(Dis)engaging students: the role of digital literacy in Higher Education learning communities

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted, either in the same or different form to this or any other University for a degree.

Signature:

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February 3 2016

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List of Abbreviations

BNIM – Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method
CAS – Critical Analytical Study
CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis
CMC – Computer mediated Communications
DIL – Digital Information Literacy Framework
EdD – Professional Doctorate in Education
HE – Higher Education
ICT – Information and Communications Technology
ISC – Imagined Social Capital
Jisc - Joint Information Systems Committee
OGF – Open Group Forum
PGF – Private Group Forum
PME – Planning and Management of Events
SE – Student Engagement
SQIN – Single Question Inducing Narrative
USE – Upper Street Events
VLE – Virtual Learning Environment

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Summary

In this ethnographic case study I examine, as a participant observer, the subjectivities of students, staff and others outside the university in real and virtual spaces. The work is intended for the education research community in the field of digital literacy and teaching practitioners in Higher Education (HE) who are seeking to understand how digital literacy and student engagement policy can influence relationships in learning communities.

I examine the literature relating to theoretical and policy discourses of digital literacy, student engagement, learning community and social capital. Based on the literature, I take an anti-foundational methodological stance that draws on the work of Derrida, MacLure and Rancière. I also draw on the work of Fairclough who locates himself as a critical realist. While not in anyway attempting to reconcile the ontological assumptions of anti-foundationalism and critical realism, I do adopt a dialectic approach that may be generative of fresh insights and perspectives. The conflicted nature of my position as an insider and participant researcher is also interrogated.

The case study of a second year (level 5) module drew on a mixed-method research approach and took place in Spring, 2012 at a post '92 university. As the module leader, I asked the students to use online Private Group Forums (PGFs) to aid group work and Open Group Forums (OGFs) to co-ordinate activities such as field trips and to ask questions. In April, I asked the students to complete a survey that sought to measure a range of items including their engagement, levels of trust and general satisfaction with their teaching experience. After the module was completed, I interviewed students, staff and an external professional. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), I analysed the content of the interviews, open and private forums and then 'read' them from a deconstructive viewpoint. In writing up I employ conventional and unconventional formats and, using auto ethnographic narrative, reflect on my approach. I then conclude the study, setting out the key findings.

The case study showed that the majority of students did not engage with institutional virtual spaces and large numbers of students used alternatives such as Facebook to support their learning. The majority of students indicated that they trusted their tutor

whom they valued as the most important source of learning support. However, tutors were, for the most part, excluded from alternative virtual spaces. Where students allowed the researcher access to their virtual space, high levels of engagement were present but these were not necessarily positive or supportive. Tutors, for the most part, did not engage with students online. Where they did, this sometimes led to dependent, disengaged student/tutor relationships.

The study offers a unique insight into student and teaching staff practices in virtual and real spaces and how wider ideologically-driven policy discourses affect individuals' subjectivities in these spaces. The qualitative and quantitative data offers a contribution to knowledge that will be useful to policy makers, Higher Education (HE) managers, teachers and students. For example, in the quantitative element of the case study, the variables of class, gender, the student's employment status and ethnicity had no apparent effect on the interactions in virtual spaces. At the same time the qualitative data presented shows students' use of institutional virtual spaces might not be an accurate indicator of student engagement and that the use of virtual spaces can lead to dependent behaviour by students. Policy makers and managers in Higher Education institutions might find the study's insights and conclusions particularly helpful when considering investment in institutional Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and how their use should be evaluated.

This study also offers a contribution to knowledge at a theoretical level. Weaving the text from virtual spaces with interviews, and reading the new text through Rancière's (1999) ideas of politics and democracy, has important implications for how digital literacy, support and engagement are understood and how they might contribute to what I call Democratic Learning Communities in Higher Education.

Chapter 1 Introduction

In this doctoral thesis I am concerned with the ways in which students engage with their studies at university and in particular how students engage in virtual spaces. Using the work of Rancière (1995) I focus on the nature of politics and subjectification at points of resistance, disjuncture and dissensus and how this plays out against wider backdrops of policy discourses that foreground concepts of digital literacy, student engagement and learning community. I read the relationship between the macro-policy discourses and the micro-practices found in the case study using Rancière's (1991a) critique of equality and emancipation and theories of social capital (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). I examine the nature of learning community, student engagement and digital literacy in the case study.

1.1 Background to the thesis

From early in my career as a teacher in higher education I have been interested in the pedagogies of e-learning, blended learning and digital literacy and the policy discourses that coalesce around these practices. I have incorporated virtual technologies including weblogs (blogs), online tests, YouTube video lectures, online submission and feedback and discussion forums into my practice. This has been in response to both institutional and sector-wide pedagogical discourse that frames good teaching and pedagogy as that which is 'blended'. Moreover, beyond the field of Higher Education, policy discourses position the use of technology in terms of access to a "good life" through the ability to succeed in an increasingly competitive, digitalised and virtual world. What I have observed in these policy-driven practices has fascinated me. Within virtual spaces, both public and private, a range of intensely political activities has played out, as individuals have sought to exercise power, project and/or defend their identity and police the spaces in which they work. What is more, individuals have sought to transgress and appropriate both virtual and physical space and in so doing have exposed both positive and pathological practices.

This thesis presents a descriptive, ethnographic and instrumental case study of a module taught at a post '92 university. The case study draws on virtual texts, the

narratives of interviewees and results from a survey taken by students. The aim of the thesis is to analyse interactions between students, tutors and professionals in computer mediated communication (CMC) environments so that the potential role digital literacy might play in student engagement, social capital and supportive learning communities can be understood more clearly. The findings of this thesis will contribute to the field of educational research. In time, it is hoped, the thesis will inform both policy makers in universities and teaching practitioners' approaches to CMC. The development of new policies and practices could encourage student engagement and the possibility of Democratic Learning Communities in which students support themselves, one another and the learning communities of which they are a part.

At the same time I attempt to go beyond this evaluation to deconstruct my research through an alternative commentary that troubles and disturbs the ground on which the case study is based.

1.2 My position within the case study and the development of my theoretical and methodological approach

My career since graduating is now almost balanced temporally between my work in events management and the academy. I spent nine years as an event manager in the non-profit sector before taking up a position as a lecturer in Events Management in 2006. This was a difficult transition. I worked with supporters and colleagues who coalesced around a shared purpose. Close team-based working relationships were the norm. Then I found myself working with students who were paying to be at university and in working relationships with staff with whom I experienced little teamwork or collegiality. In my former career I had used the discourse of business and management with phrases such as 'customer service'; these were now deployed in a new environment to which I was unaccustomed. It took me several years to really get to grips with the rules of the game and starting a professional doctorate in Education

(EdD) in 2009 at Sussex was, in part, recognition of the importance of having a doctorate to progress my career and to achieve crediblity in the eyes of my peers.

The case study this thesis examines is bounded by a module I taught called Planning and Management of Events (PME). Only students and staff who took the module were part of the research and only external professionals involved with the module were included. I taught PME from 2007, shortly after I joined the university. I developed it in several ways. However, one thread that remained constant was the strong online aspect of the module. I introduced open group forums (OGFs) and private group forums (PGFs) as part of the module's virtual learning environment (VLE), which I evaluated for the pilot research project of my Critical Analytic Study.

From early on in my teaching career issues of student (dis)engagement, in particular non-attendance, have been present. As I write this, fragments of conversation surface in my mind: a student coming to my office during the first semester I taught PME, saying "If you don't do something you'll lose them [from attending lectures]" and a comment by a senior colleague who responded to my concerns about attendance in lectures "Don't worry about the lectures, if they don't come to the seminars *then* there is cause for concern."

These concerns, along with considerable student dissatisfaction with the module, led me to make significant changes to the PME that are set out in detail below in Chapter 4 (4.1 Overview of the Case Study). At the time, as a new teacher in Higher Education, I attempted to apply some of the theory I had been studying for my Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education. For example, I tried to use Biggs and Tang's (2011) ideas of constructive alignment by linking learning objectives, activities and assessment in a way that 'trapped' students and forced them to attend and engage with the module. At the same time by having an assessment regime that demanded both individual and group presentations in the classroom I sought to respond to Tinto's (1997:602) argument for '…cooperative learning activities that call for them [students] to be interdependent learners…' Despite this, attendance at lectures was lower than I would have liked although seminar numbers were reasonably good (at least until the presentations were complete).

As my career has developed I have observed many colleagues' classes as both a peer and a manager and concluded that lack of attendance was endemic across my subject area in both seminars and lectures. However, I also realise that SE is a complex concept that should not to be conflated with and reduced to attendance at seminars and lectures. Attendance is only part of the picture. I have observed students in class tapping on smart phones and paying no attention. At the same time students have apologised to me for not coming to class because they of important meeting with other students to prepare a presentation for another module. Student attendance is often foregrounded by managerial, audit-driven discourses of student engagement which, like other quantitative measures of SE such as the National Student Survey (NSS), can become a performance indicator that oversimplifies SE (Bryson, 2014:7).

In the initial phase of the Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) I focused on themes of academic and student identity. My first piece of research involved interviews with colleagues on how the role of academic advisor was constructed by individuals as part of their academic identity. As I interviewed colleagues, who shared or withheld the detail of their practice of student advising, I had to address my own identity in my research, particularly my position as a practitioner or insider researcher (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). The research also engaged me in consideration of the ethics of research and in particular the need for informed consent. This need has remained a central issue in my work to date.

The second phase of the EdD saw the production of two texts, the CAS and my research proposal. The CAS and proposal provided the starting point for my thesis and, continuing with my interest in student engagement, I developed this in relation to the themes of social capital and community, Putnam (1995), (2000) and (1993), learning communities Tinto (1997) and Wenger (1991) and digital literacy Kress (1996).

This thesis is my response to student engagement in the course of my teaching. As my research has progressed, my position has developed both in terms of conceptual framework and methodology. Initially I thought that students could be re-engaged, learning communities strengthened, at-risk students identified and helped through the

use of technology and the development of their digital literacy. In my thesis proposal I wrote:

> The proposed thesis will examine the extent to which students, teachers and professionals are able to develop their digital literacy and in so doing, build social capital that will contribute positively to the nature of support in a learning community.

I started out with a similar position to that of Browne *et al.* (2008) and Laurillard (2007) who see technology and its transformative potential as underutilised in higher education. However, I am conscious that the discourse which privileges technology, giving it the potential to play a transformative role in university teaching and learning is increasingly contested (Selwyn, 2013; Henderson, Selwyn and Aston, 2015). It is not clear what (if any) transformation would be enacted and who would benefit from it.

My thinking on social capital and learning community has also developed. Through the work of Bourdieu (1986), Quinn (2005) and Young (1990) I have taken up a critical and agonistic stance to the consensual approaches of Putnam (1995) and Woolcock (2001). I noted in my Critical Analytical Study (CAS) that the nature of the student/teacher interactions online seemed to reinforce the established pattern of hierarchies of knowledge in Higher Education. For example, in the CAS, the quantitative and discourse analysis of the group forum posts indicates that students focused on the module leader in a question and answer genre, suggesting the established knowledge hierarchy of higher education remained undisturbed. In Chapter 2, Section 2.2 *The Nexus of student engagement, social capital, digital literacy and learning community* I map out the development of the thesis' conceptual framework in greater detail.

Within the literature on SE there are strong assumptions of the transformative potential of HE learning. For example Bryson (2014:1) writes:

> My starting position for uncovering the nature of student engagement is premised on the goal of HE being about enabling the individual to learn and develop in powerful and transformative ways. I am positioning the student as active learner, not as consumer of a product such as acquiring a qualification. We may note that even within that definition there are many contestable issues…

In examining the nature of digital literacy, SE and learning community, Foucault's (1977) thinking on power, resistance, the nature of the self and of author in relation to discourse has been important to the work I produced in phases 1 and 2 of my doctorate. I have found his ideas on the *tekhnē tou biou* (art of living) through writing as a practice of self to be particularly relevant. In his work on Greco-Roman culture, Foucault (1994a) identifies three types of writing: *ethopoietic* – a cyclical or meditative form of writing that leads to what Foucault (1994a:209) sees as '...the fashioning of accepted discourses , recognised as true, into rational principles of action.'*;* *hupomnēmata* – which could be anything from account books to an individual's note book. These were important because, and here Foucault (1994a) draws on Seneca, writing is a way of countering the *stultitia* (distraction and weakness of opinion) caused by endless reading of others' work; the third type of writing is *correspondence*:

> To write is thus to "show oneself," to project oneself into view, to make one's face appear in the other's presence. And by this it should be understood that the letter is both a gaze that one focuses on the addressee (through the missive he receives, he feels looked at) and a way of offering oneself to his gaze by what one tells him about oneself. In a sense the letter sets up a face-to-face meeting.

> (Foucault, 1994a:216)

The act of writing is fundamental to this thesis. My own writing, that of students' and colleagues' in virtual spaces, public and private, is not something that Foucault or indeed the ancients could have conceived but I will argue that writing in virtual spaces, of being an author, are relevant to being a teacher, learner or professional today.

Alongside Foucault, Fairclough's (2003) Critical Discourse Analysis methodology and methods were influential on my research approach to my CAS. However, as my research has developed I have increasingly moved to a post-structural position. The work of Rancière (1991a, 1999) became a significant influence on my conceptualisation of SE and learning community, my methodological framework and on my analysis. His ideas of equality, politics, police, democracy and dissensus are, I argue, of particular relevance to SE which is often related to discourses of democracy and social justice (Zyngier, 2008). Similarly, Henderson et al. (2015:12) comment 'If higher educators wish to see students move beyond the largely 'safe', bounded and outcome-focused

uses of digital technology reported in this paper, then alternate contexts of teaching and learning need to be legitimized where alternate (perhaps more active, more participatory or more creative) uses of digital technology will be of genuine 'use' and 'help'.' I argue that Rancière's (1991) analysis and post-structural work 'The Ignorant School Master' offers an original and radical analytic framework in which to explore the transformative and progressive discourses relating to SE and digital technology.

As this thesis has progressed Derrida's (2004) call to a double science of deconstructive writing has also increasingly influenced my work. Deconstruction is not, as Stronach and MacLure (1997:99) suggest '…only a matter of interpretation, of a different reading of what already appears to be there…' Rather it is offering a suspicious questioning of such constructs as interpretation, data collection, data, method and the subject. As Derrida suggests:

> To overlook this phase of overturning is to overlook the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a *neutralization* that *in practice* would leave the previous field untouched…We know what always have been the *practical* (particularly *political*) effects of *immediately* jumping *beyond* oppositions and of protests in the simple form of *neither* this *nor* that.

> (Derrida, 2004:39)

The ambition of this thesis is to offer a case study, an evaluation but also an opening up to the 'necessity of an interminable analysis' (Derrida 2004:39) of the hierarchy of values, assumptions and ideologies upon which digital literacy, SE and learning community are founded.

 In Chapter 3 section 3.1 I set out the development of my methodology. As my methodology and conceptual positioning have developed I have had to reexamine my research methods. In particular the use of a survey as part of the case study now seems in many ways incongruous alongside the anti-foundational, post-structural approach I have adopted. From the outset I have been keen to develop my understanding of survey and quantitative methods and wrote in my original EdD application to Sussex University, 'The EdD will help me to develop my research skills, in particular quantitative methods, and apply them to the areas in which I wish to pursue

research'. I saw developing my understanding of quantitative methods and designing a survey as part of my development as researcher. I also included a survey in my research proposal at the end of Phase 3 of the EdD. As my research project has developed I have become increasingly aware of how surveys require categorisations e.g. male/female, (strongly) agree/disagree that deny the difference that a deconstructive research account seeks. In Chapter 3, section 3.4.5 *Research Survey* I critique the survey approach and in Chapter 4, section 4.2 *Survey Results* I offer a deconstructive critique of the survey's findings.

1.3 Research questions

In setting out the research questions which this thesis addresses I began by following Fairclough's (2010) four-stage methodological approach in which the first stage sets out the research topics that point to a social wrong and frame the objects of research for those topics. The questions that guide this thesis began with what Wengraf (2001) calls a Central Research Question (CRQ), namely:

> *In what ways does the use of CMC technology in higher education affect how teachers and students relate to one another as communities of learners and to wider networks of professionals outside the university?*

I included a CRQ because as Wengraf (2001:76) suggests it is important to be able to express the essence of the researcher's purpose in a way that will '...sustain my curiosity, involvement and participation over a lengthy period of time.' The presentation of a CRQ is therefore a moment of reflection not only on my research purpose but also on my commitment to that purpose. However, as the study has progressed I have reformulated the question as:

> *How do discourses which foreground digital literacy, learning community and student engagement relate to the politics and subjectivities of students and staff in both physical and virtual spaces?*

This reformulation of the question reflects a sharpening of focus and a more deconstructive, textual approach and examines how different CMC environments and who has access to them affect individual texts. Most importantly it incorporates Rancièrian (1991, 1999) notions of politics and subjectivity.

To support the original CRQ, I prepared research questions that follow Stake's (1995) formulation of a conceptual structure via the identification of issues within the case, from which I developed issue questions that are similar to Wengraf's (2001) conception of theory questions.

Below I present the original set of issues followed by issue questions:

- CMC technology in the form of the VLE is foregrounded in higher education through policy discourses of digital literacy that promote the use of technology.
  1. *How do students and staff use technology in the module PME (Planning & Management of Events)?*
- CMC technology provides new opportunities to communicate and link with others.
  2. *How is the virtual learning environment in the module PME used by staff, students and external professionals to communicate with one another?*
- Much emphasis in higher education discourse has been placed on normative ideals of learning community, student support and belonging.
  3. *To what degree does the use of CMC technology in PME help to sustain a supportive learning community to which students and staff feel they belong?*
- CMC technology has been identified as having the potential to transform teaching and learning in higher education.
  4. *To what extent are there possibilities for computer mediated communications technology to generate new relationships between students, teachers and external professionals?* And, *what indications are there that students and teachers' use of technology gives opportunities for greater reflexivity?*

However, just as my CRQ has evolved so too did my issue statements and questions:

- o Policy discourses relating to digital literacy, engagement and learning community are deployed by different groups within/outside Higher Education.

  1. *What are the ideological assumptions that underpin the policy discourses of digital literacy, engagement and learning community in Higher Education?*

- o The texts within a VLE are indicative of the nature and existence of a learning community to which it is associated.

  2. *What is the nature of the texts produced in the VLE and other virtual spaces by students, staff and others involved with the module?*

- o   Policy discourse is expected to be a driver of practice.

  3. *What do the texts produced in virtual spaces say about the relationship between policy and practice?*

Stake suggests that from the issue questions come topic information questions that '...call for information needed for description of the case' (Stake, 1995:25) and I have developed topic-information questions from my issue questions. The topic-information questions are;

1. What are the levels of participation of students, tutors and external professionals in the VLE?

2. How do students and staff view the utility of the VLE?

3. What is the nature of the discussions and communication between students, staff and external professionals in the VLE?

4. What is the level of trust between students and staff?

5. What is the nature of the networks being made between students and other individuals and groups via the VLE?

These topic questions remain as, from them, the data generated has led to the revised, issue questions whose evolution is described above. Both the topic and issue questions were stepping stones that enabled the thesis to develop and address the central research question.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into the chapters that follow this introduction, namely: a literature review, a methodology and research design chapter, followed by chapters covering the presentation and analysis of the case study, the survey findings and texts taken from virtual spaces and also from interviews. Finally there is a conclusion that is an ending but will also, I hope, be a provocation for the reader to consider his or her practice or position within a given policy discourse.

Chapter Two critiques the policy discourses that foreground digital literacy and draws on international research literature. The implications and linkages between digital literacy and other key discourses that are ascendant in higher education today are traced, in particular student engagement and learning community. I also introduce and set out theoretical models and positions that transgress or offer alternatives to the orthodoxies of learning community, student engagement, social capital and digital literacy. In this chapter I address the first issue question:

> 1. What are the ideological assumptions that underpin the policy discourses of digital literacy, engagement and learning community in Higher Education?

Chapter Three sets out the methodological position of the study arguing that while Critical Discourse Analysis (with its foundations in Critical Realism) is not compatible ontologically with anti-foundational deconstructive approaches, there is much to be gained from their friendship. I critique the use of an ethnographic case study, in particular the limits of representation and the authority of the researcher that such positions imply. I then discuss issues relating to voice, text, reliability and validity in relation to deconstructive approaches such as writing under erasure and the importance of materiality. Finally, I set out the research design and discuss the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Four introduces the case study, initially by presenting the results of the student survey. Information on the gender, ethnicity and age of students is presented. Data relating to aspects of the conceptual framework (community, social capital and trust) are set out. Non-parametric tests are undertaken to explore the nature of trust

and support which are important to social capital in individuals and communities. The chapter also presents information relating to how the students used the VLE, before recounting a significant turning point of when a group of students allowed me to access their private Facebook group which they had set up to help them work together. In this chapter I address the following topic questions:

1. What are the levels of participation of students, tutors and external professionals in the VLE?
2. How do students and staff view the utility of the VLE?
4. What is the level of trust between students and staff?
5. What is the nature of the networks being made between students and other individuals and groups via the VLE?

Chapter Five draws on material from the online forums and interviews I conducted. The material selected focuses on sites of resistance which are woven together to produce hybrid texts that offer insights into the nature of the learning community and how discourses of digital literacy affect the local practices of students, teachers and professionals in the case. At the beginning of each section I present a topic map of the online forum from which the text is taken. The topic maps were developed through a close reading of the transcripts from each PGF (private group forum). Topics were identified and then set out over time to show the breadth and depth of the discussions students had online. The material is presented in tables with two columns, the text in the left column and a commentary drawing on CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) alongside. A secondary or alternative analysis, which draws on deconstructive approaches, introduces and links each Scene. Chapter Five addresses the topic questions 2, 3, 4 & 5 namely;

2. How do students and staff view the utility of the VLE?
3. What is the nature of the discussions and communication between students, staff and external professionals in the VLE?
4. What is the level of trust between students and staff?
5. What is the nature of the networks being made between students and other individuals and groups via the VLE?

Chapter Six concludes the thesis and presents its claims to knowledge. The limitations of the thesis and possibilities for future research are then considered. Finally, I examine how writing this thesis has affected me.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In this chapter I review literature that has informed my doctoral research and show how I have developed the conceptual framework to encompass a post-structural position. In doing so I address the first issue question, What are the ideological assumptions that underpin the policy discourses of digital literacy, SE and learning community in Higher Education? I examine and critique the claims and assumptions of these policy discourses and locate them in relation to different theories of social capital. During the writing of this review, the concepts of student engagement, learning community and digital literacy have remained sites of considerable debate in both policy, higher education research and practitioner discourse so this review will also introduce recent developments in the UK and internationally. I have taken Quinn's (2005) critique of Putnam (2000) and Woolcock's (2001) normative conceptions of learning community and social capital that privilege consensus and develop my theoretical position to incorporate the work of Rancière (1991a, 1999) and Bingham and Biesta (2010). In doing so I develop an antagonistic and post structural critique of community that introduces concepts of politics and political subjectification that offer important new ways of framing concepts of digital literacy, student engagement (SE) and learning community in Higher Education.

2.1 Digital literacy: ascendant policy discourse

Digital literacy has received attention from policy makers as Belshaw's (2012) review of digital literacy policy-making demonstrates. Belshaw (2012) takes an international perspective, reviewing policies in Australia, the European Union, Norway, the UK, US and Singapore. In his analysis of the Norwegian experience where the government implemented a four-year programme entitled 'Digital Literacy for All', Belshaw (2012:28) notes that the '…focus on digital literacy, therefore, as with the wider EU focus, was upon inclusivity and employability.' He goes on to cite Almås and Krumsvik (2007) who claim that despite their government's best intentions, ideology and rhetoric are the main drivers behind the digital literacy programme and that teachers'

practices are for the most part unaffected. In contrast, an OECD report for the EU (2008) made the following observations regarding the use of ICT in Higher Education:

> By 2005, individual modules, and in some cases whole programmes were being offered online, with a slow shift to more collaborative, problem-based and project-based learning methods. This has changed the role of both students (e-learning makes them more autonomous) and teachers.
>
> (European Commission, 2008:8)

The report suggests that collaborative and problem-based learning methods were slowly being brought in by online programmes with the implication seemingly that collaboration and problem-based learning had not been used before. The claim is made that online teaching changes the role of students and teachers but no evidence is presented to support this claim. The report cites an OECD (2005) study of secondary school usage of ICT where the claim that students become more autonomous as a result of ICT is framed in terms of students' ability to '…control and monitor their own learning' (OECD, 2005:9). However, the OECD study does not examine the new role for teachers. The key point I argue here is that in policy and practitioner discourse the definition and value of digital literacy is framed by a transformational rhetoric juxtaposed with assumptions of teacher intransigence. At the same time there is a significant body of literature that is critical of such discourse, its motives and evidence. I agree with Almås and Krumsvik (2007) that the field is prone to rhetorical and ideological claims. One aspect in particular interests me from Belshaw's work that relates to his observation of the top-down and Government-driven nature of the digital literacy policy field:

> …new literacies seems to be less about pedagogy and educational outcomes and more about individual nations' internal social cohesion and external competition… definitions need to be 'good in the way of belief' for communities residing within specific contexts, it is striking to what extent the definitions are top-down impositions by governments in consultation with big business.
>
> This drive for economic competition and positioning in a new world order - or, more often 'Knowledge Society' - explains the involvement of big business in the framing of policy…Companies certainly seem to be falling over themselves to be 'corporately responsible' in the arena of new literacies and 21st Century Skills. It would appear that (understandably) they are more interested in market share than pedagogy and development.

(Belshaw, 2012:43-44)

The ideological assumptions of efficiency and economic advantage, driven by business and governmental interest, can be seen at work in the UK Higher Education context. For example Lea and Jones (2011) suggest that the Jisc[1] requires researchers to '…report quickly with practical recommendations. These priorities make it more difficult for projects to adopt the contested or exploratory approach which is essential for exploring the learning issues in their entirety' (Lea and Jones, 2011:379). Moreover, the most recent set of projects funded by the Jisc, *Developing Digital Literacies* (Jisc, 2012) the lead researcher Sarah Payton opens a briefing paper with the following sentences. 'As we move further into the 21st century, the worlds of work, citizenship, culture and learning are increasingly digital. We need to be digitally literate to be able to access opportunities to live, work and learn.' (Jisc, 2012:1). Payton opens her briefing with a set of assertions. In using 'we' she implies community between writer and reader that suppresses difference. Moreover her characterisation of digital literacy as a government matter with universities having a responsibility to both employers and increasingly competitive global markets is in line with Belshaw (2012). In the second sentence the propositional assumption is made that different areas of life e.g. work are becoming increasingly digital. The value assumption is made 'We need to be digitally literate' so opportunities can be grasped, not just in certain areas such as work or education but as 'opportunities to live'. This claim for digital literacy, that it enables individuals to live or to gain access to a good life, is present in many policy documents with a much wider scope than Higher Education. This is clearly demonstrated by the European Commission's policy initiative, *i2010: A European Information Society for growth and employment* (2005). The achievements of *i2010* were reported in 2009:

> i2010 also aimed to demonstrate how ICT can improve the quality of life of citizens. This has been the main target of the eInclusion policy since 2005. 2008 saw the launch of the 'eInclusion: Be Part of It!' initiative, which culminated

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[1] Jisc (The Joint information Systems Committee) is a charitable company that champions the use of digital technologies in UK education and research. Its charitable objects may be accessed via this link http://www.jisc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/holdco_charity_articles_27_february_2014_current.pdf

with the eInclusion Vienna ministerial conference. Other examples include initiatives aiming to boost the rights of people with disabilities, elderly and socially disadvantaged persons. Given the close correlation between ICT skills and inclusion in society and the labour market, the Commission carried out a comprehensive review on digital literacy in Europe.

(COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 2009:8)

In the concluding sentence the value assumption is made that digital literacy is linked to inclusion in society and the labour market. This is similar to Payton's Jisc briefing (2012) on digital literacy and is demonstrative of how wider policy discourses in an international context can translate into much more localised practitioner focused discourse. This is important because it is clear that ideological positions about technology and digital literacy are being made based on assumptions of the nature of the globalised economy founded on competitive markets. As Fairclough (2001:2) argues, assumptions are ideologies which are intertwined with power because '…they are a means of legitimising existing social relations and differences of power, simply through the recurrence of ordinary, familiar ways of behaving which take these relations and power differences for granted.' So in an analysis of digital literacy in the Higher Education context, it is important to look for evidence of wider policy discourses' influence on the material practices of learning communities in Higher Education. *i2010* also identified future challenges:

> Europe needs to raise its game with growth strategies to boost economic recovery and stay world class in high-tech sectors; to spend research budgets more effectively so that bright ideas are marketed and generate new growth; to kick-start ICT-led productivity to offset GDP stagnation as the labour force starts to shrink when the baby boomers retire; to foster new, smarter, cleaner technologies that can help Europe achieve a factor four growth and to use networking tools to rebuild trust in Europe as an open and democratic society.

(COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 2009:9)

The CEC's ambition for technology-driven networking tools that will restore trust in Europe's open and democratic society is important as it relates directly to concepts of citizen engagement and social capital. And these ambitions are also seen in UK Higher Education.

In my CAS I discussed definitions of Digital Literacy in the UK Higher Education context and observed how the scope of the term went beyond basic information literacy. For instance Sharpe et al. (2010:2) assert digital literacy '…concerns the enormous range of practices involved in consuming and producing digital artefacts, individually and with others, online and offline.' More recently, Reedy and Goodfellow (2012) have published *The Digital and Information Literacy Framework* (DIL), in which they distinguish between digital and information Literacy:

> Digital literacy includes the ability to find and use information (otherwise known as information literacy) but goes beyond this to encompass communication, collaboration and teamwork, social awareness in the digital environment, understanding of e-safety and creation of new information. Both digital and information literacy are underpinned by critical thinking and evaluation.

> (Reedy and Goodfellow, 2012:3)

Recent reports by the UK-based Jisc (2009, 2011, 2012b) demonstrate how technology in teaching and learning has become increasingly prominent in Higher Education policy discourse as an agent of pedagogical change and transformation. In her preface to the first edition of Beetham and Sharp's (2007), *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age*, Diana Laurillard offers a more complex but nonetheless problematic view:

> …we tend to use technology to support traditional modes of teaching [for example] …recreating face-to-face tutorial discussions asynchronously online – all of them good…but nowhere near being transformational...How can a young person who has always hated study,…be persuaded to achieve their learning potential… they need constant personalized support and encouragement at the pace and level to keep them engaged…but in a non elitist education system this level of personalization cannot be offered for every student. The promise of new technology is that it can…

> (Laurillard, 2007:xv-xvi)

Laurillard advances the 'we're not there yet' point of view of the technology evangelist. Binaries abound, for example, transformational/traditional - traditional methods are positioned with a qualified negativity '…all of them good…but…'; it is as if education has never been transformational before! Policy discourses of widening participation and SE are also invoked through the example of a passionate young person and the implicit love/hate of study. The strong declarative phrases 'always

hated' and 'constant personalized support' are illustrative of the author's commitment – or rhetoric. There is also the fulfilment/waste binary; technology can transform teaching: even individuals who do not wish to be students can be dissuaded from wasting their learning potential. It is as if the young person has no agency or responsibility and must be saved by the teacher's technology-driven interventions. Moreover, the assumption of a non-elitist education system cannot, in 2014, be taken for granted.

Digital Literacy and CMC in Higher Education have been positioned as transformative, with social networking sites having the potential to engage students. In particular, Gee (2003) and Lewis et al. (2009) suggest that online communities of media fans demonstrate pedagogic practices in less hierarchical structures. However, opinion is divided on the impact of CMC technology in Higher Education. Ferreday et al. (2006) give examples on online peer support while Tait (2000:288) asserts that CMC offers 'enormous opportunities to rethink student support.' Yates (1997:289) critiques the democratic potential of CMC but does suggest there is the possibility of constructing gender identities that escape the more fixed forms of 'real' life. Recent studies focusing on students' use of Facebook have offered more nuanced analysis. Selwyn's (2009, 2013) studies of students' 'Wall Posts' on Facebook suggest that when students exchange information about teaching and assessment requirements, they promote themselves as academically disengaged. This is, however, helpful as students come to terms with the demands and expectations of university away from the gaze of their tutors. Moreover, far from being transformative pedagogically, Wodzicki et al. (2012) show that students mainly use Facebook for socialising while Häkkinen and Hämäläinen (2012) suggest that traditional forms of assessment are inadequate for measuring the self-regulative and collaborative forms of learning that CMC engenders. Indeed, Hrastinski and Aghaee (2013:451) report amongst students that a '... 'digital dissonance' can be noted, because few of them feel that they use such media to support their studies.'

In conclusion I suggest that policy discourse at government level is based on the assumption that the world is increasingly digital and that to be able to live (compete) in such a world requires citizens who are digitally literate. Moreover, CMC and social

networking tools can build trust, and an open, democratic society. In Higher Education research and practitioner discourses this rhetoric has been deployed in transformative pedagogical discourse that is contested by researchers in Higher Education. Furthermore, I suggest that the ideological drivers of the digital literacy policy-making can be critiqued, in particular by using theories of social capital, learning community and SE to which I turn in the next section.

2.2 The nexus of student engagement, social capital, digital literacy and learning community

Having examined the assumptions and ideology in digital literacy policy from a national and international perspective, I now focus on the important relationships between SE, social capital, digital literacy and learning communities in Higher Education. I argue that social capital is an important precursor to, and outcome of, both SE and digital literacy. Furthermore I suggest that SE and digital literacy have a major impact on the nature of learning communities in HE.

Social capital is a widely used concept that has been taken up both by structuralists such as Bourdieu (1986) and foundational, normative theorists such Putnam (1995). As my research for this thesis has progressed I have taken an increasingly anti-foundational approach to shape the analytical framework of this thesis. In relation to social capital I introduce an alternative conception of social capital, specifically Imagined Social Capital, as described by Quinn (2005), which is critical of theorists such as Putnam (1995) and suggests that social capital can be generated by engaged groups of digitally-literate students who create their own learning communities. Moreover, Imagined Social Capital problematizes and deconstructs normative discourses of SE and learning community.

Bryson and Hand (2007) suggest that SE occurs at different levels, namely: the classroom, module, course and the university and that engagement at each level may affect the others, rendering SE a diffuse concept. Similarly, Coates (2007:122) suggests SE is '…a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain nonacademic aspects of the student experience' and that:

…engagement is seen to comprise active and collaborative learning, participation in challenging academic activities, formative communication with academic staff, involvement in enriching educational experiences, and feeling legitimated and supported by university learning communities.

(Coates, 2007:122)

Coates' research used a survey instrument, the results from which were analysed using cluster analysis and then discriminant analysis. Using the results Coates (2007) developed the following typology represented in Figure 1 below:
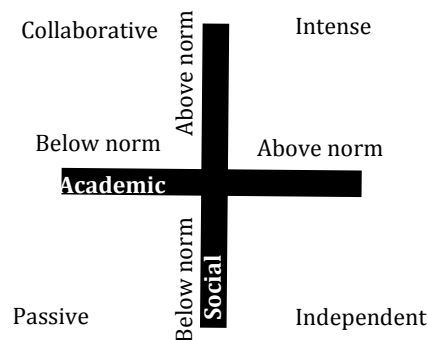
Figure 1 Typological model of student engagement styles

(Coates, 2007:133)

Coates (2007) foregrounds the importance of learning community and belonging in his model of engagement styles and suggests 'through its capacity to link online with more general forms of student engagement, the model generates an approach that can be used to design productive and high quality forms of campus-based online learning' (Coates, 2007:138). However, Kahu (2011) suggests Coates' (2007) behavioural approach is too narrow and suggests that SE should be viewed:

> …as a psycho-social process, influenced by institutional and personal factors, and embedded within a wider social context, [which] integrates the sociocultural perspective with the psychological and behavioral views …and includes not just those elements within an institution's control, thus ensuring a much richer and deeper understanding of the student experience.

(Kahu, 2011:768)

Importantly for this thesis Kahu (2011:769) suggests that the role of emotion in SE is under-researched in Higher Education and that there is a need for projects that focus

on narrower populations including single institutions. Furthermore, Krause (2005) has identified assessment as a driver of SE but that the relationship between SE and student assessment is under-researched. While my focus is on SE the issue of assessment, particularly in groups, is an important aspect of the case study on which this thesis reports.

Bryson (2014:20) is complimentary towards Kahu's (2011) work but argues that it underplays the central concept of transformation. He defines SE as:

> …about what a student brings to Higher Education in terms of goals, aspirations, values and beliefs and how these are shaped and mediated by their experience whilst a student. SE is constructed and reconstructed through the lenses of the perceptions and identities held by students and the meaning and sense a student makes of their experiences and interactions.
>
> Bryson (2014:17)

Bryson (2014) expands this definition by demonstrating that SE is a dualistic concept that encompasses both, 'engaging students' but also, 'students engaging'. Engaging students is about what institutions and staff in Higher Education can do by way of educationally purposeful activities to enable students to develop in transformative ways. 'Students engaging' has, according to Bryson (2014:19) '…elements of process, agency and outcome, as it is dynamic and volatile… located within the being of the individual.'

Social capital is seen as important for SE both prior to and during university. As Reay et al. (2005:135) observe 'First generation choosers without appropriate cultural or relevant social capital may easily find themselves in the wrong place or in the wrong course, with all the risks of drop out that that brings in to play.' Moreover, Bryson (2014:19) suggests that, in engaging students, staff in HE should create opportunities for students to develop their social and cultural capital.

It is important to note Grix's (2001:191) observation that 'Social capital is in danger of becoming a catch all phrase… impossible to pin down, but regarded as somehow desirable.' An example of the different approaches to social capital can be seen in the distinction between Putnam (1993, 2000) and Bourdieu (1986) summarised by Outhwaite (2007):

> Putnam's analyses of Italy and the US tend to treat social capital as a public good, and something which unproblematically conduces to social development, Bourdieu's focus is closer to Marx in looking at the way in which these forms of capital and the ways in which they are used by their bearers reinforce social inequalities and antagonisms between classes.

> (Outhwaite, 2007:4)

In my CAS I used Quinn's (2005) notion of Imagined Social Capital and her critique of Putnam (1993, 2000) and Woolcock's (2001) consensus-based approach to social capital. Quinn (2005) draws on Young (1990) to show how learning communities that both consume and produce social capital can deny difference and privilege the interests of certain groups over others.

Aspects of Putnam's approach still inform some of the analysis in this thesis, particularly its opening sections. For example in Chapter 4, I "measure" the presence of social capital through the membership of institutions such as student societies and participation in peer mentoring schemes. However, as this thesis has progressed I have developed a more agonistic approach to social capital that critiques the consensus-based social capital perspective found in Putnam (1993, 2000) and Woolcock (2001). Like Bourdieu (1986) I am sceptical of the emancipatory role of education and recognise how social capital can reproduce inequality in social structures.

Coleman's (1988) conception of social capital differs from that of Bourdieu (1986) in that he sees social capital not just as an asset of powerful elites but also as having potential to benefit those in marginalised communities. Moreover, unlike Putnam (1995) Coleman (1988) identifies the concept of closure in a community, the way in which relationships are structured between individuals to allow for a set of effective sanctions from which norms emerge that can monitor and guide behaviour in a community:

> The consequence of this closure is, as in the case of the wholesale diamond market or in other similar communities, a set of effective sanctions that can monitor and guide behavior.

> (Coleman, 1988:107)

The concept of closure is important to the analysis of the PME case study and is discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to Rancière's (1991, 1999) notions of police and the distribution of the sensible, concepts which I introduce next in sections 2.3 and 2.4. Norms and sanctions relate to trust and Wenger (2010) suggest that trust is a key factor in communities of practice and the learning partnerships therein. Trust relates to discipline and the belief that others will be able to make relevant contributions to the community. However, trust is another aspect of Putnam's (1995) work that has been criticised in that he sees trust as an aggregate indicator of social capital. Moreover, Tzanakis (2013) argues that Putnam (1995) fails to see that democracy can come from non-collaborative, suspicious, non-trusting and conflicting relationships.

Different forms of trust can also be distinguished, for example Offe and Fuchs (2002) argue that trust may be thought of in terms of:

> … thin or thick varieties, thin trust is just the absence of fear and suspicion concerning the likely behaviour of (relevant) others…The thick version is present not only if a person holds the optimistic belief that most people are good natured…but also if there is a reason to expect mutual intrinsic as well as instrumental benefits from cooperation with other people.

> (Offe and Fuchs, 2002:191)

Trust and reciprocity are fundamental to the nature of a learning community. They are affected by the social capital that individuals bring to the community while at the same time potentially being an outcome of the learning community. However, it is important not to valorise trust and reciprocity as Putnam does. Coleman (1988) gives the example of a qualified form of trust in diamond traders who exchange bags of uninsured diamonds because insuring them would minimise profits. The traders know that any breach of trust on their part will forfeit their share of a lucrative business. In this way it is clear that reciprocity is a key aspect of trust. Individuals that take but do not give or are perceived in such a way are likely to be denied access to the community's stock of social capital and ultimately to expulsion from the community itself.

Learning community and SE have developed into important aspects of teaching and learning discourse in UK higher education. Like social capital, learning community and

SE have been valorised as normative ideals within Higher Education policy discourse and are closely interrelated with, and linked to, issues of student retention and persistence. A good example of this is the work done by Tinto (1997) whose paper, 'Classrooms as Communities' argues for a focus on teaching practices in the classroom as a site of SE through collaborative learning and pedagogy. However, Quinn (2005) suggests that Tinto's (1997) ideal of learning community is deployed by managers with negative consequences:

> It has been one of the tasks of the university new managerialism to create a spurious and unproblematised sense of shared community, … refusing to acknowledge difference and dissidence, in favour of purity and compliance, it simply serves to inhibit change.

> (Quinn, 2005:9)

Quinn argues that learning communities can be a source of social capital but not in the way that managerial discourses would have it. Quinn (2005) draws on Young's (1990) deconstructive critique of the concept of community which suggests that the ideal of community is 'an understandable dream…but politically problematic… because those motivated by it will tend to suppress differences between themselves, or implicitly to exclude from their political groups persons with whom they do not identify' (Young, 1990:300). Rather than accept Young's rejection of community, Quinn (2005:5) suggests the concept of 'imagined social capital' as an alternative, radical perspective on belonging to a learning community. One which accepts Young's vision of a place that can unoppressively hold 'the being together of strangers' (Young, 1990:318) so that difference between individuals may exist in a community.

Quinn (2005) gives an example of imagined social capital, describing how a group of female students designated themselves 'the ladies who lunch' as a way of expressing their difference through the positive rendering of a negative epithet. This was more than learning, it was re-imagining of the self: 'Women were gathering strength to engage with both learning and life' (Quinn, 2005:10). This was not a denial of difference or a retreat from the real world but a process of enabling, Quinn suggests:

> Debates about social capital have emphasised the tangible benefits of joining with others in groups and networks, building and sharing resources …The notion of learning communities feeds into such a discourse: values and

activities are shared and so are the rewards. However, Young alerts us to the idealised, essentially unrealistic nature of this vision of community and to its elements of coercion. In relation to my research studies, the communities the women experienced in the university were not bounded by the 'facts': they even ran counter to them. Belonging was constructed in the face of exclusion. The rewards they gained from these imagined communities were difficult to measure objectively and yet they seemed very powerful.

(Quinn, 2005:14)

More recently Wintrup's (2014) case study of students on a health and social care foundation degree noted a similar practice to Quinn (2005):

…students…made it [the foundation degree] their own, finding ways around problems…The accounts of persisting, problem solving and balancing competing demands will surely be music to the ears of future employers. They [the students] generated their own form of social capital, developing intense bonds and effective networks – with each other in preference to staff – and normally communicated through friendship and study groups using social media outside formal university time, systems of virtual platforms.

(Wintrup, 2014:74)

This observation is of fundamental relevance to this thesis. Both Quinn (2005) and Wintrup (2014) have identified an important aspect of social capital that links to two key concepts - politics (Rancière, 1999) and resistance (Foucault, 1994b), which are developed in the next section.

The concept of Imagined Social Capital is also useful in critiquing notions of student engagement and their 'unquestioned' value (Trowler & Trowler, 2010:9). Taylor (2012:4) unpicks three strands from the 'discursive multiplicity' of SE: engagement as a discourse of improvement in teaching and learning, as a discourse of audit and as a discourse of critical transformation. Perhaps the most challenging (and problematic) of these strands is critical transformation which moves from a student-centred pedagogy of individual interests and experiences to '…rethinking these experiences and interests increasingly in communal and social terms for the creation of a more just and democratic community and not just the advancement of the individual' (Zyngier, 2008:1772). Similarly Kahn (2014:4) suggests '…we need to widen the frame of our discussion beyond the agency of the individual learner, to include the way that groups of learners and tutors pool their agency together.' He suggests the term 'co-reflexive'

to describe the process by which groups of students and tutors think about their togetherness and the reality engendered.

Kahn's (2014) and Coates' (2007) positions highlight the tension inherent in the concept of SE. This can be seen in relation to Taylor's (2012) suggestion of three discourses of SE, namely improvement of teaching and learning, audit and critical transformation. The discourse of improvement of teaching and learning which Taylor (2012:4) suggests relates to the promotion of '…active learning, peer learning…students' autonomy in learning as a way of measuring 'good teaching' and… as a means to think about students' personal agency and/or socio-cultural aspects of learning.' Taylor argues that the discourse of teaching and learning both contrasts and complements the discourse of audit. Audit discourse is evident in the evaluation of SE through the measurement of 'time and effort' students give to their studies along with an institution's ability to link curricula and resources to student participation and learning. Examples of this can be seen in the US and Canadian National Survey of Student Engagement. The discourse of audit is also found in the UK's National Student Survey that focuses on gathering data on the quality of students' experience with a view to increasing public accountability and informing students on their choice of course. Finally, the discourse of critical transformation focuses on what Taylor (2012:5) drawing on Zyngier (2008) describes as focussing on '…the social and cultural aspects of education, on the lived experiences of students, and on the complexity of students' identities, [to] accord it a democratic potential to reconstitute pedagogic relations, established hierarchies, and institutional structures.'

Kahn's (2014) 'co-reflexive' theorisation is suggestive of SE as a discourse of critical transformation, of which Quinn's (2005) understanding of how students might construct Imagined Social Capital could be an example. By contrast Coates' (2007) emphasis on students belonging to a learning community and suggestion that technology might contribute to the increase of SE and better quality learning combines the discourse of audit with the discourse of improvement in teaching and learning.

In light of these different (and at times contradictory) discourses of SE I agree with Taylor's (2012) caution in relation to the critical transformative discourse. The

problematic nature of critical transformation through institutional initiatives is developed by Danvers and Gagnon's (2014) discussion of students as activists. I am particularly interested in their discussion of identity, voice and speech:

> Students believe that their identity as consumer (or as a producer, evaluator, partner or critical citizen) provides them with a recognised, valued, and powerful voice. Yet forms of engagement are filtered through discourses of who gets to speak in and about higher education.
>
> (Danvers and Gagnon, 2014: 16)

Danvers and Gagnon (2014) refer to a range of student engagement initiatives which are being undertaken in UK universities; examples include Exeter University's '*Students as Change Agents'* (University of Exeter, no date), and The University of Lincoln's '*Student as Producer'* (University of Lincoln, no date) in which students work with academics on research projects, the outputs of which are used to make changes to institutions at a micro and macro level. However, there are significant differences between the Exeter and Lincoln University projects which are based on fundamental ideological differences. Neary's (n.d.) project on '*Student as Producer'* at Lincoln University dismisses Exeter University's idea of students as change agents because it is '…based on the fantasy that only organisations that become ever more entrepreneurial and innovative can survive the new economic realities.' Rather, Neary draws on the work of Walter Benjamin who argued that 'He [the student] should be an active producer, philosopher, and teacher all in one,…' (Benjamin, 1996:42). I agree with Neary's suggestion that Benjamin's conception of the student alters his/her position from the object to the subject of teaching and learning, from consumer to producer. Benjamin (1996) also called for universities to be communities of learners rather than factories of future workers.

Neary's (n.d.) project of '*Student as Producer'* could be an example of what Quinn (2010) calls Imagined Social Capital. The project may have potential to lead to critical transformation in HE learning communities and challenge conventional SE discourse by resisting the ideology and agency of market-driven and regulatory discourses. At the same time it is important to recognise both Danvers and Gagnon's (2014) suggestion of how SE is filtered in discourse and Ellsworth's (1989) powerful challenge

to and problematisation of the assumptions of critical pedagogy. She argues that these have:

> …failed to launch any meaningful analysis of or program for reformulating the institutionalized power imbalances between themselves and their students…Strategies such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact.
>
> (Ellsworth, 1989:306)

In this thesis I look for alternative, resistant practices, particularly practices in virtual space. However, it is important to note Rancière's (2014) concern for '…the pupil him- or herself, who had become the representative par excellence of democratic humanity – the immature being, the young consumer drunk with equality, and whose charter is the Rights of Man.' Like Rancière I do not envisage or advocate online communities in higher education whose practices deny the authority of the teacher and her/his knowledge.

In summary, in this section I have examined and problematized normative, consensual approaches to SE, learning community (Tinto,1997) and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Woolcock, 2001) drawing in particular on Quinn's (2005) notion of Imagined Social Capital. In the next section I use the work of Rancière (1991; 1999) and Bingham and Biesta (2010) whose work around speech and politics and democracy provides the central conceptual framework and analytical tools to examine the concept of social capital and community. Furthermore, I use this framework to unpick the issues of reproduction of inequality that Bourdieu (1986) and Ellsworth (1989) identify. Moreover, who gets to speak, what is sayable and how speech is recognised is also important to Rancière, to whose work I now turn in trying to develop a radical critique of the concepts of learning community, student engagement and social capital.

2.3 The politics of community – the distribution of the sensible

In this section I suggest that community, specifically learning community, is a political concept, a site of both domination and resistance. Bingham and Biesta's (2010)

discussion of Rancière's (1995) conception of political subjectification, identity and community is particularly helpful here. Rancière writes that political subjectification is, 'the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience' (Rancière, 1999:35). This is not about taking up some existing identity - subjectification, '...inscribes a subject name as being different from any identified part of the community' (Ranciére, 1995:36). Biesta (2006) suggests subjectification is the entry into the existing order of things, of a way of being not previously present. This, argue Bingham and Biesta (2010), means subjectification is a supplement – it adds and divides the existing order simultaneously. Here, I find Bingham and Biesta have identified an aspect of Rancière's work that is important to the conceptual framework upon which this thesis rests. In *Disagreement*, Rancière writes:

> Political subjectification redefines the field of experience that gave to each their identity with their lot. It decomposes and recomposes the relationships between the ways of doing, of being, and of saying that define the perceptible organization of the community, the relationships between the places where one doing one thing and those where one does something else, the capacities associated with this particular doing and those required for another… A political subject is not a group that "becomes aware" of itself, finds its voice, imposes its weight on society. It is an operator that connects and disconnects different areas, regions, identities, functions and capacities existing in the configuration of a given experience – that is the nexus of distribution of the police order and whatever equality is already inscribed there, however fragile and fleeting such inscriptions may be.

> (Rancière, 1999:40)

Political subjectification is an important tool of analysis in this thesis because it characterises the possibility and nature of change within a community, not a totalising, teleological progress but something no less important.

Alongside political subjectification, two concepts Rancière alludes to in the text cited above, *la politique* and the nature of *la police,* are also important foundations to the idea of political subjectification. Rancière (1999:29) defines *la police* as '...an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying and sees those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an

order of the visible and sayable.' It is important to note that *la police* is not necessarily a bad thing. According to Biesta (2010:48), it '…is all-inclusive in that everyone has a particular place, role, or position in it; there is an identity for everyone.'

La politique, however, is something very different: it is '…an extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing…Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only a place for noise' (Rancière, 1999:29-30).

For Rancière (2010), education is part of *Le partage du sensible* which is normally translated as the division of the sensible. This is 'an overall relation between ways of being, ways of doing and ways of saying' (Bingham and Biesta, 2010:8). However, *partage* may be translated as either division or distribution. While distribution suggests that everything has its place, division through political subjectification may interrupt a particular arrangement of relationships or practices. In an interview Rancière said:

> …I think in terms of internal division and transgression…In *La nuit des prolétaires*, I was interested in the way workers appropriated a time of writing and thought that they "could not" have.
>
> (Kavanagh *et al.*, 2000: 92)

While Rancière points to differences between himself and Foucault, I suggest that his ideas of division and transgression are in harmony with Foucault's ideas of resistance. In an interview Foucault was asked:

> You write…that where there is power there is resistance; and that resistance is never in a position of externality *vis a vis* power. If this is so, then how do we come to any other conclusion than that we are always trapped inside that relationship – that we can't somehow break out of it?
>
> M.F. …I don't think the word trapped is the correct one…we always have possibilities, there are always possibilities or changing the situation…we are always free - well, anyway, that there are always possibilities of changing.
>
> (Foucault, 1994b:167)

Foucault (1994d:316) suggests a philosophical approach of 'limit-attitude' which focuses both on historical inquiry and also 'puts itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take.' He rejects projects that are global in their ambition to create alternative societies, preferring specific - sometimes partial - transformations as for example, in attitudes to authority and sexuality.

I suggest that there is much to be gained both from the insights of Foucault and Rancière. Rancière chronicles the workers who transgressed and appropriated a 'time of writing'. Foucault speaks of the possibility of change through resistance to power. Neither thinker attempts to adopt a discourse of radical or total transformation. Foucault looks to explore the limits we may go beyond while Rancière thinks in terms of politics – moments when new voices are recognised, however fleetingly. I wish to look for, and if found, chronicle examples of students' transgression and resistance through the appropriation of a time and place of writing in virtual spaces. I argue that this appropriation can occur in the university as a form of politics where students are engaged in a Democratic Learning Community that is at the limit. As Foucault suggests '...work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings' (Foucault, 1994d:316). Rancière writes that politics:

> …exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction between two worlds in a single world: the world where they are and the world where they are not, the world where there is something 'between' them as speaking beings.

> (Rancière, 1999:27)

I suggest that Quinn's (2010) conception of Imagined Social Capital which is generated by individuals creating new, alternative and sometimes dissenting learning communities can be seen as what Rancière (1999) terms politics – a disruption to the established order where those whose voice is not recognised come together to be counted as speaking beings. Moreover, Rancière's (1999) theories of the appropriation of a time of writing and politics can be seen in Wintrup's (2014) case study of

foundation degree students who excluded their teachers and, importantly for this thesis, used social media outside the university VLE to form friendship and study groups.

2.4 Different perspectives on student engagement – Rancière's Ignorant Schoolmaster and theorisation of emancipation and democracy

In this section I use Rancière's (1991a) story of the Ignorant School Master who didn't teach his students as a 'master explicator' but called them to learn through their own engagement with materials such as books, to then examine Bryson's (2014) notion of 'engaging students/students engaging' in Higher Education. I also draw on Rancière's notion of democracy to examine discourses of SE that call for participatory and democratic relationships between students and staff. In doing so I also introduce Rancière's post-structural and deconstructive ideas of emancipation and equality.

In The *Ignorant School Master* (Rancière, 1991) the author describes how the exiled French schoolteacher, Joseph Jacotot, went to Belgium to teach. Speaking no Flemish, he gave a bilingual copy of the book *Telemaque* to the students he had been asked to teach. They spoke no French and Jacotot told them (through a translator) to read half of the book with the aid of the translation, constantly repeat what they'd learned, read the other half quickly and to write in French what they thought of it. Jacotot was said to be astonished at the way the students were able to express themselves very well in French. From this Jacotot concluded that a teacher can oblige another to learn by exercise him/herself. However, this practice of learning was not reliant on the teacher having knowledge and transmitting or explicating it. Rancière takes this story and suggests:

> The practice of explanation is something completely different from a practical means of reaching some end. It is an end in itself, the infinite verification of a fundamental axiom: the axiom of inequality…Such is the particular inequality that normal pedagogical logic orchestrates.
>
> (Bingham and Biesta, 2010:4)

Rancière (2010) suggests that education is part of the unequal order of modern society - *la partage du sensible* (distribution of the sensible). This is in line with Bourdieu & Passeron's (1979, 1990) arguments that the education system reproduces inequality. However, Rancière criticises Bourdieu's assumption of inequality at the start of his analysis. As Pelletier (2009) suggests Rancière sees Bourdieu's analysis as an explanation of inequality. In other words, in Bourdieu's discourse, Rancière hears '…the voice of the pedagogue, who speaks on the basis of a supposed inequality, founded on the epistemic difference between sociologically located statements and their sociological theorisation' (Pelletier, 2009a:145). For Bourdieu, Pelletier (2009a) argues, teaches those who are trapped by the logic of bodily practice - the poor are disadvantaged academically because of their habitus which excludes them from scholarly discourse. Rancière's argument is that the poor fail academically because their discourse is not heard as scholarly. The result is similar to Bourdieu's but his position also engenders '…the logic of inequality that is reproduced by the very act of its own reduction' (Bingham and Biesta, 2010:10). Furthermore, teaching, explication and lifelong learning are for Rancière (1991a:7) 'enforced stultification'. Pedagogy starts from a position of inequality between student and teacher (master). The teacher will then work to reduce the inequality through explication. However, such work involves a relationship of dependency between student and teacher and a state of inequality between the student and the teacher.

Closely linked to Rancière's (1999) ideas of police, politics and the distribution of the sensible is his theorisation of democracy as a disruptive act as opposed to a stable set of institutions. In SE discourse, democracy is also taken up by writers such as Zyngier (2008) and Henderson (2015). The differences between Ranciere's idea of democracy and the way it is used in discourses of SE can be seen in Bryson's (2014) suggestion that the future of SE lies in what he terms partnership and the need to:

> …promote a democratic approach, [although] there is a tension between participative and representative democracy. For student engagement, we would hope that there is a strong element of participation by *all* students…this model is much more democratic and accountable compared to the managerialist hierarchies that staff are currently subservient too.
>
> (Bryson, 2014:239)

It is in conceptions of what constitutes democracy that I propose Rancière's alternative view of democracy and equality as important in discussions of SE. Rancière argues:

> First of all, equality is not a goal to be attained. The progressivists who proclaim equality as the end result of a process of reducing inequalities, of educating the masses, etc., reproduce the logic of the teacher who assures his power by being in charge of the gap he claims to bridge between ignorance and knowledge. Equality must be seen as a point of departure, and not as a destination. We must assume that all intelligences are equal, and work under this assumption. But also, Jacotot raised a radical provocation to democratic politics. For him, equality could only be intellectual equality among individuals. It could never have a social consistency. Any attempt to realize it socially led to its loss.
>
> (Kavanagh *et al.*, 2000:3)

There are several key points to draw out here. The first is that Rancière suggests that equality is not the end result of a process or intervention. Equality is a starting point. I suggest that Bryson et al. (2014) assume that SE is a way of working towards democracy and partnership which is antithetical to Rancière's position. As Pelletier (2012) suggests pedagogy is currently understood as a way to a better ordered community but this is what Jacotot's universal teaching in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* rejects. Allied to this is the impossibility of attempts to realise equality socially. Bingham and Biesta (2010), drawing heavily on Rancière (1991a), write about Jacotot's method of universal teaching:

> There are 'a hundred ways to instruct, and learning also takes place at the stulitifiers' school' (ibid) – but emancipation is not about learning. Emancipation is about using one's intelligence under the assumption of the equality of intelligence...'no party or government, no army, school or institution will ever emancipate a single person' (ibid.) because every institution is always a 'dramatisation' or 'embodiment' of inequality (ibid., p.105). Universal teaching – the teaching that makes emancipation possible because it starts from the assumption of equality – can therefore only be directed towards individuals, never to societies (ibid).
>
> (Bingham and Biesta, 2010:43)

Bryson suggests that SE entails engaging students in '...educationally purposeful activities,' (Bryson, 2014:19). However, reading Bryson through a Rancièrian lens suggests SE can be the 'dramatisation' of inequality and such activities are a part of *la police*. They are *la partage du sensible*. This is a challenging position as it suggests that

initiatives driven by institutions such as Peer Mentoring, Student Staff Committees and Peer Assisted Study Schemes and student societies serve to reproduce inequality. However, Furlonger et al.'s (2014) descriptions of SE initiatives show how Rancière's ideas can be deployed to analyse SE. One of the authors (Furlonger et al., 2014) (Beth Parker) reasoned that becoming a student mentor would help her CV stand out. Beth goes on to describe how she took a decision to move from meeting students in groups to having one-to-one meetings with each group member and that this enabled one of her mentees to confide in her and share some problems she was facing. This enabled Beth to advise her on the best course of action to address the problems the individual faced. Reflecting on this experience Beth wrote:

> For me, this is why student-led schemes are so valuable; the opportunity to take risks and use initiative is hardly ever present in academic work to the same degree. It is also vital in challenging the notion that students are passive recipients of their university education, which is really all I had expected when I started my course. Being seen as a partner to staff within these schemes has given me enough confidence in my own judgements to challenge staff in other schools who don't have this attitude.

> (Furlonger et al., 2014:83)

I suggest that while the Peer Mentoring scheme set up by the university is *la police,* this is not necessarily negative. In one way it does not challenge inequality or lead to emancipation. The institution has given the students roles to play as mentors. However, in the ways Beth takes up the discourses of mentoring there is an element of politics in 'students engaging', to use Bryson's (2014:19) term. Moreover, the outcome for Beth opens the path for resistance and transgression - it has the potential for political subjectification. This is what Rancière (1991:59) describes as a student's orbit around the truth, which is threatened by teaching and explication. Bingham and Biesta (2010:24) take up this argument to suggest 'A policy or practice can only set the orbit of learning for a student, while intellectual emancipation happens when a student sets out an orbit that is wholly his or her own.'

2.5 Summary

In this chapter I have addressed the issue question, *What are the ideological assumptions that underpin the policy discourses of digital literacy, engagement and learning community in Higher Education?* I have shown that beyond Higher Education digital literacy discourse is driven by governmental policy that privileges social cohesion, economic efficiency and competition. Within Higher Education digital literacy is positioned as an agent of pedagogical transformation. However, this is contested.

My examination of learning community and SE has critiqued the relationship between these concepts and social capital. In particular, I have addressed the important differences between normative and consensual social capital theorists such as Putnam (1995) and antagonistic theories of Bourdieu (1986) where social capital is seen as reproductive of inequality and inhibiting change. The antagonistic theoretical position regarding social capital is central to this thesis. Also important is Quinn's notion of Imagined Social Capital for its theorisation of social capital in relation to learning community and SE, that nurtures difference rather than ensuring compliance. I have also critiqued narrow, behaviourist theories of student engagement using Kahu's (2011) work which also highlights the importance of emotion in relation to SE and the need for in depth qualitative research that focuses on narrower populations, including single institutions. Finally, as my thesis has progressed, I have increasingly used the work of Rancière (1991, 1999) and Bingham and Biesta (2010) to offer a radical critique of learning community and SE. In doing so I have suggested that digital literacy can be generative of new, democratic practices in a Rancièrian sense, of SE within learning communities in higher education.

Chapter 3 Methodology & Research Design

In this chapter I map out and justify the development of my methodological position, considering how post-structuralism has influenced my thesis and has led to changes in my approach to CDA and ethnography and the reading of central concepts of social capital and learning community.

In the second section I present a detailed overview of the case study that adopts a mixed-method research approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The ethical issues I encountered are also discussed.

3.1 Evolving position

At the conclusion of Phase 2 of my Professional Doctorate in Education I located my thesis within a post-positivistic paradigm of naturalistic inquiry following Lincoln and Guba (1985). From such perspectives only context-driven, time-bound working hypotheses or ideographic statements are possible and this is in keeping with naturalistic assertions of socially-constructed reality inherent in a case study approach.

Delamont (2005) identifies an important fault line in the field of sociology relating to whether research should address political issues. I was attracted to Fairclough's (2003) overtly political approach set out in his Manifesto for Critical Discourse Analysis. He writes that CDA is part of a wider project – that of critical social research which asks questions like:

> How do existing societies provide people with the possibilities and resources for rich and fulfilling lives, how on the other hand do they deny people these possibilities and resources? What is it about existing societies that produces poverty, deprivation, misery and insecurity in people's lives? What possibilities are there for social change which would reduce these problems…?

> (Fairclough, 2003:202)

I focussed on Fairclough's (2010) approach because he offers a clear process or set of steps for CDA, namely:

Stage 1: Focus upon a social wrong, in its semiotic aspect.
Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong.
Stage 3: Consider whether the social order 'needs' the social wrong.
Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles.

(Fairclough, 2010:226)

In these four stages the project of critical social research is operationalized and it appealed to me not just because of the process but because of the commitment to social change and the addressing of issues of inequality.

However, CDA is criticised by Hammersley (1997) in several ways, for example 'Critical' is seen as a euphemism for Marxism which he argues has been undermined by post-structural and post-modern perspectives. Moreover, there is both a lack of philosophical foundation and over-ambition in that CDA claims not only to offer an understanding of discursive processes, '…but also of society as a whole, of what is wrong with it, and of how it can and should be changed' (Hammersley, 1997:245). This leads to a crude, totalising binary of oppressors and oppressed and a relationship of domination between them.

My interest in CDA focussed particularly on Fairclough's (2001, 2003) work which drew on Foucault (1994d). However, over time, I have moved in my methodological approach to a post-structural position departing from Fairclough (2004) and his adoption of a Critical Realist framework. I recognise Pennycook's (1994) challenge as to whether CDA's claim that the real world hidden by ideology can, through the four stage process set out above, be exposed and the truth told/uncovered. As Foucault (1994c:119) observes 'The notion of ideology appears to be difficult to make use of…it always stands in virtual opposition to something else that is supposed to count as truth.' Similarly Derrida (1990) would question an approach that claimed to sit outside the text.

While I have travelled from CDA to a post-structural approach, I continue to draw on some of the methods of CDA which I set out in Chapter 5 (p.93) This is not an attempt to reconcile or integrate discourses but to recognise MacLure's suggestion that:

… analysis is inexorably trapped on one side or other of the binary, with no

possibility of traffic or translation between the two traditions [of linguistics and post structuralism]. Indeed such 'traffic' takes place anyway, with ideas and assumptions from one paradigm cropping up in another, often enough 'behind the backs' of those who would defend the boundaries between them.

(MacLure, 2003:190)

The influence of post structuralism on my thesis was evident in my research proposal:

The main issue to emerge since the submission of my CAS has been in the area of deconstruction. I have found the work of Stronach and Maclure (1997) and Lather (1986, 1993, 2003) fascinating and I am keen to deploy deconstructive approaches to research within my thesis although at this stage I am still thinking about how best such approaches may work within the constraints of the thesis for a professional doctorate.

Post-structuralism has had significant implications for my understanding and application of key concepts, in particular social capital and learning community. Quinn's (2005) work in particular is a strong rejection and critique of Putnam (2000) and Woolcock's (2001) foundational, normative and consensus-based approaches to social capital which have more in common with Bourdieu's (1986) agonistic theorisation. Putnam's survey-based approach to measuring social capital fitted with my commitment to doing a survey as part of my research design. However, I have increasingly left this behind as I moved towards an anti-foundational, post-structural approach. In section 3.4.5 below I examine the motivation for including a survey and later in Chapter 4, Section 4.2, I offer a deconstructive reading of the survey results.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and post structural ethnography

There are a great variety of approaches, questions asked and methods used by researchers who would claim an ethnographic methodology as the basis for their research. My ethnography is informed by Denzin (1997:xii) who claims to '...read ethnography through Derrida...who argues... that a theory of the social is a theory of writing. A theory of writing is also a theory of interpretive (ethnographic) work.' I also agree with Skeggs' (2001) definition of ethnography as:

…an idea of how we should do research. It usually combines certain features in specific ways: fieldwork that will be conducted over a *prolonged period of time*;

utilizing different research techniques; conducted *within the settings* of the participants, with an understanding of how the context informs the action; *involving the researcher in participation and observation*; involving an account of relationships between the research and the researched and focussing on how experience and practice are part of wider processes.

(Skeggs, 2001:427)

Locating my thesis in the field and discipline of education research and applying Skeggs' definition of ethnography, in particular the italics she uses for emphasis, I have engaged in fieldwork over a reasonably lengthy period of time using a variety of methods. Staff, students and external professionals corresponded using the virtual forums throughout the teaching period from February to May 2012. In some cases virtual interactions continued beyond May to encompass discussions of grades published in June. I distributed a questionnaire to students taking the module PME in April 2012. Interviews were conducted with students, staff and an events professional after the module had finished between July and September 2012. Moreover, the research was conducted in the university where I was (and am) a participant, an observer and an insider.

I have found the work of Lather and Smithies (1997) and Lather (2007) has influenced me a great deal because of the post-structural and deconstructive methodological approaches they adopt. Lather draws heavily on Derrida and I follow her lead:

> Here, the necessary tension between the desire to know and the limits of representation lets us question the authority of the investigating subject without paralysis, transforming conditions of impossibility into a possibility where a failed account occasions new kinds of positionings. Such a move is about economies of responsibility within a non-innocent space, a "within/against" location.

(Lather, 2007:38)

I attempt to address the 'non-innocent' (guilty) space in this work by the juxtaposition of different approaches to data collection and presentation.

The implication of a Derridian reading of ethnography is that a text does not provide an gateway through which the reader may enter into the 'real'. There is no reality that has not already been interpreted through language. Derrida (1998:158) wrote 'There is no outside text'. To experience something one must interpret it through language as

Burman and MacLure (2005:284) suggest '...there is no vantage point external to text, or discourse, that would give us an unmediated access to truth, ethics, being etc. The world is always 'mediated', always already textualized'.

This is not some kind of linguistic idealism as Derrida makes clear:

> What I call "text" implies all the structures called "real," "economic," "historical," socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that, "there is nothing outside the text." That does not mean that all referents are suspended, denied, or enclosed in a book, as people have claimed...But it does mean that every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this "real" except in an interpretive experience.

> (Derrida, 1990: 148)

I have noted earlier that Derrida's ontological position can be seen as sitting uneasily with CDA, which I use in the first instance to analyse the texts which form the case study around which this thesis is written. Thus CDA is the first reading of the text which enacts the author/researcher's double intention, namely to present the subject accurately and also to represent their interests – so that the subject's voice is heard (Stronach and MacLure, 1997).

I then offer a second deconstructive reading which recognises what (Stronach and MacLure, 1997:35) identify as the importance of 'struggle...in the sense of a one sided attempt by the researcher to 'subdue' the raw material of the interview data and bring it under the regime of a tidy, coherent textual structure...' Stronach and MacLure (1997) offer multiple readings of their research data (in this case interviews) which have significantly influenced my approach along with MacLure's (2003) assertion that there are no pure qualitative texts.

The implication for my work is a self-aware ethnography which recognises its impurity. As MacLure (2003:87) observes 'The contrary pull of subjective and objective authority influences the style and genre of ethnographic texts, ensuring that these are never 'pure' texts with their own unique conventions that would distinguish them from other kinds of writing.' In my writing and the texts produced in the course of the research I undertook, it is my intention to look for traces of other genres.

Fairclough (2003) suggests discourse figures in three ways in social practice: as genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing) and styles (ways of being). He asserts that genres, discourses and styles are in a dialectical relationship. Fairclough also suggests that texts are not just written but work as interviews, conversations and multimodal media (mixing of images and text), for example television and the internet (Fairclough, 2010:233). Derrida seems to concur with this approach when he suggests:

> … "writing" for all that gives rise to inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of voice: cinematography, choreography …pictorial, musical, sculptural "writing."
>
> (Derrida, 1998:9)

At the same time Fairclough (2010) suggests significant objections to post-structuralism in the notion of semiosis – meaning-making – where texts both structure social reality and are structured by it. Fairclough (2010:207) argues that while semiosis is part of social practice, no social practice is reducible to semiosis alone. Semiosis is not the play of differences among networks of signs where meaning-making has no external reference. Moreover, he rejects '…the Foucauldian inspired conflation of discourse and material practices as one more instance of 'discourse imperialism…' (Fairclough, 2010:207). In moving to a more Critical Realist ontology, Fairclough's CDA has moved away from the post-structuralism of writers like Foucault and Derrida. As Fairclough et al. (2004) observe:

> The objection to post structuralist accounts of emergence is that they idealise semiosis – they ignore reference and truth conditions and attribute properties to semiosis as such in a way that ignores the dialectical interpenetration of semiotic and non-semiotic facets of social events. The 'play' of difference is materially, socially and psychologically constrained.
>
> (Fairclough et al., 2004:35)

However, Derrida would not idealise semiosis either. He writes:

> For of course there is a "right track" ["une bonne voie"]…Since the deconstructionist (which is to say, isn't it, the skeptic-relativist-nihilist!) is supposed not to believe in truth, stability, or the unity of meaning, in intention or "meaning-to-say," how can he demand of us that we read *him* with pertinence, precision, rigor?...The answer is simple enough: this definition of the deconstructionist is false (that's right: false not true) and feeble; it supposes a bad (that's right bad, not good) and feeble reading of numerous

texts, first of all mine, which therefore must finally be read or reread. Then perhaps it will be understood that the value of truth (and all those values associated with it) is never contested or destroyed in my writings.

(Derrida, 1990:146)

The tensions between critical realism and post-structural[2] approaches have been examined closely (Norris, 2004; Wight, 2004). Joseph (2004) argues that there is much of value for Critical Realists in Derrida's work;

> However, it is worth arguing that, despite the trouble he causes us, Derrida is someone who we [Critical Realists] can live with. We can immediately give three good reasons why his friendship is valuable: a) Derrida's radical ideas on reading, textual practice and grammatology; b) that he points to the need for firmer critique of many of the assumptions and certainties of the Marxist tradition; c) the importance of his account of spectrality and ideology.

(Joseph, 2004:259)

Here parallels are drawn between Derrida's textual practice and a dialectical, realist approach to writing as a complex system of relations. Derrida's approach to Marx is also in line with critical realism although Joseph points out the importance of employing '…deconstruction in a realist manner, upholding a critical ontology and resisting the temptation to descend into intertextuality for the sake of itself' (2004:259). Derrida's reading of Marx is also important in relation to ideology and is very much in keeping with Fairclough (2003:9) who suggests that textual analysis needs to be framed with respect to the way ideological representations are found in texts. Ideological representations can contribute to social relations of power and domination.

Derrida (1990:137) makes clear '…the text is not the book, it is not confined in a volume itself confined to the library. It does not suspend reference – to history, to the world, to reality, to being, and especially not to the other…' While Critical Realists take much from Derrida as noted above, one main point of departure between Derrida and

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[2] Both Derrida (1999:229) and Foucault (1998:447) rejected the terms post-structural and post-modern as adequate descriptions for their work. Despite this the terms have attached themselves to both men.

Critical Realism is in their ontological positioning. Critical Realists reject Derrida's 'fuzzy' alternatives to ontology - hauntology and the messianic, because:

> To give some practical content to the concepts of freedom, equality, justice, democracy and friendship would mean that they cease to be messianic becoming instead tied down to the practical issues of the here and now.

> (Joseph, 2004:255)

I don't accept that a deconstructive approach cannot address practical issues that require recommendations, guidelines and policies. I suggest such things should be approached using what Derrida (1994) calls 'messianic' - a promise here and now of what is to come. I suggest that when a recommendation is made or a policy drafted it should resist '…the rage for clarity and closure emanating from policy and pedagogy.' (Maclure, 2003:170) and be open to the possibility for new practice.

Throughout my study my position has been informed by engagement with researchers and thinkers who draw on Marxist ideas that emphasise language's power to influence the social. This is important because it introduces ideology and assumptions as objects of enquiry to be examined in order to aid a critical understanding of how language influences social forms, social change and the relationships between them. I draw on Marxist influences in the spirit of Derrida (1994a:110) who wrote 'To continue to take inspiration from a certain spirit of Marxism would be to keep faith with what has always made of Marxism in principle and first of all a *radical* critique, namely a procedure ready to undertake its self critique.' In the next section I deploy these theoretical positions to examine and challenge the separation of the researcher from the researched and how claims to authority and validity of research are made.

3.3 Voice, text, reliability and validity

I wrote in my research diary (2/3/12):

> Still am getting quite animated by post-structural methodology. In particular Lather's transgressive validity her article Fertile Obsession, is very helpful and her references to phd students in particular Woodbrooks' thesis is very helpful in terms of research design and deconstruction in particular.

The rendering of voices is central to considerations of validity and authenticity, both of which - to use Rancière's (2000) term - are *la police* – ways of doing, being and saying. In order for my research to be recognised, my voice to be heard, I must present my research as valid and authentic. However, Lather (2007, 119) observes 'In the discourses of the social sciences, validity has always been the problem not the solution.'

The relationship between voice and text is linked by writers such as Lather (1993, 2007) and MacLure (2010, 2011) to notions of reliability and validity. Following Derrida's tactic I place the term "voice" under erasure where the word is written and then crossed through leaving both the word and the deletion because the word "voice" is inaccurate but necessary. As Spivak (1998) notes in her introduction to *Of Grammatology*:

> In examining familiar things we come to such unfamiliar conclusions that our very language is twisted and bent even as it guides us. Writing under erasure is the mark of this contortion.

> (Spivak, 1988:xiv)

At the root of this thesis lies a commitment to the ~~voices~~ of students, staff and others I have worked with. I am troubled by the term 'voice' as an Enlightenment category - of hearing what I want to hear – in stories of progress, transformation and liberation. Such stories have been challenged by writers such as Ellsworth (1989). In response I examine the implications of this move, tracing categories and concepts of text, reliability and validity that have been disturbed by the 'crisis of representation'. This is a crisis that has seen the loss of a clear distinction between language and reality and recognises the breakdown of the Enlightenment project, the partiality of truth and, as a consequence, the need for new forms of research.

Lather (2007:136) argues 'In contemporary regimes of disciplinary truth telling, the concept of voice is at the heart of claims to the "real" in ethnography.' The 'real' is bound up with and rests upon one sustaining a case for the reliability and validity of a piece of research and such a move invokes positivist or interpretivist notions of these words. I take an anti-foundational position that rejects trustworthiness and moves

beyond authenticity to a position of critical post-structuralism that stresses subjectivity and the affective as criteria for establishing the legitimacy of a text.

Moving from a post-positivist notion of legitimacy in research to that of critical post-structuralism implies a rejection of attempts to claim external authority for a text. As Lather (1986) suggests, values and politics, not objective epistemology, govern science.

A second implication of critical post-structuralism relates to the verisimilitude of a text, its ability to draw the reader in to the world of the participants and the believability of that world (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005). Claims to verisimilitude may be made at different levels: for example, Stake's (1995) naturalistic generalisation is one such claim but it may always be contested. Denzin (1997:12) sums this up well: 'Ethnographers can only produce messy texts that have some degree of verisimilitude; that is, texts that allow readers to imaginatively feel their way into the experiences that are being described by the author.'

The consequences of this move are several. I have taken up both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Within the former I draw on a multi-disciplinary approach that combines CDA with anti- and auto-ethnography. In doing so I am mindful of Gannon's injunction that 'Poststructural autoethnography would emphasize discontinuities, search for disjunctures and jarring moments' (Gannon, 2006:480). Similarly Lather (2007:10) suggests 'To situate inquiry as a ruin/rune is to foreground the limits and necessary misfirings of a project, problematizing the researcher as...the one who knows.' Using different formats and speaking with separate voices can contribute to an understanding of the limits of self-knowledge. At the same time MacLure makes a forceful point about such linguistic experimentation:

> Multiple voices will not make language stutter … At worst … multiple voices keep the fiction of democracy and equity in play, but they displace the material reality of the researched in favor of multiple interpretations and undermine the prospect of political action by disseminating uncertainty. So to make language stutter, we need somehow to interrupt its usual workings.

> (MacLure, 2011:1000)

Language can be made to 'stutter' by the refusal to elide its materiality, the sighs, hesitations, accents and other physical aspects of the interactions between researcher and researched. I suggest that stuttering can be read in close relationship to Rancière's notion of politics:

> At the heart of this new idea of emancipation is the notion of equality of intelligences as the common prerequisite of both intelligibility and community, as a presupposition which everyone must strive to validate on their own account. The democratic experience is thus one of a particular aesthetic of politics. The democratic man is a being who speaks, which is also to say a poetic being, a being capable of embracing a distance between words and things which is not deception, not trickery, but humanity; a being capable of embracing the unreality of representation.

> (Rancière, 1995:51)

There is, as Pelletier (2009b) observes, a significant difference in the tone of writing between Lather and Rancière. Lather's (2007) tone is of self doubt where as:

> There is no trace of a stammer in Rancière's prose. He certainly depicts a partial truth, but partial in the sense of partisan, not castrated.

> (Pelletier, 2009b:277)

The tone I adopt in writing this thesis attempts to recognise the partiality of accounts and the problem of speaking for and representing others, while at the same time holding the possibility of what is to come.

In both MacLure (2011) and Rancière (1995), ideas of democracy and equity/equality are evident, where language is made to stutter, and where politics takes place - that is to say that something new occurs, a change in a relationship or practice. Democracy in this sense should not be understood as a method of organisation as this would be a form of police order. As Biesta (2010:49) suggests 'Democracy thus establishes new political identities, identities that were not part of and did not exist in the current order — and in precisely this sense it is a process of subjectification.' In her most recent work, MacLure (2013) develops the challenge of materiality to language's mediation of the world and therefore of representation. Drawing on Deleuze's (1990) notion of sense, MacLure (2013) identifies how the material confounds the orthodoxy of qualitative enquiry, pointing to moments in her own research projects – one child's

silence, another's vomiting which defied attempts to be codified/represented. In earlier work MacLure (2010) described data as 'glowing' in terms of affect. Now she suggests a reading that invokes sense as:

> …a kind of surfing of the intensity of the event that has caught us up, in order to arrive somewhere else…sense is about resistance and perplexity: it transpires at points at which the data resist analysis, refuse to render up meaning, and confound 'good sense' or 'common sense' , which as noted is always associated by Deleuze with the banal violence of ordinary, representational language.
>
> (MacLure, 2013: 662)

So resistance is not just about interactions between those who inhabit the case study but about instances where the data resists representation.

In this discussion I have demonstrated how voice is important to discussions of validity and reliability in relation to how research is legitimated in post-structural ethnography. For this thesis the claim to legitimacy is made on notions of democracy, politics, verisimilitude, mixed-methods and an acceptance that 'work within ruins' can offer the possibility of new practices. In the next section I set out how this developed in the research design.

3.4 Research design

In designing the research on which this thesis is based I selected methods that would enable me to build a case study grounded in the texts produced by students, staff and others involved. The importance of bounding a case study has been emphasised by Stake (1995) and this might be achieved by stipulating time and place (Cresswell, 1998) time and activity (Stake, 1995) and definition and context (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Taking these approaches to bounding the case I limited my case study to the related people, processes, and events occurring within a defined place and period of time. Namely, the teaching staff and students who were registered for the module Planning and Management of Events (PME) in the Spring Semester of 2012 at London Metropolitan University. Also included within the bounds of the research case study are the representatives of two organisations, Barnardo's and Upper Street Events, who

were involved in providing the 'problems' or 'case studies' on which the students' coursework was based. The reasons for setting boundaries in this way relate to convenience and access, I was the module leader for PME. Moreover as stated by Kahu (2011), there is a need for small scale, in depth studies of SE which is an important aspect of this thesis.

Data collection took several forms. The texts that students produced throughout the module provided a substantial source of data. Towards the end of the module I distributed a self-completion survey for students to complete. Once the module was over I interviewed students, members of staff and a professional working for an events company who was involved with the module, to get them to tell stories or narratives of their experiences during the module.

The analysis of the data collected has continued over a period of about two years. The texts from the virtual spaces and interviews have been analysed using both CDA and deconstructive approaches. Over time my approach has developed from the language of building a case study on the foundations of texts to a weaving together of texts from different sources (virtual and face-to-face interviews) that render the voices of students, staff and others across the virtual and physical, offering insights into digital literacy, student engagement, the learning community and social capital. With this novel form of narrative I have also included data from the self-completion survey and usage data that can be generated by the VLE software itself.

3.4.1 Research sample

My sampling strategy is informed by the research question I have set and an ethnographic approach to sampling that is flexible and adaptive. As Goldbart and Hustler (2005:18) suggest 'It is important to recognise that you *are* always sampling, to document how you are are sampling and as the ethnography develops to plan your sampling more explicitly.' So there is no fixed boundary at which one can say the sample is complete. The task is more to give a comprehensive, in-depth description of the material to be analysed and its origins.

The sampling approach adopted attempts to develop a description of the social aspects and formations of the institution in which the research is situated. In line with CDA (Fairclough, 2010:51) I follow a sampling procedure that sketches out how different genres, discourses and styles are configured within the social practices of students, teachers and others working on the module and in the wider university. At the same time I look for relationships among the norms of speech of the community that might signify the ideologically discursive formations present. This process is written as an ethnographic account that identifies interactions where there is tension between ideologies or subjects. This focus on tension is explored further in the next section which develops the notion of tension through the introduction of the concept of resistance.

3.4.2 Author as research instrument

As the author of this thesis, as the researcher, I am the primary research instrument. I selected the topic, defined the research focus and now struggle with it as I attempt, through writing, to bring together the different data sources and produce something new. I am the unique factor in this project, looking in a way that nobody else can, giving form, through writing, to data I have collected - or perhaps more accurately created - with both students and colleagues. In this way I am a participant observer, although not in the sense that that I sought to become a member of the observed group without their knowledge. This would anyway have been impossible as my position as a teacher meant that there would always be a distance between myself and the students. Robson (2011:317) suggests the researcher position is that of, 'participant as observer'. I made it clear that I was observing from the start and, as Module Leader for PME, set up the teaching via the VLE in such a way as to facilitate online interactions. One difficulty of this approach is that those being observed might behave differently knowing that they are being observed. However as things transpired, I was allowed access to material that the students had not expected me to observe, so in fact their practice was not affected in this way.

I am aware that in identifying myself as author and researcher I am positioning myself as a powerful agent. However, I am at once creating and created. I am subject to the discourses in which I exist.

I made research notes and recorded memos throughout the course of writing this thesis. I have made notes in several formats, keeping a blog[3] where I wrote about my thesis and the ideas I was working with at the time. I also used Evernote[4] and a physical notebook to record aspects of my work. My notes and memos do incorporate some of the functions that Burgess (1981) suggests an ethnographer's research diary should achieve, in particular to record substantive, methodological, analytic accounts. Substantive accounts are detailed and chronological records of who was observed and interviewed. Methodological accounts engage with how the research was conducted and involve reporting on such matters as the conditions of observations and the researcher's role. Analytic accounts record how a study developed over the course of time and consider such matters as how research questions have been modified. Reflecting on the notes I might wish that I had been more systematic but, even if somewhat messy, my record provides rich data that contributes a great deal to the thesis. In particular, the memos I wrote immediately after the interviews, and also on how the research progressed, have provided material that has challenged me to write in a reflexive way that is I hope a practice of self-writing.

3.4.3 Textual analysis of online forums

The pilot study I conducted in 2011 demonstrated that discussion forums could provide a rich seam of data. However, this approach induced a sense of urgency because the module was taught over three months in the spring semester. As soon as students had completed the final assignment they would move on to other assignments before leaving for the summer holidays. During the early days of teaching the module I announced the availability of the forums and showed students how to use them.

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[3] See http://counterpractice.blogspot.co.uk/
[4] See https://evernote.com/

I read all the threads created by staff and students. Guided by my research questions I looked for particular themes, for example relating to digital literacy or learning communities and social capital, and focussed on particular sections of the text that seemed to relate to these themes. This process took a great deal of time. As I progressed I started to focus less on how the subjects in the text spoke to particular themes that I had identified in the literature review and focussed more on aspects of the text that for me demonstrated resistance or tension.

My approach to textual analysis draws on aspects Fairclough's (2003) approach. I have already in Chapter 2 (see, for example, p.24) used his approach to clauses, types of exchange, speech function and grammatical mood to examine policy and practitioner documents. Rather than explain in this chapter the specific elements of CDA I use, I have included more detailed notes in the introduction to Chapter 5. I also use Wodak's (2011) topic map approach which gives a diagrammatic representation of the topics covered over the period of the online forum. Comparison of the topic maps is instructive as to the richness and complexity of the online conversations as well as their duration.

3.4.4 Interviews

Six interviews were conducted: three with students who had provided their details via the survey, two with tutors on the module and one with a representative from Upper Street Events (for details of interviewee selection and profiles please see 3.4.4). I initially adopted a narrative approach to interviewing following Wengraf's (2001) Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) which seeks to follow a gestalt principle of free behaviour,

> In interviewing terms, this means, for those who wish to allow the gestalt of the interviewee to become observable, adopting an interview strategy that minimizes…the interviewer's concerns…to allow the fullest possible expression of the concerns, the systems of value and significance, the life-world of the interviewee.

(Wengraf, 2001:69)

BNIM interviews are normally based around three sub-sessions and normally have at least two interviews. In the first sub-session the interviewer asks a carefully thought-out question which is designed to encourage a full narrative. The question is termed a Single Question Inducing Narrative (SQUIN) The interviewer makes clear to the interviewee that there will be no prompts or interruptions by the interviewer during the first session. While the interviewees speak, the interviewer notes down topics. When the interviewees clearly indicate that they have no more to say, there is a break of 15 minutes or more during which time the interviewer formulates questions based on the notes taken during the interview. Following the break the interviewer asks for more stories about the topics noted in the order they were introduced by the interviewee during the first sub-session. On concluding the second sub-session the interviewer should sit alone and uninterrupted to write in a free associative flow everything s/he can recall about the interview. Wengraf (2001:143) advises to write '…in free associative flow, *not trying to order*, *organise , or censor anything*. For the 30-60 minute period, *just write*.' The third sub-session happens after the interviewer has completed an initial analysis of the text. During this sub-session questions may not ask for narrative at all but will be formulated around the interviewer's concerns.

My approach parts company with Wengraf (2001) after the self-debrief at the end of sub-session two as I did not ask for a third interview. There were several reasons for this. I was sensitive to the amount of time students and staff were giving me, in most cases at least 90 minutes. To request another interview seemed a lot to ask. What is more I did not feel confident that I would be able to recruit 4-5 people to take part in the three hour panel sessions that Wengraf's (2001) approach requires. Finally, work-related issues in the form of two restructures of the Faculty intervened and meant that it took me over six months, using NVIVO, to transcribe and start to analyse the data. In Chapter 5 I set out the transcription conventions I used.

I would also point out that I parted company with the BNIM method because of the importance of ideology in my thesis and discourse analysis and in particular CDA engagement with ideology. The BNIM approach provided texts that were ideal for discourse analysis.

3.4.5 Survey

The inclusion in this thesis of a self-completion survey of students who took the module can be seen as methodologically incongruous. I recognise this as an embodiment of my desire for presence, for the solidity of figures that represent the students in the format of tables and enable correlation of their responses. I recognise that my motivation to use a survey tool was, as Zeisel (1984) observes, to capture:

> The apparent exactness and rigorousness of statistical analysis [of survey data] is a useful device to win arguments with people who do not understand the value of qualitative knowing in scientific research. This is an important characteristic of the method…in applied design – in any competitive decision making situation
>
> (Zeisel, 1984:160-1)

At the same time the survey fulfilled two functions: it provided important data that was helpful in giving descriptive depth to the case study; moreover, conducting the survey was also important for me as a researcher with a qualitative background. I wanted to work with surveys and widen my understanding of statistical approaches.

The survey (see Appendix A) was piloted prior to distribution amongst interested friends and family who made helpful comments. I circulated the survey in hard copy to the tutors along with a power point slide that gave details of the survey (see Appendix B). I had considered an online survey but previous use of online surveys had resulted in very low response rates. The tutors then distributed the survey to the students.

Students were also given the option to provide their I.D. number if they wanted a copy of the results and to find out more about the study. Fifty seven students provided their ID number and I circulated the results to them with the following questions:

> - are you surprised by the results?
> - do you have any particular insight/explanation to give on any of the findings?
> - now that the module is finished and you have got your grades and feedback would you change any of the responses you made or make any other points?

The results of this attempt at hybrid research, collecting and disseminating information (Stronach and MacLure, 1997), were rather disappointing. I did receive one email in

response to these questions (see Chapter 5, p.71). However, of those who provided their I.D. six students said that they would be happy to give an interview and I conducted interviews with three of them. In selecting the students I picked students who had not been in my seminar groups. I was also mindful of age and nationality.

3.5 Weaving the texts

In Chapter 5 I present my analysis of the texts taken from the University VLE, Facebook and the interviews. I attempt to show how the power/knowledge relationship affects the researcher's position and I agree with Davies and Gannon (2005) who argue:

> The practice of writing poststructuralist texts is not simple reporting, since the writing itself is understood as a constitutive act, as is the collection and analysis of data. The text may not follow predicated patterns of report writing but may set out to deconstruct or disrupt the report writing itself.
>
> (Davies and Gannon, 2005:38)

In Chapter 5 I hope to disrupt my own writing by presenting combinations of extracts from VLE forums, the interviews and the closed Facebook group as an interwoven text. I then interpret these hybrid texts first by using a reading based on CDA and then a post-structural, deconstructive reading. This approach draws in particular on Lather and Smithies' (1997) approach in their book *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS* who attempt to create:

> …a format that folds both backward and forward, a book that moves toward a weaving of method…Challenging any easy reading via shifting styles…
>
> (Lather and Smithies, 1997:xvi)

In a similar way I also try to follow Stronach and MacLure's (1997) approach in their book *Educational Research Undone: The Postmodern Embrace* where, as mentioned earlier, they set out multiple readings of the interviews and other texts.

The interwoven texts are presented in a column on the left side of the page. A second column on the right gives a commentary based on elements of CDA. At the same time I incorporate Rancière's critique.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Like considerations of validity and reliability the ethical framework within which a community of researchers operates is a form of 'police' that is both a necessary restraint and a guarantee. Certain research approaches are seen as unethical and unacceptable. Those making the decisions regarding the ethics of research hold particularly powerful positions. The issues of informed consent and my position as an insider researcher present ethical challenges for this research.

Informed consent in relation to virtual spaces had been raised as an issue during my pilot study and presents some unique challenges. Unlike the interviews I conducted, I could not present the students with an (approved) information sheet about my research and then an (approved) consent form with all the appropriate points regarding publication, confidentiality and withdrawal complete with tick boxes and a line for signature and date. The assumption that because someone had posted text in a public forum meant that it could be used for research purposes was deemed unethical because the author of the post did not realise at the time of writing that it might be used for research purposes. Clearly where individuals are posting in private forums or in closed Facebook groups the issue of informed consent is much more sensitive. Moreover, as Markham and Buchanan (2012) observe, the public/private binary and data(text) person are areas of tension. To address such tensions Sharf (1999) suggests three rules should guide researchers when conducting internet research: the researcher should introduce him/herself and the nature of the research from the outset, should make concerted efforts to contact those who have posted material they wish to use as data and, finally, should seek ways to ensure feedback from those that are being studied. I followed these recommendations and ensured that all real names were substituted for pseudonyms so that confidentiality and anonymity was preserved.

In my pilot study I had emailed students after they had posted in the forums asking whether they would be happy for me to include their posts in my CAS. For my thesis I talked about my work in the first lectures I gave. I placed a message on the sign-up

sheet students read prior to joining a forum to see who else was a member. The message gave a brief description of my research and included a statement asking students if they were not happy to be part of the research they should contact me directly by email or else it would be assumed that by joining the forum they were consenting to take part. In one case where students allowed me access to a closed Facebook group, I posted a consent form in the Facebook group itself and the students posted their consent back as 'comments' on my original post.

These measures that I set out in my Ethics Application forms to both London Metropolitan University and the University of Sussex enabled me to proceed with data collection. At the same time, for me as an insider researcher issues relating to ethics were evident. As a teacher at the university power relationships became evident, especially during the interviews with both colleagues and students. Colleagues' responses often emphasised that there were no problems with the teaching on the module and that everything had gone well, while students who were asked to tell the story of what happened to them during the module took the opportunity to give feedback and evaluate aspects of the module. It has been argued by Morse (1998: 61) that 'The dual roles of investigator and employee are incompatible, and they may place the researcher in an untenable position.' This tension between roles in insider research is discussed by Brannick and Coghlan (2007) who identify four areas: access, preunderstanding, role duality and organisational politics. These areas can be related to this study. As an employee I have what Brannick and Coghlan (2007:67) term 'primary access' to the organisation in question. However, I am aware that my secondary access to specific parts of the organisation and privileged knowledge is limited. The area of preunderstanding applies not only to conceptual understanding but also to the '…lived experience of the researcher's own organisation' Brannick and Coghlan (2007:68). In my experience this has been advantageous in that it has been straightforward to design teaching tools online to facilitate the collection of data.

The ease of access, combined with dual roles, did present a significant issue relating to data collection. In my role as a teacher/practitioner I created the spaces, the open discussion forums and private group forums, and encouraged (enforced) their use. For example, if a student emailed me a question that I felt would be useful to all I refused

to answer by reply, but insisted rather that the question be posted to the appropriate forum so that all students could benefit from the question and answer. I also suggested that the private forums would be useful for students because when used to record group activities, e.g. notes of meetings, the outputs of seminar work, etc, all would be able to access and benefit. More to the point, if someone in a group were not contributing, it would be made obvious from their absence or silence in the private forum. In this way I manufactured the landscape in which the research would be conducted.

Finally, in the area of participant collaboration, ensuring the participation of those who I interviewed proved particularly difficult. I noted in my research memo Lather's citation of Woodbrooks' (1991) thesis that used member-checking and peer-debriefing that enabled the telling '…of a deconstructive tale which draws on participant reactions…' (Lather, 1993: 679). I started out with hopes to involve the students and I did share the results of the survey with them and invited responses (I got one). But my hopes of sharing my analysis with the objects of my research now seem hopeless. Two years have passed and the students have long moved on. However, although I have fallen short I do take comfort in Levinson's (1998:356) observation that 'Lather's informants are far more homogeneous, if not in terms of race, gender, and class, then in terms of institutional positions and interests, than most educational ethnographers are likely to encounter in the field.' The practicalities of the project got in the way: time was limited, I had to stop collecting data, leave the field and write up the work.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter I have set out my methodological position, which through the use of an ethnographic case study, recognises and embraces the tensions between Critical Realism and post-structuralism. In doing so I have drawn on the work of ethnographers whose work in the radical Marxist tradition, inspired by Derrida, has proved invaluable in allowing me to access deconstructive approaches - particularly with regards to the authority of the researcher and in approaches to representation, validity and trustworthiness and the importance of material, physical aspects of data.

These methodological influences have led me to take a relatively conventional mixed-method approach and play with aspects of its structure; weaving parts of the interview and online conversations into scripts on which I offer two different interpretive commentaries.

Using data derived from virtual spaces presents unique ethical challenges particularly relating to the public/private binary. I have tried to be consistent in applying prior informed consent. This was not always possible and in the end unanticipated opportunities meant consent was in some cases sought retrospectively and my intention of ensuring that students were able to comment on my interpretation of their texts was not practically possible.

Chapter 4: The case of the module 'Planning and Management of Events'

In this chapter I introduce the research case study and then present a discussion and analysis of the survey findings before turning to an analysis of the usage of the online forums used by students. The usage of the forums, as recorded by the WebLearn system, will be presented and then related to the findings of the survey. The results of the survey give a different aspect on the case study and the topics raised by this thesis address the topic questions set out in the introduction, namely:

1. What are the levels of participation of students, tutors and external professionals in the VLE?
2. How do students and staff view the utility of the VLE?
3. What is the level of trust between students and staff?

In adopting a quantitative approach I am not shifting in my post-structural ontological position that sees no reality that has not already been interpreted through language. In Chapter 3 (3.4.5) I examined my motivations for including a survey, in particular my desire to learn more about statistical approaches. The survey and statistical analysis that follow do not provide some outside on which to stand and from which see the real. Rather, I see them as part of my journey to a post-structural position, moving from the structural, foundational effort to categorise and systemise language towards focussing on all that is left over after the systematic categorisations have been made (Lather, 1992). In sections 4.1 to 4.5 I present the case study and a conventional presentation of the survey results and analysis before in Section 4.6 I deconstruct the survey approach and the totalising effect of scales and categories such as ethnicity. In section 4.7 I examine the results of the survey in relation to social capital and then in Section 4.8 identify a turning point in the narrative of this research journey by relating a serendipitous moment, which occurred in the VLE, that illustrated a key finding of the survey.

4.1 Overview of Planning & Management of Events

In the Introduction I outlined how I had first started teaching PME in 2007 and how, having taught the module, I faced a lack of student engagement (SE) in terms of

attendance at lectures and seminars as well as significant student dissatisfaction as evidenced both in comments made by students during the semester and in the end of module feedback questionnaire. I used both SE and the student's feedback to develop a rationale to make proposals to change the module. The proposals were:

1. to amend the module aims and learning objectives (see Appendix A) reducing them in number and introducing collaborative learning and self-reflection.
2. to change assessment regime from two pieces of written coursework: a short individual report worth 30% in week 7 and then a longer report worth 70% in week 12 to: a group presentation worth 40% in Week 10 and an individual piece of coursework worth 60% in Week 12.

To engage the students throughout the module I split the presentation component so that groups of 4-6 students gave three short (10min) assessed presentations singly or in pairs during weeks 6-8. Then in weeks 9-10 the whole group made a longer (20min) presentation together also worth 20%. The written coursework, consisting of a reflective diary and a business report, was submitted in week 12.

The module asked the students to prepare a proposal for either a student charity fundraising event in the Student Union Bar (The Rocket) or prepare a proposal for a trade exhibition. The two event scenarios were supported by external organisations. In the case of the fundraising event, the children's charity Barnardo's provided a speaker who also had access to the VLE and could interact with students via the Open Group Forum (OGF). For the trade exhibition a company called Upper Street Events (USE) provided a speaker and interacted with students via an OGF. Site visits to the Rocket and an exhibition centre were also organized.

An additional (unassessed) aspect of the module involved a company called Seventeen Events who sponsored a competition whereby students could submit their proposal for their event. The best three were then given finance to put their events on in the Rocket with all monies raised going to Barnardo's.

4.2 Survey Results

The self-evaluation survey of the module PME was distributed in hard copy to students immediately before the assessed presentations in seminars on April 16 and April 23 2012. This maximised the response rate. The sample collected was self-selecting, 147 usable questionnaires were completed and returned - with return of the questionnaire considered as constituting informed consent. The total number of students taking the module was 189, a response rate of 77.7%. Therefore any conclusion or inference may be generalizable to the population of the case study i.e. PME, but not to a wider student population.

The survey is divided into five sections (see Appendix B). Section 1, '**About university**' comprised nine items of which five items were 5 point Lickert scales (1=strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree). The first six items sought to measure frequency/level of involvement with student societies, the student union and peer mentoring schemes which are seen as key to student engagement in studies such as Little et al. (2009). Moreover, participation and active involvement in student societies which can be seen as civic organisations are seen by some as an indicator of what is known as bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000). Participation in the Student Union implies voting which is another metric of social capital in wider society. Equally Jacklin and Le Riche (2009:744) have highlighted the importance of peer support, including family networks, to the fostering of supportive environments in Higher Education.

Items seven to nine asked students to give ratings on whom they perceived as responsible for providing learning support. These items follow Thorpe's (2002) work around authority and supportive learning. Section 2, '**Inside and outside University**' contains 11 items, all using 5 point Lickert scales. Items 1-5 examine the nature of bridging and bonding social capital by asking students with whom they socialise, the nature of their work and their views on the networks the university has introduced. Items 6-11 examine the nature of trust which is a key concept relating to notions of community and social capital (Putnam, 2000; Offe and Fuchs, 2002). Section 3, '**Using technology**' contained 5 items, also using a 5 point Lickert scale (1 = every week to 5

never), that assess students' use of WebLearn and other social media. Section 4 '**About this module'** contained 11 items, using a 5 point Lickert scale, drawn from the National Student Survey, that focus on student attitudes towards staff and satisfaction with marking and feedback, support, the module materials and WebLearn. Finally Section 5, **'About you'** contained 4 items that collected information on gender, age, parents' education and ethnicity.

The hardcopy survey data were inputted into SPSS 17. All variables were measured in ordinal and nominal scales. In addition some items were combined into composite scores. For example the items, 'Students can be trusted to take responsibility for their learning on this module' and, 'Students can be trusted to contribute positively in seminars and other group activities' were combined into a single variable 'Trust Students'. In all instances the data was found to deviate from a normal distribution so the non parametric Spearman's correlation test was used for ordinal data. Where categorical data and ordinal data were compared the Mann Whitney test was used, for example to look for associations between parents' education and levels of student trust.

The **'About You'** section of the questionnaire asked the students about their background which is shown in Table 1 below. Several observations can be made about the students taking the module. The first is that there are significantly more women (76%) than men taking the module. 51% of students are the first in their family to go to university. The 21-24 age group (63%) and 'British/Irish' ethnicity (36%) are the predominant groups although other age and ethnic groups have significant representation. The picture, as Table 1 below suggests is, with the exception of gender, of heterogeneity and diversity. The diversity of ethnic backgrounds is important for the textual analysis that comes later in Chapter 5 as, for many of the students, English is not their first language. In particular the category, 'Any other white background' should be read as students from the European Union and Former Soviet Union countries such as Germany, Italy, Poland and Bulgaria.

Table 1 Percentage frequency distributions by gender, age and ethnic background of students taking the module Planning & Management of Events

	Percentage of respondents (N=147)
Gender	
Male	24%
Female	76%
Age	
20 or under	20%
21-24	63%
25 or over	17%
Parents went to University	
Yes	49%
No	51%
Ethnic groupings	
British/Irish	37%
African/Caribbean	21%
Indian sub-continent	2%
Asian	4%
Other white background	25%
Other background	11%

The survey section titled **About University** looked for evidence of engagement with established institutions or vehicles of student life, such as societies and the Student Union.

Table 2 Frequency distributions for undergraduates' responses regarding involvement with student societies, student union and attitudes regarding responsibility for learning

About University	Percentage of undergraduate students N = 147	
	Yes	**No**
Are you a member of a student society?	7%	93%
Are you aware of the peer mentoring schemes offered by the university?	22%	78%
Would you consider being a peer mentor?*	25%	74%

*One student said they were a peer mentor.

The students' responses to these questions (Table 2) suggest a lack of engagement in what can be termed the traditional institutions of involvement and active participation. A very small proportion of students (7%) stated that they were members

of a student society and 88% of students said they were either rarely or never involved with the Student Union. Likewise, the majority of students (78%) said they were not aware of the peer mentoring schemes available at the university. These results suggest that bonding social capital as measured by Putnam (1995, 2000) is weak. However, a reasonably large minority (25%) said that they would consider being a peer mentor which suggests there is a potential for students to be more fully engaged and perhaps move from passive to intense or collaborative engagement styles (Coates, 2007).

Table 3 Frequency distributions for undergraduates' responses regarding responsibility for learning support

	Strongly disagree/ disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree/ agree	Mode	Median
Students should take responsibility for supporting other students learning	42%	23%	33%	2	3
Teachers are responsible for supporting student learning	21%	20%	56%	4	5
Teachers and students should support each other's learning	16%	24%	60%	4	5

Note: Students were asked to rank statements 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree

The students' attitudes to peer mentoring are indicative of their attitudes to the nature of supportive relationships between teachers and students (Table 3). The measures of central tendency, in particular the mode, show a contrast between the mode score of *4 (agree)* for *teachers being responsible for supporting students learning* *w*hereas the mode score for students should take responsibility for supporting other students learning is 2 (disagree). It seems clear from these scores that students position the teacher as being very important to their learning experience and in comparison to their teachers do not value their peers as a source of support to learning. However, students were more positive in their responses to the statement, *Teachers and students should support each other's learning* which is in line with a collaborative, learning community approach to learning.

In Table 4 below, frequency distributions are given for a range of items including students' perceptions of their social relationships, employment, levels of trust and support. There are several observations that can be made. Four items specifically focus on trust. There is a significant difference between students' trust in themselves and

their peers. 75% of students either agree or strongly agree that they can trust themselves to take responsibility for their learning, However, respondents had less confidence in their fellow students with 46% of students either agreeing or strongly agreeing that students can be trusted to take responsibility for their learning on this module and 38% agreeing or strongly agreeing that fellow students can be trusted to contribute positively in seminars and other group activities.

Table 4 Frequency distributions for undergraduates' responses regarding friends, employment, contribution to their course and levels of trust

	Percentage of undergraduate students N=147		
	strongly disagree/ disagree	Neutral	strongly agree/ agree
I generally socialise with non university friends	10%	22%	67%
The university has introduced me to people and organisations that could help me in the future	24%	35%	41%
I have a job that is relevant to my degree	45%	16%	38%
I have a job that is not relevant to my degree	50%	15%	35%
I know someone who could contribute positively to the degree I am studying (e.g. by coming to talk to students)	44%	20%	36%
I can trust myself to take responsibility for my learning on this module	10%	15%	75%
Students can be trusted to take responsibility for their learning on this module	18%	36%	46%
Students can be trusted to contribute positively in seminars and other group activities	27%	35%	38%
The lecturer has delivered relevant, accurate subject material for the module	16%	29%	55%
My seminar tutor has helped me work through the subject material for the module	22%	21%	56%
My seminar tutor can be trusted to mark my work fairly	12%	18%	70%

This would suggest that in Offe & Fuchs' (2002) terms both thin and thick levels of trust are low. Students not only have low confidence in the likely behaviour of others but do not feel optimistic about the prospect of cooperating with others. This may have

significant implications for social capital and the ability of the learning community to establish a set of effective sanctions that in Coleman's (1988:107) words, …'monitor and guide behaviour.'

One item that particularly struck me was the students' response to the statement, *'I generally socialise with non-university friends.'*

The response of 97 students (67%) who either agree or strongly agree with this statement, combined with earlier responses that showed low involvement with the Student Union and Societies has significant implications for SE, the strength of bonding social capital amongst individuals studying on this module and the kind of learning community in which both they and their tutors find themselves.

 One student, Jennifer, commented on this, saying:

> I guess I expected other people to be more involved. I thought I was in the minority or in a category of students who 'go in and out' – attend lectures, seminars and leave. Because that is what I do; I am not interested in getting anything else out off [sic] university.

The implications for a learning community of a majority of students who see university solely in terms of lectures and seminars would seem negative. Although entirely in line with Tinto's (1997) identification of the centrality of the classroom to the student, the quality of a student's experience can be enhanced through extra-curricular activity that leads to improved outcomes (Trowler, 2010). Moreover, the value of their degree in terms of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000) is lessened for students who will be less likely to identify with each other and see themselves as a group sharing common bonds and interests. Furthermore, unless they have significant family and other social networks they are not gaining access to the networks the university has to offer. This point is particularly important when one considers that 51% of those taking the module were the first in their family to go to university.

The survey also asked students about whether the university had introduced them to people who would be able to help them in their future careers and whether they knew anyone who might be able to contribute to the degree, for example by coming in and giving a talk to students. These questions relate to the consensual and positive concept

of bridging social capital - those 'weak' links (Granovetter, 1973) that reach beyond the community and allow an individual to get ahead (Briggs, 1998). 41% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that *The University has introduced me to people and organisations that could help me in the future.* While the majority were either negative or neutral, a significant proportion answered positively. Furthermore, 34% agreed or strongly agreed that they *knew someone who could contribute positively to the degree*, and 38% agreed or strongly agreed that they *had a job that was relevant to their degree.* This suggests that while the majority disagreed or strongly disagreed, a significant minority did believe they had something to offer in what Putnam (2000) terms bridging social capital. Shifting the focus beyond such consensus-based views of social capital I suggest there is potential for politics in Rancièrian (2003) terms. I examine this later in Section 5.3.2 *Coming to terms – receiving feedback* (pp.141-2)

Table 5 Frequency distributions for undergraduates' use of technology during the module Planning and Management of Events

	Percentage of undergraduate students N=147		
	never/ rarely	Neutral	Every /most weeks
I downloaded useful material from WebLearn	18%	21%	61%
I used a private forum in WebLearn for group work	39%	13%	48%
I posted questions in the open forums in WebLearn	59%	16%	25%
I read the discussions in the open forums on WebLearn	35%	21%	44%
I used another social media platform (e.g. Facebook) to help with group work	23%	11%	66%

Table 5 gives some particularly interesting insights into students' use of virtual spaces. The majority of students (61%) said they downloaded useful information from WebLearn. This pattern of VLE usage is in line with other studies which present institutional perspectives that see the VLE as used most for accessing course content, Browne et al.'s (2006:182). Similarly, more recent empirical studies of students and staff in Higher Education, for example Miranda et al. (2013) indicated that both teachers and students found their VLE useful for sending messages and checking results of assessment. At the same time the finding that 66% of students are using

other social media platforms is in line with Brown's (2010) findings that suggest VLEs are likely to be replaced by Web 2.0 technologies. Table 6 below presents students' perceptions on a range of factors that are taken from the National Student Survey.

These questions were included to fulfil the institutional requirement for student feedback on the module to be collected. The results from some of the items in this section were combined with earlier items to form composites, in particular, *I have received sufficient advice and support* was combined with *My seminar tutor has helped me work through the subject material for the module* to create the item *Advice and Support* which is used in the correlation analysis that follows. The details of composite items are given in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Frequency distributions for undergraduates' perceptions of staff attitudes, coursework criteria, marking/feedback, support and module materials

	Percentage of undergraduate students N=147			
	strongly disagree/ disagree	Neutral	strongly agree/ agree	Sector average
Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	11%	25%	64%	84%
Staff are good at explaining things	15%	26%	59%	87%
The subject is intellectually stimulating	25%	26%	49%	84%
The criteria to be used in the marking were clear in advance	19%	23%	58%	74%
Feedback on my work has been prompt	11%	17%	72%	65%
Feedback has helped me clarify things I did not understand	15%	18%	67%	63%
I have received sufficient advice and support	18%	29%	53%	77%
I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	13%	29%	58%	85%
The module materials were engaging	24%	34%	42%	N/A
WebLearn materials were easy to access	28%	17%	55%	N/A
WebLearn materials assisted my learning	18%	23%	59%	N/A

From the teaching staff perspective the results given in Table 6 are not encouraging, particularly when compared with NSS data from 2012 (*NSS online tool*, no date). However, the module outperforms the sector average on the two items relating to feedback, although it should be taken into account that the students completed the

survey before giving their final presentations and submitting coursework. Feedback was given for the short, mini presentations the students gave individually or in pairs. These presentations were summative in that they contributed a small percentage to the student's grade but were also intended to provide formative feedback on how students could improve their work for later assessments. Moreover because the rest of the seminar group attended the presentation they were able to benefit from others' contributions.

The relatively high scores for the promptness of feedback and its helpfulness are not reflected in the items relating to staff explaining things and students receiving advice and support. Some insight into these seemingly contradictory responses is presented in Chapter 4, Act 2, Scene 2 Receiving Feedback.

The forces acting on and within this group of teachers and students are complex and trouble the idea that a community of the classroom is present (or that it should be) (Tinto, 1997) and suggest that Quinn's (2005) problematisation of the term 'learning community' is appropriate. The correlation analysis in the next section also suggests a range of factors are in play that will affect the nature of groups of learners.

4.3 Spearman correlation analysis

A summary of the correlation analysis is presented in Table 7 below. The respondents' scores for self-evaluation of 'Trust in Tutor' were positively and statistically significantly correlated with 'Advice and Support' (r=0.548, p=0.01). This suggests that those students who express greater levels of trust in their tutors also feel they are receiving advice and support, with the latter explaining 30% of the former. Similarly, respondents' scores for 'Trust in Tutor' positively and statistically significantly correlated with 'Help from Tutor' (r=0.602, p=0.01). This suggests that students who express greater levels of trust in their tutors also feel they are getting help from the tutor during the module, with the latter explaining 36% of the former. Finally, Trust in Tutor positively and statistically significantly correlated with 'Read Open Forum' (r=0.266, p=0.01), with the latter explaining 7% of the former.

The scores for 'Advice and Support' were positively and significantly correlated with 'Help from Tutor' (r=0.6, p=0.01) suggesting that those who recorded higher levels of help and support on the module also ranked the help given by their tutor more highly, with the latter explaining 36% of the former. 'Advice and Support' also positively significantly correlated with students who 'Read open forum' (r=0.316, p=0.01) suggesting that students who recorded higher levels of advice and support were also reading the online forums more frequently, with the latter explaining 10% of the former. This correlation is similar to the composite of the four questions relating to WebLearn use 'Using WebLearn' which positively and statistically significantly correlated with 'Advice and Support' (r=0.319, p=0.01) suggesting that those who felt they received advice and support on the module also used the WebLearn site regularly, with the latter explaining 10% of the former.

The scores for 'The subject is intellectually stimulating' were positively and significantly correlated with 'Trust in Tutor' (r=.36, p=0.05) suggesting that those who felt interested in the subject also scored higher on their trust of their tutor, with the latter explaining 13% of the former.

In the same way students who found the subject intellectually stimulating significantly correlated with those who scored highly on 'Advice and Support' (r=.56, p=.005), suggesting those who found the subject interesting also scored higher on Advice and Support, with the latter explaining 32% of the former.

The table also shows significant correlations between students' scores for the module being intellectually stimulating and 'Help from Tutor', 'Read Open Forum', 'Trust of Students' and 'Using WebLearn'. The students' interest in the subject is clearly an important factor in their level of engagement and it should be noted that 31 different degree pathways had students taking this module. It may be that students taking a BA Events Management degree are more likely to engage with the module than students taking BA Tourism and Travel Management, although no evidence has been collected to support this supposition.

Table 7 Spearman correlation coefficients for students' self-evaluation of attitude towards trust between tutor and students, support on module and use of technology.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Trust in Tutor	1									
2	Advice and Support	0.55**	1								
3	Help from Tutor	0.6**	0.6**	1							
4	Read open forum	0.27**	0.32**	0.21**	1						
5	*Trust in students*	0.12	0.21*	0.18*	0.21*	1					
6	Age	-0.11	-0.11	0.01	-0.02	-0.17*	1				
7	*Using WebLearn*	0.3**	0.32**	0.21*	0.76**	0.17*	0.05	1			
8	*Job*	0.00	0.06	-0.06	0.25**	0.03	-0.12	0.18*	1		
9	Subject Stimulating	.36**	.56**	.44**	.36*	.28**	0.01	.29**	0.62	1	
10	Socialise Non Uni	0.31**	0.11	0.27**	0.12	0.07	0.01	0.12	0.08	0.91	1

**= p (two tailed) <.01

*p (two tailed) = <.05

Items in italics are composites of one or more items:
Trust in students = students can be trusted to take responsibility for their leaning on this module,
fellow students can be trusted to contribute positively in seminars and other group activities.
Using WebLearn = I downloaded useful material from WebLearn, I used a private forum in WebLearn for group work,
I posted questions on the open forums in WebLearn, I read the discussions in the open forums on WebLearn.
Job = I have a job that is relevant to my degree, I have a job that is not relevant to my degree

From this analysis the most significant correlations relate to the students' trust in their tutor with their perception of how much Advice and Support and Help from Tutor they receive. This is in line with the measures of central tendency set out in Table 2 above that suggested students place a higher value on their teacher than other students in terms of provision of learning support. Similarly the correlations between those who found the subject interesting and scored higher on Trust in Tutor, Advice and Support and 'Help from Tutor' are strong. Weaker correlations are found between Trust in Tutor and students' responses to Read Open Forum, and their scoring of Advice and Support and Use of WebLearn. Therefore it seems reasonable to suggest that the students' level of trust in their Tutor and interest in the module's content plays a more prominent role in the students' perception of support on the module than their use of technology. These results are in line with both Jacklin and LeRiche's (2009:742) and Kuh et al.'s (2008) focus on the centrality of tutors in developing and nurturing supportive environments and engaging relationships with students. Table 7 shows there were no significant correlations relating to students' age and employment.

4.4 Mann Whitney Test

One of the survey's goals had been to look at gender and class background and see if there were relationships between them and levels of trust. The Mann Whitney test was used to look for significant relationships, however none were found.

4.5 The virtual space 1 - Overview of Virtual Learning Environment usage

This section gives an overview of how the forums were used by teachers, students and practitioners. Data from the open forums are presented first, followed by the private forums. Two open forums were set up, one for the Barnardo's scenario and one for USE. Students were required to choose one of the scenarios and then prepare a range of course work; presentations, proposal and reflective diary. An open forum accessible to all students, staff and representatives from Upper Street Events and Barnardo's, the children's charity, was available to all students. Usage of the two open forums is shown in Table 8:

Table 8 Open forum usage in VLE

	Barnardo's	Upper Street
No. joined	136	89
Participants	47	23
Total posts	125	95

Table 8 suggests that the phenomenon of 'lurking', the practice of reading questions and answers posted by others but not contributing in the form of a post (Pulford, 2011), was present in these open forums. It should be noted that the figures in Table 8 do not give the whole story. Table 9 shows the actual usage by those who had access to the module.

Table 9 Open forum usage in VLE by month

Month	February		March		April		May		Totals	
	BDS	**USE**	**BDS**	**USE**	**BDS**	**USE**	**BDS**	**USE**	**BDS**	**USE**
Student accesses	2183	1311	1506	401	656	1311	1096	684	5441	3707
Messages read	2518	840	35	17	10	30	28	23	2519	910
Accessed then left without reading	-335	471	1471	384	646	1281	1068	661	2922	2797
									-54%	-75%

From the monthly usage data recorded in Table 9 above and Figures 3 and 4 below, one can see that activity decreases over time although usage does increase in April and May but to nothing like the level seen in February.

The distinction between 'accesses' and 'messages read' is important: 'accesses' refers to individuals who clicked on the forum link and entered the forum; 'messages read' indicates a higher level of engagement in that the individual having entered the forum has then opened and read threads of posts. In February the negative figure of -335 indicates those accessing the forum were reading messages more than once.
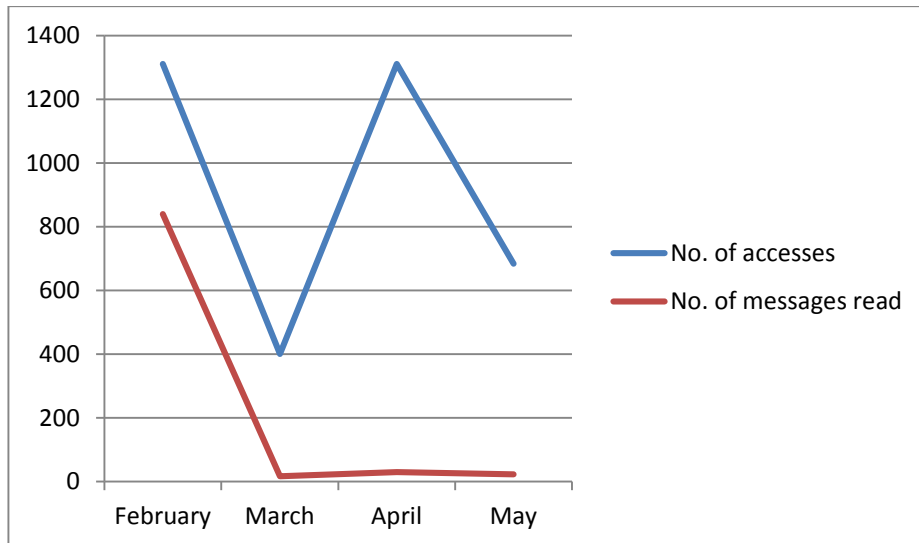
Figure 2 Usage data for Upper Street Events open forum
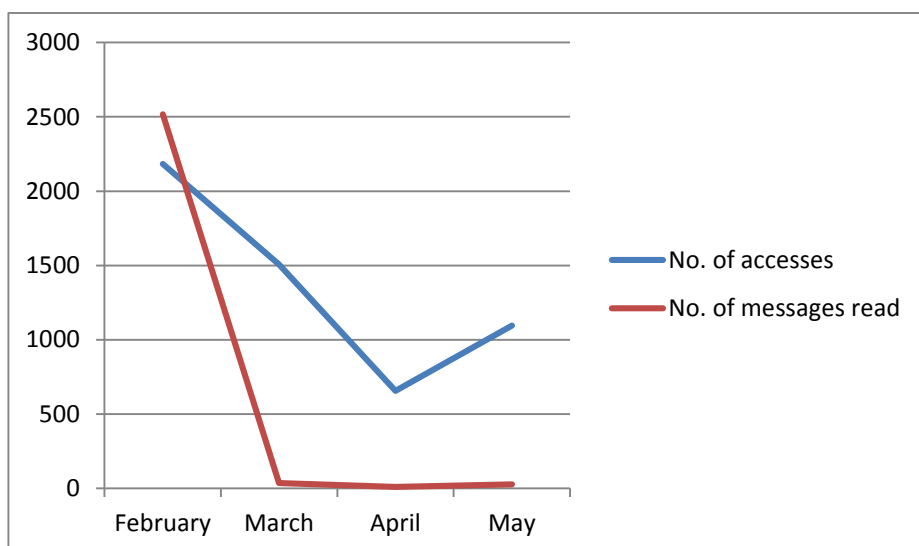
Figure 3 Usage data for Barnardo's open forum

Over time and particularly during the middle of the period of study of the module the forums were used less frequently and fewer messages were read. For the Barnardo's forum, the low point was in April (10 messages read) and for Upper Street Events March (17 messages read), which suggests students were neither developing nor reading conversations on aspects of the module over time. In April and May there was a small increase in the number of messages read or from posts that relate to the

assessment and are characterised by question-and-answer exchanges between tutor and student. The nature of the discussions will be explored in Chapter 5.

To support student group work, private group forums were created. Students, along with their group, could sign into a private forum that, once joined, could only be accessed by those who had signed in. Students were encouraged by their tutors to use the private forums as a repository for material developed on the module e.g. presentations and also for discussion and co-ordination of work.

Table 10 Private forum usage in VLE

Number of posts	Number of forums
0 to 5	14
6 to 10	7
11 to 15	6
16 to 20	1
21 to 25	2
26 to 30	1
31 to 35	2
36 to 40	0
41 to 45	0
46 to 50	0
51-200	2
Total	**35**

Table 10 clearly demonstrates that the majority of private group forums were not used to any significant degree by students or staff, with 40% having five or fewer posts and 80% of posts having fewer than 20 posts. The numbers suggest that students were for the most part not engaging in the digital practices encouraged as part of the module. However, it is clear from the survey that students opted to use other social media. Looking back to Table 4, 66% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they used other digital platforms such as Facebook and mobile applications such as Whatsapp.

4.6 Free text comments

The majority of students did not make any comment in the comments box section of the survey. In total 50 comments were made which is 34% of those who completed the survey. Rather than conduct a content analysis by identifying key words in each

statement and then develop categories or use CDA, I read through the comments and noted which ones elicited strong feelings in me. Also following Stronach and MacLure (1997) I looked for where the students either conformed (by following the instructions and ticking the boxes) or breached (writing in the margins) the conventions of the research instrument or whether they provided formative (suggestions for future improvement) or summative (evaluative comments on the module) responses in their free text comments.

The majority of students conformed to the conventions of the survey. However, there were seven instances where breaches did occur. Four of these were in Section 5 – About you. In the Ethnicity section two students ringed the word 'White' and moved on. One student drew their own box (and ticked it) next to the British and Irish boxes and labelled it 'EU'. While another ticked 'Any other white background' and wrote 'Spanish' next to it. Reflecting on these breaches of convention I note the totalising categorical effect of surveys. No student had drawn a box next to the Male and Female boxes and labelled it 'Other'. Another student had responded to the box in the following way:

Fellow students can be trusted to contribute positively in seminars and group and other group activities

1 ☐ 2 ☑ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ *My group can, not all students though*

The note at the side of the scale shows that the student is ticking the box based on her experience but it is clear that s/he has observed that not all students can be trusted.

The students' comments were overwhelmingly summative appraisals of the module which is not surprising given the format and timing of the survey. I found myself reacting strongly to the following comments:

> Too many presentations in seminars. Made them very repetitive and not engaging. Too many weeks made up with people presenting.
> New weblearn used not as straight forward as old one.

> Very little guidance on what should be included in the 1st presentations. Module focused more on barnardos & not very much said about USE - or very much support from the uni - all from John.

I found it difficult to accept the student's criticism of my amendments to the module as not engaging and also the lack of guidance was also difficult to accept. The comment regarding bias towards the Barnardo's case study was mentioned by several others and was also brought up during the interviews by Jennifer and Liz and also referred to by Bernard. However,the final point about John from USE giving support indicates that some students at least were developing supportive relationships with professionals outside the university.

4.7 Social capital, student engagement and the survey findings

So far in this Chapter, I have presented the findings of the student survey and related them to aspects of social capital and SE. In this section I critique the survey in relation to social capital, SE and Rancière's work.

As noted in Section 4.2, Table 1 shows that the students taking PME are split almost half and half between those whose parents went to university and those who are the first in their family to go to university. Table 1 also shows a significant level of diversity amongst students, with Afro/Caribbean and other nationalities being represented in significant numbers. This heterogeneity might have implications for SE in terms of the '…goals, aspirations, values and beliefs…' (Bryson, 2014:17) that students bring with them.

The insights offered by Furlonger et al. (2014) seem to corroborate the low level of awareness of peer mentoring schemes amongst students taking PME shown in Table 2 above, in that one of the students (Beth Furlonger) who became a student mentor reported:

> Students give us many reasons why they do not always make use of the schemes [e.g. peer mentoring, student representatives]. For us one of the most frustrating explanations is lack of awareness…despite our continual efforts to promote the schemes in emails, posters and events...
>
> (Furlonger et al., 2014:88)

Of particular interest is Furlonger et al.'s (2014) insight into why students don't participate. Her suggestion is that the lack of awareness is not the reason of low participation, rather it is student resistance based on the '…belief amongst some of the cohort that their peers are incapable of fulfilling the level of support and advice our schemes provide' (Furlonger et al., 2014:88). This explanation is in line with the views expressed by students in Table 3 where the primacy of the teacher's role in supporting the student's learning is identified by students and there is less agreement that students should support each other's learning.

The student's resistance to institutional programmes that are designed to build equality and democracy, such as peer mentoring, can be seen in terms of Rancière's (1991a, 1999) concepts of *la police* and the distribution of the sensible. In particular, his argument that equality and democracy cannot be implemented by institutions through policy-led programmes is relevant here:

> There are models of government and practices of authority based on this or that distribution of places or capabilities. Such is the logic I have proposed be thought of under the name of 'police'.
>
> (Rancière, 2014:47)

The University's attempt to rearrange the positions of students from learners to teachers alters the distribution of the sensible and introduces a new form of policing - not democracy or politics. Some students struggle to accept these new positionings.

Moreover, as noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.4   it is only at the level of individuals – as shown in Beth Furlonger's reaching out to individual students (Furlonger et al., 2014) that equality can be achieved through students taking their own 'orbits', not those prescribed by the institution (Rancière, 1991) At the same time the potential for students to take on the development of a new distribution of the sensible is suggested in Tables 2 and 4 where students indicate in significant numbers that they would be interested in becoming peer mentors and introducing people they know to contribute to the course. While the latter is an institutional initiative, I have noted earlier the way in which Furlonger et al.'s (2014) account is suggestive of Rancière's (1999) notion of politics and what Quinn (2005) terms Imagined Social Capital. I would argue that when

Table 2 and in particular Table 4 are considered there is also the potential for Imagined Social Capital. There is a significant group of students whose voices and contacts could contribute to the course. This could be viewed as potential bridging social capital but I suggest it is more appropriate to think of it not as a consensus-based approach to social capital but in a Rancièrian view of democratic politics. The students could make significant changes to the distribution of the sensible on their course through the introduction of new voices alongside their own. This could change the distribution of the sensible. Moreover, I suggest that Imagined Social Capital is already present in the case study and is evident in the students' use of other social media that I turn to in the next section and in Chapter 5.

4.8 Turning point

A turning point during the data collection for this case study occurred towards the end of the module. Juan, one of the students taking the module, posted:

> Our group chose not to use this private forum but instead we have created a private work group on Facebook… I would like to know where to upload the final presentation on weblearn's private group forum? Should a thread be created with an attachment? Also under what format should the presentation be uploaded, .mov/pictures/pptx?

I answered Juan's questions and then asked if I could join the group and was allowed access. This for me was a turning point or as Fine and Deegan (1996: 436) suggest, a serendipitous moment when the researcher transforms good fortune into a substantive discovery. The revelation was not really that social media is an important social aspect of how students spend their time at University. This has been demonstrated in several studies, including Madge et al. (2009), that characterise social networking sites as primarily for social purposes, not formal learning. Indeed Madge et al. (2009) agree with Selwyn (2007) that use of Facebook and other SNS should remain backstage and the status quo unaffected. The revelation for me was that through this chance comment by a student confirming the survey finding that a significant number of students were using other social media to support their learning,

I was then able to gain access to some of the students' writing which would have been hidden.

I disagree with Selwyn's (2009) suggestion that the Facebook 'Wall' function is backstage. At the time of his study, a Facebook Wall was an asynchronous message board function that allowed users to post updates, photos etc. about themselves that could then be viewed by others in their network. Users could adopt quite sophisticated approaches to how they managed their Wall by adjusting the settings so that the public, friends, particular groups of friends or just a single contact could see the content posted. This allows for sophisticated online identity management or "facework", a term Selwyn borrows from Goffman (1959) along with the terms "frontstage" and "backstage" which refer to how individuals perform in public and private spaces. However, what is apparent from Selwyn's (2009) textual analysis is that students are not adopting a sophisticated approach to managing who could see what they wrote online. Selwyn presents examples of student conversations that are 'unforgiving' towards their tutors and could have been read by the tutors they were writing negatively about. Selwyn describes how he was able to log onto Facebook '…on a daily basis and observed the development of the student pages and groups associated with the Coalsville social science students.' (Selwyn, 2009: 160).

I suggest that while the Wall posts Selwyn (2009) observed might be seen as being a place away from the university, in SNS environments these wall posts were very much frontstage in that anyone within the network could read them. What was so important and fortuitous about Juan's group allowing me to join their private forum on Facebook was that this constituted access to their backstage. The content of such groups cannot be read by anyone who has not first been given access to the group by one of the group members.

Another important consideration and, I would argue, a unique aspect of my study is that within the university's online space, students had access to both institutional and non-institutional open forums like Facebook Wall and also private group spaces. While most students did not use the institutional spaces, those that did offered important

insights into how digital spaces are used and go beyond what Selwyn (2009) terms social activity.

In Chapter 5 I will offer a close textual analysis that offers an alternative to the view of SNS as a backstage activity by weaving texts together from different virtual platforms and interviews with students.

4.9 Summary

The survey provides useful data that contributes to the development of the case study and address the topic questions set out in the introduction. When the students' responses relating to how often material was downloaded from the VLE and whether other CMC applications were used are compared with the usage data, insight is given into how the majority of students access the VLE. This addresses topic questions:

1. What are the levels of participation of students, tutors and external professionals in the VLE and,
2. How do students and staff view the utility of the VLE?

The students used the VLE to gain materials and content but did not use the private group forums, preferring other CMC applications like Facebook to work together. Moreover, activity drops away sharply as the module progresses with some increase prior to assessment deadlines. The students' responses in the survey seem to confirm the usage data, for example, nearly half the students said they used their PGF most/every week in relation to the use of private group forums which is confirmed by the counts of posts in each PGF.

The survey data also gives an indication of the level of trust between students and staff and partially addresses topic question 4, What is the level of trust between students and staff? From the students' responses it is clear that the majority trusted their tutor to be fair when marking their work. However, students were less confident that their fellow students would contribute positively to group work. Furthermore the correlation analysis offers useful insights into the relationships between different variables, in particular the significant relationships between trust in tutor and advice

and support. However, the survey did not give any indication of whether staff trusted students.

The survey also gives useful background data, for example the gender of students, their parents' education and their ethnicity which together enable the reader to gain a clearer picture of the students who took the module. The survey also enables an understanding and application of concepts such as social capital through the gathering of data on students' involvement with student societies and the Students' Union - which is minimal. Equally, the majority of students said that they socialised outside of the university community. Involvement with the student union and societies and socialising outside the university suggest that bonding social capital is weak amongst the students in this case study.

At the same time the survey and usage data provide a limited view. This is borne out in my interaction with Juan that started on the VLE and ended with being allowed access to their Facebook group. Gaining access to Juan's Facebook group was a turning point for this research project in two ways. Firstly, it gave an insight into the students' digital practices outside the VLE which challenges previous research in this area. Secondly, the data was an extra thread that I was able to weave into my deconstructive discourse analysis which helped to contribute to a richer understanding of how students appropriate virtual space.

Chapter 5 Doing police, doing politics

In this chapter I present an analysis of the qualitative data collected during the case study of the module Planning and Management of Events. Presentation of the analysis is supported by extracts from online interactions between students and tutors and transcripts of interviews with students, colleagues and others. The reasons for selecting these particular texts are because I judged them to provide insight into occurrences of resistance or dissensus which are linked to other central concepts in the case study: digital literacy, learning community, engagement and social capital. The texts also address the topic questions:

3   What is the nature of the discussions and communication between students, staff and external professionals in the VLE?
4   What is the level of trust between students and staff?
5   What is the nature of the networks being made between students and other individuals and groups via the VLE?

And the issue questions:

2   *What is the nature of the texts produced in the VLE and other virtual spaces by students, staff and others involved with the module?*
3   *What do the texts produced in virtual spaces say about the relationship between policy and practice?*

I have woven the texts together creating short narrative sequences that are presented in tables with two columns. The text is on the left with a CDA based commentary alongside it. I then develop an anti-foundational, deconstructive commentary around each text that draws on Rancière's (1991, 1999) theoretical frameworks. Each script develops in a linear way over the lifetime of the module and incorporates the material from the interviews that took place after the module concluded. The main aspects of Fairclough (2003) that I draw on are detailed below. I include these here, rather than in Chapter 3, for the reader's convenience.

The aspects of CDA I draw on are types of exchange:

1. Knowledge exchange – eliciting and giving information, making claims and stating facts
2. Activity exchange – people doing things or getting others to do things

Four types of speech function:

1. Statements
2. Questions
3. Demands
4. Offers

Three types of grammatical mood (the realisation of meaning in sentence type):

1. Declarative
2. Interrogative
3. Imperative

I agree with Fairclough (2003) that these elements are important in the analysis of policy documents and research interviews. I also deployed his usage of assumption in relation to ideology. Assumptions help to establish common ground on which communities and social interactions are based. At the same time they are important in the exercise of power and domination. Assumptions may be divided into three types:

1. Existential assumptions – assumptions about what exists
2. Propositional assumptions – assumptions about what is or will be the case
3. Value assumptions – assumptions about what is good or desirable.

My textual analysis initially draws on Fairclough's (2003) approach. In particular I look for instances of modality and evaluation in the texts which indicate what the author is prepared to commit to. Commitment to what is true and necessary relates to modality, commitment to what is good or bad relates to evaluation. I agree with Fairclough's (2003:164) assumption that, 'what people are prepared to commit themselves to in texts is an important part of how they identify themselves.'

Fairclough (2003) suggests that there are different types of modality which can be linked to different types of exchange and speech function. I use the following:

1. Knowledge exchange (epistemic modality) statements and questions which show the author's commitment to the truth
2. Activity exchange (deontic modality) demands and offers which show the author's commitment to act.

Modal markers include modal verbs e.g. 'can, will, may, must, would, should' etc. Also modal adverbs such as 'certainly' and modal adjectives like 'required'. Another marker is a mental process statement e.g. 'I think' or affective mental processes such as 'I love

this soup'. In this example another important aspect, the use of personal pronouns, is highlighted. This is important because it signals that the evaluation is the author's.

Each script is prefaced by a topic map of the online conversation of each group of students. This gives graphic representation of the structure of the conversation overall and at what point the text is drawn. Topic maps have been used by Wodak et al. (2011) to give an indication of the nature of conversations in terms of their length and breadth of content. The topics featured in Acts 1 to 3 are represented in bold type and the figures in brackets relate to the transcript lines. I have analysed the text of each group's online conversation, noting the topic of conversation that took place and when. The intention in this chapter is similar to Wodak et al. (2011) in that I aim to map the content and duration of conversations. However, I am not using a micro level approach because unlike Wodak et al. (2011) who statistically analysed the occurrence of keywords in texts from conversations during specific management meetings lasting a few hours, the online conversations I am analysing are of several months in duration. Therefore it would be impractical to attempt a microanalysis of the entire online data set using this method and the micro detail is selected and analysed in Acts 1 to 3.

The first Act is titled, 'Terms and Conditions of Support' and has two scenes. Scene 1 'Working out what is required' is about how Jennifer and Liz engage with each other to discuss aspects of the coursework they have been set. The scene gives insight into the relationship between engagement and support between students. In Scene 2 'Dealing with non participation' Jennifer, Marie and Liz challenge Isobel whom they regard as not contributing to the group work. The presence of ideology is very strong in this Scene.

The second Act, 'Subjectification' is drawn from interviews I conducted with a student, Rachel and her seminar tutor, Ben. There is one scene, 'Conflict resolution?' which like Act 1, Scene 2, deals with issues relating to engagement and support between students working in a group. This is important particularly because of the material or physical descriptions of emotion that are present in the text.

The final Act, 'Backstage' draws on posts from a group of students' private Facebook forum. The posts are incorporated with posts from the group's PGF and part of the

interview I conducted with Bernard, their tutor. In the first scene, 'Working on a presentation' Jane reacts to Juan's comments regarding a presentation she is preparing. The second scene, 'Coming to terms – receiving feedback' gives fascinating insights into how the students perceive, engage with and respond to the feedback and the grade they receive from their tutor. In 'Backstage' my analysis also questions whether politics has taken place. Finally, I present a commentary on the three Acts that draws primarily on Rancière's notions of political subjectification, police and le *partage du sensible* (the distribution/division of the sensible).

Note on transcription conventions

I have followed Fairclough's (2003) approach:

1. Pauses, short pauses shown by … Long pauses shown by a -
2. Voiced pauses (ums and ers) are shown as e: and e:m
3. Where text has been removed to shorten a passage […]
4. Where speakers overlap each other a new line is started with the speaker's name. For the most part I remained silent in the interviews, occasionally encouraging with 'mmm' and 'yes' etc. I have left these out for the most part as I don't feel they are necessary. I have included the questions I asked in the second interview stage.
5. I have punctuated the interview extracts, VLE texts are reproduced verbatim.

5.1 Terms and Conditions of Support

The text *Terms and conditions of Support* draws on posts from Jennifer, Marie, Isobel and Liz's private group forum (PGF) in the university's virtual learning environment (VLE), the open group forum (OGF), and also from Jennifer's interview with me. *Working out what's required* shows the students engaging and supporting each other during the module as they try to understand the subject material. There is also some resistance, in particular between Jennifer and Liz regarding which event case study they should choose. In stark contrast *Dealing with non-participation* chronicles Jennifer, supported by Marie, challenging Isobel whom they accuse of not contributing adequately to the work of the group.

February

- Contact details: (6-27)
- **Event ideas*: (38-43, 48-51, 59-60 70-5, 88-117, 146-56)**
- **Model Matrix (43-48, 61-2, 77-80, 125-130, 165-7)**
- Meeting up: (**174-176**, 196-205)
- Venue: (184-88)

March

- Poster: 625-6, 644-7, 657-94, 719, 727-30,
- Sponsorship (254-83)
- Presentation slides* (293, 307)
- Budget*(321-22)
- Visit to BDC (464, 477-85, 501-05, 522-27)
- Meeting up: (512-14, 553-4, 604-5, 631-5, 707-8)
- Risk Assessment (539-45)

- **Isobel: (213-18, 228-235, 340-59, 425-52*)**
- Stakeholders (747-8*)

April

Sections in bold relate
Figure 4: Topic Map

- Meeting up: (756-61, 769-71)
- Final presentation: (787-97*, 809-24*, 832-39, 928*, 950-57*)
- GANTT chart: (847-50, 858)
- Poster/Logo*: (866-7, 876-78*, 887*, 895-6, 904-8)
- Celebrity involvement (916-20, 938-42)
- Calculations/GANT chart* (965-70, 978, 986-97*, 1009-10)

to text cited in this Chapter. A * indicates an attachment or hyperlink

for

Private

Group

May

Forum 19

- Worksheets* (1018,1027, 1035, 1043, 1051)

5.1.1 Working out what's required

In this text, which is taken from PGF 19, Jennifer and Liz correspond early on in the module (week 3). They are trying to get to grips with the term, 'model matrix' used in an exercise during a seminar. The students are required to present a model matrix as part of a short, assessed presentation in Week 6. They also refer to an online video I posted in the university's VLE in week 2, the week before this exchange takes place:

[VLE Private Forum 19: Lines 32 – 51]
Author: Jennifer
Date: Wednesday, 22 February 2012 19:03:48 o'clock GMT
Subject: Well-being/Feel good Exhibition

http://www.wellbeing.com.au/ click around at the tabs to get an idea…

http://www.exhibitions.co.uk …something like these exhibitions

I'm guessing that since these exhibitions exist, then this idea has a chance. Also, I just carefully saw and listened to Lecture 2, and it is very thorough about the feasibility study. I just want to note something that I hadn't realised: the comparison of the models is being done on the *models* NOT on the *ideas*. I hope I'm right about this; that's what I understood anyway.... I'll ask Ben on Monday just to be clear. I'll post something about tourism colleges/UNIs or colleges/UNIs in general. Marie, if you can point me in any direction, that'd be great. Also something weird is happening and it kicks me out f the databases in Library Services. That's why I haven't put any research links.

CDA annotations

Jennifer opens her post with hyperlinks to events that are relevant to the group's coursework. She is trying to continue a conversation that started elsewhere and makes a demand *click around…*
I am guessing is a tentative declarative clause, Jennifer is looking for colleagues' affirmation of her ideas around a Well-being exhibition. *I just carefully saw and listened to lecture 2…I just want to note* The use of *just* also reduces her level of authority in the text. Jennifer is assertive and uses first person declarative statements to set out what she is doing in relation to the assignment. She has focused on a point that she's unsure about and uses italics and capitals to emphasise her point about models and 'ideas'. There is a discourse marker*…that's what I understood anyway* that leads into what she will do to verify her understanding. *Marie, if you can point…* this is the second demand Jennifer gives in this post. However, the use of the conditional makes it more tentative, perhaps because it is directed at a specific individual. Jennifer is cautiously setting out a position of leadership.

Jennifer's post can be seen in Rancière's (1999) terms as police work and part of 'distribution of the sensible'. She is conforming to, but also demanding, a particular way of doing, saying and being from the students in her group. These are defined by normative conceptions of SE that require visible activity in this instance: written responses in the PGF, attendance and group meetings and the completion of work required to complete the course work. Moreover, she positions the tutors as 'knowing', the final point of recourse to explain points of uncertainty. I suggest this final point is what Rancière (1991) would see as a form of dependency that creates hierarchy, rather than assuming equality, and is particularly important in the following exchanges between Jennifer and Liz:

[VLE Private Forum 19: Lines 54 - 80]	CDA annotations
Author: Liz **Date: Wednesday, 22 February 2012 21:03:14 o'clock GMT** **Subject: RE: Well-being/Feel good Exhibition** So..I am thinking if there are already well being/healthy living exhibitions then that would be a reason to not do this as there is already lots of competition? and with regard to the models I thought we had to compare the ideas based of different areas (financial, competition, marketing, etc)	Liz's response is tentative, use of mental process _So..I am thinking_ and interrogative mood opens her direct question to Jennifer regarding the Feelgood exhibition. She uses a mental process again to address Jennifer's point about ideas and models. Liz also uses _we_ to refer to the group's effort, this may be an attempt to resolve and overcome difference. This dialogical approach contrasts with Jennifer's first post, it is taken up by Jennifer in her response.
Author: Jennifer **Date: Thursday, 23 February 2012 17:11:25 o'clock GMT** **Subject: RE: Well-being/Feel good Exhibition** Well, not exactly. It is acceptable for two or three or more shows to have similar topic. The thing that we have to do is to find an "X" factor, the thing that makes our event idea different from the others. It is very difficult in our day and age to find an idea that is original, and has never been done before. And who knows, maybe these "competitors" aren't doing so well. With our idea, we might be offering something different.	Jennifer's disagreement with Liz shows a high level of commitment that is maintained in similar declarative statements, _It is_ and _we have to._ However, in her concluding comments Jennifer is more tentative and shows less commitment for example, _And who knows_. In doing so she tries to avoid contradicting Liz too harshly.

The dialogic nature of conversation as Jennifer and Liz discuss their understanding of a method shows intense engagement (Coates, 2007). It is worth noting the conversational nature of the exchanges in these posts – both knowledge and activity exchanges occur as do strategic and communicative action. In contrast to Jennifer, Liz takes up a position that evaluates and interrogates the issues that Jennifer raises. In the conversation, mental process statements e.g. 'I am thinking' show the writer's subjective level of commitment to a particular position or idea. As each writes they are showing themselves in Foucault's (1994a) terms, self-writing their thoughts and understanding for examination by the other. I would also suggest that Liz's attempt to explain the problem of the model matrix is an example of political subjectification (Rancière, 1999). She starts from a position of assumed equality; not looking to the tutor to explain the problem, she does so herself. However, the strength of "police" and the distribution of the sensible are shown in Jennifer's response that immediately refers back to the tutor:

[post continues]	
Also, I just contacted Ben via email, to ask him to clear the model matrix up. I thought the same thing that you do and maybe that's the case. It's just that I got confused with what Tom Lunt was saying at Lecture 2. Frankly, I'd prefer it if you were right.	Using the discourse marker _Also_ Jennifer reverts to declarative statements about what she has been doing. She seems to seek consensus through the mental process, _I thought the same thing as you_
[VLE Private Forum 19: Lines 120-138] **Author: Liz** **Date: Friday, 24 February 2012 09:11:36 o'clock GMT** **Subject: RE: Well-being/Feel good Exhibition** right so i have read through you post Jennifer.... I am finding it difficult to try an grasp the ideas we are talking about a little. we don't yet have a final idea, am I right? we need 3 potential ideas? we then need to put these in a table to compare them and dismiss 2 of them in favour of 1 which we can justify why it'll be a success.	Liz's response to Jennifer's posts opens assertively with declarative statements in particular, _I am finding it difficult…_ She moves from _I_ to _we._ This might be an attempt to avoid difference. Liz uses short, declarative statements to summarise the position and adds interrogative clauses which call for affirmation and response.

I do feel it is very difficult to find something original, or have something unique...hense why I said it would be difficult to do the upper streets 1.	Liz moves back to the first person and makes an evaluative statement using the affective mental process _I do feel_. This is followed by a declarative – she is arguing a point here. A request/demand for confirmation of the time and location of a physical meeting is made along with her own availability, Liz shows strong commitment for collective _we really need_ group work.
when and where are we meeting before class on monday??	
I have classes in the morning until 12 then can meet up...as we really need to start getting things written down.	

In this text there is knowledge exchange as Jennifer and Liz compare their ideas on what the term 'model matrix' means and how it relates to the coursework. There is also activity exchange, Liz tries to get the group to do things by setting out, step by step, what is required. In using 'we' Liz adopts the voice of the group to take a leadership role and suggests how the group should understand and do the coursework. The students had a choice between two problem-based case studies, one on Barnardo's (BDS) and the other Upper Street Events (USE). There had been disagreement regarding which case study to do. Jennifer had been successful in getting the group to choose the USE case. Liz's comment briefly revisits the disagreement on the choice of case study reminding Jennifer that she had said the USE case would be more difficult.

I argue that in these exchanges we can see advanced levels of digital literacy which, in Liz's case, are in line with Level 3 of Reedy and Goodfellow's (2012:17) framework "Engage in critical appraisal of others' contributions in an online interaction". Liz also thanks Jennifer for her work which shows an awareness and ability to collaborate even when she holds different opinions to others in the group:

[post continues] thanks for your work Jennifer...I am looking at lecture 2 again now to try and get more clear on it too LIz. [Liz then posts an idea for an exhibition]	Liz's conclusion is positive and affirming to Jennifer, she says that she is looking at the online video of the lecture and posts about 35mins later after she has viewed the whole video.

[VLE Private Forum 19: Lines 160 – 167]

Author: Liz
Date: Friday, 24 February 2012 09:46:07 o'clock GMT
Subject: RE: Well-being/Feel good Exhibition

not sure if this is what you mean...but
when comparing the 'models' i think the
'models' are the 'event ideas'
is this what you meant??

Liz tries to bring the issue to a close. Her opening clause is tentative and modal followed by mental process clause, followed by an interrogative, concluding clause that directly addresses Jennifer.

The online discussion and working out of what is required by the coursework does not involve the whole group to the same degree, as Marie's post the following day shows. In her entry she seeks clarification and resolution from Jennifer and Liz, not to contribute an opinion:

[VLE Private Forum 19: Lines 170 – 176]   **CDA Annotations**

Thread: What are the final ideas ?
Post: What are the final ideas ?
Author: Marie
Posted Date: 25 February 2012 17:36
Status: Published

So if i get it right we have got 3 ideas . But
my question is which one is the ONE? or
you are still thinking through? By the way
we are meeting on Monday at 1pm?

Marie's opening is hesitant and modalised. She seeks to clarify which event idea has been selected. The use of capitalisation in the question _which is the ONE?_ may suggest tension/ frustration. Marie also seeks confirmation of the meeting date and time.

Marie sits on the edge of the decision regarding the choice of case study. Her position appears peripheral. Her levels of engagement online and digital literacy are quite low at this stage. I interviewed Jennifer in mid-June of 2012. Her recollection of the group work refers back to the exchanges in the private forum. She describes how the level of engagement for the group work required by the module was greater than she had experienced before.

[Interview Jennifer 14/5/12 commencing line 7]

I mean… as I told you from… essentially from week 1 but… until week 10… we were constantly communicating e: ideas on, 'what shall we do?' and reading up and contacting again… um - that - I think it, it e: reinforced commitment to students, rather than e: meeting up two or three times in the… during three weeks, four weeks in other modules. So it was more like, 'let's whip up a presentation… cos groups are mostly for presentations' uh so… it was much more elaborate…

CDA Annotations

Jennifer's opening declarative statement *I mean, as I told you* makes a strong commitment to the claim about group work Mental process marker *I think it reinforced commitment.* Jennifer values the high level of contact which she contrasts with the position of most students superficial norm of meeting a few times at the last minute to, *whip up a presentation.*

Jennifer suggests that the communication between students required to deliver the individual and group presentations over a 10-week period meant students needed to demonstrate more commitment. This was something she valued and contrasts with her earlier comment (see page 73) about just coming into university for seminars and lectures. The assessment regime, part of the police order, seems to have demanded SE in terms of activity and communication in this instance. Jennifer continues:

[Interview Jennifer 14/5/12 commencing line 8]

I got to know my, you know, fellow group mates, team mates… so that was interesting because - and as I said we had the ups and downs… sometimes… I would get frustrated and another person would get frustrated and the other… persons would, you know, pull them up again...e: so - what else e:...Oh yeah, we had a…big problem. OK, two big problems at the beginning u:, one was we couldn't decide on which - e:m USE or BDS so e:m that was a bit awkward [laughs] because half of us were for one and the other half for the other one and we voted and we had a person e:m that didn't want to give a vote she was like, 'OK I'm fine I'm cool with everything'. You know, vote! You know, you can make or break this!

CDA Annotations

Jennifer values the closer relationship with other students. She and others felt frustrated and then another person *would pull them up* Jennifer doesn't elaborate on what this meant.

As Jennifer recounts what happened she starts to narrate the difficulty her group had in agreeing which case study they should do.

Jennifer does give detail on the vote but excludes the voices of the rest of the group only her voice is reported directly which adds intensity to what was a difficult moment for the group.

In her description of getting to know the other members of her group Jennifer seems positive and there might be potential for bonding social capital. She comments on the dynamics that play out within the group, recalling how individual group members kept each other's frustrations in check. Examples of this police work are evident within the private forum, for example, the discussion of which case study to do in the exchanges between Jennifer, Liz and Marie on 22-25 February. Importantly, resolution did not occur online. Neither Jennifer nor Liz recognised Marie's questions either about which idea would be adopted or whether the meeting would go ahead. It could be that neither of them wanted to reveal their position in writing at that stage. Alternatively, using Rancière's (1999) thinking about speech within a distribution of the sensible Marie's speech is viewed as 'noise'. Her position is peripheral and therefore her voice isn't recognised.

Resolution of which case study to do was achieved through a vote in a face-to-face meeting. This apparently 'democratic' solution to what Jennifer describes as a 'big problem' is unsettling. Jennifer recalls how one unnamed individual (presumably Marie) is forced to take sides by making the casting vote on which case will be studied by the group. Even with the distance of 2-3 months, the force of Jennifer's will is evident in the abruptness of her speech and lexis. The abrupt nature of the demand to vote, brief laugh, followed by the declarative demonstrate that this was an important, difficult issue for the group to resolve. In Rancièrian terms Marie's position as peripheral in her group became untenable as the police work by Jennifer and Liz required her to take a side. The vote, which is not secret, is not democracy according to Rancière (1999) - a disruption of the police order - it is a police work to settle the conflict between Jennifer and Liz.

The reasons why the choice of case study became a point of tension can be unpicked from the texts. From the outset of her interview Jennifer focuses on the utility of the module in relation to getting a job after graduation. However, Liz sees the Barnardo's case study in assessment terms as less challenging and therefore offering a greater chance to achieve a higher grade. Here, in the students' self-writing, wider discourses of employability and relevance to the 'real world' are juxtaposed with concerns about assessment and grades. This creates a complex situation; both Jennifer and Liz seem

engaged, diligent students. Both want good grades but two discourses of employability and assessment lead to competing ideas about the tactics the students should adopt to achieve future success.

In the group's debate over which case study to pursue, something is undecidable – is one case study better for what is to come (employment)? The other might be easier to achieve a better grade (academic achievement) that is also important for what is to come. Work supplemented by study gives way to study followed by work. In the end the decision cannot be taken through discussion reaching a consensus. It is put to a vote.

These texts address several of the questions set out at the beginning of this section. The nature of discussions and communications ranges over discussion of the coursework requirements, developing a shared understanding to arranging meetings and suggestions of what should be done. Both Jennifer and Liz show high levels of engagement and commitment to work though their discussion in the PGF. There is also trust between the students in that they are prepared to invest time in posting in the PGF and expect their efforts to be reciprocated. Jennifer also comments in her interview on how the module required commitment and engagement throughout the module. Jennifer and Liz's textual self-writing also highlight how policy discourses relating to digital literacy and inclusion overestimate the usefulness of the online environment. All three participants in the PGF value a face-to-face meeting to resolve the issues they face. The physical meeting is prioritised over virtual forms of communication. Moreover, the disagreement between Jennifer and Liz regarding which case study to do shows how the discourse of employability runs through how students take decisions relating to assessment.

Both Jennifer and Liz are strong characters who are prepared to lead. Their writing shows both students doing considerable amounts of police work to foster a collaborative working relationship even though they have disagreed on a key point early on.

5.1.2 Policing non participation

The second 'problem' Jennifer describes in her interview is a good example of frustration and policing that she glosses over in her interview:

[Interview Jennifer 14/5/12 - line 9]	CDA Annotations
e: and I think that we yeah e: e:m what else Ok, and the other problem we had… was specifically in our group of course, that… half the group migrated to, away from the seminar[…]so we got into a whole procedure of e:m, taking up roles with the initial exercise, e:m we formed the supposedly perfect team […] then another person appeared in week three and she got into our group without following the procedure… she had some personal problems anyway we just stopped communicating after a while that's a big issue	Mental process *I think* and evaluative statements she also describes the difficulties of the changes in the team membership and these intertwine with the settling of what their event idea would be.
anyway e:m I think after week 4 or 5… I think after week 5 maybe we were still struggling with the idea…	Discourse marker *anyway* distances and shifts attention from the *disappeared* student to the problem of selecting an event idea. By using *we* Jennifer positions the problem as the group's.

Jennifer describes the turbulence at the beginning of the semester with students moving between seminars which impacts on the process of group formation. In referring to 'the supposedly perfect team' Jennifer is alluding to a seminar activity which involved students completing a Belbin (2010) role type questionnaire which is then used to guide the formation of student teams. There is a cynicism/irony in '*supposedly perfect team'* that misreads the purpose of the seminar activity. Thinking about Belbin role types as criteria for forming groups was not a recipe for perfection but an exercise in getting students to think about their own and other students' roles within a team.

Jennifer briefly mentions how Isobel joined the group late and then '*disappeared'*. Isobel's departure is attributed to '*personal problems'* and that communication

between her and the group ceased. Jennifer doesn't refer to Isobel by name, she does conclude that it was a 'big issue.' How big is seen in the interactions within the group's private forum. In the following excerpt Jennifer expresses frustration with Isobel, directly challenging her lack of contribution:

[Private Group Forum 19: lines 208 – 218]	CDA Annotations
Author: Jennifer **Date: Tuesday, 6 March 2012 09:37:59 o'clock GMT** **Subject: To Isobel** Well, Isobel, once more you failed to do something (anything!) within the allocated group tasks. It is now week 5 and you haven't contributed a single thing in this group.	Jennifer's use of the temporal _once more_ followed by a strong evaluation verb _failed_ amounts to a very aggressive opening. Jennifer makes no attempt to modulate the grounds for her accusation or argument that Isobel has continually failed to contribute to the group tasks. The, _something (anything!)_ is particularly pointed. Jennifer's temporal reference to week 5 strengthens her criticism of Isobel.
We counted on you to do a portion of the work (research ticket prices) so that we can do the budget today. Your performance within the group has been absent. I am very disappointed with you and worried about the rest of us who try to do the tasks given, even if they confuse us and even if they are difficult.	Jennifer's criticism and forceful evaluation of Isobel is constructed as coming from the group; _we counted on you_ / _performance in the group has been absent_. Jennifer then switches to _I am very disappointed with you_. The move from _we_ to _I_ strengthens the attack. Jennifer places Isobel's failure to contribute in the context of the group and then personally. There is no attempt to suggest a solution.

The intensity of Jennifer's attack on Isobel is striking. In challenging Isobel's lack of contribution, Jennifer is aggressive and seemingly economical with the truth about the information she has received from Isobel. This forms part of Isobel's defence, which is a modulated and polite response to Jennifer's aggressive post:

[VLE Private Forum 19: Lines 221 – 235]	**CDA annotations**
Author: Isobel **Date: Wednesday, 7 March 2012 20:39:25 o'clock GMT** **Subject: RE: To Isobel** Jennifer, I think this is a bit rude of you writting this mail, as I did send you a txt message stating that I was at the Accident and Emergency on Monday night after uni and could not meet you and Liz Tuesday morning. By the way before reading this mail I had sent you information answering questions regarding the venue and as stated will get info rearding ticketing price and charge for stall space from research. I know I am putting in my effort as was working with you guys getting the well-being client list in class. Please check you email and please don't attach any rude email as I don't work for you, but with you. Thanks	Isobel defends herself vigorously but modulates her accusation - Jennifer is being *a bit rude.* Isobel explains she has been in A&E and says she texted to inform Jennifer that she couldn't make the meeting. Furthermore she has contributed information via email prior to this exchange Isobel refers to her contribution in class - which is not mentioned by Jennifer. Mental process *I know*
Author: Isobel **Date: Wednesday, 7 March 2012 20:50:53 o'clock GMT** **Subject: RE: To Isobel** Business Design Centre site info.doc I would also email this doc as it is my 1st time attaching files on the forum. If any contributions or suggestions please let me know. Thanks. Isobel	Isobel seems to lack confidence in the forum on how to do basic things like attaching files and replying to threads

Differing levels of digital literacy can clearly be seen in the posts made by Jennifer, Liz, Marie and Isobel. Jennifer and Liz are first to post in the PGF with Marie soon after. Isobel is last to post in the PGF. In communicating directly with Jennifer via email, rather than through the PGF, she has made herself vulnerable because she hasn't demonstrated to the group that she has been working on her allotted tasks via the stage of the PGF. She tries to counteract this by posting information on the venue she has been researching. However, it is Isobel's resistance to Jennifer though the distinction between work "with" not "for" that is particularly striking. In doing so Isobel challenges Jennifer's position of authority and also speaks to the values and difficulties of a distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 1999) where students' working

relationships in the university in terms of authority and hierarchy are contingent and discourses of the workplace (employability) shape norms and guide behaviour. Isobel makes a claim for equality against the hierarchy in the group. In the second post, 11 minutes after the first, she attaches information about a venue. Isobel shows less confidence in the PGF as she says that because it is her first post she'll also email the material to the rest of the group. Isobel invites others in the group to contribute. However, there is no response. Their silence is hard to read but like Marie's post earlier, Isobel's speech is not heard.

The timings of these posts are important to note. The group starts using the forum on 21/2/12. In the first post Jennifer records the group's emails and then addresses Isobel directly, *Isobel, if you are still at our seminar, then, please go to WebLearn and sign up on forum 19 (our group's forum). Also, which email do you prefer for contact?* Instructing Isobel and asking her questions via a forum that she is not yet a part of doesn't make much sense unless she is contacting her via email or other media. The group has four members and all of them, apart from Isobel, post between 21/2/12 and 26/2/12. Then there are no posts until Jennifer's, eleven days later on 6/3/12, when she sanctions Isobel almost without warning. It is striking that having not posted at all in the forum Isobel responds to Jennifer the following day. It might have been coincidence that Isobel logged into the forum unprompted but it seems more likely that she was prompted.

There are no earlier posts asking Isobel to contribute and it seems that Isobel is surprised by the accusations and certainly not prepared to concede that she hasn't been contributing. It is almost as if the tension of the real world spills into this virtual space and the conflict takes place within the private forum rather than face-to-face. Alternatively, it may be that Jennifer has grown tired of Isobel's failure to attend physical meetings and decides that she will challenge Isobel in the private forum.

Marie responds to Isobel's post five days later. Her writing is of particular interest because it gives insight into the dynamics of the group. The text's composition, the switches of subject and style allow us insight, through the micro practices of a student

trying to resolve conflict, into the themes of community and support that this thesis addresses:

[VLE Private Forum 19: Lines 325 – 354]	CDA annotations
Author: Marie **Date: Monday, 12 March 2012 19:24:25 o'clock GMT** **Subject: I Information about ExceL London**	Informal <u>opening poor grammar in first sentence</u>. *I hope..*
Hello ladies , here are some information that i have found about ExceL London . I hope it will be useful . To Isobel: Jennifer told us about your health issue and we are all concerned about it.	Marie suddenly changes subject and formally addresses Isobel. Her first declarative sentence reports very directly how Jennifer has told the group about Isobel's health problems. By using 'us' and 'we' Marie suggests group togetherness but this could be excluding for Isobel. The nominalization, *health issue* elides the nature of Isobel's condition. This could be sensitivity on Marie's part, or to negate importance of Isobel's situation.

In the literature online communities have been characterised as sites where communities can offer support (Thorpe, 2002; Ferreday, Hodgson and Jones, 2006; Vitak and Ellison, 2013). However, Marie's move from the periphery of the online conversation to challenge Isobel is not supportive:

However , you should understand that they are some works that need to be done by a specific deadline. So when you do not turn up or you do without any kind of research done. It just affects the group and just to remind you, Liz and you are meant to present next week. Since you do have your hospital or GP consultation on mondays "how will you do that ?"	Marie immediately qualifies the group's concern as the subject changes abruptly to the demands of work deadlines. *You should understand..* This mental process has strong deontic force– Marie forcefully sets out Isobel's conflicting obligations (seeing her GP and obligations, for example by using a direct question in speech marks.
Don't forget that even if we paste things on this forum that it is not really enough for you to understand the whole concept.	Marie uses the imperative, *Don't forget* to emphasise the importance of physical meetings and dismisses the possibility of keeping up online.

I read your comments and Jennifer ones : As a group member , i am not really happy about this kind of situation. I mean i do understand everybody points here but we are not here to make any kind of judgement or what so ever .	Marie continues to arbitrate, positioning herself within the group. The subjective affective mental process marker _i am not really happy.._ is followed by a nominalisation …_this kind of situation_ which avoids a potentially explosive description of the conflict. Two subjective mental process markers are then followed by a strong commitment _…but we are not here to make any kind of judgement…_
Honestly , as long as i am concerned the only thing that really matter for me is to get this assignment done and submitted on time.	Having thus far hedged in an attempt to avoid taking sides, Marie uses the attitude marker _Honestly,_ in doing so she takes a clear position - timely submission of the group's coursework is the only thing that matters to her.
Please just so that you know , i am not picking on you we all rely on each other so everybody participation is really important if and only if we are aiming for a good grade.	_Please_ request marker calls for understanding, strong commitment in _I am not picking on you we all rely on each other_ The link between everyone's participation and good grade is made clear and implies that the consequences of non participation will be a bad grade.

Marie privileges the physical, embodied requirements of the group. Online contributions are not enough. At the same time, she is uncomfortable with the way the group's relationships have developed and she tries to take up a position somewhere between Jennifer and Isobel. In concluding, Marie tries to depersonalise and soften her message by making clear she is focussed on getting the assignment in on time and that she is not picking on Isobel. She returns to the theme of the group relying on each other and the necessity of everyone contributing to get a good grade. The next day Jennifer follows up on Marie's post:

[VLE Private Forum 19: Lines 420 – 452]	CDA annotations
Author: Jennifer **Date: Tuesday, 13 March 2012 15:21:47 o'clock GMT** **Subject: RE: I Information about ExceL london** Just to add to what Marie is saying... I think that all of us have the same targets regarding this module, as well as the rest of the modules; that it to pass our modules with success and be proud of it!	Jennifer addresses the group (no salutation) referring directly to Marie's voice and then speaking for all. There is strong commitment in the mental process _I think_ as she asserts the desire of all to pass.
The university makes us work together because in the future we will have to do that; they are just preparing us and help us develop our team skills. And in the future, we will have to do things that we don't want to do, but if our jobs depend on it...we'll do them!	Jennifer invokes the powerful agency of the university that requires group work. This is justified by reference to the discourse of preparation for employment. The future lack of agency of individuals as employees is emphasised, _we will have to do things that we don't want_…justified on the basis of having and keeping a job.
So, in the way that in the 'real' world we need each other to complete the workload, in the same way we need each other and each others' part of the work to complete the project. If we successfully accomplish that, then we can be sure that we produced a professional project, just as it happens in the real world.	Jennifer then draws a parallel between the _real world_ and the university. _Real world_ is repeated
And don't forget that although these mini presentations are 20% of the final grade, the final presentation is 20% as well, and the written proposal is some percent...etc., little bits that we research now, are going to form our written assignment in a few weeks.	Strong assertion _don't forget_ Jennifer sets out the assessments in terms of their 'value' and how they contribute in to future work

Jennifer builds on Marie's post with a sophisticated, argument and rationale for group work in the University context as a preparation for work after graduation. The completion of tasks is presented not as working out of choice but because the alternative will be unemployment, implying that Isobel will be made unemployed from the group. She then links the need to do tasks to the group's reliance on each other.

The intertextual use of, 'workload' and 'professional project' borrowed from the workplace enable Jennifer to paint a picture of group reliance before she focuses in some detail about the assessment and its weighting in relation to the wider assessment regime of the module:

[post continues]

Isobel: Liz is going to visit the BDC on Wednesday, I think it's 11am-12pm. When we divided our work (the one with the post-its) your allocated task was **"Operations".** Your part in the presentation on Monday is to talk about these stuff, therefore it is **essential** that you go to the BDC. After all, it is not fair for Liz to do it alone because she has another co-presenter (you). Also, we have to **meet at least 2 times** during this week, before your presentation. Please, respond as soon as possible with your thoughts on what we are saying throughout the whole forum.

Jennifer formally addresses Isobel. In terms of deontic modality Jennifer's prescription places forceful obligations on Isobel, she uses 'we' to claim the voice of the group. The markers, *your allocated task*, *your presentation on Monday*, *therefore it is essential that you go* are unequivocal demands. The demands are connected to justice, *After all, it is not fair* and to the need for work *we have to meet*

There is a sense of the meticulous or preciseness of these demands in the use of bold font to emphasise key points.

Jennifer and Marie's appeals to the group relying on one another are a kind of violence that Young (1990) identifies as the denial of difference in a community. Isobel is seen as different to the rest of the group and because of this she is attacked and excluded. The perlocutionary force contained in Jennifer's setting out of what is required (attendance at the BDC etc.) should not be missed. The consequence and effect of setting out what is required is not one of a supportive group member who is trying provide clear guidance to a fellow student who is unwell. Rather the message uses the language of SE (teamwork) and employability (future readiness for the workplace), in a form of police work that uncompromisingly and specifically aims to alienate and exclude Isobel who is not in a position to contribute on these terms.

It is interesting to note Liz's silence at this point. Marie points out that Isobel has a presentation and a hospital appointment on the same day and Jennifer concludes her post in no uncertain terms on a similar point. The tone is aggressive, challenging and directive, something which Isobel had already objected to. Jennifer's final sentence

calls for Isobel to respond with a postscript advising Isobel on how to use the forum correctly. She has not made any attempt to recognise difference or to overcome or resolve the problems Isobel faces. She has used the group to bracket Isobel as an outsider. Her final sentence invites Isobel to respond to everything in the forum, which is an unreasonable demand.

The reason for Liz's silence is not clear and resists interpretation. However, the texts generated in the open forum for the Upper Street Events case study at the time provide evidence that Isobel and Liz are not communicating with each other. John (from Upper Street Events) who is organising a visit to The Business Design Centre (BDC) has posted a message in the open forum that asks students who want to attend the visit to reply to the post. By posting to the thread students are booking their place and it is straight forward for John (and the students) to see how many students are coming and what their names are:

[VLE USE Open Forum: Lines 347 - 357]

2nd BDC Show Round Wed 14th March
Post: RE: 2nd BDC Show Round Wed 14th March
Author: Isobel
Posted Date: 11 March 2012 19:48
Status: Published

Hi John,
Hope all is well. Just wanted to know if you still have anymore space for one more group (2 or 4 people) to attend the BDC on the 14/March please. If not can we attend by ourselves. any advise? Thanking you.

Isobel

Informal salutation

Isobel is tentative Just wanted to know if and If not can we attend she seems not to have read the original post by John as the supplementary questions she asks have already been covered in the original post.

Thread: 2nd BDC Show Round Wed 14th March
Post: RE: 2nd BDC Show Round Wed 14th March
Author: Liz
Posted Date: 12 March 2012 22:25
Status: Published

Hi John,

I hope there is still space for this weeks show around of the Business Design Centre as I would like to sign up.

Many thanks, Liz

Informal salutation

Liz's post comes directly after Isobel's. The affective mental process statements *I hope there is still space* and, *I would like to sign up* are confident and assertive.

On 11/3 Isobel attempted to book places for Liz, other group members and herself to the BDC the day before Liz attempts to book for herself. By asking whether there are spaces left neither Isobel or Liz demonstrate in their posts that they understand or have confidence in how the system works. They can see how many students have booked and John has stated that the maximum number of visitors is twenty. Moreover, in her post, Liz does not acknowledge that she is in the same group as Isobel. It is unlikely that she hasn't seen Isobel's post as the forum displays the names of all those who have posted clearly in date order.

Both Marie and Jennifer's posts come immediately after Isobel's query regarding the BDC in the open forum on 12/3 and 13/3 respectively. Given the nature of their posts and Liz's silence it is perhaps unsurprising that she does not respond to these posts in the group forum. In fact she did not post again, give a presentation at the designated time with Liz or take any further part in the group work. As Jennifer said, she disappeared.

Looking back at these posts two years later I am still troubled by what happened in this group. Isobel had experienced significant issues in her personal life. In the end she was able to complete the module by taking alternative assessments having successfully applied for mitigating circumstances. What strikes me is the nature of Jennifer, Marie and Liz's response to Isobel's lack of contribution. Unlike Yates' (1997) democratic

ideal of CMC or Ferreday et al.'s (2006) example of a group of students who initially use humour to comment on one group member's lack of contribution, the students in this example quickly assume an aggressive and unsympathetic position to Isobel's failure to fit in to the group-work in Ranciere's (1999) words to be part of the distribution of the sensible, to do, say and be a student. While there is some degree of trust between Jennifer, Liz and Marie, Isobel is not trusted. For example Liz makes her own arrangements to visit the venue even though she could read Isobel's earlier post enquiring about available places. There is little evidence of thick trust (Offe and Fuchs, 2002) or confidence among the group members to speak to Ben, their tutor with a view to resolving these issues. On a more positive note students did start to engage with John at USE regarding the venue visit. So while bonding social capital seems quite weak, the potential for bridging social capital is present.

5.2 Subjectification

As with the other texts presented in this chapter in *Subjectification* there are elements of resistance and dissensus. However, it is the depiction of physical engagements and their affective dimensions that are strikingly different to the other texts. Ben describes Chris' tears in her interview, while Rachel's laughter, anger and accusations are directed at both her tutor Ben and me. These are material effects of the interactions that occur in the classroom and elsewhere in the university, not in virtual space. There are moments when the data 'glows' and 'where bodily matters simultaneously demand and defy translation into codes and significations, expose the workings of representation in education and research' (MacLure, 2013:663).

In these texts I perceive the interviewees acting as agents with their own agendas. Rachel, like Jennifer, accepted the invitation to be interviewed. Unlike Jennifer, Rachel initially responded to my question with narrative. However, she also made significant evaluative points regarding the module.

February

Meeting up: (6, 12-13)	Presenter tasks*: (19, 45)	Contact details: (25-28)	Meeting up: (35-8, 55)	Venue visit/Risk assessment: (46-7)	Meeting notes 20/2 /rules*: (64-9)	Notes on Event & Marketing*: (76-9)	Meeting notes 22/2*: Final proposal (162)

Event Venue/Eva/Alec: (94-101, 119, 126-30)	Proposal: (108-12, 119, 126-30, 137-40*, 148)	Meeting notes: (155)	Final proposal: (162)

March

Meeting absence*: (169-171)	Venue Risk*: (179-180)	Presentation*: (188-89)	Meeting 26/3* (196)	Event ticket details*: (199-205, 214, 224)	Marketing presentation: (212-217)	Barnardo's Risk Assessment*: (231)

April

Meeting: 12/4*:(238)	Meeting: 22/03:(245)	Final presentation*: (252)

Figure 5: Topic   Map for Private Group Forum 10

5.2.1 Conflict resolution?

Conflict resolution? draws on two interviews that took place after the students had completed the module. Rachel, a student and Ben, her seminar tutor, give their perspectives on issues that culminated in a confrontation on the day of the presentation between Chris and Rachel who, along with the rest of her group, accused him of not contributing.

This text doesn't draw directly from the text of the group's PGF. As with the students in *Terms and Conditions of Support*, this group had also used their PGF regularly. The topic map (see Figure 5) sketches the structure of their online discourse, which takes a different approach to the students in the first text (see Figure 4 p.91). The quantity of text is much less, at around 300 lines as opposed to over 1,000 for Act 1. The PGF is used as a matter of record or archive, with notes from meetings being posted. This contrasts with the other students' practices that engaged each other in discussions about coursework and also challenged each other regarding lack of contribution. What is similar are the references to other types of electronic communication outside the institutional VLE that took place. Rachel mentions that her group created a Facebook group because using email became 'a mess.' Rachel also mentions the group's extensive use of SMS:

[Interview Rachel 15/5/12 [line 185]	**CDA annotations**
… he [Chris] couldn't come, like always, he didn't come to any meetings e:m so… we sent, I sent him an email saying like OK so, we kind of like split the tasks, you need to do that part of the presentation, so please send it by Thursday, you know, Thursday before Monday, you know, the day of the presentation e:m he didn't reply anything e: on Sunday twelve of the night,	Rachel strengthens her commitment to the fact that Chris did not engage by moving from, *he didn't come, like always,* to *he didn't come to any meetings*.

you know, midnight he sent me a text, 'what do I need to do?' and I was like, sorry… I told you to send it by Thursday, we did everything, you know, we couldn't wait for you, I don't want to lose marks because I didn't know if you were gonna get in contact with us. So we did everything already and he started to get upset, then he came, you know, Monday because the presentation was at 12. We always met you know around 10, two hours before, you know, to kind of like practice together he came at 10 and he was shouting to us, you know, that we didn't get in contact with him, you know. And I think that Ben e:m talked to you about it. And he was saying that he came to all the meetings and all the meeting sheets on WebLearn we didn't make up anything	Rachel's narrative there is a degree of difference as she reports the voices of Chris, _what do I need to do_ and herself, _sorry I told you to send it by Thursday_ She also reports indirectly for her group, Ben and me. In this way the struggle is characterised primarily between herself and Chris with the others as onlookers.
and that day we had like a big fight with him because obviously he didn't present. He didn't do anything in the whole semester, why we gonna let him present slides we did? So at that point he didn't participate any more […] Anyway, he got grades because you and Ben agreed that he had to get the grades he said, you know, like 15 in everything when we said like around 5 or 8 and I got more upset about the module itself… **Tom** [...] so did everyone get the same grade?	Rachel narrates _that day we had a big fight_ the attack on Chris is positioned as a group action. Throughout this section and the next _we_ is used exclusively. Rachel describes how Ben and I decided the grades saying, _I got more upset about the module itself…_ She uses _the module_ as a nominalisation for Ben and me to mask the attack on our decisions.

Rachel narrates how Chris' failure to contribute to the group's work built to a confrontation on the day of the presentation. The confrontation is described by Rachel as a _fight_ and that Chris _shouted._ The assessment regime demanded that this spoken violence be written down in the form of self assessments (see Appendix C) that are then evaluated by the group and used to award different grades according to contribution. Rachel returns to this issue in her interview. Her narrative traces how her anger which was initially directed at Chris turns to the module which is embodied by

her tutor Ben and me. As her focus moves she stops her narrative and starts to ask me direct questions and evaluate what happened:

[Interview Rachel 14/5/12 line 210]	CDA annotations
Rachel: No because for example, I went to all the meetings but I was always the stupid one […] We had a meeting with Ben after the presentation e:m and he put like everything for himself like 15, when obviously I didn't agree because we had the proof to say that he didn't come to any meetings just one you know	*I was always the stupid one* Rachel does negative identity work, inverting positive behaviours (attendance, leadership) which she ironically values as stupid.
but also, and this is also a thing that I wanted to comment because, why do you encourage us to do the meeting sheets if then you don't use that? Because in the end he got 15 for attendance to the meetings, you know, we did like that every week and you could see that that was false. When we had the meeting with Ben, I printed out all the meeting sheets, you know, to have proof with me but no one of you e:m really care about us.	Rachel steps out of the narrative and asks a question, *why do you encourage us to do the meeting sheets if then you don't use that?* evaluating my advice that students should keep records of their meetings. The direct accusation *but no one of you really care about us* comes as a coda
Tom Yes I … now I am not quite sure whether I should answer that question now or wait until afterwards **Rachel** [Laughs] **Tom** No, you asked me a question and I think it's fair enough for me to answer […]	Rachel's abrupt and direct questioning of me elicits a hesitant response in the modality of the mental process, *not quite sure*.

Rachel recalls the practices of the module relating to group work, and her attendance at group meetings and the recording of the meetings using the meeting sheet proforma provided in the module booklet (see Appendix D). She recalls uploading the meeting sheets into their private forum. The practice of physically attending meetings and then the writing and archiving of the meetings were meant to police the group and ensure contributions were recognised and to penalise those who did not participate. Tutors actively encouraged this practice but very few groups actually did it. The Meeting Sheet, Self Assessment form and PGFs can be seen as policing practices to

enable tutors to observe SE in terms of activity and attendance which are part of the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 1991) of being a student.

For Rachel, Ben and I failed to penalise Chris to the extent she felt was appropriate given the archived evidence. We betrayed her trust and ignored our own practice. She questions Ben and I allowing Chris' self marks of 15 to stand as lenient, when the group said he should get 5-8 points, and questions whether Ben and I care about what happens to the students. I interviewed Ben two months later. He said in the first section of his interview that students had come to him and said they felt supported. I then asked about this comment specifically in the second interview session. Ben then recounted the issues relating to Rachel's group:

Ben Interview 10/7/2012 Sections 26, 27, 28 & 29	CDA Annotations
Tom: Sure, OK thank you, Can you recollect any times when the students came to you for support? **Ben:** I had to spend time with them at the end of one of the seminars sitting down and trying to find e: you know, some e:m common ground between the various people in the group. They were accusing each other of lack of contribution. So we had a meeting together. e:m One of the students cried [laughs] And e: ultimately, again in the reflective diary, the student was really e: pushing the point that this other student wasn't contributing and she was being very e:m you know, putting her point across very harshly e:m she had in the reflective diary a few comments also about the fact that this process of sitting down actually made her consider, reconsider you know everything about e:m you know her app-, the way she dealt with the lack of contribution from the student. So I personally felt that there was a good thing, you know, that my intervention in that occasion […] with with my you know.. support there was e:m ultimately led to some sort of reconciliation with the group -	There is no modality in Ben's declarative, *I had to spend time .*The situation demanded that Ben give time to the students. Ben uses the expression, *you know* to seek empathy with me as interviewer and colleague. In characterising the conflict, *various people in the group there were accusing each other of lack of contribution* Ben glosses the situation and elides the reality that one individual is singled out by the rest of the group. Ben abruptly switches from the student who cried (Chris) to the student (Rachel) who was *pushing the point.* In moving the focus quickly from negatives about the confrontation to a positive point about how Rachel's reconsideration of her behavior in her reflective diary. Intertextuality Ben refers to other documents to support the narrative. Ben's affective mental process,*I personally felt* and modality *some sort of reconciliation* acts as a coda for the narrative which is somewhat equivocal.

This is the second of two stories Ben tells about the students, which refers to the student's reflexivity. Ben recalls/reports the way the students' positions changed over the course of the module and that in their course work (a reflective account) they then wrote about how they had changed their minds to positions in line with his own.

Ben also tentatively suggests that reconciliation was achieved between the group members as a result of the meeting. However, it is clear from Rachel's comments above that she was still angry with Ben and my overgenerous scoring of Chris' contribution. Ben pauses and I asked a third question:

Ben Interview 10/7/2012 Sections 30, 33-36	CDA Annotations
Tom Oh, OK, cool. Maybe that answers the third question which was, were any of the times that students came to you with e:m for support were they like a crucial situation?	
Ben: They were saying to me that the three of them were working really well together but that Chris wasn't always there and sometimes he wasn't there in the seminar so they told me he's not here […] But then when the final presentation came um just before the presentation he came to me and said, 'The rest of the group are not allowing me to present. They're accusing me of not having contributed.' He tried to explain his point and then they, that is when, it was just before the presentation there was no time […after the presentation] I sat with them to discuss, you know, what the problem was and why I wasn't told that they wanted to follow the group e:m yes, yes they over the course of the semester, perhaps the second half of the semester they were mentioning that they had won	The reality of the conflict in this group, its urgency and intensity, is captured in Ben's direct reporting of the collected voice of Rachel, Zenab and Rubita for example, _he's not here._ Chris is also reported directly, _the rest of the group are not allowing me to present_

the presentation, the competition but he wasn't that much involved they weren't so, you know, they weren't saying that they wanted to do the group assessment.

Ben indirectly reports the student's voices, *they weren't saying that they wanted to do the group assessment.*

Tom: Oh yeah, OK. The group assessment.

Ben: The group um assessment. But then the student cried, the boy cried e:m because e:m
they were accusing him of not being at the weekly meeting, they produced the meetings [sic] of the meeting without which said that he wasn't present and he denied it, strongly denied it, but, so he was really stressed by the fact and they were really accusing him of not doing anything that he was lying and Rachel got really agitated she said it was unfair because I said I would go back and obviously check which is what I did and I went on the system and [….] he wasn't even signed in.

Ben implies a lack of maturity in Chris by describing him first as a student and then as a boy.

Ben repeats 'they' and 'accusing' several times *they were accusing… they produced… they were really accusing…* The repetition increases the intensity of the narrative. Ben then focuses on Rachel rather than the group which may be suggestive of her leadership role in challenging Chris' lack of contribution.

Initially Ben's narrative recounts other issues and I draw him back to 'the boy who cried'. Ben's second telling of the story gives more detail and the narrative shows how the meeting was not during the semester but at end, on the day of the final presentation. This was not a voluntary meeting but one required by the assessment regime. The narrative Ben strives for is one of students' learning and reflecting which he as tutor supports, but in this instance what emerges is a messy confrontation. The lexis is that of a courtroom; accusing, denied, lying. The descriptions bring out the materiality of the encounter, there is physical discomfort; agitated, stressed and cried. This destabilises Ben's confident, teleological narrative of learning, reflection and progress. What Ben at first terms an intervention, in which he has the agency as the tutor, seems more of a reaction to a situation that unfolds on the day of the presentation, in which three students exclude the fourth member of their group and then attack him after the presentation has been made.

The embodiment of this difficult, stressful situation is the reporting of Chris' tears - these are given immediacy in the account of this event '*the student cried, the boy cried*' His physical reaction to the stress of being attacked is represented by Ben as a sign of boyhood and by me of immaturity. Ben and I assigned a representation of what happened, just as we police the disciplinary regime of assessment:

Ben Interview 10/7/2012 Section 37	CDA Annotations
…he refused to do that and then I convince at the first stage and then I convinced him to give me his view on what he had contributed obviously there were huge discrepancies between what he thought he did and what the other people did so ultimately we formed if you remember	Ben justifies the decision made regarding the group work twice as one made by both of us saying, *we formed if you remember* and,
Tom Yeah	
Ben that we did this together and we found compromise that I think reflected very much the kind of work he did in fact it matched	*we did this together*

Ben describes how he approached the situation and enforced the disciplinary procedure in the face of Chris' initial refusal to take part. He then concludes by justifying his actions and the outcomes in two ways; he mentions that the grade Chris got for his final piece of group work is similar to what he got for his individual work and that I had been fully involved with the issues as they had unfolded and had supported the actions he had taken. These interview extracts are open to multiple readings. The students involved use the police practices introduced by the tutors to exclude and discipline a peer to such a degree that the tutors seek to use their authority within the hierarchy to ameliorate the consequences of the policing tools they have introduced. Rachel uses the interview as an opportunity to hit back at Ben and me for ignoring the evidence of her group's digital archive.

There is also an important point relating to methodology here in the relationship between language and materiality. I have selected particular pieces of text based on a

Foucauldian (1977, 1994b) approach that foregrounds resistance. However, I recognise MacLure's (2013) challenge to my claim to select data, suggesting that in focusing on a particular piece of data '…we have chosen something that has chosen us.' (MacLure, 2013:661).

5.3 Politics

In Chapter 3 I described a serendipitous moment when one group allowed me to access their private Facebook group. The students created the Facebook group in February 2012 and it was used regularly until early June. The text produced is very large and I focus on two extracts which I entitle, *Working on a presentation* and *Coming to terms – receiving feedback.*

Working on a presentation is an encounter between Juan and Jane in which they discuss and come to terms with the preparation of slides for an assessed presentation. To describe Juan and Jane's conversation as an encounter is a rather anodyne characterisation. There is tension initially as Jane resists Juan's intervention and what follows is a carefully negotiated reconciliation. *Coming to terms – receiving feedback* is an extended composite, network or weaving together of several texts: the Facebook group, the private forum in the VLE and an interview with the tutor Bernard. In this scene the students receive and respond to the grade for their final group presentation. The texts produced by the students demonstrate high levels of digital literacy and there is much for both students and practitioners to reflect upon. It is striking how the Topic Map (see Figure 6 below) for the private Facebook conversations of Group 21 differs from those of Acts 1 and 2. It is significantly longer in terms of duration and covers a far greater range of topics in more detail.

February

- Event/Exhibitor ideas (1-81, 94-103, 111-113*, 116-125)
- Venue: (82-93)
- Meeting up: (104-110)

March

- Event/Exhibitor ideas: (126-140, 144-151, 159-172, 257-264, 310-338, 342-372, 412- 421, 471-474, 593-596, 613-618)
- Venue: (158)
- YouTube: (173-182)
- Presentation: (185-265, 265-273, 858, 442-463, **475-516**)
- SEM 1 results (274-308)
- Meeting up (339, 352-361, 529-547, 553-555, 589-612)
- Logo (373-409, 422-440, 517-528)

- Jane's son unwell: (464-70)
- The Apprentice* (621-628)
- Advertising costs (556-566)
- Search engine optimization* (569-578)
- PESTEL analysis (579-588)

Figure 6: Topic Map of Facebook Group 21 continues over page

April

| Reflective diary (641-62) | Sharing final presentation (657-62) | GANT chart and other documents (653-660) | Meeting up (669, 676, 703, 852-862, 931-935) | Recommended books (670-681) | Team name (683-692) | Coursework discussion (694-824, 835-845) |

| Google Glass* (825-835) | Belbin, citations (863-75) | Real time information (875-886) | Discussion of similar event* (887- 906) | Jane Birthday (890) | Final presentation group members work experience (907-928) | Final presentation encouragement (929-939) | Breakeven point (940-953) |

| Thanks & mutual appreciation (940-953) | Proposal (967-1008, 1127-133) | Reflective diary (1009-1055) | **Presentation results 1056-126** | Belbin (1173-1179) |

Figure 6: Topic Map of Facebook Group 21 continues over page

May

Belbin
(1160-1173)

Proposal 1139-1146, 1147-1158, 1159-1179, 1181-1196, 1197-1236)

Deleting the Facebook group (1237-1234)

Discussion of module results (1235-1266) 1056-1126

June

Well wishing (1270-1283)

Grades published (1284-1292)

Figure 6: Topic Map of Facebook Group 21

5.3.1 Working on a presentation

In this text Jane responds to Juan's altering some PowerPoint slides she has prepared
for an assessed presentation:

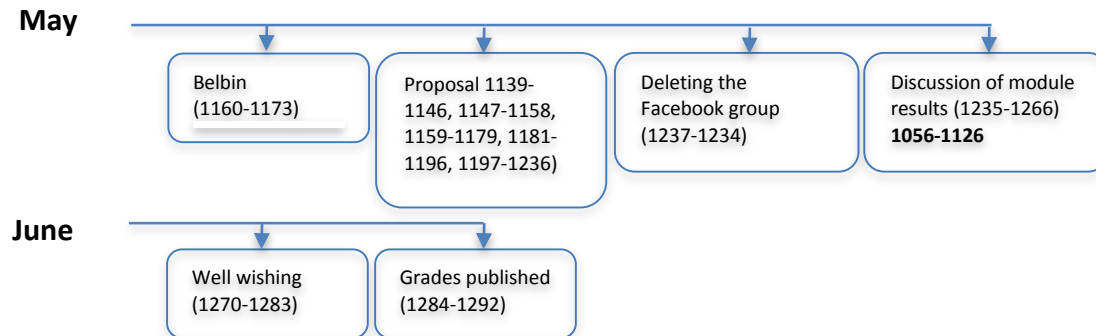| Facebook Group 21: lines 511-516	CDA Commentary
Jane um Juan u completly changed the slide of the products which am not happy with u didnt discuss it u jus changed it, and am changing it bk, also am changing the bit where u have that thing tilted. other than that its clear. where is the link u mentioned **Like • • Follow Post • March 12 at 3:38pm near London, England**	Jane's use of language is in striking contrast to Juan's. The 'text speak' style is remarkable in several ways particularly the use of the second person, 'u' and the omission of 'I'. Jane opens with 'um...' suggesting this is a spoken text and might indicate hesitancy. She reacts against Juan, who seems to be the leader of the group, because he has altered the PowerPoint slides she has prepared for an assessed presentation. Jane writes several declarative, accusatory statements which are far from hesitant and seem aggressive. There is a high level of commitment, in particular use of modal verb 'completely'. The affective mental process *...am not happy with* followed by *u didn't discuss it u jus changed it* suggests an implicit value placed on the importance of discussion
Jane the tilty thing has 2 stay as i dnt no hw to change it **March 12 at 3:47pm • Like**	Jane asks for assistance as she cannot see the link that was mentioned. A request for help is followed 9mins later by another post also by implication asking for help. Clearly she is struggling to change some of the amendments Jaun has made

The language contrast may evoke normative judgements reminiscent of MacLure's
(2003) discussion of the British media's treatment of those who do not speak standard

English. While both individuals are demonstrating a significant level of digital literacy and engagement by choosing to discuss their work through Facebook, Juan's lexis and style reads more conventionally with the norms of academic or business styles.   There is a paradox between spoken and written. Jane and Juan are *writing to* each other but the immediacy of the writing event is such that it resembles speech. For example, Jane gives materiality to what she writes using 'um'. There is an unspoken invitation here to the reader (whoever that may be) to give materiality to the text and in doing so make judgements about both writers. Juan maintains a reasonably formal approach in his lexis while Jane's is more text speak, it is almost a stream of consciousness. In terms of support this passage is important as Juan can be seen as trying to help Jane but the offer is rejected because of the lack of consultation on Juan's part:

Facebook Group 21: lines 517-528	**CDA Annotations**
Juan change whatever you want. I did it in the most professional way. I always get A's for the presentations. up to you to do whatever you are more confortable with.	Juan's response feels dismissive i.e. 'do what you like, I don't care.' The difference between Jane and Juan's style/lexis is striking e.g. 'u' and 'you' respectively. Jane is a native English speaker, Juan is not. There is an intertextual dimension to Juan's response. He claims his identity as a professional. The Business School claims to produce Business Ready Graduates (*Producing London's most Business Ready Graduates*, no date) He combines the unmodulated claim to professionalism with his track record in assessed presentations. This is challenging to Jane who may or may not have a similarly good set of results.

the video (as explained on the email) is underneath the newspaper image on the Products slide. it is a link that once you click on the image it takes you to the web-video. the tilty thing can be changed on 'effects' or view 'effects' the only reason why I worked on it was because that slide was not there. also it was missing a conclusion slide. plus the Gannts chart needs the attention I mentioned on the email.... I couldn't do it cause I didn't had the original.	In the next few lines Juan tries to respond to Jane's requests for help. He explains how to change 'the tilty thing' back. Juan also states that he didn't change the presentation but added slides. There are references to emails – they are communicating with different media outside the Facebook group.
I am just trying to imporve it, because despite being you presenting, it is all of us work,.... whatever the group decides.... **March 12 at 4:09pm • Like • 1 [liked by Jane]**	Juan's conclusion is interesting as he justifies his actions in an appeal to the group – it is the group's work not just Jane's because Jane is presenting it. This is a strategy he repeats when voicing his concerns to the tutor (Bernard) about the grade received for the final presentation. Jane 'likes' Juan's response, this seems positive on her part.

Jane's challenge and Juan's response are important as they demonstrate their ability to use relatively high-level digital literacy skills, in particular the ability to collaborate and successfully produce digital artefacts as part of an assessed activity (Reedy and Goodfellow, 2012). In so doing they surface other discourses that surround them as they work together. This is most obvious in the intertextuality of Juan's response as he justifies his contribution to Jane's work. In particular, Juan's use of the word 'professional' is immediately picked up by Jane:

Facebook Group 21: lines 532-533	**CDA Annotations**
Jane sorry if u feel i wasnt proffesional enough, but its not ur mark on the neck its mine, i still like to keep my stamp on things. coz i feel its 95% ur work **March 12 at 4:19pm**	Jane reacts to Juan's claim to professionalism as questioning of her own. She asserts her ownership of the work, _mark on the neck_ – mixes up, 'neck on the line' but her meaning is clear - I am being graded so I want control of the content.

The word 'professional' is an identity that is important to both Juan and Jane. The sense of the word and the identity it bestows seem obvious. However, the term can have many binaries: professional/amateur, professional/unprofessional and professional/student. In using the term the students might be longing for the work that will come after life at university that confers the title professional. They measure their practice and each other's against what they perceive to be proper, legitimate and acceptable. The university's employability discourse also seems present in the students' invocation of "professional", in that it is the Business School's aim to produce "Business Ready Graduates" (*Producing London's most Business Ready Graduates*, no date). There is some irony in this claim as most students are already working while at university.

Jane's challenge to Juan can also be read in terms of the distribution of the sensible. Juan has altered her work and Jane does not recognise this move as legitimate in terms of what it is to do, say and be a student (Rancière, 1991). This is similar to the way that Jennifer doesn't accept Liz's explanation of the 'model matrix' method in 5.1.1. *Working out what's required*.

5.3.2 Coming to terms - receiving feedback

This text is a network of texts that sketches a familiar social practice in higher education – the giving of a grade and feedback. What makes the interaction unique is that the students' reaction is visible. The text begins in Juan, June, Pam, Shauna and Jane's PGF with their tutor (Bernard) posting the grade and comments on their final presentation. Bernard asks the students who have joined the group to inform the other group members who haven't joined that the feedback is now available. This could be seen as a lack of engagement on the group's part. However, it will be recalled that in Chapter 3 Juan's post in the OGF led to a significant moment in the research. The text moves from the private group forum to the students' closed Facebook page, back to the private forum and concludes with Bernard recollecting the incident in his interview. This text is the summative feedback for a group presentation made towards

the end of the module. The feedback is given by the tutor Bernard to the group via the VLE forum a few days after the presentation is made:

[VLE Private Forum 21: Lines 1–16]	CDA Annotations
Author: Bernard **Date: Thursday, 26 April 2012 02:44:51 o'clock BST** **Subject: Presentation feedback - group proposal** Dear All, Attached you will find the feedback and mark for your group proposal. Please ask the rest of your team to sign up for this forum so that they can access the feedback as well. Kind regards, Bernard [file attached text reproduced below]	Bernard's post implies his authority as a tutor who can give grades and feedback and instruct students to do things. Bernard's request that members of the forum get others to sign up represents the importance of the attached feedback which all should have access to.
General comments: You could have introduced all the team members early on, to emphasise the strengths of your team (and your suitability for a project like this). You did, however, introduce yourselves well. Your market analysis at the beginning could have been presented with more clarity.	Bernard's opening statement uses the modal marker, _You could..._ which is used again twice, _...could have been presented..._ and, _the objectives could have been..._ In each case there is an indication of deficit, the students _could_ have done better. This is indicative of Bernard's academic identity, one who is not prepared to make strong/absolute claims in his critique of the group's presentation.
The venue was not mentioned until after 8 minutes, but you explained well why it is a suitable choice (and you showed several good photos). All in all you covered the key areas and you showed that you are well organised. Some of the objectives could have been slightly more specific though.	Bernard does make more definite statements such as ,_You did, however..._ , _The venue was not mentioned_ and, _All in all you covered..._ The modal adverb 'slightly' is used twice, which lowers the level of commitment.
The presentation was slightly too long (about 20% over the time limit), but both of you were confident and you handled the questions well. The video did not play, but technical errors are unfortunately part and parcel of presentations (so no marks detracted for that). Overall a competent presentation but with some weaknesses. /B 25 April 2012	References to team members, team strengths and objectives link to a business discourse that assumes that strong teams and specific objectives are valuable.

Bernard posts the feedback on the VLE at 2:44am on 26 August. Pam picks up on them and comments in the Facebook group less than 12 hours later. Her choice to communicate the grade via Facebook highlights how the students use this virtual space as a place of writing away from the gaze of their institution and their tutor:

[**Facebook Group 21: line 1070 (239-253)**]	**CDA Annotations**
Pam congratulations groupies we pdid well for our presentations! B overall xxxx **Like · · Follow Post · April 26 at 1:35pm near London, England Shauna likes this.**	Informal salutation style and positive mood. Pam assumes the B as a good grade.
June where can you see it ? i cant find it ... **April 26 at 1:36pm · Like**	The knowledge exchange between June and Pam is similar to mobile SMS genre with short questions and statements. In particular the use of _yer_ and _thx:)_
Pam well you and Juan got a B **April 26 at 1:38pm · Like**	
June Okay but where did you find that info ? on weblearn ? **April 26 at 1:39pm · Like**	Pam ignores June's question and statement on how to access the grade and responds by repeating the grade. Her statement, _Well you and Juan got a B_ is abrupt and shifts responsibility for the grade from the group to Juan and June. And June has to ask again in a more polite style although the structure is similar question followed by statement.
Pam yer. go on our group discussion board on weblearn x **April 26 at 1:40pm · Like · 1**	
June thx :) **April 26 at 1:40pm · Like**	

The initial exchange between Pam and Jane below highlights an interesting counter to narratives of digital literacy and engagement. First Pam states that the group have got a B overall. She has accessed the grade and feedback via the VLE. It is clear from her mood that Pam considers the grade of B as a positive result. Pam seems to demonstrate positive digitally literate engaged behaviour. In contrast June doesn't respond to the grade but asks how to access the grade and presumably the feedback. This lack of knowledge of how to access grades via the VLE is suggestive of disengagement and/or low level digital literacy. However Pam's response makes it clear that she thinks it was June and Juan who were responsible for the group getting a

B. Pam ignores June's question assuming that only the grade is important whereas June is keen to see the feedback and grade.

Juan's response five minutes after Pam's is comprehensive. He reproduces Bernard's feedback on the Facebook group and then goes through it line by line. This text is a unique insight into how feedback is received by students. Juan's response is to comment and feedback to the rest of his group on Bernard's feedback. He moves from blaming Bernard's incomprehension, to comparing the superiority of his presentation in comparison with other students' work, to criticising the lack of criteria provided in advance, to one qualified admission that *'the objectives'* could have been improved. He concludes by saying that he'll confront Bernard regarding these issues:

[**Facebook Group 21: line 1126 (183-229)**]	
Juan Content grade: 65 Presentation grade: 66 OVERALL GRADE: 66 General comments: You could have introduced all the team members early on, [Juan pastes Bernard's feedback in full as quoted above]… Overall a competent presentation but with some weaknesses. /B 25 April 2012 **Like · · Follow Post · April 26 at 1:39pm** **2 people like this.**	Jaun's post is much more comprehensive, reproducing Bernard's feedback text
Pam i shoulda just done that! well done you 2! *clap* *clap* **April 26 at 1:41pm · Like · 1**	Written representation of clapping
June Juan are you at uni ? **April 26 at 1:41pm · Like** **Juan** I can't believe he is giving us feedback on the order of things ... when he actually said there was no particular order to it as long as we covered it. Shame he didn't understand the logic of the pres, but perhaps because it was emphasized enough.... The order was meant to not bore the clients with too much detail about ourselves at the beginning, yet mentioning our capacities as a competent event design and management company (that was the 'Initial' slide.	Juan's strength of feeling clear in the mental process statement *I can't believe.* Bernard's voice is reported, *he actually said* There is no modalisation of opinion in Juan's first sentence or in the beginning of the second where the affective marker, *Shame* is used. Juan challenges Bernard's judgment in terms of a failure of understanding. Juan places the blame on Bernard but

We did a market analysis which no one else did. This market analysis emphasized exactly the reasons why people would like to attend our event: (check the 'Keynote' slide and you'll see one of the main reasons for people to attend these types of events is to 'Get new ideas'... so I don't really understand why he's complaining about this. The venue was introduced right after the concept and products and exactly where it had to be... again there was no criteria for the order of it.	then he modulates, *but perhaps because* and moves from personal *I* to reflection on the group's presentation using *ourselves/our/We.* He then moves to address the group *you'll see* before moving back to first person to make an evaluative mental process statement, *so I don't really understand why he is complaining…* Intertextuality - Bernard is characterized as complaining about some material included in the Keynote slide.
I do agree on the objectives as they were perhaps not specific enough. But overall we delivered a pitch... which was what we were required to do without even have been told how to do it.. and really.... compare it to other presentations... no one covered the topics with the clarity and professionalism that we did.... I will inform Brenard of this... in a diplomatic way ;) Even though I am not happy with his feedback and the mark... ...Congratulations to all. Well done! xx **April 26 at 1:51pm · Like · 2**	Jaun is prepared to accept the point Bernard makes regarding the objectives but his non-modal statement *I do agree* is immediately modalised with *perhaps.* Juan's summing up shows his frustration. The grade has impacted on his identity as an A student Misspelling of Bernard's name. The smiling, winking face is ironic.

Juan was so intent on formulating a response to Bernard's feedback that he takes 10 minutes to respond to June's question regarding whether he is in the university. The change in mood and style is striking as he shifts from an earnest critique of Bernard's feedback to a playful style, flirting with June. However, it is clear that he rejects the grade and the feedback that Bernard gives. Juan is convinced the presentation deserved an A and, humorous flirting notwithstanding, he is angry as the abbreviated, text speak expletive in his concluding remark indicates:

[Facebook Group 21: line 1126]	**CDA Annotations**
Juan I am not at Uni...why? u miss me? it's natural don't worry... time heals everything: : : ::lol April 26 at 1:51pm · Like · 1	Juan responds to June's post at 1.51pm, ten minutes after she asked whether he was in the University. His style changes significantly to a more mobile text form that reflects the informal banter with June. The social practice has changed his style from formal analysis of Bernard's feedback to the team of which he was seen as leader to humorous flirtation with another student.
June ahahahah How long do you think ? its hard... life without you, you know.. N o April 26 at 1:53pm · Like	
Juan u can always stalk me here : : : April 26 at 1:54pm · Like	
June no i justed wanted to say that i am not happy at all with the grade, i understand the feedbacks but still as you said it was clear and professional and showed the amount of work put into this project April 26 at 1:55pm · Like · 1	
Shauna Yeah I thought you guys would of got higher!! but yeah tell Bernard all of this! but still well done everyone a B is still gooood :) April 26 at 1:56pm · Like	June and Shauna both affirm Juan's views
Juan is good . but not for me. this pitch was an A. Mostly because his feedback is about structure and he said there was no particular order for it... wtf!?!?!? April 26 at 1:58pm · Like	Jaun's short, declarative statements _is good. but not for me. this pitch was an A_ reflects the issue of his identity as an A student. The abbreviated question/expletive _wtf!?!?!?_ (What the f—k) attests to his strength of feeling.
Jane soz for the latest well done guys April 28 at 7:47pm · Like · 1	

Juan's switch of style from a formal analysis of Bernard's feedback to familiar banter and text speak with June indicates an advanced level of digital literacy. He uses different styles in different contexts or with different readers. In doing so he demonstrates that he understands the style in relation to context so that his voice will be recognised by readers in multiple contexts.

This recognition is an example of self-policing. Juan understands the hierarchies and values present in different contexts. His acceptance of the status quo, the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 1991) is evident. Earlier he said that he would speak to

Bernard in a 'diplomatic way ;)' he realises that there is an acceptable way of speaking to a tutor but he adds an irony to this recognition by adding the smiling, winking face. Juan's diplomacy is seen in the following post in PGF 21, Bernard has posted his feedback and Juan responds:

[VLE Private forum 21: lines 20-88]

Author: Juan
Date: Monday, 30 April 2012 19:04:22 o'clock BST
Subject: RE: Presentation feedback - group proposal

Dear Brenard,	Misspelling of B's name. Bold font
thank you for providing our group with feedback on the final pitch/presentation.	Juan opens his response by thanking Bernard – this action is in keeping with the tutor/student order of discourse. Juan uses _our/we_ to foreground his response as on behalf of the group – _our group_, _we appreciate_.
We appreciate your comments although we believe there was some misunderstanding in regards to our appointed weaknesses. We say this with most admiration and respect for you position and professionalism as a Lecturer and only to express our views from a purely academic self-development perspective.	Mood and Modality, a declarative sentence making a knowledge statement the focus is on making a claim, _although we believe there was some misunderstanding_ Juan uses the modal marker 'we believe' to introduce the evaluation of Bernard's feedback, from the perspective of the group.

Juan's repeated misspelling of Bernard's name (see Facebook post line 1126 above) might indicate a lack of familiarity with his tutor and explain the polite, almost obsequious, tone of his post. However, Juan is challenging his tutor's decision which contravenes the social practice of tutorial authority and disturbs the genre of feedback (tutor speaks, student listens). In using 'we' Bernard takes up the group's identity as a position from which to criticise Bernard's feedback and grade decision that is indicative of the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 1991). The students have not handed in their final individual assignments and to confront the tutor who will grade their work is a risky endeavour so masking the individuality of his challenge is a sensible approach. Moreover, the suggestion that several students have the same opinion gives strength to the challenge and might intimidate:

The main point we would like to clarify concerns your feedback in terms of structure, as we remember your guidelines regarding what should be included in the presentation referred to a range of topics, which we believe to have covered in our presentation. We also remember you mentioning there wasn't any particular order to it. We would like to explain that also according to Tom Lunt's guidelines on pitch delivery stated that the product can be great but it is normally the personal aspect that makes the sale, [...] The fact that the venue was presented at minute 8, is again a matter of structuring to which there were no guidelines.	Juan focuses on structure and refers back to advice that Bernard had given regarding structure. I (Tom Lunt) am brought in to justify the introduction of the team.
We do agree that our objectives could have been more specific.	Juan does not equivocate regarding the objectives, which Bernard suggested could have been more specific. However, this comment is brief (11 words out of 458) and fails to acknowledge the importance of objective setting.
In any case, we respect your marking and this just our opinion. We would also like to thank you for your dedication and helpfulness during the teaching of the module. Kind regards, Initial Event Design & Management p.s.- please find attached our PP presentation. [file attached]	The conclusion is semi formal and from the team, not the individual who wrote it.

Even without the insight given by having access to the students' Facebook conversations, the negative feeling is evident. Juan refers twice to his respect for Bernard's position as lecturer and his marking but disrespect, frustration and anger creep into the text in Juan's rebuttal of Bernard's feedback and suggestion that not enough guidance was given. The lack of guidance was also evident in many of the free text comments given by students in the survey. In his interview, Bernard comments on the issue of guidance:

Interview Bernard 24/7/12

I remember one of your replies where you wrote something like, 'I spent half a minute googling this and I found all of these different pages and all of these different things.'

Declarative mood beginning with a mental process. While Bernard modalises, _something like_ he emphasises his point in two ways, reporting my voice directly and repeating of 'all'.

VLE Barnardo's Open forum 5/3/12

Hi Alex,
I was wondering if we are allowed to Vegas night at the rocket involving gambling i.e. (poker , roulette etc). Are there any legal restrictions on organising an event such as this in the rocket.
Awaiting your response.
Thank you
[posted by Louise]
Group [Group number deleted]

Informal salutation.
Declarative mood beginning with a mental process that changes to an interrogative mood

VLE Barnardo's Open forum 8/3/12

Louise
A simple google search 'organising gambling events' gave me this link as the second option
http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/gf-faqs/poker/can_i_raise_money_for_charity.aspx
I hope you find it helpful.
Regards
Tom

Formal salutation. Declarative mood. The use of the word _simple_ suggests that Louise could have done the Google search because it was easy.

In this knowledge exchange I answer Louise's question by pointing her in the direction of information and imply that she could have found it herself.

Interview Bernard 24/7/12

So perhaps trying to encourage the students to try to find some information on their own before they are asking questions because that's an issue that comes up in other modules as well. Sometimes it appears as though the students want the teachers just to tell them exactly what to do.

Declarative mood. Using the word _perhaps_ and phrase _sometimes it appears_ Bernard modalises his commitment to the value of students finding things out on their own without the help of a tutor.

There is a subtle and important point relating to the nature of the questions that the students asked. The students' questions reveal a kind of disengagement and my answering rewards their behavior and creates a 'student dependent on tutor' police order (Rancière, 1991).

A similar point is made by John, a former LMU student who worked for a London-based events company involved in the module PME:

Interview John 18/7/12

I don't know, maybe we could encourage the students more to ask those kind of questions e:m yeah there was a lot of operational questions, a lot of nitty gritty how does this work rather than sort of, not theoretical but rather than sort of overarching question. I think you get what I'm saying? […] Or perhaps, how do e:m What's a good way to go about introducing myself to suppliers? How do I generate sales leads? […] Those kind of things. Whereas the majority of questions were kind of like, you know, 'Do I need to include this cost in my budget?'

John's negative mental process statement followed by _maybe_ modalises his commitment to the value of the kinds of questions students ask.

John seeks my affirmation and commitment to what he values by switching to an interrogative mood.

To emphasize his point John takes up the student's voice to ask the kind of questions he sees as important and then contrasts these questions with one that he sees as less so.

John almost echoes Bernard's observation regarding the kind of interactions that are taking place in the forums. Both use the word 'encourage' in relation to moving the students on in the kind of questions they ask. Another example is that of Isobel and Liz in *Dealing with non-participation* where both Isobel and Liz ask John if there is space left for the visit when it should have been clear how many places there were by the number of posts on the thread. This for me could be a double bind. I have encouraged interaction online to try and improve the student's engagement with the topic. However, the result is that the students' posts are often questions that imply a short cut. They could have found the answer for themselves but they take the less challenging route of asking their tutor. This leads to dissatisfaction amongst the teaching staff and the external professional who must answer. Juan also went to see Bernard to discuss the grade and Bernard responds to his post in the PGF shortly after this meeting:

[VLE Private forum 21: lines 20-88]	CDA Annotations
Author: Bernard **Date: Wednesday, 2 May 2012 15:35:52 o'clock BST** **Subject: RE: Presentation feedback - group proposal**	
Dear All, Thanks for the message, Juan also came by today so we talked about it as well. I appreciate your comments, and will take them on board for future reference. I agree that your presentation was good - although there were some weaknesses which means B+ rather than A.	Bernard's tutorial style is courteous and firm. His salutation is to the group and he addresses the group throughout his post. He avoids addressing the specific points in Juan's message.
Thanks also for doing such a good job throughout the semester, I look forward to receiving your proposals and reflective diaries next week. All the best, Bernard **[Interview Bernard 24/7/12 sections 7 & 8]**	Bernard acknowledges the group's *good job* and moves the focus temporally *I look forward* onto the next set of assessments.
Bernard: Then I gave them general feedback in week 10 after all the presentations had been made and they were sent the feedback sheet and mark via email or it was uploaded into their e:m blackboard forums and a couple of groups did not use the forums so I emailed the feedback at the end of week 10. [...] There weren't any issues I have to say with the feedback. I didn't have any issues, complaining about the mark, apart from one student e:m who was part of a group doing the USE case study and I gave them a B for the presentation. He came to me in week 11. We talked a bit about that he had received A's for all his presentations throughout the course of study at London Met but it was uh a civilised conversation and he didn't want me to change the grade or anything just talked about the grade	Bernard uses several declarative statements - *I gave them… they were sent… it was uploaded…* and *I emailed* as he gives a clear account of how he gave the students feedback on their presentations. He also makes temporal references to when particular tasks were done or incidents took place. There is strong commitment in Bernard's statement, *there weren't any issues I have to say with the feedback.* He conflates issues with complaints. However he then hedges, *apart from one student* Bernard contrasts the student's previous record of As and the nature of the conversation which is represented as positive.
TL OK	

Bernard: And I further explained cos he thought perhaps that the USE presentations were e:m more difficult perhaps than the Barnardo's case study **TL** mm	Reason for further explanation given with high degree of modality _perhaps_ repeated.

Bernard's response in the PGF acknowledges, but does not engage with, the points in Juan's post. It seems he assumes that because he and Juan have met to discuss the work it is not necessary to go into more detail. In his interview Bernard narrates the exchange with Juan whom he characterises as an exception because it was the only issue or complaint relating to the grades he gave. Bernard's recollection of his discussion with Juan is of Juan's previous grades and that the Upper Street Events (USE) case study was more challenging than the alternative Barnardo's case. This was not mentioned by Juan in the PGF or the Facebook group but was evident in the conversation between Jennifer and Marie in Act 1: Scene 1 and in the free text comments from the survey. Bernard's use of the phrase 'civilised conversation' indicates that Juan continued in his recognition of the distribution of the sensible that he displayed in the PGF.

5.4 Politics and the stutter

This chapter has considered the texts produced by students, staff and external individuals. I have chosen these because they focus on aspects of resistance in the community of learners who took the PME module. I believe that in following Rancière (1999) and focussing on areas of resistance or politics I have addressed Benjamin's (1996) suggestion that the nature of a learning community might be discerned by asking: are the students active producers and, to what extent are the students' efforts recognised?

In the first text, _Working out what's required_ the nature of the discussion between Jennifer and Marie is 'productive'. They discuss their work, what they do and don't understand, sharing ideas and opinions. In her interview Jennifer describes how group

members would 'pull' each other up to prevent frustration becoming conflict. However, *Dealing with non-participation* is less positive as Isobel is attacked for her unproductivity. It is clear that Isobel is not as confident in virtual space as Jennifer or Liz. She fails to realise the significance of the group forum until she is actually attacked and forced to defend herself there. The texts show Jennifer and Liz 'policing' each other to use Rancière's (1999) term. What they write and discuss is within the ways of doing, being and saying that are recognisable within a given distribution of the sensible for students in higher education. However, there are ripples of what Rancière (1999) calls political subjectification, in other words, the redefinition of experience in that Liz takes up a role that had no place in the previous order of things. She seeks to *teach* Jennifer within the virtual space which is close to Benjamin's (1996) conception of a student who teaches as well as learns. *Dealing with non-participation* builds on some of the themes present in the first scene. The pressure that Jennifer, Liz and Marie put on Isobel is, I suggest, political subjectification. The students act politically to remove a group member from their group. They ignore the guidance given by their tutors and do not refer to their authority. The students act on their own terms and as Rancière (2004) puts it, reconfigure the existing distribution of the sensible.

Conflict resolution can be read in several ways. The text draws on interviews with Rachel, a student and Ben, her tutor which narrates a confrontation between a group of students who contributed and one (Chris) who apparently didn't. The text can be read through Rancière's (1999) lens in much the same way as *Dealing with non-participation*. However, I suggest an alternative reading that links Rancière's (1999) politics with MacLure's (2011, 2013) materiality where language stutters/stammers. The affective intensity spills out of the text in the materiality of Chris' tears at the accusations levelled at him by the rest of the group. Like Isobel, the group challenges him for his lack of contribution. However, Rachel and the others don't challenge him until the day of the presentation. Chris failed to see that the rest of the group had effectively built a case against him by documenting his absences throughout the semester and as Ben recalls, making comments on his absence in the seminars. While Ben tries to narrate a happy ending in her interview, the anger of Rachel's direct

accusation 'no one of you cares about us' forcefully attacks both Ben and me, challenging and accusing both of us for not punishing Chris more harshly.

I suggest that Rachel's narrative engages in what Rancière, in an interview with Biechman et al. (2005) calls politics - openly challenging the distribution of the sensible. While Rachel makes her challenge after the module was completed and marks given, it is clear, particularly in Ben's interview, that Rachel challenged him during the module and so she made '…visible what had no business being seen, and [made] heard a discourse where once there was only a place for noise' (Rancière, 1999:30).

This accusation is an act of dissensus. Rachel challenges the distribution of the sensible that I have established in my interview with her. She questions the point of the disciplinary regime I have put in place when Ben and I ignore the evidence that she and her group have collected to show that Chris had not contributed. Rachel's criticism relating to lack of support and direct challenge during the interview is an important moment as they compel me to step from my position as the silent interviewer and defend my position as a teacher.

The contrast between *Politics* and the texts in *Terms and Conditions of Support* & *Subjectification* is striking. Other groups did engage in high levels of digital literacy. However, when one considers both the topic maps, the content of the texts, their duration and importantly, as the exchange between Juan and Jane shows, the recognition of individual members' contributions, *Politics* shows far greater sophistication in the students' writing. This suggests that the social media used could make a difference to levels of engagement and bonding social capital within the learning community. Non-institutional Web 2.0 tools such as Facebook might provide such an environment.

While *Politics* does not immediately suggest digitally literate students in new positions, or relationships with tutors disturbing hierarchical power structures distributed in pedagogical relationships, there are some nuances that should not go unnoticed. The students' use of Facebook is, I suggest, transgressive, reminiscent of Rancière's (1991b) book, *The Nights of Labor* where he argues that working class emancipation

broke with the identity of the working class and the division [partage] that assigned "thought" to some and "production" to others. Rancière (2003) describes the workers:

> …claiming the status of fully speaking and thinking beings…Their emancipation was thus based on the transgressive will…to act as if intellectual equality were indeed real and effectual
>
> (Rancière, 2003:219)

The pedagogical hierarchy where the teacher teaches and the student learns is interrupted. The students take on the identity of the teacher. I suggest that there is some similarity between *Working on a Presentation* and *Working out What's Required*. Like Jennifer and Liz, Juan and Jane are negotiating as part of the police order of doing, being and saying as students in Higher Education. At the same time Juan's intervention and perceived changes to Jane's work are problematic for Jane. This could be because of the way Juan intervened without discussion but it might also be because political subjectification (Rancière, 1999) is taking place – his intervention reconfigures the existing order of things as he seeks to produce through teaching Jane what to include in her presentation. What is more, in their online and face-to-face interactions the students also built imagined social capital in the way that they supported and took strength (Quinn, 2005:10) from each other both in virtual and real space. The position that Juan was able to take as a spokesperson for the group in challenging Bernard's feedback and grade was strengthened because he had been able to discuss the matter with the rest of the group in their Facebook forum. Moreover, in responding to Juan's post, Bernard says that he will take their comments on board for future reference, implying that he too has learnt from the exchange. It is not a tectonic movement of position but there is a small rupture or tear in *le partage du sensible*. I suggest the students have also taught the teacher.

5.5. Social capital and democratic learning communities

From a normative, consensual perspective, the texts in this chapter suggest that social capital is present. For example, the way in which Jennifer talks about getting to know the other students in her group in PME and the students' communication with John at USE is indicative of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000), in that the students are

developing loose networks between themselves and reaching out to individuals and organisations beyond the university. However, as noted earlier (Section 5.3.2), in his interview John talks about the nature of the students 'operational' questions that are in some way lacking. He struggles to find the alternative, and in settling for "overarching" questions, the students are positioned as not knowing and not knowing how to know. Their voices are recognised within the distribution of the sensible, they are allotted their place. In contrast, the exchanges between Jennifer and Liz and also the interactions in Juan's Facebook group suggest greater levels of engagement through digitally literate practices. However, in referring to the tutor for clarification of the model matrix (Jennifer), and professionalism and assessment - performance in past presentations to reinforce a point (Juan), the distribution of the sensible is, for the most part, maintained and social capital can be seen as reinforcing relationships and practices rather than changing them.

In Chapter 3 I cited Jennifer's comment that she was surprised at the number of students who "…go in and out – attend lectures and leave. Because that is what I do; I am not interested in getting anything else out off [sic] university." In her interview she talks about the normal way of preparing for an assessed presentation being to meet up and "whip up" a presentation in the last few weeks of the semester. This indicates the nature of the students' norms, values and beliefs as they relate to participation in university work in this case study. I suggest that such norms of non-participation are indicative of an absence of learning community. Issues arise where students don't conform to the "go in and out" pattern and a more engaged norm is prevalent, as in the interviews with Rachel and Ben where Chris' lack of contribution leads to his exclusion and a difficult confrontation on the day of the presentation. Rachel's frustration is compounded by Ben's and my failure, from her perspective, to apply the correct sanctions as set out in the rules (see Appendix D). In Jennifer's interview and the PGF texts, the group members move quickly to sanction Isobel who is seen as failing to contribute.

One reading of the students going "in and out" of the university is that there is a lack of what Coleman (1988) calls closure present in the module PME. Without closure, norms to guide behaviour and build trust are more difficult to sustain. Coleman (1988)

studied social capital in relation to families and identified that the amount of time and the quality of a relationship between a child and its parent had a significant impact on levels of social capital. What is clear from the texts in Chapter 5 is that tutors do not participate in the VLE and students, for the most part, are excluding their tutors from the forums they create in other social media. The consequence is that the structure of relationships that form between students means that the main effective sanction in the face of conflict is exclusion without the involvement of the tutor and that the procedure of self-assessment, which was introduced to avoid exclusion, has limited or no impact.

An alternative reading to Coleman's (1988) idea of closure is both Quinn's (2005) and Wintrup's (2014) observation that students, in the face of exclusion in their learning community create what Quinn (2005) terms, Imagined Social Capital. In the case study of PME there is a tension in the students' resistance to the tutors by not engaging with self-assessment and excluding tutors from their discourses in virtual spaces. At the same time the tutor is the main point of authority, consulted and invoked when students are uncertain about coursework or needed as backup in situations requiring sanction. This suggests the teacher/student dependency that Rancière (1991) identifies. However, I suggest that in the self-writing (Foucault, 1994a) that Jennifer and Liz undertake in their PGF, and in Juan's Facebook group and the interaction with Bernard in their PGF regarding their grade, Imagined Social Capital through political subjectification (Rancière, 1999) is generated. In this way the argument of this thesis is that when students and (potentially) staff engage with each other, participating in self writing in virtual spaces:

> The dynamic is of individual performance of identity and recognition, and validation of that performance by members of the community, enabling one to be simultaneously different and the same…a re-imagining of the self with and through others, without being absorbed or assimilated.

> (Quinn, 2005:13)

SE - participation through self-writing has the potential to develop a different form of closure within groups to that suggested by Coleman (1988). Self-writing can facilitate the development of norms that guide behaviour. This is not the acceptance of a

homogenous set of values and ideas but of participation in a discussion over what values and ideas should be accepted which can be generative of what I call Democratic Learning Communities.

5.6 Summary

The texts in this Chapter addressed the topic questions:

6   What is the nature of the discussions and communication between students, staff and external professionals in the VLE?
7   What is the level of trust between students and staff?
8   What is the nature of the networks being made between students and other individuals and groups via the VLE?

Students communicated with each other to collaborate on coursework, Jennifer and Marie discussed aspects of their work they weren't sure about and Juan advised and amended Jane's presentation. These texts suggest reasonably high levels of trust between the individuals involved. They could be candid with each other and there is reciprocity in that they replied to one another's posts. At the same time these positive texts have to be seen alongside the more disturbing police work of Jennifer, Isobel and Marie. It is clear that Jennifer and Marie did not trust Isobel and used the PGF to attack Isobel for her lack of contribution. Acts 1, 2 and 3 suggest that the nature of networks made between students and other individuals and groups via the VLE is limited. Tutors only used the students' PGFs to give feedback and the students used the OGF to arrange visits to the venue with John from USE. The tutors contributed very little to the OGFs with students' posts being answered exclusively by me as the module leader.

The texts also address the issue questions:

2   *What is the nature of the texts produced in the VLE and other virtual spaces by students, staff and others involved with the module?*
3   *What do the texts produced in virtual spaces say about the relationship between policy and practice?*

In my reading of all three Acts, I draw on Rancière's (Bingham and Biesta, 2010) notions of police, political subjectification and *le partage du sensible* (the distribution/division of the sensible). There is evidence of the students policing each

other, for example Jennifer and Marie's treatment of Isobel (*Dealing with non-participation*) and the way Rachel's group used their PGF to record Chris' lack of contribution (*Conflict Resolution*). The students' way of doing, saying and being within this field of experience seems to be where an individual cannot contribute so that rather than supporting the student and involving the tutor, they are pushed out with varying degrees of aggression. More positively there are instances of political subjectification where *le partage du sensible* is disturbed, for example in *Working out what's required* and in *Politics* there are instances of students writing as teachers, for example Liz tentatively tries to guide Jennifer and Juan advises Jane. In both these instances there is difficulty, resistance and even conflict. Jennifer largely ignores Liz's correct advice and Jane reacts strongly to Juan altering her presentation. Rachel's open challenge to Ben and me in *Conflict resolution?* regarding the lack of support and failure to deal severely with Chris, along with Juan's challenge to Bernard's feedback in *Coming to terms – receiving feedback* are all, I suggest, examples of political subjectification.

There is also some evidence of the relationship between policy discourses and the student's practices. For example in *Dealing with non-participation* the policy discourse of employability can be read in Jennifer and Isobel's self writing. Jennifer is perceived negatively by Isobel as a 'boss' or 'employer' and later Jennifer draws parallels between their group work and paid employment after university. Indeed she goes further and shows how lack of contribution (work) can lead to unemployment (dismissal) In *Working on a presentation* Juan makes a claim to be 'professional' in giving advice to Jane.

The relationship between policy discourses of digital literacy, learning community and student engagement and the practices of students and staff is complex. The policy discourse relating to digital literacy and SE was instrumental in my work to set up the VLE for students to engage online. However, the practices of the students in the texts presented in 5.1 to 5.3 do not seem to have been typical of all students in the case study. Like the students in *Politics*, the majority did not use a PGF. This could be because as digitally-literate students they opted for alternative, more appropriate and user-friendly digital platforms outside the university's VLE.

There are several instances e.g. *Working out what's required* and particularly in *Conflict Resolution* where the students' valorisation of face-to-face meetings would suggest that the community of the classroom is a strong driver in relation to discourses of learning community. Moreover, the Topic Maps show that significant amounts of conversations online are given over to organising face-to-face meetings. For the students, engagement seems to be judged in relation to participation as presence in the classroom and in virtual spaces, with the former seen as most important.

Reading the student's' texts using Rancière's work suggests a distribution of the sensible is at once intact but also disturbed. Binaries manifest themselves; community/exclusion, digital/embodied and (dis)engagement. There are also silences and tears that resist being read. Drawing on Rancière's (1999) notion of democracy I have introduced a new concept of Democratic Learning Community that is not about signing up to a shared set of beliefs and values but to participate in a confrontation between individuals about what it is to share and be in a community. I now move in the concluding chapter to discuss these readings in relation to ideology and the implications for education research, teaching practice and policy making.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: left to their own devices…

In this concluding chapter, I return to the aim of this thesis which is to analyse interactions between students, tutors and professionals in computer mediated communication (CMC) environments so that the potential role digital literacy plays in student engagement, social capital and supportive learning communities can be understood more clearly. I begin with the central research question, summarising the findings of my research and set out the contribution to knowledge my research makes. I then consider the implications of the research, its limitations and my own development as a researcher.

In addressing the central research question, *How do discourses which foreground digital literacy, learning community and student engagement relate to the politics and subjectivities of students and staff in both physical and virtual spaces?* this thesis argues that in Higher Education the policy discourses of digital literacy, student engagement and learning community are profoundly normative and premised on ideological assumptions that they can deliver trust in institutions, social cohesion and increasing competitiveness. In contrast my study found, at times, intense levels of antagonism, dissensus and disintegration in the students' learning community, both in the virtual spaces and in physical encounters described by interviewees. This is in stark contrast to the consensual, normative, discourses around digital literacy, student engagement (SE) and learning community typically found in policy discourses. At times it is questionable whether terms like learning community and social capital as framed in Higher Education (HE) policy discourse are appropriate to the texts this case study reports.

The texts presented in this thesis suggest new ways of framing discourses of digital literacy, SE and learning community in higher education. In particular, those taken from the students' online conversations, show significant differences that relate to the nature of virtual space and its effect on the students' writing. In the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE) the students' writing was for the most part circumscribed. This is evidenced by the VLE generated usage statistics, the students' survey

responses, the topic maps and in the students' silence in the Open Group Forums and Private Group Forums (OGFs and PGFs). This silence contrasts with the abundant nature of the students' writing in the closed Facebook page I was given access to. This is a new insight into the students' use of CMC technology which contrasts with previous research suggesting that rather than re-engaging with their studies through social media such as Facebook, students conduct a range of other activities such as identity building and critiquing of the teaching experience (Selwyn, 2009).

The case study shows how my use of the VLE did at times reinforce teacher-dependent behaviour amongst students rather than fostering independent learning. Students used the OGF in the institutional VLE in a similar way to a customer help service facility on a website. Short instrumental questions were asked to which, as Bernard observed, students could have easily found the answer themselves had they read the information provided more closely. Similarly John, from the event management company suggested that students were not addressing substantive issues relating to the topic of study within the VLE; what he called "overarching questions". They were, he felt, focussing on unimportant or less productive lines of thinking and questioning and wondered how they might be encouraged to think about the topics in different ways.

These observations led me to develop and change my position. During the early stages of writing this thesis my thinking was similar to Gee (2003) who suggested that CMC interactions in communities of gamers could contribute to pedagogic change in the form of a levelling of hierarchy between teacher and student in HE settings. However, drawing on the work of Rancière (1999), I suggest that levelling is not inevitable and at times reinforcing and recasting of hierarchy might result. The students took up different subject positions; teacher, learner, leader and manager. They challenged each other online and in some cases used virtual spaces to exclude individuals who did not conform, or come up to, expectations. This was done either directly through online forums or indirectly by using the texts from the online forum as a matter of record to be used as evidence against an individual – a practice that I connived in.

This thesis does not accept a reading of the case study of Planning and Management of Events (PME) as CMC merely recasting and reinforcing hierarchical pedagogic practices. The case study presents texts that suggest the practice of self-writing in CMC can lead to changes in practice of a limited but important nature. Moreover, the link between the virtual and physical is of particular interest. For example the exchanges on Facebook and the PGF (see 5.3.2 *Coming to terms – receiving feedback*) led to what Bernard described as 'a civilised conversation' with Juan. The study also showed students supporting one another and taking strength from practices of self-writing (Foucault, 1994) in virtual spaces to challenge their tutors – including me. This is a form of digitally-literate, political subjectification (Rancière, 1999). New voices are heard, sometimes momentarily, that may be generative of what I call Democratic Learning Community.

I suggest that the notion of Democratic Learning Community is an original contribution to knowledge because it recognises and offers the opportunity to reframe approaches to teaching and learning that position learning community NOT as a goal to be worked towards where all individuals share a common set of values. This is an original contribution to knowledge in theoretical terms because it takes the concept as framed in contemporary discourses of learning community in HE and, using Rancière's (1999, 2010) ideas of politics, police and democracy, challenges its current normative status. Democratic Learning Community, as I propose it, is a situation in which dissensus, agonistic and suspicious positions may be taken. Democratic Learning Community allows for the growth of new groups that might themselves be communities operating their own forms of social capital. The possibility exists for students and staff to develop their own orbits around the truth (Rancière, 1991).

I also argue that using Foucault's (1994) conception of self-writing as a way of framing digital literacy is an original contribution to knowledge. Through self-writing, in VLEs, Facebook groups and other CMC and physical spaces, there are opportunities for both staff and students in HE to confront and dissent from established discourses and allow new subjectivities to develop and emerge. From the CMC interactions in Juan's Facebook group emerges the 'civilised conversation' between Juan and Bernard. The physical outcome of self-writing in CMCs is not always comfortable or consensual as

Ben's description of 'the boy who cried' when attacked by the rest of his group on the day of the presentation shows.

For students, teachers and managers it is important to understand the value of the practice of self-writing. A practice that is separate from assessment self-writing is, I suggest, an intrinsic element of digital literacy and generative of social capital. This is neither social capital in Putnam's (1995) terms of joining pre-existing networks to gain advantage nor Bourdieusian social capital that reproduces structures that maintain the status quo. Self-writing allows for a social capital that develops on its own terms and values. What I have found is that transformation cannot be done to the learning community but rather its members can transform themselves for better or worse. Either way, what is needed are places where teachers and students may be left to their own devices.

There have been many studies of students' interactions in CMC environments such as institutional VLEs and Facebook. These have deployed a range of methodological approaches, including ethnographic studies which used constant comparison and open coding of text. Content analysis has also been used while other studies have conducted student surveys and analysed the usage data provided by the VLE itself.

This thesis uses a conventional survey of the students and online usage data taken from the VLE. However, the combination of CDA and deconstructive commentary is novel, in allowing a double reading which shows the partiality of the author's knowledge. Moreover, the students allowing access to their Facebook group is unusual and gives a unique insight into how students work together in CMC environments outside the institutional VLE and beyond the gaze of their tutors.

6.1 Implications

This thesis should challenge practitioners, managers, educational researchers and policy makers to consider the nature of the learning communities in which they operate and how they are affected by discourses of digital literacy, SE and learning community. For students, practitioners and managers questions such as: 'What kind of

learning community do you want to work in?', 'What does participation in a democratic learning community look like?' and, 'What does it mean to be a student, teacher or manager in this University?'

In the case study the students created Facebook groups without explicit direction from their tutors. They created a forum in which they could write freely to each other and drew strength from this activity. I suggest that in doing so they wrote in the genres that Foucault (1994a) refers to as *hupomnēmata* and *correspondence* and at times escaped the *stultitia* associated with endless reading of others' work and a dependence on the explication of tutors who offer information and guidance.

I suggest that self-writing is of great value for students. It could be that self-writing must happen away from the tutor's gaze. However, I suggest that the boundary can be porous. When a learning community celebrates what Rancière (1999) calls politics and promotes self writing activities in both embodied and digital spaces it will be exemplifying equality and emancipation – not as destinations but rather as activities which will allow more flexible subject positions, build imagined social capital and enable Democratic Learning Communities to grow.

Educational researchers and practitioners should be aware of the limitations of institutional VLEs. The findings of this study suggest students prefer alternative CMC environments. Furthermore, the preference for embodied over digital space is important when considering SE and suggests practitioners should encourage students' use and proficiency in a range of CMC tools and make direct links between physical and digital learning spaces. At the same time the metrics used to evaluate SE should recognise the use of a diverse range of CMCs rather that just the usage of the institution's VLE.

For practitioners the suggestion that institutional VLE space can and should be augmented with Web 2.0 applications might be challenging. However, it should be noted that such innovations are not always required or necessary. An organic, voluntary approach is more likely to lead to SE, while top down impositions tend to be counter-productive.

6.2 Limitations and future research

The use of a case study implies a set of limitations regarding generalizability that are well rehearsed. Similarly, the limitations of being an insider researcher are also widely recognised and critiqued. However, I push against the characterisation of these limitations because they lead to paralysis and rejection that are based on the impossibility of total representation and the ability of the author to remain outside the objects of study.

I would have liked the students to be more involved in the analysis stage of this thesis. In particular I would have liked to share my interpretations in Chapter 5 with them. I recognise my impact on this case, my teaching style etc. will have impacted on the students' behaviour.

The thesis could have engaged with issues of gender and class. In particular, instances in the text where women took on what are often seen as male roles. An example of this is Jennifer taking on the role of manager in an aggressive way that fits more with a male construction of a managerial role. I found the single-question-inducing-narrative approach to interviews difficult in that it was not easy to pursue particular topics such as class although this may have been due to my inexperience with the technique rather than the technique itself.

In relation to future research, the binaries of embodied/digital, community/exclusion and (dis)engagement have significant implications for how digital literacy, student engagement and community are conceived and practised in Higher Education. Digital literacy is in part about understanding and managing these binaries. Ethnographic research of these spaces, while difficult in terms of consent, might be invaluable to students and teachers as well as managers and policy makers in higher education. In particular, participative action research combined with ethnographic approaches that seek to engage students and teachers in identifying traditional hierarchies has the potential to be very valuable to learning communities in higher education. Furthermore, research that examines the relationship between self-writing in digital spaces and the embodied "real" encounters between members of learning

communities is another area for future research. However, such research will not sign up to discourses of improvement and progress but rather to "surf" (MacLure, 2013) to new, unexpected possibilities.

6.3 My development

Looking back on this thesis over the course of the past five years, I can see how my attitudes and opinions have changed as I have engaged in research. In particular my views on digital literacy and use of technology in the context of student engagement and learning communities in Higher Education have evolved. I have moved on from a view of technology as an agent of transformation and democratisation in higher education. Now I am more cautious, having witnessed the ways in which digitally literate students can police their peers and suppress politics. Moreover, use of technology can encourage dependency and disengagement.

In writing this thesis I have developed a set of materials that have been used by colleagues teaching first year students. The materials are a set of scripts that students perform in their seminars and provide a basis to discuss issues relating to non-participation in group work, receiving feedback and working together. I did not anticipate producing these scripts or using them as teaching aids. Furthermore, when the students found out that the words they were speaking were actually those of students who had studied on their course it was noticeable how their attention grew.

It is hard to say what has been the final and most significant point of learning and development for me as a researcher writing this thesis. I can narrow it down to three points:

1. Designing a questionnaire and then using statistical methods was one of the hardest and most challenging aspects of this work. Learning to use SPSS software and write in a different genre when presenting results was a struggle and reminded me of what it is like to be a student. Finally, using CDA was a challenge as I had no formal linguistic training.

2. As a researcher I was aware of the serendipitous moment, an unexpected or unplanned-for moment that changes the perspective and course of a research trajectory. However when such a moment occurs, as it did when I was given access to the students' private Facebook group, one can never be fully prepared. As a researcher I am now convinced of the need for a flexible approach to research that is open to unexpected moments and prepared to embrace them.

3. Finally my engagement with post-structural perspectives has radicalised my research approach. Reading *Educational Research Undone: The Postmodern Embrace* (Stronach and MacLure, 1997) and also Bingham & Biesta's (2010) Jaques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation were significant moments in my research journey which encouraged me to experiment and take risks with(in) my writing and the genre of evaluation in Education Research.

In my examination of acts of resistance I hope this thesis also resists an easy, complacent reading but rather leaves an inheritance for the reader '…to sift, to harness, to reclaim, to reactivate…and then strike out with choices which not only inherit their own norms, but invent them too, in the inevitable absence of programmes and fixed norms' (Derrida, 1994b:39).

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Appendices

Appendix A Changes to the PME module aims and learning outcomes

The module aims at present are;

The aims of the module are:

1. to examine the contribution made by market research, project planning and stakeholder analysis to the successful delivery of events

2. to identify strategic decision points in the events planning process and evaluate their relative importance

3. to familiarise students with the financial context of event management, including budgeting, pricing and financial control

4. to identify the importance and role of planning in gaining funding for events

5. to address key elements in the practical operations management of events, including health and safety concerns, marketing communications, and the management of risk

6. to conduct an appraisal of a given event and demonstrate the importance of monitoring and evaluation in the events planning process

The module aims should be restated as;

1. To equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to research, plan, implement and evaluate a wide range of event types in a diverse range of settings

2. To develop students competence in group work and oral presentation

3. To develop students ability to reflect critically on their learning experiences recognising areas of high and low performance and the actions necessary to address them

The learning outcomes are at present;

On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate an awareness of the diverse range of events and describe their underlying structures and rationales.

2. define the contribution made by market research and project planning to the successful delivery of events

3. identify strategic decision points in the events planning process and evaluate their relative importance

4. conduct a stakeholder analysis of a given event, assess the associated potential risks and suggest planning best practice methods to mitigate such risks (A3)

5. demonstrate familiarity with planning the budgets and related processes (A1, A2)

6. outline planning strategies to maximise funding opportunities

7. identify key elements in the practical operations management of events and evaluate contrasting models of scheduling and delivery (A2)

8. demonstrate the role of planning in the delivery of marketing communications

9. outline the key elements of risk and health and safety concerns at events and devise processes to address them effectively (A2, A3)

10. conduct an appraisal of a given event and demonstrate the importance of monitoring and evaluation in the events planning process (A1)

The Learning outcomes are to be restated as;

On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. Formulate an event feasibility study and explain its importance to the successful delivery of an event. (A3)

2. Design an event proposal for an event that incorporates; a stakeholder analysis, operations plan, costed budget, analysis of risks (including H&S risk assessment), marketing plan and monitoring/evaluation procedures. (A3)

3. Work in a group to organise and deliver a high quality presentation of an event proposal. (A2)

4. Appraise their own and others performance throughout the module reflecting on how future activity might be modified to improve individual and group performance (A1)

Appendix B Text of PowerPoint shown to students

Module survey

Please will you complete this questionnaire on your experience of the teaching and learning at London Met and on the module Planning & management of events. The questionnaire is part of my thesis for my Doctorate in Education. I also hope that I may be able to publish an article on the results of this research. I hope this research will help both students and staff in higher education to gain insight into how they teach, study and learn together.

All responses are strictly confidential and anonymity will be ensured. By completing and returning this questionnaire you are consenting to the results being used in the research project.

Thanks

Tom

Appendix C Student Questionnaire – Closed questions

<u>Student Survey for Planning & Management of Events</u>

Please put a [√] in the box that best applies to you.

If you make a mistake or change your mind just fill in the square like this ■ and put a tick in the box you prefer.

<u>Section 1 – About University</u>

1. Are you a member of a student society?

☐ Yes. Then go to 1 a.   ☐ No. Then go to 1 b.

1 a. When was the last time you attended a society meeting /event? (1 = in the last week, 5 = over a year ago)

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

1 b. What is the main reason for you not to join a society? (Please check all that apply & use the box marked Other)

☐ Too busy   ☐ Don't know enough about them

☐ None of them interested me

☐ I have my own interests outside university

☐ Other

2. Are you involved with the Student Union at London Met? (1= very involved 5= never involved)

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

3. Are you aware of the peer mentoring schemes offered by the university?

☐ Yes. Then go to 4   ☐ No. Then go to 5

4. Have you taken part in a peer mentoring session?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

5. Would you consider being a peer mentor?

☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ I am a peer mentor

6. Please rate the following statements

1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree

teachers are responsible for supporting student learning

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

students should take responsibility for supporting other students learning

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

teachers and students should support each other's learning

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Section 2 – Inside & Outside University

1. Please rate the following statements

(1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree)

I generally socialise with non university friends

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

The university has introduced me to people and organisations that could help me in the future

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I have a job that is relevant to my degree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I have a job that is not relevant to my degree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I know someone who could contribute positively to the degree I am studying (e.g. by coming to talk to students)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. Based on my experience of the Planning and Management of Events module, I believe
(1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree)

I can trust myself take responsibility for my learning on this module

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

students can be trusted to take responsibility for their learning on this module

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

fellow students can be trusted to contribute positively in seminars and other group activities

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

the lecturer has delivered relevant, accurate subject material for the module

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

my seminar tutor to help me work through the subject material for the module

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

my seminar can be trusted tutor to mark my work fairly

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Please turn over

Section 3 - Using technology

1. For the module Planning & Management of Events
(1 = Every week 5 = Never)

I downloaded useful material from WebLearn

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I used a private forum in WebLearn for group work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I posted questions on the open forums in WebLearn

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I read the discussions in the open forums on WebLearn

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I used another social media platform (e.g. Facebook) to help with group work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Section 4 – about this module

10. Please rate the following statements

1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree

Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Staff are good at explaining things

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

The subject is intellectually stimulating

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

The criteria to be used in the marking were clear in advance

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Feedback on my work has been prompt

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Feedback has helped me clarify things I did not understand

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I have received sufficient advice and support

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

I have been able to contact staff when I needed to

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

The module materials were engaging

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

WebLearn materials were easy to access

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

WebLearn materials assisted my learning

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Is there anything else you would like to say about this module?

Section 5 – About you

Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female

Age:

☐ 20 or under ☐ 21-24 ☐ 25 or over

Did one or both of your parents go to university?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Ethnicity

White

☐ British ☐ Irish

Mixed multiple ethnic

☐ White & Black Caribbean ☐ White & Black African

☐ Any other mixed background

Asian or Asian British

☐ Indian ☐ Pakistani

☐ Chinese ☐ Any other Asian

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

☐ Caribbean ☐ African

Other ethnic group

☐ Arab ☐ Bangladeshi

☐

Any other Black background

☐ **Any other White background**

☐ **White and Black Asian**

☐ **Any other Ethnic group**

Thank you for completing this survey, if you would like a copy of the results and to find out more about this research please enter your student number in the box below. Please note the questionnaires will not be analysed until after your coursework has been marked

Student No:

Appendix D Team Assessment Sheet

People have a right to know/understand the standard of performance that is required by their group and be informed of the standard they are achieving.

If an individual is underperforming the team should make every effort to understand why by discussing the issues with the individual concerned.

The team and the individual should then make a plan to enable the individual to raise their performance to the standard required.

All students should be clear that if performance remains unsatisfactory the process outlined below will be undertaken.

It is important that underperformance is not ignored and left unchallenged until the end of the module – underperformance should be possible to identify quite early on and easily by week 5-6.

Please note that it is not possible for students to expel a group member. Students need to agree within their team how they will deal with different levels of input and reflect this in the allocation of marks.

Only where a team can demonstrate that a member has not responded to emails (copied into the relevant tutor), attended meetings for which minutes have been taken or contributed at all will they receive a zero grade. A tutor will award the same grade to all team members unless they are fully informed of the circumstances and presented with evidence that a team member hasn't contributed as outlined in the process below. The individual concerned should also be able to give his/her side.

Underperformance process:

If a team decides to go down this route they should inform their tutor first and then copy the tutor in on all email correspondence relating to the process outlined below.

If a student team falls out for whatever reason, they will be expected to grade themselves using the criteria given in the self assessment sheet on page 19. To understand and fairly apportion marks for the team presentation/discussion a team

assessment sheet on page 20 will be filled in by all members of the team and a signed copy handed in on the day of the presentation. This will measure individual's contributions on six indicators;

1. Regular attendance at team meetings

2. Contribution of ideas for the task

3. Researching, analysing and preparing material for the task

4. Supporting and encouraging team members

5. Contribution to cooperative team process

6. Practical contribution to the end product.

Your team should keep records of meetings and who is given what tasks, deadlines etc. this will help if you disagree on individual contributions and also enable your tutor understand what has gone on. See p22 of the module handbook for a meeting proforma.

You should start with the self assessment below. Individually students should award themselves a mark out of 20 for each of the six categories. The first and second columns provide criteria to help you decide a mark between 0 and 20. Use the third column to note the reasons why you feel your contribution was worth that mark.

When you have completed the self assessment sheet, the team should have a meeting with their tutor to discuss the self assessments and agree each person's mark for each category. Once you have agreed the marks you should fill in the team assessment sheet on p. The team should send the final team assessment accompanied by each individual's self assessment to their tutor.

Self assessment declaration sheet

Worth 20	Worth 0	Justification for mark	Mark
Regular attendance at team meetings Attended all team meetings, stayed to agreed end, worked within timescale, active and attentive, prepared to be flexible about meeting times	Missed several/most meetings, always or often late, left early, got off the point, giggled, day dreamed or gossiped most of the time		
Contribution of ideas for the task Thought about the topic in advance of meeting, provided workable ideas which were taken up by the team, built on others suggestions, and were prepared to test out your ideas on the team rather than keep quiet	Didn't come prepared. Didn't contribute any ideas. You tended to reject others ideas rather than build on them		
Researching, analysing and preparing materials for the task You did what you said you would do, your brought materials, did and equal share of the research & helped to analyse and evaluate material	You did no research. You didn't do what you promised to do. You didn't get involved with the task and allowed others to provide all the material.		
Contribution to cooperative team process Left personal differences outside team willing to review team progress and tackle conflict in the team, took on different roles as needed. Kept team on track, willing and flexible but focussed on the task.	Did not take initiative, waited to be told what to do. Always took the same role (leader, joker etc.) regardless of circumstances. Created conflict, and wasn't prepared to review team progress.		
Supporting and encouraging team members Keen to listen to others, encouraged participation, enabled a collaborative learning environment, sensitive to issues affecting team members with special needs	Sought only to complete the task, spoke over others & ignored their opinions, kept ideas and resources to yourself. Insensitive to individuals needs, didn't contribute to the learning process.		
Practical contribution to end product Willing to try doing new things. Not hogging the tasks, made a high level of contribution, took own initiative, was reliable and produced high standard of work/presentation	Not willing to take on any task, did not take on any responsibilities, were unreliable so others felt the need to keep checking up, and you made a limited, poor quality contribution.		

We think it is very difficult for all team members to make exactly the same level of contribution so the totals on the team assessment sheet for each student should not be the same unless you attach a short statement explaining why.

Team assessment sheet example

Student initials	Tom	Bernard	Ben	Phillipa	
Regular attendance at team meetings	15	19	19	20	
Contribution of ideas for the task	16	17	18	20	
Researching, analysing and preparing material	10	20	17	20	
Contribution to cooperative team process	12	15	19	20	
Supporting and encouraging team members	14	18	18	20	
Practical contribution to end product e.g. writing, presenting, making materials etc.	5	20	19	20	
Total for each student(*)	72	109	110	120	

The tutor grades the group discussion/presentation as 60%. A group members individual peer score e.g. 72 is divided by the group median score (in this case 109.5) and multiplied by the tutors mark;

So Tom gets:

72   x 60 = 40%

109.5

Bernard gets 58%. Ben gets 60%. Phillipa gets 66%.

Appendix E Meeting proforma

MEETING TITLE (enter the topic of the meeting here)

A copy of this document shoud be posted on the group's blog after the meeting

DATE:
VENUE:
PRESENT AT THE MEETING/AND APOLOGIES:
(list the names of all the people who participated in the meeting and note any who said in advance they could not attend)

MEETING DISCUSSION
(Briefly summarise the main points that were discussed during the meeting, who said what on each particular topic as well as general conclusions)

TO DO:
(list all the tasks that were agreed to be done following the meeting, deadlines by which the task(s) should be completed and assign a person responsible for each particular task)

NEXT MEETING DATE:
(agree on the date and time for the following meeting)