurs outside of the classroom and the academic department. Therefore learning is to a certain extent beyond the control of the practitioner and the idea of adapting pedagogy to encourage particular approaches (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983) is questioned. Although this may have an impact on how learners perceive learning my study highlights how approaches to learning is much broader than this, relating to their attitude to life in general.

In summary practitioners and researchers need to realise that there are no simple answers when examining students' approaches to learning. However through this study a key recommendation can be made. It is essential that the methodology used is idiographic due to the need to understand the 'meanings' of approaches to learning. By focussing on the individual process of learning it is then possible to examine approaches to learning while remaining student centred. From this discussion it is possible to see the value of approaches to learning and the value in adopting the most appropriate methodology and methods for both researchers and practitioners.

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Interview Questions for First Interview

To Start

The Participants are briefed as to the nature of the study, specifically;

- The Purpose of the Study
- Explanation of the tape recorder
- Confidentiality of their responses is explained
- Any questions on the part of the student

Background Questions

The students are asked to provide background information in regard to their, name, age, course of study, year of study, ethnicity and family background.

Learning

Describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which learning occurred/ did not occur:

- How did you feel when this happened?
- When/where did this happen?
- How did this affect you?
- Is this a common experience?

How do you go about learning something?

- What happened, experienced, feel?
- When and where?
- Is this a common phenomenon?

When do you think you have learnt something? Can you give an example?

- How did this affect you?
- When/where did this occur?
- How did you feel?
- Why did that make you 'feel' you had learnt?

Motivation

Do you find learning interesting?

Are you interested in the subjects you learn?

What is your main purpose in studying?

Environment

What do you think influences/affects your learning?

- Can you give an example?
- How did it affect you?
- When and where?
- How did it make you feel?

Where do you prefer to learn?

Emotion

How do you feel when you are learning/ when you are not learning?

- What happened, can you give an example?
- Why do you think you felt this way?
- When and where?
- How did this affect you?

Assessment

Do you/ how do you measure your learning?

- Is this a positive or negative experience for you?
- How does this make you feel?
- Did this affect you?
- When and where do you measure your learning?

To Close

Is there anything you would like to ask?

- Clear any anxiety
- Any issues they had with the interview

Discuss arrangements for future interviews

- Agree next meeting

- Ask learners to keep a 'learning log' so they can introduce issues at the next meeting which they feel are relevant to themselves.
- Inform participants that they will receive a transcript which they can review and comment upon.

Interview Questions for Second Interviews

Prior to the second set of interviews the participants were asked to fetch with them;

Two assignments – one that they were satisfied with and one that they were not so satisfied with.

Notebook- which they were asked in the first interview to write down any thoughts they consider relevant to these discussions

To Start

How did you feel/what are your thoughts after the first interview?

Have you any comments/questions/clarifications in regard to your transcript?

- How did you feel when reading your transcript?

Is there anything you wish to raise from your notebook?

- How did you manage using this notebook?
- When/where did you write in it?

Learning

Since we last met have you had any learning/non-learning experiences?

- How did you feel?
- When/where did this happen?
- How did this affect you?

Have you had any further thoughts on what influences/ affects your learning?

- How did you feel?
- When/where did this happen?
- How did this affect you?

Motives for learning

Why did you decide to come to university?

Why did you choose a Business Course?

Does your learning need to be relevant?

- Can you give an example?
- Is this common?

Learning as a man/woman

Do you think that being a man/woman affects the way in which you learn?

- In what way, can you give an example?
- Is this common?
- When and where?

Assignment Review

The same questions were asked for both assessed pieces of work.

Can you talk me through how you went about this assignment?

- How did you choose this particular assignment?
- How did you feel before you started this assignment?
- How did you approach this assignment?
- How did you feel when working on this assignment?
- Did you find working on this assignment a positive or negative experience?
- How did you feel when you submitted the assessment?
- How did you feel when the assignment was returned?

These questions were then followed by the individual follow-up questions derived from the first interview(s). As an example of the individual follow up questions used I will present the individual questions derived for Ophelia for her second interview

Ophelia's Second Interview

How did you feel now that you have finished your exams?

Have you come across any further distractions which detract you from your studies?

To Close

Have you any questions, issues, clarifications you would like to make before we finish the interview? (this question was asked before and after the recorder was turned off)
This was to ensure that,

- Clear anxiety

- Raise any relevant issues
- Ensure participant comfortable with the interview

Discussion of future arrangements

- Agree next meeting
- Inform that they will again be sent the transcripts to review

Interview Questions for Third Interview

The participants were asked to complete a shortened version of the ASI prior to the third and final interview. They were asked to respond to the questionnaire and note down any thoughts they had in regard to the questions presented to them.

To Start

How did you feel/what are your thoughts after the second interview?

Have you any comments/questions/clarifications in regard to your transcript?

- How did you feel when reading your transcript?

Is there anything you wish to raise from your notebook?

- How did you manage using this notebook?
- When/where did you write in it?

Approaches to Studying Inventory Questions

Before the students discussed the ASI I explained my own personal interest and reservations about this instrument and why I wanted them to complete it. I stated that despite my own position I wanted them to feel free to expound their own personal views of this questionnaire. The students were then asked,

Can you tell me how you felt when completing this questionnaire?

- Did you face any difficulties?
- Do you have any queries?
- Do you feel there were any omissions which are important to your learning?

The Questionnaires were then scored and the results feed back to each interviewee

How do you feel about your scores?

Do you think this is an accurate reflection of your learning?

Is there anything which the feedback misses which you feel is relevant to your learning?

Personal Learning questions

In the previous interviews different emotions seemed to have impacted on your learning, for example, guilt, elation, happiness, sadness, etc. Can you think of an event in which your own learning has been affected by your feelings/emotions?

Has being here (at university) changed the way you think about yourself and the world?

In your experience have you ever found that your learning has affected your confidence?

How do you know what is right, what is true?

Are there things the university does not provide that are important to you?

Learning as a man/woman

Do you feel that men and women 'think' differently?

- Can you give an example?
- When/where?
- Is this common?
- How does this affect you?

In your experience have you ever found examples of men and women wanting different things from their learning?

- Can you give an example?
- When/where?
- Is this common?
- How does this affect you?

Can you think of an examples of when men an women have different experiences at work?

- When/where?
- Is this common?
- How does this affect you?

Learning

When trying to learn what is your main aim- what is your purpose?

In your learning how important is collaboration with others?

- Can you give an example?
- When/where?
- Is this common?
- How does this affect you?

Do you need to balance freedom and structure in your learning?

- Can you give an example?
- When/where?
- Is this common?
- How does this affect you?

Do you differentiate between academic and practical learning?

- Can you give an example?
- How does the subject of 'Business' fit?

How would you define interactivity in your learning? Is it important in your learning?

- Can you give an example?
- When/where?
- Is this common?
- How does this affect you?

How does pressure affect your learning?

- Can you give an example?
- When/where?
- Is this common?

How have you reacted to different assessment methods in your learning e.g. examinations, coursework?

- Can you give an example?
- When/where?
- Is this common?
- How does this affect you?

In the earlier interviews we discussed the effect that relationships with others has on your learning of the themes which emerged two were quite prominent. Firstly the balance of power in relationships with others (e.g. in groupwork) and secondly the importance of gaining respect from others (e.g. peers, lecturers, the business world). What impact do you think power and respect have on your learning?

- Can you give an example?
- When/where?

- Is this common?
- How does this affect you?

If I were to ask you what learning means to you how would you answer?

Do you think these interviews we have shared have affected you and your learning?

Ophelia's Third Interview

As with the second interview questions that related specifically to the individual were included. These questions were gathered from examination of the second interview. In this segment Ophelia's questions are used to show as an example, (these questions always followed the questions which were applied to all students)

Is certainty important in your learning?

Are you wary of changing your learning cycle?

You mentioned in the last interview that you were embarrassed when reflecting/reading your own words. I wondered why you then volunteered for these interviews?

You referred to have a preference of freehand writing rather than typing, why? Do you do each in different places?

How do you get depth into your learning?

To Close

The participants were thanked for the commitment to the interviews and their willingness to share their experiences with me.

They were also asked if they had any questions, issues, clarifications you would like to make before we finished the interview? (this question was asked before and after the recorder was turned off) This was to ensure that,

- Clear anxiety
- Raise any relevant issues
- Ensure participant comfortable with the interview

They were also informed that their final transcripts would be sent to them and if they had queries in regard to any matter they should contact me to discuss.

Dear Student

My name is Kay Greasley and I am currently undertaking a PhD in the area of student learning. As part of this research I would like to interview a number of students regarding their experience of learning in Higher Education. I hope that the interview will provide the opportunity for you to explore and understand your own learning styles.

The interviews themselves will take place three times throughout the academic year. The exact time of the interviews is negotiable so that it is convenient for you. You will also be given the opportunity to see the part you played in the study and feedback of the interviews will be given.

If you would like to discuss your possible involvement in the study or if you would like further information please contact me in Room E705, or by email k.dobie@derby.ac.uk, or by telephone 01332-622222 ext. 1186 so we can arrange a time convenient to you. All discussions and inquiries will be strictly confidential and you will not be identified in the study.

If you have any queries at all and would like further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Kay Greasley

The Sample

Name	Age	Year of Study	Course	Educational Background	Family Background
Clive	24	Year 3	BA Management Studies	Clive initially undertook 'A' Levels. He then completed a HND in Business and Management. After repeating a year of the HND, Clive transferred to a degree course	Clive is the eldest of three children. His parents are all well educated to at least degree standard. His father is a consultant physician and his mother an accountant. He lives away from home.
Diane	32	Year 1	Part-Time Certificate in Personnel Practice	Diane works as a base co-ordinator for a local authority centre. She is sponsored by her organisation to study this course. She is also undertaking a professional counselling course.	Diane describes her background as working class, she has one sister and her parents are divorced. She lives in Derbyshire (where she was raised) with her partner, she has no children.
Gary	21	Year 2	BA Human Resource Management	Gary has transferred into the 2 nd year of this course after doing an HND in Business and Personnel in Southampton. Previously he had completed a BTEC in Business and Finance.	His family are well educated with all members educated to a degree standard. His father has completed a PhD. He lives at home with his parents in an area local to Derby. He is a registered dyslexic.
Jim	51	Year 2	Part- Time BA Business Studies	After he left school he failed his HND in mechanics but later successfully completed his HNC in Engineering. Jim re-entered Higher Education three years ago.	Jim is married with teenage children. His previous positions have involved world-wide travel. He is now based in Derby as a manager for an engineering firm.
Karen	18	Year 1	BA Human Resource Management	Karen began her university education straight after she had completed BTEC, GNVQ (advanced) in business.	Karen describes her family as working class. Her father owns a small business and her mother works p-time in a local hospital. She has one older brother.
Ophelia	23	Year 3	BA Business Studies	Ophelia transferred from 'A' levels to a BTEC in Business in Finance before she started university. This she felt delayed her university life by a year.	Ophelia indicates that she is from a close knit family and was living with her parents and sister. Her father is a joiner and her mother an administrator.

What was I gonna say? So really, erm, I'm just talking about something like you, your exams, so that's coming up soon. Erm, going back to the interviews erm, how did you feel after the end of the first interview?

Before I saw a transcript?

Ah!

But yes, I felt alright about it, yeh. Erm, um, I quite liked the fact that I'd got sorted out, in my own mind, I spoke about my learning (**yeah**) about the way I learnt and I thought, to myself, well yeah, I know where my weaknesses are perhaps and I'd be able to do something about it, but it hasn't worked (laughs) Every time I went away I didn't really do much about it, but then, looking back, at the erm, at the interview you sent to me, I have – I've got better in the respect of that I said that sometimes I don't concentrate, in lectures, erm and I forget about what, what people are talking about – I lose the thread, so I just switch off and I'm not interested – but I don't do that anymore now. I think I've definitely, at last, the last module, come to realise that I need to listen and make sure that right from the start I'm taking notes, so it keeps my interest. So that's, that's been a big benefit, yeah to me.

Yeah, so you're learning to change your method?

Yeah, but only really in that aspect, yeah. But I have learnt that – because it is so much better now, so if you look through my work and it all sort of makes sense, whereas before I would look through my lecture notes and they made absolutely no sense. Until I got the text book out and read it, erm, started to get some sort of idea, when I came to revise, I'd have to read all through my books to get an idea of what was being said in the lecture. Whereas now I don't, I've – because I've listened to what they're saying, I make my own notes, I can understand it straight away. And then the text books are a benefit to me.

Whereas they weren't before?

No, they were a necessity before. I only sort of managed to grab the basics because I had to get the basics out of the book, whereas now I can get, sort of, elaborate on it using the book, because I know the basics already.

So how did, did you have any comments with regard to the transcript or...?

I've got a couple. (laughs)

Ok.

Erm, I've written on the back of this, here. Erm, (sound of paper being rifled through) I don't know where it is. Right, I had that – I was embarrassed reading it...

You were?

Yes, I get, because I think I mentioned before that when I, when I do my work I don't like to read back through it again. And I get insecure reading it back through it and I was embarrassed reading back through this. I also felt that I had too many words to say. I get carried away talking. Erm, I talk about irrelevant things and I think that's just nerves. Cos I know that I waffle on erm, I've still, as I said in here, I make notes for everything. I erm, I was talking about, in my last interview, when I do revision and when I do erm, assignments, I do – I do though, I learn in the same way. I make a lot of notes. I still do it, I'm still doing that. I can't do an assignment without writing notes. Erm, I do, I do lists for everything. I think I feel, in my own mind, that I have to have a full understanding of it and without writing freehand notes, I can't then – until I've understood and written a list of everything I've got to do – I can't start typing it. **(right)** Erm, and I just know that I make more notes in lectures now than I used to. Erm, and I concentrate more in lectures. I mean that was basically it for that really.

Yeah.

On, on my transcripts, yeah – they were the only differences from that.

So what made you think that some of what you said was irrelevant?

I just – well, I felt, as I was saying it in the interview, that I just carry on talking for no reason and as you read it, some of the things are totally unnecessary to say, they're just repeating themselves, but I think that I'm just – so I'm just, well I must just be a nervous person I think. A bit insecure.

Do you think?

Yeah, I think so **(yeah)** cos I think that's why I don't like to look over my old assignments and things like that, because I'm worried in case I've done something wrong or said something wrong in it. I don't want to, I'd rather not know. I'd rather be in denial than – the same with my assignments and my dissertation. Up until, sort of this week, I've not really looked, on a daily basis, of how long I've got left because I didn't want to know. But then, the way I work, I can't work unless I've got a goal and a deadline really, to give me almost a sense of urgency **(mm)**. So by not looking how many days I've got left, I was sort of convincing myself that I had longer, therefore not getting a sense of urgency and not really getting as much done as, until I thought, this has got to be in. If you see what I mean. I've only got this many days and that, that was a problem really. Cos of my dissertation I've had to, sort of motivate myself and do my own time limits, I would rather not do it, I'd rather not think about it same as I'd rather not look over my old assignments. And so I think that's probably put me behind. And also, the fact that I've got to, that I feel I have to read everything, I can't – someone keeps saying to me just type something on a page, go back and alter it. And I've just really, I'm not really, I'm not really comfortable doing that. And I mean, I don't know whether it's to do with my old computer system – we didn't have WORD in it – it was just a multi-rate word processor and you couldn't go back and move anything around or alter things,

you had to know, otherwise you'd have wasted sort of like (yes) a page, because you couldn't alter it. So, right from my first year, I've been used to doing everything freehand and then typing it up. And I'm not comfortable now with just reading a bit, typing it and finding relevant bits. I have to read it all. And it's consequently taking longer than I expected. And even though we've got a new computer system, where I could alter it now, I'm just not comfortable, starting to type until I've fully understood everything. (yes) It's like I would rather know, before I've written, finished my literature review, I would rather know what the answer to my analysis and conclusion are. Because I'm not comfortable with doing a literature review, not knowing that I've written about the right things, which is a bit of a problem really.

What do you mean the right things? I mean when you're writing a literature review, well isn't it supposed to just be about what the people say and not what you're confined.

Yeah, but I'm not sure whether I'm talking about the right things that people are saying until I know what I'll find, which is a bit of a catch 22 because I didn't have anything to base it on, I was really struggling on which direction to take. Because I felt I needed to know what my answers were gonna be before I could find the questions – which was wrong so I had to, what I did was I went right back to the beginning and got some really basic marketing books. (mm) Mm, and started right from the – I knew I wanted to do marketing communications when I thought of it, so I looked at really thin, small books on marketing communication and then got a bit of a bigger book on marketing communication and sort of started narrowing it down by going from right, real basic detail erm, to have to narrow it down to some, to the areas that I wanted to look at. But even so, when I started getting just marketing communication books I was still finding I had to read everything in it, in case it wasn't – in case there was something more relevant or it wasn't as relevant. I couldn't just find the chapters that I needed. I still had to read the whole lot which sort of like set me back a bit once I'd started it, so...

So you feel the need to read everything?

Mm,

In case of what? What do you think might happen if you don't?

Er, I'm not, I might go totally in the wrong direction. But I'm gonna end up with a lot of theory and not actually have anything to relate it to because it would be the wrong theory to relate to Levi's – that I'm doing for my dissertation.

You think?

Mm, that's what I felt. Now I've done it, I could – I feel as though I could've done that a lot easier by just looking at sections, but I couldn't have done it, that way. I wouldn't have known where to look or anything.

How did it make you feel when you actually did read the harder text books? (lose Kay's last words)

Erm, frustrated in a way because as I was doing it, and when I, and then after I'd read it all I had to go back and then I made a list of what I was going to put into my literature review. Erm, and as I was doing it, I felt frustrated because there didn't appear to be that much. Just because I only listed the titles down and I thought it's taken me so long to do this and I hadn't really got that much. Erm, but and yeah, frustrated that I'm not as far on as I should be but then in the, on the other hand I think to myself well I just about know everything now, as it, because I've done so much reading, that the analysis and the conclusion shouldn't take so long because I know, sort of, almost what I'm going to be putting in it. It's just that everything's sort of in my head and in note form and nothing's down as in an actual – anything finished to hand in, which frustrates me. And everyone says if you just give anything in, you'll feel better but I just myself don't feel comfortable doing it. I just need to have everything set out, in (?) as such – but then my mum's the same. My mum, she's got a list for everything. Post It notes everywhere. Er, and I made a note of this in the notebook you gave me. I had a row with my mum one day. We was rowing about assignments – erm, she said something about, something along the lines of that she was exactly the same as me. She leaves everything to the last minute and that just got me thinking maybe I'm just genetically – because my mum, she works all the time with her job, she's working every night (mm) and, and I, and she says well you're just the same as me. And I think she could be right but I thought I should be doing it a different way but if this way works for me and I feel – I've done alright, so far, in my exams and things, then I don't know whether it's worth me worrying too much about not having it all down on the page, at the beginning. Whether I should do it this way and just carry on, rather than have to disrupt my learning cycle now. And if, maybe that's just genetically the way I am. Maybe, I just take after my mum and....

Are you learning from your mum?

Oh yes, I learnt from my mum, especially with the lists. Er yes, I think it's a habit as well. Because I had the habit in my own computer system, of writing it first, now I'm not comfortable otherwise and it, it's taken me longer, really, trying to do it the other way and not working, having to go back and then read bits, than if I'd just started. I'd like to be able to do it the way that everyone else seems to.

So is it because you're, you're doing your reading and you write it out for others, you want to feel comfortable about what you write?

Mm, yes, I think so. I don't want to get it wrong. I want to understand what I'm writing. I can't write something down and not – write it down for the sake of it and not really understand it. It's like one of my friends, she's done her literature review ages ago and she's like "well just get the relevant sections out and put 'em in". Well, how can you do that? What if it's not right? She goes, "oh they'll be right. I just relate them to the topic." But now, this week, she should have done her analysis and she says she's hit a brick wall. And I think to myself, maybe although I'm sort of the last one to do anything and – just because I haven't got it all written down, typed up, doesn't mean I'm not as far ahead in my mind (mm) as they are, and I might find it easier to actually write it all down

at the end. But then I might not get a great – I'm worried about in case I don't get a great deal of depth into it or anything, because I've, I had sort of, almost, conceived it all at once rather than developed it. But I'll just have to wait and see how that goes. I think (pause) well I'm not looking forward to having to do the draft, and then go back and alter it. I'm really not looking forward to having to do that because I'm going to have to read it all again and concentrate on it, but I think, so what I planned on doing is to, to do a final draft of my dissertation and then I've got an assignment to be in, erm, (pause) for the same, for the day before my dissertation. So what I can do, is do my draft and then if I haven't strayed totally from it, do my other assignment – to come back on it might give me a fresh perspective and I might not struggle. Because, when I do an assignment and then go back and try and look over it, I can't see any further than what I've written. I have trouble looking from other points of view and looking where the criticisms are. Because I think I just don't want to see them. So in fact, if I have a break, and obviously I'll give my first draft in and it'll be checked – and then come back after having had a total break from it, I might then be able to see a new perspective.

Yeah, and that, and you found – cos it was interesting, you said that you found it difficult to, you work hard and you might have said something wrong – do you feel that you might be saying something wrong?

Erm, I think I just get quite embarrassed really. It's the same with having a photograph taken – it's bare evidence of – when you've had your photograph taken – of what you look like and, and erm, evidence of what I've said, and I didn't really want to look to see what I'd said (laughter) to be honest. So I just – well I sort of like just flick through it and then something would catch my eye and I'd read that bit and then try not to read too much around that bit. And I looked and I just didn't want to read it (laughter). So yeah, even though I sat her and said it all I just didn't want to, well I didn't want to know if I'd said something really embarrassing or....

Do you think it's a fair reflection of what you actually said or...?

Yeah, I do, because my, my problem – another of my problems is I do think before I ..talk before I think a lot of the time. And I think, you've got – with a lot of waffle in me going on because I'm nervous – but I think, because I said it straight away, a lot of it, I didn't realise I talked like that until I said it and then, obviously, I've read it since, yeah, I think it is a fair reflection. Bit dippy but yeah but that's, that's just the way I've learnt and maybe, over time, with my new computer system I will start to type things up but I think it's going to be a slow learning process because it's taken me 4 years to learn to pay attention in lectures. (somebody speaks in the background)

Sorry, you've booked this meeting room (tape is switched off and on) OK, sorry about that. Where were we? (lost words) shall we move onto the next one and see if it comes back to us?

Yes.

**Erm, is there anything you wanted to bring out in your notebook?
Anything you wished to...?**

I'll have a look, see what I can find (sound of fumbling). I think a lot of it, I've already mentioned because it's been as I've been doing my dissertation – things that I've been frustrated about, what I've got here. Oh yeah – beginning of January, I started to dream about the fact that I'd not done any work (laughter). I was just bombing down – I just started to dream about going into exams and then – and not knowing anything and then I would have to hand an assignment in and I wouldn't have actually done anything. Erm, it – and then also...

How did that make you feel then? When you was dreaming?

It was awful. I just kept waking up, feeling guilty, feeling I must do – I must have subconsciously worried about my exams, obviously, and that's why it disturbed my sleep but I did, I felt terrible. Erm, the day after that when I'd had, had a disturbed sleep, my sister wasn't at work, so consequently I didn't want to do anything. So I watched TV in the morning and then felt guilty. Er, in the afternoon I started to sort out my work but I ended up cleaning my room, which probably (laughter) just sums me up – if I can, I will do something else. And that's where, I think, I need the deadlines and the goals in my own mind to know I have to do it by then because if there's a chance I could put it off, I will. And then I've got, I feel like crying because I've not done any work – phoned Jo and Carol, they're other people at University. Jo had done some work, Carol had done none. So that made me feel better erm and I said to Carol I'd phone her tomorrow to check how much she'd done. And we do that quite often – we both do it – we phone each other 'cos she's as bad as me. She's actually done nothing on it (lost word) but she wasn't, she wasn't like that before she went to her placement neither. She said she doesn't know what's happened to her this year.

Is that right?

Yeah, since she – in the 2nd year she did all her work, all straight away. But since she was on a placement year she seems to have lost all motivation for work, as in University work. Yeah, so we phone each other up and we'll say, right I'll phone you tomorrow and do some work, just to sort of motivate each other cos we're not very good unless we've got a deadline now. Erm, (pause) oh, I made a plan. On the 5th January I made a plan, not to go out at all until the 17th of January (mm). I just basically made plans for things but then when – and when people have got really very many dates in, that's probably why it didn't actually work. I don't think it did do at all. 6th January I was depressed, worried about my work so I didn't end up doing it till 12 O'clock, just kept putting off instead of doing it.

(Kay speaks but can't be heard)

In a morning. In a morning I was worried about it so I didn't end up, started doing it until 12 O'clock. I think that's probably just me in general. I, I just worry and think about it too much. (mm) I say a bit about my dissertation again. "I

think about it so much that I confuse myself. When I actually sit down and start looking at it, I'm fine but then when I close my book and start thinking what am I going to put in where? I start to confuse myself". Erm, and this must be the end of the day. "I've done revision, exams over" Saying again, next time I won't leave it till the last minute, I'll make notes throughout the module (laughter) It hasn't worked, so far. Erm, then I've got the one where mum and I had a row. Erm, that she says...

What did you have the row about?

We rowed because I got a good grade in one of my assignments – I got an A+ and she insinuated that if I worked that hard all the time I'd be OK but in everything. Which was a bit unfair really because she knows I didn't work any harder on it, I just understood the topic.

What was that in?

It was in small business enterprise. Erm, and it was the first time I'd properly used a referencing system because erm, before I'd managed to get through most of my assignments – I don't know how – without properly referencing in or anything, or really using a lot of theory, just using one or two books. But for this erm, how's, how the new technology will affect the small business in the millennium? And because it was a lot of common sense with practical answers, I used a lot of journal articles and newspaper articles and things and I understood it and I had loads of sources and references and I just felt as though I'd got quite a lot of depth to it. And it came back and I got an A+, so, so it wasn't the fact that I'd worked any harder, it was the fact that I understood it and, and I had a lot of information to put in it.

Whereas you don't feel you understand some of the others?

No, sometimes I don't feel I understand it and I don't feel – because, as I say, I tend to read everything, I don't have enough time to read as much as I, or to research as much, cos I get, I get a few things out and I have to read them all, then run out of time to get a lot of extra things. Um, so – but with this one I did really well, but, yeah, so as I say we had a row about it, cos I thought that wasn't fair and she said, you just leave things till the last minute. And I only leave my titles till the last minute. But I've – bear in mind I've done the reading for the last few weeks, couple of weeks beforehand or so. I just – I do tend to run out of time (mm) but, because I always think to myself, oh I'll be able to read that chapter in the morning. And it'll take me 2 days and I just underestimate what I need to do. So, but I mean – touch wood – it's been alright so far. I've not, I've never been late with an assignment or anything, it just means a bit of a mad rush at the end. Got another one – erm, tried to do the reading for my dissertation and tried to think too hard about it, I think. I get fed up with it and put it down. I'm looking at it too closely and trying too hard and I can't get focussed and narrow it down. Erm (sound of pages turning) I've got here that I need to have complete understanding of a subject before I can get my head around it and I'm still having trouble, trouble narrowing it down on a subject. And when I spoke to you earlier about how I started doing – I got a basic marketing book out and worked my way up from there, which is what I've

got down here. Erm, starting to make sense. I suppose I start from the bottom and work my way up (slight pause). I've got an understanding of things but I can't write anything onto the page.

You can't or you don't want to?

Probably don't want to. Don't feel comfortable writing it down. I would much rather write it freehand, with pen and paper, rather than type it (mm). Arranged a meeting with you. So it's almost like I've got a deadline, I have to put more effort in because I've got some motivation now, I've got an objective to get finished and a goal. Usually I float along with no urgency. I don't want to look into the future because knowing me I won't be able to do it in time or do well enough and things, so I tend not to look. Erm, saying the same thing about – I've got into a habit of not putting anything onto the page, onto the page before I've got all the information. It's just hard to change – I've written it all down on paper and haven't actually done anything. (pause) Still not done any revision notes for the (?) module.

Was that an aim for it?

That was my aim, yeah, to do revision notes. It went along to reading a book. I've still not done any. I only do it when I've got a deadline and then it's almost as if I need it, I think. It's an agency to start taking things in and to make an effort to do a lot of things, otherwise I do 1 or 2 things and forget about it and go back. I have to read it again (mm) because I've forgotten. I've done that about 3 times. Forgotten, done a chapter and think what on earth have I just read yesterday, in that chapter? Erm, history's today, or yesterday. Last night – feeling more settled, I've written in my diary day to day what I should be doing. I've erm written, sort of, literature review, literature review, method, analysis, day by day, otherwise I'll just wait and I'll leave it all and think, oh my (?) should be in tomorrow, I'll have to do it sort of thing. Erm, I know now that I should have time to do it in. I'm in a bit of a panic but now because I have daily goals, I should be able to get the work done. Also, I've done all – most of my reading. It's all downhill in lifts, so I should now be able to start to get the typing done without feeling as though I've not understood things. Erm, reading took longer than I thought (pause). Just that basically I need to know where I'm going before I can start typing things down and I think that's just my main learning experience that I've found.

Yeah.

I think I've just realised that I'm not gonna – well not at the moment – gonna be able to do, to do bits and pieces, I'm gonna have to get everything sorted and then, that's how it is and I think that's just the way I learn.

Then why did you feel so guilty?

Probably because I know that's the way I learn and I know that, I think that subconsciously I've known that the reading would probably take longer than I thought it was going to. Now, now, because I've had to talk about it and write it down, I know that it takes me longer to read things, whereas, in the past, I just

thought, well it's not my fault I've not got as much depth because I, because I've done a lot of reading it's not my fault. But it actually is my fault because I've, I've admitted now that I do have to read things so I need to allow longer. But it's not very easy for me to work that way. It's not easy for me to buckle down unless there's a sense of urgency. And so I'm in a catch 22 situation where I perhaps think, I know that I read everything – it's a standing joke, I do. And when I was on the work placement I used, I read everything. And all that I need to know, all that we need to know.

So does it help you then, reading?

Not always it didn't – it does now, yes. It does because, because I'm not comfortable writing anything down unless I've got full understanding and without reading everything I don't feel as though I understand it. I feel that I just need – and I don't allow myself enough time to do it, so that's why I feel guilty.

Do you think you'd ever have enough time?

(pause) I felt, when I did my er, my assignment on small business and new technology – yeah, I felt like I had everything I wanted to write down on that page. And I found, I found what – a new article in the paper the day before it was supposed to be handed in. And I was gonna hand it in but I had my international business to be in on the same day and I didn't get chance to do it. But even so then, I still, I still had the information in there, with different references and it would have been nice to add an extra one, but I wasn't leaving out information, so I knew I'd fully understood it and done everything I could because I wasn't missing any theory or anything else. It was just another example but I'd already got some sort of similar things but that's the only time I can remember being fairly happy with understanding.

So, but you can be happy with your work?

Er, yes, I think I can be. Erm, usually I'm just satisfied with it but, with that, I was happy. But as I say it was the first time I'd ever done any referencing and I don't know why I've never – I'd used a couple of books but I'd really never put names within the text or anything like that. I don't know why. Maybe, I'd just sort of missed it. a key point, in lecture or something. It's on my settee that – but no, and it's because I knew that I'd done it as I was supposed to do it and I had lots of examples and lots of books that I'd written theory on, I was pleased with it, yeah.

How did you find it, keeping your notebook?

This, fits and starts. I'd suddenly have loads of ideas about I know, I know why I'm not learning, I know what I've got to do and I'd have to write them all down and then forget about it for a few weeks and then think – well something might happen which would remind me and I'd put in but generally I would just have like – I'd be thinking about something else, some aspect of assignment and stuff and I'd think, oh that would be able to go in my notebook. And I'd have loads of ideas but they'd all tend to be on the same theme. They didn't really have any experience, learning experience other than to a University, that I found. But

maybe I think, over the past few months, a lot of my time has been spent either worrying or trying to do Uni work – mostly worrying about it. Erm, so there's not been a lot of time.

Did you find worrying actually puts you off?

Yeah, yeah. I panic about it, erm, and so I'd rather do anything – I look for other things to do rather than have to think and do my work. And I'll only really do it when I have to, which is why I've got daily deadlines now.

Do you stick to your own goals?

If they're specific. I try – I do stick to them if they're specific but I try not to make them specific so that I don't have to (laughter). Yeah, I will try and say I want this to be in on, on then, and usually, and usually if I say I need this to be done Monday, I will do it but I think sometimes I will sort of say I'll have this done by next week and then it will be the week after. Unless I set a specific date I won't have it done. Er, there's some circumstances where I – it may be done – but generally if I set a day, I will be happy with where I've got to on that date. Plans might change and things like I will want to have typed however many words and I might not have done, but I will have read an extra book which will have given me more of an understanding. So, I'll always, if it's finished – assignment (?) and I'll set a deadline, I will always finish that. Stages – I'm not too good at finishing stages or anything. They have to – cos I tend to think of, of my assignments as a whole, not different parts in it (mm) and I think that must be, just again, because I need a full understanding. I cannot think of my assignments within separate sections. I think of them as the whole assignment to be put in at the end. So that's the main deadline that I stick to mm.

OK, mm, well my next question was really, I don't know if we've covered some of it (end of side 1, tape 1) ...other experiences since we met?

Erm, not that, not that I've noticed and not, and I have watched out because I've been looking for my book but erm, well, not that I can think of. Maybe if I had to sit down and I had a couple of hours to think, I would probably come up with them but I've been watching out and I've not really done anything that I've, I've learnt from. Oh, I've done 1 thing. I've learnt – I went to erm, Twickenham, on Saturday to see the rugby league, with my boyfriend and some of his work clients and he's very, he's very sure of himself, my boyfriend is and I'm – well obviously – but no, I'm generally quite shy and quiet and it would be the first time that I had met most of these people and some of them were good friends of his, so rather than going and be introduced with him, because he wasn't ready to go down to meet them, I said right, I'll go and look for them. I just – I felt that for me to be comfortable in that situation, I would be more, it would be more beneficial for me to go down, on my own, to introduce myself and give an aura of confidence, sort of almost pretend I was confident rather than go down with him and be his shadow. And it worked fantastically because it was almost like I was playing a part for the first part of the day but because I went down, hi, my name's Olivia, David will be down in a minute, it, it gave me some confidence so that I could cope with the rest of the day with all his work colleagues and clients and things.

So what made you...?

Pretend to go down.

Sorry.

No, it's alright. So I think the learning experience from that was the fact that I, I have to take charge of my own destiny, in a way, or situations can be within my control. I don't have to be the quiet one who just sort of – well I'm not really ever the quiet one – but I am shy and a lot of my, a lot of myself is an act and a persona that I put on for other people. But that situation would have made me very uncomfortable had I not taken control of it from the beginning. (mm) And it's not something I would normally do and I don't know whether, I can't remember whether I spoke about this last time but on my 1st day at University I had to take control and go and introduce myself to people. And it was the same sort of situation then but I've not had to do it since before I went to University before. But no, I felt I had to do it because, because it would've – David, my boyfriend, obviously knows them all erm, and if I hadn't have done it, I would've felt uncomfortable. I would have been shy and awkward and they might have just seen me as his girlfriend whereas, because they saw me first, on my own, they had to sort of talk to me as a person and they were all really nice but I'm sure it would have been easy for them to just see me as his girlfriend. And, and in actual fact, some people that arrived late, that I didn't get to speak to first and on my own, erm, well didn't acknowledge me or anything. They were very nice but they didn't go out their way to talk to me, whereas because I'd gone out my way to talk to other people they went out their way, almost considered me as sort of like a friend. So that's my learning experience. Have more confidence.

But you felt you had to act the part?

Yeah, I did definitely. But because it's not me naturally, I would never dream of going and talking to somebody I didn't know, but for me to get through that day I thought I had to put a part on. And then, after that initial thing, I could just be myself. But the initial part I've not normally got the confidence to talk to people I don't know.

How does that make you feel?

I was pleased with myself – really pleased with myself. Erm, because I just – it's up to me really. I don't – it's the same, and it's, I should relay that to my work, it's up to me to do my work and if I don't take things into my own hands, no-one else is going to do it for me. And I do, do it to some extent because obviously no-one else does my work, but I don't do it as well as I should do because I don't, I don't think about it all properly. Whereas I thought about this situation, I thought I've got to go down and speak to these people and get it over and done with before....and cos, and also when I'm with my boyfriend, I'm not embarrassed when I'm with him but I, I don't, I'm embarrassed because he's watching my reaction to meeting people. I don't like people to watch me and I know he would react to see if I was embarrassed or comfortable. So I'd rather get that all over and done with without him being there.

So was Dave more of a factor than meeting?

Erm, he was an equal factor, I think, yeah. Not more of, because he would only have done it out of concern but no-one else would have been there to see if i was coping alright. So if i did it on my own and I didn't cope well, no-one would've seen, well except for these people who I didn't know anyway. But I didn't want to – I suppose I didn't want to let him down, in a way, as well. I didn't want to, to be timid and not have anything to say, whereas because I met them, I had something to say.

So that's quite a positive learning experience?

Yeah, it was for me. And it, it was positive in a way that it's not, it's never as hard as you imagine it to be neither. Nothing ever is. And the work, I dread it and I sit down and the time flies and it's not particularly difficult it's just motivating yourself to do it and, I think the thing that upsets me most about the work is the loss of time I could be doing other things. It's not – because I, the work is reasonably enjoyable, it's the thought that I've got to sit there for however many days and type this out and do this, not the fact that I think I won't be able to do it because as long as, as long as I read everything, I – hopefully not ever and never yet, really not been able to understand something when I've allowed myself enough time to understand it. So, yes. (pause)

So have you had any non-learning experiences? (lose Kay's words)

I don't think I have to be honest with you. (pause) I don't – I suppose I don't learn from my own mistakes, in a way. I'd been – I'm quite a stubborn person and I tried, recently, to erm, be less stubborn but I rile people. I've tried to sort of – what I want to do is to be able to go to them and say, look, I don't think I'm in the wrong but I think we should talk about it. If I've rowed, say with my sister or my boyfriend or anyone, but I can't actually bring myself to do it yet and that's something I'd really like to break to my mum about this. I've learnt from my mum in this way, though she's, she never apologises if she's wrong or anything like that. But, erm, bits in her, not quite so extreme, but I know I would like to be able to go to someone and say, look, I think we should talk about it, erm, I've – not that I think I'm in the wrong, but I think we should talk about it and discuss it and work out, you know, a compromise. But I just can't do it. I really can't do it. I'm too stubborn and I just think oh well, I'd rather not talk to them. So I've not learnt in that respect. Something I want to do but I've just not been able to do it. I'm just too stubborn.

OK, erm, I don't know if you have anything new, any thoughts on what influences or affects your learning? You came up with some ideas, last time and I just wondered if you – I don't know if you have but if you...

(Pause) erm (pause) no, I don't – we spoke about lighting and things didn't we, last time (mm)? I find that, and I haven't done it with my work for my dissertation, but when I sit in bed and do it, I work much better. And when I'm in my front room or my dining room, even if the TV's not on or anything, if I, if I'm in bed I seem to be able to get through the pages faster and I don't know why.

But if I'm in my front room or even at the dining table or whatever, it takes me longer to read things. I'd read a line and have to go back and read it again whereas if I'm in bed – and I have no idea why that is.

So, yeah, so it's just where you are. is it - I don't know - perhaps cos you're more relaxed?

It might be because I'm more relaxed and it might be because what happens is I take my work to bed and think oh, just do – and it's normally work that's not urgent – I'm doing this – I struggle, all day, with things thinking I've gotta get this done because I'm behind on writing this and I'm, that, so there's pressure on me in the day but the stuff I take to bed, at night, I think I'll just take this and if I read a couple of pages it's a bonus because it's something I should do tomorrow or something that's not urgent. So (mm) it, I think probably there's less pressure on me and I end up doing more work, in bed, because time flies and I'm more relaxed. It's – there's no, there's no sort of pressure, although I said earlier – didn't I? That sense of urgency made me do things (mm). I think that I need that, to actually start me off but when I think I'm doing something for a bonus it becomes much easier to do, doesn't it? Yeah, so it must just be, you know, the thought I'm in bed and that, I don't have to do this. I can go to sleep when I want – makes me do more, I think.

Yeah. Is there anything else, or...?

No, I don't think so – not that I can think of at the moment.

OK, OK, erm, and I asked you before about what was your main purposes in studying – I just wondered what was your main purpose in coming to University? To do this.

(Pause) erm, well I wouldn't have been very good, I wouldn't have ever done further education if I'd have had, if I'd have gone to work because I need (pause) sort of almost the motivation of the people around me and being here, in this environment, to do my degree. I couldn't have worked and done it Open University. I wouldn't have done that. I would have put it off and put it off and not given it in. So, the fact that I was – decided to carry on with my education, I never even thought about going to work because I know that I wouldn't have done it. (yeah) I have to come here to give me the incentive to do it, so that's why I chose University rather than an Open University course or anything.

So, it was what? You get support from colleagues here?

Yeah, I get support and it's support from people around me and it's a learning environment. I wouldn't – I probably wouldn't have been able – well, I know what I'm like at – I put work aside and don't do it. I'm here and other people are studying, so I will study, if I'm at home and I'm not in a learning environment, and have to do it off my own bat, I wouldn't have done it.

Yes, so it was important to you to have contact.

Yeah. I never even thought about not coming to University, to do my degree. I didn't consider going to work and doing it part-time or anything, I just knew that....And I knew that, because it takes me a – erm, not – I don't think, well I didn't know it took me a long time to do reading and stuff, but I couldn't imagine working and doing University as well – straight off. I think it might have been easier if I'd worked for a few years, got into a routine of – of getting things done 9 to 5, and then sort of trying to fit University in. I think maybe I'd have a more structured life. But because I've had education up till then and I wasn't particularly rigid, at college, and things, I would have had a hard time allocating time.

Yeah and was there a particular reason you chose a business course?

Because it was quite broad I chose a business course. I enjoyed it at my BTec and I didn't, I didn't have any – I didn't really want to specialise in, in any sort of more academic subjects, sort of English Literature or anything because I didn't have a career path that I wanted to follow that I was interested in or anything. I wanted to be a pilot, when I was younger but that was Maths and Physics and I was awful at 'em, so, so I gave up with that. Yeah and that was the only ever career I really wanted, so (sniffs) I just did a broad one – business studies.

And because it was broad, that was....

Yes, because I could do lots of different modules in it. And I mean I had coped alright with it, at college, and I thought I would probably be alright with it, at University.

Is it broad because you don't know what you want to do for a career?

Yeah, I've no idea what I want to do, still now with 2 months to go (laughter) I don't know what to do, so. I know I won't be doing a Masters though. (laughter)

You know that?

Yeah.

Mind you people say that and then a year later they're back.

Really?

Oh yeah.

Well I'll have to work, I'll have to work out my learning style (laughter) to be able to do that. I'd like - I would like to but I know how much I struggle motivating myself now, to have to motivate myself again – unless, unless I learnt how to write things down, go back, read, alter. I could – I mean I couldn't imagine ever writing a book or a novel or anything because I would have to, you know, write things down and then go back and change them. I couldn't imagine doing that for like a whole novel – my worst nightmare. Although, I love reading. I read anything and everything, any book anyone gives me I read, but I couldn't imagine writing one.

No, no. What because – just because you'd have to go back?

Yeah because I would have to go back and read my own things and it would embarrass me to have to read what I've written, I think.

Why?

Because, in my – I wouldn't want it to sound stupid and if I read it, it might sound stupid and then I would be disappointed, I think. So,...I think. I don't know, I just, I don't know whether maybe I'm just lazy and I think that – I'm convincing myself I don't want to read it because I'm embarrassed but I'm lazy, so...No, I do, I get self-conscious about seeing things I've done, work I've done. Self-conscious about it (**yeah**). And I – even the assignment I did that I was pleased with, I've not read it again.

You haven't?

No, I've not read it, even though I've got it back and it was an A+ I've not read it again. I still wouldn't want to (pause) although (pause) no. No I've not had any urge too but maybe that, as well, is because erm, I don't need to do it any better, so.

Erm, I don't know whether this question is really applicable for you but I was just wondering, does your learning have to be relevant?

(long pause) It's easier if it's relevant to me. Erm, because I understood the assignment on the new technology – it was like common sense and it wasn't relevant to me in a way that, that I have any intention of gi, do, of getting a small business but it was relevant in the way that it was an everyday thing and that it was less theoretical literature and more day to day (**mm**) sort of day to day operations and day to day practices. So it had more relevance to my life because I mean I don't, sort of, need theories every day or things like that, but I could relate to it. So, yeah if, if I, if I understand something, I'm much more likely to want to know more about it, than if it's something I'm just having to do. Some things are totally irrelevant to me and I just haven't got any interest in them, sort of like I've said before – several times – I don't like quants – that's totally irrelevant to me, I've got no idea why I would need it and I don't want to learn about it.

Is that, do you have difficulty with quants?

Yes, I did have difficulty with quants.

So I wonder if you see it as irrelevant because you have difficulty with it, or you have difficulty with it....

Yeah, probably and because I know that I would never want a career in it, because I have difficulty in it. So I don't see any point in, in trying to understand it. It's like people say, what course you doing? And I say business studies and they say, oh accounting! No! And I just worry that one day when you go into an

interview somebody's gonna think because I've done business studies, I'll be good at accounting. Yet, I'm awful at it. So, yeah and that's another thing, like accounting I've not interest in whatsoever. Anything that's solely based on quantitative, I'm just not...

So rather than an interest then do you see them as similar?

Yes, probably so, if I'm – if I was interested in something I would probably, it probably mean I would be able to find relevance, that I could use in the future or that made sense to me, or, or it was sort of any everyday occurrence. Not an every day occurrence, as in something that would be a practice that maybe one day I would have a use for. (mm) But somethings I hope that I'll never have a use for. So I'm not interested and I don't find it relevant.

And is this somebody you think, you think about theory in that way?

Yeah, I do, I do think about theory in that way, a lot of it. Some theory, some theory I read and I think well that is just common sense. Why in a, has somebody not written it down before? Than in 1976, sort of thing. And I do think to myself, am I missing the point sometimes? Because some things seem so obvious, I think, I must be missing the point. They can't seriously want me to write that down when it seems so obvious really. Erm, but, on the other hand, those theories that are obvious and that I understand, I become interested in because (yeah) I can talk about them and I can write about them. The theories that – the theories in subjects that I'm not so keen on, I just try to ignore really (laughter). Yeah, and a lot of assignments I've had – well not a lot of assignments – some assignments have had “not related to theory enough” and it's because I've not been interested enough to read. Or, if I have read them they've not made sense to me much and they're normally quantitative ones or things like that. Or, I think they've got to be quantitative ones – maybe they haven't but because I think they have, I try not to go into much detail about them. So I've lost marks, in assignments, for that. (yeah)

Erm, on a different sort of tack, really, do you think that being erm, a woman, affects the way in which you learn?

(long pause) Generally, erm, (pause) no, I've never thought of it in that way. I notice in other people though – in, in tutorials – it's usually the men that talk first, in debates and things like that. There's the odd woman that'll stand up and say her point first but normally men start the debates off. They're normally more confident in speaking but, but I don't, I will start – I mean if no-one else is talking I'll talk but I won't normally start the ball – but that's not because I'm a woman, that's because I'm quite shy, but I've never felt that being a woman has made any difference.

Yeah, but the – you think that the men tend to talk first?

They do tend to be more dominating in debates and thinks like that, hmm.

How do you feel in that situation?

I'm alright once I've said the first word. When – it's actually opening my mouth, to get the first word out, and the sound of my voice and knowing that other people are listening. Once I start talking I'm fine. But it, I find it very hard to actually start talking. And once I start talking you can't shut me up but, but that first – I'm quite shy about it, a bit insecure. I don't want people to listen to me. I'm quite happy writing everything down and letting someone else – say my views – but I just don't, I think I don't want people to see it's me, in case it's wrong – again. I don't, I don't want to, you know, embarrass myself.

You think that's what you'd do?

I do quite often, yeah – I get it wrong. Erm, no, I mean and I have done, I've said things by mistake and like, and it's been funny and it's never as bad as you imagine it to be but I just – I'm quite self-conscious because it's that quiet, your voice, everyone looks at you and it's, it makes me a bit self-conscious. But I don't mind doing debates. I'm better now than I used to be, erm, I wouldn't talk at all. But now, if I've got a point, I have to say it; I feel I want to say it. Before I just wouldn't have bothered – oh no, it doesn't matter, no-one's gonna notice if I don't speak and no-one's gonna really care if that point's put across or not. But now I do feel the urge to say things, if I've got a point.

Have you noticed any other difference between men and women then, in your course?

(long pause) No, not really because I don't really have a lot to do with men, on the course. All my friends are female really, that I talk to, that I talk to and am with and I don't really have a lot of dealings with men.

Is there a reason for that?

I don't know. I've never really thought about it until now. This, this erm year, we've done more debates and I've been put in more teams with men, for different reasons and I was, I think I was surprised – I remember being surprised that, at how nice they all were, as in they all seem – because we had nothing to do with them, I thought, I must have sub-consciously thought they must be a bit stand-offish if we've never really had a lot to say to, to different people in the group. But, I think everyone must think the same thing and everyone feeling absolutely a bit shy, cos once you get into a team and start talking, they're all fine. But I thought maybe they're a bit, you know. So (? Next 2 words) but I've never really thought about it until this year when I got into a team and I thought, these people aren't, sort of not snobby I don't – stand-offish, they're not – I think they're probably just shy. And lack of opportunity. You're in, sit in your lecture, you're out. In your tutorial now – out. You mix up. You're all in different sort of groups. You don't always see people. At a school, you saw the same people every day for 5 years but now you're lucky if you see 'em for an hour, two hours a week. The same people, so – but I must say my choice of friends has affected my choice of modules for this final year.

It has?

Yeah, because I was going to do erm, like what was I gonna do – a different module now and nobody else was doing it with me, and I, I thought to myself now I do I want to go into a group, people I don't know and, if I struggle with something, have no-one to talk about it with? Or no-one to ask if I don't understand something? Or, shall I change my module for something I would not particularly want to do but know that I would have the support there if I struggled? And that's what I did, I changed my module and did it with everybody else because I didn't want to take the risk, with it being the final year and I'd have my dissertation and everything. I'd be struggling with the subjects and having nobody around that I felt I could talk to about it.

Did you not think you were taking a risk, choosing a subject you didn't particularly want to do?

Yeah. I did think that but I thought, and I think, well my dissertation, I think – it was a marketing one I was going to do and then changed my mind. But it would've been much better for me to do the marketing one but I just felt it was a bigger risk, for me, to be struggling on my own and then either be struggling and not go – like I did at college, when there was no support around and I started to not understand things and all my friends were off with their boyfriends, in Birmingham. I just chose not to go rather than find a way to understand it. And I didn't want to take that risk again, so...

Did you not think you would make friends from....?

No, cos I do that with the (?) and yeah, I know other people in the group. Erm, I just – I don't know maybe I just – I think I probably took the easy option – the easier option for me, sticking with people that I've been with for the last 2 or 3 years.

Yeah. Cos I just wanted – cos you were saying that you've not worked with, well I take it from what you've heard with many other people who number a small circle of friends....

Yeah

Erm, but particularly not with, is that particularly not with men who (?) this academic year?

Yeah, not intentionally, it just – most of the groups have been as far as I can remember, most of the groups have been mainly women orientated in the modules I've picked. Erm, (pause) yeah and there's normally only like 3, 2/3 blokes within the – you know, I'm not sure whether there's more women than men on the course or not. But there's normally more women than men and we've never, we've not ever done so much debating as we've done this year, so we've never been segregated into groups. We've just stuck, sort of pairs or on our own. So, yes, there was no – in particular, have much to do with men. We've had, I mean quite a lot to do with other people but when we've had to do the groups, in the past, it's always been girls, we've never had boys in the groups, that I can remember.

And do you socialise with men from the Uni, perhaps (?) 'em?

No.

No?

No, I mean I still live in Derby though, so I socialise with – I live where I was brought up so all my close friends are there, but even my friends who have moved down from Halls don't socialise with men off this group. If they socialise it's because they've lived with people, with men. Nobody – our group's not a very sociable group, I don't think. Er, because everyone's in sort of little groups and no-one seems to really mix. Everyone gets on (yes) but they wouldn't choose to go out with each other, I don't think, or go drinking or anything. Probably the only time you'll see them together is after the last exam and in the bar. That'll be it and then we'll all be gone.

So you've not noticed any other differences about your tutorials?

No, not – but then I put it down to the fact, as I said before, that you don't see people all the time. People are changing and unless you pick the same modules you probably won't see each other for....people I've not seen since the 2nd year, this year – in my tutorials in the 2nd year, are different tutorials now. I don't see them again (coughs) so, whereas at college, when I did a BTec, I was with the same people every day and at school I was with the same people every day. Whereas, you don't get close to people unless you're sort of with them. And I think a lot of people, once they've made a few friends, will pick the same modules to stay together because they're not – they don't really know anyone else very well because they've moved around a lot. (yeah) Cos I, thinking about it – a lot of the groups are groups that have been together since, they stay all the same people, so they – maybe they just like the same things or maybe they, they've picked it to stay together.

Cos that surprised me, because well most of the students never thought about even getting (?) really. A lot of people didn't.

No, maybe it, maybe then it's because I wasted a year at college by being on my own, with all my friends doing different things (yeah) and me struggling. And wasting a year – maybe that makes me want, but you see a lot of people in the same groups. I'm sure it's – well I'm not sure but maybe it's (Yeah) (?) really itself.

Yeah, I mean "A" level (lose Kay here) I don't know – it surprises me. Erm, the other thing we've asked you to fetch with you – this assignment – one you were happy with and one you were unhappy with so if you could just tell me which one we'll do first (rustling followed by end of side 2, tape 1)

...finding assignments that have changed.

Oh right, why what's happened to them?

Just don't save it, I just don't know.

Oh right.

I just don't save them, I don't want to look at them again and I don't save them. I, I know that I've got some that my friends have picked up for me because I've not picked them up. They – cos they know I won't bother, if I know my grade I won't bother. So, erm, they pick 'em up and they've got them at their house. I just never ask for them. I just don't want 'em. So yes, but I found this one which was erm, "Arguments need to be more closely based on theory", which is as I was saying before, the operations – erm when I did business operations – I really didn't understand it whatsoever. And I didn't make the effort to do any reading, to surround it. And as I wrote this assignment on Glastonbury, I thought to myself at the time, I'm just repeating what's in the case studies. (yeah) Erm, and I – well I got a better grade than I deserved I think myself, because I didn't really – I got one book out and because I didn't understand it, thought I'm never gonna understand this. I got one book out and used the theory from one book, which I didn't reference, I didn't relate to anything and I just basically copied out what it said in the case study. Cos I just didn't understand it and I should've made the effort to read around the subject until I understood it, but I just didn't.

What because you weren't particularly interested in the subject?

Because I had a problem understanding it. I have – I sort of gave up, really, before I started. I'd given up.

So how did you feel – well first of all, why did you choose, did you choose this one because it was one of the few you could find? Or...

It was one of the few I could find and it was the one that most struck me as, it was the one that I was the least happy with when I gave in.

Yes.

There was another one I thought I might bring which was erm, an international business one and as it – I got a C+ in it, so I did alright in it, but I left it till the last minute and didn't finish it properly. Some of the appendices weren't there. Erm, I've not actually, it's at my friend's house – I've not actually picked it up, so I've not read the comments. I know I got a C+ but I don't know whether I was penalised for not having all my appendices in, which there should have been but I mean it maybe they didn't notice, but they should have been. So I was not happy with that one because I didn't have enough time to finish it off because they were in on the same day and that's a nightmare, for me, because I leave everything till the last minute, so it's 3 till the last minute. But even so I'm still happy with the contents of it and this one, I know, I just regurgitated what I was up for, what I was told in the case study and I was not happy at all handing it in. Not happy in the module because I didn't understand it, so, so this one I (?) said it was the most problem I had, other than – I mean, I did quants assignment but I did quite well in that. But I had help from people around me. So whilst I didn't understand it, I still did alright in it, so there's not been really much point

bringing that in because I wouldn't have been able to understand it. Accounting I struggled at anyway but, but I'm not very good at accounting, I'm not a numbers person. Though this one I should have been able to understand because it was just taking a bit of my time to research it and I would have been alright at it. But this one is, this one I could've done more about to do better at.

So you think you were just regurgitating rather than trying to understand it?

Most definitely, yeah. I never tried to understand it at all. I think, well I probably flicked through it, one book, took the bits that I thought would do and didn't try to look any deeper into it, I got no depth into it and really no theory, no references or anything. (yeah) But I think – well I don't know what year was it in? In 2nd year – oh well, no excuse then. (laughter) I was gonna say maybe I was in my 1st year. No, yeah, I was in my 2nd year. Now, if I got that I would definitely make the effort to do it. I know that I would but I think maybe because it's my final year.

Because it contributes more or...?

Because it contributes more and there's more worry now and it's here, I'm finishing and if I do badly, I haven't got another year to write it. I've got to do well, this year. All the marks go towards it and I've not got another chance – well I have but it would put me a year behind. So, yes, this is my last chance, so I would make – maybe I wouldn't do as well as I'd like to do because it would probably be a last minute thing again but I would definitely get lots of books out, read around it and try.

Yeah. So how did you feel before you started this assignment?

(long pause) Erm, I felt quite happy before I started it, because we had a big case study on it. And when I spoke about it to other people they said, they said, oh it's all in the case study, so I thought, this'll be alright, it'll be quite easy. And then I started to look at my notes that I'd done, in the lectures, and I thought, I don't really understand any of this. Erm, I remember going to the tutorials and thinking that I can't really – I'm not really sure what operations is all about. And then when I came to do the assignment I just thought to myself – as I was writing it – it can't, this can't be the real correct answer 'cos it's there in, in the case study. Surely, they don't just want me to put what's in the case study? But still, whether it was because of the people who said it was just – it was all in the case study – I tried to reassure myself I didn't need to do any more. But I knew, I did note, in myself, that I should have put more theory in it. And it came back and it said I should and I know – so I've only got myself to blame.

So how did you actually approach starting the assignment? How did you actually approach (?) through it?

I got 1 book out and I looked in my tutorial notes and my lecture notes, made basically just about no sense whatsoever. Made sense on its own, in a way, but not when I had - came to relate it to the case study. It didn't seem to make any sense in relation to Glastonbury. But, I couldn't see what operations had to do

with Glastonbury. Because it was all quite sort of theoretical and I couldn't seem to relate it to this. So then I got a book out and certain bits made, made sense. Erm, and then just read the case study. So I only really read one book and, and a case study. That was how I approached it. I didn't, I didn't do anything extra or anything to try and make more of an effort.

So how did you feel when you got it back?

Relieved that I'd got a C. (yeah) Yeah, I was relieved 'cos I thought I didn't really deserve that. (mm) I mean I'm sure I put the main points in but I just didn't explain why they were relevant to operations, which, which I should have done. So, yeah I was relieved I got a C and I'd passed it.

So this wouldn't – well, in this negative er – I don't know, is it a positive or a negative experience?

It was a negative experience but it's positive now because I know I wouldn't do it again. But then I'm not saying I wouldn't do it again if I was not in the 1st or 2nd year. (yeah) And if there was – I can't remember whether I had anything to hand in at the same time, you see. If there was something to hand in, at the same time, that I understood then I would have given more effort to the one I understood than the one I didn't, which was probably – which is wrong but then I might have got a lower mark on the one I understood. So, if I had one assignment to give in – now – I would definitely spend more time on it. If I had 2 – saying I was in the 2nd year – I might still not pay much attention to this one.

OK, so if we have a look and a – at the one you're happy with...

The one I've mentioned already. It's my small business enterprise one – new technology and the small business. They're just – I picked a different subject – we had a choice of 3 questions and I picked a different question from everybody else. Everybody else picked a question where they had to buy a book for it, well, or get a book out the library and read a quote from people and discuss it. And everyone said "get this one, get this one" all the answers are in, are in the text and things but I'd made that mistake already, when someone told me it was a case study (laughter). But no, she said all the answers are in it. Then, my friend said, "I'll lend you mine when I've finished with it". And a few days went by and she hadn't finished with it and I thought I don't really understand that question everyone's doing. What's the point of just going along with everybody else, doing it, because they've said it's the easiest one, when I'm sure that, that this one'll make more sense? But the question, the way the question was worded (coughs) – excuse me – I can't quite remember it now but it made it sound more difficult than it was. Erm, so and I went and I spoke to – after one of the lectures – I spoke to Gill Fearn and I just – I didn't really ask a question about, I just mentioned something to do with erm, this example would be good. She was talking about something in the paper – about new technology. I said, "oh this would be good for the assignment." She went, "yes, that's what we want." Or something like that. So I knew that I was on the right lines erm and it, it wasn't as hard as the question made it sound. Erm, so I just went to the library, pulled some journal articles off – which is the first time I'd used journal articles for anything – pulled some journal articles off, which were brilliant, to do

with new technology and small business. So that gave me the basis to start and then I got some books out but there wasn't really a lot of specific books on that area. You had to read around it, so I got books on technology to do with erm, sort of HRM and things like that. But because I knew where I was going, from the start, I could get books around it and get a real thorough understanding and then pay attention in magazines and newspapers and I got loads of articles there. And I had to, and I just had loads of things to write about.

(background voice – inaudible) OK.

Yeah, I just had loads of things to write about because I'd got a lot of sources and reference information.

Yeah, so and – well, that's the obvious question, why did you choose this assignment?

Because it, it was the first one I've been happy with the depth I've put in it. The first one where I've properly referenced. It's probably the only one that I am – that I can say, I couldn't have done any better. I couldn't have got anything more in – well, I probably could, all the new technology things, but I covered every option that I thought was available. But even so, I still had problems before I typed it up of getting an order to write it down. I had to write everything out in a list, it still didn't make sense and I ended up colouring and highlighting to the – I had pages and pages of notes where I'd read things, coloured them in highlighter, all different sections that were, that were relevant. So all the yellow ones would be about Internet things but because I'd so many pages, I'd got so much that needed to come together, I had a problem organising it and putting them in order. So I coloured them in and just went through and then, then I coloured them all in and then I couldn't get in my head around an order I put first. So then I had to write another list of like main headings and then I could get and write it down. But even so it put me back and I was struggling on the last 3 days, I had, no I had 4 days. I spent 2 days typing this one up and 2 days typing in special business, which was 4,000 and this was 2,500 I think or 3,000. So it really ended up being till the last minute but because I'd done so much detail, on the reading, as always, I do so much reading and I can't get it in order and it gets left behind – I get left behind. So, but no, I – because I typed this one up first as well and then the special business the next, I was pleased with it.

You were?

Mm.

Mm, so I'll take it this is quite positive?

Yeah, it was because if I'd not have done this and if I hadn't have got it back and known that I'd done it right, I would be unsure about references, still. I would be unsure about what people are actually looking for, within this course. I didn't – until I did this, I didn't realise that erm, a lot of the marks are probably to do with the research rather than the actual findings. Erm, and if you research and you (?) the set, your findings are there anyway, aren't they? As long as you can discuss it. So this has given me a good idea of what I'm aiming for,

although it's still not easy for me, I still have the same problems with getting order and getting, erm, a full understanding and putting it in the right order to write on the page. That's still my problem. (mm) The actual content isn't so much a problem. It's getting an order to write it in that's a problem.

Erm, and how did you feel when you got this back?

Erm, (pause) I can't – I was just thrilled – I can't – I was just pleased. I don't think I thought I'd done, I'd got to an A standard. I just thought I'd done it as best as I could and I was pleased that the best I could was A+. So, I think – I don't know.

Is that what you aim for to do the best that you can (yes) or do you aim to get an A?

No, (or a grade) I don't aim to get any grade. I just aim to do the best I can because I never really feel, when I hand assignments in, that I have done it well enough to get an A or whatever, yeah. I just do it to the best I can and normally, to the best I can, would be the amount of time I've got left because I've been a lot of time researching and preparing. I don't leave enough time to do it, to put information in, in the end. I put enough – well I would quite often like to put more (mm) so. Sometimes I don't though, sometimes, sometimes I've written it down and I just don't want to see it again. I always don't want to see it again but I don't feel the need to put any more even though I know it could be better. I don't always feel the urge to make it better.

So, is it – when you get any feedback – is it the grade that you're looking at or is it the fear of catching it on your assignment sheet?

I don't really look very hard at the feedback on my sheets. I mean I got this and saw that I got an A+ and that – it took me till I got home to read the feedback because I don't want to see what people write about me. The same as I don't want to ...

Even with an A+ grade?

Yeah, even so I'm still, I would say a bit self-conscious about it. Er, I thought it probably wasn't going to be bad but I was self-conscious about reading it. Erm, especially when, obviously I don't get A+, I just don't – it takes me a long time to actually read the comments 'cos I don't want to know where I've gone wrong 'cos it's almost like I've failed in those areas.

Is that how you see it?

Yes, I think so because I can't explain why I wouldn't read it otherwise. I do feel as though I – I should've tried harder and I'm always ashamed of myself in a – not, greatly – ashamed of myself for not doing well in those areas. (mm) But sometimes, sometimes I wouldn't have done it any other way because I didn't know that's what they wanted or I didn't know that information but sometimes I read it and I think yes, I could have done better. But that's always with hindsight, yeah, I suppose you always see what you could've done, don't you?

So how did you feel about fetching these in today to show me, being as you don't like looking at them again?

I felt fine about bringing them in. I've not read them again though. I couldn't go that far. Erm, I've flicked through them, I just – well, yeah I don't mind anyone else seeing them. And in a way, when I don't do so well and other people see them (pause) other people see them, I almost feel that I'm not embarrassed about other people reading them, because I think well that's – I don't work as hard as them, so they should see that my grade isn't as good. But, unless I get a better grade and then I think (whispers something which is inaudible) oh, you know, I really don't want them to know I've got a better grade because they work so hard and I, I – although I do work, I work harder than people think I do because I'm quite – I don't know. People who are joking really and not acting very serious, people think that I don't work. Although, I work – I work harder than people here, my friends here think I work 'cos they only joke that all I do is watch TV all day. And I make jokes that I do as well, whereas I don't. But that's just, you know, the way I am (mm). But even so, because people think I don't do much work, I feel guilty when I get better grades than them when they, they've been seen and everybody knows they work hard. So obviously I've got a guilty conscience as if, well they must really hate me because I've done better than them and they think I don't do anything. And while I don't do as much as some of my friends, I do...

Do you really think that they would have those feelings?

No. But I, no I don't but I think if I knew there was someone who, who didn't sort of – or thought there was someone who did nothing and then got really good grades, I'd be like (makes a tutting sound) it's not fair, sort of thing. (yeah) But that's just me – nasty.

Is it?

Well I'd like to think that other people didn't think like that but I think I would think like that. I wouldn't resent them but I do feel that some people deserve it and some people don't. And I can imagine they must think I don't because I always joke, and people joke, that I'm – I've not really got much common sense at all, I haven't, and people think I'm a bit dippy. And they just joke and it's always a laugh and when I got this people were laughing about it for weeks afterwards – they couldn't believe I'd got an A+. So, so yes, I feel a bit guilty as if they might think I don't deserve to do well because they don't think I do as much as I do.

Is it important what they think?

Yeah because, because they work (pause) – well some of them work hard and I don't want them to think that, that I, that I just take for granted the fact that I got a better grade than them when I know how hard. The thing is I don't want them to think badly of me, really, even though I'm sure they don't. I'm just like thinking, cos I'm a bit self-conscious like that.

Do you think then it works on fairness?

No, I'm sure it doesn't. Cos I got better exam results than most of my friends – apart from one. Most of my friends and I – I know I didn't do as much revision as, as the majority of them. So I don't think that is fair, no. But fairness would mean the people who did the most revision would get the best marks and it didn't work like that.

Do you think that's what, how learning should work?

Yeah, well it would be nice – no, not for me it wouldn't be nice (laughs). I think that'd be the best way, the more effort you put in, the better results you should get but, but it's (pause) – I think it should, yes. I think people should be given intelligence on how hard they're prepared to work.

Not about their level of understanding?

(Pause) no because (pause) yeah well, yes, because in a business environment things – the higher your level of understanding, the better you'll get on and it would give people an indication that you can understand, whereas an employer would prefer someone with a higher level of understanding than one that will for a certain, certain sort of top management jobs – a higher level of understanding than one that worked harder and took them longer, because it would take them longer to understand things. But I think that's unfair because – just because the level of understanding isn't so high, they will still probably work harder. So I think they will, you know, so they've got different things to offer organisations but they're lower grades will not show that and I think that's unfair (pause) in, in education. I think that's unfair that there's no way of showing how hard people work. The grades show whether you can do the work or not but some people would be better in certain jobs because they're more diligent and more motivated, Whereas I might have a higher level of understanding but my motivation's terrible. Unless I've got a deadline to work to and especially within work, if it's not my deadline, if I've got to do something for somebody else, erm, I'm not motivated at all. I could quite easily do nothing, at work, all day and not feel bad about it. (laughter) So my grades don't reflect that and CV, thankfully. Erm whereas other people who work hard don't get a good grade but would always work hard, with no way of showing it, just got a grade (??) and they would be more worthwhile for certain companies than me, because they would work and I wouldn't.

Although you do it in the end.

I do it in the end, yes, if I have to. (laughter)

So, since erm, these are going back now to our first, first interview – these questions, but one of the points picked up on was that you said that you hadn't felt able to go and speak to lecturers, if you were having difficulty and I just wondered why that was?

(pause) Probably because first thing it's not always easy to find lecturers. Erm, it's not like when you're at school you've got 12 teachers or something, you

know, and you know where they all are. Lecturers – it's a big place and it's not always easy to find where the rooms are. You've got a lot of rooms to look. It's an effort to phone somebody to find out where they are. Erm, then you've got to be able to make an appointment with them and they're all busy, and they've only got certain time slots and then they say, if you can't get us, put a note in the door. But, basically accessibility to the lecturer isn't as easy it was, at school. At school you – they'd always have like 5/10 minutes after the lesson to talk to you, or you could talk to them, in the lessons. Whereas it's rushed in, do your lectures, out again – they're off to another lecture. They haven't got 5 minutes to spare really. Erm, also there's no sort of relationship with the lecturers, because you don't see them very often. I, I wouldn't probably feel comfortable going and asking for their advice when they didn't know, know my name or know me or probably even recognise me from the last week (mm) so...

Is that the way you feel?

Yeah (yeah) and I don't feel it's anybody's fault. I just – I personally would feel uncomfortable having to go and have a conversation with somebody, about work, when I didn't really know them very well.

And that's true for all your lecturers?

(pause) Yeah, apart from erm, this lady for small business. But, she's the only one I've really spoke to after the, the – we've had the tutorial or the lecture. I mean I didn't speak to her for very long – even so – but she's, she's – I don't know if it's cos she's shorter than me (giggles). She's tiny and so she's more approachable, I think.

Really?

Yes, and she doesn't seem so much like a lecturer. She seems, which is – this is gonna sound bad, she just (laughs) – anyway, she's been very erm quiet and almost shy and as if she was a bit unsure of herself. And some of 'em was talking about her, it turns out she's incredibly clever with something like 2 doctorates or something and she just didn't appear to be that type at all. She – erm, she seemed very shy and it was almost like I didn't have to be shy to talk to her because she was more shy than me.

Really?

Yes, so but in the end she turned out to be nothing like that. She's one of the most competent people I've met. But it just – because I had that impression, she just gave me the ability to go up and just say, would this be relevant to the assignment? Which isn't a lot to ask but I wouldn't normally have done it to any, I wouldn't have even said, would this be relevant to the assignment? Whereas I would with her. But I still wouldn't have been comfortable going to talk to her about anything like major problems or could we have 10 minutes to discuss it. I still wouldn't be comfortable doing that.

You wouldn't?

No

But because you felt she had – she wasn't very confident, that gave you the confidence to talk to her?

Yes, yes, cos I thought she'd probably be more uncomfortable than me, with me asking her questions. And she wasn't, it's just the air she put off at first, and as it turned out she was nothing like that at all but I was able to sort of talk to her because of it.

OK. Erm, I – also because you mentioned it today, about your friends – (?) I wondered if you felt that you would – I don't know – whether you felt that you were too reliant on your friends? (lost words)

Erm, no. I don't think so. Cos we – although I say I picked these modules in case I couldn't understand things and for support and things, I never really needed the support as such. Never – I've never really asked about (?) not since the 2nd year. I mean this year, certainly, none of us have ever asked each other, although we did, we do rely on each other as I spoke last time, about some groupwork and we relied on a woman to do the finance in it, erm. That was just basically because we all picked what we felt best at, even though she wasn't best at it, and she didn't like doing it. But we just sort of all picked areas (mm) and if I'd've been told to do the finance, I would have done it and I would have done it on my own, probably not asked them their advice. So I think it's – I just, I like to feel that the support's there if you need it but I've not needed it this year, not since the 2nd year, when people, or the 1st year was it? when people helped me with the quants and the end accounting and things. I've not needed it since.

OK, erm, I just wondered, because you mentioned last time that after you'd done examinations or you've done assessments erm, you feel a bit emotional after you've actually finished it, I just wondered how you felt after your examination period this time, in January?

Erm, I was better, I felt – you know – much better about it. I think I did anyway. But when I was straight into knowing that I was having to do more erm, do research for my dissertation, so I didn't really have a period where I had nothing to do until I came back. I knew I had to do it and while I didn't get much done, it was on my mind and I was worrying about it. It was more that I was worrying, more than I was doing it but that was on my mind so I didn't really have a gap between the two. So I didn't have chance to get sort of em, emotional and worked up and almost – I said I think that I almost felt a sense of – sort of erm, as if you've – what's the word? (long pause) Can't remember. It was, it was almost as though, as though you didn't want to stop doing the revision. It was almost as if you had a purpose and you was a bit like, not sure what to do after you'd finished. But I had none of that this time because I knew I should be doing my dissertation, so I just thought I'd worry about that rather than, than doing nothing and thinking about my exams.

OK, Erm, (long pause) do you find – because you talked about the feeling of belonging. You talked about being in a group and how that affected

your choice of modules, do you find that feeling of belonging helps with your learning?

(long pause) I do, I do feel it helps my learning in the sense that I like to know what to say to other people who are at the thing. Because if they're, if they've all started something I will have to start it. Because although I only work to my own goals I wouldn't like to be the only one left behind. And whilst there's still someone now, further behind than me on their dissertation – erm, maybe I need her to do a bit more work actually – erm, I need the support in that respect. I need to know how they're doing and, and generally if we can't understand it then someone else can't understand it as well and it's just the feeling of you not being on your own. It's not that I ask for advice, or anything like that, I just find it helps because I know I'm not the only one.

Yeah, so is it erm, is it that you've got somebody behind you that – behind you on the process of, say for instance your dissertation – does that hinder you? Does that slow you down or does that make you feel better?

It makes me feel better. Erm, definitely makes me feel better but maybe if she'd done more I might have done more. But I can't say that because I have, I have been sort of constantly working, every day, doing something on it. It's just taken longer than I thought it was gonna take but if she'd have started before, I might have started earlier. If she'd have started earlier than she did, I might have started earlier. But as it is, since I've started I've not, not done anything (coughs) so I can't say anything in that respect.

OK and the last question was really, cos you talked about differentiating, erm we mentioned it, briefly about regurgitating and understanding – how do you differentiate between memorising and learning or understanding?

When I memorise and learn, I can't talk about something. Erm (pause) to, to learn and memorise I would read 1 book and I would have 1 point of view and I wouldn't be able to discuss it with anyone other than that point of view. When I feel I've understood it I will have read several different aspects on the same theme and I've several authors or, or theorists' opinions on a certain theme. And be able to pull it all together, which is just about the stage I've got to on my dissertation, which is why I'm starting to feel more comfortable with it because I'm starting to pull together different people's ideas on different subjects. But it takes me so long to actually understand something, for me to be happy on it because, because I can't just skim read things. I just, I have to, to fully understand it I have to have read everything I can or everything I've set my mind to read, which I normally sort of like – on a normal assignment – I will want to read sort of 5 or 6 books in – fully – in the sections that are relevant, not just take bits out of them. I will need to read all of them and then get different articles to put in with it. But then, you see I've only just really started doing that this year anyway (mm) so I think that's probably why I'm a bit more comfortable in my work this year, although it's taken me a lot longer than normal because in the 2nd year I did all my assignments like 2 days before – ALL of it. I started 2 days before whereas now it takes me 2 weeks to do the reading but now, I mean my grades are better. My grades, in the 2nd year, were C's and D's and this year they're B's –so.

Yeah. So you've solved....?

Yeah, so I think I probably have learnt something but whether, whether I still get all my assignments in on time now is a different matter (laughs).

OK, that was it for my questions erm, I'll turn the tape off in a second. Is there anything you want to raise or ask me or...?

No.

No? OK (end of side 1, tape 2)