(Illustration to Introduction Paragraph 9 of a Thousand Plateaus by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) Reproduced here by kind permission of the artist Marc Gnui)

Through a glass darkly: A post-qualitative case study into **lecturers'** perceptions of academic writing practices in higher education.

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Abstract

This thesis shifts the traditional emphasis around academic writing and writing development from students' shortcomings as writers to an exploration of an under-researched aspect of the debate, namely lecturers' perspectives of academic writing (their own and students). It draws on a New Literacy Studies (NLS) approach that locates academic writing and writing development in higher education, within a critical and situated theory of practice. The research is located within a postmodern, post-structural paradigm and involves a deliberate deconstruction of methodologies involved in traditional qualitative research (Stronach and MacLure, 1997). Foucault's (1980) concept of 'disciplinary power', Lather's suspicion of scientism (1986) and the work of feminist theorists like Pillow (2000), and Richardson (1997) are used to challenge traditional notions around qualitative research. Post-qualitative research methods and ideas (St. Pierre, 2011) are used to deterritorialise and reterritorialise traditional qualitative methodologies, with forms and ideas that speak in new ways about qualitative research practices and how researchers might handle qualitative data differently. Lecturers' statements in the research setting are used to explore dominant epistemes and discourses circulating around academic writing practices. The thesis proposes that lecturers and students are engaged in an inherently tense and problematic relationship around academic writing, described by Baynham and Prinsloo (2008) as a process of constant 'recontextualisation'. Alongside the statements from research participants, autoethnography passages appear throughout the thesis (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). These passages reflect the multiplicity of relational and dynamic discourses that inform academic writing practices in higher education. The assemblages and imaginaries offered in the final chapter are exercises in educational philosophy and reflection. They represent an attempt to write out/up/through my own subjectivity and respond to the statements made by the research participants which reflected how they lived, thought and worked with academic writing practices in higher education. (294)

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Prologue

> *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*
> (Corinthians 13:12, King James Version)

It is important to state, not as an apology, that this introductory chapter is deliberately messy and bitty. It aims to orientate the general approach and structure of the thesis that is rather nomadic and not always perfectly linear. The structure of the early chapters reflects the different theoretical and methodological orientations informing my research journey, whilst the final three comprise a working out of those orientations.

I have chosen the '...through a glass darkly' quote above as a part of the title of this thesis because it offers a suitably enigmatic and rhizomatic leitmotif, which I employ throughout the thesis. The quote above is important to me because it offers multiple entry points into ideas about academic writing practices that I explore in the chapters that follow. I chose it long before I had ever heard of a rhizome or post-qualitative research, and I had no idea that the quote was biblical in origin. I must have heard it somewhere and it stuck in my mind, an earworm, or refrain waiting for its moment. I chose it for the thesis because it so eloquently, yet in such an indefinable way, expresses what I feel about research into academic writing practices. Itself a translation, it resonates beyond its original biblical context, indeed various versions of it exist in different religious texts. It is ancient, and yet curiously timeless, as countless uses of it in poems, novels, plays, films and art can attest. It is most commonly w used to invoke or draw attention to the ineffable, the troubled, the distorted and the perplexing nature of things.

In particular, thinking about '...through a glass darkly' has helped me to deterritorialise and reterritorialise the limits of my own perceptions of academic writing. Through it, I have been able to 'demap' myself out of old ways of thinking about academic writing practices, subsequently; new ways of thinking have found their

way in. The phrase has kept me thinking about the difficulty and undesirability of fixing ideas about academic writing and writing practices and how they might be the subject of qualitative research. It gestures to the complexity of my chosen subject and the methodological approach I eventually settled on to research it. Ultimately, seeing 'through a glass, darkly' can be viewed as a metaphor for anything, God, or the meaning of perception itself?

I felt it was appropriate to begin this whole (ad)venture, with a number of writing exercises which attempt to reflect how the phrase '...through a glass darkly' reflects, in my opinion, writing's essential indefinability and mutability, as these are key concepts underpinning the discussion of academic writing practices which follow. Over the next few pages I deploy three different writing practices, namely critical discourse analysis, a treatment of the phrase as form of Deleuzean refrain, and poesies. These forms of writing help me to articulate my feelings about researching dominant academic writing practices, whilst engaged in producing a dominant academic writing practice of my own. That is, they intentionally signal my intention to remain subjective and emotionally engaged with my research, as an integral heuristic of the doctoral process.

1.1 Linguistic Analysis

The opening exhortation 'For *now we see'* is rich with ambiguity. Most obviously the phrase concerns itself with two fundamentally human actions, '*seeing'* and '*knowing'.* However, the '*seeing'* and '*knowing'* being referred to are mysterious; neither is defined and their use draws attention to the many different possible/potential meanings, both abstract and concrete, that sit behind them.

Seeing

It is not clear if we are meant to be just *seeing* whatever it is there is to see, literally, as in to '*perceive with the eyes; discern visually'* (Oxford Educational Dictionary, 2012). Additionally there is a more figurative use of 'to see', as in *'experience an event or situation'* (Oxford Educational Dictionary, 2012). This reflects my belief that academic writing practices cannot ever be simply seen (identified) or known (understood); rather they are always informed by

many possible/potential meanings that multiply the more one attempts to illustrate how individuals experience them.

'See' can also be used to indicate that one can *'deduce'* meaning or understanding (as in '*I see what you mean'*). The temporality of the phrase *'now we see'* in the quote suggests that the subject (the 'I') in '*through a glass darkly*' has moved from a state of not being able to see, or deduce meaning from phenomena, to seeing, or deducing meaning when previously s/he could not. I experienced this process of change as a consequence of working on the thesis. For example, I now 'see' academic writing in ways that I did not (could not?) before. Moreover, I feel that I am now able to deduce, that is make meaning out of, my feelings and thoughts on the subject of academic writing practices differently, because I now see them differently. My gaze has altered or shifted; perhaps I now see as a researcher/practitioner rather than just as a practitioner.

More emphatically, 'see' can be used to '*ascertain or express comprehension, agreement, or continued attention'* (Oxford Educational Dictionary, 2012), in which instance, *'now we see'* can be construed as, '*look, now we are* paying attention'. This reflects the idea that in this thesis, that I am very consciously paying or drawing attention to academic writing practices in a way that was not possible (for me at least) before, because previously, such practices appeared so commonplace, so natural, so taken-for-granted, that they had become invisible.

The symbolic and practical importance of academic writing may be a constant presence, a definite 'something', in higher education, which I suggest is often occluded or obscured by the darkness that shrouds it. In this sense, the adverb *'darkly'* specifically functions as a metonym for that which is unknown, and unknowable, or as an antonym for 'clearly'. One can look into darkness, but only see 'darkly'. Paradoxically, in doing so one creates a situation where one can only see that which cannot be clearly seen. Looking in to the dark one only knows that one can see nothing, or at best something very indistinctly (darkly). This is often how I felt about 'looking at' academic writing practices, as so often they were 'hidden in plain sight', as practices. As I discuss in Chapter 3, whilst it may be easy to identify/name certain technical characteristics of writing (such as spelling and grammar) as correct; identifying exactly how and why certain academic writing practices in higher education are constructed and maintained as 'good practice' can prove more difficult to define. When writing up the thesis, I often found I had to be content to embrace meanings or understandings that were indistinct, difficult to

make out or establish.   Darkness or 'seeing darkly' is in this way worked as a metaphor for the uncertainty I experienced during my research into academic writing practices. Simultaneously, the idea of 'seeing darkly' also reminds me of the endless possibilities in research for new ideas and concepts to emerge.

The oxymoronic juxtaposition of glass/darkly is key to the ineffable power of the phrase and its relevance to the thesis. Its paradox, like the paradox presented by academic writing practices, cannot be dissolved. One sees through glass, yet what one sees can be distorted. Hold the glass up, move it, look through it from different angles and objects will loom into view or recede. What one sees and how one sees does not stay the same.   One will always see 'something', but not always clearly. Is that frustrating or does it make the process of looking more interesting? The glass mediates looking, it is a shield between the individual and what s/he is looking at; it may protect, but it may also screen material out, removing the observer from the action. Moreover, is looking the same as seeing or knowing? Is what one sees all there is?   I raise these questions later on in Chapters 6 and 7 when I look at the data I have collected and consider the conclusions I feel I can draw, or not, from them. Seeing, therefore, is, complicated and complicating.

Knowing

Seeing can also *'emphasise that an earlier prediction was correct'* (Oxford Educational Dictionary, 2012) *as* in, '*now I see what you mean*'. This flags up the ways in which seeing and knowing can be synonymic in the sense of: '*now we see*' meaning simultaneously 'now we understand'. However, seeing and knowing can also be experienced separately. For example, a key idea in this thesis is that whilst lecturers are able to 'see' or recognise a piece of academic writing, they often do not know, or fully understand, how exactly academic writing can be differentiated from other forms of writing. This disjunction between seeing and knowing is created in this instance by those implicit assumptions informing dominant discourses about good academic writing in higher education which are explored in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Alternatively in the use of '*we see*' and '*I know*' the phrase sets up an interesting linguistic tension in that the act of seeing is presented as collective, whereas the act of knowing is singular. Does this imply that the subject of the phrase (*'I know'*, that is, me, the researcher) is uniquely privy to special knowledge which has changed the nature of my seeing so, that I am in a position to see the same thing as everyone else, ('*we see*'), but to '*know*' it in different

individualised ways. If so then the thesis is the medium by which I share and disseminate this new way of seeing. Is this, I wonder, 'the unique contribution to knowledge' of this PhD, its essential PhDness?

The phrase *'face to face'* could mean that nothing is straightforward. For example, surface encounters with the materiality of phenomena (like research data) may reveal nothing or anything. One can look at 'things' (like essays?) describe them, judge them and interact with them over and over and still not be able to 'know' completely what they mean or how 'good' they are in any empirical sense. In short, the meaning of things remains elusive; one can only '*know in part'*, the rest is unknowable. This, as Chapter 6 and 7 delineate, is essentially the ontological position taken in the thesis with regard to the interpretation of participants' accounts of their experiences of academic writing practices in higher education.

Time

In temporal terms the phrase is dense and liminal as it references itself to undefined events pertaining before and after its utterance; as such it exists, as does the whole thesis, in a liminal space between *'now'* and *'then'*.

'*For <u>now</u> we see'* is anaphoric, referring to a time before or outside the phrase suggesting a time/space that reflects a paradigmatic shift. '*Now*' 'I/we' see academic writing practices in higher education differently. Recognising that perceptions, the researcher's and the researched, acquired through the research process can, and do, change, helps make clear that social realities are contingent. This means that one can argue, as I do in this thesis, that what one 'finds out' in one's research really depends on how one sees what one is researching at any given time. Reflection is obviously a key research concept that draws on the temporal nature of seeing and knowing, for as we reflect (look back in time) we may see and know things differently (if darkly). Perhaps, at various times during the research journey one may conclude, as I did in Chapter 2, that one was not looking in the right place, or for the right thing or that one was even looking for something that was not there, in my case 'best practice' in academic writing.

Ontology

Ontologically '*then shall I know even as also I am known'* gestures towards postmodern notions of multiple and constructed identity(ies), where the 'I'/identity (ies) of the subject cannot be isolated from the 'I'/identity (ies) that is/are known or constructed by others, ('*I am known'*).

As Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus,* state 'the One and the multiple cannot be divided' (1987, p.21). This idea of multiple identities, including identities assumed by the researcher and researched at any given time/place, is part of my assumed ontological position as a post-qualitative researcher. I construct, and am constructed, through the development of a researcher identity, just as my research creates 'researched identities' out of my participants' responses.

The phrase, *'then shall I know'* also looks forward to a changed ontology or state of being, which brings with it new kinds of identity (ies). This uses of *'then'* references the Heideggian (1953) concept of 'thrownness' (Geworfenheit) which refers to a constant future state of being/knowing that can be willed or constructed into existence, *'then'* rather than '*now'*. This concept reflects my chosen methodological position, which, as Chapter 2 illustrates, took a long time to develop. Its detailed articulation in Chapter 6, underpins my central premise that any knowledge gained through qualitative research is situated and contingent, mutable and plastic, never definitive or fixed.

1.2 The Deleuzean Ritournelle or Refrain (from 1837: Of the refrain: Plateau 11: Deleuze and Guattari, One Thousand Plateaus. 1987)

Glossary

Ritournelle/ Refrain – *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*

Milieu – 'a block of space-time': the period spent writing this PhD

Territories –academic writing practices, qualitative educational research methodologies

Assemblage – the thesis/ the field of qualitative educational research/myself as a researcher

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I have moved a long way from my earliest attempts at research into academic writing, which are detailed in Chapter 2, through to the tentative assemblage constructed in Chapter 8. This research journey could be characterised as a journey 'from chaos to the threshold of a territorial assemblage' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.312). The refrain *'through a glass darkly'* has emerged as a way of expressing and re-expressing, negotiating and re-negotiating, how I am

trying to mark out new territories that relate to academic writing practices and educational qualitative research in my research journey.

In making this journey I have come to regard '*for now we see through a glass darkly…*' as a form of Deleuzean refrain. Deleuze and Guattari in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) describe their concept of the 'refrain' or ritournelle as creative and generative, rather than representative, primarily because it embodies moments of stability that emerge out of the chaos of experiential and theoretical struggle. They write:

> The refrain has […] three aspects, it makes them simultaneous or mixes them: sometimes, sometimes. Sometimes chaos is an immense black hole in which one endeavours to fix a fragile point as a centre. Sometimes one organizes around that point a calm and stable "place" (rather than a form): that black hole has become a home. Sometimes one grafts onto that place a breakaway from the black hole (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.312).

This thesis treats academic writing practices as a form of chaos or rhizomatic muddle, mess or 'entanglement' (Barad, 2007) which are part of the lived, and professional, experiences of higher education lecturers. By helping me 'fix a fragile point' and then 'organise around that point' within the chaos/muddle/mix/entanglement that represent the 'black hole' of my research terrain, the refrain has also paradoxically helped to set my thoughts free. By embracing it I have been able to move out from the 'black hole', creating Deleuzean 'lines of flight' that have opened up more rhizomic connections within the milieu of my research. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) discuss how refrains can aid the researcher as they help navigate the various milieus and territories encountered on their research journey. The refrain embodies, like Richardson's (1994) metaphor of 'crystallisation', a moment of understanding or security (which is of course neither clear nor secure) because it holds or organises, albeit momentarily, disparate elements or phenomena which are constantly collapsing and reconfiguring.

The idea of the refrain or ritournelle is a difficult but integral concept in this thesis, not least because it describes how '*for now I see through a glass darkly'* has functioned as a useful metaphor for my research journey through milieus and territories which refer to the literature or body of thought already extant in academia already concerned with the practices and theories of academic writing practices and qualitative educational research methodologies. As Deleuze explains:

> […] the ritournelle (refrain), for me, is absolutely linked to the problem of territory, and of processes of entrance or exit of the territory, meaning to the problem of deterritorialisation. I enter in my territory, I try, or I deterritorialise myself, meaning I leave my territory [...] (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.312).

Treated as a refrain, 'through *a glass darkly'* has connected my nomadic wanderings through various different territories within the milieu of this research as it reflects:

> […] motifs and counterpoints that express the relation of the [research] territory to interior impulses or exterior circumstances […] (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.318)

For example, whilst moving between and beyond other people's research to territorialise and deterritorialise my own ideas and theories, I have used the refrain to help articulate and exemplify the idea that more reading and thinking about a subject does not necessarily lead to greater clarity or certainty about it (which is not the same as not having anything important or useful to say about it).   The functionality, or usefulness of the '*through a glass darkly'* refrain, is related to its ability to expresses something of the indefinability about the terrain over which I, as a researcher into academic writing practices, have travelled. Lastly, it has also helped create spaces for new ways of thinking about academic writing and qualitative research in education that have led the way to completely new territories and other milieus, which may in time form the basis for research projects that I might undertake in the future.

1.3 Poesis

In darkness
Making maps
Getting lost on purpose
Searching
Speaking in and through
Glass
A vacant receptacle
Never full

Data not
liquid made solid
Resisting transparency
Preferring
flattened opacity

Esoptron
a mirror or a lens
Showing and revealing
lack of substance
Subject to breakages
Matter
Fragile yet solid
Mysterious unknown

A dark corner
Resisting
Refusing to shed light
Obscure /opaque
Liminal
The space between

Incidental
A dark scowl
Secret
meanings
Lacking enlightenment

Dark humour
Making light of extremes
Transgressive
Skeptical
Disturbing
Discomforted

Dark refrains
deep in richness
language
full verlarised/valourised
Like plisse,
this thesis is
permanently wrinkled.

1.4 Outline of Thesis

The context of this research is, in many ways, mundane, principally because it concerns itself with aspects of the core day-to-day work of many lecturers in higher education, irrespective of their discipline. Mediated through the prism of a post-qualitative, flattened ontology, the thesis offers a critique of the dominant discourses informing everyday practices and interactions with regard to lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices in higher education. It also takes account of associated issues, such as the quality and standards debate in academia, professional academic identities, the status and significance of academic journal writing, and post-doctoral academic scholarship. In doing so it sets out to disturb, to problematise, dominant academic writing practices in higher education and traditional qualitative educational research methodologies, and to deconstruct and critique them both as an act of theoretical resistance. Foucault (1988) asserted that:

> […] critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged and unconsidered modes of thought the practicalities that we accept rest on […] (pp. 154-155)

I deploy four key theoretical figures, Foucault, Bourdieu, Deleuze and Guattari in the thesis to theorise and critique the 'taken for grantedness' of dominant academic writing practices in higher education. Foucault provides a framework for discussing the economy of power relations that characterise academic writing practices in higher education. His concepts of 'archaeology' and 'genealogy', which are discussed at length in Chapter 6, provide valuable tools for deconstructing the development of dominant discourses about academic writing in the Academy. I adapt Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explore the importance of individuals' personal writing histories in Chapter 7, where I use them to explore how different experiences of academic writing in higher education shape lecturers' professional writing identities in various and complicating ways. The work of Deleuze and Guattari, specifically their book '*A Thousand Plateaus*', has provided an over-arching philosophy for the thesis with its compelling alternative metaphor for conceptual thinking, the rhizome, references to which appear throughout the thesis. Rhizomic models endlessly multiply meanings and ceaselessly make connections. These notions of connectedness and multiplicity are central to the question that lies at the heart to the thesis, namely, the question 'what is academic writing?'

This, however, is a question that the thesis fails to answer. At best it signals up (through the dark?) some ways for thinking about academic writing practices using a form of post-qualitative research which seeks to expand established educational precepts and research boundaries. Clearly there are practical implications for a thesis that takes this position.

My position as an insider researcher means I am, like my participants, engaged on a day-to-day basis with academic writing practices in higher education. I was fully immersed in the research setting as it was my workplace, researching it therefore would always have been autobiographical to some extent. However, I have used autoethnography throughout the thesis (often using it to open and/or close chapters) in order to present an analysis of my own feelings about the academic writing practices involved in researching and writing up the thesis, and the different writing identities or sense of self that they have opened up for me. As Geertz (1988) suggests, in doing so I am engaged in active 'text building' as a 'witness' to the material that I have assembled through the research process. I am also keen to explore how conducting the research was an intensely personal process that involved and changed me on many different levels.

I am aware of the pressures exerted on my constructed research self or identity by the authority of the academic PhD form I am engaged in producing, and its potential to subjugate that research self should it become too free-wheeling. For this reason, the autoenthnographic musings of a more liberated research self have literally been set outside the margins of the 'real' research writing. Physically they are indented and differentiated by the use of italics. This 'setting aside' suggests an uncertainty about whether they should be seen differently. For example, one might argue that their place is provisional, they could be taken out and no-one would notice. Indeed, removing them might be perceived as the safer option.

However, I have chosen to keep autoethnography as a way of highlighting my subjectivity and setting it within the thesis, alongside the many subjectivities of my research participants. This is important as it recognises that:

> I am part of the history I seek to rework, situated within it in complicated ways (Ball, 2013, p.88)

Through each autoethnography section I chart the development of not only a deeper theoretical understanding and appreciation of the research subject, participants and setting, but of myself as a researcher. Autoethnography is a hybrid or blurred genre that helps to break down bounded spaces, texts and discourses, allowing new spaces and possibilities for discourse to emerge. In particular it suits the onto-epistemological approach of this study which, as much as anything, is about my own induction or socialisation into dominant post-graduate writing practices, and my attempts to write reflexively about the (de)constructing and resisting of those practices. I am very conscious of the tensions and contradictions that are inherent in being an academic researcher writing about academic writing practices. As a way of acknowledging those tensions, I am indebted to Richardson's (1994) concept of academic writing as, 'writing as inquiry', which she considers to be 'a way of finding out about yourself and your topic […] a method of discovery and analysis' (p.923).

Chapter 2 offers a chronological account of research projects undertaken prior to the PhD culminating in the postmodern, Foucauldian and Deleuzean inspired post-qualitative research orientation (St. Pierre, 2012) that this thesis takes. This approach is broadly generative and functions not as just another theoretical lens through which one can observe and report on the material phenomena being researched, rather it questions the very act of seeing and observing in research which create:

> […] new options for thought and create new possibilities for action. (Rabinow and Rose, 2003, p.xi).

Chapter 3 explores a number of interconnected and interdisciplinary linguistic, discursive and epistemological theoretical frameworks that inform academic writing practices and related discourses in higher education, namely: social literacy theories and their educational implications; theories of discourse and power; and the concepts of habitus and linguistic capital. These frameworks generate:

> […] an endless tracing of established concepts and words, a tracing of the world present, past, and future. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.24)

This tracing gestures towards the formulation of a Foucauldian 'history of the present' which is embodied in dominant academic writing discourses in higher education. As Foucault writes in the *Order of Things* (1970):

> The history of knowledge can be written only on the basis of what was contemporaneous with it, and certainly not in terms of reciprocal influence, but in terms of a prioris established in time (p.208).

By 'a priori', Foucault suggests that any historical and critical analysis requires one to delineate the paradigm or world view through which historically dominant discourses operate, which in turn determine the limits of uncritical assumptions appertaining to those dominant discourses.

Chapter 4 reflects on the importance of issues of power and identity in the academy with regard to the development of dominant academic writing and writing development practices in higher education.

Chapter 5 explores and critiques the extent to which academic writing practices construct and mediate the professional identity (ies) and status of higher education lecturers.

Chapter 6 troubles conventional qualitative educational research's '…procedures, presuppositions and philosophy of knowledge' (Ball, 2013, p.34), in doing so it delineates a post-qualitative research approach which critiques scientistic, empirical disciplinary and theoretical research positions.

Chapter 7 takes as its starting point the Foucauldian concept of 'power/knowledge' which it treats as an abstract discursive force determining what will be the dominant (but not the only) epistemic systems in any given field. Foucault in *Discipline and Power* discussed the ways in which 'power produces reality' (1977a, p.194). The subsequent analysis of participants' accounts offered in this chapter acknowledge that power/knowledge structures lecturers' understanding of, and reactions to, their lived experiences of academic writing practices in higher education. It also explores how different forms of professional identity-work characterise their daily interaction around dominant conceptions of academic writing in academia, that is, their workplace.

Chapter 8 creates a tentative assemblage and new practice imaginaries for students, lecturers and institutions with regard to the development of academic writing. These imaginaries suggest how the reconceptualisation of academic writing might influence the development of teaching and learning around academic writing in higher education. It also offers a personal postscript to this research that reflects the complexity and liminality of a personal reconceptualisation of academic writing practices.

Lastly, there are a number of common threads, (illustrated in Figure 1) that I have developed throughout my research journey. They are woven into the theoretical frameworks that I explore in Chapter 3, they inform the methodology that I settle on in Chapter 6, and appear again in the writing up of data in Chapter 7. Finally they help knit together the final assemblages described in Chapter 8, and of course they embody the refrain '*through a glass darkly'* in all its mystery and contingency.
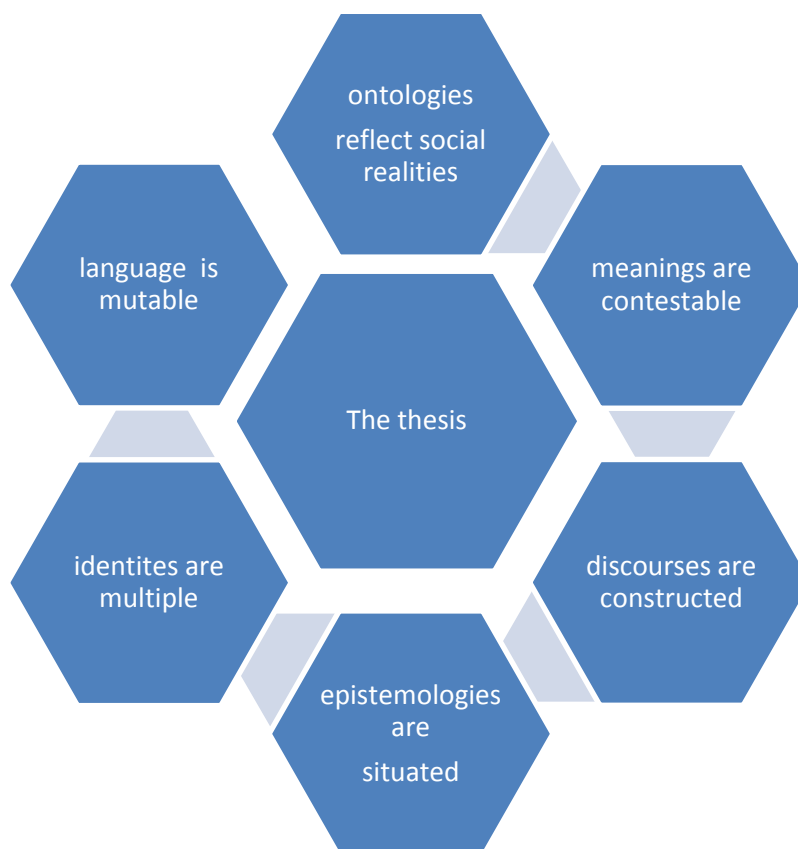
Figure 1: Common threads in the thesis

Epilogue

On a personal level this thesis begins (and ends) with me – with certain aspects of who I am and what I do as a higher education lecturer at work as a:

[…] scholar and worker in the knowledge economy [...](Ball, 2013, p.120)

Additionally, as a doctoral student, I have also been engaged in researching my own and my colleagues' perceptions of academic writing practices in higher education. This research focus is rooted in my workplace experiences of academic writing practices and was prompted by what Nealon (2008) calls a:

[…] provocation to respond to 'today', a particular problem or set of problems' in a way that moves beyond condemnation or judgement […] (p.111)

As such, I began this research by asking myself lots of questions about who I am and what I do with academic writing practices in work. I asked 'what don't I understand', 'what don't I like', 'what do I want to know' and 'how can I find out how to do things differently'?

Initially, my assumed direction of travel was along well-trodden qualitative educational research lines. However, as I discuss in Chapter 2, I reached a point, after several research projects on the subject of academic writing practices, where I realised I was engaged in a struggle:

[…] to reveal and undermine what is most invisible and insidious in prevailing [educational] practices. (Ball, 1995, p.267)

As part of this struggle I became very alert to the need to constantly interrupt obvious lines of research and explore a sense of myself as researcher by questioning assumptions about academic writing, as well as what being an educational researcher could mean. I had to shake off what MacLure (2013) has called:

The malign effects of those deeply ingrained habits [which are] immensely difficult to discern and almost impossible to renounce or escape… (p.626)

This involved consciously questioning ingrained ideas about what constituted 'good' academic writing (namely, it should be clear, correct, formal and impersonal) and 'rigorous' qualitative research in education (which reflect the need for validity, representational modes of thought and explication).

Trying to conduct a form of experimental, hybridised educational research required me to satisfy the more traditional conventions of doctoral scholarship, such as compartmentalising ideas into sections, chapters, headings and appendices. These nods to structural convention have often felt uncomfortable and deeply inappropriate to my overall approach. Moreover, it has not always been easy to move away from those dominant disciplinary and formal demands informing doctoral writing in education studies. In the act of writing up the thesis I often slipped into limiting and hierarchical modes of thought and modalities, as they are so embedded in educational qualitative research traditions. As Honen and Sellars (2008) write:

> The logistics of bringing together a text that meets academic requirements and has the possibility of making sense to readers is forever 'steering' us in the 'direction' of producing a 'linear' text – an 'ordered' 'progression' of 'theoretical ideas' and 'practical applications' that 'leads' to a 'coherent' 'conclusion'. (p.8)

Nonetheless, I have employed where possible, and where I felt it illuminated the arguments I was trying to explore, art, poems, rhizomic maps and first person autoethnography sections. These are all examples of how I have tried to articulate what has become a process of opening up the polysemic nature of academic writing practices through an equally multi-layered, post-qualitative educational research approach. The latter marks a distinct change in direction from the more conventional methodologies that characterised the earlier research projects outlined in Chapter 2. In short, I have experienced an ontological shift that has enabled me to 'dismantle the coordinates of... [my] ...starting point', offering instead, 'the possibility of a different experience' (Burchell,1996 p.31).

Consequently, I started to think about how my research participants and I are subject to multiple forms of governance that are both internalised and operate via external dominant academic writing practices and established qualitative research

methodologies in the Academy. As the write-up progressed I increasingly wanted to use the thesis to question these dominant discourses and practices, for as Ball (2013) notes:

> […] one key point of focus of resistance is against practices, particularly the multifarious practices of governmentality […] (p.148)

To return to Foucault who characterises resistance as one means of self-transformation, I realised that I needed to be willing to transform my thinking about academic writing and research. My new starting point for the thesis therefore, was to question dominant academic writing and qualitative research practices, not least my own, through the very act of conducting this research and writing up this thesis. Thus I entered the research equivalent of a hall of mirrors, where the only thing I expected, or hoped to find was the unexpected.

Chapter 2: Journeying towards new Conceptualisations of Academic Writing Practices and Post-qualitative Research

Prologue

Like most PhDs, this one is the result of a long and often tortuous personal journey through various research projects, all of which have contributed to my eventual choice of a particular ontological and epistemological position for the final doctoral thesis. Drawing on Richardson (1994), the writing up of this thesis represents an extended, and unfinished, 'form of inquiry'. Whilst working on the thesis I underwent seismic shifts in my thinking about academic writing practices and modes of qualitative research, a shift largely characterised by a move from description towards critical reflexivity.

This chapter is my attempt to trace how and why those shifts in thinking happened along my research journey. My development was not linear, rather, through my involvement in the various research projects detailed below, I followed ever more rhizomic, Deleuzean 'lines of flight' from one idea and discursive space to another, on what has been a very nomadic research journey.

Over time, I developed more complex conceptualisations of academic writing practices and qualitative research than the ones I began with. This increasing complexity in my thinking necessitated a change in ontological position and a corresponding relocation towards post-qualitative research methodologies. So although for six years I was continually researching in the same setting and looking at interactions between the same groups of lecturers and students around academic writing practices, the way I looked changed dramatically, until by the time I actually came to write the thesis, it seemed as though as I was not looking at the same thing at all. Moreover, I realised that ultimately I would always be looking 'through a glass darkly' no matter how hard I looked.

The grid below charts my journey towards the final thesis's reflexive, post-qualitative research design through an outline of the various research projects that led me there.

The grid is followed by a more detailed account of each project that outlines how each research project helped inform the next up to and including the thesis itself.

Research project	Research assumption	Research Issue	Methodology	Research response	Research outcomes	Assumed research impact
Developing the writing skills of first year early childhood and education students. *2007*	Writing is a set of technical skills that students have or have not got to the required standard for higher education.	There is a problem with students' academic writing. The problem is with the students.	Quantitative	Develop the students so that they make fewer mistakes.	Extra support for students can be justified.	Student performance improves.
Embedding writing skills. *2008*	Embedded writing activities can be used by lecturers to develop all students' academic writing.	There is a problem with delivering academic writing support The problem is with the curriculum and mode of delivery.	Co-constructionist	Develop the curriculum so that writing support can be more effectively taught.	Revalidation of redesigned degrees and/or individual modules improves effectiveness of delivery.	Student performance improves + the learning experience is enhanced.
Lecturers' perceptions of students' writing. *2009*	Lecturers try to support students' academic writing in different ways – how are they doing it?	There is a problem with how lecturers support academic writing development. The problem is with the lecturers.	Discourse analysis	Develop the lecturers to deliver academic writing support more effectively.	CPD programmes.	Student performance improves + the learning experience is enhanced + teaching improves.

Research Project	Research Assumption	Research Issue	Methodology	Research Response	Research outcomes	Assumed research impact
Through a glass darkly: A post qualitative case study into lecturers' perceptions of academic writing and writing development practices: 2014	Nobody really knows what academic writing is or could or should be.	There is a problem with conceptualising and researching what academic writing is. The problem is with the relationship between qualitative research and academic writing and writing development practices.	Post-qualitative	Development of more personal problematised philosophy of academic writing and writing development practices.	Time and space to reflect on academic writing and writing and development practices and qualitative research in flexible and innovative ways.	Students and lecturers may begin to appreciate how complex writing is as a social practice. New ways of thinking about and enacting research into academic writing practices may follow.

2.1 Background Information

2.1.1 The Setting: a picture of diversity

Although the thesis is concerned with lecturers' perceptions of academic writing, it grew out of a series of research projects that focused on students' difficulties with academic writing practices. My research journey began whilst I was teaching at a post-1992 university in the West Midlands, on their Education Studies, Special Needs and Inclusion Studies and Early Childhood Studies programmes. The research setting has an excellent track record in attracting widening participation; according to HEFCE performance indicators (2009) just over 50% of its undergraduates come from the lowest socio-economic groups (one of the highest percentages in the country). Typically, many of its students are local and mature learners who took vocational, rather than academic, routes to university, or achieved alternative qualifications such as Access to Higher Education. This, as I argue below, in the section on students and in Chapter 4 and 5, has implications for their writing histories and subsequent implications for their development as academic writers in higher education.

2.1.2 The Course

All the research on students detailed in the research projects below centres around one degree programme: the School of Education's Academic and Professional Pathways programme (APPs), which until revalidation in 2011 was called the Specialist and Joint Awards (SJA). The programme was comprised of 3 strands, namely, Education Studies, Children and Families (CAF) and Special Needs and Inclusion Studies (SNIS). In addition, students could take Education Studies in combination with one of the other two strands, or could opt to be specialists in CAF or SNIS.

In 2006/7, at the time of the first research project detailed below, the programme was described thus in the 2005 course handbook extract.

All our courses are made up of units called modules that contribute towards your final degree/diploma, known as an 'award'. You need to register and pass a certain number of modules that fall into three types:

`Core` – you must study and pass all these compulsory modules to meet the requirements of your award

`Core option` – you must choose a set number from this group of modules in order to meet your course requirements

`Elective` – you make up the balance of your award with electives. This scheme allows you to include more modules from your subject(s), select modules from a different subject area or choose skills-based modules. In addition, the University Elective Programme (UEP) enables you to select blocks of modules in Languages, Information Technology or Business, to provide a specific 'flavour' to your programme of study.

Figure 2: Extract from SJA course handbook (2005)

SJA/APPs was a big programme (regularly recruiting over 190 students), with core modules necessarily taught by relatively large groups of lecturers, drawn from all three teams working across the 3 pathways. Across the programme, students were assessed through essays, individually negotiated projects, reports and reflective writing assignments, including learning journals and blogs. As part of the revalidation process, the original modular design in SJA was replaced by set courses in Education Studies, which could be studied in combination with Early Years (renamed, Children and Families) or Special Needs and Inclusion Studies. Alternatively students could study specialist Early Years, (which was renamed, Children and Families in 2011), or Special Needs and Inclusion Studies. Under the new revalidation programme, 'Learning Works' (2011), all modules in first year programmes were compulsory. This meant that the concept of a 'core' module was lost after Learning Work's inception, although core modules are still referred to in the first research project described below, as the programmes were still modular at the time that research was carried out.

2.1.3 The Students

The student sample for the first three research projects covered in this chapter comprised the majority of first year students (191) studying on SJA/APP in whichever year the research project under discussion took place. First year students were chosen as the subjects

for these early research projects because higher education exposes them to new and challenging writing experiences, not just in terms of what they have to write about, but how they are expected to write and who they are writing for (Davies, Swinburne and Williams, 2006). The student participant sample included all the full and part-time undergraduates studying for B.A. Hons degrees in single honours Early Childhood Studies, Special Needs in Education (SNIS) programmes or either specialism jointly with Education Studies, and part-time Foundation Degree students. In addition, there were a small number of students studying Education Studies with subjects from other Schools in the university, such as English and Religious Studies.

The SJA/APP cohort was predominately female, and like students from across the whole university this cohort entered higher education with a wide variety of academic, vocational and professional qualifications, including Advanced Certificate in Childcare and Education (ACCE), City and Guilds, Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (CACHE), BTEC Diplomas and National Awards, and GNVQs in Early Years, Children's Care, Learning and Development, Health and Social Care; in addition to a wide range of A Levels and Access to HE programmes. Prior to coming to university, the majority of students had worked in a community or educational setting related to their choice of degree, such as schools and/or nurseries, both mainstream and specialist; either in a voluntary capacity, on placement or in full or part-time employment. Many continued to work, predominately as teaching assistants or early year's practitioners whilst completing their degrees. By 2006, workforce development initiatives in early years Educare had encouraged a number of mature students to study for a Foundation Degree in Early Years, a programme introduced by the New Labour government as part of their strategy for improving the status of practitioners working in the sector (DfES, 2007). (Successful graduates from an FD can 'top-up' to honours degree level, and in the setting many did, often transferring in from partner F.E. colleges to do so). Those students coming directly from school or sixth form colleges averaged relatively low A Level tariffs of between 120 and 180. A majority of the intake across the life of the different research projects described below did not have an English qualification above GCSE grade C.

This diversity of their previous educational experiences meant that whilst many SJA/APPs students were familiar with professional/vocational literacies, such as report and portfolio

writing, they were often less confident using the essayist literacies typically required by undergraduate writing assignments (Burke, 2005; Lillis and Turner, 2001). Other research on this student group in the setting by Kendall et al., (2012) suggested that for many of the vocationally qualified students, entry into higher education required that they shift from their utilisation of a largely practical knowledge base developed in the workplace to a new, primarily theoretical knowledge base taught at university. This shift, and the demands that it made on their writing, may account for the anxiety and difficulty with writing many of them experienced whilst on the programme. These difficulties were documented in a different pieces of research in the setting conducted by Cramp, Lamond, Coleyshaw and Beck (2012) and Cramp, (2012).

2.1.4 The Lecturers

The participating lecturers involved in all the following research projects were based in the School of Education and taught across the SJA/APPs programme. Many were 'second career' lecturers who had had previous careers in a variety of professional backgrounds including nursing, nursery management, social and youth work. Others had worked as teachers and managers, in a variety of adult, further, secondary and primary education settings, prior to joining as subject-specific lecturers in higher education. This meant that their professional and personal experiences of writing and resulting writing identities were diverse and shaped by professional contexts other than higher education.

2.2 The Early Research Projects

(See appendix 1 for the CETL briefing paper produced for this research project)

2.2.1 Developing the writing skills of first year early childhood and education students.

1st CIEL project 2007	Developing the writing skills of first year early childhood and education students.
The impulse for research	Writing is a set of skills that students have, or have not got, to the required standard for higher education.
Research design	Driven by the desire to establish what kinds of technical writing problems students starting the SJA programme had. Students were assessed for technical written competency. Lecturers and students were then made aware of the students' technical written competency, or lack of it early on in the degree.

Findings	Some students do not have the requisite skills for academic writing in higher education and may need additional and/or specialist support.

The impulse for research

In 2006/2007 I joined the School of Education's (SEd) Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) team. The remit of the CETL in the setting, as in other HEIs, was to identify excellent teaching practices and develop and disseminate information about those practices across the sector as outlined in the HEFCE 'Summative evaluation of the CETL programme' (2011). This CETL project was called Critical Interventions for Enhanced Learning (CIEL). CIEL's brief was to develop pedagogies, support systems, activities and initiatives that enhanced first year students' learning across the university.

My first CIEL project, begun in 2007, was called 'Developing the writing skills of first year early childhood and education students', using first year students on SJA/APP as the sample group as outlined above. (See appendix 1 for the project briefing paper). The project drew on research about student retention and drop out, which suggested that there is often a mismatch between students' writing experiences in previous educational settings and the demands of academic writing in higher education (Clarke and Ivanic, 1997; McGivney, 2003; Tinto, 1993). Consequently, across the sector and different disciplines, many first year students are often underprepared to make a successful transition to academic writing in higher education (Yorke and Longton, 2007).

Overall retention was consistently high on SJA, averaging over 90%. Despite this high retention rate, there was concern in the teaching team over a significant minority of students who consistently achieved lower than average grades in their first year and who then failed to improve significantly as they progressed through the degree. This might have suggested that there was a strong incentive for lecturers to support those students struggling with their writing development. However, lecturers did not appear to spend much time developing or supporting students' academic writing, rather, face-to-face teaching sessions focussed heavily on transmitting subject-specific content. Normally, it was only towards the end of each semester that students were offered individual or small group tutorials for support with their summative assignments. These tutorials were not focussed on academic writing as the teaching team had made a decision not to read or comment on written drafts; instead

they offered students an opportunity to read their plans out to the lecturers for discussion. In this way, summative tutorials focussed on the organisation of subject-specific content at the expense of any writing development input from lecturers. This arrangement meant that the first continuous writing that lecturers saw from students was the summative assignment written twelve weeks after they had started the course. Entrenched problems with some students' academic writing, therefore, often only became fully visible after a number of assignments had been marked and/or at the end of the year when struggling students failed resits or scraped through with low grades.

The '*Developing the writing skills of first year early childhood and education students'* research sought therefore to identify those students struggling with academic writing much earlier than would otherwise be the case, so that they could be encouraged to access targeted academic writing development, which at the time was only offered outside of their subject-specific modules.

Research Design

An analysis of written feedback given by lecturers in the setting to first year students on core modules was undertaken as preparation for the project. It confirmed that low achieving students were frequently, and overtly, marked down for a combination of persistent technical writing errors (such as spelling, punctuation and grammar), poor expression, referencing inaccuracies and a lack of structure/organisation, in addition to an inadequate grasp of their subject matter. This was not surprising as the generic assessment grid used across the university to guide assessment clearly indicated that students' written work was to be judged negatively against such criteria. This suggested that technical problems with academic writing, and a failure to address those problems, were holding some students back.

For the project, I created an initial writing activity for students to complete in the first week of the generic, stand-alone study skills module, 'Learning for Success' (LfS), which all first year SJA students took. LfS, was a ten-year-old core module running in the SJA programme in 2005. It was designed to develop study skills such as referencing, presenting, team working and communication, as well as introducing students to the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The project's initial writing activity

required students, in their first LfS session, to write a response to a subject–related journal extract which they had previously been given to read during induction; the response had to be written under controlled conditions during a seminar session.

I designed a very simple grid to identify and quantify the type and frequency of basic technical writing errors students made during the initial writing activity (see figure 1 in appendix 1). Using the type and frequency of errors made, students were categorised broadly in terms of the level of study skills support that I felt they might require for the rest of the year (see figure 2 in appendix 1). The students were not shown this breakdown of their errors, as it was felt that in some cases it might be demotivating, although their LfS lecturer was. Students who made consistent errors were encouraged to discuss with their module tutor how their writing might be most effectively supported in the future.

Findings

Lecturers reported back though LfS team meetings that the initial writing activity had made them more aware, earlier than had previously been the case, of those students with very weak writing and/or specific issues such as EAL and dyslexia. Consequently, they felt that they were more able to be explicit and proactive about the support they offered students within LfS, as well as alerting them to other university-wide support. At the end of the first year the grades achieved by all students were cross-referenced to their broad categorisations in the initial writing activity. This revealed that students who had evidenced a high number of technical errors in the initial writing activity tended to achieve lower than average grades in their end of year summative assignments. I took this as evidence that their writing skills had not been developed over the course of the year (it could also of course indicate that they might have other difficulties with learning).

Reflections on 'Developing the writing skills of first year early childhood and education students'.

It is not difficult to make a number of criticisms about this research project. It took a classic problem-based approach to the question of competence in academic writing based on a very simple skills-based conception of writing as a set of technical skills. The 'counting up' of mistakes in the initial writing activity was methodologically crude, and the categories used to 'rank' students were vague and subjective. There was no theoretical

analysis of how and why students made those kinds of mistakes, how important they were (or not) to subject-specific learning or understanding of students. Nor was there any systematic discussion about how lecturers might be encouraged to tackle academic writing problems as an integrated part of the support they offered on LfS and/or other subject specific modules that they taught to first years. There was no follow-up to check if students did take up the recommendation to avail themselves of more support with their writing as part of the tutorial support offered within LfS or outside of it. As such, the project merely confirmed that some students did have a problem with technical accuracy and expression in their academic writing and that those problems did appear to depress their summative assessment grades.

However, in terms of its role in my development as a researcher *'Developing the writing skills of first year early childhood and education students'* definitely got me started on the research journey culminating in this doctoral dissertation. Having completed it, I understood that simply identifying technical aspects of writing did not help students to produce the kind of academic writing their lecturers expected. On a more positive note, I felt that the initial writing task used in the project had certainly got my colleagues thinking more about students' issues with academic writing. For example, my research journal from that time records frequent discussions about academic writing between myself and my colleagues initiated by the research. Some were moving beyond our usual exasperation and frustration with the 'problem' of 'poor writing'. They had begun to think about ways in which we could proactively support students to develop their academic writing more effectively as a part of our subject-specific teaching. These discussions led directly to my next research project.

2.2.2 Embedding writing skills

2nd CIEL project	**'Embedding writing skills'**
The impulse for research 2008	Can embedded writing activities help lecturers develop students' academic writing?
Research design	Developing, delivering and evaluating embedded activities to develop students' academic writing.

Findings	Most of the students thought that the embedded writing activities completed as part of the research would help them when writing their summative assignments. Lecturers thought the activities helped them to raise the issue of academic writing development with students more proactively and effectively.

The Impulse for Research

In 2008 the CETL allocated further funding to the SEd CIEL team. A previous research project conducted with the same group of students by other members of the team (Allan and Clarke, 2006) had indicated that the 'LfS' module was not ideal, as a significant minority of student participants in the study indicated that they had difficulty in transferring the study skills taught on it to wider study contexts. This, Allen and Clarke concluded, raised the possibility that:

[…] if a more inclusive environment, which engages all learners, is to be created, then the teaching of subject-related and metacognitive skills needs to be embedded in subject teaching and learning. (2006, p.73)

Allan and Clarke's conclusions echoed Wingate (2006) study, she concluded in her paper *'Doing away with study skills'* that:

Much would be achieved if more academic staff could be encouraged to develop their students' learning within their regular teaching (p. 467).

Because of Allan and Clarke's (2006) research, the SJA teaching team decided to replace SfL with a programme of study skills development that would be delivered in an embedded way through the first-year core modules. As part of the CIEL project team, I responded to this change by creating a new project, *'Embedding writing skills'* which involved working with staff teaching on SJA's core subject-specific modules to create, co-deliver and evaluate a number of embedded activities designed to develop and support students' academic writing development. The chosen activities included microthemes, which are short written pieces on a given subject; free writing; double entry journals; peer review activities; note-taking and the use of learning action groups. Many of these activities fed directly into students' final summative assignments.

Experienced cumulatively, the writing activities designed for the project were intended to embed low-stake (that is, non-assessed) opportunities for students to practise different kinds of academic writing, and receive structured feedback on how they could improve their writing within a subject-specific context. This practical exposure to embedded academic writing development practices was followed up by discussions between staff and students. These were explicitly about the nature of academic writing, in particular, how it might differ from forms of writing that they had previously experienced. For students, the project attempted to structure their experiences of writing as a continual loop of practice, feedback and discussion. This was so they could more effectively translate their subject-specific learning and understanding confidently and effectively through academic writing for summative assignments. For lecturers, the activities were intended to create a greater awareness around how they wanted learning and understanding to be expressed through the written assignments that they set for students.

The Research Design

The research design for '*Embedding writing skills*' was firmly located within an on-going cyclical process, where research, action and evaluation were interwoven into the delivery of core modules taught on SJA. As such the broad research design was based on 'spirals' or cycles concerned with looking, thinking and acting (Stringer, 2007) which determined each stage of the research activity as illustrated in Figure 3.

Look in order to identify and analyse the problems some students appear to have with academic writing.

LOOK

THINK

ACT

Think about how to support academic writing practices within subject-specific modules.

Act to produce, deliver and evaluate embedded academic writing activities in order to initiate further discussion and possible changes in practice.
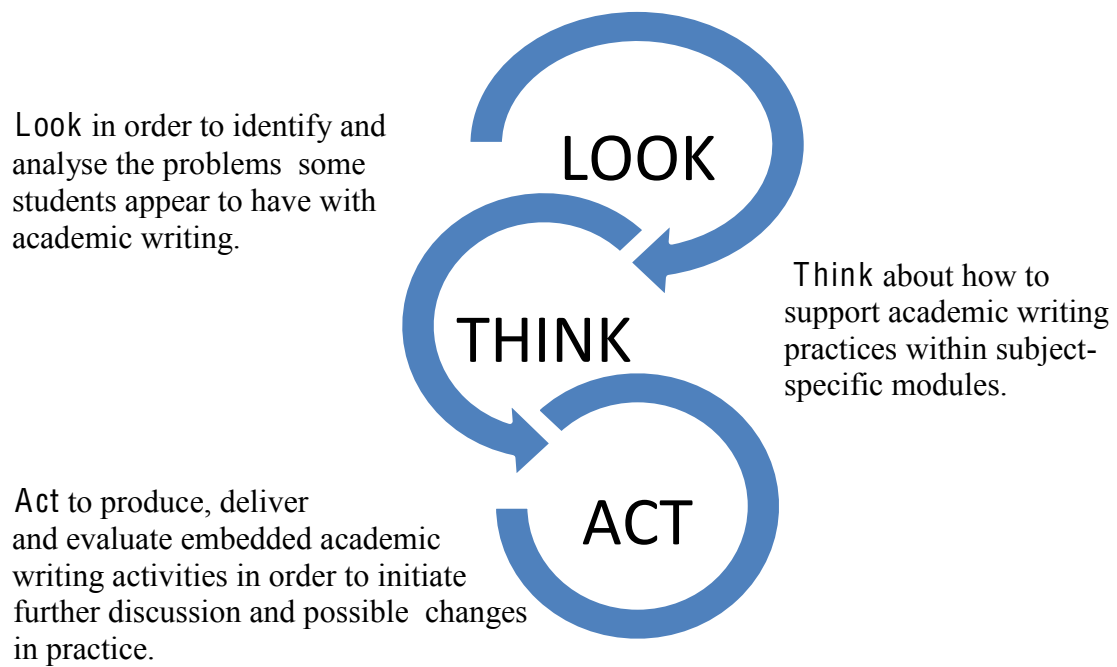
Figure 3: Adaptation of Stringer's (2007) 'spirals'

This project tried to initiate a dialogic, co-constructionist approach to the academic writing activities that students and lecturers were engaged in as part of their everyday teaching and learning relationships (Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, 2003). This meant that lecturers and students were encouraged by the research to view academic writing activities as:

> […] multiple practices […] which contribute to everything else, [in order to see] the holistic connections and their potentials for generating further connections' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p.2)

Data on the writing activities was collected in a number of ways.

Post-it Data

In order to capture an immediate, qualitative response to the impact of the use of writing development activities carried out as part of the pilot study, student feedback was collected using post-it notes.

Figure 4: '*Embedding writing skills*' conference poster (French and Worsley, 2008) showing the use of post-its as feedback on double-entry journals.

(For a detailed account of the use of DEJs as part of this project see

http://www.eliss.org.uk/CurrentIssueVol22/ViewArticlev2i2/tabid/272/itemid/103/pubtabid/278/repmodid/411/Default.aspx)

Immediately after completing an academic writing development activity in class, such as the double entry journals shown in Figure 4 above, students recorded their anonymous feedback on a post-it note. They were asked how useful the activity had been and in what ways they thought it had helped to develop their academic writing (or not). It was also made clear that their input was vital in informing any future writing development activities. Using this system, feedback was collected on three key academic writing development strategies: peer review; use of double-entry journals; and formative written summatives, which had been embedded in SJA core modules over one academic year. The post-it data

analysis was then coded using NVivo (an international qualitative data-analysis computer software package) which uses coding to identify key themes.

Focus Groups

Two separate, hour long focus groups (each containing 15 student volunteers from across the SJA programme) were held in the first semester of the students' second year. Focus groups were chosen because they drew on any interaction between students' experiences of academic writing and writing development practices since joining the setting. Barbour (2005, 2007) discusses how interaction is an essential feature of focus groups because it often reveals the multiple subjectivities operating around any given research focus. To maximise interaction between participants groups were structured using Morgan's 'funnel' approach (1997). This begins the focus group with an unstructured question designed to stimulate discussion ('think about the different types of writing that you have had experience of since joining higher education' and 'what positive or negative feelings do you have about writing in higher education?'). The questions asked gradually became more structured ('what do you think the word 'synthesise' means you have to do in a written assignment?'). As Morgan notes, this approach:

> […] makes it possible to hear the participants' own perspectives in the early part of each discussion as well as their responses to the researcher's specific interests in the later part.
> (1997, p.41)

The focus group data was recorded by participating students who made notes and lists as they went along. These comments were later collated and analysed inductively (by me) to record the breadth of discussions that had taken place.

The importance of using discussion to collect feedback on learning experiences for research in this way has been highlighted by a number of authors, not least because it enables lecturers and students to get fully involved in the research process (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Sambell and McDowell 2006; Yorke, 2001; McDowell and Sambell, 1999) found that:

[…] students readily identify a range of purposes for assessment, which would be widely regarded as educationally sound, and that they do make judgments about how well purposes are met […] (p.107)

The quality and thoughtfulness of many responses in this project confirmed McDowell and Sambell's confidence in the ability of students to contribute to the research process. (For a detailed breakdown of the feedback received on double entry journals see appendix 2).

Findings

The discussions that arose out of the focus groups and post-its suggested that different groups of students were facing a number of difficulties with academic writing. Some of these difficulties were experienced more by specific groups of students than others. For example, mature Foundation Degree students, who had often not been in formal education for many years, commonly evinced a lack of confidence. There were also various technical, linguistic problems experienced by overseas students, who had English as a second language, as well as the special needs of students with problems on the dyslexic spectrum. More generally, many students reported that they had always had weak spelling, punctuation and grammar or struggled with referencing and/or had difficulties utilising wider reading effectively.

The embedded academic writing development activities created for the project had been contextualised for students as linked formatives so that the work required to complete them always fed directly into the final summative assignment. As Figure 5 shows the feedback on this approach was positive.
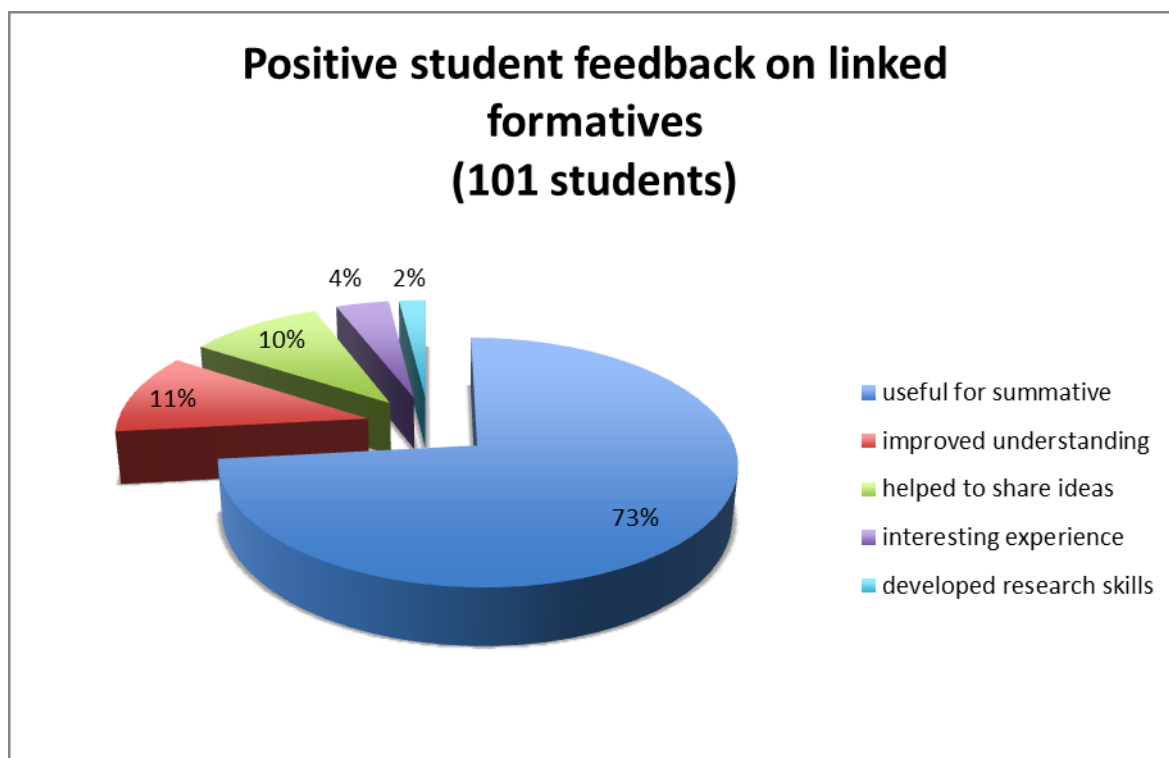
Figure 5: A breakdown of the positive student feedback on the use of linked formatives.

Peer reviews were the second kind of linked formatives used in this project. This activity involved students marking real student scripts, which had been anonymised and taken from previous iterations, with permission, using the university's generic criteria for Level 4. As the typical comments below show the majority found this activity to be a useful preparation for their written summative assignments:

> *This session [...] helped me to understand how to do an assignment in the proper manner. It also helped me to identify where I was going wrong and what I can do in order to improve.*

and

> *I found the activity really helpful; looking from a marker's view will help me write my essay, as I now know what the tutor/marker is looking for.*

Importantly, peer review provided an opportunity to discuss the meaning of summative assignment briefs and how they related to assessment materials, including the university's generic criteria and the module specific learning outcomes. This activity also encouraged students to initiate discussions about what their lecturers expected with regard to the

content and form of assignments. Lastly, critiquing other students' writing drew attention to common technical and referencing errors without having to personalise the issues.

A breakdown of the postive feedback on peer reviews (131 students)

- helped prepare for summative (96 students)
- help explain assessment criteria (8 students)
- raised the importance of proofreading (16 students)
- helped with writing (10 students)
- raised issue of criticality (1 student)

1%
8%
12%
6%
73%
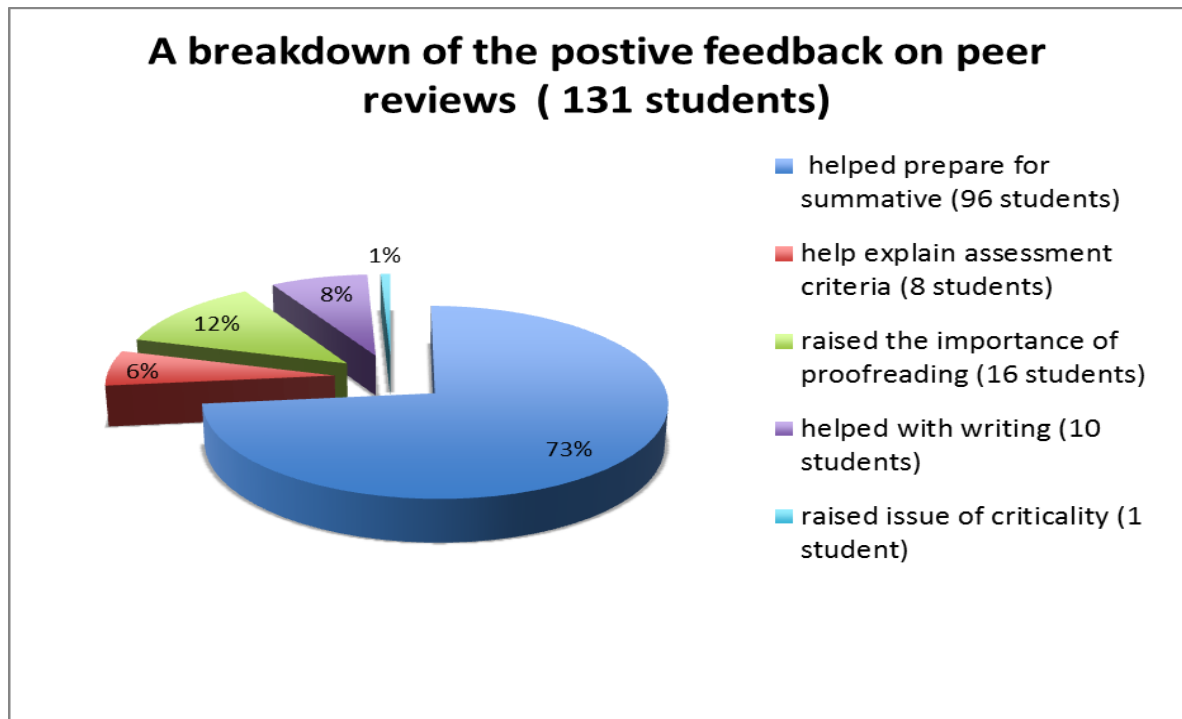
Figure 6: A breakdown of the positive feedback on the use of peer review.

Focus Group Feedback

In the first instance participants were asked to discuss and identify the different kinds of writing they had been asked to produce in their first year. Figure 7 below displays the range of writing practices that they identified.

Figure 7: Types of writing that focus group participants said they had experienced during their first year on SJA.

This range of writing practices was wider than many students had previously experienced in other educational settings, in particular, they commented on the widespread use of digital literacies for educational purposes, such as, blogging and wikis. Half were anxious about the greater emphasis placed on using secondary sources in higher education assignments (15 out of 30 students), whilst the majority had struggled with Harvard Referencing (26 out of 30 students). Students clearly knew that they were being asked to produce a particular kind of academic writing as undergraduates, which could perhaps be best described as a form of hyper-formal writing. Students talked of how the defining characteristic of this academic writing in higher education was to be '*impersonal*'. This, in turn was strongly associated with *'never using I',* not *'using slang'*, *'trying to sound like you know what you are going on about'* and *'using other writers' ideas'*.

Not surprisingly, in the light of the above comments there was a heated debate, and not a little confusion, in both focus groups about what Fairclough (1992b) calls 'hybrid literacies', such as reflective academic writing assignments, which encourage the use of the first person and thus were often not deemed '*proper academic writing*' by the students. (The implications of this increasing hybridity are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4).

This was an important turning point in my thinking as it highlighted the very subjective nature of academic writing practices and their assessment. This was an idea that I would subsequently use to inform the final PhD research.

Focus group participants were next asked to identify key terms that they felt characterised writing in higher education. They came up with the following list:
- Critique
- Analyse
- Synthesise
- Substantiate
- Evaluate

They were then asked to discuss and define what they thought those terms actually meant. The discussion of each word resulted in a long and quite diverse list such as the one below in Figure 8.

Synthesise
Putting theories into your own words
Writing the knowledge/things you've learnt in a certain way
Producing themes in your own words by bringing theories to enhance argument
Doing something with the knowledge you've learnt.
How you convey the knowledge Stream my arguments
Produce theories in own words
Produce theories and include them to enhance your own argument
Putting theories in own words
Bringing the work/text you have read together
Bring together points
Find ideas that are similar to others

Figure 8: Focus group discussion of key words used in summative assignments

This diversity suggested that these key terms, which so often appeared in assessment briefs and criteria, were actually quite nebulous and were often interpreted in many different ways by students. The focus group discussions also raised questions about whether lecturers were always clear themselves about what they meant when they used such terms in summative assignments and feedback. As Lillis and Turner (2001) note:

> [The] terminology widely used by tutors and/or in guidelines to name academic writing conventions raised more questions than answers. (p.59)

It is also fair to note that key terms are not always chosen by lecturers but are often imposed as an indicator of 'levelness' via 'top down' guidance, including QAA subject benchmark statements, revalidation panels feedback and institution-wide generic assessment criteria grids. Interestingly, informal discussions between lecturers, prompted at a number of conference presentations and workshops based on this project, strongly suggested that lecturers did not ordinarily consider the meanings they invested in commonly used key words for assignment writing (or levelness), nor did they usually discuss their possible meanings with their students. This began to raise queries in my mind about lecturers' perceptions of students' academic writing practices and their attitudes to academic writing development. These were all issues that would eventually surface more coherently in the final thesis.

Questions in the focus groups about the relationship or role lecturers had with regard to developing students' academic writing elicited a consistently unequivocal response. Students strongly felt that lecturers were there to '*judge*' students' work through assessment and that they therefore '*ought to have knowledge of the subject*' as well as '*the rules'* by which writing on that subject was to be judged. The role of feedback was also important. Students frequently asserted that lecturer feedback should be about helping them to get their writing *'right'*, although, as has already been pointed out, what they meant by 'right' was open to debate. Unfortunately, students also made clear that they felt that lecturers' expectations about their writing were not consistent or made explicit before they handed their work in. As one participant memorably commented:

> *Feedback on a summative is a really good way of finding out what and how the lecturer wanted you to write.*

Many students had experienced sharp differences between the amounts of time different lecturers spent giving them written and/or verbal feedback on their formative and summative written work. Comments ranged from '*she put loads of helpful comments on so I could see what I was doing wrong'* to '*I did not think that I could ask for help with my English'*. It was also clear that negative written feedback was not always very helpful as

comments like, '*I have no idea why I got the grade I did, but I was really gutted'*, were quite common. Moreover, the majority of participants agreed that writing issues were dealt with differently by different lecturers, *'some lecturers are really strict and some don't care so much*', as well as the predictable '(*)...*is a hard marker, everyone knows that'*. Interestingly, these discussions about perceived inconsistencies in feedback raised the issue of lecturer subjectivity, which was often linked to anxieties about possible lecturer bias and unfair value judgments about students' work. Both focus group sessions concluded with a group consensus that success in writing could be summed up as, '*giving lecturers what they wanted'*, so long as one could work out what that was.

Reflections on '*Embedding Writing Skills'*

Participating in the embedded activities certainly stimulated debate between students and lecturers about the need to prepare for summative assignments more proactively within subject-specific modules. Although the post-it feedback rarely mentioned academic writing practices specifically, their importance was implied in frequent comments about needing to pay attention to proofreading and referencing. As the students had found the activities helpful, the project suggested that an embedded approach to the delivery of academic writing development in the degree programme as a whole might be useful. However, there had been no real tradition of lecturers operating in this way in the research domain, which was typical of higher education settings generally (Zukas and Malcolm, 1999). The project did, therefore, drawn attention to questions of how well-prepared and supported subject-specific lecturers in the domain were with regard to embedding and supporting academic writing development for students, or even working more collaboratively with specialist writing developers. Once again, my focus had come to rest on lecturers' experiences and feelings about academic writing and writing development practices.

Many of the lecturers on the '*Embedding writing skills'* project articulated a clear and often passionate belief that students' academic writing needed to be improved. However, there appeared to be a great deal of confusion and frustration expressed about who should do it and how it could be done. Moreover, when lecturers were asked about what they wanted students' writing to look like, what they thought it was for and how they applied their own conceptions of writing to marking and assessing students' written work, they often

appeared confused and unsure about what they did actually expect. Over time it was this discrepancy, between what lecturers thought and did, or did not think or do, around academic writing development, as much as the mismatch already identified, between students' previous writing experiences and their transition to academic writing in higher education, that created the germ of an idea that fed into the pilot study for the MPhil pilot study discussed next and ultimately the final PhD thesis.

2.2.3 'Towards a more situated analysis of lecturers' perceptions of academic writing and writing development practices' - MPhil pilot study

The pilot study 2009	**Lecturers' perceptions of academic writing and writing development practices.**
The impulse for research	Exploring lecturers' perceptions of academic writing and writing development practices.
Research design	Interviews
Findings	Lecturers are often insecure about themselves as academic writers and their role in developing students writing.

As the background reading for the pilot study progressed, I became increasingly interested in the ways that dominant discourses around academic writing might be influencing how lecturers approached questions around developing their own, and their students' academic writing. This research project took as its starting point the idea that first year SJA students' academic writing development was going to be shaped, implicitly or explicitly, by their lecturers' expectations and values around academic writing. However, these were, as the previous 'Embedding *Writing Skills'* project had suggested, often confused and implicit. The following research questions were therefore created for the MPhil/pilot study:

Q1. Drawing on current literature and practice, what working definitions of literacy skills for first year undergraduates in the School of Education can be posited?

Q2. What effective practice currently exists in the development of first year students' literacy skills development in the School of Education?

(i) What constitutes effective practice in the context of the study?

(ii) What evaluative tool(s) for measuring effective practice can be developed in the context of the study?

Introduction

The interrelated theoretical and practical basis of these research questions was deliberate. Drawing on the work of Lea and Stierer (2009), this research project sought to theorise discourses informing lecturers' perceptions about academic writing (discussed further in Chapter 3), whilst the practical origins of the thesis drew on my own and my colleagues' personal experiences of supporting students' academic writing, and the extent to which we felt responsible for developing it as part of our specific subject teaching (discussed further in Chapter 4). This duel focus reflected an idea developed in the work of Carr and Kemmis (1986) who insist that:

> The twin assumptions that all 'theory' is non-practical and all 'practice' is non-theoretical are […] entirely misguided. 'Theories' are not bodies of knowledge that can be generated out of a practical vacuum and teaching is not some kind of robot-like mechanical performance that is devoid of any theoretical reflection. Both are practical undertakings whose guiding theory consists of the reflective consciousness of their respective practitioners (p.113).

Using this duality, I wanted to examine ways in which lecturers' perceptions about academic writing and writing development influenced students' writing development, not least, because lecturers are so closely bound up with teaching, setting and marking students' written assignments. It was also important to acknowledge that lecturers and students have a vested interest in producing assessed work that meets the disciplinary-based writing practices underpinning assessment briefs (Lea and Street 1998, Lea and Stierer, 2000, 2009).

Higher Education Academic Writing Practices

The pilot study was the first of my research projects to look explicitly at academic writing as a situated practice. This situated approach starts with the supposition that, upon entering higher education, lecturers and students are engaging with disciplinary-based academic writing practices. They are also expected to construct a suitable 'discoursal self' through their adoption of established academic writing practices (Ivanic, 1998). For many students, especially in humanities and social sciences, this involves producing 'essayist literacies'

(Lea and Street, 2006). Lillis (2001) has called the essay 'the privileged literacy practice within society' (p.53). Essay writing has not surprisingly, therefore, been traditionally associated with higher education and higher cognitive thinking, although it is debatable if writing essays actually promotes deep learning and understanding any more than other written assessment forms (Hyland, 2002). Nonetheless, Lillis argues that:

> The practice of essayist literacy is enacted and maintained through the formal institutions of schooling and in many ways is synonymous with formal schooling […] the further up the ladder you go the closer you are expected and assumed to come to the ideals of essayist literacy […] In order to be successful in HE students must […] learn the conventions of, essayist literacy (2001, p.53)

Expectations around established academic writing practices, like the essay, are it can be argued, often wielded like a 'disciplining technology' exerting a formidable influence over students' writing for assessment (Archer, 2003b; Fairclough, 2001). The regulatory function of dominant academic writing practices, and the heavy investment students make in higher education, often creates an understandable desire for conformity or 'appropriacy' (Fairclough, 1995), as students seek to reproduce disciplinary expectations and values in their academic writing in order to improve their grades.

In addition, previous educational experiences in school and beyond, undoubtedly affect students' familiarity and confidence with dominant academic writing practices (Ivanic, 1998; Lillis, 2001). McGivney (2003), for example, refers to the 'mystique of unfamiliarity and remoteness' facing mature students who have entered university through a vocational route and who may not be very familiar with higher education academic writing practices like the essay. Lillis (2001) also makes the point that undergraduates are:

> […] constructed as an autonomous and socially neutral, or empty subjects', subject to and informed by dominant educational discourses rather than their own feelings and preferences (p.24).

This notion of students, as 'empty subjects', subjugated to dominant academic writing discourses, such as essayist literacies, is reinforced by the long-standing institutional lack of interest about any other vernacular or professional literacies that individual students may bring with them to university. There is also little sense in the Academy of how other

literacies might conflict with, or complement, the dominant, disciplinary-based academic writing practices which undergraduates are expected to adopt (Ivanic, 1998; Lea and Street, 2006). Reay's (2008) research explicitly draws on Bourdieu's (1985) concept of 'habitus' (discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5) to suggest that the more familiar learners are with established academic writing practices and expectations, the more easily they acquire positive learner and writer identities in higher education. The degree of 'fit' around established academic writing practices and the development of a positive writing identity (Ivanic, 1998) appear, therefore, to be crucial to many undergraduates' retention and achievement (Doloughan, 2001). Indeed, a failure to acknowledge the relationship between differing educational experiences and varying degrees of familiarity with dominant academic writing practices may explain why so many universities, even those drawing on a very heterogeneous student cohort, have not always responded imaginatively or pro-actively to the challenge of facilitating academic writing development of students from non-traditional educational backgrounds (Hayton and Paczuska, 2002).

As the focus groups in '*Embedding writing skills'* project confirmed, students often experience conflicting expectations regarding the written work they do eventually produce for different modules and/or lecturers across their programmes of study (Ivanic, Clarke and Rimmershaw, 2000; Higgins, Hartley and Skelton, 2002; Lea and Street, 2000). This is may be because they are dealing with the different situated and implicit ways that lecturers define academic writing in terms of their own, often unacknowledged, value judgements, fears and anxieties about it (Chanock, 2000). Interpreting what different lecturers expect from their students' writing is, therefore, often a matter of inference and guesswork. For this reason Lillis and Turner (2001) argue for an:

> […] evaluative metalanguage relating to […] literacy practices in higher education
> […] reflect(s) and enact(s) a powerful tradition relating to knowledge making and
> language. (p.61)

However, the use of such a metalanguage and the need for openness and dialogue assumes that lecturers themselves can fully articulate the origins and implications of their own academic writing practices, which is often not the case (Lillis and Turner, 2001).

All these factors create a situation where, despite the high stakes involved in the production of academic writing, students often find it difficult to work out how they can improve their academic writing, nor are they clear about what kind of advice they should be asking for (Ivanic and Clarke, 1997; Ivanic, 1998; Lea and Stierer, 1998; Lillis, 2001). Lecturers meanwhile, are often equally unsure about how to articulate what they consider to be 'good writing', even less how to begin to help students to achieve it (Hounsell, 1987, 1997; Norton, 1990; Lea and Street, 2000; Lillis and Turner, 2001). Through consideration of this dilemma, I moved from a position where I was researching how students' academic writing could be improved, to one where I focused on lecturers' perceptions of what academic writing actually was and how that affected how they thought they might improve their students' writing. This significant shift in emphasis on to the lecturers, away from students, continued through to the research that I carried out for the final thesis.

Research Design

The MPhil pilot study was conceived of as a singular 'exploratory case study' (Yin, 2003). It was conducted in the same 'natural' work-based setting as the earlier research projects discussed above. Data were socially situated and collected primarily through participants' written and verbal accounts. Ontologically, the research drew on what Whitehead (1988) calls a 'living education theory of professional practice' that is essentially a form of practitioner-based action-research. Whitehead's approach encourages qualitative researchers to deepen their understanding of professional practices, such as academic writing, through an exploration of how they experience everyday professional settings and relationships. Using this approach, the thrust of my questions to participants with regard to academic writing practices could be summed up as, 'what do you do, and why?' (Adapted from McNiff and Whitehead, 2000). This approach offers:

> […] new ways of connecting what we know through research with what we do in […] education […] (Buysse et al., 2003, p.2 65)

McNiff and Whitehead, (2002) also make the point that practitioner-based action researchers are always researching themselves and their practice, as well as researching the practice of others. In trying out this approach, therefore, I began, for the first time in my research career, to wrestle with the classic subject/object dichotomy implicit in traditional

qualitative research approaches. This struggle culminated in the adoption of the post-qualitative methodology discussed in Chapter 6.

Collecting the Data

Eleven Level 4 core module lecturers in the School of Education's SJA responded to my request for an interview and they formed the sample group for the pilot study. Seven lecturers were interviewed and four responded via email (as they were unable to make an interview). All were asked the following same set of questions.

Q1   What kinds of writing practices/skills do you think first year students need? (RQ1)

Q2   What writing skills do you think students most commonly lack during their first year?' (RQ1)

Q3   Do you currently use any strategies to develop your first year students' writing skills? (RQ2)

Q4   How successful do you think those strategies have been? (RQ3)

Q5   What problems do you experience around developing writing skills as part of the module(s) you teach? (RQ3)

Q6   What do you think your role could or should be in developing first year students' writing? (RQ3)

Additional Data

Field notes were used to record my observations about the research context as the study progressed. These notes helped to capture my personal perceptions and reflections about the physical research setting, the writing practices that took place within it and pen-portraits of the various participants. Many of these personal observations and comments now appear as part of the autoenthnographic material quoted throughout the main thesis.

Analysing the Data

Taken as a whole, the body of data collected for the pilot study reflected Hakim's (2003) view that whilst case studies take people as their central unit of account, they are not primarily concerned with individuals as such, but with any patterns or trends in behaviour and perceptions that emerge through a study of the data. Drawing on social theories of language (discussed further in Chapter 3), a simple version of discourse analysis was used as the main analytical tool for describing, analysing and interpreting interviews/accounts.

Discourse analysis was chosen as it facilitated an exploration of how the participants' choice of language might reveal their attitudes to, or more specifically their constructions of, academic writing practices. Initially, I was looking to see if I could discern patterns that would help me understand the values and expectations informing academic writing practices as social phenomena within the research setting. However, I also wanted to consider if participants' accounts reflected wider social, political and cultural discursive formations around academic writing and writing in general.

Findings

The pilot study's findings indicated that lecturers, like students, were often contending with what Lillis called the 'institutional practice of mystery' surrounding writing in higher education (2001, p.53). Both groups struggled with the confusion and ambiguity surrounding conventions and expectations around academic writing, which, as this study suggested, appeared to affect lecturers' ability to develop students' academic writing with confidence. The first two interview questions, 'What kinds of writing practices/skills do you think first year students need?' and 'What writing skills do you think students most commonly lack during their first year?', were designed to establish if participants felt there was a need for student academic writing development in the setting. Although the participants all agreed that students' academic writing needed to be developed, like other research in this field, their responses confirmed that knowing how to do it was a very difficult proposition. Even though the concept of 'good academic writing' is all pervasive in the Academy (Lillis and Turner, 2001; Clarke and Ivanic, 1997), as the previous CIEL study discussed above had shown, establishing what it actually looks like is notoriously difficult (Lillis, 2001; Lea and Street; 1998).

Participants often felt strongly that students needed to read more widely in order to develop their understanding of subject-specific material. This was not just in terms of what they were being asked to read by lecturers, it also involved questioning how they were reading and for what purpose.

> *I think some students have difficulty with new literature. It's like going back to basics.*
> (Lecturer J)

There was also a sense that higher education demanded different kinds of reading:

[They] need to read with more focus. (Lecturer L)

Reading was also frequently linked by participants to students' frequent inability to use secondary sources effectively in their written assignments. The terms '*analyse*', '*synthesise*' and '*evaluate*', were used over and over again to describe what lecturers expected students to do with regard to their wider reading in written assignments. However, as the lecturer below comments:

I think students have difficulty in understanding analysis and I don't think we as lecturers explain it properly. (Lecturer R)

Moreover, as the *'Embedding Writing Skills'* project had shown, these terms meant different things to individual lecturers and students, a fact not lost on some participants:

[…] Are we all consistent? Do I mean the same as everyone else? (Lecturer J1)

Not only did lecturers often not know what their colleagues and other academics meant by many of these key terms, they were often not sure what they thought they meant themselves. When it came to considering participants' views on technical accuracy a similar sense of uncertainty emerged. Participants' comments about technical accuracy were uniform in that they all complained, to varying degrees, about students' poor spelling and punctuation, problems with grammar and sentence construction as well as an inappropriate use of '*abbreviations*', '*slang*', '*informal phrasing*', '*conversational tone*', and a '*failure to use the passive voice*'. Nonetheless, there was a lack of clarity when they were pressed to define, in positive terms, what they felt *did* constitute an appropriate academic style. This lack of clarity was reflected in the variety of terms used by participants to describe 'good' academic writing. These included '*cautious*', *'objective*', *'right', 'academic', 'appropriate', 'complex'* and '*sophisticated*'. The essential vagueness of these terms is all that really connects them, and they are very typical of the kind of terms used by lecturers in other studies about students' writing in higher education (Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis and Turner, 2001).

Referencing was identified by all the lecturers as important for students' writing development. This was not surprising, as Thesen (1997) states:

> The convention of referencing is what characterises the academic essay more than any other feature' (p.30).

However, it was interesting that participants did not refer primarily to the largely mechanical process of getting the layout of referencing formats correct. Indeed, over half of the participants held the view that although students were not familiar with the rigours of referencing conventions, they could, and should, acquire them independently.

> *Let's face it they just have to learn that stuff.* (Lecturer M)

Rather, lecturer-participants tended to raise issues about students' difficulties in understanding when and how to apply the secondary source material they had read within their own academic writing. This, they acknowledged, required a conceptual understanding of how to synthesise different sources of information with one's own thinking. However, many of the lecturers felt frustrated about students' inability to do this effectively, so that typically:

> *Quotes are slapped in so links are not made.* (Lecturer D)

It was clear that many first year students were often very unsure about *why* they had to reference secondary sources when writing in higher education, as it had not been required to the same extent for previous educational qualifications, such as A Level or Access. This raised other, more complex issues connected to referencing, not least the issue raised by three of the lecturers, that first year students often had very naïve views about theories of knowledge and consequently tended to be very uncritical when using wider reading.

> *There is a lack of reflection on what they have read which means they are not able to relate quotes to their own ideas.* (Lecturer L)

Participants' concerns about students' poor referencing went beyond a simple conviction that they just needed to learn how to acknowledge secondary sources accurately. Indeed,

participants' comments often hinted at more complex questions, such as, 'What is the purpose of referencing?' 'How does one establish or contest with students the authority of different sources?' and 'What values and assumptions does the process of using other writers' words and ideas imply about writing, and knowledge in higher education as opposed to other kinds of writing in educational settings?'

The third and fourth interview/questionnaire question asked, 'Do you currently use any strategies to develop your first year students' writing skills?' and 'How successful do you think they have been'. These questions produced some interesting responses from participants. Two lecturers expressed a high degree of uncertainty about their ability to even begin to work with students on their writing, responding with "*You tell me*!' and '*It's not something I have really thought about'* when first approached for an interview. Six others talked about themselves in terms that, to varying degrees, suggested they felt like novice writing developers:

> *I don't think we do as a whole guide them into the way in which we expect academic writing styles to be.* (Lecturer J2)

> *To be honest I am not always sure what I should be doing to help them with their writing* (Lecturer T)

However, all participants agreed that they did try to offer students some kind of embedded, related writing development activities during their delivery of core modules. Activities used by participants included: referencing exercises; quizzes and practice; use of online activities such as building a wiki; participating in an online forum and accessing study skills support websites; peer reviewing an assignment; modelling effective writing practices; discussions about writing; producing microthemes (short, unassessed writing on a specific theme); using double-entry journals (DEJs); controlled conditions writing activities and free writing. Two activities, the modelling of writing for a specific assignment and using online resources, were used extensively by most of the lecturers. Microthemes, peer review, DEJs and free writing were used more intermittently across modules and only by those lecturers who had identified themselves as particularly interested in developing students' writing (most of whom had participated in the previous '*Embedding Writing Skills* 'project). In addition to any writing development activities

delivered throughout core modules, as described above, all the lecturers offered all students one-to-one support and small group tutorials towards the end of the subject-specialist module to support their production of final written summative assignments.

It was clearly felt by participants that academic writing development activities such as DEJ could help support students' knowledge and understanding of subject-specific issues and subjects.

They (DEJs) seem to help students focus on what reading for academic purposes actually is for[...] I used the feedback given on DEJs to emphasise to students what reading and referencing in their own work really means in practical terms. For example, it isn't just about bunging some quotes in. They have to incorporate the secondary sources into their own writing, their own thinking [...] (Lecturer B)

and

By encouraging [students] to explore the real focus or meanings of what they read double-entry journals (DEJs) almost put students in a position to avoid being descriptive or anecdotal [...] DEJs help them to process information rather than reiterate what they read [and] can give students the opportunities to learn how to use reading to inform their own thinking …(Lecturer A)

Formative assignments were also felt to be effective:

As preparation for the first summative assignment students do a number of short formative pieces of writing on selected skills and subject areas. (Lecturer P)

As another lecturer put it:

I think the more they can engage in formative, practical writing tasks the better, because they will then make gradual progress, rather than us saying, 'Here is the assignment, go away and do it'. (Lecturer M)

Research by Newell-Jones, Massey and Osborne (2005), into staff and student perceptions of academic writing development activities in higher education degree programmes, reported that half of the teaching staff in their study felt that teaching writing skills was not part of their role. Rather, they wanted students' writing development to be dealt with through external additional support provision. Although the majority of lecturers in this

study (9 out of 11), appreciated the opportunity to refer students to external writing support, they also felt some responsibility for addressing writing development issues within their own teaching sessions. Not surprisingly, how to frame the delivery of embedded writing development activities, alongside subject-specific content, emerged as an important pedagogic issue. Several of the participants debated how important they felt it was to reposition academic writing development for students as a process, rather than just allowing it to be seen purely as the 'end product' of assessment. This idea is echoed in the quote below, which was typical of a number made by participants on this subject:

> *We may need to drop some of the [subject-specific] content so that we can spend more time on process [but] we need to teach process so that we can signpost independent learning.* (Lecturer N)

Indeed there were some quite complex strategies used by participants to embed academic writing support as outlined below:

> *I have made some changes to my level 1 module and I am going to use a staged assignment where they will submit four separate small pieces of writing including a microtheme, a double entry journal and an action plan. These will all be counted towards their final grade but only the final piece of writing (that is quite short) will be assessed against the assessment criteria. I hope that this will allow the students to start handing in assessed work early and getting feedback and support on their writing.* (Lecturer L)

and

> *I get them to look at A, C and E essays in terms of content and writing skills. Re the latter, I get them to identify and articulate in groups in their own words what constitutes good writing skills based on their analysis of the essays, hoping that the transparency that emerges will feed through into their essay writing.* (Lecturer B)

However, this amount of detail in planning and implementing writing development within a subject-based session was unusual in the setting.

Several participants commented on the lack of communication between lecturers in the setting around academic writing development activities and there were few opportunities to team-teach. As one participant commented ruefully:

I don't know what other people are doing with their students around writing. (Lecturer J2)

Seminar groups in the research setting were generally large (35+), a fact that definitely had implications for rooming groups together and team-teaching. Nonetheless, it was evident that some participants felt that co-teaching around writing development, across seminar groups, could be a useful way of helping less experienced staff gain confidence as writing developers.

It was clearly important to some lecturers that they needed to be more specific with students about what they wanted them to produce in written assignments, rather than leaving them to try and work it out by following the kinds of implicit writing 'cues' that Lillis and Turner (2001) refer to in their paper. As one lecturer put it:

I think it's about making what we want explicit, because what we want is quite often very transparent. I think we do owe it to the students to be absolutely explicit about what we are expecting regarding their writing. (Lecturer B)

The idea that students' subject-specific learning could improve through a more process-led, interactive approach to writing development in higher education echoes the findings of other researchers working in the field (Fairclough, 2001; Lea and Street, 1988; Lillis, 2001). Ivanic (1998), in particular, outlines in her research how process-led writing development activities acted as an effective bridge between students' understanding of their subject and their ability to write successfully about it. Indeed she suggests in some of her later work, that writing essentially 'mediates' learning (Ivanic, 2004). Two lecturers were explicit about their awareness of this mediation or dialectic between students' understanding of subject-specialist knowledge and the ways they could be taught to express, or in Ivanic's terms, 'mediate' that knowledge effectively in their academic writing:

We need to do more work on analysis and process rather than just cover the subject. (Lecturer M)

and

> *We need to try to show the processes of producing academic writing as part of the subject specific content of the module.* (Lecturer T)

However, in their responses to interview questions 5 and 6, 'What problems do you experience around developing writing skills as part of the module(s) you teach'? and 'What do you think your role could or should be in developing first year students' writing?'; participants did highlight a number of barriers or problems with regard to implementing academic writing development with their students. For example, embedded academic writing development activities, such as those used in the '*Embedding Writing Skills*' project, whilst seen as an effective way of delivering writing development by the majority of lecturers, were deemed to require considerable confidence and expertise in order to deliver effectively. Unfortunately, there is plenty of evidence, (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5), that delivering academic writing development in this way has not traditionally been viewed as an important aspect of lecturers' professional development, or professional identity in higher education (Biggs and Tang, 2007; Lea and Street, 1998; Ramsden, 2003).

On a practical level, some lecturers were worried about how they could make time for developing embedded writing development activities, such as feeding back on writing for formative and unassessed writing tasks within existing workloads. This reflected Murray and Kirton's research (2006) which demonstrated how it is often difficult for university lecturers to undertake work on writing development, as well as fulfilling all their subject specific teaching, research and administrative duties.

As one lecturer stated:

> *It would be useful to have […] more formative submissions and workshops, though the semester structure and end of semester submission structure […] inhibit this.* (Lecturer N)

The need to make space for academic writing development activities and ensure that they were timed to complement assessment preparation is an often unacknowledged aspect of curriculum delivery that any embedded writing development model needs to factor in. This concern was often raised by participants, through discussions about the relationship or balance between subject content and writing development. As one participant stated:

How much of the subject area do you take out to fit in the writing activities? (Lecturer A)

Uncertainty about balancing the curriculum was also coupled with a general feeling that subject-specific content had to come first because:

The modules are quite rightly based around the subjects that the learning outcomes focus on, and so whether there is room in those modules to start developing writing skills is a very important question [...] (Lecturer N)

Clearly participants felt that there was a desire to fulfil tight teaching timetables and meet the demands of formal assessment regimes. In addition, meeting the writing needs of large groups potentially generated a lot of extra work for lecturers, especially if they were required to feedback on unassessed formative academic writing tasks. Nonetheless, some lecturers in the setting had addressed this problem by using group blogs, where students were encouraged to read and comment on each other's contributions rather than just relying on the lecturer to do so.

Most participants in the pilot study tended to be quite proactive in their support to all students, not just those they perceived to be struggling with their writing; they were accordingly keen to incorporate the use of process-led, unassessed writing activities and iterative feedback. However, Lea and Stierer's research (2000) suggest that an absence of professional and institutional opportunities, or any encouragement to take on the role of writing developer, may help explain many subject-specific lecturers' lack of clarity or interest around what forms academic writing development could or should take in their sessions.

Interestingly, the pilot study also appeared to provide an opportunity for some of the participating lecturers to reflect on their own struggles with academic writing, noting:

I am still finding out what kind of writing I should be producing for journals. (Lecturer A)

and

They [the students] and we [the lecturers] are all bound by conventions and by structures and the real difficulty then is the style [of academic writing] (Lecturer D)

Several also talked about how writing at doctoral level had helped them develop a more explicitly metacognitive, situated approach to writing development for students:

[In my Ed Doc] we have assignments coming up and that was really informative to engage in that because it makes me sympathise with the students; this whole thing of 'am I getting the level right?' [...] It's so nerve wracking writing an assignment and each time the night before I have thought it's just rubbish, I have been working on this for ages' but it could just be way off because I don't really know and that has been very informative for me as a lecturer thinking I need to avoid doing that to students and to be as open as I can about what we're expecting and why we were asking them to do things in particular. (Lecturer C)

This more metacognitive, reflective approach created a greater awareness of how and why academic writing practices operate in particular ways within higher education settings, such as those suggested by Ivanic and Lea (2006). As one lecturer stated:

I now try [with students] to say that writing will help you work out what you think so don't just think of it as a horrible task at the end of learning and that it is part of the learning and it will help you work out what you think, although do students get that? Some do [...] (Lecturer L)

This type of reflective comment suggested that for some lecturers, their own writing histories, both past and present, influenced and intersected with their expectations and assumptions around writing and writing development strategies for students. As Lecturer C comments:

I think [I] must have been influenced by being a Primary School teacher [...]being fussy about 'oh write a sentence and do your punctuations and write in paragraphs' and going on about those things to 6 year olds ...I'm sure that's had an influence but I think I had to think it through since working in HE about what is the purpose of writing [...] because it would be really pathetic if what I thought was important above all else was it being nicely presented and no spelling mistakes.

Despite the fact that several of the lecturers in the pilot study identified a lack of knowledge/confidence about how to develop students' writing, there was no university or school-wide commitment in the research setting aimed at developing a coherent and systematic writing developer/development programme for staff. As outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, this is the case in many higher education institutions, where support around writing

development remains predominately bolt on and piecemeal for students and lecturers (Doloughan, 2001).

Conclusions

In spite of the obvious shortcomings of separating academic writing development for students from their acquisition of discipline knowledge, it is a division that remains strong in many universities (Doloughan, 2001), including the research setting. Students are, more often than not, taught a subject without the opportunity to engage explicitly with the processes, such as writing for assessment within that discipline, that underpin the articulation of their subject-specific learning.

The variance in confidence and awareness between different lecturers in the research setting, suggested there should be more opportunities for lecturers to discuss their values and expectations about students' academic writing and writing development, as well as the content and purpose of the written assignments that they are setting for assessment. All the lecturers in the study expressed a clear desire to be better supported in developing writing for students and embedding writing development into subject-specific curriculum design. Co-teaching with experienced, confident or trained specialist writing staff to develop writing and/or offer extra writing support sessions for students was also mentioned by several participants as one way that this could be achieved.

In conclusion, the pilot study made a case for challenging the traditional lack of interest around academic writing practices in many higher education institutions. In their work on professional development for higher education lecturers, Lea and Stierer (2000) agree that many lecturers would benefit from professional programmes designed to support them as writing developers, just as so much research suggests that students would benefit from a more coherent approach to specifically developing their academic writing (Wingate, 2006). One can argue that proactive institutional support around writing development, and embedding writing development into programmes, could help lecturers and students to develop more confident writing identities. This is because such strategies would help develop of a clearer, possibly more critical understanding, of the historical and cultural values and assumptions underpinning academic writing assumptions in higher education.

Reflections on '*Towards a more situated analysis of lecturers' perceptions of academic writing and writing development practice'*

Reflecting on this project I felt I was beginning to look more 'darkly' into the subject of lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices. As the research progressed, it became apparent that the lecturer-participants, when prompted, often had complicated feelings about academic writing and writing development that hinted at a recognition of the essential complexity and situatedness of writing in higher education as posited by the New Literacy Studies theorists (discussed in Chapter 3). This complexity, however, had not been anticipated by the rather operational focus of the pilot study research. For example, all participants had indicated that technical accuracy was important, yet I had not questioned why they thought so to such a strong and uniform degree. Nor had I asked them to articulate their understanding of the relationship between technical accuracy and the students' ability to express their learning and understanding. However, I now realised that I needed to address those questions by opening up a more situated discussion about how lecturers' perceptions about academic writing practices were discursively constituted This would include asking how lecturers positioned themselves, or were positioned, within dominant academic writing discourses within higher education.

Although the pilot study started out by focussing on the extent to which participants felt they supported students' academic writing and writing development, it ended with the realisation that what so much of what lecturers do with students around academic writing development depends greatly on their own history and identity as writers, and in particular with their writing identities in the academy. Indeed, engaging in the research process had encouraged participant lecturers to reflect on their own academic writing practices. This unexpected and welcome outcome eventually led to the conception of a 'higher education writing habitus' as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

In the light of the uncertainties raised by participants about what actually defines academic writing, I felt that I should have probed further into what individual lecturers meant when they used terms like '*analyse', 'synthesise' and 'evaluate'* when discussing writing practices with regard to assignments, feedback and assessment criteria. I began to wonder if my participants had ever had the time to discuss or reflect upon what they really thought they meant with regard to their own and others' academic writing. There was clearly an

opportunity to develop a different approach to this topic, one that might facilitate a deeper, more complex appreciation of the issues academic writing practices raised for lecturers in higher education.

Critically, analysing lecturers' perceptions of themselves as academic writers emerged from the pilot study as a fruitful area for further research. It reflected a concern that eventually developed into the discussion in Chapter 5 about the fluidity and mutability of academic process through academic writing practices like doctorates and journal writing. I was increasingly thinking about my own position as a lecturer and researcher, not least, because I was part of the same work environment and social practices as my participants. Moreover, as a PhD student, I was engaged in my own very personal struggle with dominant academic writing and research discourses. I could not step out of this research as an external observer, I was living it and it was about me as much as anyone else that might be involved in it. All of which required me to think hard about the limitations of traditional qualitative research design.

The first research question for the pilot study, 'Drawing on current literature and practice, what working definitions of literacy skills for first year undergraduates in the School of Education can be posited?' had, I now realised, been rather superficial. It assumed that understanding academic writing and writing development practices lay in identifying and discussing what lecturers did (or said they did). Indeed, what was most interesting about the whole dynamic between lecturers, students and academic writing practices was not so much what was said and observed, but what was not said or seen (at least on the surface). In this way the pilot study data had revealed the tip of a very large, problematic pedagogic iceberg. For example, it was clear that many of the lecturers in the setting perceived themselves to be novices in academic writing development. This was in contrast to the more secure identities they had as experts and teachers in their disciplinary field. It would, therefore, be important in any future research to explore the potential tensions around writing identities for lecturers as writers and writing developers in the Academy.

With regard to the second pilot study research questions, 'What effective practice currently exists in the development of first year students' literacy skills development in the School of Education', 'What constitutes effective practice in the context of the study' and 'What

evaluative tool(s) for measuring effective practice can be developed in the context of the study?', the data illustrated how many expectations and assumptions around academic writing practices in higher education are implicit. Although participants were often very interested in students' academic writing, they nonetheless articulated their perceptions about it in a rather superficial way. This suggested that academic writing and writing development could, or should not, be reduced to simple operational forms of 'good practice', for lecturers or students. Rather, it confirmed that writing identities and abilities in higher education were complex and increasingly the product of hybridised practices, not only reflective, but digital (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008). I felt therefore, that it was not possible to produce a set of conclusions and recommendations that could identify and implicitly promote 'best practice'. It was, however, possible to observe that lecturers and students, in this and in previous studies in the setting, largely agreed that effective practices around writing and writing development practices were inextricably bound up with lecturers and students developing confidence and competence in those practices. That notwithstanding, confidence and competence are notoriously difficult to evaluate in any measurable way. For this reason, it was very difficult to produce any meaningful evaluative tools for measuring effective practice around developing students' writing in the setting out of the data.

In conclusion, completing the MPhil pilot study opened up less fixed ways of thinking about academic writing and writing development practices in higher education for me. I now felt that academic writing development practices were much more than a concrete set of activities that could be simply, observed, collected, critiqued and reassembled to improve practice in the setting. Invisible, behind what the student and lecturer participants did, or said they did, or thought they did, lay a whole mass/mess of contradictory, unarticulated perceptions and expectations about writing practices in the setting which required a more fluid methodology and onto-epistemology.

2.3 Introduction to the PhD thesis 'Through a glass darkly': A post-qualitative case study into lecturers' perceptions of academic writing.

PhD 2009	Through a glass darkly: A post-qualitative case study into lecturers' perceptions of academic writing
The impulse for research	Can anyone really define academic writing?
Research design	A rhizomic/postmodernist approach that problematises the whole question of conducting qualitative education research into academic writing.
Findings	Nobody really knows what academic writing is or should be, but that is an important thing to recognise in the academy.

The research journey detailed above shows how I, over time, shifted my position ontologically and epistemologically (a journey discussed further in Chapter 6). To summarise, in the first project I undertook around academic writing *'Developing the Writing Skills of First Year Early Childhood and Education Students'* I thought that the outcomes of my research into academic writing could be measured. I also thought the outcomes of the research were quantifiable, even though I realised at the end that at best they were debatable. Next, in the '*Embedding Writing Skills'* project I sought to include colleagues more in the research, as I wanted to acknowledge that the research data was constructed out of my own and participants' experiences and opinions. However, I did not attempt to explore different subjectivities operating in the research and accepted everything at face value. In the MPhil pilot study, '*Towards a more situated analysis of lecturers' perceptions of academic writing and writing development practices'* I had used critical discourse analysis to highlight how interpretative and therefore inherently subjective the accounts collected as data were. However, the issue of power was not really explored in my subsequent analysis of that data.

For the PhD thesis, in the light of these earlier, formative research experiences, I wanted to take a more consciously nuanced account of how lecturers made sense of and related to

their own academic writing practices. This was because I felt that perceptions and personal experiences of academic writing must inform how participating lecturers related to the issues of students' academic writing and writing development. It was also important to acknowledge that I now viewed the whole subject of academic writing practices very differently. In this sense, my research had moved from a specific focus on students' problems with academic writing, to a wider interest in academic writing per se as a problematic discursive conceptualisation. As the grid below suggests, this much more complex conceptualisation had definite research implications.

Pre-thesis conceptualisation of academic writing	Problematised conceptualisation of academic writing used in thesis
Autonomous	Ideological
Objective	Subjective
Techniscist skills set	Social practice
Universal	Situated
Functional	Creative
Performative	Developmental
Fixed	Fluid
	Consequences for research approach?

Figure 9: Conceptualisations of academic writing

The more I looked at the previous projects, with their research questions and different methodologies, the less I felt they said anything about this new more complex conceptualisation of academic writing practices. These projects had not taken account of my subjectivity and therefore did not reflect the conflicted and multiple 'I' of the researcher, which was for me, an increasingly important part of the research process. I therefore felt I had to move away from asking what was there 'to know' about lecturers perceptions and practices around academic writing practices. Instead, I gravitated towards more open questions such as, 'What can be inferred about the dominant discourses in higher education informing lecturers' perceptions about academic writing?' This shift in focus ultimately involved treating my data collection and analysis as a more critical and creative process. Furthermore, it initiated an ontological change that reflected my new understanding of epistemology, or knowledge-gathering. These shifts and changes demanded I adopt a 'new research literacy' (St. Pierre, 1997a, p.2) which allowed me to articulate the meaning of my data in a less deterministic way and to:

> […] produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently […] (St. Pierre, 1997a, p. 175)

Consequently, I felt suspicious of any methodological prescription or dogma that sought to fix the meaning of academic writing practices. It was necessary, therefore, as I proceeded to the PhD stage, to produce a set of modified research questions, which better reflected the new ontological and epistemological turns that my research interests had taken. For this reason, I chose to create what I have called research 'provocations', rather than research questions, as I thought they better facilitated an exploration and problematisation of the gaps and contradictions that had emerged out of the pilot study data analysis.

Thesis research provocations:

Q1. What is academic writing and how do dominant discourses about academic writing in higher education appear to inform lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices in the research setting?

Q2. How can post-qualitative research into lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices open up a debate about academic writing development practices in higher education?

These provocations allowed the PhD to become distinctly more theoretical, even philosophical, in its orientation towards academic writing practices. Simultaneously, the adoption of a post-qualitative methodological approach embraced the multiplicity and complexity of lecturers' perceptions about those practices.

Epilogue

Over the period that this chapter covers I have tried to delineate why I became interested in how the slippery, liminal spaces around identity, power, epistemology and pedagogy affect academic writing practices in higher education and my research into them. I began to see that there was more work to be done around critical pedagogies with regard to academic writing. In order to engage with these ideas, I knew that I had to go beyond the established modernist/Enlightenment intellectual heritage offered by traditional educational research models. This was mainly because I was no longer sure that qualitative educational research could, as it often claims, produce objects of knowledge through an objective observation and analysis of people and practices. Indeed, I felt uncertainty about the very nature of academic writing and any attempt to conduct research into it.

I therefore needed to find another way of thinking about academic writing and carrying out educational qualitative research. What follows therefore, is not an evidence-based humanist research project, rather the thesis offers itself as a form of bricolage, a Deleuzean assemblage of ideas, a conversation between the literature, the participants and myself about academic writing and practices in higher education.

Chapter 3: Reconceptualising Academic Writing Practices: Muddling through and mixing it up - how linguistic, discursive and epistemological theoretical frameworks create new contexts for academic writing.

Prologue

In Chapter 2 I discussed how my research journey towards a more complex re-conceptualisation of academic writing practices had, as Lillis and Turner (2001) predicted, served only to create more questions than answers.   In addition, as a researcher I had come to realise that:

> […] an absence of theory leaves the researcher prey to the unexamined, unreflexive preoccupations and dangerously naïve ontological and epistemological a prioris […] (Ball, 1995, pp.265-6)

As I embarked on this thesis, therefore, I needed to leave descriptions of lecturers' practices and operational problem-solving behind and begin to consider how lecturers' perceptions of academic writing might be informed by different and competing epistemologies and discourses. This was an indistinct 'field of enquiry' (Richardson, 1994), through which I could do no more than look 'darkly'. To begin, I therefore needed to struggle with theories informing the dominant discourses around lecturers' perceptions of academic writing. Not least because:

> The interpretations and theoretical assumptions on which [research is] based are not neutral but are part of, and help to construct, political and ideological conditions [for the research] (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000, p.8)

I was now convinced that lecturers and students, like myself, were often struggling with what Lillis and Turner (2001) call the "institutional practice of mystery" surrounding academic writing practices in higher education (p. 53). In this next chapter I wanted to theoretically interrogate those 'mysteries' by asking the following questions. Where do established conceptions of academic writing in higher education come from? Were they susceptible to change?

Could they be challenged? Do lecturers actually have a clear idea what academic writing is? And finally, how do I and my fellow lecturers negotiate and re-negotiate their/my/our personal relationships with those practices? I agreed with Richardson (2000) who observed that:

> *[...] there is no such thing as 'a thing' speaking of 'itself' because things are always constructed and interpreted [...] (p.58)*

For the thesis, therefore, I decided to treat academic writing as something that could be re-constructed and re-interpreted using theoretical frameworks that potentially disrupt, defamiliarise and problematise authoritative and privileged theories and concepts.

3.1 Introduction: Research into Writing: turn and turn again

This thesis treats academic writing practices in higher education as part of a rhizomic configuration of interrelated experiences and discourses existing within what Donald called the "muddle of education" (1985, p.242). Muddled and difficult to define, academic writing practices are nonetheless taken to be relational and historically situated. By foregrounding their historicity this section attempts to delineate how previous discourses and practices around academic writing have:

> [...] in terms of power and knowledge shaped the structure of the present (Olsen and Cole, 2006, p.185).

Writing as a social practice is irremediably polysemous; engaging humans in virtually any process, from scratching marks on a surface that connote shared meanings in a community, to highly sophisticated and differentiated communication systems resulting from different practices and settings, such as disciplinary-based academic writing in higher education (Tolchinsky, 2003). Research about writing can also take many forms. Linguistics researchers often study the pragmatics of lexis and syntax in conversation or texts, or they focus on technical aspects of language acquisition such as phonics or orthography. In comparison, much educational research on writing has focussed on how children learn to write, or find it difficult to do so. This thesis is concerned primarily with how students and lecturers come to recognise, or are inducted into

specific forms of disciplinary-congruent forms of academic writing whilst in higher education. It is also concerned with the places occupied by academic writing in higher education - its ontologies, as well as what is thought or known about writing in that academic world - its epistemologies.

Tolchinsky (2003) argues that writing's 'being in the world' differs from other forms of communication because it involves a physical mode of production that separates, in time and space, the writing artefact/product from the writer/subject/producer. Moreover, written texts are more than just a record or repository of the physical writing marks that they contain, they are objects that can be regarded as vibrant entities imbued with what Bennett (2010) calls 'thing power'. That is, they are generative and pregnant with the possibility of new meanings. Much of the 'thing power' emanating from written texts can be attributed to the inherently intertextual nature of writing. Intertextuality is especially constitutive of academic writing practices, as in academia it is the business of lecturers, researchers and students to endlessly read and compare texts (books and journals) in order to create new forms of writing (essays, dissertations, PhDs, new research and more books and journals etc.). The use of quotations, citations, and bibliographies are further manifestations of constant how written material in the academy is constantly recirculating and being re-inscribed.

The research focus of this thesis into lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices seeks to explore those perceptions and the world or lived experience that they emerge from. In his book *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (1999) Gee posits that worlds can never be known directly, rather they are always constructed, or given meaning, through language. This conceptualisation, how one experiences the world, was part of what Gee (1996), in an earlier work termed the 'social turn', a shift, he argued, that influenced all social sciences in the latter half of the twentieth century by challenging old certainties and hierarchies. At the heart of the 'social turn' is the issue of power relations in social domains and how they are inevitably reproduced through social practices. This thesis is interested in the kinds of power relations embodied in social practices around academic writing in the social domain of higher education.

The postmodern theoretical frameworks outlined in this chapter have informed the choice of a post-qualitative research paradigm (which is discussed in more detail in

Chapter 6). Schostak and Schostak (2013) employ a fishing net analogy from Diprose and Ferrell (1991) to describe how postmodern theoretical frameworks work in post-qualitative research to create:

> […] strings of meaning [which] produce the holes in the material world in such a way that what is presented is as much the product of the unsaid as of the said. (p.viii)

Post-qualitative research is not, therefore, about framing a discussion and creating bounded spaces, which can then be used to define and explain research subjects/objects. Conversely, it employs theories and concepts to make visible how social realities or perceptions are shaped by dominant discourses, which create only the illusion of bounded, understood spaces (or strings of meaning). Between dominant discourses however, there exist alternative, liminal spaces through which other meanings form and move, that are neither visible nor understood. (That is, one can only see them '*through a glass darkly*').

A post-qualitative approach draws (directly and indirectly) on all the 'posts' (St. Pierre, 1997b). These include, post-structuralism, postmodernism, post-colonialism, post-feminism, post-revolutionary and post-emancipatory forms of enquiry that together help foster a more open post-qualitative approach for educational research. It is important, however, to point out that this use of the suffix 'post' signifies an ongoing engagement with important 'isms' such as feminism, colonialism and racism in opposition to any belief that society has moved beyond such social issues. Indeed, St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) argue that 'post' is often used to domesticate or diminish the power of the original movement, a claim they strongly refute.

Lastly, post-qualitative research embraces what 'New Materialists, such as Bennett (2010) and Bradotti (1994), have called the 'ontological turn'. As Course (2010), an anthropologist, points out, this ontological turn is:

> […] neither a "school" nor even a "movement", but rather a particular commitment to recalibrate the level at which analysis takes place. (p.248).

The ontological turn offers educational qualitative researchers a flattened, non-hierarchised onto-epistemological landscape (Latour, 2005), through which they can navigate the 'rigorous confusion' (St. Pierre, 1997b, p.281) of lived experience.

This post-qualitative thesis uses the confusion and freedom offered by the social and ontological 'turns' to examine critically a number of interconnected and interdisciplinary linguistic, discursive and epistemological theoretical frameworks informing academic writing practices in higher education namely; social literacy theories and their educational implications; theories of discourse and power and the concepts of habitus, doxa and linguistic capital. These frameworks open up new ways of thinking about how to research academic writing practices. They are an attempt to avoid creating educational research that promotes what Kinchloe (2005) calls 'monological knowledge' and researchers who:

> [...] are satisfied with right and wrong answers that preclude the need for other perspectives. Thus, monological knowledge is a smug knowledge that is content with quick resolutions to the problems that confront researchers (2005, p. 326).

Monological researchers, he suggests, fail to recognise any cultural, discursive, ideological, and epistemological dimensions '[...] in the rationalistic quest for order and certainty' moreover 'thick descriptions are lost to the forces of order and certainty' (Kinchloe, 2005, p.326).

The theoretical frameworks explored in this chapter attempt to avoid the kind of epistemological 'smugness' Kinchloe condemns. Across this thesis theory is used to problematise, even celebrate, issues thrown up by postmodern, post-qualitative approaches and methodologies, in order to deconstruct what Alvesson and Sköldberg, (2000) term the 'taken for grantedness' of dominant discourses around academic writing practices.

3.2 The Autonomous Model of Literacy

Despite the intertextuality and situatedness that characterised the production and consumption of writing, the work of early linguists like Bloomfield (1933) treated it as a decontextualised set of skills. This skills model, which Street (much later in 1984) termed 'autonomous', constituted spelling, punctuation and grammar as a 'neutral technology' which once acquired could be applied by individuals universally without reference to any ideological and cultural values. In autonomous, skills-based models, 'good academic writing' is defined by the idea that each writer makes, or has the potential to make, individual choices whereby they select and then uniquely combine, words from an internalised (disciplinary-based) lexicon, in order to express their subject-specific learning clearly and effectively.

Across all educational sectors autonomous models of writing operate as a dominant discourse informing academic writing practices. Everyone working in education is, therefore, firmly located within a "grammocentric" world (Hoskin, 1990). In such a world, one can argue that academic writing practices function as forms of regulation and differentiation as they are inextricably:

> […] centered on individual and individual difference, both normalization and pathologisation […] realised within a set of assessing, diagnostic, prognostic and normative practices. (Hoskin, 1990, p.52)

As such, one can view academic writing as exerting what Foucault (1979) in *The History of Sexuality* terms 'disciplinary power'. Street (2000) argues that this discursive form of power:

> […] disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin [writing, so they] can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal (p.18).

Intangible and diffuse, disciplinary power subjects everyone within its ambit to constant surveillance and control. It is perpetuated through observance of normative standards in society, which are maintained through a pervasive 'apparatus of uninterrupted examination' (Foucault, 1981, p.186). In higher education, the examination and surveillance of teaching and learning standards is often mediated through forms of

academic writing. Written assignments, of one form or another, remain a common (although not the only, and not always the most important) vehicle for mediating learning across most disciplines. Academic writing summative assignments certainly continue to be the most conventional means by which humanities and social science students are assessed and ranked.

The examination of summative written assignments may appear to individuate learners by reifying and rendering their learning visible so that it can be judged on its own terms. However, one can argue that it is actually the normalisation of dominant discourses like the autonomous model of writing, which only appear to unproblematically regulate conceptions of academic writing through forms of discipline and differentiation. As Gee (1996) wrote, these dominant, 'big D', discourses actually represent the:

> […]different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language "stuff," such as different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing, and using symbols, tools, and objects in the right places and at the right times so as to […] give the material world certain meanings. (p.13)

In this sense, written summative assignments, and the specific disciplinary academic writing practices they enact, can be seen as the main means by which many undergraduates integrate the language of learning with the non-language 'stuff' of learning, as they clearly involve 'thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing, and using symbols, tools, and objects in the right places and at the right times' (ibid).

Written summative assignments are also used to classify students into neat hierarchical, unindividuated positions along a norm-referenced spectrum, (so that a piece of writing can be judged as a 48% opposed to a 76%). In this way, dominant discourses about academic writing are invisibly stitched into higher education taxonomies around standards. However, powerful conceptualisations around what constitutes 'good academic writing' maintain their dominance by obscuring the very social and cultural power relations that underpin and inform them precisely because they create:

> […] certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbols systems and ways of knowing over others. (Gee, 1996, p.13)

Foucault over a number of early key texts (1982, 1984) outlined how power relations allow dominant discourses to solidify over time into 'objects' of knowledge and domination that are difficult to contest or resist. Similarly, in his classic essay, "*Common sense as a cultural system*" Geertz (1983) describes how established social practices often translate in everyday language as 'common-sense' and concludes:

> Common sense is not what the mind […] spontaneously apprehends; it is what the mind filled with presuppositions […] concludes. No religion is more dogmatic, no science more ambitious, no philosophy more general. Its tonalities are different, and so are the arguments to which it appeals, but […] it pretends to reach past illusion to truth, to, as we say, things as they are. (p.74)

This thesis argues therefore that 'big D' discourses around academic writing standards may be experienced as 'common-sense', however, they are constructions, maintained by discursive and disciplinary power relations, rather than self-evident universal standards that can be unproblematically applied to individuals' writing.

3.2.1 The 'Great Divide theory of literacy'

Within Western cultures dominant writing practices associated with powerful settings and social groups, such as academic writing in higher education, enjoy a long-standing high symbolic value and discursive dominance across wider society. One manifestation of this dominance was a heated debate that developed during the early 1960s which turned on alleged differences between so-called oral and literate cultures. Its effect was to reinforce the cultural privileging of writing over other forms of communication. Great Divide theorists, as they came to be known, maintained that on an individual level there was a correlation between the ability to read and write and the development of higher cognitive skills such as thinking conceptually. On a macro level, they argued that fundamental epistemological and cultural changes occurred when a society changed from a predominately oral state to one that had developed literacy (Levi-Strauss, 1966; Goody, 1977; Goody and Watt, 1963; Olson, 1977; Ong 1982). Goody sums the Great Divide position up thus:

> […]writing, and more especially alphabetic literacy, made it possible to scrutinise discourse in a different kind of way by giving oral communication a

semi-permanent form; this scrutiny favoured an increase in scope of critical activity, hence of rationality, scepticism, and logic [in societies]. (1977, p. 11)

This alleged increase in 'rationality, scepticism and logic' was due, according to Great Divide theorists, to a belief that once ideas, information and forms of knowledge got written down in physical objects, such as books, they became independent from their original oral sources. No longer fixed spatially in communities and individuals, written ideas, information and forms of knowledge were then, it was claimed, inevitably experienced in more abstract, atemporal ways (Goody, 1977).

Writing was, in this way, historically constructed by the Great Divide theorists as a key component of Western cultural superiority. Ong (1982), for example, placed societies on a spectrum spanning 'full orality' to 'full literacy'. In the latter, written texts were increasingly regarded as pre-eminent repositories of 'cultural power'. This contrasted with the treatment of oral traditions of knowledge-keeping such as the African griot or Australian Aboriginal 'songlines', which were culturally devalued. Openly dismissed as primitive, such indigenous practices only reinforced the marginalisation of groups who practised them (Cole, 1996). Moreover, it was common for religious, legal and historical texts to be used to reify the authority of colonisers in the West. In particular, so called 'schooled literacies', that inevitably embodied the economic and cultural capital of the colonisers, further ensured that Western education and the writing practices that it endorsed worked to oppress the very people it was ostensibly 'civilising' (Matusov and St John, 2004).

3.3 Social Theories of Literacy/Literacies

Challenging limiting and oppressive conceptions of writing, such as autonomous models and Great Divide theories, alongside the culturally dominant neoliberal world-view that they underpin, requires a considerable methodological and ideological shift in how writing is viewed in society. For example, social literacy theorists like Scribner and Cole (1981), refuse to make any simple links between illiteracy and the lack of individual cognitive abilities or wider societal development as posited by Great Divide theorists. Instead social literacy theorists treat writing practices, like other social

practices, as part:

> […] of a domain […] framed by its culture. Their meaning and purpose are socially constructed through negotiations among present and past members. [Such] activities thus cohere in a way that is, in theory, if not always in practice, accessible to members who move within the social framework. These coherent, meaningful, and purposeful activities are […] most simply defined as the ordinary practices of the culture. (Seely-Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989, p.1)

This notion of domains reinforces the idea, originally formulated in Berger and Luckmann (1966), that the apparent stability and 'givenness' of dominant, established academic writing practices and institutions and the social realities that they support, are discursively constructed not 'real' or 'true' in any concrete sense.

Social theories of literacy also suggest that constant social interactions foster the development of multiple literacy practices. These multiple practices differentiate communities and groups existing within particular settings or domains in what Gergen (2009) has termed the '…on-going confluence of relating' (p.304). As Hull and Shultz (2002) write:

> Literacy is […] based on cultural production and reproduction. (p.193)

Hence the meaning and use of any given literacy or writing practice, no matter how established, is always plural because it speaks though the sum of its multiple, sedimented 'semantic layers' that have accrued over time and which constitute it diachronically in discursive terms (Bakhtin, 1981, p.276). Moreover, as they negotiate these 'semantic layers', writers operate agentically. They are 'nomadic' subjects who are 'ambivalent and polyvalent' (Lather, 2006, p.43) about the writing practices and artefacts that they constantly use, for different purposes, in their everyday lives.

Unlike proponents of autonomous models, interpretive sociolinguistic research maintains that language use (in written or verbal form) does not just convey general and decontextualised information. For example, Gumperz (1982b) showed how his research subjects used and recognised a variety of lexical, structural, and prosodic 'contextualisation cues' to communicate (or not) across different social domains. Gumperz's cues signified very specific social and cultural meanings around race, class

and status that delineated and reproduced social and cultural discrimination around, amongst other things, employment. Working in the same period, Brice-Heath (1982) showed how the three different communities within the Piedmont area of the Carolinas, USA that she researched: Trackton, Roadville, and Maintown, could not be divided easily into categories like literate/illiterate. Nor could those binary labels be related to the intellectual or cognitive development of individuals in those communities in the way that the Great Divide theorists had suggested. Indeed, her research showed that each group in the study identified deployed 'strikingly' different literacies for a variety of social purposes that could not be easily categorised or hierarchised (Brice-Heath, 1982). Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) call these early researchers, who blurred the boundaries between social anthropology and sociolinguistics, 'first-generation literacy study theorists'.

3.3.1 New Literacy Studies

Pioneering literacy researchers, Gumperz (1982b) and Brice-Heath (1982), demonstrated how literacy was experienced and used differently by individuals and groups in society. The idea that language was not just a neutral technology of communication was further developed by a group, whose work comes under the umbrella term of New Literacy Studies (NLS). Important NLS researchers include Barton and Hamilton (1998); Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, (2000); Gee (1996) and Street (1984, 1995). Collectively their studies replaced the concept of 'literacy' with 'literacies'. They contended that it was unhelpful and potentially damaging to treat literacy as the product of a unitary, autonomous skill set that could be taught or learned independently of its context of use. Street (1984) called this emerging alternative model of literacy, 'ideological' (whilst acknowledging that the autonomous model was equally as ideological as any other model of literacy, including his own). Street's book, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (1984), openly rejected many of the assumptions underpinning the work of the Great Divide theorists, arguing that an alternative, ideological model of literacy:

> [...] offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another. This [ideological] model starts from different premises than the autonomous model – it posits instead that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill [...]. It is about knowledge:

the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, being. Literacy, in this sense, is always contested. (Street, 1984, pp.7-8)

Street, moreover, maintained that there was no empirical base to the autonomous model of literacy, creating what Bartlett and Holland (2002) call a 'paradigmatic revolution' in literacy studies.

The overtly critical and ideological take on the literacy practices that NLS theorists advanced, helped open up the idea that literacy practices, like other social practices, are informed by wider cultural discourses and influences, such as neoliberalism and globalisation (Ball, 2007; Wallace, 2002). Accordingly, NLS theorists often produced broadly ethnographic treatments of literacy practices, where domains, such as the home and the workplace, were characterised by clearly differentiated sets of literacy practices, texts and events, operating differently in various cultures. For example, Street extended the earlier work of Scribner and Cole (1981) who had studied the interplay between numerous literacies used by the Vai people of Liberia. His field studies (1984), based in rural Iran, observed so-called 'illiterate backward villagers' using distinct literacy forms for specialised purposes, such as education and trading. Street's studies in Iran went on to influence and inform a whole international research movement which Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) categorised as the 'second-generation of social literacy theorists'. This group's alternative approach to language use created a progressively pluralistic and situated analysis of literacy/literacies that heightened awareness of how all human cultures navigated their divergent and complex worlds, through their use of different texts and literacies.

In the UK, Hamilton and Barton (1998) in *Local Literacies: A Study of Reading and Writing in One Community,* examined how a working-class community used multiple literacies for a range of purposes in their everyday lives. Their study demonstrated the extent to which individuals were connected with each other through their use of various literacies, both formal and vernacular, and membership of wider societal communities, as well as contact with cultural, economic, political discourses. Barton and Hamilton concluded that taking the community's literacy practices as a whole one could argue that:

[…] literacy simultaneously serves both individual and social purposes and, in fact, there can be multiple and conflicting purposes in any literacy events. (1998, p.6)

The pluralism and interconnectedness of each individual's literacy practices in that study was exemplified by Hamilton's later concept of 'literacy ecologies' (2002).

The essence of this approach is that literacy competence and need cannot be understood in terms of absolute levels of skill, but are relational concepts, defined by the social and communicative practices with which individuals engage in the various domains of their life world. (p.176)

Hamilton's (2002) 'literacy ecologies' reflected Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concept of social ecologies where:

The ecological environment [like the literacy environment] is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls […] (p.3)

Like Bronfenbrenner (1979), Hamilton (2002) also argued that all interpersonal relationships, even the most intimate family relationships such as the parent/child relationship, were informed by and linked to wider societal communities and cultural, economic, political discourses, and that all these domains used different literacies.

Figure 10 offers an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological theory to show how individuals are situated within an ecology of different nested literacies that change throughout their lives, but remain connected in various ways.

Exo-literacies (formal)
Legal literacies
Policy literacies
Political literacies
Religious literacies
Health literacies

Macro Literacies (ontologies)
e.g.
Humanism
Neo-liberalism

Micro-literacies
(Vernacular)
family/school/peers/

Chrono-literacies
(time and space)
Literacies change
as individuals move
in and out of
different domains
and literacy
communities during
their lifetime.

Meso-literacies
(local)
Employment
literacies
Faith literacies
Community
literacies
Youth literacies

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory
Chronosystem
Macrosystem
Exosystem
Mesosystem
Microsystem
You
Family, School, Peers.
Family / School / Peers / Religious Affiliation, Workplace, and Neighborhood / Workplace / Neighborhood
Economic System, Political System, Education System, Government System, Religious System
Religious Affiliation
Overarching beliefs and values
Dimension of Time

Figure 10: Adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979) and Barton and Hamilton's (1998) social theory of individual and community use of literacies.

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Although it is by no means exhaustive, Figure 11 attempts to populate the 'YOU' at the centre of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model by representing, more rhizomically, the connections between different kinds of social and situated relational and multiple literacy use described by Barton and Hamilton (1998).
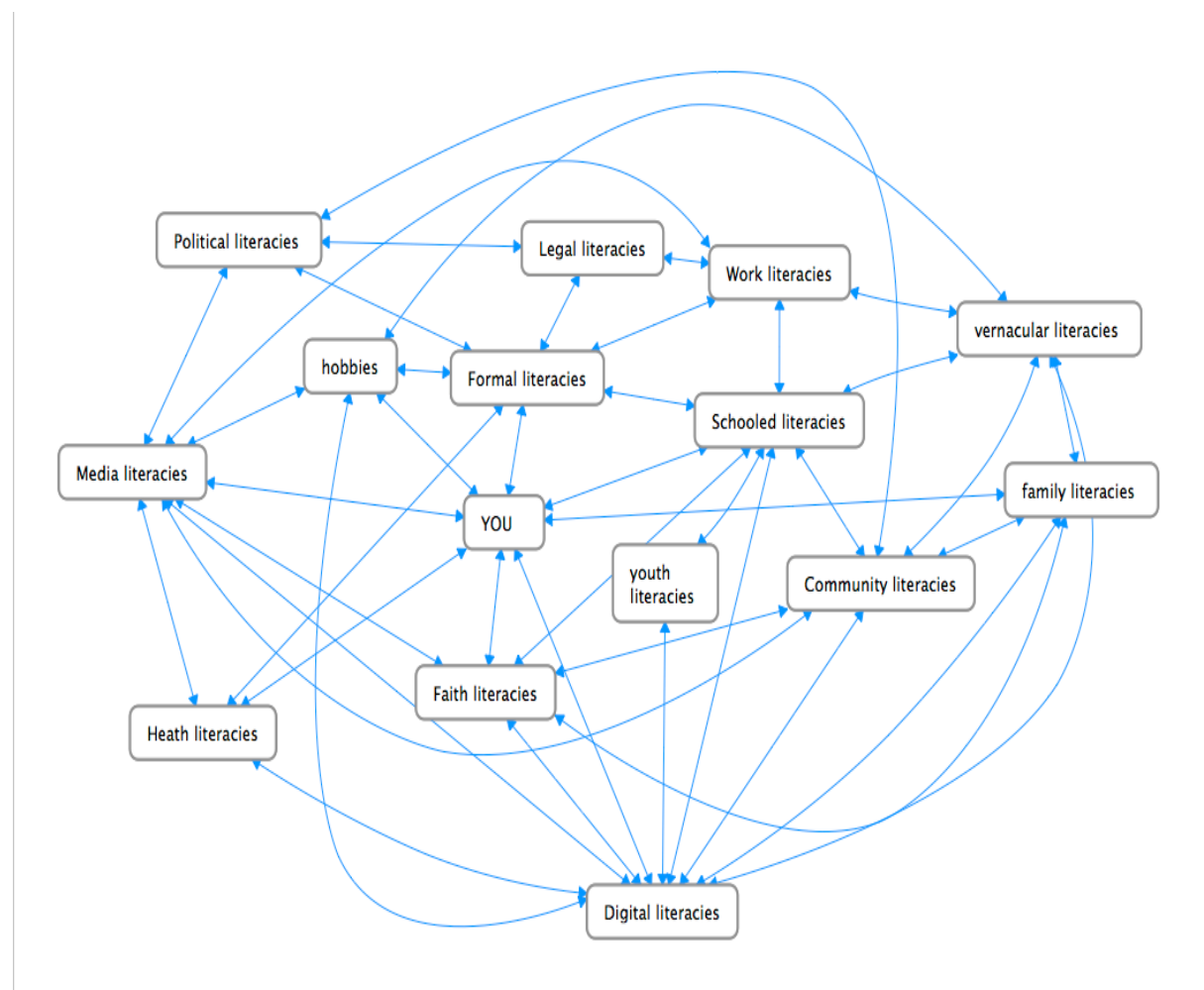
Figure 11: The 'YOU' at the centre of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979)

Barton and Hamilton's Lancaster study (1998) showed how different life events, such as joining a hobby group or getting ill could engage an individual rhizomically in a whole range of interconnected literacy practices. Figure 12 illustrates the way that any aspect of literacy, in the example given, health literacies, might be used in various ways by any given individual at any given time for different purposes.
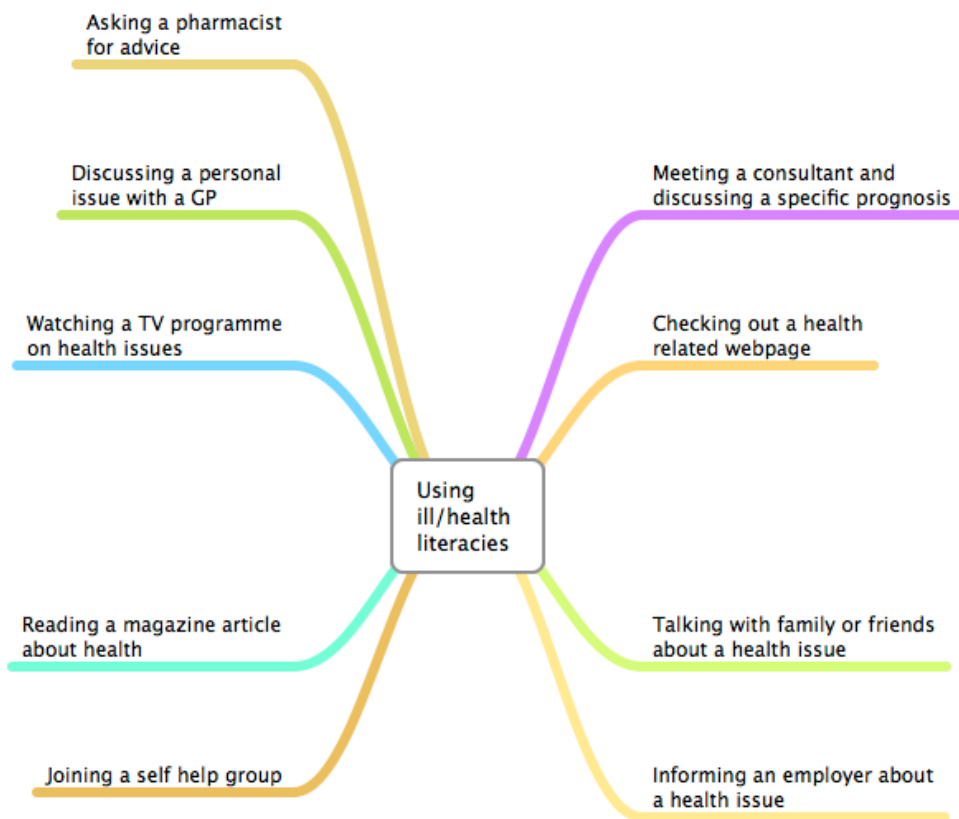
Figure 12: Using health literacies

Figure 13 (p. 82) represents the same health literacies rhizomically in an attempt to show the interconnectedness and relationships between the different aspects of literacies usage. Each element of this rhizomic map is, provisional and temporary, all the elements can and will change as individuals' literacies endlessly react and interact as people go about their everyday lives. A rhizomic map showing one individual's use of all the different literacy domains (as represented in the adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model in Figure 10, p. 79), would eventually create one huge, dynamic interconnecting web of multiliteracies, a concept discussed in the next section.
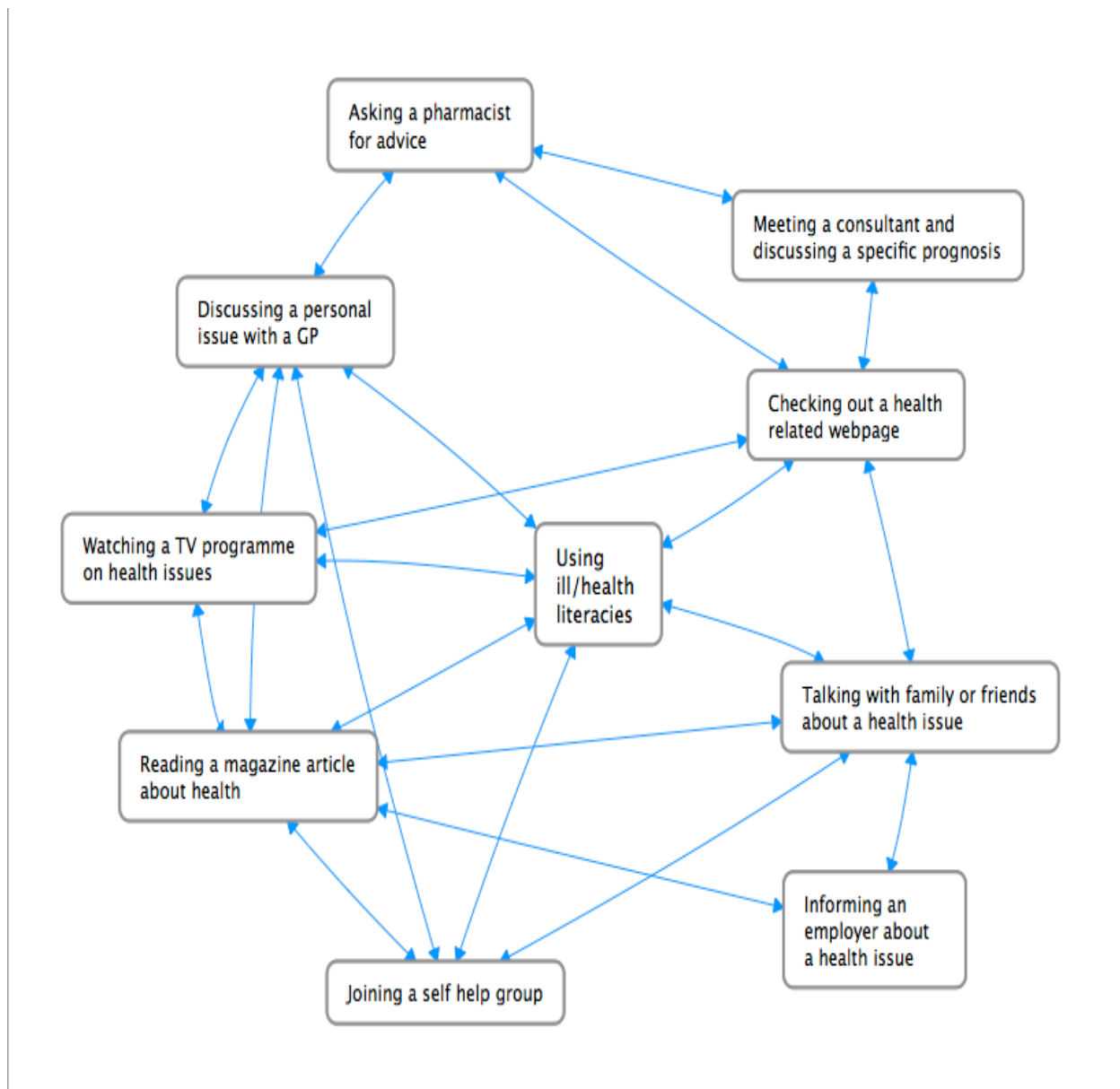
Figure 13: Rhizomic representation of heath literacies

By drawing attention to the situatedness of all kinds of literacies, NLS opened the way for a more complex and dynamic conceptualisation of literacy practices, including those developing out of new digital technologies, as discussed in the next section.

3.3.2 Multiliteracies

The New London Group's jointly authored paper, 'A *Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures'* (1996), is one of the cornerstones of social theory-based research into literacies. In a key extract, The New London Group (NLG) asserted that:

> […] the human mind is embodied, situated, and social. That is, human knowledge is initially developed not as 'general and abstract', but as embedded in social, cultural, and material contexts. Further, human knowledge is initially developed as part and parcel of collaborative interactions with others of diverse skills, backgrounds, and perspectives joined together in a particular epistemic community, that is, a community of learners engaged in common practices centered around a specific (historically and socially constituted) domain of knowledge. We believe that 'abstractions', 'generalities' and 'overt theories' come out of this initial ground and must always be returned to it or to a recontextualised version of it. (p.69)

The NLG's concept of multiliteracies encouraged a more sophisticated analysis of the 'multiplicity of communications channels and media' that people were increasingly exposed to (New London Group, 1996 p.61). Moreover, it was not long before their approach was also being used to explore how digital technologies, which towards the end of the twentieth century were increasingly used in everyday life, were opening up an assorted set of new literacies and literacy practices (Gee, 2008). Simultaneously, combining language (written and spoken), visual images, symbols and sounds the new digital literacies embody a vibrant and constantly changing hypertextuality. This is epitomised by the diverse literacies, discourse communities and identities proliferating across the Internet (Lankshear and Knobel, 2008; Merchant, Gillen, Marsh, and Davies, 2013), in different forms of the media (Bennett, Kendall and McDougall, 2011) and in video gaming (Gee, 2003; Salen, 2007). Kress (2003), moreover, argued that the adoption of so many innovative digital literacies creates significant:

> […] choices about how what is to be represented should be represented: in what mode, in what genre, in what ensembles of modes and genres [and] on what occasions. (p.117)

Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) maintain that this third generation of social literacy theorists' work is typically about the shift:

> […] from the local to the translocal, from print based literacies to electronic and multimedia literacies and from the verbal to the multimodal […] (p. 2)

Social literacy researchers have certainly been very interested in charting how the multiple modes and genres characterising digital literacies engender different hybrid forms of 'design grammar', that is, ways of reading and creating communication. These new grammars fundamentally expand how people communicate across domains, often with interesting and unexpected consequences. Social literacy theorists are also interested in how digital technology continues to facilitate the rise of global literacies which link and create discourse communities and practices, both nationally and internationally (Gee and Hayes, 2011). In addition, they examine how global literacies reinforce existing international power relations, often excluding individuals and communities across cultures and geographical boundaries (Selfe and Hawisher, 2005).

The implications of digital multiliteracies are particularly far-reaching for education. Higher education, in particular, has not been slow to employ electronic technologies such as the Internet, social networking sites, blogs, You-tube, conference and presentation software, avatars, eportfolios and virtual learning environments to communicate with students, exchange information, deliver teaching material and assess students. However, it has been suggested that students often arrive at university more conversant with these emerging multimodal literacies than many of their lecturers, a fact that may destabilise traditional power relations in the classroom (Knobel and Lankshear, 2007).

For this reason, many social theory researchers have argued that educators need to engage with students through a 'pedagogy of multiliteracies', which recognises the diversity and sophistication of literacies that learners use, irrespective of what stage they are in their education (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, Ivanic, Satchwell and Smith, 2007). Young and Muller (2007), in their analysis of the sociology of education, raise the fundamental pedagogic issue of how to:

> […] overcome the discontinuity (sometimes expressed as a conflict) between the formal, codified, theoretical and, at least potentially, universalizing knowledge of the curriculum that students seek to acquire and teachers to transmit, and the informal, local, experiential and everyday knowledge that pupils (or students) bring to school. (p.173)

Using their analysis, if one replaces the idea of 'knowledge' with 'literacies', one can begin to see how educators might benefit from a theoretical framework which critiques, and allows for the complications informing, the relationship between digital and/or vernacular literacies and more formal schooled literacies. One can also posit a link between the concept of multiliteracies and Bernstein's (1977) original concept of language 'codes' and 'code-switching' in education.

For example, in his later work, Bernstein (1996) explores the extent to which children employ an infinite range of literacies that they can draw on in the course of their everyday lives, both within and outside of formal schooled literacies. He also argues that values, beliefs and attitudes will all be reflected in the 'characteristic types of language use and related literacy practices' (1996, p.91) operating within any educational setting. Many studies (Kalantzis, Cope and Slade, 1989; Crowther, Hamilton and Tett, 2001; Hamilton, 2001), have explored the tensions between vernacular, 'out-of-school' literacies, which are used every day by different, especially disenfranchised, groups of learners, and the more formal schooled literacies they are expected to use inside educational settings. These studies show how, although vernacular literacies are often systematically undermined and excluded by educational settings, they nonetheless help to establish and maintain learners' personal and community identities as they move between the domains of home and education. They also reveal the extent to which the various literacies employed by individuals, position and reposition them differently across different domains and discourse communities at different times in their lives.

All this raises the issue of how, in order to explore fully the implications of the inherent mutability and instability of literacies, this research required a more postmodern theoretical orientation to language use and literacies in practice.

3.4 Postmodern Theories of Writing

Social theorists looking at literacies traditionally rely on:

> […] observable, collectable and/or documentable specific ethnographic detail of situated literacy events, involving real people, relationships, purposes, actions, places, times, circumstances, feelings, tools, resources [...] (Tusting, Ivanic and Wilson 2000, p.213)

Postmodern approaches to literacies and language, however, move beyond such a purely phenomenological approach, preferring to see the study of literacies as rooted in:

> […] the actual and densely contextualised forms in which language [and by implication literacy practices] occur in society (Blommaert, 2005).

These 'contextualised forms' of literacies, texts and literacy practices simultaneously accrue both material and abstract dimensions (Baynham and Prinsloo, 2009). For this reason, meanings attributed to literacies and literacy practices cannot be 'known' in any concrete sense, or simply categorised in binary or oppositional terms (Ball, 1990a; Lather, 1991; Usher and Edwards, 1994).

Texts, moreover, are physical objects with agency that gives them the power to invoke different and contested feelings. They also reify social interaction and literacy practices through activities like:

> […] making, designing, representing, naming, encoding and describing as well as perceiving, interpreting using, reusing, decoding and recasting. (Wenger, 1998, p.6)

Postmodern theoretical approaches problematise these processes of production and the corresponding modes of consumption that they feed. In short, there is no such thing as neutral texts or singular literacy practices, as they are all:

> […] sites of the emergence of complexes of social meanings, produced in the particular history of the situation of production, that record in partial ways the

histories of both the participants in the production of the text and of the institutions that are 'invoked' or brought into play [through the text or practice]. (Kress, 1997, p.122)

Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) discuss the ways in which texts constantly 'circulate in chains of entextualization' (p.12), a process that inevitably results in multiple readings. These readings cannot be fixed but are constantly 'recontextualised' to produce new meanings (Barton and Hamilton, 2005). Using more rhizomic models, this thesis specifically explores how academic writing practices and texts in higher education are constantly contextualised and re-contextualised through social interaction between students and lecturers, researchers and editors. Moreover, the thesis (as a text) is itself entextualised as it is constructed through its appropriation and treatment of other written sources and practices.

3.5 Theories of Discourse and Power

A postmodern critique of theories of power and discourse accepts that there are different experiences of power and powerlessness in society but argues that those power-relations are never fixed or all-encompassing. This section looks at how theories of discourse make visible the networks of power-relations that support dominant, totalising discourses in higher education. These dominant discourses do inform autonomous models of academic writing development, although it is important to acknowledge that alternative writing sub-cultures also exist in any domain that resists, and/or only partially reflects, such dominant discourses (Bhabha, 2004).

Indeed, Foucault (1980) warns against falling into the trap of totalising discourses that serve to delineate power and powerlessness as simple binary oppositions. Instead, he argues that:

> Power must be analysed as something, which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain? It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. (p.98)

A postmodern approach can use this more fluid notion of power to posit writing practices as potentially violent conceptual spaces where power, epistemology and

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identity struggle, often in opposition, to surface 'truths' which present themselves as 'self-evident, universal and necessary' (Foucault, 1981). Dominant discourses in the Academy, as elsewhere, do not draw attention to themselves as discursive constructions as they are naturalised and often rendered invisible through their very ubiquity. Postmodernist approaches, however, encourages their systematic deconstruction in order for such commonplace/common-sense attitudes and norms to be critiqued and challenged. As Ball (2013) writes:

> Power is not a mode of subjugation, or a general system of domination and indeed power is as much about what can be said and thought as what can be done – it is discursive. Power is not merely prohibitive it is productive, a lot of the time it 'makes us up' rather than grinds us down. […] We are active within relations of power. (p.30)

3.6 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Chapter 6 offers a consideration of CDA as research methodology. This section however, looks at CDA as one of the 'broader social theories of literacy' (Barton and Hamilton, 2005) that helps illustrate how the meaning of texts are produced through discourses and embodied in the writing practices emerging out of them. For example, CDA can help explain how different literacies help contribute to personal 'identity kits' (Gee, 1996) which allow individuals and groups to recognise and communicate with each other through differentiated, often hierarchised, discourse communities. Kress (2003) makes the point moreover, that CDA can help uncover how dominant discourses establish themselves through literacies and language, in order to capture and prioritise dominant institutional meanings and values. Fairclough's extensive body of work on CDA (1992a and b, 1995, and 2003), specifically explores how discourse and power facilitate the construction of dominant discourses, which systematise the meaning and status of language and literacy practices in higher education. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) make clear, in educational settings:

> The content of the message itself remains unintelligible as long as one does not take into account the totality of the structure of the power positions that is present, yet invisible, in the exchange. (p.146)

The existence of dominant literacies and literacy practices in education does not preclude consideration of how other literacies can be distinguished, or are related to

each other, within an educational domain. Fairclough (1995) for example, argues that Foucault's concept of an 'order of discourse' invokes an open system comprising:

> The totality of discursive practices of an institution and the relationship between them […] (1993, p.138)

Looking forward, Chapters 4 and 5 provide a general discussion about how students and lecturers interact with various academic writing practices in higher education, whilst Chapter 7 explores how such practices intersect or conflict with individuals' own experiences and perceptions of academic writing practices literacies.

Taylor (2004) makes a useful epistemological distinction between analysing texts (such as participant statements) using a traditional linguistic form of CDA and more Foucauldian 'genealogical' approach. She argues that the former focuses on identifying structural and linguistic features in texts, whereas the latter, reflecting its postmodern origins, focuses more on textual complexity, power-relations and how meanings are constructed and context-bound, although:

> […] the 'Foucauldian' discourse analyst certainly shares the Critical Discourse Analyst's concern as to the relationship of language to other social processes, and of how language works within power relations. (Taylor, 2004, p. 436)

Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2002) use the term 'semiosis' to refer to broader ways in which texts can be used to interpret aspects of the 'relationship of language to other social processes […]' (p. 2). Their work includes exploring who uses texts, why they use them and the power relations involved, how texts are used in different domains and which writing practices they utilise as well as all the connections between those different elements. They discuss how they use semiosis to:

> […] interpret social relations broadly to include not only individual actions and interactions but also the emergent properties of institutional orders and the domain of the lifeworld. (p.2)

Taylor (2004) points out that Foucault insisted on the freedom to interpret texts discursively in this way, even though such a broad approach has been condemned, in

positivist circles at least, as a shortcoming that leaves the postmodern researcher open to claims of a lack of analytic rigour, a charge that is firmly disputed in Chapter 6.

CDA also offers a critical, yet nuanced, approach to the analysis of power and discourse that complements an interdisciplinary, postmodern approach to literacies, not least because it:

> […] is not so much a direction, school, or specialization next to the many other 'approaches' in discourse studies. Rather, it aims to offer a different 'mode' or 'perspective' of theorizing, analysis, and application throughout the whole field…. in such diverse areas as pragmatics, conversation analysis, narrative analysis, rhetoric, stylistics, sociolinguistics, ethnography, or media analysis, among others. (Van Dijk, 2001, p.352)

CDA's interdisciplinarity chimes with the scepticism of radical ethnographers like Hymes (1972). Hymes' epistemological approaches to CDA are characterised by highly complex boundary crossings, over a variety of social sciences, including anthropology, psychology, literacy and communication studies, ethnography and sociology. Resulting CDA hybrids, such as linguistic-anthropology (Schiffrin, 1998) and sociolinguistics (Hymes, 1972, 1974; Lakoff, 2001) all share a commitment to studying language, literacy texts and practices as fluctuating, unstable, yet situated products of incessant social interaction. Arguably, hybrid forms of CDA can help open up ambiguous, ambivalent and liminal spaces, in and around, observable literacy events, practices and texts, moving in the process, beyond the observable phenomenology of the social theorists referred to earlier. Bhabha (2004) calls liminality, 'a third space', an 'in-between place' within society, which is a truly postmodern space where 'ways of being', 'identity-kits' and 'statements' dissolve, only to be continually reassembled, often in other hybrid forms. As Deleuze and Guattari state in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987):

> Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle. (p.25)

Liminality, in this sense, can represent freedom, a space, in which hybridities may flourish. As the New London Group (1996, p.66) stated:

The term *hybridity* highlights the mechanisms of creativity and of culture-as-process particularly salient in contemporary society. People create and innovate by hybridizing - that is, articulating in new ways - established practices and conventions within and between different modes of meaning. This includes the hybridization of established ways modes of meaning (of discourses and genres), and multifarious combinations of modes of meaning cutting across boundaries of convention and creating new conventions (italics in the original).

The hybrid approach to CDA, used in Chapter 7's discussion of participants' statements, does not seek to 'read' or understand the worldviews or social realities of those statements in a fixed or definitive way. Instead, it attempts (and in doing so accepts that it may fail) to discover, recover or uncover how participants' perceptions about academic writing practices, and concurrently their adoption of possible professional writing identities, are produced, situated and maintained in complex and ambiguous ways discursively, within higher education. In short, by using a hybrid, postmodern form of CDA in this thesis, the research setting and participant perceptions are not examined separately from the discourses that they inhabit, instead it is made clear that they are discursively constituted by them (Hardy, Phillips and Clegg, 2001).

In this way, a postmodern CDA analysis, such as that offered in Chapter 7, explicitly offers a means of resisting, refusing and politicising the normalised and depoliticised 'what is'. In doing so it seeks to:

[…] rediscover the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which [...] count [...] as being self-evident, universal and necessary. (Foucault, 1980 p.6)

3.7 Power, Powerlessness and Plurality in Postmodernist Concepts of Academic Writing

Discourse-defined positions of power and powerlessness have traditionally been explored through 'standpoint' theory. 'Standpoint theory is an explicitly political, as well as social, epistemology […]' (Wylie, 2003, p.26) because it posits a way of articulating how discourse enables or constrains individuals and groups in society, by privileging or marginalising their view of the world. Wylie discusses how much of the pioneering work on standpoint theory was carried out by feminist/Marxist researchers,

especially in the 1980s, who worked from the premise that membership of any social group, such as 'the proletariat', or 'women', correlated to a particular standpoint or take on the world (Hartsock, 2004; Harding, 1986).

Hill et al., (1999) however, assert that postmodernist research cannot address social justice issues because, unlike standpoint theorists, it will not acknowledge that oppressed and marginalised groups have any essential defining identity. However, Wylie (2003) refutes the notion that social groups can be easily essentialised as individual members, nor do they necessarily share universal characteristics or clearly defined cultural origins. Feminist and post-colonial theorists, such as hooks (1982) and Butler (1990), further contend that race and gender are socially constructed and are therefore always plural. Both theorists have warned of the dangers inherent in accepting the idea that essentialised labels unproblematically determine the place of disenfranchised groups and individuals in society, and conversely those who oppress them.

This is because relying on simple binary constructions, such as male/female and black/white, fails to encapsulate how people are differently positioned discursively in myriad ways at different points in time and space. Indeed, one can argue that standpoint categorisations are as much an illusion as the artificial unitary subjectivity of the Enlightenment *homo economicus*. It is perhaps more useful to view social groups and individuals as occupying relational fields that are fluid and multi-layered (Nash, 2000). For example, Wylie's (2003) work characterises standpoint theory through two main ideas. Firstly, *The Situated-Knowledge Thesis*: this suggests that we all have a socially constructed standpoint from which we view the world and our own experiences. Secondly, *The Thesis of Epistemic Advantage*: which maintains that some standpoints, especially the standpoints of marginalised or oppressed groups, are epistemically advantaged in certain contexts (Wylie, 2003, p.28) on account of insights gained by groups through their marginalisation or exclusion from dominant discourses (Harding, 2004). This is because oppressed groups:

> […] can learn to identify their distinctive opportunities to turn an oppressive feature of the group's conditions into a source of critical insight about how the dominant society thinks and is structured. Thus, standpoint theories map how a

social and political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemological, scientific, and political advantage. (Harding, 2004, pp.7-8).

Wylie's (2003) second standpoint thesis is a cornerstone of many politicised emancipatory research projects. It is developed by Harding (2004), who argues that while critical standpoints are not necessarily shared by everyone in a social group, they may develop out of a shared critical understanding and reflection produced by members of the group, who go on to produce a 'distinctive insight about how hierarchical social structures work' (p.31). Grebowicz's (2007) more postmodern analysis of standpoint theory, however, suggests that this form of critical consciousness is:

> […] always in a process of becoming it is something we do, not something we have […] it is partial, conditioned socially, and continuously interrogated […] (p. 17)

Grebowicz's (2007) approach acknowledges the fluidity, hybridity and liminality of socially constructed identities and relationships and treats the development of critical consciousness as contingent on those shifting identities and relationships. This idea is developed in Chapters 5 and 7 with regard to the analysis of professional writing identities for lecturers in higher education. In such an analysis of identity the possibility of different standpoints remains, however, they must be viewed as open-ended and subject to constant reinterpretation and renegotiation. Standpoints articulated by the participants in Chapter 7 for example, reflect how discursive power has operated around academic writing practices in their experiences of particular higher education settings and relationships.

Although each research participant's experiences of academic writing practices in higher education are accepted as irreducibly individual and subjective, this post-qualitative research does not, unlike Marxism or humanism research approaches, seek to definitively explain how or why discourse and power hierarchise, legitimise or marginalise groups and individuals in society. From a postmodern point of view, the validity of any standpoint cannot, therefore, be determined by reference to any pre-existing criteria which claims to measure, to a greater or lesser extent, its 'objectivity' or 'truthfulness'.

Harvey (1989) argues that because of this relativism postmodern research often lacks any point to its questioning. However, simply reclaiming excluded, marginalised or repressed meaning through a critical interrogation of dominant discourses, does not necessarily reveal new or more authentic 'truths', just different re-presentations or interpretations. Longino's (2002) work discusses how sociality and plurality play an equal role in the reception of scientific, as well as social science research truth claims, as both depend on wider social validation for a positive critical reception. Moreover, Foucault (1980) consistently argued that although there may be epistemological privileging within discourses, creating dominant, established discourses which are hegemonic, there is no 'outside the discourse' only potential re-representations, including those which are resistant or marginalised, within the discourse.

In order to be critically reflective therefore, the postmodern researcher needs to acknowledge their own, and/or their participants', ontological standpoint(s), and be clear that it/they do not represent the only possible standpoint(s) that could have been taken, or may be taken in the future with regard to any issue under consideration. For this reason, it is clear that any analysis of qualitative data cannot claim grounds for prescriptive political solutions. For Eagleton (2003), this postmodern rejection of the veracity of any essentialised standpoint conclusions and its alternative insistence on the relativism and conditionality of discourses of power/powerlessness is 'narcissistic', rendering it politically ineffectual and pointless as a means of social enquiry. In their defence, postmodern approaches often maintain that classifying social groups primarily on the basis of their power, or powerlessness, fails to recognise the actual subtleties of lived experience or account for the numerous social agendas, changing relations and blurred divisions that exist between diverse social groups and individuals at any given time. Moreover, hooks (1990) argues that we are all, powerful and powerless, embodied in a web of 'political sedimentation' that binds us together in different ways at different times.

Intersectionality can be used as 'a method for interrogating the institutional reproduction of inequality' (Grabham et al., 2009, p.1). This is because it draws attention to the extent to which marginalised identities are constituted via multiple oppressions and interconnected forms of powerlessness. In addition to Crenshaw's (1989) initial analysis of ethnicity, intersectionality has been used to dissect the multiple

effects of sexuality (Bowleg, 2008; Taylor, Hines and Casey, 2010) and disability (Beckett, 2004).   Chapter 7 draws on McCall's (2005) intricate typology of intracategorical, anticategorical, and intercategorical forms of intersectionality which demand that worldviews cannot be easily defined or distilled into unitary or distinctive standpoints.   More precisely, McCall is interested in re-visioning and deconstructing existing social categories in order to challenge them.   Her anticategorical approach echoes the postmodernist refusal, also employed in this thesis, to categorise people into simple distinguishing groups per se.   The two other forms, 'intra' and 'inter' categorical, also challenge traditional essentialist groupings such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality in different ways.   The intracategorical approach focuses on the nuanced differences within categories that are often ignored in favour of simple unitary or binary representations of the group (such as LTBG, whilst the intercategorical approach looks at the unequal relations between social groups, like male/female relationships.

In *Sortie* (1975) and *Laugh of the Medusa* (1976) Cixous contends that socially constructed examples of discursive binaries, such as male/female, rational/emotional coloniser/colonised and speaking/writing, are the product of discursive power and not 'real'.   She makes a case for feminist cultural theorists to engage in forms of reading and writing that deconstruct and replace the apparent naturalness or inevitability of dominant discursive binary structures.   Like Kristeva (1980, 1982), Cixous developed a body of work in which radical forms of academic, theoretical writing destabilise and reject old certainties.   She offers in their place an overtly political, alternative academic literacy that in its elusive, dense and circular written style seeks to dissolve dominant discursive binaries and explode the linearity and exclusivity of established hierarchical claims to power and ways of understanding the world.   Lather (2006), draws on these ideas when she deploys Foucault's observation in *The Order of Things* (1970) to argue that the physical world consists of a 'wild profusion of existing things' (p.xv).   She argues that it is oppressive binary discourses, such as colonialism, racism and sexism, which impose limiting and restrictive categories on individuals' lived experiences of the world.   In such binary discourses:

> Dualistic categories are represented as pure breaks rather than as unstable oppositions that shift and collapse both within and between categories [and] the slides of inside and outside that so characterize the contemporary hybridity of

positionality and consequent knowledge forms are tidied over. (Lather, 2006, p.36)

Using this approach, even hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), a cornerstone of Marxist philosophy, can be seen as contingent and contested. This is because dominant discourses and the powerful groups that they support, are always vulnerable to social and cultural shifts and threats from competing groups, however disempowered. As Fiske (1987) writes:

> Hegemony is a constant struggle against a multitude of resistances to ideological domination, and any balance of forces that it achieves is always precarious, always in need of re-achievement. Hegemony's 'victories' are never final, and any society will evidence numerous points where subordinate groups have resisted the total domination that is hegemony's aim […] (p.41)

3.8 Archaeological and Genealogical Approaches to Academic Writing

When examining hegemonic ideas and structures, Foucault sought to critique their underpinning, taken-for-granted rules and/or conditions, which he called 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1975, p.30). In society, these regimes operate as 'unconscious codes and rules or holistic conceptual frameworks' (Ball, 2013, p.21). Foucault's (1980) response to assertions of 'truth', therefore, require an analysis of what he called the 'conditions of possibility' under which socially or culturally powerful discourses or regimes come to be viewed as 'true'. In this spirit, Chapters 4 and 5 consider the general 'conditions of possibility' under which lecturers' relationships to academic writing practices are played out, whilst Chapter 7 looks how participants articulated their experiences of such conditions in the research domain.

Foucault identifies a number of key 'conditions of possibility', which can be applied to the construction of truth-claims frequently made about academic writing practices in higher education. Firstly, there is the predominance of what Lather in her influential book '*Getting Smart: feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*' (1991) calls the 'positivist hegemony' of science. By this she means that truth claims in the West often manifest themselves in scientific or pseudo-scientific forms of language and literacy practices, such as those encouraged by an autonomous model of literacy. As Said comments:

> […] control in society and history has […] discovered a way to clothe, disguise, rarefy and wrap itself systematically in the language of truth, discipline, rationality, utilitarian value, and knowledge. (Said, 1983, p.216)

Secondly, economic and political forces operate in society to support some truth-claims over others, so that:

> Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. (Foucault, 1980, p.133)

Foucault rejected hegemonic worldviews, as he preferred to treat dominant constructions of social reality (past and present) as inherently plural and plastic. In *The Order of Things* (1970) he argued that historicism was a relatively modern and over-simplistic way of trying to understand relationships between past and present. In particular, he resisted the modernist principle of progressive chronology, replacing it with attempts to trace the emergence of the, often hidden, ideological struggles and ruptures constantly swirling around hegemonic, dominant discourses (such as academic writing in higher education).

In *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault sought to 'excavate' what he called the 'subjugated knowledges' of alternative ideologies or epistemes, which could include alternative/resistant ways of thinking about academic writing practices. Subjugated knowledge, he argued, was hidden or disallowed by dominant discourse boundaries, but it could be brought out into the open where its marginalisation could be repositioned as forms of resistance. (For example, this thesis employs a post-qualitative onto-epistemological approach to resist the dominant discourse of pseudo-scientism, within which educational qualitative research is often located.) Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) depict Foucault's concept of archaeology as 'a strict analysis of discourse' (p.104), where the discursive archaeologist is engaged in examining discursive traces left by the past in order to produce what Foucault (1970) called a 'history of the present'.

Foucault gradually moved from his archaeological approach towards what he termed a more 'genealogical approach'. It is not always easy to unravel exactly what Foucault meant by genealogy, although there is definitely some overlap with his earlier concept

of archaeology. Dreyfuss and Rabinow (1983) argue that although different, 'archaeology and genealogy alternate and support each other' (p.105). Whereas archaeology can be understood as a method of identifying epistemological differences and similarities extant at one synchronic moment in time, the concept of genealogy is diachronic, in that it explores particular epistemes as they develop through time. Genealogical approaches therefore examine how epistemological similarities and difference come into being; a process that Foucault (1980) argues is driven by constantly shifting power relations in society, creating 'histories of struggle' (p.82). Thus genealogical research insists on the contingency and revocability of powerful social practices and forms of knowledge, as well acknowledging those that are 'subjugated or 'disqualified'. Ball (2013) discusses how such exigency:

> […] follows logically from [Foucault's] rejection of essentialisms and universals. [Genealogical] histories are both a way of demonstrating uncertainty and contingency, and [the idea] that absolutes are historical and vehicles for the construction of an 'ontology of the present'. (p.33)

Foucault described how all histories not only inform the present but are themselves shaped by it too. Genealogical histories are always contingent and created discursively; passed down as stories about the past, they can resurface in any present moment and take on different meanings. Foucault's genealogical approach, therefore, suggests that the 'truth' of present histories is actually dependent on an illusion of continuity created by historical custom and practice. This limiting function of historicism reflects Latour's notion of the 'contingent historicity of Truth', which suggests that over time some things appear 'truer' than others (1999).

Genealogy is therefore primarily interested in the past as a means of deconstructing the present. It works by interrogating the present in order to undermine any supposed historical coherence and unity that the past might suggest (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). Ball (1994) states that Foucault's genealogical approach in this way:

> […] interrupts the taken for granted and isolates the contingent power relations which make it possible for particular assertions to operate as absolute truths. (p.3)

It is also the case that power relations not only facilitate the emergence of particular discourses, historical and present, which become normalised or 'given'; they also operate to maintain those givens once they have established themselves in domains, such as higher education. Any genealogical analysis of academic writing practices will, therefore, concern itself with apparent historical absences, discontinuities and inconsistencies as they have the potential to:

> [...] disturb what was previously considered immobile [and] show the heterogeneity of what had been considered consistent (Foucault, 1977, p. 147)

To illustrate how such a disturbance might work in practice, one can consider the way in which New Literacy Studies (NLS) challenged the dominant autonomous model of 'literacy'. Chapter 7, drawing on NLS, attempts to represent a 'history of the present' through a genealogical analysis of lecturer participants' perceptions of academic writing practices in the research setting. These statements are presented in the thesis as:

> [...] conjunctions of a whole set of practices from the moment they become co-ordinated with a regime of truth. (Foucault, 2010a, p.19)

3.9 Using a Bourdieusian Theory of Social Reproduction to Explore Academic Writing Practices

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) explore how unequal power relations in society are not only inscribed in educational practices, like those that inform academic writing, but are frequently reproduced by and through them. In this way, one can argue that dominant academic writing practices will inevitably serve the purposes of dominant discourses and groups in the academy, for as Bernstein (1971) wrote:

> How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control. (p.47)

Fairclough's (1995) critical analysis of how academic writing practices 'distribute, transmit and evaluate' educational knowledge also helps reveals how power operates in higher education because:

> […] to a greater or lesser extent, they [academic writing practices] are involved in educating people about the sociolinguistic order they live in. (p.220)

This is because dominant academic writing practices embody what Bourdieu (1996) termed 'linguistic capital' which, he argued, is commensurate with and can be exchanged for, other forms of capital including social or economic capital. For Bourdieu, linguistic capital is denoted by the authority, confidence and prestige accorded to high-status language users when they speak or write. Individuals with 'high' linguistic capital have authority and can 'command' particular readings of their utterances in society. Sullivan (2001) for example, defined linguistic capital as, 'the ability to understand and use 'educated' language' (p.893). Similarly, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) outline how participation in the production of high status forms of literacy, such as doctorates, academic articles or textbooks, contributes to an individual's cultural capital. Indeed, according to Bourdieu (1984), one of higher education's most important social regulatory functions is to reproduce inequalities in social cultural and economic power through unequal access to, and production of, these privileged forms of linguistic capital.

Arguably, to uncritically accept the hierarchies implicitly embodied in dominant discourses around academic writing practices is to legitimise them, and by implication, the unequal distribution of power cultural capital in society that they embody. For example, higher education defines academic writing practices as an exclusive 'linguistic field'. This 'linguistic field' can accommodate both disciplinary differences within the academy, whilst maintaining a high status in the wider society outside the academy, primarily through differentiating itself positively from other, allegedly inferior, forms of writing. Academic linguistic capital can, therefore, be usefully defined, like any form of capital as a:

> […] configuration of positions comprising agents (individuals, groups of actors or institutions) struggling to maximize their position […] (Maton, 2008, p.698)

In Bourdieusian terms, higher education, like other powerful institutions in society, is a domain where dominant groups tend to adopt conservative stances in order to hold on to their discursive power. Other marginalised and/or powerless groups have to be prepared to resist or challenge those established discourses in order to gain any power.

Bourdieu's concepts of doxa and habitus explore how and why an individual feels and acts in particular ways within a given setting or discourse. Doxa, another term coined by Bourdieu in 1977, is used to describe the tacit agreement and unspoken understandings which underpin accepted or expected behaviour or practices in any given social context. Doxa can be put to work in research to explore how an individual's personally felt beliefs and values are often unconsciously influenced or informed by wider, dominant, social discourses. Bourdieu argues that doxa:

> [...] provides the illusion of immediate understanding, characteristic of practical experience of the familiar universe, and which at the same time excludes from that experience any inquiry as to its own conditions of possibility. (1977, p. 60).

Nonetheless, doxa can be troubled when individuals begin to question or resist the norms or expectations that characterise their social environment, or their place within it. This leads onto the idea of habitus, which in its broadest sense was characterised by Bourdieu in *The State Nobility* as:

> A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or a particular section of that world - a field - which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world. (Bourdieu, 1996, p.81)

Constituted by everyday social interactions and practices, habitus remains at an unconscious level 'unless disturbed by events that cause self-questioning' (Reay, 2003, p.369). When so disturbed, it can render the 'taken for granted' place of an individual in any social setting problematic by raising the issues like:

> How well adapted is the individual to the context they find themselves in? How does personal history shape their responses to the contemporary setting? [...] Are structural effects visible within small scale interactions? (Reay, 1995, p.369)

Habitus can therefore be used in research terms to disrupt the given or expected in any setting and critically interrogate participants' everyday practices:

> [...] with an eye to the ways in which historical and social forces have shaped a person's linguistic habitus and thus impinge upon that person's actions in the moment [...] (Bartlett and Holland, 2002. p.6)

This idea of a "person's action in the moment" is important as one's habitus, the latter is not a fixed thing, it can and will change over time according to an individual's experiences and surroundings.

More specifically, for this thesis, the idea that an individual's personal social and historical experiences of academic writing practices, can also be used to explain how lecturers in higher education develop a 'writing in higher education habitus, as outlined in the rhizomic map below (Figure 14). Presented rhizomically, one can see how academic writing practices, and the relationships that they support in higher education, are completely entangled with each other. The movement of any one individual across such a rhizomic map will be different and constantly subject or open to change as their different experiences and relationships forge new connections.

Figure 14: 'Writing in a higher education habitus' rhizomic map.

Cumulatively, these many writing practices constitute in Bourdieusian (1990) terms, a form of embodied linguistic capital which operates within the 'symbolic economy' of any education setting. This idea of Bourdieusian fields of practice:

> […] help fashion linguistic production by determining the 'price' [or value] of linguistic products […] (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.145).

For example, the conferment of a degree could be read as a form of embodied cultural/linguistic capital which enjoys a wider currency within other spheres of social, cultural and capital exchange, such as the labour market. Bourdieu argues that the 'symbolic economy' of higher education, and the academic writing practices that it legitimates, also function to reflect and maintain wider societal inequalities. Not least because linguistic capital, such as one's familiarity and confidence using dominant academic writing practices, is like other forms of cultural capital, never primarily the result of individual effort (as neoliberalism would have it). Rather, it is an advantageous by-product of the cultural capital which privileged individuals simply acquire from their parents. Moreover, doxa informs an individual's habitus, which in turn helps or hinders their movement through and within different discursive fields and communities of practice. As discussed in Chapter 4, in higher education this inbuilt inequality creates a toxic association between social justice, access to higher education and high status academic writing.

3.10 The Vexed Question of Agency and Identity in Post-qualitative Research

Unfixing the discursive power of the unitary subject and attempting to re-theorise conceptualisations of individual agency is a pre-requisite of post-qualitative research. Not surprisingly, rationalist critiques of postmodern concepts, such as Bourdieu's habitus and Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, often focus on the relative absence of agency and individualism that they seem to offer. This, it is argued by their detractors, flies in the face of human experience of lived reality. Postmodern theories of the individual reject Cartesian rationalism and the unitary, agentic self that informs it, replacing it with a concept of multiple identities that are provisional and contingent on wider social and cultural discourses. This postmodern view seeks to de-centre the individual subject and replace it with the idea of multiple, discursively constituted

subjectivities linked together in shifting power relations. Conversely, a typically rationalist, modernist view of humanity proposes that individuals can carve out their own identities and determine their own value systems, because they operate within a 'narrative of free choice and autonomy' (Gill, 2006, p.260). They are, in short, positioned unproblematically as agentic. However, this is not to say that a postmodern concept of the subject precludes a subject having agency (Clegg, 2006).

In her conceptualisation of an alternative, more postmodern, conceptualisation of individual agency Clegg (2006) cites Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan, Laws, Mueller-Rockstroh and Petersen (2004) who claims that individuals, through a reflective analysis of their oppressive experiences of 'being in the world' (such as, a radical feminist deconstruction of patriarchy), can come to understand how, and possibly why, they are being oppressed. This process of deconstruction offers, Clegg (2006) maintains, opportunities for oppressed individuals to begin to actively resist oppressive discourses operating against them in society, despite the fact that those discourses will continue to oppress them (even when they have been deconstructed). Davis et al., (2004) outline how this kind of informed resistance to oppression can be theorised as an aspect of subjectivity, which is, nonetheless, often experienced as agency. By which they mean that an individual is able, through an understanding of their oppression, to subjectively experience a renewed sense of self as powerful, singular and agentic. However, although this renewed sense of self may be experienced as concrete and real, it can still be understood theoretically, as a relational, subjective construct of self which exists, alongside any other subjective/subjected selves that an individual may construct or have imposed on them discursively.

Butler (1993, 1991) and Said (1978) also explore the idea that the unitary, centred subject is actually a product of Western culture; and, like the cultural power of certain individuals or groups, only appears natural and inevitable if it remains unquestioned. In the same vein, Ball (2013) argues that for Foucault the 'microphysics of power' constitute all:

> [...] the individual choices, interactions and behaviours (tactics) that together produce more general social patterns (strategies) - hence his interest in details, rather than the end-forms of power [...] (Ball, 2013, p.31)

Foucault's (1980) work forces an examination of how a seemingly autonomous sense of 'self', as well as a subjugated 'self', can be realised discursively. However, for Foucault (1980) concepts of individuality are both disciplining and productive of power. This is because discourse not only positions how individuals act, think, or feel, but also how they are perceived as they do so, within the wider social spheres they inhabit. Butler (1993) for example, notes how powerful subjects (actors/players) may embody and reify the effects of power whilst simultaneously obscuring and denying them. Wider social and cultural discourses and contexts place individuals in relative positions of power, that is to say, individuals can and do experience power as personal to them. However, one can argue that such feelings are not actually derived from individual power, rather they represent culturally/socially distributed power, which is a product of their own, and others, relatively powerful or powerless, discursive place in society. Moreover, discursive power is something individuals do not have control of, even though they can operate at the limits of it. As Youdell (2006) maintains, we are all:

> […] made subject by and subject to discursive relations of disciplinary power, but being such a subject s/he can also engage self-consciously in practices that might make her/him differently. The subject acts, but s/he acts at the limits of subjectification […] (p.42)

In order to try and comprehend how these limits of subjectivication operate through academic writing practices, it is useful to revisit Foucault's concept of personal genealogical 'histories' discussed earlier in this chapter. They are presented as:

> […] form[s] of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs its empty sameness throughout the course of history (1980, p.117).

By deconstructing genealogical histories the unitary subject is refigured as a composite identity. In this thesis, participants' academic writing histories are constructed out of statements they made about the various academic writing practices and Bourdieusian (disciplinary-based) fields through which they move. This means that their sense of personal history, or identity, can be viewed as the result of countless social interactions and shared practices around academic writing, although it is not reducible to them. For example, as discussed in Chapter 7, academic disciplines, regulated by the specificity

of their writing practices, operate as powerful regulatory discourses informing the development of professional writing identities. However, because identity is fluid and liminal, it is possible, despite the disciplinary power that these dominant discourses exert, for individuals to experiment and 'shape-shift' (Gee, 1996) into different positions and spaces around them, as we can see from several of the participant statements cited in Chapter 7.

Holland and Lave (2001) address the tension between agency and discourse through their conceptualisation of habitus as a kind of, 'history in person', a term that echoes Foucault's concept of the 'historicisation of the subject' (1980). Bartlett and Holland (2002) situate such 'histories in person' inside what they call, 'figured worlds of literacy', to suggest how individuals, like those taking part in this study, create 'identities in practice' symbolically, through language and literacy practices. Like Butler's notions of 'performativity' (1991), 'identities in practice' are created by individuals and enacted through language and literacies. These literacies position and realise individuals' different writing identities within the wider discursive spaces that that they inhabit. In Chapter 7, for example, it is possible to see participants consciously positioning, or projecting themselves and being positioned by others, simultaneously as academic writers in different spheres of professional activity, such as lecturing, writing journal articles and producing doctoral theses. These are all activities that require different forms of writing and produce different 'identities in practice'.

Viewed in this way, there is no fixed or singular identity created through agency, or the adoption of 'identities in practice'. Nor are these agentic identities in any sense more or less 'real' because they are discursively constituted. Movement between potential forms of identity takes place in transitional spaces and will often result in new hybrid, possibly transient and provisional 'ways of being'. It is not possible therefore to predict which actions or identities will emerge from discourses (even dominant ones), as contingent and politically strategic power relations affect individual habitus and identity formation in infinitely different ways. There is always/already the possibility of completely new, often hybrid, forms and practices emerging. This process is very different from the vision of endless, predictable social reproduction sometimes supposed by a simplistic application of Bourdieu's theoretical frameworks. In

comparison, Chapter 7 uses concepts of power and discourse, habitus, capital, field and agency to inform a more rhizomatic analysis of the participants' statements.

Epilogue

I have struggled in this chapter to show how interconnected theoretical frameworks can be used to explore the ways in which academic writing practices create very productive and generative, rhizomic entanglements in higher education. Taken together, these frameworks reflect Donald's (1985) 'muddle of education' (p.242) which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. I hope that this chapter has laid the foundations for the methodological approach that I adopt in Chapter 6.

I have used the frameworks discussed above to explore how individuals (such as my participants) are variously and endlessly discursively positioned by their social interaction which is mediated through the academic writing practices that they are engaged in, within what I have termed the wider 'mix' of academic writing practices and communities extant in higher education. The churn and connectedness created by this conceptualisation of the rhizomic nature of academic writing practices and communities has forced me to reconsider how academic writing practices have developed historically, and taking by a geological approach, how this historicity might help explore how they currently operate in higher education.

Chapter 4: Reconceptualising Academic Writing and Writing Development 'Practices-in-Use' in Higher Education.

Prologue

Higher education teaching and learning has ostensibly centred on ensuring that students can grasp subject-based curricula, located within well-defined academic disciplines such as geography or physics, taught by acknowledged experts in the field. However, concerns about the ability of some students to translate what they have learnt into effective academic writing are frequently aired, both inside and beyond academia.

In my experience, lecturers' frustration and irritation about the poor quality of some students' writing often fails to appreciate their institution's responses to supporting students' academic writing, as well their own shortcomings as writing developers. I was certainly aware that the central systems of support offered in the research domain for this study, were often failing to improve the writing of the students that they were trying to help, as well failing to reach those students who needed them the most. Indeed, the research projects detailed in Chapter 2 developed out of my own, and my colleagues', frustration with the common forms of academic writing development available to us and our students.

This chapter is designed as an act of 'apperception', which the online Oxford dictionary defines as, 'The mental process by which a person makes sense of an idea by assimilating it to the body of ideas he or she already possesses'. To this end, the chapter seeks to explore how my reconceptualisations about academic writing and writing development practices in higher education, add to an understanding of how the complexities of lecturers' and students' entanglements with academic writing practices often get lost through constant use and familiarity. This act of foregrounding and deconstruction is important, as universities have not traditionally embraced academic writing as a situated social practice.

4.1 Introduction: Conditions and Processes - **Developing Students' Academic Writing in Higher Education**

This chapter delineates some common approaches to supporting and developing academic writing practices for students in higher education. It acknowledges that a number of practical institutional factors, including size, composition of the student body and wider economic considerations, such as changing government policies and fluctuating funding streams, can influence the different approaches to academic writing support that universities choose to take (Hayton and Paczuska, 2002). There are centrally funded, university-wide writing support centres such as Coventry University's 'Centre for Academic Writing', Liverpool Hope's 'Writing Centre' and stand-alone study-skills focussed models like Aston University's 'Learning Development Centre' and Birmingham City University's 'Centre for Academic Success'. Most universities have made some institutional commitment to developing students' academic writing, however, when judged in terms of the overall allocation of resources, academic writing development remains underfunded and undervalued; one may conclude therefore, that it has simply not been a pedagogic priority in higher education (Eraut, 1994; Rowland 2000).

This thesis considers how institutional academic writing development provision, and the pedagogies that underpin it, are an integral part of my Bourdieusian 'academic writing in higher education habitus' which, I suggest, informs the participant lecturers' perceptions explored in Chapter 7. This 'academic writing in higher-education habitus' sits within a wider context comprising:

> […] conditions and processes […] which, we hope, maximise the chance of a favourable outcome ('educatedness') between irrational, infinite, and unpredictable entities, such as complex institutions, teachers, students, location, time, event and so on. (Ruth, 2008, p.106)

Academic writing and writing development practices inform Ruth's (2008) everyday 'conditions and processes' in higher education. Indeed, one can argue that they help to create 'educatedness' by interacting with and connecting significant players, artefacts and processes within the academy in various ways. However, within higher education academic writing development has historically been:

[…] limited to its role in subject specific learning […] and has not […] had a place in the curriculum in its own right […] (Ivanic and Lea in Ganobcsik-Williams, 2006 p.6)

Given this subsidiary role, it is not surprising that little attention has been paid to how lecturers might be enabled, or encouraged, to support students' academic writing development needs (Lea and Stierer, 2000). Lecturers have not traditionally been encouraged to think explicitly how students' academic writing development might be informed by both their previous writing histories, as well as the disciplinary writing conventions and expectations that they are expected to conform to as undergraduates. As discussed in Chapter 5, lecturers' role as academic writing developers is an area even more neglected than the academic writing development of students.

Paradoxically, the institutional lack of interest in developing undergraduates' academic writing has continued, despite a number of high profile sector-wide reports, negative media cover and political moral panics (French, 2013). Dearing's *National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education* (1997) identified a lack of key skills, including 'appropriate writing skills' in university graduates, subsequently calling for study skills to be embedded into every degree, for all students. Several years later, the White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* (2003), also called for a much greater emphasis on developing undergraduates' 'communication skills', including writing. Despite recognition by both reports that something needed to be done, neither fully addressed the question of who was to carry out academic writing development or how it might be best achieved.

Media and political concern has been particularly vocal about the poor quality of undergraduate writing over the last thirty years, frequently linking it to debates about 'dumbing down' in the higher education sector (French, 2013). The Labour party administration (1997-2010), in particular, pushed for a widening participation agenda. This was designed to open up and transform Britain's traditionally exclusive higher education system as they sought to dismantle educational barriers and challenging some of the traditional class-based learner identities associated with university entry (Reay et al., 2008). However, it was not long before critics of widening participation began to make a connection between falling standards, especially with regard to students' academic writing, and the increasing participation of non-traditional students in the sector (French, 2013). Ganobcsik-Williams' *Report on the Teaching of Academic Writing in UK Higher Education* for the Royal Literary Fund (2004), explores a

litany of complaints made about the quality of students' writing from within and outside the academy. *Writing Matters,* produced by the Royal Literacy Fund (2006) and the *Tomlinson Report* (2004) also claimed that many students were entering university unable to write well enough for the demands of higher education.

More recently, it has been argued that even 'gold standard' qualifications, like A Levels and the International Baccalaureate, do not actually prepare students very effectively for university success (Winterson and Russ, 2008). It is interesting, with regard to this largely unresolved tension around widening participation and academic standards, to note how the perceived liberalisation or democratisation of powerful institutions, like universities, often produces a counter-culture of fear and danger that opposes and even demonises agents of change. O'Farrell (2005) argues that this is because democratisation threatens, or at best renders conditional, many traditional privileges enjoyed by powerful groups in society.

This might help explain why, despite the apparent urgency of alleged problems associated with falling standards of academic writing in higher education, there is a continuing reluctance (or inability) by politicians and academics to acknowledge the complexity of academic writing practices, and a lack of honesty about how certain discourses restrict and simplify conceptions of academic writing across higher education. Indeed, Burke (2008) notes how instead:

> […] concerns about quality and widening participation are often juxtaposed in policy discourses, reinforcing differences, misrecognitions and exclusions. (p.2)

What follows in this chapter is a discussion of several common models of academic writing development in higher education and their relation to academic writing development pedagogies. It is an attempt to make visible the kinds of tacit knowledge and assumptions about teaching and learning underpinning higher education academic writing and writing development practices, and the perceptions of lecturers in the research domain discussed in Chapter 7. Section 4.2 outlines common academic writing and writing development approaches currently used across higher education, whilst section 4.3 examines how critical pedagogies can be used to explore the more problematised reconceptualisations of academic writing development practices in higher education outlined in Chapter 3.

4.2 Models of Academic Writing Development in Higher Education

Traditional academic writing development strategies in higher education are broadly based on the predominately autonomous, skills-based model of literacy critiqued in Chapter 3. They are illustrated in Figure 15 below, which reflects aspects of Figure 9's pre-thesis 'Conceptualisations of academic writing' (p.63).

Autonomous conceptualisations of academic writing practices in higher education
Objective
Techniscist skills set
Universal
Functional
Performative
Fixed
Individualised
These often result in deficit model for academic writing development.

Figure 15: Autonomous conceptualisation of academic writing practices in higher education.

Figure 15 illustrates how an autonomous model of academic writing functions as a fixed, universal skill-set that students and lecturers need only to learn, in order to produce or perform successful academic writing in the academy. This model has little sense of the New Literacy Studies' view of literacies (discussed in Chapter 3) where the production of different kinds of writing, even within the academy, is presented as a situated, fluid process, contingent on context. In comparison, an autonomous institutional focus is too often predicated on the belief that 'good' academic writing has to be a clear, objective medium mediating what Ruth (2008) termed, 'educatedness' or more generally, learning.

An autonomous conceptualisation of academic writing supports traditional transmission or knowledge exchange models of pedagogy in the Academy that are instructionist, passive, teacher-directed and skills-based. Both mutually reinforcing approaches encourage universities to favour more individuated models of learning and assessment, where the emphasis is on

displaying subject-specific learning through a decontextualised written 'product'. This, it can be argued, creates a teaching and learning environment that fails to acknowledge the role that situated academic writing practices and different writing experiences and identities play in the process of conveying learning, irrespective of discipline. Such an environment creates a reductive reliance on content over form or product over process, especially when it comes to the assessment of summative written assessments. The ubiquity of autonomous approaches to academic writing in higher education means that they constitute a 'given', which often operates as an invisible or 'taken for granted' dominant discourse informing undergraduate academic writing and writing development practices (Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001). The ensuing emphasis on technical writing skills can, it has been argued, not only hinder students' critical thinking about their subject, but inhibit experimentation and stifle the creative expression of ideas (Ivanic, 1998; Lillis 2001).

Autonomous models of academic writing development also encourage an unfortunate tendency to elide social and political differences between learners. This is because they do not take into account the different experiences of writing that students bring with them to university. For example, many traditional assumptions about academic writing practices have their origins in a time when students were part of a homogeneous, elite group who entered university via the successful completion of educational qualifications that relied on long-established 'essayist' forms of academic writing (Lillis, 2001). This shared writing history no longer holds true, especially for many widening participation students, who start their degrees having completed professional or vocational qualifications that often rely on evidence-gathering, portfolio-based literacies. Others have either never acquired any formal educational qualifications or have been out of education for a long time (Davies, Swinburne and Williams, 2006).

McGivney's (2003) research illustrates the effects of what she calls the 'mystique of unfamiliarity and remoteness' which exemplifies why traditional academic writing practices often confound non-traditional students entering university through vocational or non-traditional routes. It is perhaps specifically, the 'unfamiliarity and remoteness' of dominant academic writing practices, which for many students, accounts for the perception that they are less capable. It might also explain why, despite the pervasive, disciplinary power epitomised by the acculturation model, the concept of 'good' academic writing remains stubbornly elusive

for many students, especially those from non-traditional backgrounds (Lillis and Turner, 2001; Ivanic and Clarke, 1997).

4.2.1 The acculturation model

The acculturation model of academic writing development operates on the premise that students are predisposed to absorb higher education academic writing practices through osmosis or immersion in the culture of the university or, more specifically, the demands and expectation of discipline-based study. Lillis (2003) discusses how acculturation is assumed to happen obliquely, through students' interaction with peers, lecturers and exposure to academic texts, in place of any overt academic writing development pedagogy. Indeed, acculturation encourages lecturers to presume that students entering university are ready, more or less, to absorb the demands of undergraduate level academic writing practices. In this way, it does not make allowance for how the expansion of higher education has created a huge increase in the numbers of part-time, overseas and widening participation students. This means that the acculturation model is often woefully inadequate, as it cannot meet the needs of a more heterogeneous student body who often have very diverse writing experiences prior to coming to university. However, Ganobcsik-Williams (2006) points out that the acculturation approach is still common, particularly in research-intensive universities.

Not surprisingly, lecturers who rely on this acculturation model often fail to acknowledge its inconsistencies and limitations. These include the fact that although subject-specific lecturers determine the kinds of academic writing they expect from students, because they set and mark written summative assignments, there is rarely any obligation for them to interrogate or critique those assessed forms of academic writing with students. Nor is there usually any incentive to embed academic writing development activities into subject-specific teaching. As an approach, therefore, acculturation:

> […] tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation and so fails to address the deep language, literacy and discourse issues involved in the institutional production and representation of meaning' (Lea and Street, 1998, p. 159).

Acculturation does not address any such deeper discourse or issues, nor does it acknowledge how academic writing practices, for different disciplines, have been socially and culturally

constructed over time (Lillis and Turner, 2001). For this reason, it often converts academic writing problems into a personal problem or deficit, rather than an institutional failure to meet the diverse needs of students.

4.2.2 The deficit model

Deficit or remedial models of academic writing support are most often offered alongside the acculturation approach, as a response to students who are struggling with academic writing, despite their immersion in the culture of their discipline. Officially, deficit provision exists for students who need 'help' in getting the technical aspects of their academic writing, (like spelling, grammar, structuring assignments and referencing 'right'). One could argue more controversially, that it exists for students who have failed to pick up on the tacit cues about academic writing development that acculturation offers. That is, the deficit resides with the support model, not the students.

Often deficit provision is located in centrally-based 'Learning Centres' that positively promote their services to students on the basis of friendliness, flexibility and accessibility. These centres are avowedly non-judgemental and the people who work in them strive not to seem as though they are part of a deficit model of support, with all the negative connotations that brings with it. For example, students are often encouraged to self-refer for support, they can determine the content or number of sessions that they attend and they are able to opt in to individual or small group sessions, all of which is an attempt to give them a sense of control. Unfortunately, the recent work of Smit (2012), which draws on Northedge (2003b) and Haggis (2008), suggests that the deficit model of academic writing support in higher education is least likely to be taken up by those who need it the most.

This reluctance may develop because students' fear and a lack confidence in their academic writing have been shown to develop as a response to negative feedback from their lecturers (Johnson and Pajares, 1994; Pajares, 2003). Pajares (2003) points out that a reluctance to seek help is especially true of students who lack confidence about their academic writing to begin with. They are the most apprehensive about receiving negative feedback and are often reluctant to seek out support when they do receive it, resulting in ever weaker self-efficacy. Northedge (2003), describes how students can get very demoralised about negative feedback on their work

from lecturers who intimate that their existing writing practices are inappropriate or just plain wrong, without providing any concrete strategies to address or change how they might improve future written assignments. Students, he suggests, often feel ashamed that their work has been singled out in this way and are consequently unhappy about coming forward to ask for help. Conversely, students who feel confident about their writing worry less about engaging in academic writing and respond more positively to constructive criticism. Their self-efficacy is correspondingly high and they are not afraid to seek out support to improve further. However, research by Newell-Jones et al. (2005) revealed that half of the lecturers in their research setting felt that teaching academic writing skills was not part of their role. They wanted students' writing development to be dealt with through external additional support provision, despite the fact that Durkin and Main (2002) found that academic writing skills, like note-taking and writing essays, were identified by students as their weakest 'study skill'.

Another weakness in the deficit model is the extent to which it decontextualises academic writing development. This is because support is usually offered by generic writing developers who inevitably cannot share the disciplinary background, and concomitant subject-specific writing practices, of every student they work with. Perhaps just as importantly, nor do they have any input into the written summative assessments that their clients are having to produce. This leaves writing developers, like the students that they are trying to help, often having to guess not only what the lecturer setting the assessment actually wants the students to write about, but how exactly they want them to write about it, and why.

Nonetheless, the historical dominance of the deficit approach to academic writing development within higher education is hegemonic; if institutions offer nothing else in the way of academic writing development they will usually offer some form of deficit model provision. As Lea and Stierer (2000) have pointed out, it is a model of literacy support and development that has been transferred unproblematically to higher education from schools. Ironically, Newell-Jones et al., (2005) suggest that the deficit model's stranglehold on academic writing development practices in higher education is exacerbated due to the fact that:

> The majority of academics have probably been exposed to this model as students themselves and are as novices in the practice arena [of writing development] (p.4).

4.2.3 Separate 'bolt-on' provision

Alternatively, or in addition to, centralised provision for deficit academic writing support, many university degrees offer compulsory 'bolt on', study skills modules as part of their first year degree programmes (Doloughan, 2001). Wingate's random search of the web in 2006 revealed that of ten post-1992 and ten pre-1992 higher education institution, all but two offered bolt-on study-skills courses. Bolt-on provision is a more compensatory model of academic writing support, although it does share some of the deficit model's characteristics. For example, bolt-on provision is often delivered or co-delivered by specialist writing-developers who are not members of the students' disciplinary-based teaching team. Lea and Street (1998) describe how bolt-on provision is also predicated on a very autonomous approach to academic writing development as it assumes:

> […] a set of atomised skills which students have to learn and which are then transferable to other contexts. The focus is on attempts to "fix" problems with student learning. The theory of language on which [this approach] is based emphasises surface features' of writing rather than logic and structure (pp.158-159).

Separating academic writing development out from subject-specific learning through study skills modules reinforces the central tenet of the autonomous model, namely that students need only to master an appropriate set of writing skills, independent of any context in which their writing is employed, in order to 'write well' (or better). Moreover, the very breadth of the study skills remit, including as it does, information skills, time and stress management, digital literacies, group work and presentation skills amongst others, often leaves little space for specific development around academic writing practices in broad-based study skills modules.

Bolt-on modules are often very unpopular with students who either feel that they do not need the additional module and/or are resentful that they have to spend time on a module that is not directly relevant to the subject that they have come to university to study. Research into bolt-on forms of writing development provision have found that they are less effective than embedding academic writing development within subject-specific modules, and/or developing complementary online digital resources which support the development of information literacies (Bent and Stockdale, 2009; Beetham, McGill, and Littlejohn, 2009) or a combination of both (Secker and Coonan, 2011).

4.2.4 Embedded approaches to academic writing development

Wingate (2006) argues that the whole concept of 'writing-as-skill' (Lillis, 2001, p.22) is insufficiently nuanced for meaningful academic writing development in higher education. Real support, she argues:

> […] can only be achieved within the subject and through explanations, modelling and feedback by subject tutors. (p.463)

The move to a more embedded model of academic writing development has been encouraged by the recommendations in Dearing's report (1997) and the White Paper: *The Future of Higher Education* (2003), as mentioned above. In response to these reports there has been some movement towards replacing stand-alone, 'bolt on' provision by 'building-in' academic writing activities across degree programmes. There have been a number of research projects which suggest that embedding writing development in this way can be a very positive experience for students and lecturers alike (Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Wingate, 2006). For example, Beetham et al., (2009) demonstrated that academic writing development **'acquired iteratively, through practice within authentic tasks and as needed'** (p. 3) was more effective than when delivered in isolation from the discipline that the student was studying. However, delivery of embedded provision by subject specialists does raise a number of questions about the extent to which lecturers are, or can be, prepared to undertake an academic writing development role. This issue was raised in Chapter 2 and is picked up again in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

One can argue that in order to overcome the difficulties many students experience around academic writing development, lecturers in higher education need to be more explicit about what academic writing practices their set written assignments require (O'Donovan, Price and Rust, 2008). This requires what Lea and Street (1998) called an 'academic literacies approach' which supports lecturers to consciously 'induct students into specific forms of academic discourse' (Lea and Street, 1998, p.172). The concept of 'academic literacies' acknowledges that academic writing in higher education is primarily shaped by discursively constructed disciplinary contexts and educational settings, within which it is taught and which are distinct from other domains, such as home or work. Ivanic and Satchwell (2006), Lillis (2003) and Lea and Ivanic (2006), also use this idea to draw attention to how higher education writing practices

discursively construct and position students and lecturers hierarchically around academic writing practices, as well as the other writing practices that they bring with them to university. Importantly, however, O'Donovan et al. (2008) argue that in order to be able to do this effectively and confidently, lecturers need to have a heightened awareness of what those academic writing practices are and how they can be developed in students.

'Writing in the Disciplines' (WID) and 'Writing across the Curriculum' (WAC) are embedded approaches to academic writing development that originated in higher education in the US. In the UK they are more often called 'whole organisation' approaches. These broad embedded approaches avoid some of the difficulties associated with deficit and autonomous models of writing development as they encourage subject specialists and writing developers to work together within disciplinary contexts to develop academic writing development for all students, not just those deemed to be struggling. Both WAC and WID support teaching subject specialisms and academic writing development together as part of an integrated learning experience, arguing that this approach is more effective than providing separate forms of academic writing development provision (Allan and Clarke 2007; Ganobcsik-Williams, 2006; Zawack and Rogers, 2012).

The WAC Clearinghouse (http://wac.colostate.edu/), hosted by Colorado State University, is an impressive open-access resource dedicated to the promotion of academic writing as a learning heuristic in and of itself for staff and students across all sectors and subjects. WAC aims to give students, and importantly subject-specific lecturers, an opportunity to consciously experience and appreciate academic writing practices as an integral part of the learning process by highlighting the relationship between critical thinking and academic writing (Ganobcsik-Williams, 2011). Advocates of WID more specifically argue that academic writing expectations in higher education, as elsewhere, are shaped by the disciplinary contexts in which they take place and should therefore be developed through communities of practice based within those disciplines (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2012). The latter, it is argued, allows students to develop a confidence and competence in their particular subject areas though active participation in a number of related activities, using the kinds of dialogic and critical literacy pedagogies which are discussed in more detail below. These could include opportunities to complete low-stakes academic writing, modelling of appropriate academic writing and sharing feedback between peers and lecturers.

WAC and WID approaches share many of the broad NLS precepts discussed in Chapter 3; including the idea that writing in education is always a complex, social and process-led activity. As such, they reflect a more ideological model of literacy and academic writing development that draws on Lea and Street (1998) **'**academic literacies' approach. It is useful at this point to consider various critical pedagogies that inform and support more embedded ideological models of writing development. Although they may not so established or common in higher education as the autonomous models discussed above, they are an important aspect of the 'writing in higher education habitus' of participant lecturers in this study.

4.3 Problematised Conceptualisations of Academic Writing Practices in Higher Education.

Critical pedagogies usefully trouble traditional concerns about autonomous ideal of 'correct' forms of academic writing and politicise the social privileging of some established academic writing practices in higher education. This section specifically considers the extent to which critical pedagogies can encourage a more problematised conceptualisation of academic writing practices in higher education, as illustrated in Figure 16 below, which represents the post-thesis side of Figure 9's 'Conceptualisations of academic writing' (p.63).

Problematised reconceptualisations of academic writing practices in higher education
Ideological
Subjective
Social practice
Situated
Creative
Developmental
Fluid

Figure 16: Problematised reconceptualisation of academic writing practices in higher education.

Figure 16 represents a sharp contrast to the clearly demarcated lines drawn between academic writing development and subject specific learning, which are traditionally found within higher education and illustrated in Figure 9 (p.63).

Critical literacy pedagogies draw attention to how dominant academic writing and writing development practices often fix writing and writing identities in ways that conflict with, or do not reflect, individuals' feelings about themselves as educators or learners (Clarke and Ivanic, 1997; Ivanic, 1998; Lillis, 2001). In doing so, they begin to open up discussions about writing and identity that more traditional academic writing discourses and practices often close down. For example, a critical literacies approach critiques simple deficit and techniscist models of support for writing and helps articulate WID concerns about how disciplinary differences are expressed through academic writing practices. Social pedagogies help appraise how effectively communities of practice can encourage the interactive aspects of teaching and learning that WAC is rooted in. Lastly, critical discourse theory can be used to explain how power relations are experienced through academic writing texts and artefacts in the Academy by using an academic literacies approach.

What all these critical pedagogies have in common is the potential to encourage more innovative, interactive and fluid ways of theorising about and delivering academic writing development in higher education.

4.3.1. Critical literacies

Critical literacy is a 'deep' approach to academic writing development as opposed to more 'surface' autonomous, skills-based models. Critical literacy approaches make visible the processes and functions of academic writing, such as the requirement to understand, integrate and structure information in specific disciplinary ways (Biggs 2003; Ramsden, 2003; Biggs and Tang, 2007). They are also concerned with:

> […] relations of power and thus with the manner in which power circulates both in the real world and within particular texts. (Wallace, 2001, p.210)

In order to work within a critical literacy paradigm however, lecturers need a thorough NLS based understanding of how academic writing practices are constituted, socially, culturally and linguistically, and how they relate to the pedagogic approaches that characterise their particular disciplines. This approach can be allied to Bernstein's (1971, 1977) research on 'codes of

schooling', which he argued, shaped and hierarchised the power relations sustaining 'schooled literacies'. For Street (2003), teaching in any educational setting:

> […] entails the recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space but also contested in relations of power […] (p.77)

In his later research Bernstein (1990), goes so far as to suggest that an individual's relationship to educational structures and processes may provide an explanation for individual educational performance, or under-performance, as well as accounting for broader disparities in educational achievement across different social groups. He writes:

> […] regulated unequal distribution of privileging principles of communication [. . .] and that social class, indirectly, effects the classification and framing of the elaborated code transmitted by the school so as to facilitate and perpetuate its unequal acquisition. Thus the code theory accepts neither a deficit nor a difference position but draws attention to the relations between macro power relations and micro practices of transmission, acquisition and evaluation and the positioning and positioning to which these practices give rise. (1990, p.118–19)

This notion of multiple literacies, which operate as differentiated affective codes, echoes Bourdieu and Foucault's theories about the relationships between cultural capital, power and language. These elements, in experiential terms, are often played out through individual and group experiences of education and schooled literacies. This can mean that students from marginalised social groups, who have not traditionally participated in higher education, feel that they have to hide or downplay any vernacular literacies they may use, replacing them with new, more pedagogically aligned, and therefore acceptable literacies (Lillis and McKinney, 2003).

One aspect of critical literacy explores how personal, vernacular literacies can be positively incorporated into pedagogised educational spaces in order to encourage powerful and empowering synergies around learning through academic writing practices. For example, Ivanic's TLRP project, *Literacies for Learning in Further Education (2003 - 2006),* produced a great deal of data. It looked closely at the ways in which further education students' home literacy practices could and should be used, and even celebrated, by lecturers in a broadly Freirean approach to facilitating learning (Ivanic, Edwards, Satchwell, and Smith, 2007;

Satchwell and Ivanic, 2009). In a similar vein, Barnett (2000, 2007) acknowledges the importance of the personal to the pedagogic, arguing that one of the main aims of higher education should be to encourage and develop students' ability to reflect critically and creatively through three domains: academic knowledge, the self and the world.

Barnett's (2000) 'three domain theory' can be recast in critical literacy terms as a way of understanding how knowledge, the self and the world are mediated through the various academic and/or schooled literacies individuals are exposed to in education and beyond. For example, Pahl and Rowsell (2012) carried out research around teacher-educators' pedagogical text-making practices. Their study showed how a critical literacy approach opened up space in the classroom to critique what the researchers termed, the students' 'sedimented' identities. These multi-layered identities were embodied in the students' numerous literacies (both schooled and vernacular). The 'sedimented' writing identities that emerged not only looked to past writing experiences, but suggested new directions that students' writing might/could take. This notion of covalent, multiple writing identities reflects Ivanic's (1998) earlier concept of co-existing autobiographical, authorial, and discoursal 'selves', which, she argued, individuals should be encouraged to distinguish between and develop for different purposes.

In Chapter 3, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological model, which illustrated links between wider community and family contexts, was adapted to illustrate the rhizomic relationships that inform any individual's use of literacies, specifically forms of writing. In education, critical literacy approaches recognise how non-educational literacies, vernacular and informal, often impact on the educational structures and processes that an individual may have to negotiate as part of their learning. For example it has been used to ask how multiliteracies, such those encouraged by new digital technologies, may affect the teaching and learning in any educational setting or curriculum, including higher education disciplines.

Critical literacy approaches also assert that the many texts, both produced and consumed by lecturers and students, are 'framed' by literacy practices that position readers and writers in different ways. As Swain (2010) asserts in her critical literacies study of how children read magazines:

Effectively, we interpret the world and develop our views and values based upon what we see represented in text […] (p. 131).

Fairclough (1992b), debates how critical literacies' approaches complement his concept of Critical Literacy Analysis (CLA) in that CLA enables students and lecturers to challenge and critique academic writing practices and writing development through the discipline-related texts that they are producing and consuming in higher education. For this reason, Fairclough (2001) asserts that lecturers need to take into account complex inter-relationships between texts, including the 'processes of production' and the 'social' or 'disciplinary conditions' within which those relationships are experienced (p.26). Furthermore, he asserts that what constitutes appropriate academic writing can, at any given time, be said to affect and to be affected by constant processes of social change that characterised any particular educational setting or context.

In this way, CLA can be linked in to the work of NLS theorists like Barton and Hamilton (1998), as using critical literacies theory in their teaching enables lecturers to ask what distinguishes higher education literacies from any other literacies. In doing so, they can problematise and foreground the processes and assumptions informing academic literacy practices which render them visible and stop them being so 'taken for granted' (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). Making academic writing and writing development practices visible like this relocates them discursively, yet they remain ambiguous and problematic (like *'through a glass darkly')* and this makes them difficult to define or pin down. As Sally Mitchell asks, in her keynote at the 2009 European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing conference (later published in 2010) and entitled '*The Roles of Writing Development in Higher Education and Beyond' Now you don't see it; now you do: Writing Made Visible in the University*':

> *[…] you don't see it [academic writing] but now (when you've been told what to see) you do. Or do you?*

4.3.2 Social pedagogies of learning

In British higher education there has been a tendency to see pedagogy as culturally and politically disengaged from the personal and interpersonal, with students following very individualised trajectories of knowledge acquisition (Alexander, 2010, Simon, 1999). An overtly social approach to developing academic writing skills challenges the idea that there is little connection between students' understanding of a subject and its sociocultural, literacies based context (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2003). Social pedagogies of learning entail an altogether more social or collective, 'pedagogy of mutuality' (Bruner, 1996, p.56), which reflects the teaching practices popularised by Dewey (1933) and Vygotsky (1962). For Dewey, (1933) education, or more accurately learning, was mediated through an overtly dialectic process between individuals and the various learning communities that they were a part of. His students were encouraged to reflect on and learn from each other, as well as apply their learning to personally relevant problems. This ensured that what they learnt could evolve beyond a fixed curriculum or body of knowledge.

Vygotsky's (1962) 'Zone of Proximal Development' and Bruner's (1996) concept of 'scaffolding' both exemplify inherently social pedagogic models. These models recognise the centrality of social learning and teaching relationships that constantly connect individual students to their peer groups and lecturers. Vygotsky was especially interested in the networks created as part of an individual child's development, the cultural specifics of the pedagogies they were exposed to and their wider social and historical enculturation. Such networks or relationships also exist in higher education, as they do in any educational setting, where academic writing is informed and shaped by particular practices such as, lectures, seminars, tutorials, essays and reports. Participation in and guidance around socially situated academic writing practices, either tacit or explicit, becomes increasingly important therefore to the whole process of teaching and learning, bridging the gap from 'what is known' to 'what was not known'.

Alexander (2008) centres on an overtly dialogic model of learning and teaching. His model reflects an academic literacies view that learning requires dialogic and essentially creative relationships between teachers and learners and learners and their peers. These relationships facilitate a process of intersubjectivity, or 'interthinking' (Littleton and Mercer, 2013), which

functions as a key pedagogical tool. As Alexander writes, teaching and learning is dialogue about:

> […] the different ways of exploring, knowing and making sense represented by the established disciplines of enquiry, and between these and each individual's unique personal knowledge […] (Alexander, 2010, p. 103)

Alexander's dialogic teaching model, like Bernstein's theory of codes and the ideas underpinning the range of NLS theorists discussed in Chapter 3, acknowledges that teaching spaces always involve a variety of literacies or repertoires of talk, including everyday talk, learning talk, teaching talk which teachers and learners use, often interchangeably in educational settings depending on the purpose and context. In Alexander's model, talk, and by implication other forms of communication such as writing, only become specifically pedagogic when they are informed by five principles, namely: collectivity, reciprocity, support, cumulation and purposefulness, which are all principles informing his 'dialogic classroom'. (Alexander, 2008, pp. 112–113)

Mercer (2000) pays attention to how purposeful pedagogic dialogue, at any level of learning, requires a shared focus and effective communication between all participants. Drawing on Rogoff's (1990) concept of 'intersubjectivity', Mercer shows how, although Rogoff's concept of 'guided participation' originated out of work with children, it can be usefully applied to adult learners as it primarily involves dialogue with peers and lecturers about the 'cultural scripts' particular to any community of learning/learners. Considered in the context of academic writing, guided participation represents one way that a co-constructionist approach could be used to nurture effectively students' confident use of academic writing practices in higher education disciplines.

4.3.3 Situated learning

It is important to acknowledge that perceptions about academic writing will be affected by, and ultimately reflect, individuals' educational experiences and personal preferences, as well as the expectations embedded in the contexts or settings of particular academic disciplines, institutions, degrees and even modules that students are studying or teaching (Fairclough, 2003; Burke, 2005). The specificity and situatedness of academic writing practices is, therefore,

clearly an important aspect of academic writing development practices. Brown, et al., (1989) define situated learning as that which reproduces or contextualises skills individuals will be using in 'real life'. They argue that applying learning in real life conditions means that learners are more likely to engage in creative problem-solving, and are better placed to apply their learning across different contexts. At its simplest, situated learning encourages educators to place their students in environments that are as similar as possible to the real life contexts in which their learning will actually be used. For vocational training, it is clear to see how this approach could and does work, as student-dentists or engineers will eventually, albeit under supervision, have to practice what they are learning in university when qualified. Brown et al., (1989) suggested that in such vocational settings:

> The activity in which knowledge is developed and deployed […] is not separable from or ancillary to learning and cognition. Nor is it neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of what is learned. Situations might be said to co-produce knowledge through activity. Learning and cognition, it is now possible to argue, are fundamentally situated. (p.1)

The 'real life' arena for academic writing and writing development in the humanities or arts subjects is not, however, so clear cut, as many academic writing practices, such as essays, are not usually transferable to any post-university work/life situation. Nonetheless, the value of essays, according to situated theories of learning may lie in how they provide:

> […] conceptual and methodological resources for investigating the fundamental processes of cognition as a social and situated activity. (Kirshner and Whitson, 1997, p.3)

The idea that essay writing is 'a social and situated activity', determined differently by each disciplinary field in higher education, is developed further in Chapter 7. Suffice to say at this point that situated learning approaches to academic writing necessitate a careful examination of the dominant academic writing practices extant in any given disciplinary field. One needs also to pay particular attention to the assumptions and values informing the epistemes that have developed to articulate those dominant writing practices. Investigating dominant, often 'taken for granted' processes of cognition and expression in this way, can trouble traditional concepts of how knowledge transfer is effected, or publically performed, through the medium of academic writing by shifting the focus away:

[…] from the individual as the unit of analysis toward the sociocultural setting in which [writing] activities are embedded […] (Kirshner and Whitson, 1997, p.5)

In this way, situated learning pedagogies challenge the passive 'knowledge transfer' model in higher education where there is a traditional discourse around individuated, human capital models of knowledge acquisition. Notions of situated learning for Barnett (2000) are vital in higher education precisely because they:

[…] enable [students] to understand the contestability of the (knowledge) frameworks they encounter. (p.22)

Barnett (2000) bemoans how traditional teaching models in higher education, unlike more student-centred further and adult education pedagogical approaches, too often place students in a passive and subservient relationship to the processes of teaching and learning, rather than encouraging them to contest them. University students have become, he argues, 'recipients of a curriculum' (p.163) which allows little space for creativity and innovation; resulting in what MacLure (2006) in her conference speech '*Qualitative inquiry: where are the ruins?*' calls a 'scripting of pedagogy'.

NLS studies into academic writing and writing development practices have often focussed on the situatedness of academic writing practices (Clarke and Ivanic, 1997; Ivanic, 1998 and Lillis, 1997). Such studies conclude that academic settings, and the literacies that emerge from them, actually require lecturers and students to constantly negotiate and renegotiate their relationships in the setting through situated academic writing practices. They also recognise how academic writing practices constantly mediate lecturers' professional identities, not only through social interaction with other writers in the Academy (through reading their work as well as meeting or working with them); but also from their own, often transformative, educational and life experiences of writing for different purposes (Ivanic, 1998).

4.3.4 Communities of practice

Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of 'communities of practice' treats all learning as an inherently social activity, that over time produces practices which embody the distinctive nature of each community of practice. Wenger discussed how:

> […] collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore to call these kinds of communities, communities of practice. (Wenger 1998, p.45)

The complexity of academic writing communities of practice in higher education can be contrasted with Lave and Wenger's (1991) initial research groups where the case study 'experts' appeared to be confident in their roles and 'novices' were able to observe and learn from them before participating in one explicitly defined arena of practice. In classic communities of practice lecturers could represent the skilled practitioners or 'masters' and students the 'apprentices'. However, in lived experience, as the participants' accounts in Chapter 7 suggest, relationships between all these elements within the learning environment are inevitably dynamic, and often problematic. Moreover, different universities, and the various schools and divisions within them, could be said to constitute different types of communities of practice.

As a critical pedagogy, communities of practice introduce the idea that learning emerges through active 'legitimate peripheral participation', by individuals in 'a community of practice', located in a specific domain. In this model, learning occurs when an individual is engaged in the social practices of a community, because 'learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.31). Being engaged in communities of practice therefore:

> […] refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities. (Wenger, 1998, p.4)

Reflecting this idea, Candlin (1998) suggests that academic writing and writing development practices can be seen as:

> […] a 'vehicle' by which to lead 'apprentices' through a process of continual improvement into membership of the disciplinary academy […] (p.7)

Clearly WID is drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1991) idea that, over time, repeated exposure to, and experience of, a community's practices means that new members in academia can be supported and gain experience until they are confident and competent enough to move from peripheral, to central participation in shared, disciplinary-based, practices such as, in the case of higher education, academic writing and writing practices. Accordingly, it is clear to see how the idea of communities of practice also underpin an 'academic literacies' approach to academic writing development. Particularly in the way it suggests that experienced lecturers/researchers could be mobilised to support less experienced colleagues or students in their writing, creating either formal or informal writing communities, across a variety of contexts and settings in higher education.

To conclude, the critical writing pedagogies outlined in this section can be used to explore approaches that deliberately undermine higher education's own self-certainty about its use of everyday practices, such as academic writing. This is because they have the potential to:

> […] interfere with the hierarchical disposition of [higher education's] conceptual structures and blur the illusory transparency of its access to the world. (MacLure, 2006, p.11)

By acknowledging how discussing the ways in which wider power relations and social conditions can inform academic writing practices, lecturers may feel able to work more productively with students to develop their academic writing across and within disciplinary boundaries. This of course involves lecturers both acknowledging and critically analysing and challenging the power of their role as the arbiters of 'good' academic writing, even to the extent of questioning established conceptions of 'good academic writing'. Using critical pedagogies in this way, helps explore to what extent lecturers' perceptions about academic writing and writing development practices are loaded with potentially oppressive and limiting attitudes and norms. Of course, lecturers themselves may not fully comprehend dominant attitudes and norms; nonetheless, they enact them in their assessment of students' writing and

of course, in their own academic writing. It is to this issue of lecturers' professional, yet very personal relationships, with academic writing that the next chapter turns.

Chapter 5: Reconceptualising Lecturers' Professional Academic Writing Identities in Higher Education.

5.1 Introduction: Identity as a Signifying Practice

This chapter reconceptualises lecturers' professional writing selves and/or identities through a broadly postmodern conceptualisation of identity(ies). For Butler '…identity is a signifying practice' (1990, p.145) and this chapter makes the case that positive lecturer academic identities in higher education are largely signified through successful participation in everyday academic writing and writing development practices, such as writing course materials, setting written assignments, marking written assignments, editing and writing for journals, or conferences, which combine to create a 'writing in a higher education habitus'. In Lea and Stierer's (2009) study of lecturers in higher education, academic writing:

> […] functioned both to express crucial aspects of academic identity and, at the same time, to develop and extend academic identity [ies]. (p. 426)

However, in line with the broad postmodern approach of this thesis, identity is treated as fluid and contingent on individuals' infinitely various experiences and subjectivities. With regard to higher education, Clegg (2008) discusses how lecturers, like students, are part of wider social and cultural communities of practice and discourse groups that expose them to different types of writing, which are constantly changing as they go through life. Social interaction around academic writing practices mediates and facilitates the development of academic writing identities for lecturers and students alike and there are grounds for suggesting that lecturers, as much as students, are often contending with what Lillis (2001, p.53) refers to as the 'institutional practice of mystery' that surrounds academic writing in higher education. That is, they too struggle with the confusion and ambiguity that common conventions and expectations around academic writing practices create in higher education.

However, as Chapters 3 and 4 have made clear, lecturers, like students, need to first be familiar with and understand academic writing practices in order to produce successful academic writing

Those practices have to be developed, honed and refined if they are to meet the standards and expectations of the gate-keepers and judges in the Academy. For just as lecturers' assess and judge their students' writing, so their own writing is likely, over the course of their career, to be judged and assessed by doctoral supervisors, journal boards and publishing editors. Like students, lecturers are also perpetually engaged in high-stakes academic writing. Interestingly, however, the lack of overt institutional support for the development of academic writing for new lecturers clearly mirrors subject lecturers' ambivalence around developing students' writing that was evident in several of the pilot studies outlined in Chapter 2.

5.2 Professional Academic Writing as a Work-based Social Practice

Drawing on Clegg's (2008) research into lecturers' lives, this chapter 'theorises some of the possible ways in which the life-world of academics is being experienced' (p.332). In particular, it examines how the different relationships with academic writing that lecturers experience are necessarily grounded in the complexity of writing as a work-based social practice. Chapter 4 focused on academic writing development approaches and strategies and acknowledged that higher education lecturers have not traditionally seen themselves, or been seen by their universities, as academic writing developers. In comparison, lecturers' own development as academic writers is usually understood to be an integral part of their professional academic identity.

For the majority of lecturers the formation of an academic writing identity manifests itself through the production of particular forms of academic writing such as doctoral work and writing for professional journals. (Chapter 7 discusses in more detail how academic writing practices are often experienced as inherently performative for lecturers). Not only do lecturers produce written teaching material which they often 'perform' for their students, they are also often expected to produce professional academic writing which 'performs' their work to a wider audience in peer reviewed

publications and conferences. It is the reception of this professional academic writing by other legitimated academic writers, which most publically confers lecturers' professional status in the academy. Ball states that:

> The practitioner, the professional, is…brought into being by the knowledge that makes them expert […] knowledges are produced within power relations also in the sense that some groups or individuals have been able to speak knowledgably about 'others' in subaltern groups […] (2013, p.15)

However, it is important to acknowledge that these academic 'knowledges' are largely presented for public consumption through the production of professional academic writing forms. Even the act of speaking as an academic is bolstered, either explicitly by reference to written notes at the point of speaking, or implicitly through the status conferred on extempore utterances which are subsequently legitimated by a body of written published work.

One can argue that it is dominant forms of academic writing that mediate the powerfulness of academic knowledges promulgated in higher education. Confidence with dominant, legitimising forms of academic writing is what characterises or marks out the professional or expert academic. It is a confidence that gives them the power to 'speak knowledgably in research about 'others', particularly subaltern groups. Foucault's concept of governmentality moreover, suggests that these public forms of academic writing function in higher education as:

> […] a set of (governmental and other) practices aimed at producing certain sorts of persons, not as a collection of phenomena which hold meanings like a bank, from which people withdraw and to which they deposit (Kendall and Wickham, 1999, p.112).

Following on from this, being seen to successfully fulfil professional academic writing practices constitutes a Foucauldian 'technology of the self' (1999, p.53) whereby lecturers learn to cultivate particular professional identities. For this reason, academic writing practices are treated in this chapter as one of the most significant ways in which lecturers' work-based/professional writing identities are constructed, regulated and contested (see Figure 17 on page 138). Further discussion of this idea is offered in

Chapter 7 though participant statements. These statements reinforce the idea that individual lecturers, consciously or unconsciously, often acquire different kinds of writing identities, in further and higher education, which may be conformative and/or transgressive (Reay, David and Ball, 2005; James and Biesta; 2007).

Lecturers have very different roles and develop quite distinct professional identities during their working lives. In addition to variations that exist between institutions, higher education is divided along disciplinary lines, specialisms and sub-specialisms (and the various Schools and Faculties within each university). Lecturers' professional identities are therefore constantly:

> […] enacted and constructed…coalesce[d]…shaped and re-shaped' (Trowler and Knight, 2004, p.30).

Professional, work-based identities moreover, are part of a wider 'lived complexity' (Sucharhov, 1994) which cannot be separated from other personal, social and cultural identities and/or membership of other discourse communities. Nor should one ignore how individuals intersect with class, ethnicity and gender affiliations and other social categories (Archer, 2008). Far from being a smooth, progressive trajectory towards a fixed professional status, academic identities are perhaps best understood as a process of 'becoming' and/or 'unbecoming', as outlined by Colley and James (2005). Their work in further education illustrates the extent to which subjects experienced developing academic identities as a 'disrupted' process, characterised by ontological uncertainty and feelings of inauthenticity. This means that:

> […] the meanings associated with 'being' an academic and what constitutes 'academic work' are always in process. (Archer, 2008, p.385)

Similarly, Leathwood (2005), in her study of female further education lecturers, describes professional identity as 'fluid, shifting and constructed through difference and exclusions' (p.391).

Additionally, individual lecturers' roles and responsibilities may change substantially over time, resulting in what Gee (1999b) calls 'shape-shifting portfolio' professionals

who develop 'boundaryless careers' (Dowd and Kaplan, 2005). Clegg (2008) describes how lecturers' highly differentiated academic identities are therefore:

> […] not a fixed property [they are] part of the lived complexity of a person's project and their ways of being in those sites which are constituted as being part of the academic environment […] (p.329)

Within all this complexity, dominant higher education discourses and the communities of practice that they support, frame and inform lecturers' individual experiences of writing and the construction of professional writing identities. One can argue therefore, that perceptions by lecturers of academic writing practices are less about individual preferences and choices and more about the different subject positions that can be taken up within dominant discourses and communities of practice around academic writing. Resulting subject-positions of course, 'can be and are contradictory and irrational' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999, p.54).

5.3 A Professional Academic Writing in Higher Education Habitus

Bourdieusian concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' are a useful way of exploring how individual experiences as a lecturer can be contextualised through membership of various professional communities, yet characterised by the particularities of their personal experiences. An individual lecturer's membership or identification with, a particular academic community may be reinforced or marginalised by wider higher education discourses that they feel that they belong to, or are excluded from. Moreover, at every stage and in every aspect of life there is endless choice, so that:

> […] no two individual histories are identical (and) no two individual habituses are identical. (Bourdieu, 1990, p.46)

In brief, a Bourdieusian field constitutes:

> […] a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value […] (Bourdieu, in Wacquant, 1989, p.44)

Bourdieusian fields often embody rules or taken-for-granted practices that are imposed (without necessarily being explicitly identified) on those who seek to enter or remain within them. They therefore structure social and professional practices by defining, albeit artificially, the range of possible and acceptable actions and behaviours available to those operating within any given field (Grenfell, 2004). Bourdieu (1984) discusses how these regular social practices can become invisible because they are, 'obscured by the realities of ordinary sense-experience' (p.22). This might help explain, for example, the 'discourse of transparency' around academic writing practices identified by Lillis and Turner (2001) and discussed in Chapter 4.

Bourdieu (1985) claims that habitus does not have to mean that individual attitudes and behaviours are wholly predetermined by fixed dominant discourses. Rather, he described how it can be viewed more productively as a 'system of dispositions'. These dispositions emerge out of participation in and exposure to wider social settings and discursive arenas. They are moreover, characterised by a:

> […] vagueness [...] the more-or-less, which define(s) one's ordinary relation to the world. (1990, p.54)

Within Bourdieu's theory of dispositions there are potentially limitless individual:

> […] possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions […] (1990, p.54)

However, Reay's (2002) more nuanced take on habitus suggests that it can function to exclude some practices as unthinkable, whilst predisposing individuals towards other 'certain, predictable ways of behaving' (2004, p.432). Nash's (2002) school-based research into attainment also suggests ways in which habitus can function like a 'state of mind', made up of 'effective dispositions' (p.46). As Reay points out therefore, the choices any individual makes are taken within:

> […] an internalised framework that makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable. (2004, p. 434)

In this way, one can argue that individual agency is not 'free', rather it can be seen as the product of habitus, which itself is a:

> […] complex, internalized core from which everyday experiences emanate (Reay, 2004, p.435)

Reay's (2004) interpretation of habitus allows researchers to argue that habitus cannot be observed empirically; rather it has to be interpreted intuitively. She calls this approach 'operationalising' habitus for research purposes and describes it as:

> A mixture of the embodied, the instinctual and the unsought, we also glimpse the 'life of the mind', the reflective as well as the pre-reflective. (2004, p. 441)

However, as Foucault (1980) states, individuals are constantly struggling with their sense of identify and place in the world, a struggle that results in constant flux and change as people try to make sense of their experiences. Recognising the essential dynamism of the relationship between individual habitus and field creates endless opportunities for what Reay calls:

> […] adaptations, responses, reactions and resistances to 'the way the world is' (Reay, 2004, p. 437)

Figure 17 creates a version of what Colley and James (2005) called a 'vocational habitus' (p.489) which illustrates how lecturers' identities are constructed/constituted as professional academic writers.
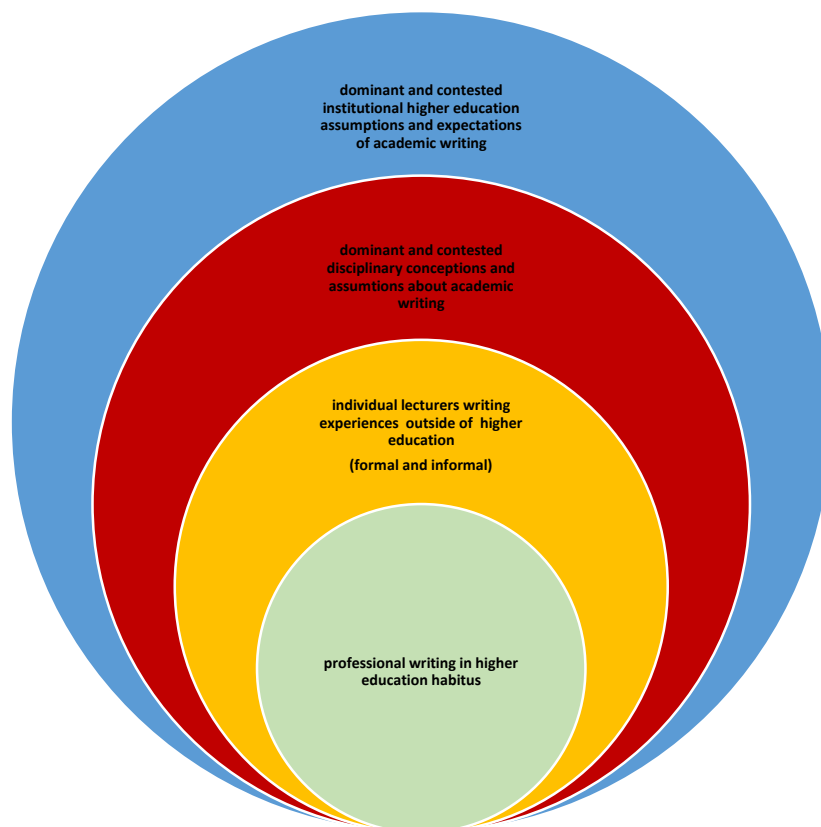
Figure 17: Fields through which lecturers' work-based/professional writing identities are constructed, regulated and contested.

Participant lecturers' accounts of their individual academic writing and writing development practices are treated in Chapter 7 as individuated products of a 'writing in higher education habitus' (see Figure 14, p.140). This habitus can be viewed in the same way as Bourdieu's notion of a 'schooled' or 'cultured habitus' which, he maintains, is structured and restructured by each individual's historical experience of writing in and for the disciplinary fields that any given individual has encountered throughout their education, an idea which is discussed further in Chapter 7.

5.4 Postmodern Conceptions of Professional Writing Identities

Dominant discourses and communities of practice help police disciplinary boundaries through their contextualisation of legitimated professional writing identities, which are located within recognised disciplinary boundaries. In an attempt to more accurately reflect the messiness of lived writing experiences many qualitative researchers have

moved towards rhizomatic approaches. Rhizomatic researchers have been compared to explorers or cartographers charting unknown territory. Their maps are strange and often wonderful documents described in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) thus:

> The [rhizomic] map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, and susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it is detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight. (p.21)

As discussed in Chapter 3, Figure 14 (reproduced below) attempts to illustrate the rhizomic connections created between lecturers use of different academic writing practices. It is also important to note that rhizomic writing relationships often cross disciplinary boundaries, creating liminal discursive spaces, hybrid academic writing practices and multifaceted professional identities.

Figure 14: Writing in a higher education habitus.

A rhizomic representation of lecturers' writing experiences shows the extent to which they draw, not only their professional writing experiences as researchers, lecturers, academic writers and writing developers in higher education, but in addition use writing practices developed in other jobs and writing communities that they may have been members of. Deconstructing the rhizomic relationships within any given individual habitus, using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) macro or micro spheres, should help encourage qualitative researchers to think more relationally about how the subjects of their research are located discursively across various fields. Maton (2008) argues convincingly, that habitus, when viewed within the context of 'field', requires the researcher 'to adopt a relational mode of thinking that goes beyond surface empirical practices' (p.61)

One can further explore ways in which individual lecturers are constantly engaged in the construction of professional 'selves' and 'identities' which are inherently multiple and plastic (Barnett and di Napoli 2008; Henkel, 2000; Taylor 2007). It is not useful, therefore, to view lecturers' identities as bound or fixed physically or discursively in

any one context or role. Indeed, Bourdieu characterises identity-work for members of any social group as a:

> […] struggle to determine the conditions and the criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy, that is, to determine which properties are pertinent, effective and liable to function as capital so as to generate the specific profits guaranteed by the field […] (2001, p.11)

Struggle is, of course, evident in all fields of social interaction, although the high stakes attached to higher education make it especially sensitive to claims and counterclaims with regard to the authentication and legitimation of lecturers' professional writing identities. Cummins' 'Academic Expertise Framework' (2009), analyses the extent to which educators' and learners' identities are mediated through on-going social interaction and relationships. These, he maintains, create myriad opportunities for 'identity negotiation and identity investment' (p.264).

Cummins' original framework concentrated specifically on the ways in which deaf, as well as other educationally marginalised students, were often disempowered by how they were positioned discursively by their teacher and the pedagogies they employed. However, with its emphasis on the interplay between discourse, power and interpersonal spaces, where knowledge is generated and identities are negotiated, Cummins' framework can be usefully adapted to explore how lecturers' professional identities are positioned, empowered or disempowered by the academic writing practices that mediate micro-interactions and inter-personal spaces experienced by groups and individuals in higher education. Figure 18 is an adapted, combined version of Cummins' framework that has been combined with Polanyi's (1966) notion of 'tacit spaces'. It aims to illustrate how lecturers and students negotiate 'correct' or 'appropriate' academic writing identities via academic writing practices. These practices, in turn, are mediated by institutional structures, (which relate to Bronfenbrenner's macro-sphere) and professional identities (which relate to an individual's micro-sphere). However, the power and interrelationships between these spheres are rarely made explicit, or visible, in any analysis of professional writing identities.

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│   LECTURERS AND STUDENTS    │◄─────►│  DOMINANT DISCOURSES IN HE  │
└─────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────┘
        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │         MACRO AND MICRO                  │
        │     INTERACTIONS BETWEEN                 │
        │    LECTURERS AND STUDENTS                │
        └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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        │ MEDIATED BY ACADEMIC WRITING PRACTICES   │
        │              AND TEXTS                   │
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        │ CREATION OF TACIT INTERPERSONAL SPACES   │
        │       WITHIN WHICH ACADEMIC WRITING      │
        │       IDENTITIES ARE NEGOTIATED          │
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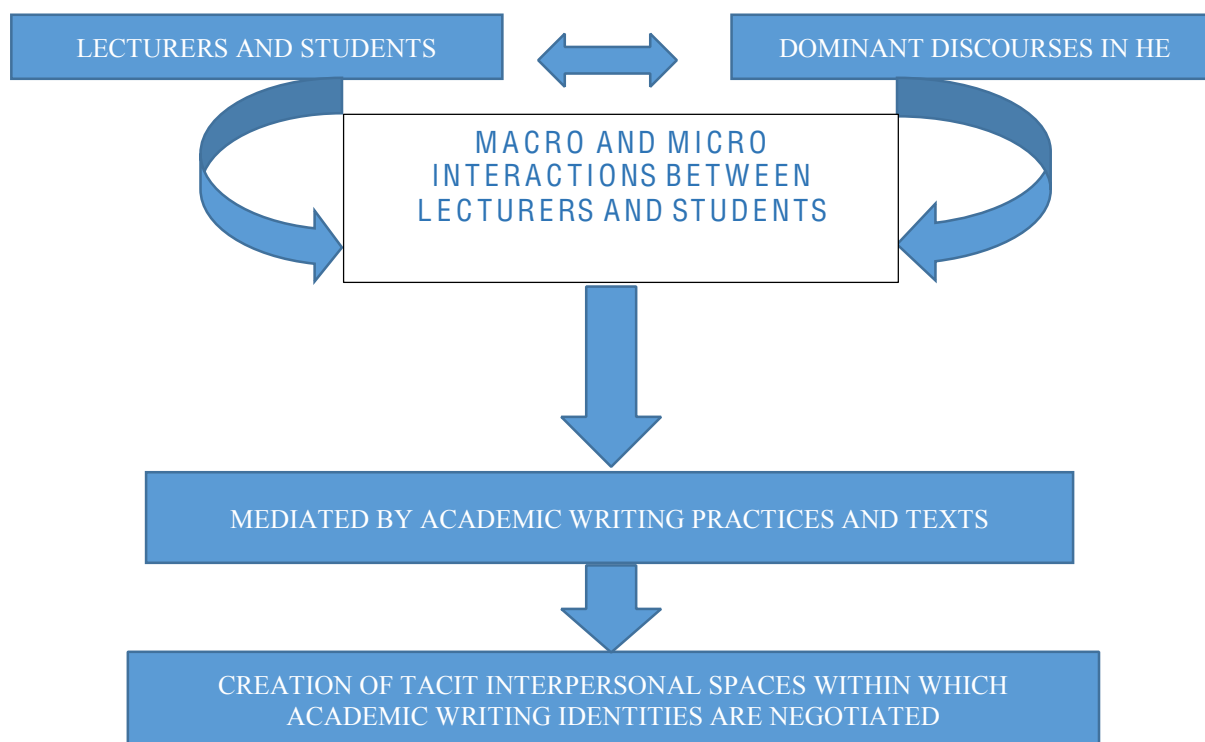
Figure 18: Adapted version of Cummins (2009) and Polanyi (1983)

This diagram helps explain how tacitness, and the power relations that it underpins, have especial implications for new lecturers. As Archer writes:

> […] younger academics are interestingly located at the nexus of competing discourses around what it means (or might mean) to be an academic. (2008, p. 38)

This suggests, as discussed in Chapter 8, that lecturers, new to higher education, who are developing a professional writing identity, may benefit, (students also often struggle in this respect), can benefit from having a greater self-awareness of the discourses informing dominant academic writing practices in their disciplinary field.

5.5   Communities of Practice and the Development of Professional Academic Writing Identities

Confidence and familiarity with accepted (or expected) professional academic writing practices is a crucial component in lecturers' feeling that they are developing into 'real' academics. As discussed in Chapter 7 however, lecturers often struggle to develop

successful professional academic writing careers. Like students, one can argue, that lecturers need to be inducted into forms of academic writing that legitimise their status as academics in the academy.

Warhurst (2008) explores how lecturers' development in higher education as education professionals, an identity that does not necessarily include an idea of their development as professional academic writers, has most often been theorised, if not experienced, through communities of practice, in which they are positioned initially as novices. Chapter 4 (4.3.4 p.129) discussed how communities of practice are characterised by different kinds of members and forms of membership; and how these communities have permeable and shifting boundaries and can involve competing, as well as complementary, practices. Wenger (1998) acknowledges that individuals are always simultaneously members of a number of practice communities; moreover, he argues that they bring their prior experiences of community membership to each new community that they join. At the same time, membership of a new community will modify previous learning experiences. Wenger (1998) writes:

> […] we engage in different practices in each of the communities of practice to which we belong. We often behave rather differently in each of them, construct different aspects of ourselves, and gain different perspectives. (p.159)

Relationships in any community of practice are therefore never straightforward. They often shift and need to take account of factors such as hierarchies, emerging identities and changing relationships, which can all affect different members differently as they are inducted and become part of a community. For example, students may 'buddy up' and help each other through assignments, either formally or informally, whilst lecturers, who are often involved in their own research and professional development, often simultaneously operate in higher education as teachers and learners. Each of these roles empowers or disempowers individuals at different times and affects relationships between them. Gourlay's work (2009, 2011) suggests that although 'socialisation' is used to induct new lecturers (like new students) into higher education 'threshold' practices, individuals can nonetheless often have trouble feeling that they fit in.

Gourlay's lecturer subjects, far from experiencing a smooth initiation into their 'expert' professional responsibilities and a warm welcome into the relevant communities of practice operating in their work-place, often experienced alienation and anxiety, compounded by physical and professional isolation. In her research, these negative experiences usually resulted from a lack of communication and collaboration between new and 'expert' colleagues in their settings because institutions were not very interested in functioning as collaborative communities. This was especially the case around professional academic writing development and the legitimisation of professional writing identities which often involved overt competition between academics around funding, research opportunities and the publications (and promotions) that arise from those related activities,

This frequent lack of collaboration between academics, even within faculties, may disguise the extent to which higher education communities of writing actually connect individuals through their participation in cross-institutional disciplinary based networks of practice. It is these wider, sector networks that most often legitimate disciplinary-based academic writing practices, although, as participants in Chapter 7 discuss, the omnipresent rules that define them are often tacit and unstated. Professional writing identities, like other aspects of professional lecturer identity, such as teaching or supervising, are therefore continually being made and re-made through a process of negotiation and struggle, conducted at the level of writing within in the disciplinary field. Aspiring lecturer-writers therefore, often feel that they have to find their place amongst the writing of influential past and current members of their disciplinary field, which corpus or body of work constitutes 'the field' (an idea developed in Chapter 6). In their writing careers, therefore, individual lecturers often overtly position their writing relationally in regard to other, more established writers in their field, who themselves occupy different theoretical and aesthetic writing identities through their careers (and who fall in and out of fashion). This means that it is difficult to claim a:

> […] unidirectional movement of novices from legitimate peripheral participation to full membership of a community of practice […] (Colley and James, 2005, p.1)

Rather the movement is more rhizomic as suggested in Figure 14 (pg. 143).

This chapter has tried to connect academic writing practices to a broadly postmodern theoretical framework about identity-formation and professionalism in higher education. As discussed in Chapter 4, professional writing communities are often very conservative and encourage compliance, rather than fostering challenge and innovation, especially from new lecturers, such as those studied by Archer (2008). The issue of professional writing identities, and the academic writing practices that support them, looks forward to Chapter 7. There the accounts of participating lecturers in this study further illustrate how the conferment of a professional academic identity is often perceived to be dependent on lecturers' academic writing credentials. This reinforces the idea, mooted throughout this thesis, that the production of legitimised academic writing practices are central to what it means to be an academic. This assertion is reflected in the pressure, evident in many of the accounts in Chapter 7, where lecturers discuss how they are often under great pressure to engage publically with academic writing (to publish articles and books, to present conference papers, etc.). Moreover, universities also, due to the pressure of the Research Evaluation Framework (REF), increasingly *need* their lecturers to become published writers within specific, legitimated disciplinary fields, which are embodied in the carefully hierarchised academic publishing industry, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6: Reconceptualising Qualitative Education Research. Postmodernism and Post-**qualitative Research into Lecturers' perceptions** of Academic Writing Practices in Higher Education.

Prologue

> My critique is not that qualitative inquiry is unscientific, my critique is that, to a great extent, it has been so disciplined, so normalized, so centered…that it has become conventional, reductionist, hegemonic, and sometimes oppressive and has lost its radical possibilities to produce knowledge differently (St. Pierre, 2011, p.613).

My starting point in this chapter, drawing on St. Pierre (2011), is the belief that traditional practices in educational qualitative research cannot accommodate the actual messiness that characterises lecturers' lived experience of academic writing, nor can they reflect the complexity of my research participants' statements about that lived experience.

This chapter explores how a nexus of 'post-qualitative' research methods and ideas encouraged me to re-engage with, and/or reterritorialise, established research discourse spaces with concepts and ideas that speak in new ways about academic writing practices in higher education. A vital part of this alternative research process has been the important task of deconstructing my own perceptions, not least because in writing a PhD critiquing academic writing practices, I am constructed and constrained by the very academic writing discourses I am exploring and critiquing.

The post-qualitative research described in this chapter has helped me to use the experiences of the participants in Chapter 7 to illustrate 'exemplary practices' (MacLure, 2010) which generate ideas and theories about academic writing practice. In this way, I have tried to avoid using theory to reproduce 'lumpen epistemologies' (MacLure, 2010) that simply illustrate what is already known. I have, at the same time, sought to trouble the 'epistemic ignorance' (Pillow, 2011) embodied in the dominant hegemonic discourses that inform so much educational qualitative research. In particular, I wanted this thesis to engage in a different kind of qualitative educational research, where the rationale was, 'to try to interrupt [...] clarity-seeking and closure

seeking tendencies' (MacLure, 2006, p.6). The post-qualitative approach I have taken therefore, seeks to operate as 'an instrument for the multiplication of endless constructions and interpretations' (Deleuze, 1977a, p.208). Additionally, post-qualitative methodologies are transversal; they intersect or cut across old disciplinary and epistemological binaries and offer new tools for theorising practices, experience and beliefs. Accordingly, I have embraced Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concepts of rhizomic and flattened ontologies and have deployed them alongside the idea of embodied subjectivity explored in the work of New Materialist thinkers Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2013).

The decision to work through a post-qualitative approach has encouraged me to make explicit my ontological, epistemological and ethical preoccupations. For example, I needed to consider critically how to research subjectivities, my own as well as my participants. I asked how did my subjectivity affect the research, and how did the research change me? I am also attracted to the idea that research can always be 'made' in any number of ways and similarly can resist being made in particular ways. Therefore, this chapter is offered principally as an act of 'textual staging' which flags up how the material collected from lecturer participants in Chapter 7 has been deliberately fashioned into a made, or more accurately, 'made-up' research narrative.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have argued comprehensively that, in qualitative research, researchers should acknowledge that they are creating their own explicitly subjective and constructed research narrative out of the data they have collected. Research narratives, such as those offered in Chapter 7, can only ever offer a partial interpretation of participants' social realities and can never claim to represent them fully. Research narratives are, in turn, read by others, who will inevitably produce their own, possibly conflicting, interpretations of the data and the researcher's analysis. This constant remaking of the meaning of qualitative data creates what Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) term 'the interpretation of interpretation'. This, they maintain, is an inevitable consequence of language's inherent instability and the role it plays in translating experience and understanding (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Incorporating a critical awareness of my research's 'madeness' into the research process, means that as a postmodern researcher, I have, in addition to the research carried out on the research participants, become a kind of 'ethnographer of my own research' (Woolgar, 1988). Simultaneously, I have tried to deconstruct my resistance to traditional qualitative research methodologies, whilst critically analysing the alternative methodologies I have chosen to work with. However, these acts of methodological resistance are not an attempt to privilege my chosen research position, or reach an alternative place of theoretical certainty, rather I want my position to remain one of 'not knowing what and how to think' (Burchell, 1996 , p. 30).

6.1 Introduction: The Research Implications for a Complex Reconceptualisation of Academic Writing Practices

The earlier studies, discussed in Chapter 2, trace how my conceptualisation of academic writing became more complex as I progressed in my research. Indeed, the primary outcome of those earlier projects was that they revealed how complex and contested academic writing practices are, and how they are positioned along a continuum from traditional to alternative as illustrated below in Figure 19.

Reconceptualisations of academic writing practices	
Traditional	Alternative
Autonomous	Ideological
Objective	Subjective
Techniscist skills set	Social practice
Universal	Situated
Functional	Creative
Performative	Developmental
Fixed	Fluid
Consequences for the choice of a research approach….?	

Figure 19: Reconceptualisations of academic writing practices

Chapter 3 outlined the complex history and practices embodied in traditional conceptualisations of academic writing, whilst Chapters 4 and 5 explored how those conceptualisations were often played out through the development of lecturers' professional writing identities, through their academic writing practices in the workplace. This chapter frames the discussion of participants' comments on their experiences and opinions of academic

writing practices that appears in Chapter 7, using a set of reconceptualisations about academic writing practice in higher education. These methodological reconceptualisations appear below in Figure 20. They were inspired by Denzin and Lincoln's *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (1994) which offers a compendium of alternative qualitative research methodological approaches.

Reconceptualisations of qualitative educational research practices	
Traditional	**Alternative**
Linear ←——————————————→ Rhizomic	
Creating impact ←——————————→ Influential	
Outcome focussed ←————————→ Process based	
Objectivity ←————————————→ Subjectivities	
Validity ←————————————→ Relational	
Conclusive ←————————————→ Open-ended/inconclusive	
Individual ←————————————→ Collaborative	
External ←————————————→ Embedded	
Solution-based ←————————→ Problem-based	
Consequences for choice research methodologies…?	

Figure 20: Reconceptualisations of qualitative educational research

It is important to note that the need to reconceptualise methodology for this doctoral research grew out of the reconceptualisation of academic writing practices that preceded any consideration of how to proceed methodologically. Opening up and challenging dominant discourses around qualitative educational research processes is difficult, not least because different approaches and methodologies overlap and influence each other, as Figure 21 shows (reproduced with permission from Niglas, 2007). In comparison, all research approaches, including post-qualitative and quantitative, are treated in this thesis as constructed, socially situated forms of discourse (Clough, 1992). Moreover, if all research approaches are constructed then it follows that they can be systematically deconstructed 'as one practice among others' (Foucault, 1972, p.186).
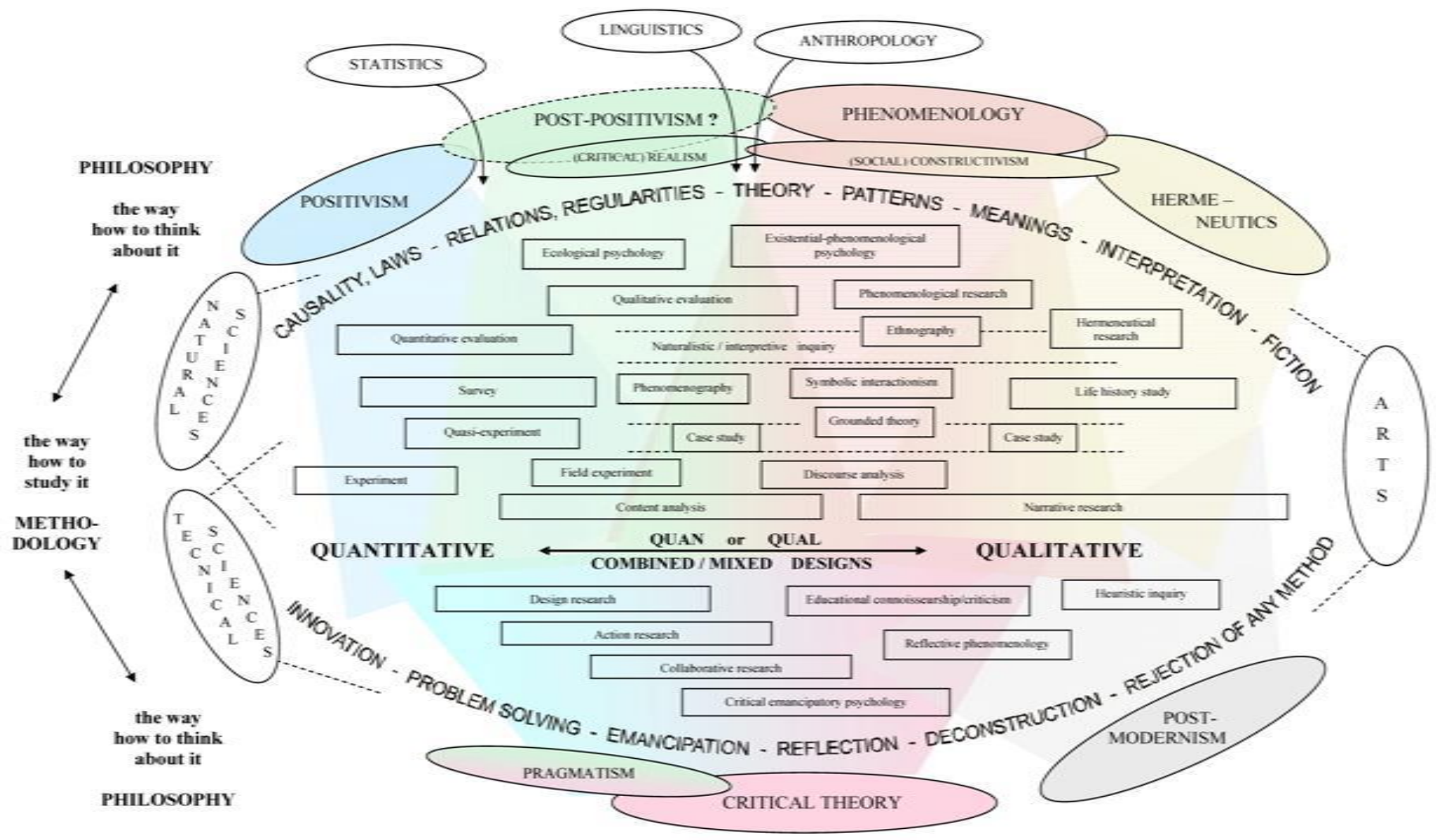
Figure 21: Research Methodologies (Niglas, 2007)

Figure 21 illustrates a quantitative-qualitative continuum across research approaches. This continuum spans the scientific empiricism of the natural sciences at one end, and the broad interpretative paradigm dominating qualitative research in liberal arts and social sciences at the other. Traditionally, qualitative research draws from positivist/empiricist/scientist ontologies to maintain mono-dimensional concepts of validity as a defence against putative allegations of distortion and tainted data, (often because qualitative data are deemed too subjective otherwise). In this way, positivism positions itself in research terms, not as one ontological choice out of many, but as the sole means of legitimising qualitative researchers' 'objective' or 'truthful' data-claims (Lather, 2005). Moreover, this legitimacy is often achieved through a simple binary opposition to qualitative 'subjective' data. In comparison, as the reconceptualisation of qualitative research continuum in Figure 20 suggests, in post-qualitative research notions of validity remains inherently contestable and open. This chapter argues that the broad interpretative research paradigm, so popular in educational research and the social sciences generally, is a research discourse in thrall to its opposite, scientism. It will explore the idea that a desire for logic, objectivity and truth in qualitative research reflects a yen by some social scientists for a 'simple and ordered universe that never was' (Popkewitz, 2004, p.62). Moreover, it argues that 'scientific objectivity' does nothing more than offer social sciences a false and 'timeless truth free from political and cultural influences' (Harding, 2004, p.4).

6. 2 Problematising Scientism

6.2.1 The origins of qualitative educational research

Originating in ethnography, interpretativism was adopted by qualitative educational researchers as they, like anthropologists, sought to observe and critically analyse the culture and practices of groups and settings for research purposes. In simple terms, qualitative educational research often attempts to explain, or improve, an educational issue or problem. It does this by adhering to 'objective' scientific research conventions, like those described above, which have been adapted from the natural sciences, to examine social or individual phenomena, such as human behaviours, practices, beliefs or opinions. Researching educational settings and practices, in this 'scientific way', usually involves systematically collecting data (often through observation or grounded methods) and then analysing or interpreting it, usually through some form of encoding, in order to produce an 'authentic' vision of the lived experience 'captured' by the

researcher in the research domain. This collection, codification and analysis of research data is then offered, within a quasi-scientific qualitative research paradigm, as an explanation of 'what is happening on the ground', or as 'evidence' which reveals 'new' knowledge or understanding of the research domain by revealing 'truths' about it. The plausibility of these findings are then tested by inviting further analysis, on the basis that research data from one setting should be relatable to or understood in other settings, where 'it', (whatever the subject of the research is), is happening too. This whole process suggests linear, logical models of enquiry, as exemplified in the models shown below. Moreover, it is claimed that following such linear processes protects qualitative research from empirical attacks on its rigour and objectivity.
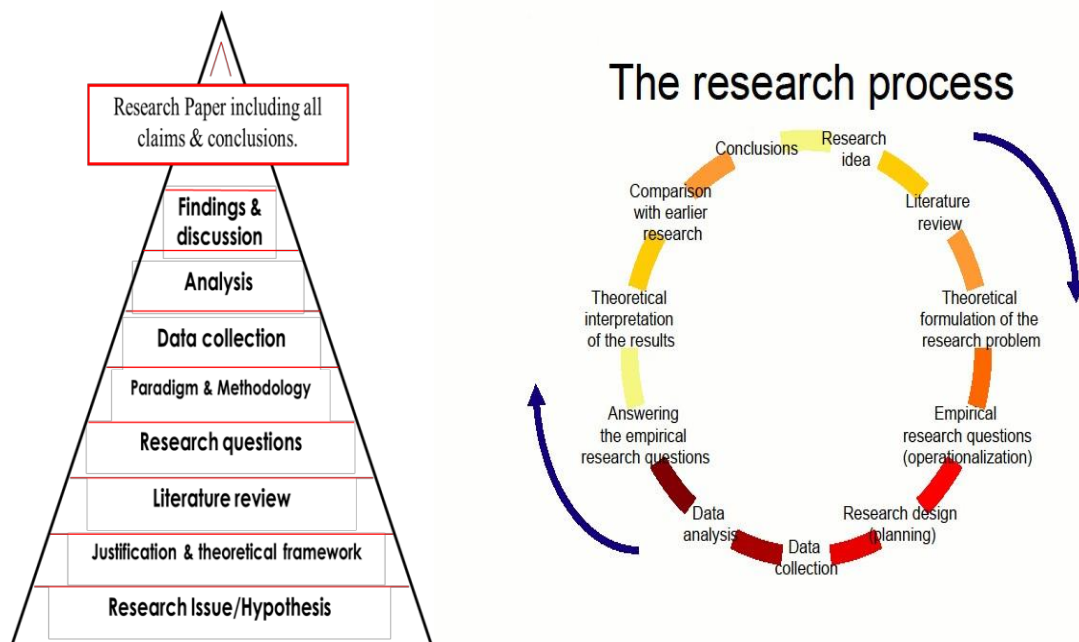
Figure 22: Representations of the traditional qualitative research process.

Uncritical commitment to scientific rigour and the 'objectivity of science', underpins established qualitative educational research conventions (MacLure, 1995). Understanding the extent to which the scientific paradigm dominates traditional qualitative educational research discourses helps explain why it shapes conceptualisations and expectations about what constitutes proper, valid, objective or truthful qualitative educational research, even in many ways it operates as its absolute antithesis. As Lather (2005) notes:

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> […] it is NOT the nature of the problems that guides the choice of methods in the social sciences, but rather a scientism where unacknowledged objectivism is the water in which the fish swim. (p.3 capitalisation in the original)

6.2.2 Challenging the discursive dominance of scientism

The ubiquity of scientific paradigms in the West is one of the means by which:

> […] new forms of control and power [were] legitimated by complex discourses that stake a claim to rationality and that are embedded in diverse institutional sites. (Olssen, 1993, p.2)

Huge breakthroughs in biology, physics and chemistry, especially during and after the Enlightenment, meant that discursive authority in research became associated with positivist principles. This meant that positivism, along with its adjuncts, objectivity and reality, developed into the 'normal science of modernity' (Kuhn, 1970, p.32) becoming, one can argue, in the process a Foucauldian 'regime of truth'. Positivist forms of knowledge and the rational world-view that they support, create totalising epistemes about *all* claims to truth and knowledge, especially those arising out of formal research processes. For example, one can argue, that through this historical process, dominant scientific discourses informing quantitative educational research, such as validity, reliability and reality, have operated as 'grand narratives' in the academy, creating what Harding has called 'methodolatory' (1987).

With particular relevance to qualitative education research, Schostak and Schostak (2012) describe how the emergence of a dominant scientific paradigm was:

> […] inscribed across the world, in order to describe and manage it systematically without recourse to subjectively held beliefs and values. (p.vii)

Accordingly, the discursive predominance of positivism can be said to have exerted a pernicious normative and regulative 'disciplinary power' (a concept discussed in detail in Chapter 3) over newer disciplines, including the social sciences, which, paradoxically, so often need to focus on issues of subjectivity and experience. This dominance manifests itself through methodological tropes, such as the authoritative gaze of the researcher and the concomitant objective and singular world-view that it engenders, as well as a belief in an essentialised individual subject that is underpinned by a belief in the linear/chronological progression of

history and science. These scientistic conventions result, it can be argued, in a situation where qualitative research is always deemed 'unscientific' when judged against classic rationalist standards, as it is unable, due to its inherently subjective nature, to fulfil empirical criteria. This means that natural science conventions, like validity and objectivity, have to be claimed or 'conferred' upon qualitative research in order for it to be legitimised and accommodated with the dominant scientific research paradigm (Latour, 1999).

For Lather (1996), scientism, when applied to qualitative forms of research, can produce a form of methodological reductionism that, in traditional qualitative educational research, means 'methodology often diverts attention from more fundamental issues of epistemology' (p.2). Kincheloe (2005) talks of how researchers need to become more like 'methodological negotiators' (p.325) willing to challenge and change prevailing scientist/empiricist expectations and ready to:

> […] view research methods actively rather than passively, meaning that we actively construct our research methods…rather than passively receiving the "correct," universally applicable methodologies. (Kincheloe, 2005, p.325)

In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard (1979) is particularly wary of classic discourses that rely on what he terms, 'master narratives', 'metanarratives', 'grand narratives', 'meta-discourse,' or 'grand récits' about the human condition, such as Enlightenment-based liberal-humanism. His advocacy of 'incredulity' (p.xxiv) toward totalising conceptualisations can be usefully applied to traditional qualitative research in education. This is because qualitative research in education necessarily requires a subjective reflective/reflexive approach to understanding human behaviour and/or culture. Derrida's (1990) concept of 'deconstruction' is another useful approach that is enacted in the analysis of participants' accounts offered in Chapter 7. Suffice to note here that the process of deconstruction encourages qualitative researchers to constantly critique and challenge, not simply describe, those social and cultural discourses informing and contextualising the research domain (and the accounts that arise out of it). The use of alternative, radical research methodologies must, therefore, necessarily problematise the core epistemologies or totalising discourses which measure, and limit, the quality of traditional qualitative research in education, such as validity, reliability and reality.

However, rejecting closed and/or linear research approaches, epitomised by the models in Figure 22 (pg. 152), Stronach and MacLure (1997) argue that educational researchers need to acknowledge 'the provisionality of meanings arising out of their qualitative research' (p.93). Moreover, they discuss how alternative postmodern methodologies can initiate, or enact, a 'methodological putsch' (p.53) on scientism's universalising tendencies in the social sciences.

6.2.3 Problems with validity

The increasing popularity of interpretivist research in education and social sciences generally has necessitated a critical discussion about positivist/empiricist assumptions regarding validity, which cannot and should not be easily resolved. The scientific paradigm demands that any research tool purporting to measure, describe or evaluate research phenomena must justify itself as 'valid'. Such an approach assumes that research validity is predicated on what the researcher has 'found out' which they perceive, or believe, to be 'true'. In this sense 'truth' becomes the criteria against which the research, or at least its validity are measured; a standard against which the ideas it develops and presents can be assessed. However, as Miles and Huberman (1994) usefully note, 'validity itself is not monolithic'. (p.278). Indeed, Winter (2000) maintains, it is:

> […] a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects. (p.1)

To illustrate this point one can take Maxwell's (1992) contention that various kinds of validity emerge through different research methodologies. His concept of 'theoretical validity' rests on wider conceptual frameworks that researchers bring to bear on the research process. This is a useful way of acknowledging how researchers' epistemological choices might begin to shape their interpretation of data in particular ways. Accordingly, his concept of 'descriptive validity' reflects a positivist reliance on factual accuracy, whereas 'interpretive understanding' allows for a variety of interpretations, possibly conflicting and competing, which reflect a more postmodern research approach. Lastly, Maxwell's concept of 'evaluative validity' acknowledges how researchers' judgments, and their evaluation of subjects or issues being researched, contribute to any findings they might make.

Winter (2000) further exemplifies the difficulty and complexity posed by validity debates for any educational qualitative researcher when he makes the point that definitions of validity are

always, 'entirely relative to the … belief system from which (they) stem…' (p.2). In their comprehensive overview of research methods in education, Cohen, et al. (2007) list a number of competing definitions and classifications for validity in qualitative educational research. For example, Mishler (2002) argues that educational researchers working within interpretivist paradigms should reject positivist terms for validity and replace them with his concept of 'authenticity'. Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose using alternative terms such as 'trustworthiness', 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability', and 'conformability', to reflect differing concepts of validity in qualitative research.

Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) replaces the positivist search for 'truth' with a concept of 'fidelity'. This 'fidelity' is developed out of an ethical, collaborative relationship between researchers and their research participant(s), who between them create data through the narrativisation of lived experience into a research narrative. Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) argues that the product of such a collaborative process cannot be judged as 'valid' or 'invalid', it simply is what it is. His approach embodies the difference between a simple analysis of narratives that seeks to distil codes and classify participants' accounts, as units of data, and a more Foucauldian process of narrative analysis, which involves the researcher more fully on a personal level (Taylor, 2004). Moreover, Scheurich's (1997) concept of 'deconstructive investigation' into validity focuses on validity's role in maintaining the authority, or what Scheurich (1997) calls the 'trustworthiness', of research data.

In traditional educational qualitative research, coding requires researchers to identify and aggregate common themes and subthemes out of their research material. Scheurich (1997) however, views coding as nothing more than an ill-advised attempt to fulfil the requirements of scientistic, empirically-based research criteria. He is dismissive of what he calls the 'elaborate and arcane' processes that coding requires, as they have 'no corresponding focus on the complex ambiguities of language, communication and interpretation' (p. 63). For instance, he argues that when coding data, conscious or unconscious acts of selection by the researcher may create patterns and meanings that reflect personal 'virtualisations' of the data. These are then decontextualised (or de-subjectified) and re-presented 'objectively' through research coding processes (Scheurich, 1997). Maclure, (2013) concurs with this view, arguing that coding qualitative data, however rigorous, merely:

[…] positions the analyst at arm's length…encouraging illusions of interpretive dominion over an enclosed field […] (p.16)

Maclure is more interested in 'New Materialist' ways of looking at qualitative research material that do not see data as passive, waiting to be brought to life through coding by an inductive and sensitive researcher. As Barad (2007) writes, 'matter and meaning are mutually articulated' (p.152). New materialists see qualitative data as agentic matter, a catalyst for unpredictable change in the researched and the researcher. Just as researchers may be said to be fashioning and transforming their data into a research narrative, so, Maclure argues, the data are transforming the researcher. Not only does working with it make them into 'a researcher', it may change them affectively/emotionally (possibly making them more sensitised, politicised or angry, etc.).

It is useful in qualitative research, therefore, to shift validity claims away from positivist, absolute and universal concepts, which are synonymous with 'truth'; towards a more postmodern, relativist position, which acknowledges that all 'validities' are socially constructed and historically situated. For, if monolithic, universal validity and reliability claims remain unquestioned in qualitative educational research, they can become politically suspect and unethical. Lather's (2001) feminist, poststructuralist perspective on research asks qualitative researchers to consider alternative 'transgressive validities', which destabilise and challenge positivist validity claims. Reflecting Lather's call to arms, this thesis does not ignore questions of validity and reliability, rather it seeks to problematise and foreground them. Not to do, so invites what hooks (2009) has called a 'colonisation' of experience and meaning, which belies the actual complexity of people's lives.

6.2.4 Problems with reliability

Reliability traditionally addresses the extent to which accurate research methods and techniques for eliciting information actually are valid, using the core principles of replicability, repeatability and transferability. Positivist concepts of validity not only demand an ostensibly 'objective' interpretation of data, they also encourage researchers to ensure that data from one source can be reinforced or confirmed by other sources, thereby strengthening validity claims through reliability claims and vice-versa. Joppe (2000) for example, defines reliability at its most basic as:

> […] the extent to which results are consistent over time…and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology […] (p.1)

In empiricist research, triangulation is usually enacted to ensure reliability by drawing on data from different sources, in order to reveal patterns of congruence or difference deemed significant by virtue of their appearance across a range of data sets. Mathison (1988) describes how:

> Triangulation has arisen as an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establish valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology. (p. 13)

By traditional 'scientific techniques', Mathison is referring to how experiments or tests in the natural sciences can ensure reliability through replication. Accordingly, qualitative researchers are often encouraged to use triangulation to see if they can repeat their findings, or produce a correlation or pattern across a number of data sets. If they can, such patterns are often used to bolster validity claims for the original research. Stake (2004), for example, argues that through the steady accumulation of related case studies, even a single case study, like the one used in this thesis, may claim reliability for its own particular findings through association. Bryman (1988) likewise suggests that single case studies may also provide openings for other related research projects, which further explore the original issue or problem, thus adding to the validity of the originating study.

However, one can argue that discerned patterns in qualitative data may be coincidental, or the result of the researcher's own editorial influences. Researchers may respond to similarities and congruence across studies, or different sources of data, with what Stronach and Maclure (1997) call 'a mobilization of meaning', rather than any greater validity or reliability in a strictly positivist sense. That is, they will enforce a reading or interpretation of the material which 'makes sense' (to them at least). However, more sources of data, wherever they come from, do not necessarily produce more reliability. Indeed, increasing the breadth of data potentially creates more difference, more multiplicity, and more contestability, not less. Cohen et al. (2007) make the point that any lack of 'converging conclusions', or areas of uncertainty resulting from the incorporation of different sources of data, should be openly acknowledged,

something which may, of course, undermine subsequent validity claims based on 'association'. Even Stake (2003), is clear that although he feels qualitative research design should incorporate triangulation, researchers may still have to allow for the multiple, alternative interpretations that might emerge through cross-referencing within one piece of research, as well across other, related studies. Indeed, a plethora of unstable trajectories, displaced relationships and unresolvable differences may emerge across different data sets. Such unpredictable connections, relationships and differences often produce a postmodern rhizome in place of the neater, relational research models generated by empirical, or arboreal, methodological approaches, which are discussed in the next section.

Barbour (1998) makes the additional point that using a variety of methods within one study for triangulation purposes could, 'create problems' with regard to positivist validity claims, as each method operates differently depending on the 'terms of theoretical frameworks we bring to bear on our research' (p.353). Furthermore, not only different theoretical frameworks or methods may trouble the 'reliability' of a piece of research. Different conclusions could be drawn from the same data; for example, if it was looked at, even using the same frameworks and methods, by a different researcher, or at a different time by the same researcher and so on, rendering any neat comparisons inconclusive. In practice, reliability, like validity, can mean very different things, or nothing, depending on the chosen research design and paradigm. Stenbacka (2001) asserts that since reliability in the scientific paradigm traditionally focuses on objectively measuring and reproducing findings, it has no relevance to interpretative study and is pointless as a way of assessing the quality of qualitative research.

6.2.5 Problems with social reality and objectivity

Qualitative research often claims that it is seeking to objectively investigate and understand 'real' authentic experiences of researched groups. However, social reality is a highly contested notion, so much so that Guba and Lincoln (1985, p. 81-87) identify four kinds of reality, namely; 'objective reality', 'perceived reality', 'constructed reality' and 'created reality'. They maintain, furthermore, that each of these variations brings with it equally contested concepts of subjectivity that can complicate any qualitative research remit.

Derrida, in *Of Grammatology* (1967), argued that dominant interpretations of social reality are achieved discursively through 'transcendental' signifiers, which dominate within semiotic systems and/or communicative acts, irrespective of any temporal or spatial factors. These transcendental signifiers create an 'external point of reference' such as religion or science, in which dominant concepts or philosophies are rooted and 'made real' for individuals. Transcendental signifiers offer definitive meanings and everything outside them is decentered and/or excluded from 'reality'. However, Derrida (1967) maintains that there is no ultimate truth or reality; rather there are only differences between perceived realities. Critical qualitative research can therefore usefully be concerned with deconstructing such 'transcendental signifiers' by seeing them for what they are, namely historical and social constructions, not eternal truths or definitive interpretations. Qualitative researchers, in addition, need to be sensitive to differences between perceived realities (some of which may be marginalised), and cognisant of the historical and social contexts informing them. This ability to distinguish between perceived realities requires that researchers assume a:

> […] double standpoint: on the one hand a rigorous, demanding, critical, but affirmative commitment to the legacy of the past, and on the other an equally exacting commitment to what the legacy of the past suppressed, remained unassimilated […] (p.11 Collins-Hill and Andersen, 2013)

This 'double standpoint' (Collins-Hill, 2013) echoes the multi-layered nature of Foucault's genealogical research process discussed in Chapter 3.

Jackson (1989), a progressive ethnographer working in anthropology, began to question qualitative researchers' claims to capture definitive forms of social reality. His questions about whose version of social reality was being represented in scientifically conducted ethnographic studies challenged the viability of validity and reliability claims made for any qualitative research. Jackson (1989) argued that, ultimately, such claims did nothing more than seek to deny or control:

> […] the uncontrollable messiness of any truly interesting fieldwork situation. (p.3)

Producing qualitative educational research that does reflect that inevitable 'uncontrollable messiness' is not easy and necessitates 'the ontological politics of staying true to complexity'

(Landstrom, 2000, p.475). Indeed, for Stronach and Maclure (1997), the deliberate relativism so characteristic of postmodern methodologies remains a prerequisite of a vigorous and rigorous alternative research approach. This is precisely because its aim is not to know the object/subject(s) of the research 'better' or more fully than before. Rather the researcher's aim is to be prepared to critically reflect on, challenge and renegotiate the inherent and historically situated 'contestable meanings' (Stronach and MacLure 1997, p.157) produced by their object/subject(s), using the 'double-standpoint' Collins-Hill's (2007) approach alluded to above.

Moreover, one can argue that qualitative research is meaningful only if it engages in this kind of debate about the [re]presentation and/or [re]interpretation of perceptions and/or experiences, as opposed to seeking to measure or understand them in factual, concrete terms. Hammersley and Atkinson (2004) question the assumption that researchers have a privileged view of their research domain that allows them to reveal truths about it. Lather (2004), meanwhile, maintains that 'truth seeking' about reality should never be the aim of a qualitative researcher. She argues instead that qualitative researchers should never suggest that they are able to record and/or interpret the 'reality' of any given research domain, without also offering a complicating sense of how the researcher's and the research subjects' subjectivities co-exist, interact and compete. This thesis echoes Lather's contention that to pretend otherwise is to deny the complexity of properly entextualising any human social setting for research purposes.

Researcher reflexivity about their own and participants' subjectivities raises questions about the legitimacy of any data and challenges the authority of qualitative researchers' interpretations of data. This 'crisis of representation', a phrase first coined by Marcus and Fischer (1986), raises important methodological questions about the ability of qualitative researchers to authentically and objectively represent or depict the lived experiences, opinions or ideas of their research participants. Acknowledging the issue of representation in research requires a recognition that all data is necessarily situated and subjective, as Johnson and Duberley note:

> [...] to make unexamined meta-theoretical commitments, and remain unaware of their
> origins, amounts to an abdication of intellectual responsibility which results in poor
> research practices […] (2003, p.1279)

Taking the representation of research subjects' social realities seriously requires qualitative researchers to make their own situatedness and subjectivity explicit as a part of the qualitative research process. In the second edition of their *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000) Denzin and Lincoln, placed the 'crisis of representation' fourth in their 'moments of qualitative inquiry', where it interestingly precedes the 'crisis of legitimation' and initiates the fifth moment, 'postmodernism'. In placing it there they emphasised the centrality of problematising interpretation to postmodern research, and the need to find alternative methodologies that embrace the complexity and instability of subjectivities in qualitative research.

6.3 Alternative Research Paradigms for Qualitative Educational Research

Radical, alternative qualitative studies have the potential to 'challenge the form and categories of traditional qualitative research' (Merriam, 2002, p.10). However, in defiance of its traditional 'cultural cringe', Lather (2006) suggests that qualitative research should simply stop trying to ape the natural sciences and look instead for alternative methodologies that are:

> […] not about paradigm competition but, much more profoundly, about a move away from a narrow scientism and toward an expanded notion of scientificity more capable of sustaining the social sciences […] (Lather, 2006, p. 47)

The problems with scientism, as discussed above, and its relationship to qualitative research, have not been so vociferously debated in the sphere of educational research, as in other social sciences, such as ethnography and sociology. However, challenging these conventions is at the heart of what Lather (2005), in her paper presented at the First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry called, '[…] the very political contest over scientific research in education that is our situation today.' Instead of trying to prove definitively that educational researchers can ever really know what people think and feel, which Lather (2006) argues it is impossible, the social sciences can, she claims, create different and often powerful ways for humans to think about themselves. (A note of caution however: it is important to avoid simply creating alternative totalising metanarratives for alternative qualitative research methodologies, which present themselves as canonical in the place of scientism). Foucault was alert to this tendency in academia and warned how all discursive formations are constantly in danger of being 'epistemologised' (1972, p.194), a process that effectively sets them into hardened knowledge

positions. 'Epistemologisation' would, of course, hamper the potential of alternative qualitative research methodologies to disrupt totalising educational research discourses like scientism.

Scientistic research approaches in qualitative research have been comprehensively deconstructed and critiqued across a number of social science subjects and settings (other than education). Several are comprehensively summarised in Denzin and Lincoln's later editions of the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2011). Influential studies cited therein include Ellis and Bochner's (2000) work around autoethnography, Richardson's (1997) innovative oral history of domestic abuse and Lather and Smithies (1997) study *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS*. These studies maintain, as discussed above, that qualitative researchers can present only one possible research narrative out of many possible accounts of their data. They also reinforce the idea that qualitative researchers need to be to be more critically reflexive and acknowledge the presence of multiple discourses and subjectivities, such as feminism, patriarchy, religion, gender and sexuality, as they can, and do exist alongside other in qualitative research domains, creating complex social dynamics.

In the light of this complexity, it is preferable to view qualitative research into social practices, like academic writing in higher education, as a necessarily intricate and contingent process. Indeed, Schwandt (1998) maintains that because qualitative research is such a contingent process, so-called postmodernist 'epistemological posturing' is necessary in order for researchers to try on and reject different methodological approaches without solidifying or fixing themselves into methodological straitjackets. Usher and Edwards (1994); Stronach and MacLure (1997); St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) are all radical qualitative educational researchers who experiment with conventional methodologies and methods in order to draw attention to and defamiliarise, as well as critique and challenge, traditional qualitative research methodologies.

6.3.1 Thinking differently about qualitative educational research: postmodernism

Postmodernism at its broadest is a theory that seeks to critique modernism in general and the modes of consumption and production in late twentieth century capitalism in particular. The term postmodernism first appeared in architecture, where it challenged architectural classicism by juxtaposing different styles and playing around with space and shapes in new and interesting

ways. The effects of this innovation are epitomised by Charles W. Moore's: Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans, created during 1976-79.

Figure 23: Charles W. Moore's: Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans (image from Wikipedia)

Moore's Piazza, perhaps fittingly, was never completed and has been called the first postmodern ruin, after it was left to fall into disrepair (although it has been recently renovated). With its jumble of jarring references to the setting's disparate local communities, and clever nods to past and future architectural styles, the Piazza exemplifies postmodern principles (Jencks, 1987) in that it:

> […] contrast(s) with the older notion of classical rules in being understood as relative rather than absolute, responses to a world of fragmentation, pluralism and inflation rather than formulae to be applied indiscriminately. (p.330)

Architectural postmodernism quickly became a metaphor for understanding the erosion of old certainties and practices in any field, including industry, the arts and social science (Jencks, 2002).

Because they challenge the established ways of thinking about and doing qualitative research, postmodern research paradigms are less about:

[…] whether or not a [research] position is right, coherent, or   interesting…'

and more about :

> [...] why it is we come to occupy and defend the territory that we do, what it promises us, what it promises to protect us from […] (Butler, 1993, pp.127–128)

Postmodern approaches to qualitative research, moreover, encourage internal contradictions and dissonance in classic research methodologies in the same way that Moore's Piazza unsettles and kicks against classic architectural principles. Indeed, Foucault talks about discourse in architectural terms as:

> […] a frame or field within which divergent discourses, new and old, confront one another , in which some are marginalised or subjugated and others are appropriated to define the "domains of validity , normativity and actuality" […] (Foucault, 1974, p.68, in Ball, 2013, p.23)

Postmodernism's commitment to multiplicity and deconstruction is diametrically, and some might say politically, opposed to any desire to regulate and control. In research terms, postmodernism signals that a failure to question the underlying methodological principles driving dominant empiricist research outcomes can result in increasingly conformative research. This is important, as research in education has, over the last forty years, been aligned to an increasingly regulated and commodified knowledge economy linked to professional expectations and 'performativity' (as discussed in Chapter 5 and 7). These factors have resulted in educational research, both quantitative and qualitative, being frequently tailored to meet expectations of target-led funding, designed to improve practice and/or create measurable impact (Ball, 2008). Over time, one can argue that the potential for researchers in education to question, and ultimately challenge, taken for granted research assumptions has been eroded (Avis, 1993; Ball, 2008). Indeed, MacLure maintains that:

> […] you could see the movement towards evidence-based research, and science-based research, partly as attempts to bypass or discipline the insubordinate textuality of qualitative educational research (2006, p.2).

Instead of trying to make qualitative educational research fit narrow scientific, empiricist criteria, postmodern approaches celebrate multiple interpretations and inconclusive deductions. For Foucault (2002, p.245), a postmodern insistence on multiplicity and provisionality serves

as an invitation or provocation for further important, if inconclusive, debates, which push against, or transgress, hegemonic epistemological and disciplinary limits. Alternative post-qualitative education research, in this way, can highlight 'the practical and experimental illumination of limits' (Foucault, 1977, p. 33). Methodologically, this can be conceptualised as a form of transgressive counter-practice (Biesta, 1998). Counter-practices are not devised on the basis that they will necessarily be better than other approaches, what matters is that they are different from and throw into relief, or make visible, prevailing, dominant practices so that they can be deconstructed and challenged. In this spirit Latour (2000) calls for research approaches that render their subject(s) as:

> […] disobedient as possible to the protocol and to be capable to raise their own questions in their own terms and not in those of scientists whose interests they do not have to share! (p.116)

The point of transgressive, postmodern counter-practices, therefore, resides in their ability to 'prove', in Foucaultian terms, that there is more than one way of thinking about or doing something, and/or that established, normalised ways of thinking are not natural, but rather discursively constructed.

6.3.2 'We're tired of trees': A rhizomic approach to qualitative research

In horticultural terms the rhizome is a botanical classification for a type of plant: 'an elongated, usually horizontal, subterranean stem which sends out roots and leafy shoots at intervals along its length' (Online Oxford English Dictionary, 2011). In its image, rhizomic/rhizomatic research is continually moving off in different directions, replacing old readings with alternative transitional and equally temporary ones. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) characterised this constant change and movement as a process of 'reterritorialisation' and 'deterritorialisation'. Other key principles of rhizomic thinking include connection, connectivity and heterogeneity. As a metaphor, or model, for theory, the rhizomic structure embraces connection and heterogeneity because, unlike trees or their roots, 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be […]' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.7). For this reason, the rhizome is a model that resists structures of domination or even any kind of structuration, whereas traditional arboreal thinking is inherently structural and hierarchical (see Figure 25).

The Tree of Contemplative Practices
www.contemplativemind.org
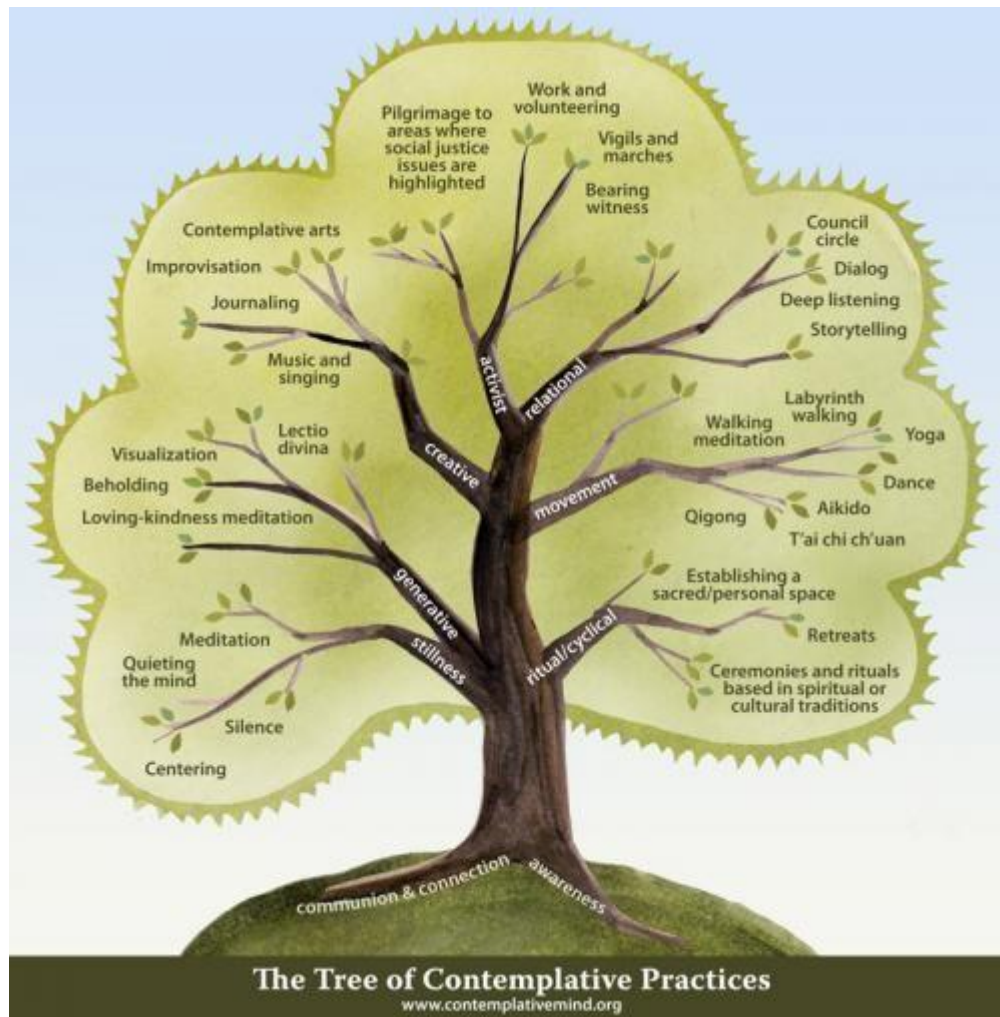
Figure 24: Representation of arboreal thinking

In the arboreal model of research, one central (root) idea may spawn many offshoots, however, they always develop separately and in a linear fashion and at some point they end.

For example, MacLure (2013) discusses how systematic coding of qualitative research data:

> […] assumes and imposes an 'arborescent' or tree-like logic of hierarchical, fixed relations among discrete entities […] (p.167)

For this reason, any interconnectedness that coding qualitative data appears to reveal remains constrained by the hierarchical/binary taxonomies within which it has been positioned. This kind of 'root-thinking' represents essentialist, Cartesian principles that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) dismiss as 'the oldest and weariest kind of thought' (p. 5). In comparison, multiplicity and unpredictability is central to rhizomatic thinking, for, as the numbers of multiples develop in the rhizome, so do the number of possible combinations between the different elements within it. Used as an alternative metaphor for research this multiplicity can be applied:

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> […] to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status. (1987, pg.7)

A rhizome can be split at any point, but it can, and will start up again or 'rebound', filling any gaps; this is what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call **'asignifying rupture'**. This process reflects how, despite breaks and discontinuities within the research process, everything continually ties into and affects everything else. Not least, this interconnectedness relates to how, through a rhizomatic methodological approach, old divisions between research domains (the field of reality), the research thesis (a field of representation) and the researcher and researched (fields of subjectivity) can be broken down and reconstituted. What remains is an 'assemblage', like those created in Chapter 8, which establishes multiple connections, although such connections are themselves constantly subject to 'deterritorialising' and 'reterritorialising' moments. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987)

A rhizomatic approach to qualitative research foregrounds the researcher's and participants' subjectivities, but refuses to try and fix what they might mean. In contrast, rhizomic analysis is fluid, moving along what Deleuze and Guattari call, 'lines of flight' as discussed in the opening chapter and illustrated in Figure 1 (p.14). However:

> […] these lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions. Unlike the tree, the rhizome is not the object of reproduction […] the rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. (p.21)

6.3.3 Post-qualitative research

Rhizomic concepts provide a theoretical framework for the post-qualitative paradigm chosen for this thesis, which seeks, like MacLure's (2006) concept of the 'baroque', to:

> […] honour the obligation to get entangled in the details and decorations of educational scenes, rather than trying rise above them, or to view them in orderly perspective from the vantage point of the masterful viewer. (p.7)

A post-qualitative research paradigm is less about problem-solving and more about problem-making. Problematising opens up a critical commentary around social phenomena, like academic writing practices, rather than simply shaping and serving them up as the findings of an educational research project. As discussed in the opening to Chapter 3, 'the posts' view objects or subjects of inquiry as ontologically complex and part of wider social contexts and processes, in which they are always culturally inscribed and historically situated.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue that post-qualitative researchers need to move away from fixed ontological positions so that they can explore and chart how technologies of the self collapse, as ontologies shift and epistemologies proliferate and change, through the messy processes encouraged by postmodernist research. Lather (2005), talking about feminism, suggests that recognising ontological messiness and uncertainty creates:

> [...] a sort of loss, a disorientation where openness and unknowingness are part of the process, a self-reflexive, non-dogmatic feminism that relishes conflicting interpretations without domesticating them, a sort of permanent unsettlement in what might be termed a post-foundational feminism. (p.3)

If one replaces the word 'feminism' with 'post-qualitative research' then Lather's argument mirrors Usher and Edward's (1994) assertion, namely, that post-qualitative research paradigms are deliberately ontologically uncertain and messy because they claim no certain or measurable outcomes or truths. In specific research design terms, post-qualitative research requires researchers to be constantly:

> [...] critically reflecting on the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcomes. (Hardy, Phillips, and Clegg, 2001 p.554)

Post-qualitative research thus engages researchers in reflection, not only of the individuals and the practices they are researching, but also of their own practice as researchers.

A post-qualitative commitment to ontological complexity proposes a process-sensitive, contingent research approach where validity and reliability are impossible to measure. Its adoption also entails acknowledging the existence of multiple subjectivities and standpoints within any research design. These post-qualitative subjectivities and standpoints are,

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moreover, situated within a flattened ontology, represented by a rhizomatic web, where no single aspect of the web can be placed in a singular or hierarchical relationship to another in order to measure congruity or incongruity. In this way, post-qualitative research produces not only 'thick' (Geertz, 1998), but sticky data, which is always connected to other phenomena and discourses. This creates a situation where it is ever more difficult to separate out research material or phenomena, in order to capture the definitive meaning of any given social reality (Blommaert, 2005). Furthermore, post-qualitative research deconstructs and challenges positivist claims for objectivity and truth, repositioning them as contested claims. Accordingly, all validity claims in post-qualitative research are inherently suspect and can be treated as 'transcendental alibis' (Elam, 1994). Those alibis do no more than get traditional qualitative researchers off an empiricist hook about what to do about subjectivity and social reality and their vexed relationship with validity and reliability.

Even critical reflection, one of the cornerstones of qualitative action-research, needs to be re-examined in the light of post-qualitative methodologies. Boud, Keogh and Walker's (1985) collection of essays discuss how reflection can be an activity where individuals:

> […] recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it […] (p.19)

However, a post-qualitative approach replaces reflection with a rigorous critical reflexivity that refutes any notions of a stable 'state of mind' that can be easily 'recaptured' in order to be evaluated. Rather, the multiple subjectivities inherent in post-qualitative research approaches remain inevitably full of ambiguity, paradox, contradiction, hybridity, liminality and indeterminacies.

Traditionally, qualitative researchers in education objectivise and categorise their 'speaking subjects'. However, problematising the subjectivication of qualitative participants, and exploring how subjectivity and subjectivities inform data analysis, are key post-qualitative methodological concerns which destabilise traditional concepts of validity in educational qualitative research projects. Kincheloe (2005) argues that post-qualitative researchers:

> […] seek multiple perspectives not to provide the truth about reality but to avoid the monological knowledge that emerges from unquestioned frames of reference and the

dismissal of the numerous relationships and connections that link various forms of knowledge. (p.327)

In this way post-qualitative research does not conjure up any ultimate coherence, authenticity or truth out of the various subjectivities and inter-subjectivities elicited from its participants, nor are any single participant's perceptions deemed more representative or accurate than another's. Rather, post-qualitative research data is regarded as inherently unstable and always full of potential meanings or interpretations, depending on who is reading/interpreting it and when and why and where (Derrida, 1990). This lack of determinism raises many rhizomatic questions: that is questions without a single definitive answer or endpoint, as Figure 26 demonstrates.

Epistemological uncertainty about subjectivity and 'knowing'

- What do I/my participants know/think we know…about anything…ever?
- When can I tell if participants are pretending/lying/deluded/acting out, and does it matter if they are?
- Do we know or feel the same about stuff today as we did yesterday, as we will tomorrow/ and the next day and the next day…?
- How do we remember what we knew or thought we felt yesterday, last week, a year ago…(and so on)
- How do I shape/interpret/construct/deconstruct/represent what people tell me about what they know or feel?
- What did I /miss/ignore/misinterpret/misunderstand/leave out…and why did I do that?

(And so on…)

Figure 25: Epistemological uncertainty about subjectivity and knowing.

In addition to the uncertainties alluded to the above, post-qualitative research treats any act of reading/interpreting/assembling qualitative research phenomena as polysemic and unique to each individual researcher and their research subjects/settings. So much so that, reading any qualitative data for research purposes:

> [...] always involves both mastery *and* surrender, grasping meaning and being grasped by it. It involves reason and seduction. Texts never have firm boundaries enclosing static bodies of knowledge, and readers never take 'out' of texts exactly what their writers supposedly put 'in' them. (MacLure, 2006, p.4 emphasis in the original)

In the place of a search for truth or authenticity in subjective research accounts, post-qualitative approaches draw on Heidegger's (1953) *Being and Time.* Heidegger argues that reflexively attempting to make sense of one's research subject/objects onto-epistemologies (and failing to do so!) should be an expectation for any critical researcher. Moreover, Heidegger's (1953) theory of 'dasein' (being-in-the-world) attempts to recognise how the different consciousnesses or subjectivities collected by qualitative researchers are, inevitably, multiple and intersubjective; that is, they endlessly connect to each other and to the researcher's subjectivity and historicity in rhizomatic ways.

This commitment to treating post-qualitative research material through rhizomatic processes, connects to another of Heidegger's (1953) key philosophical ideas, namely that one exists only in relation to other things/individuals 'in-der-welt' (in the world). This translates in research terms as the inadvisability of separating researchers from the objects/subjects of their research, and/or taking relationships between things or individuals as given or for granted. Heideggian philosophy, in this way, facilitates post-qualitative researchers' 're-visioning' of their research material through critical reflection and reflexivity about their own and their participants' subjectivities.

6.3.4. Research design: using a situated single case study in post-qualitative research

The use of a situated single case study provides a physical setting for this research, (which Chapter 2 describes in detail). Whilst operating as 'an organising frame' (Lea and Stierer, 2009), the research setting is conceptualised as a constantly changing, yet historically situated, site of enquiry, through which the various discourses and practices associated with academic writing practices in higher education can be studied. As such it is presented as a 'bounded instance' (Simons, 1981), comprising unique, complex and shifting associations between players. By acknowledging the complexity of perceptions and discourses around academic writing practices, the chosen research design most closely resembles Yin's (2003) 'exploratory case study' model. It is difficult to anticipate in exploratory case studies how any research will develop, and Yin (2003) highlights the dangers of trying to create a neat research design which seeks to, or succeeds in, 'controlling out' any complexities that may emerge during the research process in order to maintain an artificially narrowed down area of enquiry. Nisbet and Watt (1984) confirm that the boundaries of a case study will always be difficult to fix and that any

qualitative research design has to be flexible enough to accommodate changes and issues as they arise. As researchers cannot pre-judge what will emerge, this means that only the broadest features of qualitative case studies can be pre-designed.

A central question arising within traditional qualitative research paradigms is whether it is valid to study a single case study as many researchers maintain it can never be representative of anything but itself (May, 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2004; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). However, Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2000) argue in their book *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts,* that they seek to:

> […] capture cases in their uniqueness, rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalisation or for theoretical inference of some kind […] (p.3)

This reflects how, in this study, the use of a singular situated case study does not assume that the research domain is necessarily representative of other, similar settings or situations; the point has been to try and 'capture' one setting's singularity. Moreover, the research's temporality is foregrounded in the research because the data is presented as a snapshot of a particular group of lecturers, at a particular time, carrying out a set of academic writing practices within particular modalities. The insistence that qualitative data can only reflect a one-off moment, in all its complexity, links to the work of Deleuze and Guattari, (1987), Guattari, (1992) and Marcus and Saka (2006) who all refer to research settings as diachronic assemblages of individuals, practices and discourses. Such assemblages (as discussed in Chapter 8) are inherently temporary, which means they will change over time or even disappear completely. That notwithstanding, Atkinson (2000b) argues that case studies 'tell a story' of a particular group, place and time, and that such stories may provide opportunities for case study researchers to make creative and insightful connections with research carried out on other groups, places and times (but not necessarily). Post-qualitative research maintains that participant narratives, and the research narrative that the researcher constructs out of them in a case study, are not exclusively informed by the research setting. This is because wider social, cultural and historical factors will always influence the shape that research narratives might take, at any given time (Foucault, 1980; Kendall and Wickham, 1999).

6.4 A Question of Subjectivities

6.4.1 Resisting the interview

Research interviews construct interviewers and interviewees in particular relationships with each other, which reflect wider discursive relationships of power, powerlessness and resistance and often embody forms of control and social reproduction. Without clear and critical self-awareness on the part of researchers, it is likely that the act of interviewing will reproduce, or at least reflect, prevailing cultural norms and discursive power relations. One can also critique the qualitative interview, from a postmodern perspective, as a form of 'root-thinking', forever caught in a Cartesian dualism. In traditional interviews qualitative research participants are represented as sources of individuated, autonomous knowledge, whilst the language that they use to describe those experiences is treated by the researcher as a transparent means of communicating that knowledge.

As discussed in Chapter 3, New Literacy Studies approaches to language, conversely argue that it is impossible to limit the meaning and interpretation of verbal utterances. For example, what a question or answer means to an interviewer can easily mean something different to the interviewee. Language is inherently unstable and all communication is subject to endless and simultaneous re-interpretation, it is consequently very 'slippery' (Scheurich, 1997). In Scheurich's useful critique of the research interview, he dismisses the idea that qualitative interviews are a valid means of communicating 'reality' or 'truths' from interviewee to interviewer. Scheurich makes the point that in any linguistic exchange there are bound to be contested meanings, ambiguity and open-endedness, producing what he calls 'a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a moving feast of differences interrupting differences' (1997, p.66).

For the post-qualitative researcher, the act of data collection, therefore, needs to be refigured as an act of constructing meaning and exploring contestable and contested perceptions. This is in stark contrast to traditional qualitative research approaches to data-collection, where the influence of variables and multiple interpretations are characterised in largely negative terms as possible sources of 'data contamination'. A typical response to such contamination is to attempt to design variables out, for example, through sampling and/or peer review of transcripts

or to ignore them by imposing an authorial perspective on the material that edits out any dissenting voices and perspectives.

6.4.2 Eliciting as data collection

Elicitation is a method of obtaining information for research adapted from anthropology and ethnography. It has been used in a variety of settings to try and involve the subjects of research more fully in the processes of research. For example, in the 1980s systems-designers in engineering and business created what they called an 'elicitation of requirements'. This was a means of encouraging management to fully involve user's experiences when developing new and complex organisational systems. In the military elicitations are commonly used for intelligence-gathering, as a way of 'drawing out' what people know rather than simply asking or interviewing them. In education elicitation is broadly defined as:

> [….] a technique by which the teacher gets the learners to give information rather than giving it to them […] (www.teachingenglish.org.uk)

Over a six month period in 2012 I asked all colleagues (50+) in research setting's School of Education to complete what I called an 'elicitation' rather than conduct interviews, which I had rejected for the reasons outlined above (see Appendix 4 for a copy of one of the responses). Far from being a process of simply extracting information, the use of an elicitation was an attempt to encourage a more open discussion of participants' experiences and feelings in response to a series of prompts or suggestions for discussion. In this thesis, the idea of using an elicitation as a form of data collection grew out of the need to find a qualitative data collection tool that encouraged lecturer participants to think about and discuss academic writing practices on their own terms, rather than the researcher's.

The overarching design of the elicitation was informed by the NLS approach to language and literacy discussed in Chapter 3. Using the concept of Street's (1984) 'ideological' model of literacy I wanted the elicitation to explore how participants' perceptions of the academic writing practices that they used every day, raised questions about identity, power and the nature of dominant academic writing conventions. The questions in the elicitation sought to highlight rhizomic relationships between lecturers as academic writers, in ways that reflected the highly situated and contested nature of academic writing practices in higher education.

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The use of electronic media to distribute the elicitations also mediated communication with the respondents in place of direct communication through interviews. I felt that by removing myself, as much as possible, from any face-to-face interaction with the participants I would help release their imagination and creativity with regard to the questions, and minimise any influence I might have on their responses. However, I realised that it was impossible to avoid determining responses, as in giving the participants a set of prompts I was inevitably going to shape the nature of participants' responses to some extent.

Participants were invited to record their responses by writing them down or digitally recording them. They were free to leave out any questions that they did not wish to answer and were encouraged to make additional comments, or raise any other issues about their experiences and feelings about academic writing practices that occurred to them when completing the elicitation. They could respond in any way they preferred: stream of consciousness, lists, bullet points or continuous prose. In short, respondents were given permission to say whatever they wanted, how they wanted to (or, just as importantly they could chose to ignore certain questions, which some of them did). (See appendix 4 for an example of one of the responses to the elicitation).

The elicitation recognised the importance of ethical issues such as confidentiality and anonymity for participants. BERA guidelines were adhered to at all stages of the research process and voluntary informed consent was obtained from all participants. All accounts in the study were anonymised and all names and identifying comments were recast or removed to ensure that the materials produced as part of the research did not compromise any member of staff or student. Members of staff participating in the study could choose which method/mode they preferred for recording their accounts. Audio recording and transcription were both offered and participants were offered the opportunity to change their minds about contributing to the research at any time. The research was successfully submitted to the research setting's Ethics Committee before any elicitation material to participants was sent out.

Given the overall post-qualitative research approach of the thesis, I was committed to keeping the process of collecting data as open as possible. At the same time I sought to avoid regulating or constraining the respondents, thus allowing multiple perspectives to emerge through my

choice of statements that I, as the researcher, chose to highlight from the various elicitations I received. I chose, therefore, to use an elicitation to call forth, draw out, or provoke a reaction from participants. I have no idea why some colleagues chose to respond whilst others did not. The participants who offered their responses to the elicitation were not representative of the whole workforce within the research setting, although coincidentally at least one person from each team in the School of Education took part.

The majority of those who did respond worked directly with me, so perhaps they wanted to support a colleague's research. However, some people who worked with me did not respond and a significant minority, who had never worked with me, did respond. I also wondered if the decision to respond was due to a particular interest in academic writing or research. Certainly, with regard to the former, some respondents had obviously thought hard about the issue of either their own academic writing and/or their role as academic writing developers for students and had strong opinions. Others openly acknowledged that academic writing and writing development practices was not something they had thought much about despite their decision to respond. Interestingly, a number of potential respondents clearly felt bewildered by some of the questions, several wanted to meet up to talk through questions (I refused) and some asked for clarification about 'what I really wanted'. Others responded to questions, but asked me to get back to them if I wanted more information or clarification. There was a sense, therefore, that some respondents felt that the elicitation did not meet their expectations about a call for research information. Perhaps that was another reason why some people chose not to respond.

I expected, and did not mind, if any responses were incomplete or ill-defined and I treated all the responses, however incoherent or terse, as expressions of 'self-presentation' within the discursive formations that informed the dominant academic writing practices in higher education of these individuals in this setting, an idea that I explore in more detail below.

6.4.3 The power of the statement

In Chapter 7, my analysis of participants' statements utilises a broadly Foucauldian (1972) archaeological approach to data. In this analysis, dominant discourse formations informing academic writing and professional writing identities, (which were discussed in Chapters 4 and 5), are critiqued through enunciations made by the lecturer-participants. In addition, I have

treated the research setting as a particular, though not necessarily representative, context where higher education academic writing practices are regularly enacted. I was not primarily interested in discovering patterns or homogeneity across a range of representative narratives. Rather, my interest lay in exploring how the different statements made by participants offered opportunities to explore how individuals, consciously or unconsciously, complied with, reproduced, struggled and fought (to different degrees) with those powerful discourses around academic writing that informed their everyday practice and identities as lecturers in higher education in the research setting.

Foucault's interest in statements, which he called 'discursive enunciations' (1980), is an important component of his methodological and ontological approach to the study of discourse. He regarded statements as important indicators of the often hidden, but nonetheless predominant, rules and conditions operating in any 'discursive formation', such as the discourses informing academic writing practices in higher education. In this way, Foucault's (1972) archaeological method allows post-qualitative researchers to explore beyond the surface of 'what is said', by allowing them to 'open up' participants' statements. By treating statements as discursive enunciations, the speaker is positioned in relation to, on a spectrum between compliant or resistant, to the dominant discourses that inform and prescribe the disciplinary fields within which they are articulated. Discussing statements from participants in this way can, therefore, provide useful insights into the construction and dynamics of dominant discourses that validate or normalise (or invalidate and marginalise) individuals' perceptions of academic writing in the research domain.

Foucault is interested in analysing statements taken from what he calls the 'historical archive' of a setting or discourse community. He states that this archive represents 'the general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (1972, p. 130) that exist around any given subject. The archive, therefore, represents the body of material constituting a discourse; in this study, it is made up of the theories and established approaches to academic writing and writing development identified and discussed in Chapters and 3 and 4. It also includes the lived experience of 'practices specified in the element of the archive' (1972, p. 131), which in this study, refer to the analysis of statements about participants' perceptions and experiences of academic writing practices in Chapter 7. The concept of an archive can, therefore, be used to explore the conditions of a statement's existence. These conditions include questions about

where the statement is found in the archive, who said/wrote it, when, where and to whom. All these questions help explore how truth or validity claims are constructed and valued within the given institution or discipline under consideration. Foucault (1980), reflecting on his theory of statement, wrote:

> The rule of materiality that statements necessarily obey is therefore of the order of the institution rather than of the spatio-temporal localization; it defines possibilities of reinscription and transcription (but also thresholds and limit), rather than limited and perishable individualities (, p.103)

My post-qualitative research approach overtly positioned and simultaneously reinscribed participants' statements in Chapter 7 as, 'discursive enunciations' rhizomically placed in a wider Foucauldian discourse formation or Bourdieusian field, rather than manifestations of individually realised preferences or experiences. For that reason, I have deliberately not included any biographical detail about the participants, just as I sought not to cultivate any kind of personal researcher/researched relationship with them.

I was hopeful that collecting material in this way would allow me to 'talk back' (bell hooks, 1982) to the participant accounts, without talking directly to the participants. Like Foucault(1980), I was not interested in objectifiying 'speaking subjects' through my research; rather I was engaged in a process of interaction, not with people but with the texts they had produced in response to the elicitation. In this way, the participants' accounts and my own writing about them became a modality of exchange, a form of 'virtual dialogue' (Hyland, 2002, p.2). For this 'virtual dialogue' to work, however, I needed to place myself firmly in the text on the same level as my respondents. To do this, I also used autoethnography as a form of data-collection from myself, as I too was engaged in academic writing practices in the setting.

6.4.4 Interpreting participant accounts

Narrative theory and methodologies have been increasingly used in qualitative research across disciplinary boundaries, including research in education. Mischler's (2000) 'storylines' illustrate how personal narratives can create a sense of self, as well as reflecting social processes or institutions or representations of culture. According to Mischler (2000) this kind

of narrativisation of experience acknowledge how identity formation is dynamic and constantly changing, working to position individuals' 'being-in-the-world' at any given time. Mattingly (1991) discusses how telling stories serves to 'wrest meaning from experiences' for individuals. Similarly, Polkinghorne (1995) views narratives of the self as one of the most important way individuals make meaning out of their experiences because they:

> […] exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world. Narrative is the type of discourse that draws together diverse events, happenings and actions of human lives. (p.5)

Kincheloe (2001, 2005), describes how the subjectivities of research participants and researchers constitute a form of 'narrative bricolage' which:

> […] appreciates the notion that all research knowledge is shaped …by the types of stories inquirers tell about their topics. Such story types are not innocently constructed but reflect particular narratological traditions. (Kincheloe, 2005, p.337)

In post-qualitative research it is necessary, therefore, to acknowledge the plasticity and multiplicity of any participant accounts collected as primary data. Narrativised 're-tellings' of individuals' experiences are not necessarily logical, stable or 'real'; they are, conversely, contingent upon their temporality and temporariness and can only represent the moment in which they were said. Readings of data, once created, exist diachronically and historically and are connecting and reconnecting rhizomatically throughout the research process (Hagood, 2004). The different accounts presented in qualitative research may reinforce or contradict each other, yet none of them can purport to be more authoritative or 'truthful' than another. Post-qualitative researchers, moreover, accept that they narrativise their participants' accounts again through their interpretation and re-presentation of the 'accounts-as-data', creating an overarching research narrative. This over-arching research narrative is also open to further reinterpretation by its readers, producing an infinite number of possible reading and re-readings as the research text (doctorate/dissertation) becomes re-entextualised as it circulates though the Academy.

This thesis uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) to discuss responses elicited from participants. As Chapter 3 discussed, CDA treats texts, for example, the participant accounts

offered in Chapter 7, as sites where myriad readings are produced and can be contested. To ward against fixing the meaning of one's data, Usher and Edwards (1994) assert the relevance of a postmodern 'respect' for uncertainty, which they interpret as a willingness by qualitative researchers to remain alive to the infinite possibilities and ambiguities of texts they are working with. In Chapter 7, a rhizomatic post-qualitative analysis of participants' accounts has been attempted which:

> […] involves mapping […] discursive lines, following pathways, identifying the intersections and connections, finding the moments where the assemblages of discourses merge to make plausible and reason[able] sense to the reader. (Honan and Sellers, 2008, p.10).

Narrativising experiences for qualitative research purposes, therefore, does more than just reflect an individual's experiences and express their perceptions of those experiences. One can argue that the act of narrating also helps construct participants' sense of self, or identity, and situates their perceptions historically and discursively (Lofland and Lofland, 1996). In this way, identities, like perceptions:

> […] are not so much preserved in stories as they are created, reworked, and revised through participation in everyday narrative practices that are embedded in and responsive to shifting interpersonal conditions. Memories of self and other provide a constantly updated resource that narrators exploit in projecting tellable and interpretable selves […] (Miller, 1995, pp.175-176)

Reflecting this idea of multiple selves, Huhn, Christoph-Meister and Pier (2009) in their *Handbook of Narratology,* chart how in methodological terms qualitative research participant accounts (or as is the case in this thesis, statements) can be treated as linguistically constructed entities which are discursively positioned in particular ways, *as data*, rather than as 'true' or 'real' representations of who participants are and what they mean.

6.4.5 Identity issues

As discussed in Chapter 3, in a postmodern paradigm individuals construct, acquire and discard many different selves or identities as they progress through life. With regards to research(er) identities, Butler (1993) maintains there is no research 'subject' prior to its construction by the researcher/research narrative (p.124). Moreover, in addition to the identities of any research

participants there are always several sets of subjectivities, not least, the researcher(s) and the participants(s), operating at any time within the qualitative research process (Richardson, 2000; Plummer, 2001). As Miller notes:

> Narrative approaches […] look at how individuals actively construct and reconstruct narratives in the process of making sense of their experiences and presenting their self/selves. (2005, p.19)

Different narratives, at different times, will produce different selves or identities, for example, in the professional as opposed to the personal domain. Moreover, Bruner (1987) maintains that creating personal narratives requires 'an interpretive feat' on the part of the teller, who will shape the narrative consciously or unconsciously each time they tell it.

Bruner (1987) also sub-divided narrative accounts into two types: 'autobiographical' and 'canonical'. With regards to the latter, he wrote not only of 'canonical life narratives', but of 'canonical stances'. The latter operate in similar ways to Gee's (1996) 'Big D' discourses as they influence the ways in which individuals often shape their autobiographical narratives by 'provid[ing] a standard for judging the actions of others' (Bruner, 1987, p.281). Kirkman, Harrison, Hiller and Pyett (2001), drawing on Bruner's work, discuss how these canonical, narratives operate discursively to raise some interesting questions about how marginalised individuals negotiate dominant discourses in their personal narratives. Although personal narratives may 'serve to interpret and explain their subjects' (Kirkman et al., 2001, p.180); they can also, as White (1995) asserts, reveal 'ambiguities, contradictions and contingencies in people's accounts of their experiences and beliefs' (p.15). This is because personal narratives have an 'ontological dimension':

> […] that is at once temporal, relational, and cultural, as well as institutional, material, and macro-structural […] (Somers, 1994, p.607)

Narratives, therefore, do not represent a unified reality that is 'out there' or a fixed identity that can be explored through analysis and be pronounced upon for research purposes. They can, however, be reconceptualised through Heidegger's idea of 'throwness' (1953), as participating in qualitative research often prompts participants to reflect on where they feel themselves to be at any given moment. In research terms, this means qualitative researchers only have the 'nowness' of the moment in which participants tell their story to interpret. In

another moment, those same participants may very well be telling another story, or different version of the previous story, that they told to the researcher and so on. This lack of stability around narritivisation of experience complements Bauman's (2000) theory of 'liquid modernity' as it too emphasises a need for constant negotiation around possible transformations of identity in everyday life. Liquid modernity contends that professional identities, such as 'researcher', like other forms of identity, such as national or sexual identities, are always collapsing or mutating. Even so-called essentialised identity factors, such as ethnicity, gender and disability are constantly under construction and revision (Butler, 1990).

6.4.6 Researcher subjectivity

Foucault (1980) characterised the role of the qualitative researcher as an 'interpreter of meaning', rather than a 'finder of knowledge'. This alters the traditional purpose of qualitative research and problematises what is researched and how it is researched. Insisting on the relevance of researcher subjectivity to the research process, brings debates around researcher 'voice' and visibility to the fore in the sixth, so called 'messy' stage, of Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) educational research model. In this late stage Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain how postmodern researchers need to become 'bricoleurs' who struggle with how to locate themselves, and the subjects of their research, ethically in the reflexive texts that constitute their research (p.3). Kincheloe describes his idea of the bricoleur as:

> Focusing on webs of relationships instead of simply things-in-themselves, the bricoleur constructs the object of study in a more complex framework. In this process, attention is directed toward processes, relationships, and interconnections among phenomena. (2005, p.324)

According to Kincheloe (2005) the postmodern researcher/bricoleur should therefore be prepared to embrace the 'complexity principle', inherent in the messy, untidy and often unpredictable world of post-qualitative qualitative research. Foucault's (1972) concept of a 'genealogical' methodology, discussed in Chapter 3, can also be used to theorise the role of the post-qualitative researcher as one who, out of the inevitable plurality and diversity of their research data, constructs representations, rather than reports findings (Kendall and Wickham, 1999).

A post-qualitative researcher also focuses attention on how the research process positions them with regard to their participants and data. Gronlund (1981) makes the point that one cannot measure any qualitative data empirically as it is inevitably shaped and informed by the researcher's subjectivity and bias. In a similar vein, Winter (2000) talks of the need for the researcher to be 'disinterested', meaning that they must not prioritise their own interpretation of data, but engage with participants' subjectivities. Gronlund and Winter are equally interested in problematising how research always constructs an identity for researchers. For this reason, questions about postmodern researchers' subjectivity are as important as the issue of research participants' subjectivities, as discussed above. This is because researchers, and those who they research, are all engaged in producing narrative texts and research identities that:

> [...] produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently. (St. Pierre, 1997a, p.175)

as part of the research process.

Acknowledging the existence of multiple subjectivities in qualitative research makes relationships between researchers and researched convoluted and messy, as it is not easy to tease out the various subject positions that may be taken up when researching. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) regarded even primary identities, such as 'researcher' or 'participant', as emergent and transient, held artificially, as in aspic, for the purposes of the research narrative alone. Critically evaluating their relations with participants within the research domain is also an essential requirement for reflexive post-qualitative researchers. This is because, as Gubrium and Holstein (2003) contend, participants cannot help but be affected by biases, subject positions, and possibly disciplinary concerns held by researchers. This post-qualitative insistence on the complex relationship between researcher and participant subjectivities is not without its critics. For example, May (2002) argues that by rejecting the concept of a unified subject, and any concomitant sense of an external 'reality', post-qualitative responses to research data become:

> [...] so incoherent that engagement is difficult, if not impossible, for the purposes of illuminating the dynamics of social issues. (p.3)

May's response to the 'problem' of ever engaging coherently with researcher/researched subjectivities is to call for a return to a research approach which assumes that researchers can be somehow separated from their research subjects, and the settings that they are researching. However, this assumption denies the ethical imperatives underpinning post-qualitative researcher reflexivity. Scheurich (1997), for example, is clear that reflexivity around subjectivity allows for a more honest, and therefore possibly more ethical, relationship between qualitative researchers and their participants. He argues that if qualitative researchers assume an authoritative, authoring research 'voice', they deny and limit other possible subjectivities that might emerge out of qualitative research. For Butler (1993), a positivist insistence on constructing coherent research narratives where object(s) of research are 'explained' in some way, inevitably creates a 'constitutive outside' that she cannot accept. This is because it creates a research framework that effectively screens out those elements that cannot be fitted into an over-arching research narrative, namely: 'the unspeakable, the unviable, and the nonnarrativisable' (p.188) who must remain external and absent from it.

To conclude, once one has rethought subjectivity through a post-qualitative lens there is no returning to the old ways of thinking about qualitative data. As Foucault (2005) constantly argued in his later work, postmodern researchers need to be engaged in reflecting upon and resisting how they, and the subjects of their research, have been produced and constructed as subjectified and normalised 'subjects' through traditional qualitative research methodologies. Indeed, MacLure and Stronach (1997) call upon postmodern researchers to see themselves as 'responsible anarchists' (p.98) who use a postmodern ontology and critical reflexivity to interrogate creatively their own subjectivity, alongside any discussion of their participants' subjectivities.

6.4.7 Autoethnography

In autoethnography the researcher is overtly the 'teller' of their research narrative and as such they can reflect upon the implications of how they have chosen to tell their story. Within post-qualitative research the research self does not refer to a unified, authorial or authoritative 'I' but to one which takes as its starting point more fluid and contradictory notions of self and identity. As discussed in Chapter 4, it is important to acknowledge Butler's (2004, p.233) concept of disrupting and disturbing 'Other' discursive selves which can emerge through the

writing of critically reflective narratives such as this thesis. In this way, autoenthnographic texts can often:

> […] reveal the fractures, sutures, and seams of self. Interacting with others in the context of researching lived experience [of both researcher and researched]. (Spry, 2001, p.712)

Ellis (2004) interrogates this commitment to overt self-reflexivity by asking:

> Is the 'I' only about the eye of the researcher standing apart and looking? What about the 'I' of the researcher, the part that not only looks but is looked at, that only acts but is acted back upon by those in her focus. Is ethnography only about the other? Isn't ethnography also relational, about the other and the 'I' of the interaction? Might the researcher also be a subject? (p. xix)

Autoethnography, therefore, far from conferring an authoritative voice on the researcher, allows them to reflect on their place in the research narrative they are creating. This use of autoethnography embodies what Foucault (1984), refers to as an overt 'technology of the self'. This is:

> […]an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and at the same a historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them. (p.118)

Technologies of the self involve the conscious construction of a research self which the researcher is constantly engaged in reflexively constructing and deconstructing throughout the research process. Goodall's work (2000) further describes how autoethnography deploys relational and dialogic language between the researcher, their participants and readers creating relationships that:

> […] proceed through close, personal identification - and recognition of difference - of the readers' [and participants'] experiences, thoughts, and emotions with those of the author. (Goodall, 2000, p.7)

Autoethnography in this thesis:

> […] synthesises both a postmodern ethnography, and a postmodern autobiography. [which] opens up new ways of writing about social life […]
> (Reed-Danahay, 1997 pp.23)

By embracing autoethnography, I have tried to make visible the inherent creativity of academic writing reflecting an idea explored throughout the thesis, namely, that any form of academic writing is personal, the result of myriad choices made or rejected along the way. As Richardson writes:

> Like other cultural groups academics fail to recognise their practices as cultural/political choices, much less see how they are personally affected by those choices. (1992, p.126)

By contrast, writing oneself into the research through autoethnography:

> […] dissolves any idea of [the researcher's] distance, doesn't produce 'findings,' isn't generalizable, and only has credibility when self-reflexive, and authority when richly vulnerable. (Goodall, 2000, p.9)

Such an approach, however, raises questions about identity, power and discourse in qualitative research. In particular it asks whose view(s) are being allowed to emerge in the research, how are those views presented and by whom? Denzin (1997) addresses these issues when he outlines the ways in which ethnography, particularly in its more traditional form:

> […] privileges the researcher over the subject, method over subject matter, and maintains commitments to outmoded conceptions of validity, truth, and generalisability. (p. 20)

Reed-Danahay (2001) discusses how, unlike these more conventional forms of ethnography, the use of a critical or radical autoethnography problematises representation and identity in research. She writes:

> While disclosure of intimate details of the lives of those typically under the ethnographic gaze (the informants) has long been an acceptable and expected aspect of ethnographic research and writing, self-disclosure among ethnographers themselves has been less acceptable and much less common. (p.407)

Arguing that any researcher's experiences and interests lie at the heart of the research process troubles the empirical assumptions underpinning traditional educational research discussed earlier in this chapter. Indeed, Lather (2001), Eakin and Mykhalovskiy, (2005) and Ellis and Bochner (2000) have all championed autoethnography precisely on the grounds that it challenges the primacy of authorial omnipotence, objectivity and rationality so often associated

with academic research. Autoethnography offers a chance to resist those conventions because it:

> [….]displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural…focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their [the researcher's] personal experience; then […] exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.739)

Post-qualitative research treats empirical truisms, like objectivity and validity, as nothing more than attempts to depersonalise and universalise what is an inevitably a subjective research process. Ellis and Bochner's (2000) concept of the 'vulnerable self' acknowledges the intimacy of the post-qualitative researcher's relationship to their research and their participants. However, there is risk attached to such an overt identification with the subjects and processes of one's research; for example, one may lose perspective, gain uncertainty and struggle with the material or data it produces. In this way, identifying personally so closely and overtly with one's data troubles and destabilises unequal power-relations implicit in the conventional authoritative and distancing 'gaze' of traditional qualitative researcher.

It is clear, therefore, that writing autoethnographically in post-qualitative research creates a different kind of researcher identity or academic writing self. For example, in autoethnography, the 'researcher self' is not separate from the 'lived self' (Richardson 2003, p.197). For Goodall this produces an interesting effect, namely that:

> One of the most 'disturbing' characteristics of autoethnography is that its prose style or poetic is at odds with the clear scholarly preference for an impersonal, non-emotional, unrhetorically charming, idiom of representation […] (1998, p.6)

Many accounts of innovative autoethnographical projects, such as those recounted in Ellis and Bochner (2002) and Richardson (2002), insist that qualitative researchers need not limit inclusion of their personal lived experience research processes to established methods, such as the narritivisation of their experiences as a researcher through field notes and observations. For example, Van Maanen's (2010) 'Tales of the Field', uses confessional and impressionistic 'tales' which are fictionalised accounts of his intensely personal experiences working in the research field. In the ethnopoetics of Richardson (1997), Ellis's novelistic fictionalisation of the ethnographic process (2004) and the ethno-drama or ethnotheatre of Mienczakowski,

(2001) and Saldana, (2005), one can see how postmodern researchers and their research participants are united through creative and imaginative forms not usually associated with research into education.

Experimenting with split-text formats and multi-voiced texts, postmodern researchers have found powerful ways of voicing their and their participants' subjectivities (Lather and Smithies, 1997; Richardson, 2002). These studies all place the personal, the emotional and the subjective at the centre of their research. Ellis and Bochner (2000) get to the heart of the matter when they ask:

> Why must academics be conditioned to believe that a text is important only to the extent it moves beyond the merely personal? (p.746)

Moving beyond the personal, post-qualitative researchers entwine their subjectivity together with the subjectivities of their participants. These multiple subjectivities are then simultaneously, and often precariously, woven together to construct a 'research voice' that is polyphonic or rhizo-vocal because it contains many voices and points of view. Ultimately this unique, but unstable, assemblage reveals and complicates the relationship between the research participants and researcher, who are completely entangled. Autoethnography places the researcher as just one more voice within the research, in doing so it begins to rebalance the traditionally unequal relationships between qualitative researchers and their participants.

6.5 Post-qualitative Ethics

In any research, researchers attempt to produce coherent and convincing arguments out of the material collected using ethical procedures. However, this section explores the idea that postmodern approaches, such as post-qualitative research, require an alternative 'postmodern ethical perspective' (Bauman, 1993, p.27). Classic Marxist theorists, like Callinicos (1990), maintain that postmodernism's insistence on the plurality and plasticity of experience and identity means it has no moral compass. Said (1993), is equally withering about what he calls the 'tiresome playfulness' of postmodernism, claiming that it operates as little more than an 'intellectual exercise in the real world' (p.312) which fails to address 'real' social and political issues. However, it is possible to claim that post-qualitative research, like other postmodern

approaches, has a clear political and alternative ethical agenda. Not least because as Richardson (2000) writes:

> Postmodernism awakens us to the problematics of collecting and reporting data, and challenges disciplinary rules and boundaries on ethical, aesthetic, theoretical and empirical grounds. (p.253)

For example, using autoethnography to highlight how the researcher is just another subject in qualitative research helps develop a Foucauldian 'critical ontology of the self", from which one can attempt to resist the normalising effect of dominant discourses about self and identity in research. Trihn's work (1989) explores how an autoenthnographic text:

> […] announces its own politics and evidences a political consciousness. It interrogates the realities it represents. It invokes the teller's story in the history that is told… (p. 188)

Due to this complexity, St. Pierre (2000) calls for a specific and complex ethical practice that necessarily challenges the idea of an unchanging set of universal ethics:

> If there is no absolute truth to which every instance can be compared for its truth-value, if truth is instead multiple and contextual, then the call for ethical practice shifts from grand, sweeping statements about truth and justice to engagements with specific, complex problems that do not have generalizable solutions. (pg.25)

Similarly, Lather asserts that traditional 'scientific' research practices can be viewed as:

> […] inscriptions of legitimation rather than procedures that help us get closer to some 'truth' capturable through language. (1991, p.112)

In the first instance, post-qualitative research, as discussed above, rejects established tropes of empirical research like truth and reliability, or the idea that qualitative research necessarily empowers research subjects through its ability to reveal new 'knowledge', or hitherto hidden 'truths', about their lived reality (Foucault, 1980). Traditional ethical principles, therefore cannot and should not, be applied to a postmodern, post-qualitative research paradigm, such as the one used in this thesis.

Alternatively, a postmodern ethical framework could engage researchers in a productive critique of traditional qualitative research ethics. For example, asserting that the practical activity of observation and recording literary practices produces data that is not in any way 'real' or 'authentic', leaves grounded, phenomenological data without any, 'ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality', as research (Butler, 1992, p.136). This issue of ontological uncertainty is precisely what triggers the 'crisis of representation' in qualitative research, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Therefore, acknowledging that there is a 'crisis of representation' means that a lack of criticality around the representation of qualitative data can be viewed as unethical and unacceptable.

To be ethically responsible, in postmodern terms, is to also accept and acknowledge that qualitative research findings represent no more than an interpretation by the researcher, which will in turn be interpreted by other readers, who will inevitably produce their own interpretations of the material and so on. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) refer to this ongoing process in postmodern research as 'the interpretation of interpretation'. It is the centrality, yet instability of this constant process of interpretation, which is distinctive in postmodern research. Moreover, it is inherent, although not always acknowledged, in all research approaches (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000).

Postmodernism's relativism is a discursive position which requires that one need only accept there is no definitive or absolute point of view on what is ethical, just as there are only ever relativist points of view on any given subject or phenomenon. Post-qualitative research ethics are inevitably relative as they allow that infinitely diverse ethical points of view or positions are available on any subject, and can at any time be hierarchised, legitimised or marginalised through discursive positioning. They are therefore subject to constant change. Latour's (1993) notion of 'relationism' points the researcher towards trying to tease out what relates each given thing to a whole range of other things in any given setting. This can be a useful corrective against the potential ambiguity of any vague research application of reflexivity and relativism as it is a methodology for:

> […] pointing out what instruments and what chains serve to create asymmetries and inequalities, hierarchies and differences […] (Latour, 1993, p.113)

Despite this, relativism has led to charges that postmodern researchers are unable to sustain a coherent or consistent political position, or that they create an ontological position where the meaning of everything can be endlessly contested. However, it does not follow that simply because one refutes the concept of absolute or universal truths, that one has to agree that all points of view are equally or relatively ethical. Conversely, attempts to impose a universal ethical framework on research can be viewed as illusory and ultimately oppressive. Bauman (1993, 1995) critiques common ethical mores and practices predominant in Western culture since the Enlightenment and explores how they influence every area of everyday life. He asserts that 'becoming moral', in an Enlightenment sense, is more to do with 'learning, memorising and following the *rules'* (pg. 14) instituted by dominant social discourses, rather than following any innate or universal human, moral imperative. For Bauman, modern social ethics embody a form of 'moral parochialism under the mask of promoting universal ethics' (1993, p.14), that is, they are always the product of a certain time and place. Consequently, his alternative ethical stance insists that context is all important to ethical questions (1993, 1995). This means that research may be ethical or not depending on its context, and because contexts are always changing ethical guidelines may need to change.

In post-qualitative research, ethics devolve around a recognition that research has always been a part of the world that it describes, maintaining that the processes of research are an expression of the operations of power within that world. For Foucault (1980), a serious ethical dilemma for researchers was less to do with their responsibility, or even their ability to represent 'authentic' or 'accurate' findings in their research. Rather, he believed that ethical responsibility lay in social science researchers' commitment to the idea that they cannot operate outside the arena of politics and power. Moreover, that they have a responsibility to question:

> […] the centralising powers linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific [or in this case educational research] discourse. (Foucault, 1980, p.84)

This means that following established ethical codes of conduct around consent and disclosure do not by itself release researchers from the responsibilities generated by the ethical issues concerning power. Yet it is often assumed that neutrality, or an absence of power relations, is achieved through ethical procedures. For example, 'informed consent' reflects the common exhortation to researchers to give their participants a full disclosure of their research aims. Thus consent to take part in the research often implies an ideal ethical relationship between

research participants and the researcher, which is avowedly, 'open' and consensual. It can be argued, however, that informed consent actually sidesteps questions about the power relations inherent in any research design between researcher and researched. This is because it suggests that power imbalances will automatically be dissolved when the researcher and researched appear to have 'agreed' to work together.

In qualitative research there has been an increasing tendency (discussed in Chapter 3) for ethical responsibilities to centre on the researcher using standpoint theories to 'liberate' rather than 'betray' their participants. However, in such 'emancipatory' models, contested epistemologies and their possible influence upon individuals or social practices are rarely taken into consideration. This is because the 'truth' of marginalised standpoints is often given a kind of transcendental power by the researcher that serves to authenticate all that it purportedly reveals. Foucault (1984) argues, however, that postmodern ethical research should not profess to emancipate its participants, any more than it can claim to create new knowledge or 'truths' about them. Rather, the emancipatory potential of any research lay, he claims, in its ability to open up the research field by asking questions that may delimit, or redefine, ontological and epistemological boundaries. Post-qualitative research does not, for these reasons, claim to liberate oppressed social groups and individuals, as MacLure (2006) writes:

> [...] what people want is undiluted, unmediated access to evidence, or truth, or knowledge, or the authentic voice of subjects. What research fails to do, over and over again, is to achieve that alchemy of transmuting the base material of language into pure – i.e. text- and context-free - knowledge, evidence or action (p. 2).

In post-qualitative research academic writing cannot be context free or pure, what it can do is draw attention to its own discursive origins in order to challenge and innovate. Moreover, post-qualitative ethical practices aim to emancipate the researcher from the dominant forms of discursive power that regulate and limit the epistemological fields in which they, their participants and their research are situated. Indeed, one can argue that because post-qualitative educational research embraces ontological uncertainty, multiple identities and competing discourses, it is actually more ethical than those studies making empirical or 'pseudo-scientific' claims for their subjective interpretations of qualitative data. This post-qualitative alternative ethical approach is now applied in the next chapter to the research participants' responses.

This section has explored how postmodern, post-qualitative approaches create a complex, and complicating, 'theory nexus', which contrasts with the 'critical illiteracy' (MacLure, 1999) of those qualitative researchers, particularly in educational research, who just accept established qualitative methodologies and procedures. This 'theory nexus' seeks to critique qualitative educational research methodologies in order to open them up and make visible their often 'taken-for-grantedness' by problematising or calling it into question. The different approaches and principles outlined in this methodological chapter work together to explore different aspects of that established practice.

Epilogue

It has been my intention to be deliberately conscious and reflexive about my emotional, subjective and personal choice of research methodology in this thesis. This choice reflects how I feel that:

> *[…] there is no division, in practice, between work and life […] a practice (like academic writing) involves the whole person, continually drawing on past experience as it is projected into the future. (Ingold, 2001, p.240)*

I cannot, nor do I wish, to avoid being entangled in my research. After all I am emotionally and personally involved in the practices and people who are discussed in the next chapter. As a lecturer working in the same research domain, I share many of the academic writing and writing development practices and experiences of my research participants and throughout the thesis I am simultaneously present, positioned and constructed as an employee, colleague, academic, educator, students, researcher and research participant.

Kincheloe (2005) argues that in his alternative qualitative research model the postmodern researcher becomes a 'bricoleur' who avoids:

> *[…] modes of reasoning that come from certified processes of logical analysis; bricoleurs also steer clear of pre-existing guidelines and checklists developed outside the specific demands of the inquiry at hand. In its embrace of complexity, the bricolage constructs a far more active role for humans both in shaping reality and in creating the research processes and narratives that represent it (p.325).*

Bricoleur is a term that which roughly translated means to 'fiddle with' or 'tinker', or my favourite, to 'mess about with'. In the theatre, arts and music bricolage denotes the construction or creation of a work put together, like a collage, from a diverse range of 'found objects' or whatever materials are at hand (regardless of their original purpose). Both terms have been usefully applied to post-qualitative research processes and reflect what I am trying to achieve in Chapter 7 as I pick my way through participant responses to the elicitation. In short, I am a self-proclaimed bricoleur.

Chapter 7: Reconceptualising the Data: Onto-epistemological Accounts of Academic Writing Practices in a Bounded Research Domain.

Prologue

(An homage to Laurel Richardson)

*I have amassed/
assembled/collected/taken
/ wrested/wrenched/
marshalled/mobilised/collated
material*

*

*It
Told stories
Offered up opinions
Shared experiences
Gave examples
Cracked jokes
Vented anger
Revealed fears
Made suggestions*

*

*Many voices
Spoke to me
I listened
I reflected
I reacted
I pondered*

*What should I with them?
What did they
could they
should they
signify?*

*Something?
Anything ?*

*

I spent a lot of time with this stuff
I played with it
Tried to organise it
Fell out with it
Dreamt about it
Thought I discerned patterns
Discontinuities
dissonance
congruity

*

Within, between and across besides
and beyond
what I was expecting to
find
and what I did not expect

*

We have been busy
discovering/uncovering/recovering

*

I/it have been
Reorganised/disorganised
Made/remade/made-up
interpreted/represented/ re-represented
*
Now we are
Transmuted/transformed/transfigured
Relocated/dislocated/percolated

And I wonder
have I found
findings?

Or have they
founded me?

7.1 Introduction: Ontological and Epistemological Matters

This chapter explores accounts of academic writing practices in the research setting, (their ontologies), and asks what those accounts might suggest about the dominant discourses, (or epistemologies), informing academic writing practices in that setting. This means that, unlike the earlier studies discussed in Chapter 2, I do not presume that I am describing and/or interpreting stable subjects, objects or practices when I examine the statements I have chosen arising from the elicitation. Nor am I claiming to definitively understand or explain those statements (as outlined in Section 6.4.3, 'The power of the statement', p. 177). More precisely, the statements elicited for the research are treated as a 'dispositif', which explores the extent to which academic writing practices exist as 'the coupling of a set of practices [within] a regime of truth' (Foucault, 2010a, p. 18).

I have summarised the pressure to conform to a regime of truth with regard to academic writing in Figure 26 below.
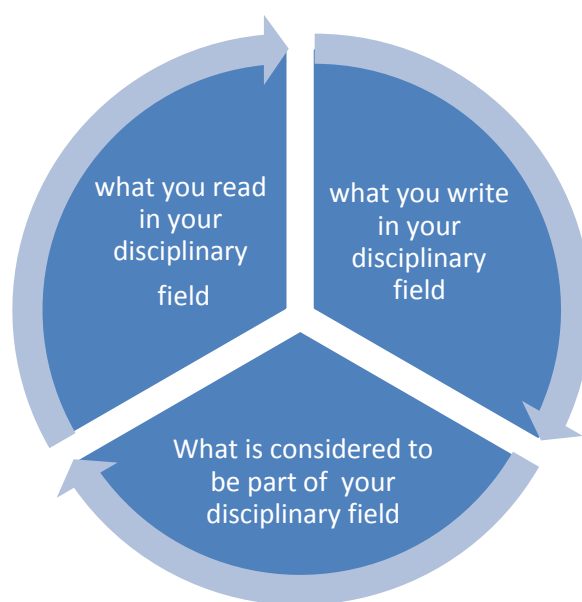
Figure 26: Reading and writing in disciplinary fields.

Figure 26 illustrates how the regime works at the simplest level. It shows how the kinds of academic writing people read when they are studying in a particular disciplinary field, as under and postgraduates, often informs, even if it is in oppositionary terms, the types/forms of academic writing that they seek to produce when they are seeking to get published as professional academic writers. In this way, academic writing practices can be regarded as one

of the principle ways that disciplinary fields are maintained as a self-affirming, self-regulating and ultimately conservative force within the Academy. This occurs despite the fact that legitimated academic writing practices are most often presented as the supreme conduit for individualised intellectual understanding and expression.

This chapter is specifically concerned with how the participants', and my own, perceptions of academic writing practices reflect and/or resist 'regimes of truth' which inform academic writing practices and which were carried out as part of the everyday business of lecturers in the research setting. The data is not just constructed by me, the researcher; it simultaneously constructs me as 'the researcher', another participant in the thesis engaged in academic writing practices. In addition, this chapter treats disciplinary fields as semi-permeable and rhizomic which are:

> […] plugged into an immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.24)

Whilst the following observations and discussion of participants' statements about academic writing practices are contextualised by the theoretical nexus outlined in Chapter 3, they remain contestable and provisional for the reasons discussed in Chapter 6. Accordingly, I strive for what MacLure (2006) has called a 'baroque' style that is:

> […] an analytics of entanglement and displacement [which] resists building hierarchies, frameworks and abstractions, and tries instead to stay with the resistance and ambiguity of reading and interpretation. (pg.9)

Breaking out of conventional practices, via unpredictable lines of flight, can be initiated by a 'stammer' or 'stutter', a concept taken from Deleuze and Guattari (1986) and Deleuze (1994). At the level of language, the stutter/stammer highlights particularly affective or powerful language within a text so that it stands out from its wider context (MacLure, 2006). In addition, many of the statements chosen for discussion in this chapter suggest alternative points of entry into different ways of thinking and speaking about academic writing practices. This is because the stutter/stammer breaks into the seamless hegemony of 'order words'. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe how order words legitimate dominant discourses and help to maintain them because they define and organise ontological and epistemological frameworks.

Stuttering/stammering, within those frameworks, causes order words to stop making sense momentarily, or at least to begin to make different kinds of sense. In this study, the stammer or stutter represents a break or challenge to dominant discourses about academic writing, which express themselves primarily through disciplinary fields and reified practices. This process of reification and the relationship with its opposite, divergent 'lines of flight', are represented in Figure 27 (pg.196) which illustrates how dominant discourses embed/inscribe themselves through writers' constant reification of dominant academic writing practices.

The Deleuzean conception of striation creates homogeneity, sameness and repetition across dominant discursive spaces (disciplinary fields) and their related phenomena (associated academic writing practices). These become identified with each other to create a bounded, yet semi-permeable entity, which individuals in the Academy move into and out of in ways described by participants in this study. Their statements often supported the idea that dominant discourses, embodied by disciplinary fields, expedite 'effective' academic writing practices within that field, but only within recognised boundaries. That is to say, academic writing practices and the effects that they facilitate, are completely contingent on their context, in that they are self-referential and mutually reinforcing. This is very far removed from the claim that effective academic writing practices are, at any level, self-evident and universally transferable.

Deleuzean 'lines of flight'

The lines and boxes represent **striated space** that refers to disciplinary boundaries and reified practices.

Academic writing practices in higher education

The arrows represent **lines of flight** that are moving out of and beyond striated space.

The space beyond the boxes is smooth space. A place where new hybrid forms can develop out of lines of flight
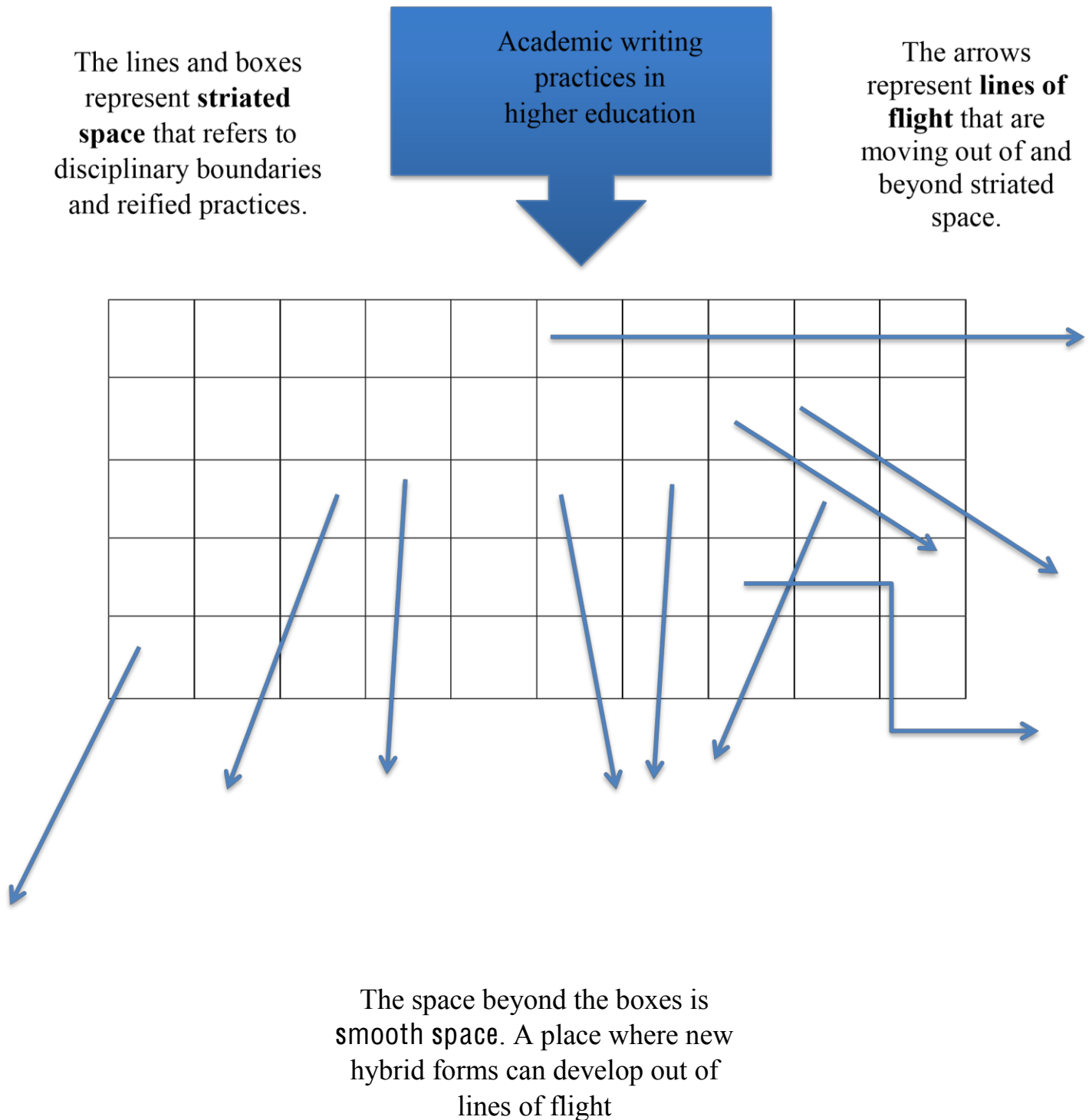
Figure 27: Deleuzean lines of flight

Lastly, I have tried, through the discussion of participants' statements, to produce a form of Derridian 'double-writing' (Neel, 1988). This approach explores the multiple and unstable meanings, residing in the language lecturer participants' use, to describe their perceptions of academic writing practices. The use of statements, in this way, is an attempt to capture the intrinsically messy and overwhelming nature of lecturers' perceptions and experiences of academic writing practices. I do this in order to keep my discussion generative, rather than descriptive and/or prescriptive, and because I wanted to resist falling back into more traditional ways of representing definitive interpretations of the material collected for this thesis. Consequently, my discussion about the statements reinscripts myself, and my participants, into new and hopefully productive relationships and entanglements about the academic writing practices we all participate in.

Out of my many re-readings of the data I have picked out for discussion those statements, or discursive enunciations, that emerged as 'hot spots' (Maclure, 2013) which:

> […] point to the existence of embodied connections with other people, things and thoughts that are far more complex than the static connections of coding. (p. 171)

More precisely, these statements are points in the data that 'glow' (Maclure, 2013) with a particular resonance as they connect to my own complicating reconceptualisations and entanglements with academic writing practices in higher education.

This process of researching the use of academic writing practices in higher education by lecturers involves discussing, not only what the research subjects think they know and recognise about these everyday professional practices, but also what Bourdieu (1984) called their misrecognition or 'meconnaisance' of them. As Mahar, Harker and Wilkes (1990) note:

> Misrecognition/ meconnaisance [alludes to] the process by which practices are made 'invisible' through a displacement of understanding and their reconstrual as part of…the habitus that 'goes without saying' (p.19)

Bourdieu (1984) suggested that misrecognition/meconnaisance, a distributed form of 'false consciousness', was responsible for people failing to see social practices as constructed (and therefore open to deconstruction), because they had become taken-for-granted, or given, in their

everyday lives. In this research, misrecognition/meconnaisance is important as it may account for why lecturers often fail to critique or challenge established academic writing practices in their own, or their students' writing.

My subsequent 'researchification' of these 'research-based accounts of practice' (Clegg, 2009) in this chapter, rests, therefore, on an overt interrogation and problematisation of:

> […] the conditions under which certain statements are considered to be the truth... (Ball, 2013, p.19)

These 'conditions' are treated as the product of dominant academic writing practices informing the various disciplinary fields and discourse communities which lecturers in higher education are a part of. There is no intention to produce a naturalised, overarching research narrative that explains what the statements add up to as a whole. Consequently, no truths are uncovered, subjects are not liberated and accounts of practice are not used to model ideal notions of 'good practice', nor are participants' perceptions offered as typical. There is no formulation of hierarchical categories or binary opposites within the field of practice and the voice of the researcher is not privileged. Lastly, the statements used are acknowledged as unstable and possibly unreliable observations about the matter in hand, namely academic writing practices.

The following discussion does, however, attempt to use the problematised reconceptualisations of academic writing, outlined in Chapter 3, to embrace the multiplicity and complexity of academic writing practices in the research setting and explore the ways in which they are informed by a wider rhizomic 'academic writing habitus of higher education', (an idea already discussed in Chapter 6). As such they represent:

> A collective assemblage of enunciation [within which] all individuated enunciation remains trapped within […] dominant significations […] (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 24)

 It also takes into consideration how participants' statements often point towards hegemonic, unconscious structures of thought which reflect dominant discourses around academic writing practices, instead of trying to establish if there is any 'real' meaning or 'truth' to their individual utterances.

7.2 The Formation of a Higher Education Writing Habitus

As lecturers, like anyone else, pass through different stages of education, they move ever nearer towards Ruth's (2008) notion of "educatedness" discussed in Chapter 3. As they do so, they develop a 'higher education writing habitus' (discussed in Chapter 6), which shapes and informs their approach to and familiarity with dominant academic writing practices. This chapter traces the formation of such a habitus through the statements participants made in the elicitation about their experiences as undergraduate, post-graduate and post-doctoral academic writers engaged in published writing activities. This, it is argued, is a process that gradually leads them towards the development of professional disciplinary-based, academic writing identities within the Academy.

7.3 Undergraduate Writing Experiences: Finding the Field

Transitioning to academic writing in higher education is fraught with difficulties and is often clearly marked by the realisation that one has entered into new educational territory.

> *At UG level it seemed that I had entered a world that was disconnected from me. (Susan).*

A sense of dislocation, especially from previous educational writing experiences, reflects the discussion in Chapter 5 about the development of higher education identities. The tension experienced around changing identities is supported by other research into transitions in higher education, such as Yorke and Longton's report into '*First Year Experience of Higher Education in the UK*' (2007). Yorke and Longton made the point that transition is often experienced sharply around the shift that individuals have to make towards new, specifically undergraduate, academic writing practices.

> *I found academic writing (at UG) quite hard to get the hang of at first. (Lucy).*
>
> *Hard to say how but I did struggle with transition for the first year of UG and got low grades as a result [....]* (John).

One can argue that this sense of transition is a manifestation of the ways dominant academic writing discourses tend to define 'good' writing through the universally acknowledged, though tacitly experienced, standards and rules defined by autonomous models of writing development

discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Statements made by the participants often referred to how, as undergraduates, they had needed to work out, or infer, often with difficulty, what was expected of them as academic writers.

> *[The] biggest difference at university was having to conform to a set of conventions and practices that were not always made explicit. There were expectations of what a 'good' piece of academic writing is, though this is not necessarily something that you are made aware of or prepared for when first entering the academic world.* (Tim)

> *I had a total uncertainty about how to write at undergraduate level* […] *I can remember the first assignment I wrote as an undergraduate and it was terrible. I really had no idea how to write and totally no confidence in what I was writing.* (Valerie)

> *I remember when I started my degree being extremely worried about writing an assignment, as this was something that I felt I hadn't experienced before.* (Lona)

Situated in a subaltern position, Tim, Valerie and Lona recall the sense that there were dominant conventions and expectations around academic writing in their discipline that they were subject to, even though they did not know what they were.

Statements, like those above, reflect the adapted Cummins (2009) framework of expertise and Polanyi's (1966) notion of 'tacit spaces' outlined in Figure 18 (pg. 145) which illustrates the inadequacies of the acculturation model of academic writing development. Such emotional statements reflect the often keen sense of disempowerment experienced by undergraduate writers; *'it was terrible'*, participants state they were '*anxious*', '*worried*' *and* '*embarrassed*'', in short, they often felt strongly that their existing academic writing practices were inadequate for higher education purposes.

> *I felt quite embarrassed when meeting tutors on a one to one basis and giving people my work to read as I was very unsure of what tense and level of writing was expected.* (Gail)

As discussed in Chapter 3 undergraduates also often experience academic writing practices as tantalisingly vague, yet they feel they are clearly important to get right.

> *[….] you had to make [your writing] look like academic writing…but it had to appear natural not forced. It had to flow off the page as if it could not have been written in any other way.* (Martha)

It is interesting that Martha felt her academic writing should appear '*natural not forced*'. She is echoing here the idea underpinning acculturation models of writing development that expect students to unproblematically and inevitably assume a '*natural*', rather than acquired, sense of what dominant academic writing practices demand.

> *[…] thinking back to when I started as an undergraduate, I definitely had to read to tune into the writing style expected because I hadn't been reading or writing at that level before. (Marie)*

Marie is aware that there are forms of legitimate academic writing practices which exist in the 'immense outside', which students and lecturers can 'plug into', in a Deleuzean sense (1987, p. 24).   In this way, one can argue, disciplinary fields are often experienced, or perceived, as bounded spaces within which lecturers (and students) carry out their everyday academic writing practices.

Marie's comments about her need to '*tune in*' to an expected academic writing style as an undergraduate, reflect Bourdieu's description of acquiring understanding of a field which he said was like acquiring:

> […] a feel for the game, or the practical mastery of the logic or of the imminent necessity of a game – a mastery acquired by experience of the game, and one which works outside conscious control and discourse […] (1990, p.61)

Marie's comment infers that she had to '*get a feel for the game*' before she could feel confident about her ability to produce the 'right' kind of academic writing practices for her discipline in higher education.

Other statements by participants acknowledged that the relationship between the evidencing of disciplinary learning, through the production of written assignments, was more closely related to the reproduction of legitimated or approved writing practices than in any of their previous education settings.

> *Writing as an undergraduate required me to think more about how I packaged the [subject] content. (Marie)*

Writing at degree level was an intensification of writing at A level for me. The difference was, my degree required that I write as though I had an opinion and that the analysis I was including was my own. At A level it was largely regurgitation. Degree writing was more about thinking. (Darren)

I think that my writing prior to university was not as focused on how I presented the subject content as it is now. (Gill)

These comments reflect the idea that as undergraduate writers, students need to be aware of the greater emphasis on the form of disciplinary-based academic writing practices, not just the content of disciplinary-based knowledge. Darren's comment, that writing at undergraduate level required '*that I write as though I had an opinion',* echoes Martha's acknowledgment that often the form, or style, of undergraduate writing is as much about giving an impression of 'academic' credentials, rather than actually having any, ('*it had to 'look like academic writing').* Thus, the undergraduate writing selves, or identities, that participants were reflecting on in the elicitation, appeared to require a more overt process of 'self-presentation' through the written texts that participants' as undergraduates were required to produce, than had been the case in previous educational settings.

The act of conscious self-presentation, as an undergraduate academic writer, can also be construed as an expectation to produce more 'writerly texts' in the Barthesian (1972) sense. Such 'writerly' texts are characterised through their tendency to wear overtly stylistic influences as a formal signifier of learnedness or 'educatedness' (Ruth, 2008).

My discipline encouraged a kind of showy use of language and knowledge that I still wrestle to escape from. (Darren)

I find it interesting that I remember the feedback I received on my early work [in university] so acutely. At the time I had no idea what they meant by 'it was too journalistic' but I learnt soon enough. (Miriam)

I was lucky that I had good tutor feedback on my writing as a first year student and he told me how rubbish it was. I was then given strategies to support my writing which I quickly learnt from. (Valerie)

As an undergraduate I experienced learning how to do academic writing as a very systematic formula… over time it became clear what you should and shouldn't do (Bob)

At university academic writing seemed more about having to prove something by writing in particular ways … (Marie)

This subject of successfully writing in a suitably academic way is often defined, not only by the need to '*prove something*' in epistemological (or subject-specific terms), but by the ability to express or legitimate that 'proof' via a very particular set of academic writing practices which are discussed in more detail in the section 7.6, 'Academic Writing as a Professional Practice' (p. 226).

> *As an undergraduate student I put a lot of pressure on myself to do well and write in an* academic manner. This was challenging at times and ...I could see that my level of *writing was not up to the standard of degree level.* (Gail)

Gail's comment suggests that it is not just that subject-specific learning acquired by students gets legitimated through written summative assignments; it is also that the successful reproduction of dominant academic writing practices confirms a legitimate student academic writing identity.

7.3.1 Speaking the field

Finding a personal voice, what lecturers in their feedback often refer to as 'the student's voice', is another aspect of academic writing that students are often called upon to produce. This valorisation of the academic writer with a 'personal voice' is a manifestation of what Foucault described as:

> [...] the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences' (1977b, p.127).

One can argue, however, that academic writing is, more often than not, especially at undergraduate level, about students working out how to create or package 'a' voice that is 'acceptable'. This is not the same as creating a personal or individual voice. Rather, it suggests a voice that reflects or embodies the style of dominant academic writing practices found in a subject's wider Bourdieusian disciplinary fields, which are populated by legitimated texts and characterised by dominant readings of those texts.

> *At school and sixth form, the need to support claims via evidence from the published* world was not emphasised. As I recall pre-undergraduate was more about writing an *essay perhaps — telling you what I knew — whereas later with my undergraduate*

> *writing[…] the style of the writing was very much informed by my reading around the subject, by showing through my writing what I had found out about what other people knew or thought.* (Helen)

Helen outlines the origins of an aspect of academic writing development that the participant Zander called '*ventriloquism*', something he describes as developing the '*ability to write like somebody else'*. This emphasis, on writing in the same way as other more established writers in one's disciplinary field, again reflects the importance of 'field'. It a concept which functions, at least on a superficial level, as a bounded collective writing space that contextualise and mediate the construction of legitimated student and professional academic writing identities within particular academic disciplines. The issues and tensions involved in adopting, these, what I have termed, 'field-congruent writing practices' are discussed further below.

Despite difficulties inherent in any educational transition, transitioning to higher education could be very positive, especially in terms of consciously developing as academic writers.

> *I really didn't enjoy writing before university. I often wonder whether this was because I didn't find an area that I was truly passionate to write about until I started my degree. Prior to university I wrote only when I needed to and to be honest as little as possible, really not developing my own distinctive writing style until I got there.* (Lona)

> *It was not until I came to university to do my degree that I found enjoyment in expressing my thoughts in writing.* (Laura)

> *After three years and achieving a first class honours degree I felt much more capable and confident. Writing at university was a process which I feel I developed by myself. (*Gail*)*

In these positive statement, one can see how an ability to produce what participants perceived as successful academic writing, was often experienced in passionate, pleasurable terms which were tightly bound to notions of self and identity. Laura and Lona infer that university alone, unlike the previous educational settings that they have inhabited, provided an opportunity to develop very personal writing and thinking styles as they refer to '*my thoughts'*, '*my own distinctive writing style', 'writing at university was a process which I feel I developed by myself'*. This sense of self-sufficiency, confidence and individual achievement, which has been conferred, or is assumed through a perceived autonomous mastery of higher education academic writing practices re-appears, is discussed at length later in section 7.6, 'Academic Writing as a Professional Practice' (p. 226). Suffice to say at this point that these expressions

of autonomy and individuality, often expressed in terms of '*finding one's voice*', can be deconstructed as a paradoxical manifestation of subjectification. In this alternative reading the perceived autonomy experienced by individuals (who have '*got the hang of*' or been able to '*tune into*' the 'right' academic writing practices) can be re-presented as an illusion. It is a product, one could say, of the disciplinary power exerted by dominant academic writing practices in the Academy that serve to give only an impression of autonomy and individuality. The power of such a disciplinary-based, field-congruent 'voice' rests, it can be argued, not on its singular uniqueness, but in its origins, which are collective and distributed.

7.3.2 Reading the field

As undergraduates progress through their degree programme they hopefully gain some familiarity with a range of written materials, such as textbooks and journals, which are valued in their chosen disciplinary field. However, disciplinary fields are never stable, there is always movement and change at the margins and undergraduates, and neophytes in the field (for example, new undergraduates) are not expected or encouraged to position themselves at disciplinary margins. More often than not they are encouraged to interact with and locate themselves in established discursive/disciplinary safe spaces that are constructed for them by the lecturers and the subject-based texts that they are encouraged to read. That means that undergraduates often have little exposure to any alternative texts or discourses that might trouble the dominant (accepted/legitimised) reading and writing practices within (and outside of) their disciplinary fields. For this reason, an innate conservatism often prevails with regard to undergraduates' reading matter (sometimes referred to wryly as the 'tyranny of the reading list') which results in students rarely straying far from reading recommended by their lecturers.

This conservatism creates what Barthes (1988) termed a 'comfortable practice of reading' (p.14) which fosters, in the reader, a sense of belonging and familiarity within disciplinary fields. This 'comfortable' practice of reading then informs how undergraduates construct a sense of themselves as academic writers within their disciplinary field*.* Statements made in the elicitation reflected on this process as participants outlined how directed reading, during their degree, helped them to become culturally and emotionally congruent with the dominant discourses determining preferred writing practices in their disciplinary field.

> *I think there is a definite link between how much academic literature you read and your ability to write and understand academic writing. I think reading in your field enables you to develop your vocabulary, understanding and critical thinking skills.* (Gail)

> *I do believe that the answer is to read, read, and read some more!.. Immersing yourself in good reading can help to model – unconsciously or not – ways of writing.* (Marie)

In this way, 'reading the field', functions to model 'appropriate' academic writing through a form of disciplinary power which differentiates and hierarchises forms of academic reading matter in the same way it does academic writing practices. (Note the qualifier in Marie's statement above '*Immersing yourself in good reading'.*) One could, therefore, recast such positive declarations of '*getting'* academic writing as more a recognition that individuals' feel they can produce writing that properly belongs to their disciplinary field. In this sense, Lona, Laura and Gail's comments above function as evidence of a compliant positionality. They are individuals who believe simultaneously that they have developed a personal '*voice*', or '*style*', that feels comfortable, right and appropriate. However, it is the 'mastery' of dominant academic writing practices that makes students (and arguably, the lecturers marking their work) feel secure, because they are field-congruent. Moreover, one can argue that these feelings of individuality and 'rightness' only occur when writing practices are performed, and thus reified, within pre-ordained territories, marked out by dominant discourses in the discipline. As such, those positive feelings are brought into being within Deleuze and Guattari's (1989) 'smooth spaces' and 'striations' where established, dominant discourses informing disciplinary discourse boundaries hold sway, as illustrated in Figure 28 (p.199).

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, in addition to sustained exposure to legitimised (field-congruent) reading, disciplinary fields are further reinforced for undergraduates via positive reinforcement through the setting of particular summative writing assignments, as well as receiving feedback and grades that reward certain types of academic writing as opposed to others.

> *At university I would read continuously and take comments about my writing on board and continuously sought to improve my writing.* (Siobhan)

The Deleuzean contingency and situatedness of undergraduate academic writing practices is therefore, often not experienced as such by undergraduates. Once individuals have successfully acquired appropriate academic writing practices, and the subsequent academic success that they

facilitate compliance to dominant writing practices can be experienced as personal, cathartic and absolute. As Alice wrote:

> *Once I 'got it', I got competent at it quite quickly and enjoyed the feeling of writing in an academic style when I was a student. It felt grown up and important.* (Alice)

Moreover a statement like Martha's below, recalls the way in which Deleuze and Guattari's striated lines (see Figure 28, p.204) can also function to create a 'fit' between individuals, positive academic writing and their disciplinary field.

> *[…] it [academic writing as an undergraduate] really was a struggle at first …but then when I began to get it there was a real buzz and everything followed on from that because then it all fitted in really well and I began to think differently through writing from in other ways I had been thinking. It was all about what you'd read and then you came up with different things when you start writing and that's quite exciting when that happens.* (Martha)

In Martha's account, '*getting'* undergraduate academic writing practices can be represented as an alignment between individual and field. She illustrates how conscious acquisition of the dominant writing practices, of any disciplinary field, acts to confirm or realise a positive writing identity for students that, '*all fitted in really well'*. However, the neat fit achieved between dominant academic writing practices, and the subjectivity and ontology of the individual writer, is seductive (and dangerous) precisely because it feels so comfortable, so '*right*'. One could argue therefore that the dominance of field-congruent academic writing discourages innovation and resistance by undergraduate writers, for whom it often feels too risky to move outside the safety of the striated spaces that constitute what they know of 'their field'. Alternatively, field-congruence is a discourse position that is more likely to feel 'natural' or 'right'. However, what it may also mean is that an individual has absorbed the strictures of the dominant academic writing practices in their field, to the extent that they experience them as their own internalised judgements and preferences.

7.4 Post-graduate Writing Experiences

7.4.1 Undertaking an MA

> *I would describe myself as someone who produces academic writing as I write at postgraduate level and as such it must be academic surely? (Lona)*

As most lecturers have completed one or more post-graduate qualifications it was useful in the elicitation to look at how they felt about academic writing practices at the first postgraduate level. The plethora of publications aimed at Master's Level study, along with endless institutional debates about what constitutes 'M level teaching and learning', could be seen as testimony to the much commodified nature of writing at this level. As MAs are usually the minimum professional qualification required for employment in the higher education sector, achieving one signifies at least a measure of professional proficiency. For this reason, MAs in Education, in particular, have functioned as important markers for individuals in terms of the higher education job market (Stierer, 2000). This might help explain the emotion invested in achieving a Masters and the confidence instilled in those who have completed one. In this way, Masters, and the kinds of academic writing they require, represent an important step in the inscription of a higher education professional writing identity for individuals.

Entry on to a Masters programme appeared to produce a strong feeling of transition, or *'stepping up',* as described in the statement below.

> *Before starting MA studies it [my academic writing] was a bit 'immature'. I was very aware that my writing needed to get to another level if I was going to succeed at this new level. (Valerie)*

As with undergraduate writing practices there is a specific awareness of the need, at Masters level, to address and comply not only with disciplinary-based theory at a higher level, but with new, specifically post-graduate, academic writing practices. This understanding is often gained at some personal cost, especially if there had been a length of time between undergraduate and post-graduate study.

I felt fear at first, I did not really know how I was supposed to write at this level, it had been a long time, but that was something I just had to get over. (Den)

My MA was a reminder after several years of not studying formally that I could still do it. Even though there were times when I felt like crying or pulling my hair out it was a process of getting back into the saddle, flexing old muscles. (Miriam)

I felt fear that my writing would not make the grade. (Susan)

Having to write academically again was a shock to the system initially. (Helen)

The intense physical metaphors used to describe this process of transition appear at every stage of post-graduate and professional transitions covered in this study. They reflect the importance to lecturers in higher education of gaining professional qualifications and status, and they point to the anguish involved in producing the 'right' kind of academic writing. Nonetheless, Masters were perceived as necessary and important staging posts on the way to greater academic writing confidence. Den, for example, got over his initial fears and:

[…] then felt satisfaction and then pride in the kind of 'crafting' skills I felt I had got good at by the end of my Masters […]

A growing sense of confidence in academic writing was evident in the statements below which describe how some individuals they felt after they had completed their Masters qualification.

When completing my Masters, I felt much more confident and able to write academically. (Gail)

My Masters proved I could write at a higher level. It gave me the confidence to go on to the next stage. (Miriam)

One reason for this growing confidence may be the extent to which writing at Masters Level, especially in Education Studies, introduces students to a greater conceptual/theoretical understanding of everyday professional practices, such as academic writing. As such, Masters not only introduce them to discussions about what constitutes specialist practice-based knowledge, but more importantly, from the point of view of this study, it requires them to package that knowledge using more reflective/reflexive academic writing practices than previously required. This is because reflective/reflexive writing is viewed as a particularly appropriate means of assessing professional, practical experience.

> *At postgraduate level, doing my Masters, the academic writing seemed very much more about structure, criticality of argument, and having something worthwhile to say….[it] was about taking a stance I think and working towards trying to convince the reader of something.(Marie)*

There is something in what Marie says here that suggests a newly heightened awareness of disciplinary-based field boundaries and her possible place within them at postgraduate level. It is embodied in the words '*criticality*' and '*taking a stance'*, which denote that positionality has come more into play than at undergraduate level. This accords with a sense that her sense of her disciplinary field is becoming a little more stretched, that its boundaries are becoming more fluid.   From here on in, academic writing practices are not just about articulating/reproducing dominant knowledge discourses in the field, increasingly they require individuals to overtly position themselves, ontologically, using a critical rationale, (overtly or implicitly) in relation to dominant discourses (consciously or unconsciously). Moreover, these ontological and epistemological considerations require more nuanced academic writing practices than had previously been the case.

7.4.2 PhD/Professional Doctorate in Education

As discussed in Chapter 4, the stakes around embarking on and completing a doctoral thesis are very high. The achievement of a PhD or Professional Doctorate qualification is mediated, especially in the humanities and social sciences, though the production and defence of a written doctoral text. Doctoral texts, therefore, operate as a schematic metonym within the domain of higher education legitimising individuals' status and identity simultaneously as professional academic writers and academics.

> *The thesis is my academic flag sent out in the world – I am more than it and yet in terms of an academic identity it does/it will brand me – I feel judged and want to be accorded the value that it accrues by participating in the production of such a prestigious product of the professional world I am engaged in.* (Miriam)

However, ongoing struggles with academic writing practices often start all over again when embarking on a doctorate. This is because it represents yet another academic writing transition where any previous experience of and success in academic writing (as undergraduates and even at Masters Level) count for little.

*By the time I got to PG levels (MA) I thought I had cracked it only to find at doctoral level I had not! (*Susan)

*Well the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about writing for my Ed Doc is the assignments coming up and that it was really informative to engage in the whole thing of 'am I getting the level right? (*Helen)

*I don't think I have got anywhere yet, I did well at university and have done the assignments and that was all fine and then didn't do it for decades and you come back for the Ed Doc and it's like aaarrrgghhh!! (*Martha*)*

Clearly writing a PhD and/or Professional Doctorate (in Education) can often turn out to be a very different writing experience from Masters or other M Level programmes such as PGCE. Each new qualification requires a move into a different writing space from the one previously inhabited, and this is nowhere more apparent than the change from Masters to doctoral level.

At PhD level the type of academic writing required is a large step-up from even Masters Level. (Gill)

This 'step up' is often synonymous with the idea that doctorates are perceived as the most elite and possibly esoteric or rarefied form of academic writing. The academic writing practices involved in doctoral writing are clearly experienced as part of a very distinct community of practice into which individuals find themselves, sometimes painfully, inducted.

For even baby academics like me, it's part of your whole grounding as an academic writer that you become sceptical and it's that scepticism and being able to both justify a position and a state of uncertainty that is so difficult to grasp, because perhaps you've read three different things and you don't agree with any of them so you're in a state of uncertainty but that might still be a valid state to be in but you then have to route it through your writing towards some kind of position, you do in the end have to make a decision about what you think and how you are going to write about it. (Helen)

[…] you go into an Ed Doc or a PhD and suddenly it's not just enough to read and understand something and it's not just enough to be able to kind of enumerate that knowledge back into a conversation, you've got to do all that but then you've got to go the extra mile and got to hit the ground running and go deeper and write at a more conceptual level (Miriam)

One can argue that the perceived academic writing credentials of the doctoral supervisory team are a vital aspect of their authority. They are the people perceived to have the knowledge and expertise to get their supervisees through the doctorate.

> *I would say my tutors at the Institute of Education who are both well-known authors in Early Years have been a big influence, their encouragement and insights into the effort they put into their work has been helpful.* (Ian)

However, as 'experts' in their field, supervisors can also be quite intimidating for their supervisees:

> *Although I have now started my PhD I still feel very much a novice and still in awe of my supervisors.* (Gail)

Although Directors of Study (DOS) and supervisory teams are ostensibly appointed for their subject expertise, it has been argued that through their comments on the *presentation of knowledge*, that they, albeit somewhat elliptically, exert degrees of disciplinary power over supervisees' doctoral writing practices (Kiley and Mullins, 2002). This is due, in part, to the intimate, more private doctoral relationship that often means that supervisors are the only audience for a thesis during its gestation.

> *My DOS was hugely important as she gave me the confidence to think I could do it.* (Lesley)

Certainly, supervisors and their students often work together closely within a professional environment where dominant disciplinary and writing discourses intersect, inscribe and determine particular paradigms or communities of practice. As Johnson et al. (2010) write, doctorates:

> […] are required by formal legislation to be subject to 'supervision', which means that both the student (the 'candidate') and the dissertation are to be constructed under the authorised and authorising gaze of an already-established researcher, standing in, in some sense, for the field of study in question and for the Academy more generally. (p.142)

One might expect, therefore, to find that a majority of doctoral candidates cite their doctoral supervisory teams as the most significant influence on their development of a field-congruent, post-graduate academic writing style. This influence can be a positive one:

The biggest influence on my writing at doctoral level was my PhD supervisor [...] He helped me to learn to cut through the waffle and just say what I mean. (Rose)

I would have to say my supervisory team for my PhD have had the most influence on my writing recently, as they have spent some considerable time with me and continuously checked and advised me on my writing ability. (Siobhan)

My DOS have really guided me carefully through the whole process of writing the Ed Doc, it has been trial and error all the way, with me making the mistakes and them helping me sort them out. (Helen)

Or negative:

I felt I was just expected to learn how to write at doctoral level. I sort of worked it out as I went along but I know that I could have done with more support as I often got things wrong. We got plenty of input about methodology and literature reviews but that is not the same as working out how to write them up. We never got anything about that [...] (Lesley)

Initially my doctoral supervisors were very critical about my writing, it was not the right level, it was not academic enough, it was too subjective, looking back I can see what they mean but at the time I struggled to produce what they wanted. (Miriam)

Studies of PhD supervision relationships have often focused on close-grained transmission pedagogies that foster master and novice relationships. These include the iterative cycle of producing writing, which is read by the supervisor, then discussed with the candidate then rewritten and further discussed and so on. This cycle allows the supervisors to not only monitor the content of a thesis, but to reify 'appropriate' doctoral writing practices (Johnson et al., 2000).

As a PhD student I felt bound by convention and by structure and I had real difficulty with finding the right style for my doctoral writing [...] this was unfortunate as it was something which my DOS was very particular about. (Bob)

Frow (1988) reflects how, through this kind of unequal relationship, the doctoral process assigns:

[…] a structural role to insecurity [as it] challenges the candidate's sense of worth (p.319)

I am always trying to impress my Director of Studies. (Susan)

> *I think that the process of writing my thesis has made me less confident as a writer as I worry constantly about achieving the required level (Martha)*

One can, however, argue that academic writing at doctoral level creates just another, albeit more prestigious, writing 'self' or identity, which is part of a long line of writing identities assumed by professionals working in academia. This reflects Butler's (1995) notion of multiple, plastic identities which was discussed in Chapter 5. For example, section 7.6, 'Academic Writing as a Professional Practice' (p. 226) explores how post-doctorally, many academics, in order to get published, find themselves taking on, or at least considering, other new, equally challenging post-doctoral professional writing identities.

Far from being an exercise in Enlightenment-informed autonomy and originality, the doctoral thesis as a literacy product or artefact is often experienced as the final capitulation to dominant academic writing discourses characterising the wider disciplinary field; not least, because candidates are often carefully steered towards presenting doctoral work through very traditional and uniform academic writing practices by their supervisory teams:

> *[...] with the PhD you are terrified of writing in those areas like an experimental or creative way. Writing a doctorate can be a very conservative experience, mine certainly was.* (Bob)

> *[...] my experience with the Ed D assignments involved not just doing all the reading but of having to write what the tutors want [...] in the way they want you to write it. Needless to say I worry constantly about getting it wrong! (*Martha*)*

The intensity of emotion evident here recalls the earlier struggles with undergraduate writing discussed previously. Stepping up to doctoral writing clearly made some individuals in this study feel insecure as they worried about what their supervisors thought about their writing at this level. Moreover, as individuals progress with their doctorates, they may come into conflict with their supervisors over the form their writing takes. It is not uncommon for the advice of a supervisor to follow what Yeatman (1995, p.11) calls an 'Oedipal narrative', where disagreement and or resistance may lead to the supervisee's style of writing being undermined or even rejected.

> *There were a few times where I nearly fell out with my supervisor about the direction I wanted the thesis to take which was very different from what she wanted. As time*

> *went on I did try to fight my corner more, but initially I just used to bite my tongue and try to do what she wanted me to do. (*Miriam*)*

> *At PhD level, despite my understanding through literary theory that an 'objective' stance is a rhetorical device, I knuckled down to the largely empiricist conventions required of my writing by my supervisor [...]* (Darren)

Phrases like '*biting my tongue*' and '*knuckling down*' clearly sum up the felt intensity of the supervisor/supervisee relationship, reflecting how some individuals felt constrained by supervisors exerting authority over how their doctorates should be written.

Doctorates are often cited as 'evidence' that academics have proved that they can generate academic writing that sits comfortably within the given dispositif of their 'professional writing in higher education habitus'.

> *Largely as a result of writing my PhD thesis over the last five years, my skills as a writer have developed considerably. Not only does the process of academic writing come more naturally to me now but I also feel much more confident in the way in which I am able to express my thoughts/ideas through the written medium.* (Tim)

For Tim, producing a doctorate seemed to involve a process of internalising and naturalising a discipline's dominant academic writing practices. This, as discussed in Chapter 5 and above in the section on undergraduate writing, is a process that begins very early on in an academic writer's career.

> *Since I started writing for my dissertation it [academic writing] became second nature.* (Luis)

Luis intimates that the academic writing practices he developed, or was inducted into via the doctoral process, now feel 'natural' (although of course one can argue that they are as ideological as any other form of writing).

Successful doctorates also signal the progression from an insecure undergraduate academic writing identity, to the more established professional writing identity expected of academics.

> *I think that my writing has improved with age (!!) I certainly find academic writing much easier now.* (Rose).

> *I have grown in confidence and am therefore more assertive in my academic writing since completing my Ed Doc.* (Den)

> *Over time my academic writing has become less over-wrought and I am much freer in my assertions than I was when I wrote my doctorate.* (Alan).

> *I am prepared, even willing to take risks with my ideas and writing now that I have an established publishing record.* (Zander)

They can also give academics a palpable boost in confidence about their academic writing and a licence to be more creative and take risks.

> *[…] after I got my Viva my supervisor said 'well you can go and write anything you want now'.* (Bob)

> *I am glad I did it, but all those years ago it felt like a chore. Now I write what I want, not want my examiners want!* (Den)

There is a sense in these statements that Bob and Den feel released from the perceived strait-jacket of doctoral writing practices.

The doctorate also signals, at least to other professionals in the field, an important professional milestone, namely the final formal confirmation that, as one participant put it, '*I had arrived*'. This statement reflects the idea of how, at the end of a successful doctoral process, the candidate is reborn as:

> […] an intelligible academic identity… a licensed scholar, a `doctor', who, appropriately credentialled, is deemed safe to pursue research unsupervised, autonomously. (Johnson, Lee and Green, 2010, p.136)

This position/perception, however, can work in two distinctly different ways. On the one hand as a 'doctor' one can supervise doctoral candidates, one is therefore potentially in a position to become one of the professional elite for one's discipline, potentially another gate-keeper for those who come after you. On the other hand, as alluded to briefly above and in Section 7.9.1 'Hybridity and Innovation' (p.265), post-doctorally individuals may feel that they have earned the freedom to write more freely as they move beyond, and even seek to challenge, dominant academic writing practices extant in their discipline.

7.5 Communities of Practice

For students, the idea, if not the reality, of writing communities expresses itself most commonly through their experience of an acculturation model, as discussed in Chapter 4. For academics however, support for academic writing often appears to reside in their membership of professional networks and the personal relationships that individuals have built up within and outside of their own higher education institutions. These professional networks and relationships create, it can be argued, diffuse and shifting communities of practice which are another way in which a 'writing in higher education habitus' for lecturers is fostered in the Academy. The variety and informality of these professional writing relationships and communities (both physical and virtual) may be a necessary response to the paucity of formal academic writing development for staff in academia. As Lea and Stierer (2009) write:

> Universities have largely ignored the (often tacit) learning challenges faced within their own organisations by their largest single employee group – namely, lecturers…the scholarly and professional literature on workplace learning suffers somewhat from a blind-spot with respect to university lecturers' professional development. (p.421)

Individuals often negotiate this 'blind-spot' using colleagues as 'literacy brokers' (Lillis and Curry, 2010) in various ways, such as working and/or discussing course materials with others, co-teaching, reading each other's work and helping with wider reading suggestions.

> *I've signed up to join a cross-Uni writing group but I feel very apprehensive about it. I need to do it but I shall feel very inadequate.* (Marie)

> *We always confer with each other about the course content. We have large teams of people working on course materials and it would be stupid to reinvent the wheel.* (Miriam)

The importance and ubiquity of these professional relationships and networks may also be indicative of the essentially rhizomic nature of academic writing practices within the 'higher education writing habitus', which, as Figure 28 illustrates, is multifaceted and constantly changing.

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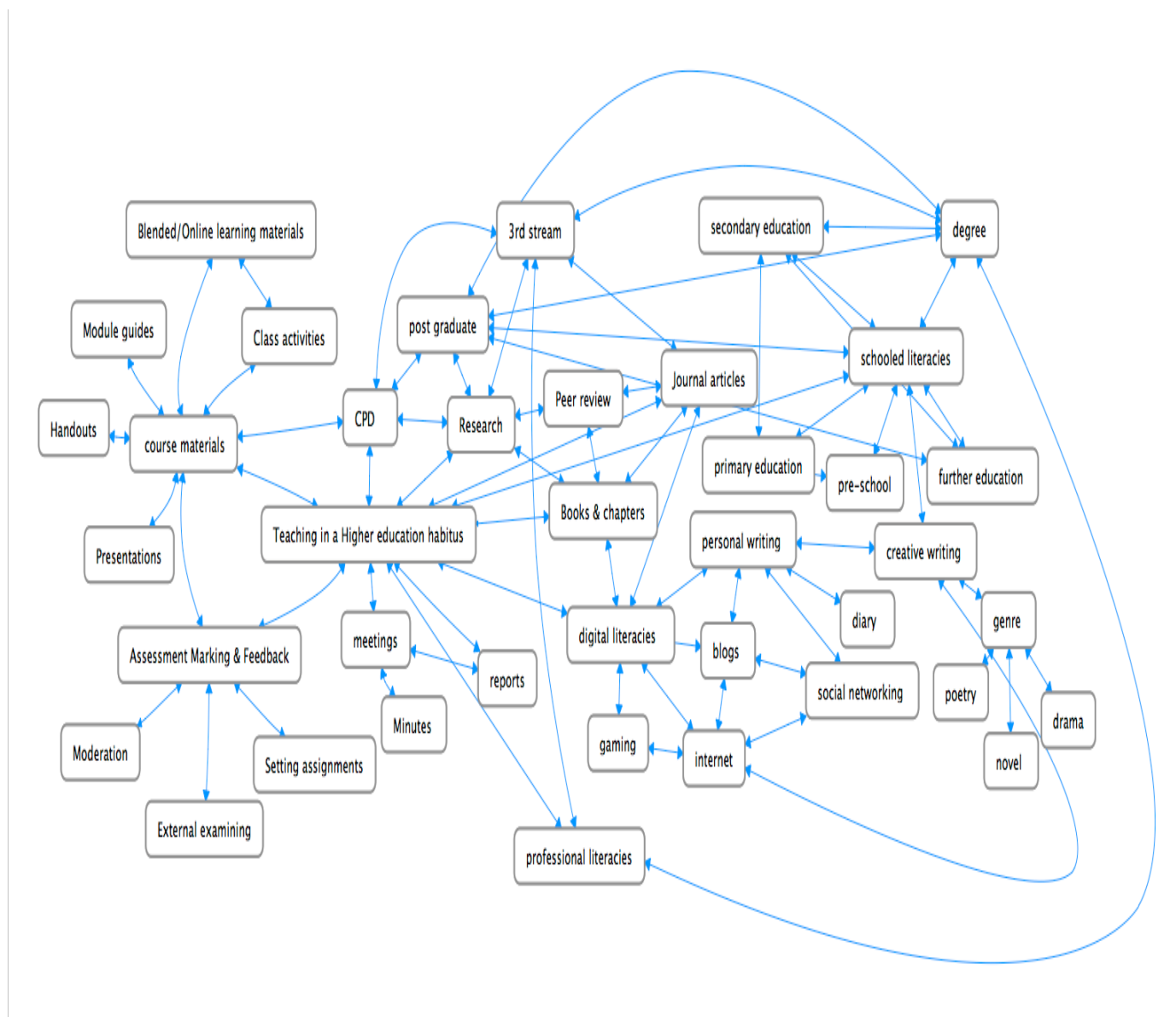
Figure 28: Teaching in a Higher Education Habitus

Significantly, if not surprisingly, given the discussions around the dearth of academic writing support for higher education lecturers in Chapter 4 and 5, it is very unusual for academics to receive any formal support around academic writing development once they have joined higher education.

> *[...]If we did it was minimal as I can't remember it.* (Den)

> *I can't think of any formal training or education that has helped me as a writer...* (Alan)

I have never received any training in academic writing per se – it has been more finding out how to do it myself. (Helen)

Given the absence of formal training and support, the importance of informal and reciprocal relationships between work colleagues cannot be underestimated. In post-1992 institutions, in particular, peer support and in-house writing communities represent a shift away from the traditional image of an autonomous higher education academic/expert who works alone, as described by Boud (2001). In very teaching-intensive institutional settings, such as the one used in this case study, lecturers often teach and research in teams as there is less time for individual research projects outside of doctoral and teaching work. In such institutions, lecturers are often taken on for their teaching or professional knowledge of vocational areas, not their research and publication records, as is more often the case in pre-1992 research-intensive universities. This often results in the need and desire by less research-active lecturers to engage with colleagues more experienced than themselves with regard to future research and publishing opportunities. The influence and input of these more experienced academic colleagues can be perceived as a way of helping to demystify the whole process of doctoral writing and writing for publication.

I think my writing has improved, as I now know who to ask and where to go for support. (Laura)

Lecturers are also often members of formal writing communities that exist beyond their own institution, through their involvement with conferences, online collaboration, discussion groups, as well as editing, peer and book reviewing for journals. These activities are often valued because they inform and help develop professional academic writing practices.

[…] I really enjoy reviewing and editing as I learn so much from other people's writing. (Susan)

I have written a couple of articles with other people and that's quite interesting and also I think it makes you look at your own writing at the style and with the tone and does that match with how somebody else does it. (Martha)

However, no writing community or group is ever static in terms of its shape or purpose over time. What power it has often derives from a central sense of what is 'right' or 'expected' from

its adherents, which in time can become institutionalised and fixed. Critical analysis of communities of practice and the associated concept of reification help to conceptualise:

> […] our understanding of the social construction of knowledge, the co-ordination of human activity and the role of institutions and cultural artefacts in these processes. (Barton and Hamilton, 2005, p.33)

Indeed, Wenger (1998) argued that participation in a community of practice *requires* reification, stating:

> […] any community of practice produces abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms and concepts that reify something of that practice in a congealed form. (pp. 58-59)

Lave and Wenger (1991) examine how individuals are inducted into different social practices through artefacts, relationships and roles that are produced through reification.

> *I don't think I have particularly changed in my attitudes to writing, I have always enjoyed writing but always found it difficult to express points clearly. The more I work with and talk to other writers the more I realise this is a common experience and what is required is the dedication to work at refining work and not be put off. (*Peter*)*

This reification of academic writing practices in higher education is clearly manifest in the myriad texts produced and consumed by different groups, including formal and informal communities of practices across disciplines in the academy.

> *[Learning to write academically] has definitely been a social practice and I don't think any of my academic writing has been thought about or written anything without the input and support of others. (Gail)*

Wenger (1998) outlines four key consequences of reification that can be usefully applied to academic writing practices and the texts that they produce, such as, key disciplinary textbooks. These consequences include the ability of practices and texts to evoke meanings, their transportability across different contexts and time, their potential to endure and their focussing effect. Scollen and Scollen (2003) look critically at the means by which reification may be the result of:

> […] one specialised form arising from the more general fluidity of social interaction. (p.16)

Academic writers pick up and use language and syntactical structures employed by other writers writing on the same subject, or from the same point of view, whilst simultaneously attempting to graft their personal styling onto the writing practices they use to articulate their ideas. Over time this constant reiteration and re-articulation of shared ideas and positions can reify into stylistic conventions that exert a hegemonic, disciplinary power over the performance and reception of academic writing practices, resulting in the fixing of 'meanings and the power relations that they embody' (Wenger, 1998, p.287).

This process of reification promotes shared understandings between community members that result, over time, in particular kinds of social interaction that binds people together in various discourse communities, some formal and professional, others less formal and diffuse.

> *[…] my expertise, such as it is was really developed and changed through co-authoring, both as the 'junior' and as the lead author.* (Dennis)

> *Conferences are a great way of testing out ideas with other people. I have always enjoyed discussing my work and listening to others. It can be very invigorating for your own writing to put yourself out there. (*Miriam)

However, most often, academic writing is experienced as an individual activity, conducted alone, with little contact with other writers.

> *[…] it is a solitary activity, with the exception of the odd conference presentation. This is partly through choice although I expect I would benefit from going a bit more public. (Alice)*

> *I tend to prefer to write alone (sole authored papers and book) but have written with others on projects and edited books. (Lucy)*

> *I am rarely in contact with other writers except for the doctoral students I support. (Rose)*

> *I would describe my writing as an individual activity, I think that this is probably because I automatically think of my PhD work, but I often like to sit by myself and write, I suppose it becomes more social when people then read that work. (Lona)*

These comments point to the persistence of an individualised subject or writing self, as discussed in Chapter 5.

7.6 Academic Writing as a Professional Practice

In Chapter 5, this thesis contends that academic writing practices are central to the development of lecturers' positive professional identities. As such, they are an important part of the tangle of personal interests, institutional demands, disciplinary boundaries and professional responsibilities which together produce what Larner (2000, p.14) calls, the 'messy actualities' of lecturers' lived experience. This tangle influences how individual lecturers negotiate professional identities and navigate their way through increasingly complex and unpredictable higher education work environments. However, Lea and Stierer (2000) note:

> There has been little exploration into writing itself as professional practice. We know very little about the kinds of writing that HE lecturers do in their everyday professional work, or how the social practices and the social relations around these texts constitute professional practice... (p.151)

The ability to produce a professional writing style is one of the ways individuals can establish a credible professional academic identity, as such it is extremely important. As Siobhan wrote:

> *I have longed for my own writing style.*

Chapter 5 discussed how academics often spend years developing an 'academic writing in higher education habitus' as they pass through different educational settings. In the formation of any discoursal self, Ivanic's work (1998) makes it clear that writers are constantly being made and remade/in a conscious process of 'becoming'. This process produces a sense of being in a state of continual development as a professional academic writer.

> *I often critique my own work and seek to improve my writing ability, I don't think this will ever change in my continuous need to make my writing more academic.* (Lona)

During their development as academic writers, many academics go through a painful developmental/experiential process requiring similar identity work to that which they undertook as undergraduates. As 'professional academics' they are often conscious that they are actively creating, and then inhabiting, new writing identities which encourage colleagues and managers in the academy to see them as legitimate 'academic writers'.

> *I know there's structure and style I need to produce…and even now I'm still trying to* work out a professional writing style. (Bob)

As Tim noted:

> The more opportunities you can take to practise writing professionally, the more developed your skills as an academic writer can become.

In different ways Bob, Lona and Tim position themselves discursively as professional academic writers, yet they remain 'works in progress', who despite successful completion of their PhDs, still feel that they are in a process of 'becoming' (Colley and James, 2005) as professional academic writers . As discussed in Chapter 5, they continue to refine and adapt their academic writing practices post-doctorally, as published writers.

Echoing my own complex reconceptualisation of academic writing posited in Chapter 3, it can be very difficult to pin-down what one means by the process of professional academic writing.

> *I don't know if craft is the right word for what I mean* when I talk about developing an *academic writing style for myself… so I'm trying to think of something to replace that, I think skill doesn't capture it either, I think it is something you can get better at.* (Martha)

Martha's language in this statement reflects her inability to articulate precisely what she thinks academic writing is. (One could say she is looking at it through a glass, darkly.) What she does know, however, is that she has to try and produce something that is recognised as academic writing in order to achieve, or maintain, her professional identity as a lecturer in higher education. She employs different nouns to try to encapsulate what she thinks it might be. It is, *'craft'* or *'skill',* however, ultimately she finds both terms inadequate. Perhaps they express something too artisanal which does not fit with the dominant, noticeably techniscist, discourses underpinning conceptions of academic writing in higher education discussed in Chapter 3. Still in her quote there remains a sense of needing to define the *'something'*, which can stand for academic writing.

She seems to feel it is 'out there', but nonetheless she cannot define it. In its materiality this *'something'* can be, (must be?) improved on; '*I think it is something you can get better at'*. This belief in self-improvement is a familiar neo-liberal refrain, that in terms of academic writing practices reflects the continued discursive power of the autonomous model (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) on perceptions of academic writing development practices in higher education. This neo-liberal model explicitly informs the relationship that lecturers often have with academic writing practices, which is discussed in the section on performativity (pg.245).

7.6.1 Recognition, mimesis and subjectification

This section analyses the ways in which academics often learn to recognise and reproduce academic writing practices that ultimately inform and confirm their professional academic writing identities in higher education. In many ways, this process is a continuation of their induction into academic writing experiences as under and post-graduates. Like those earlier educational experiences, adopting particular professional academic identities also involves a conscious transition into certain professional academic writing practices. This professional identity-work is treated in the thesis as an ongoing, further development of lecturers' 'writing in higher education habitus'.

> *I would say that academic writing professionally it is not just about what I think regarding a subject area, it's about me taking into account other authors' perspectives and referencing their work effectively in my own work.* (Lona)

Lona's assumption of a personal, professional academic writing identity is complex, '*it is not just about what I think'*. Although on the surface this might seem odd, as one consistently expressed criterion for academic writing, in this study, as in others, is that it is only worth publishing/presenting if one has something new to say. Lona, conversely, regards professional writing as taking responsibility to conform to the disciplinary power of the field she wishes to contribute to. In this sense she is, to develop an idea raised in Chapter 5, projecting a professional writing identity that situates her inside what Bartlett and Holland (2002) call a 'figured world of literacy'. This identity, through the adoption of certain academic writing practices, creates an 'identity in practice' and has symbolic resonance with her chosen field. As Lona writes, she is consciously *'taking into account other authors' perspectives and referencing their work effectively'.* In this way, she appears to accept that her professional

academic writing outputs are legitimised through their acknowledged and conscious, proximate relationship to other, legitimated, academic writing in the field. This enables Lona to regulate herself '*effectively*' in accordance with the dominant disciplinary discourses informing her field. They regulate not only what can be written about (content) but how it should be written (form), just as they did when she was an undergraduate and Masters level writer.

There is an implicit hegemony operating here which Miriam translates as follows:

> *Seriously if your writing does not place you somewhere recognisably in the field […] where are you? Nowhere?*

One can argue that this interconnectedness between an individual's work and that of established writers creates a 'weight of authority':

> *Academic writing is writing which always has to 'stand on the shoulders of giants' in terms of how one has to use references to one's wider reading to support the points one wants to make in one's own work.* (Lucy)

This need to refer constantly to the work of others in the field can cause some anxiety, especially to lecturers' new to professional academic writing practices.

> *[…] there always seems to be such a barrier to get through before you can say what you want to say and then you can only say it if someone else has already written it in a book or paper!(Alice)*

However, it is common for academics to defer happily to the work of established writers strongly identified with their field, in order to establish the co-ordinates and credentials of their own academic writing.

> *I think our own writing is influenced by those writers whom we are drawn to and see as good models on which to base our writing'.* (Tim)

> *[…] reading other peoples' work has helped me define my style. When reading other academic' work I often have an opinion on their writing style, whether positive or negative. (*Lona*)*

The mimetic process of becoming a successful professional academic writer is therefore not dissimilar to the process of becoming a successful under or postgraduate student. By embracing

intertextuality within their disciplinary field in this way, professional academic writers develop a recognisably discipline-based writerly self that claims kinship with, and shares subjectification alongside, other already established writerly selves who are mutually acknowledged within the same disciplinary field. In this way mimesis ensures that professional academic writing practices operate like other:

> […] forms of education or 'normalization' [which are] imposed upon an individual and consist in making him or her change points of subjectification, always moving toward a higher, nobler one in closer conformity with the supposed ideal. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.129)

> *I have learned so much from other people's writing [...] clarity, modes of expressing their ideas, cohesion. They have all helped me develop my own professional writing style… to see how academic writing is constructed is to be able to use it in your own writing.* (Susan)

> *The more you read the more confident you become in your own writing style as a researcher in academia.* (Helen)

> *I am a great reader and I think reading others people's work has helped me define my own writing style as a professional, published writer* […] *the more you read the more confident you become in your own style.* (Valerie)

This perception quite curiously suggests that out of familiarity with their disciplinary field comes alterity, not sameness, because, as the statements above suggest, wider reading in the discipline is felt to produce an individuated, personal writing style, expressed as variations on *'my own writing style'*. One can argue, however, that this paradox of attribution is a result of meconnaisance or misrecognition (as discussed in the introduction to this chapter) which ensures that the 'taken for grantedness' of intellectual individualism, which operates as a cornerstone of academia, is a recurring dominant higher education discourse. Indeed, it is so dominant, it trumps mimesis as a characteristic of academic writing in the Academy.

Developing as a professional academic writer may involve adopting new writing practices (the journal article for example rather than the essay) or the adaption of existing practices (the ability to write up ever more complex research projects), either way, academic writing remains an essentially imitative, or more precisely, mimetic act, which one can argue inevitably results in subjectification. Here, for example, is Alice writing at some length about her experience of entering a new disciplinary field when writing her PhD:

For me being introduced to other writers in this field was transformatory – having a sciency health care background meant that this literature was entirely new to me and gave me a whole new perspective on many things in life e.g. how I read newspapers, how I interpret other media (e.g. women's' mags, TV shows), how I feel about other people's response to media; how I read academic texts etc. Undoubtedly this exposure will have influenced my academic writing but, apart from specifically referencing this body of work, I would be hard pushed to put my finger on what this influence is.

Alice's comments express how mimesis (which, it can be argued, is the influence that she cannot put her finger on) seeps into individuals' ontologies and ultimately subjectivities, affecting how they write.

A denial of mimesis may be indicative of the ways in which dominant discourses about academic writing operate as a complex 'regime of truth' in academia. For example, the disciplinary power of the field always creates a form of subjectification in which lecturers' personal perceptions of, or enunciations about their position as academic writers runs in accordance with, to one extent or another, dominant academic writing practices in their chosen field(s). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain this phenomena in the following way:

> [From] subjectification issues a subject of enunciation, [which is] a function of a mental reality determined by that point. Then from the subject of enunciation issues a subject of the statement, in other words, a subject bound to statements in conformity with a dominant reality (of which the mental reality just mentioned is a part, even when it seems to oppose it). (p.129)

This notion of a 'dominant reality' is expressed by Valerie's assertion:

My academic writing is an expression of who I am and what I think. (Valerie)

One could argue that in making this statement Valerie has internalised the 'dominant reality' in higher education which holds that professional academic writing is an inherently individual act of self-expression, instead, as argued in this thesis, an act of mimesis. Her self-expression also presents as a superficially straightforward ontological statement, namely, 'what I write represents who I am'. However, such a statement can be said to be actually bound 'in conformity' to a dominant reality in academia rather than an 'assertion of 'truth'. This is because one can argue that whoever Valerie thinks she 'is', and whatever she thinks 'she thinks', are not fixed, or the product of untrammelled free thought expressed unproblematically

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through her academic writing. More precisely, one can argue that such ontological assumptions can be deconstructed as a form of subjectivication to dominant neo-liberal, humanist conceptions of self and intellect in the Academy.

This notion of subjectification is also illustrated by Darren's response to the question 'what for you characterises academic writing?' He writes:

> *With academic writing you should get a feel for the way an argument unfolds. When that happens it does become kind of internalised. You should be able to follow it,* because it's clear, or it isn't any good. (Darren)

From a feminist/New Materialist point of view the language that Darren chooses reflects how social/professional practices, like academic writing, are literally embodied or as Braidotti (2000) puts it 'enfleshed' in the minds and bodies of the individuals who use and experience them, so that they operate like a Deleuzean refrain:

> […] a sort of memory that repeats and is capable of lasting through sets of discontinuous variations, while remaining faithful to itself. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.159)

In this way, dominant academic writing practices can be viewed as a reified form of lived experience, expressed as epistemes and ways of thinking, which more easily coalesce into representations of field-congruent 'social reality'. Darren talks viscerally of, '*getting a feel*', for the published academic writing in his field, and how, as the 'good' academic writing unfolds its argument, its meaning becomes *'internalised'*. Darren appears to be arguing that, for him, academic writing (which appears to be the same as academic writing that he subjectively likes or approves of) should 'fold' the reader in. Similarly Lesley writes how:

> *Immersing yourself in good reading can help to model – unconsciously or not – ways of writing.* (Lesley)

For Lesley, subjectification is experienced as *'immersion'* in the writing practices of others and she is happy to 'swim', in a classic Bourdieusian sense, in her chosen field. For both of these participants the process of immersion or internalisation happens, one could say, because of the congruence that they have achieved between themselves and their disciplinary field.

Darren's internalisation of the practices of academic writing that speak positively to him, happens not just because he inhabits a shared and identifiable disciplinary space with the authors producing such works. Through his sense of '*internalisation*' he is also exemplifying Braidotti's (2000) radical sense of the material as a "[r]ethinking of the embodied structure of human subjectivity" (p.158). This refers to the way that Deleuzean subjectification removes individual subjectivity, whilst maintaining the illusion of agency. Indeed, subjectification seems on occasion, to heighten not lessen individuals' sense of subjectivity as personal. Darren's rejection of some academic writing as '*no good*' could translate as a subjective failure to '*feel*' or to be '*folded in*' by that writing. One can discern a similar difficulty in the following quote:

> At times I come across a noted academic who has great information that I want to read about, but their writing style is really hard to be engaged with and fully understand. (Lona)

Lona, because of her knowledge of the field, and her desire to belong within it, discriminates enough to recognise that she is dealing with a '*noted academic*', (that is, they have been legitimated by her disciplinary field), who has '*great information*' (the epistemological orientation is clearly field-congruent) so the content is not the problem. It is the '*writing style*' that she finds '*hard to be engaged with and fully understand*'. Like Darren, she does not feel '*folded in*' by this writing rather, she is shut out by it. This absence of felt congruence, which is presented agentically by the individuals who experience it here, could be re-presented either as a lack of familiarity or recognition with the '*particular discourse that reflects pre-established norms*', not a failure in the quality of the writing, as academic writing. For this reason, such a sense of incongruence is perhaps best understood as an ontological, rather than a stylistic failure.

The subjectification of individuals' academic writing, therefore, is one embodiment of a 'dispositif' which illustrates how 'the coupling of a set of practices' is 'made', that is, constructed, to make sense within 'a regime of truth' (Foucault, 2010a, p.18). Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 6, another complementary 'dominant reality' of traditional conceptualisations of academic writing, that sits alongside the assertion of a personal, unique 'academic voice', is the belief in an autonomous, subjective neoliberal educated self which is the source of that individuated academic voice (Ball, 2013). In such a dispositif, the practices of academic writing support a regime of truth in which 'good' professional academic writing

embodies a fully realised educated subject who speaks authoritively. Their authority derives from their assumption, or the conferment, of an 'expert' academic 'voice', which is allegedly the product of their own individual and highly educated, or schooled, thought processes. This dispositif, of course, runs contrary to the postmodern approach taken in this thesis with regard to questions concerning relationships between writing and identity. It argues conversely, that academic writing practices ensure the subjectification of educated identities within the Academy. This means that individuals who do not challenge the 'taken-for grantedness' of convention inevitably find themselves 'bound to statements' that 'ring true'. This is because such statements conform to a 'dominant reality', not because they are true, despite the fact that they may be experienced as unique and true to the individual uttering them. This is what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) mean when they talk of an oppositional 'mental reality'.

Dominant academic writing practices, moreover, are flexible enough to territorialise and reterritorialise academic levels and genres over time and space because all they require is recognisable forms of textual expression to assemble material in ways that 'make sense' within the field.

> *I think that in writing academically other people can get your perspective on specific subject areas. I have had other academics who have seen me present my work ask for information about any other publications I have produced. I think that this is highly important in academia as then I'm likely to be referenced in their work and then others will see it and so forth.* (Siobhan)

Siobhan expresses how field-congruent, dominant academic writing practices might be said to act as a kind of implicit DNA, linking and binding academic texts rhizomically through various connections and permutations within, and even across, different disciplinary fields.

7.7 Regimes of Truth informing Professional Academic Writing

In an attempt to deconstruct further the dominant discourses informing academic writing as a dispositif, the elicitation asked participants to identify what they felt characterised academic writing, as opposed to any other kinds of writing. The most commonly identified markers were *'clarity', 'purposefulness', 'belonging', 'positionality within a recognised field'* and

'cultural/social status'. All these characteristics presented as self-evident 'regimes of truth' to participants, although they can be critiqued to reveal how they are constructed and situated as social, specifically professional practices. In particular, academic writing seemed to be easily defined by its outward facing functions, which could be summed up by a number of order words that cropped up time and time again in the responses to the elicitation. These included, *'clarity', 'purposefulness', 'sense of audience', 'originality'* and *'status'*. The following section not only examines how frequently these order words were used in participants' statements, but critically analyses them as integral components of the dominant discourses informing academic writing practices in the Academy.

7.7.1 Clarity

The sheer number of statements using the terms *'clear', 'succinct'* and *'coherent'* to characterise 'good' academic writing can be viewed as significant.

> *Good academic writing should be clear and coherent'.* (Helen)

> *I look for clarity of expression, succinct writing, grammatical accuracy as well as checking whether the rationale of ideas/research seems sound. (*Jill*)*

> *I look for clarity of meaning in a succinct form. (Rose)*

> *I am looking for well explained studies that are coherent and cohesive. (*Lucy*)*

> *Mainly methodology and writing style in terms of coherence and consistency. (*Luis)

> *I am looking for it to be clear and concise and technically accurate, with paragraphs and generally grammatically competent with ideas clearly explained and clarity of expression. (*Gail*)*

> *Academic writing is a synthesis of ideas and experience in support of a clear, informative and persuasive argument.* (Peter*)*

These terms seem benign, who would not want academic writing to be *'clear', 'succinct'* and *'coherent'*? However, they are problematic because they are always presented as given and non-negotiable, partly because they are unquestionably placed on the positive side of a binary such as:

succinct/wordy

coherent/incoherent

clear/unclear

These binaries, whether implicitly or explicitly evoked in discussions about writing, automatically valorise clarity. However, it can be argued that clarity as a 'given' feature of 'good' academic writing simply illustrates the abiding influence of rationalist, empiricist concepts underlying the dominant discourses informing academic writing practices in higher education, as discussed in Chapter 3. Clarity prioritises a particular function of academic writing, namely the desire to make the world and its associated phenomena, primarily through research and academic writing, a more understandable, or 'known' place. Discursively, clarity positions academic writing as primarily expositional, concerned with explanation and clarification, not as has been suggested in earlier chapters of this thesis, about philosophising, problematising and complicating concepts, situations and experiences that cannot be explained clearly.

One can also argue that some ideas do not lend themselves to being orderly, measured and disciplined, neither can they be easily expressed in language and structures that are *clear',* *'succinct'* and *'coherent'*. Some ideas are not clear, the thoughts and ideas that they engender are not coherent and they cannot be explored succinctly or clearly, perhaps one can only see them *'through a glass darkly'*. Writers often find that their writing stutters and stammers as they seek to articulate and express what they mean when attempting to articulate difficult ideas. As Jill acknowledges, this is often the case in academic writing in higher education.

> *[…] I have a lot of trouble in aiming for clarity at a higher academic level […]*

The main issue with the dominant discourse around clarity in writing is that it positions grappling with difficulty as a staging post on the way to the clarity in writing, rather than a necessary consequence of attempting to work with inchoate, unruly concepts.

> *I find that my ideas don't fit comfortably in a box*-which has caused me difficulties/dilemmas as far as writing goes. (Alice)

It is interesting that, for Alice, ideas should fit comfortably in a box. In comparison, Chapter 6 makes a case for post-qualitative educational research on the basis that it accommodates ideas

'outside the box'. Indeed, venturing outside the box encourages Deleuzean 'lines of flight' that move the writer/researcher beyond the strictures and Deleuzean striations of dominant practice. One could argue in the light of that debate, that getting ideas to fit 'in a box' can only be achieved by the imposition of a restrictive ontology that screens out any inconvenient information which does not fit the rest of the picture, or narrative, that the writer is trying to create.

The terms *'clear, 'succinct'* and *'coherent'* are problematic therefore in that they do not allow for the inherent multiplicity and plasticity of meaning in any use of language. Succinct prose may give an impression of directness and clarity, but it may also enact an oversimplification, by concentrating on one meaning artificially, at the expense of other, possibly competing meanings. For example, Lyotard (1992) dissects the dangers inherent in the totalising functionality of clear and simple language in his analysis of Orwell's totalitarian 'Newspeak' (p.105). He demonstrates how Newspeak, like any form of linguistic propaganda, relies on the fiction that simple and clear language must be better, because it is purportedly more meaningful, more honest, less opaque, than language that is not. However, as discussed in Chapter 3 and 6, no language, even that which appears clear, is ever free of its historical, social and cultural contexts and the various complicating power relations that they entail. According to Lyotard (1992), to engage in writing that does more than reproduce dominant forms and meanings involves becoming engaged in a process of struggle with language's inchoate potentiality, irrespective of how clear or simple the intentions of the writer may be. Lyotard views this approach to writing as a struggle, a form of 'active resistance' (p.397) against dominant academic writing practices.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) also consistently argue against clarity, preferring to be overtly engaged in writing practices that not only speak against or beyond what has already been said, and agreed, but attempt to do so in unpredictable ways. One could therefore work to create different binaries from the dominant ones given above, such as:

<div align="center">

Simple/inert

Succinct/regulated

Clear/restricted

</div>

and use them to suggest that academic writing that defines itself as good, because it is *clear',* *'succinct'* and *'coherent',* runs the risk of creating a hyper-hegemonic ideality in which what is accepted as legitimate academic writing conforms to the 'mode of the already said' (Lyotard, 1992, p.107). In this vein Valerie asserts:

> *[Academic writing] is piece of work which is evidence-based showing a clear synthesis between writers' beliefs and values and what the research is saying.*

Her description articulates a classic modernist mind-set (the underlying principles of which have been comprehensively critiqued earlier in Chapter 6). According to Valerie's definition, the clarity of academic writing practices helps ensure production of empirical, '*evidence-based'* data which, unproblematically, through a *'clear synthesis'* enables the writer/researcher to align their '*beliefs and values'* (that is, overt subjectivity) with their research outcomes. Thus Valerie's agreed, or assumed, definition of clarity becomes a kind of glue that holds everything her definition of research presumes, together.

For John, clarity required *'disciplined objectives'* to be present in one's writing. This suggests that he felt that academic writing practices help to maintain control over the ideas and thoughts that one is trying to communicate through one's writing. This is a view that regards:

> […] scholarship and research as unruly practices in need of regulation. (MacLure, 2006, p.33)

Clarity, in this sense, equals orderly writing that is measured and disciplined, a function that suggests further binaries such as:

<div align="center">

Orderly/disorderly

Measured/unmeasured

Disciplined/undisciplined

</div>

Conversely, a lack of order and discipline in one's academic writing could be viewed positively as a form of resistance to 'the sober conventions of academic-writing-as-usual' (MacLure, 2006). Bob, for example, feels that his writing could/should be more speculative and tentative. He writes:

I quite enjoy exploring the more difficult theoretical sides and asking questions even though at times they may be half cock or sort of not quite formulated because if you're not sort of engendering some kind of discussion or debate in academic writing then what's the point.

Bob's willingness to accept that his writing might accommodate ideas that are '*half cock or sort of not quite formulated*' hints at the potentiality of a more undisciplined approach to academic writing and the kind of thought processes that it could accommodate. Bob wants his academic writing to be questioning and generative, to allow for '*some kind*' of '*discussion or debate*'. Uncertainty is interestingly what Bob feels gives his academic writing '*a point*'. This is a long way from Tim's earlier certainty that:

Academic writing is a synthesis of ideas and experience in support of an informative and persuasive argument. (Tim)

Bob may seem less assured, his *'I quite enjoy',* is less certain of its ground than Tim's earlier confident assertion that '*Academic writing is [...]*'. However, Bob's sense of academic writing suggests, one could argue, a more sophisticated understanding of what differentiates academic '*discussion or debate*' in higher education; which is that it may be less about presenting a '*persuasive argument*' and more about pushing boundaries or stretching disciplinary fields. Pushing too hard against the boundaries of one's field is, however, risky as failure, or refusal to reproduce '*pre-established norms*', deliberately or otherwise, could mean that one's academic writing might be deliberately excluded from a particular field as 'unacademic', or 'not academic enough'.

7.7.2 Purposefulness and Audience

The next most common characteristic that defined academic writing in the research was its essential purposefulness. Academic writing was perceived as an '*opportunity to have one's say', 'to get your work out there,* to *'present work',* as well as a *'chance to see what other people thought'* and a *'way of explaining your ideas and working out theories'.*

Often the purposefulness of academic writing was articulated as a form of agency. Statements referred to academic writing as *'helping'*, *'guiding '*, *'persuading'*, *'inspiring '* or *'informing'* the reader.

> *Academic writing should help the reader in their own personal journey of thinking around the subject and inspire them to want to read more. (Valerie)*

> *It's about taking a stance, I think, and working towards trying to convince the reader of something.* (Marie)

> *When I read a piece of academic writing by anyone I am guided by the clarity of the writing and the rationale of the discussion. (Tim)*

This active relationship between the producers and consumers of academic writing calls up a Deleuzean subject who as writer *and* reader of academic writing sits always 'in-between':

> […] a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects. (Braidotti, 2000, p.159)

Academic writing practices require academic writers to 'fold' external influences into their writing so that its external effects can in turn be unfolded (re-folded) outwards to their audiences.

> *[…] my academic writing is for other people interested in the same areas as me.* (Susan)

This process of simultaneously enfolding the reader and writer into a disciplinary field through positionality or relatability legitimates acts of writing, *as academic* writing. It reflects the idea that academic writing looks, not just towards a literal audience, but a symbolic one that evokes the field, instead of requiring actual readers to legitimate its existence. As Zander writes:

> *Academic writing is intensely personal but needing of an audience; well, 'having' an audience irrespective of whether it reaches them.*

This legitimisation by the field is what makes certain forms of academic writing *'publishable'* for Marie.

> *I would love the chance to read widely and then put a publishable piece of writing together for others to read.* (Marie)

Miriam is equally sure about the importance of audience in legitimising her work.

> *In my work I am trying to be as clear as I can about my points of reference. That's all I can do. It is up to the readers to decide the validity or otherwise of what I have written.* (Miriam)

> *I am writing for a purpose with a readership, that is, other people in mind* (Gail)

The '*other people*' that Gail has '*in mind*' are, of course, other academic readers and writers in her disciplinary field. Whilst Rose observes that:

> *Writing for an academic audience, in my view […] is a very specific genre.*

Gail and Rose accept that there are expected forms of writing that academic writers have to adopt consciously if they are to get published. As Healey's (2000) research suggested:

> […] there is a strong perception among [academic] staff that there are significant differences among disciplines in what academics do and how these activities are described and valued. (p.173)

> *Each discipline has a template/model for the kinds of writing that needs to conform to the necessary conventions.* (Tim)

Apart from begging the question *'necessary'* for whom, it is clear that often academic writing needs to:

> *[…] fit the parameters of academic requirements.* (Siobhan)

This strong perception of what is required of academic writers was, superficially at least, a source of comfort and certainty as expressed in the next statement.

> *As an academic writer writing for publication the university context provides a purpose for the writing and a structure. It also gives meaning to writing in terms of audience – you generally know who will read your work and why.* (Lucy)

Here *'university context'* gives purpose to Lucy's academic writing. The context and purpose of Lucy's published work are mutually constitutive; they *'give meaning'* to each other in terms

of the audience for the writing. The sense in which Lucy knows why, and who, she is writing for also infer her recognition of the power and regulatory function exerted on academic writing in the academy through publication. However, despite this recognition, Lucy hints at an underlying uncertainty; you only '*generally*' know who is reading your work and why. As Alice writes:

> *It can be hard to identify the audience for and appropriate routes to publication for what I most want to write.*

Alice reflects the anxiety that academic writers may experience about finding a fit between their own writing practices and the writing practices of others already established in their disciplinary field. This 'fit' is important precisely because, as discussed above, dominant academic writing practices (as much as the content of a piece) declare a text's relationship to its disciplinary field. This affective, dialectic reading and writing relationship between writers and their audiences reflects how individuals in the Academy most commonly experience inclusion within their disciplinary fields. Alice, perhaps for this reason, is uneasy about academic writing that leaves too much unsaid or implicit about its position.

> *I specifically like writing that makes explicit the assumptions it is making, the perspective it is taking [...] which usually are just left unsaid and unquestioned. These assumptions often define the field of the writer/subject area but when not made explicit make it hard for the reader to make links with other fields.* (Alice)

Alice prefers academic writing that makes its position in the field clear and unambiguous, whilst suggesting simultaneously that she feels that often the reverse is the case. She evokes a notion of 'field' as a bounded space that any instance of academic writing inhabits, but which can nonetheless be linked to '*other fields*'. Thus disciplinary fields are defined by '*assumptions*' for Alice '*which usually are just left unsaid and unquestioned*'. This is interesting as it links to the earlier discussion in Chapters 4 and 5 about the tacitness that characterises academic writing practices in higher education. It is a reminder that being able to recognise even implicit assumptions is a sign that one can read the field (albeit '*through a glass darkly*'). This suggest that an individual who is fully inducted into a discipline's academic writing practices would no longer need the field's tacit rules to be made explicit, as they would have been completely internalised through recognition, mimesis and internalisation.

7.7.3 Status

One of the ways that academic writing differentiates itself from other forms of writing is through its status within the Academy and beyond in wider society.

> *Writing for journals gives me a profile and reputation which may lead to relevant work.* (Den)

Getting published, especially in what is often referred to as the '*right*' journals, is overwhelmingly seen as proof in the Academy (for various reasons described below), that individual academics are bone fide academic writers and higher education professionals. The necessity to get published was reflected in the frequent use in statements by participants of imperatives like, '*I need to publish*', '*I have to get my writing published in the right journals*' and '*it's expected of me and I expect of myself*'.

Participants were, however, acutely aware that 'prestigious' academic writing, and the status that it confers on professional academic writer, was more about getting published in the 'right' or most esteemed publications, not the quality or content of the writing itself.

> *I feel very much a failure in regards to writing for journals which is so important for me now. I submitted and re-submitted to one quite prestigious journal but no luck – I think I aimed too high and I have learnt a valuable lesson about writing to appeal to certain journals[…]* (Marie)

> *I am still finding out what journals want […] which is important as I need to get published in the right publications.* (Bob)

Anxiety about impact citation or impact analysis, the effect it has had on the status of knowledge in the Academy and the corresponding heirarchisation of journals it creates is common in higher education. Zander, for example, drew attention to the fact that academic status has nothing to do with the size of readership for his work.

> *I am aware of my so-called 'higher' and 'lower' status writing: in simple terms the books I write which have most readers are of lower status than those of higher status, that is journals and academic books which have comparatively very few readers.* (Zander)

Whilst Miriam was frustrated that her writing for online publications was not taken as seriously as work published in more established, paper-based journals:

> *It doesn't seem to matter what, or how often you get published online. People are only interested in more established journals. I often get asked by my manager why I don't try to get something published in one of the more prestigious journals[...] the fact is I know they would not publish the sort of stuff I want to write so I don't bother, because what is the point!*

This comment reflects the current debate, most of it conducted predictably on the Internet, in digital journals like http://www.hybridpedagogy.com/, and blogs such as http://theory.cribchronicles.com/2014/04/27/what-counts-as-academic-influence-online, about the reasons why (for and against) open-access, digital journals should be deemed less prestigious than more traditional paper-based journals by many in academia.

This bias against online journals, as Miriam suggests, may be less about the quality of what is published online and more to do with ideas about how traditional publishing is constituted through discourse in particular ways, especially with regard to academic writing practices and the disciplinary power that they exert. The implications that the inevitable, and for many welcome, increase in open access publishing might have for the potential proliferation of alternative academic writing practices is fascinating and will hopefully inform future research into academic writing and professional publishing in diverse digital spaces. As discussed already, it is clear that traditionally journal editors do operate as gatekeepers, not only in terms of what academics are writing about but, more importantly for this study, how they write. Their powerful position in the higher education knowledge economy is confirmed by the fact that academics also want, and need, to get published in certain journals in their field. As Cope and Kalantzis (2009) note therefore, (ironically in the First Monday online journal), far from being a neutral conduit for knowledge, the professional academic publication system defines the social processes through which academic knowledge is made, giving in the process, a tangible form to legitimated knowledges.

The importance of producing the 'right' kinds of academic writing can also be discerned in the prominence attached to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) that measures, ranks and financially rewards academic writing 'outputs' from academics. Universities who appear at the top of the REF tables are regarded as high status, typified by the self-selected Russell Group

that comprises 24 top-ranking research intensive universities. It is therefore not surprising that increasingly academics across the sector focus on those types of academic writing that are '*REFable'*. As Ball (2013) states:

> We are burdened with the responsibility to perform, and if we do not we are in danger of being seen as irresponsible (p.138).

The growing funding significance attached to REF publications and 'third stream' bid writing has arguably contributed to a new type of commodified higher education knowledge economy (Avis, 2012; Biesta, 2010), which academics are often very aware of and want to be part of.

> *I am interested in writing about whatever interests me but I've to keep in mind that for my career progression I have to keep focused on my main area of interest if I am to be entered for the REF which is very important for me at this stage in my career as an academic. (Luis)*
>
> [...] *now I have enough for the REF I can relax.* (Tim)
>
> *You have to think about what you can place and where, thinking about that takes up a lot of time especially when you are new to the business of publishing.* (Miriam)

More than anything else, a good REF rating signals up an academic's status and financial value to their institution, and in an ever more competitive higher education environment academics often feel pressure to protect their market position by maintaining the perceived value of their writing outputs.

> *My outputs are valuable to my managers even if I didn't want to write for publication I would find it difficult to justify not doing so* [...] (Alan)

Keeping focused on the REF is also about meeting internal demands, demands that weighed heavily on some of the more established academic writers in the study, who were under constant pressure to contribute to departmental targets, or the REF.

7.7.4 Originality

In academia, original contributions to any disciplinary field are a key component of doctoral and professional academic writing, usually justified on the basis that this is the only way to build new disciplinary knowledge. However, the importance attached to originality and the production of new knowledge, troubles the deeply rooted idea that academic writing and thinking requires extensive reading and reference, even deference, to the work of other writers. Originality, in that sense, might be better expressed as 'a claim for power' (Ball, 2013, p.13) within a disciplinary field.

There is a common perception that academic writing should be about identifying or articulating something new or 'original' within a disciplinary field.

Academic writing should bring something new to the table. (Lucy)

In academic writing I look for what knowledge was being contributed that is different to what else has been written in the same field. (Valerie)

I know that writing for journals is somehow different from other kinds of writing – it makes a stance, offers a claim to knowledge, offers something new. (Siobhan)

However, this entrenched belief in newness and originality, as a defining principle of academic writing, is problematic because it usually presumes that 'new' ideas emerge in individual academics' minds as separate and distinct entities. Paradoxically, one can argue that 'new' ideas, like the academic writing practices used to express them, actually emerge and are contextualised by an individual's wider reading across the disciplinary field. Knowledge of the field may subsequently enable individuals to move beyond reified, striated spaces, creating Deleuzean lines of flight into more unpredictable discursive spaces. This does not, however, constitute wholly original thought in the traditional sense. Perhaps Marie is nearer the mark when she says academic writing is about:

[…] using familiar information in a new way perhaps. (Marie)

More exactly, Marie's point suggests that individuals actually take up new positions in relation to others working in the field, rather than create totally new epistemes or knowledge. The traditional individuated cognitive model of originality also belies the extent to which ideas are

developed through a form of 'interthinking' (Mercer, 2000) expressed at the level of reading and writing as intertextuality or entextualisation. It might, therefore, be more accurate to suggest that, so called, 'new' ideas are more like hybrids, fusions or blends of existing ideas and discourse positions available with a disciplinary field.

Lastly, the notion of originality in academic qualitative research is not just about mediating new or original insights into studied phenomena, more precisely it is arguably an articulation of a writer or researcher's subjective experience of their chosen research phenomena (which may have been experienced by other researchers, albeit differently). In this sense, originality can be recast as a product of ontology and subjectivity, and as such it can be viewed as inherently unstable, temporary and multiple.

7.8 Performativity and the Professional Academic Writing Self

The tangle of personal interests, institutional demands, disciplinary boundaries and professional responsibilities reflect what Larner (2000, p.14) calls the 'messy actualities' influencing strategies of neoliberal subject formation. Lecturers deploy these 'messy actualities' as they navigate their way through an increasingly complex and unpredictable higher education work environment. In this very competitive work environment, lecturers increasingly face the 'terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2003, p. 216) and experience constant struggles over academic 'labour processes' (Avis, 2004, p. 210). For example, Lea and Stierer (2009, 2011) have commented in detail on the relationship between lecturers' professional identities and academic writing practices in higher education, stressing the extent to which those professional identities are bound up with producing and working on everyday documents in the higher education workplace.

The difficulties establishing a professional academic writing identity in such a complex, writing-focussed work environment are obvious. For example, any distinction between academic writing practices and writing identities and any other possible writing practices and writing identities is significant. This is because many lecturers are involved regularly in other writing practices and have been proficient in other professional writing practices in previous jobs in addition to any academic writing they may produce as lecturers in higher education.

Individuals may, therefore, at any time, draw on to different discoursal selves/or writing identities (Ivanic, 1998). For example, Zander states:

> *Being a 'writer' is these days very much a part of who I am. I guess it always has been and publication validates this, particularly to others.*

This statement raises questions about the conditionality and provisionality of the relationship between this lecturer's professional identity, academic writing and his other writing selves. The use of inverted commas around the word *'writer'* could signal up Zander's unease with the term. Perhaps *'writer'* when applied to his sense of self is, in this instance at least, perceived to be assumed or acquired in the sense that Gee (1996) uses the term 'acquired identity'. As such it appears not to be entirely owned by Zander. One may infer that he resists the term, or perhaps what he thinks it says about him (in this research context, or to others in the field?). Zander could be reacting against the notion of the progressively marketised, neoliberal higher education sector which has created what Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1996) have called a 'new work-order', in that he does not want to define himself (unlike Luis) as a writer solely in work terms. Luis, on the other hand states unequivocally that academic writing is for him:

> *An essential part of how I perceive my role as an academic.*

In this statement Luis positions himself in the 'figured world of academia' (Bartlett and Holland, 2001) as an 'academic' because he feels he has the ability to write academically. This reflects the discussion in Chapter 4, about how the production of academic writing crucially informs the construction of a professional identity for many academics. There is an implicit recognition for Luis, as with Zander, that academic writing is an essential component of an assumed, or conferred, professional academic identity, embodied in the cultivation and recognition of, an externally predicated academic writing self. This academic writing self is constructed, legitimised and policed by wider dominant higher discourses and communities, mainly through conferment of a doctorate and/or publication.

As part of the new work order in higher education, lecturers are involved in many different writing activities as part of their everyday professional lives (Stierer, 2006; Stierer and Lea, 2009, 2011).

I feel writing is a massive part of the job and thinking about it I probably write for many different audiences every week. For example module summary reports, a plethora of validation documents, preparing slides and writing cameos and case studies, writing articles and book chapters, references for students. You need to be able to turn your hand to many different styles and types of writing. (Gail)

Gail's statement epitomises what Gee (1999) calls a 'shape-shifting portfolio person' who emerges out of an 'academic writing in higher education habitus'. Her sense of her professional writing habitus details the multiple writing practices that she '*needs*' to '*turn her hand to*'. This is an interesting idiom as it could suggest a lack of professional training and or preparedness, yet it acknowledges there is a need to be very responsive to whatever the job 'throws at you', to be infinitely adaptable and responsive. Gail is aware that she has many *'different audiences'* for her professional academic writing work. Her writing must communicate with students, peers, managers and editors and all these audiences have to be catered for with different writing practices, mediated through multiple instances of social interaction. For each writing practice the audience can and will change, different students require different materials, different journals and editors like different types of articles and the bureaucratic demands made on lecturers are always shifting.

*Teaching requires a degree of precision in communicating with students, writing for journals and books is a further step up the writing ladder. (*Peter*)*

As Ball writes:

> In modern higher education the lecturer increasingly resembles a 'neo-liberal subject' who is malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled. (Ball, 2012, p.139)

Lecturers working in a teaching-intensive institution (such as the research setting) are often expected to be generalist academics not subject-specialists. This meant that they often had difficulty locating themselves in recognised academic writing discourses or disciplines.

I'm not sure about my specialism – not sure I have one anymore! (Marie)

[it's] constantly changing…(Tim)

It doesn't fit comfortably in a box, which has caused me difficulties/dilemmas as far as writing goes. (Alice)

Under such pressure it is perhaps to be expected that:

> [...] 'successful', authentic academic identities are rendered insecure, temporary and risky within contemporary higher education (Archer, 2008, p.392).

The additional requirement to be flexible and adaptable to constantly changing teaching demands created tension around the pressure exerted on individuals to produce, or at least become engaged in, academic writing for research and/or publishing, in addition to keeping on top of the other writing-based tasks that Gail refers to above.

> *The bread and butter of my job is teaching; but I am also required to produce academic writing, this for me, is very separate from my teaching [...] My current writing projects have few points of contact with the subjects of my teaching. I don't see this situation as helpful as I am not able to benefit from a synergy between the two activities. Teaching a subject and writing about it both contribute to greater quality of both.* (Alice)

Alice makes clear here a distinction between writing for teaching purposes and writing for other academic purposes, such as research and/or publication. Despite recognising how crucial academic writing, and being seen to be an academic writer, is to the establishment of a professional identity for many academics, it is often difficult to find the time to do it in addition to the other demands of the job.

> *I need to write [for work] more but I have a lack of time in and out of work.* (Valerie)
> *My spare time is often spent on other workload issues which makes writing seem like just another job sometimes even though I enjoy doing it.* (Luis)
>
> *I like to think of myself as an aspiring academic writer, I enjoy writing but I find it hard work and need time (which I rarely have) to concentrate on and refine my ideas.* (Ian)
>
> *The demands of my job are immense, some days, after trying to write for several hours I find I have only written 50 words!* (Susan)
>
> *I find it quite difficult to get going to be honest as I'm easily distracted but once I get in a flow then I'm okay. (Bob)*
>
> *I enjoy writing and much of it has been done in my own time as there is so little time within work hours for the thought and depth needed to develop academic writing.* (Rose)

Even for established academics, the need to take or find time to grapple with academic practices is ever-present. As discussed in the next section, writing for academic purposes is a

complicated and mercurial business requiring constant negotiation and re-negotiation of disciplinary expectations and conventions. However, Lee and Boud (2003) found that in comparison with staff working in the more traditional research-intensive universities, lecturers working in post-1992 institutions were given less time and fewer opportunities to develop their academic writing.

7.8.1 Fear of Failure and not making the Grade

Because academic writing often functions as an embodiment of professional identity, attacks on one's academic writing are often perceived as an attack on one's sense of self as an academic. Academics are, not surprisingly, often worried about making the grade, or being validated as professional academic writers, especially with regard to how their academic writing might be received publically.

> *I feel defensive about my work because my writing – the product of all this thought and effort always contrasts so badly compared with what I feel.* (Miriam)

> *I fear that anything I write will be criticised. (Susan)*

> *I still lack confidence in my writing and my ability to orally justify/defend it, I expect I would benefit from going a bit more public though. Writing is a very personal activity and criticism must be given sensitively but I still lack confidence in my writing and my ability to orally justify/defend it.* (Alice)

> *I have to 'confess' to my emotional response to reviewers' comments on my journal submissions [...] they can seem harsh! (Lona)*

> *I worry about what peers might think of my ideas, and see weakness in my arguments.* (Alan)

Female lecturers, in particular, are often very self-depreciating about claiming any status for their academic writing (Archer, 2008).

> *I am always writing with a certain amount of trepidation about how my work will be received. (Susan)*

> *I have a constant fear of disappointment that the work will not be good enough. (Helen)*

> *I have a fear of failure and worrying that anything I write will be criticised. (Alice)*

> *I haven't really 'arrived' yet as a writer within the university context [...]I feel very much a failure in this aspect [...] I would love the chance to read widely and then put a publishable piece of writing together.* (Marie)

The issue of how some men and women react differently to the demands of performativity and its relation to professional academic writing practices raises many important issues that could form the basis for future research projects in this area.

> *I struggle to get emotional distance from my writing, thought I know I should.* (Alice)

> *I often feel blocked when trying to write a piece. This can be very upsetting and it used to bother me more though than it does now. I have got used to it.* (Den)

> *What is frustrating is that I always write from emotion. The stuff I want to write about has a moral dimension and I am often propelled by outrage.* (Darren)

> *I am always elated when feedback from peers on my work is positive and desolate when it is not.* (Jill)

> *I often feel that I have put everything of myself into a piece of writing; I am both invigorated and exhausted by the effort of doing that. I want to stop being like this. I want, if truth be told, to be able to just churn stuff out that meets the grade that would be great.* (Miriam)

Traditionally, little attention has been paid to the holistic, emotional experience of writing, which involves issues of identity and wider social/cultural contexts to acts of writing. However, one can argue that these statements of emotion create a stutter in the more dominant idea that academic writing should be the product of rational and dispassionate thought. In comparison the powerful emotions invoked to describe feelings about trying to produce academic writing such as '*frustration*', '*outrage*' and '*exhaustion*' bear witness to the intensity and personal nature of the academic writing experience.

These splashes of emotion are real 'hot spots' in the data. They represent the importance of the affective domain, which connects academic writing in higher education rhizomically with a whole concatenation of dominant discourses in academia. To fail at academic writing at this professional stage in one's life, is to fail for many as an academic. The affective domain gestures to a heartfelt identification between the act of writing and individuals' sense of self. As discussed in Chapters 6 and 8, postmodern approaches to academic writing practices seek to celebrate the relationship between emotion and subjectivities around writing in and for the

Academy. In their work on academics, Lee and Boud (2003) found that in the workshops they held academic writing constantly emerged as a:

> […] touchstone for the surfacing of many major questions concerning identity and change. Issues of fear and desire worked together to impact often dramatically on images of personal competence. (p.197)

Acknowledging this kind of effect raises some interesting questions about relationships between an academic writer's subjectivity and the dominant academic writing practices they are working within. These matters are revisited in Chapter 8, both through scrutiny of the very personal experience of producing this piece of academic writing, and a wider discussion about future possible developments for academic writing development in higher education.

7.8.2 Performativity and professional capital

Most text-books on the subject of academic writing are broadly utilitarian in their approach to the writing process, stressing the importance of planning and structure and a need to be organised and clear. The language these books use predictably echoes order words familiar from the definitions of academic writing discussed in previous sections; namely clarity, audience, field and status. Even sympathetic advice given by influential writers like Murray (2005), and Murray and Moore (2006) advocates separating professional academic writing practices from personal feelings and one's sense of self as a writer.

Using a more personal framework, Zander states academic writing is, '*part of who I am'* and '*has always been'*. Perhaps for him there are ways in which being a 'writer' (producing certain types of writing) is a part of his identity that he struggles with. Perhaps there is a clue about which writing identity he is referring to when he asserts, '*publication validates this, particularly to others*', which suggests that the 'writer' which he has placed within inverted commas, is a professional writing identity validated by publication not the 'real' writer that he also thinks he is when writing creatively (not professionally or for different non-academic professional fields). The 'others', who care so 'particularly' about publication are academic audiences whose approbation/acceptance legitimates Zander's identity as an academic writer. This is in comparison to any approbation/acceptance that he might receive for other kinds of writing that he undertakes, which do not affect, or reflect, upon his legitimisation as an academic writer.

Professional academic writing practices emerge in this study as a very public act, as engaging in research and contributing to journals are crucial attributes informing lecturers' status as legitimised academic writers. They are definitely a passport to academic employment, status research and professional capital, which reaches its zenith through external publishing. As outlined in Chapter 5, one can argue that within an increasingly commodified knowledge economy the production of legitimated academic writing primarily functions to embody and signify individual lecturer's intellectual capital, professional identity and status. Academic writing is traditionally defined through participation in two professional writing practices, namely qualitative educational research and/or writing for journals (rather than say producing teaching materials for students). The connection between 'successful', and 'authentic' academic identities', and the production of 'successful' and 'authentic' academic writing in journals and books is unequivocal.

Yes, because I've had stuff published in academic journals. (Alice)

Yes, I am someone who produces academic writing in terms of books and journal articles. (Lucy)

Yes I write [...] journal articles [...] chapters. I am looking towards writing a book at the moment. (Darren)

Yes [...] it is part of my remit is to produce articles/books about the research I have done. (Rose)

I think it is a part of our job to produce academic writing. (Susan)

Yes, I am involved in editing a journal and books and am being asked to peer review by publishers as well as working collaboratively on publications. (Ian)

To insiders the content of academic journals indicates membership of a particular sub-section of any disciplinary field (and often a rejection or refutation of other competing sub-sections of that field). Arguably however, one could simply know that an article had appeared in a particular journal for the above to be signified (or at least assumed). Actually reading the article would not be required; it is where the article appears that allows it to be 'read' or understood in the wider economy of academic capital.

Even the production of 'new' knowledge has to be validated and legitimised through field-congruent academic writing practices that academics draw on deliberately.

> *When producing academic articles, I reach for a tone that claims authority through the way I use language.* (Darren)

> *My work is becoming more accessible I think this has been helped by my editing a journal and books and being asked to peer review by publishers as well as working collaboratively on publications.* (Peter)

Published academic writing in this sense is not just written to be read, it also functions as a multiple signifier of expertise, legitimacy and knowledge, both within and outside of academia:

> *[…] I eventually realised that virtually no one reads it, and even fewer are moved to comment. (Alan)*

Outside higher education, academic journals have an important role as they operate as vehicles for esteemed forms of writing and knowledge (conferred through their association as products of higher education). This high status ensures academic journals' symbolic cultural power, even outside academia, irrespective of what any of their contributors are actually writing. As Lillis (2012) writes:

> […] writing for publication is largely taken as a given [however] the specific workings, meanings and consequences of this activity at national and transnational levels tend to remain invisible. (p.695)

The assumed rigour and legitimacy of the peer reviewed journal article rely, like so many of the assumptions underpinning the legitimacy of qualitative educational research discussed in Chapter 6, on the scientific, rationalist credentials of the act of reviewing.

> *You have to be prepared to take criticism; sometimes it can be brutal. (*Miriam*)*

The system of peer reviewing books and journals is a manifestation of how academic writing practices help maintain dominant discourses in disciplinary fields and their different forms of knowledge production. Cope and Kantartzis (2009) maintain that:

The system of peer review is a pivotal point in the knowledge design process: the moment at which textual representations of knowledge are independently evaluated. To this point, knowledge work is of no formal significance beyond the private activities of a researcher or intellectual. Peer review is required as a critical step towards their knowledge becoming socially validated, confirmed as knowledge–of–note and made more widely available knowledge. (http://firstmonday.org/article/view/2309/2163

However, in one way, anonymous peer reviewing only make sense if academic writing is viewed through the very limiting autonomous model critiqued in Chapter 3. Maclure argues that:

[…]systematic review […] assumes that meaning, or evidence, resides 'in' texts, and with the right procedures can be forced up to the surface and stripped of rhetoric – of those traces of argument and interpretation that render meaning variable, incomplete, partly tacit and always entangled with the interests and personal histories of those who are doing the reading. For the proponents of systematic review, as for advocates of the return to scientific methods in educational research, interpretation and argument are problematic. Maclure (2006, p.3)

Lesley and Rose's statements on their experiences of reviewing reflect many of the points made by MacLure about how the review process attempts to enforce systematic and correct criteria on academic writing. Both are looking for predictable indicators of academic writing, as discussed in section 5.2 'Academic writing as practice' (p. 135).

*I enjoy the challenge of doing it. I look for clarity of expression, succinct writing, grammatical accuracy as well as checking whether the rationale of ideas/research seems sound. I am always a bit tentative, thinking that it is only fair to express things in a considerate manner. On the other hand the process and my part in it has to be rigorous if it is to serve its purpose. (*Lesley*)*

I am often asked to review journal articles, books and book proposals. I look for clarity of meaning in a succinct form. Sometimes it is difficult, especially when you know someone has put their heart into something and the writing is poor. (Rose)

They both, however, acknowledge the issues that an idealised, purely rational approach to reviewing other people's academic writing raise. Lesley, for example, is always '*tentative*' about making judgements, whilst Rose finds it sometimes '*difficult*' to simply dismiss writing that does not appear to meet externally imposed standards. However, neither questions the orthodoxies they are being asked to apply. Lesley is keen to be seen as '*rigorous*' and Rose regards writing that fails to make the grade as '*poor*'.

Academics who wish to get published understand that they have to be aware of nuanced differences between journals and editors that are often difficult for neophyte contributors to identity or grasp. The whole process of working out what journal editors want or expect can, and does, differ from journal to conference, and even within specific publications expectations will change over time. For example, as well as having some of the special knowledge that John mentions in his quote about '*insider trading*' made above, other participants discussed the need to write oneself in to a particular writing style in order to get published, or to have a number of different writing styles that one could draw on for publishing purposes.

> *I have learnt to revisit writing and rework it to meet the demands of different publishing contexts*. (Darren).

> *Demands are varied [...].but I enjoy the opportunity to write differently and see if it still gets published*. (John)

Martha was determined to begin with what she wanted to say as the main impulse for writing:

> *[...] one of the key purposes of producing academic writing is how it is going to be received [...] so it is definitely aimed at an audience although I can't write with a target journal in mind, I can write my ideas and then think about that afterwards maybe and adapt things, so what does that mean; it means the audience comes along afterwards but I have to write it for me first*. (Martha)

Of course, one can argue that there is no way of knowing who is reading one's work in journals, even less why they would be doing so, or what they would make of it. This is a point raised more equivocally by Marie who wrote:

> *Who is going to read the journals? If it's all rather 'rarefied' – good content couched in long and erudite text – who will access it and isn't that why writing is written? To be read? If not, then it's back to playing the game and then I lose interest*.

The specificity of '*academic requirements*', alluded to earlier by other participants, are called '*rarefied*' by Marie. Her use of the inverted commas is interesting; is Marie suggesting that this is how others see such writing, or is it how Marie herself perceives academic writing for journals? If it is the latter then perhaps she is hedging her bets, as the inverted commas suggest a provisional classification; the '*rarefied*' signifiers that she alludes to, moreover, are typically vague, comprising '*good content*' and '*long and erudite text*'.

Marie not only asks who will read the journals, but how will they be accessed. This is a fundamental question central to why anybody bothers to write in academic journals:

[…] isn't that why writing is written? To be read?

This issue of published academic writings' inaccessibility and relevance to the world outside academia is a pertinent one:

Oh it's very closed, I mean you have to ask yourself by the same definition, we're in this closed environment where we read and are peers to each other's work but maybe you have to ask the question; who outside that environment accesses our writing? (Bob)

For Marie, if nobody reads the work that she publishes in journals then it is just *'back to playing the game'* that has to be played according to certain pre-determined 'rules and regulations'. If publishing in journals is just about signifiers, which constitute 'the game', instead of the work itself, which she has invested with personal meaning, then she *'loses interest'*. This is perhaps one of Ball's (2013) small acts of resistance with their 'different purposes and possibilities' (p.32) as discussed in Chapter 5.

Marie, however, is clear that she has to publish and that she would like to be published.

I think there are huge demands on me to write and the fact that I am not getting published is a problem! [...] I realise I need to 'play the game' to get published in a journal article. [but] I'm not very good at playing the game and so the demands are high! (Marie)

Nonetheless, she positions herself as non-compliant with the idea of just producing academic writing for publication because she has to, or because other people want her to or think she should, or because it could be good for her career. She does not want just to *'play the game'*, even though she wants to be a player. Possibly she is trying to define the terms on which she, personally, is prepared to play; perhaps she is proposing a different kind of legitimacy or meaning for her work in place of publically acknowledged signifiers. Either way, her stance raises the question, will her work be published if it does not conform to the writing practices of the disciplinary field she is part of, or wishes to join? Holding these views may allow Marie, if she gets accepted for publication, to feel that she does so on her own terms. They may even

allow her to reconcile her discomfort with the 'disciplinary power' exerted by journals, whilst maintaining her own professional status within her chosen academic field.

Confident, frequently published, academics often feel much more comfortable with this idea of the 'academic game' around publishing.

> *It [writing for journals] is a game of course. I enjoy the game and hope that I can use what I have written as examples of issues for other practitioners. (*John)

Not taking 'the game' too seriously is, perhaps, an ironic nod to how closely many academics associate the public act of academic writing with their equally public professional identity and status as academics. Lona appears to have fully embraced the idea of *'playing the game'* and has no qualms in doing so.

> *I think that in writing academically other people can see your perspective on specific subject areas. I have had other academics that have seen me present my work ask for information of any publication I produce. I think that this is highly important in* academia as then I'm likely to be referenced in their work and then others will see it *and so forth.* (Lona)

For Lona, journals are a *'highly important'* space for academics to share their perspectives within *'specific subject areas'*. For lecturers like Laura, journals, along with conference presentations, function as a kind of shop-front for one's work. Within each disciplinary subset the production of academic writing products (journals, conference papers, book and chapters) bind disciplinary communities of practice together, putting academics in touch with each other, facilitating the exchange of ideas through citations and professional networking sites '*and so forth'*. One can sense that behind that last phrase lies a whole raft of rhizomatic activity, set in motion and kept in motion by multiple acts of academic writing.

There is a connection here between the performativity that academic writing demands and a wider culture of fear in the higher education sector, particularly around aspects of lecturers' professional identity, which Ball (2003) termed the 'terrors of performativity'. Ball views performativity as a key mechanism of neo-liberal government that functions like a new moral order across all educational sectors, positioning academics and their writing as primarily productive units. As discussed in Chapter 5, academic writing for lecturers is an essentially

public act, a performance that mobilises, in various ways, their academic expertise and embodies their professional and cultural capital for consumption by others. There is also a sense in which Butler's (1997b) concept of performativity can be applied to an enactment of academic 'writerliness' insofar as it is ritualistically and repetitively performed by those wishing to be included in the ranks of legitimate academic writers, whatever their discipline. This idea links to the discussion of reification discussed above. As Lona writes:

> *I see myself writing my publications as soon as possible from my PhD and actively writing in my fields of specialism throughout my career. I feel that the university provides me with good support to do this. I feel that while writing to deadlines and time constraints can be demanding, I actively want to be part of it.* (Lona)

Individual performativity, therefore, is endorsed through various forms of self-management and self-presentation, through what Foucault called 'technologies of the self' (Martin, Gutman and Hutton, 1988). This is in addition to external judgements and comparisons about one's professional writing identity made by others in higher education, such as managers, journal editors and doctoral supervisors (Ball, 2003).

> *I learned to think and show off through analysis and language use.* (Darren)

Ball (2013) discusses how academics are in danger of internalising performativity so that they only produce, or prioritise, what the market demands. One obvious manifestation of this is the importance that very driven academics, like Lona, afford to carefully positioning themselves as academic writers, in relation to other writers in their disciplinary field. However, resisting dominant professional academic writing practices can take many forms, for example, the desire to cross disciplinary boundaries which is another of Ball's 'many small acts of resistance' (2014, p.132).

7.9 Stretching, Pushing and Pricking the Boundaries of Academic Writing

Sword (2009) argues that risk is essential if academic writing is not to become an ossified form, of little interest to anybody beyond the 'intellectual hothouse' of the academy. She dreams instead of academic writing that can kick against what she calls 'cookie-cutter prose' (p.334), moving in the process beyond the confines of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) smooth spaces and striated lines, out along lines of flight. This section looks at how participants' viewed the

idea of experimentation and innovation with regard to their own academic writing practices. It was felt that this was important to ask, as academia often presents itself as an important conduit for cutting-edge intellectual innovation and debates about ideas and opinions in society

> *Academic writing is an opportunity to develop my arguments. It is a bit of a challenge but almost entirely a productive one.* (Luis)

However diverse the content of academic work; recognition, mimesis and subjectification suggests that dominant academic writing practices are important, not as markers of individuality, but as indicators of belonging to disciplinary fields. In doing so they help to organise disciplinary fields, creating expectations and boundaries about how individuals can succeed as an academic writer. Tim is pragmatic about this:

> *Writing for journals is a particular genre of writing in which the writer is expected to present their thoughts and analysis of a subject they have researched or thought about according to a pre-established set of norms, including the use of a particular discourse that reflects these norms.* (Tim)

He accepts that learning to write, '*according to a pre-established set of norms',* is a required 'technology of the self' for professional academic writers, a response to the fact that editors and reviewers of academic journals, like lecturers at undergraduate level, and doctoral supervisors at postgraduate level, often function as gate-keepers or guardians for their discipline's writing practices. As discussed above, if they are eminent in the field, they may well have helped shape and/or maintain those writing practices over the course of their own career as academic writers. This results in a situation where:

> Academic writers often assume that they have to produce a particular style of prose because peer-reviewers and editors will accept nothing else. (Sword 2009, p.320)

Academic writing practices are often viewed through a prism of externally imposed conditions, which have to be complied with.

> *It [academic writing] has to be within fairly strict guidelines of ethics and methods…* (Lucy)

> *It involves writing to report my research, and to critique the research of others.* (Alan)

> *I believe good academic writing involves an evidence base, criticality and reflection.* (Den)

> *It is a synthesis of ideas and experience in support of an informative and persuasive argument.* (Peter)

It is interesting to note how assured these definitions of academic writing sound. Phrases like, *'it has to be', 'I reach', ' I believe'* and *'it is',* suggest that the terms being used are unequivocally self-evident to the individuals using them. However, as has been extensively discussed throughout earlier chapters, the meaning of terms like *'evidence', 'ethics', 'synthesis', 'informative', 'authority', 'reflection', 'criticality'* and *'persuasive'* differ substantially depending on the ontological position one takes up. Nonetheless, their very ubiquity, and the surety with which they are expressed, suggests these kinds of 'order-words' operate like a panoptican, exerting, as discussed in the introduction, a regulatory 'disciplinary power' across academic writing practices. Lucy is unusual amongst the participants in that she recognises that she has not read widely in her disciplinary field in order to create an individuated voice (*'my own style'*) but is engaged in producing a recognisably generic *'academic style'*.

> *I think there is definitely a link between academic reading and writing – without reading academic texts I would say it was impossible to be able to write in an academic style.* (Lucy).

As Deleuze and Guattari write (1987):

> There is no significance independent of dominant significations, nor is there subjectification independent of an established order of subjection. Both depend on the nature and transmission of order-words in a given social field. (p.79)

Foucault (1972) also outlines in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* how dominant discourses in any field will define what is 'say-able', 'do-able' or 'think-able. It is not therefore surprising to see such assurances constantly reiterated with regard to dominant discourses informing academic writing in the academy as discussed in Chapter 3. Britzman (2000) describes the regulatory power of discourse in the following terms:

> Discourses authorise what can and cannot be said; they produce relations of power and communities of consent and dissent, and thus discursive boundaries are always being redrawn around what constitutes the desirable and the undesirable and around

what it is that makes possible particular structures of intelligibility and unintelligibility. (p.3)

The disciplinary power around academic writing practices wielded by journals ensures that they are risk-averse and operate to maintain, not stretch, the limits of acceptability. Innovative writing practices that challenged established dominant forms are often perceived as the preserve of established academic writers who were already dominant in their field.

> *I'm at the stage of my career though where I'm much more cautionary because its high stakes. When I have dozens of papers under my belt then I might be tempted to go off on one because I know some journal might print it or a book and take a risk because perhaps it's a well-known writer in the fields but I'm never going to get to that stage at my age. (Bob)*

Alice, in her statement below, articulates the tricky dilemma faced by academics when seeking to produce a recognisable, that is, acceptable academic writing style.

> *I'm looking for an engaging style, but one which still fulfils the requirements of academic writing. I don't like strict adherence to the formula e.g. articles which have 'methods', results' etc., - when this doesn't seem entirely appropriate, resulting in lots of repetition, and a deadening of style. (Alice)*

Alice wants to create what she calls an *'engaging style'* but knows she also has to *'fulfil the requirements of academic writing'.* She recognises that this often involves bowing to the authority of dominant writing discourses that demand a *'strict adherence'* to a pre-existing *'formula'* that she, nonetheless, seeks to avoid and/or resist because a too slavish observance of the rules produces, a *'deadening of style'.*

This *'deadening of style'* can also conflict with more imaginative impulse individuals might have as writers.

> *[my academic writing] is research informed and, if I am honest, too focussed on methodology, which constrains creative thinking. (Den)*

Sword's (2009) work on academic writing illustrates how, despite journal editors' claims to encourage new and innovative writing, they inevitably stick to tried and trusted styles, often

coming down hard on writers who they feel have stepped out of line or gone beyond the accepted boundaries of their disciplinary field. Sword writes:

> My research reveals a startling gap between theory and practice; that is between what most academics say stylish writing is and what educationalists actually produce and publish. (p.320)

This was a view reflected in statements from the elicitation.

> *I am sometimes astonished by the response of reviewers to articles I have written. The tone they adopt and their anonymity reveals that they are blind to their agency in the interplay of knowledge, power and language. So, for example, a reviewer of a chapter for a book I wrote in the last year, attacked my writing in an emotive and dismissive way and went out of his/her way to take a pop at the significance of the work. One key criticism, which I thought had something to it, was that my use of language (a bit obscure and showy – one of my weaknesses) contradicted the argument of the article. I think he / she had a point and I had a go at amending the piece to take the criticism on board. However, the tone of the comments demonstrated that s/he didn't have even the most basic grasp of writing as a means of communicating between people.* (Darren)

> *The one paper I have written which I have recently submitted and waiting to hear feedback is a paper from my PhD thesis which I have developed in a different, more creative way, however I think the feedback I got on the way I was writing was not brilliant and not terribly encouraging. It was difficult to work out what the reviewers didn't like but after reading it through a few times it boiled down to what I was trying to do is at least be a little bit more creative than was usual for that journal paper.* (Bob)

Sword (2009) mentions that a Foucauldian analysis (such as the one offered in this thesis) would perhaps suggest that journals, or at least their editors, are operating like an 'authoritative panoptican' (p.327) with regard to dominant academic writing practices. This could account for journal editors and peer reviewers' conservatism, especially on the more prestigious journals. As discussed above, disciplinary parameters that define academic writing disciplines are very recognisable.

> *[...] in terms of journals and papers, first of all you put the data out there so people can add to it incrementally and in the tradition of building up a body of knowledge but other than that… you can't go out on the limb because of this nature of the rigor and community[...]* (Peter)

> *I haven't got a long list of journals and articles and books behind me and interestingly I know what I have produced is regarded of less value because of the kinds of journals they appeared in but I would like to develop some book chapters for example that give me some freedom to be able to write in more challenging ways and ask questions.* (Den)

These statements, one might argue, reflect a Bourdieusian orthodoxy prevailing in disciplinary fields. John referred to published academic writing as a form of '*insider trading*' for '*those in the know*'. Being '*in the know*' can be interpreted as being aware of the '*pre-established set of norms*' that Tim sets so much store by and that Zander and Bob recognise and try to resist. Insider trading, when applied to the knowledge economy, is about keeping one's disciplinary knowledge secret or held within a defined circle of '*those in the know*' who are 'expert insiders' (Wenger, 1998). These inside traders have an advantage, which is the means of entry into their chosen academic knowledge market. Intellectual insider trading keeps the value of disciplinary knowledge high, and gives those who have the knowledge, power. It is a telling metaphor which speaks again to neoliberal principles underpinning the value of a legitimated professional academic identity as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Once again we are reminded how high the stakes are in academic writing for many lecturers.

7.9.1 Hybridity and innovation

One can argue that disciplinary fields actually have an inherent rhizomic propensity to 'operate by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 21). Hybridity and innovation are just some of the forms of academic writing that can trouble, and potentially disrupt disciplinary fields, producing work that stretches their boundaries and even occasionally breaking completely free of them. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), hybridity and innovation happen in 'smooth spaces'. Smooth spaces are formless and within their confines meaning is fluid and always in flux. Smooth spaces are traversed by Braidotti's (2011) concept of the 'nomadic subject' who reterritorialises and deterritorialises new unchartered spaces through lines of flight that are difficult to predict. Nomads are outsiders and the work they produce is often insubordinate, iterant and difficult to pin down or define, as they are always in a process of becoming, moving and changing. The principle of nomadism is:

> […] an absolute that is one with becoming itself, with process (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.494)

Such smooth spaces are antithetical to dominant discourses, which are represented by Deleuze and Guattari as striated/reified lines, which fix practices like academic writing in higher

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education. Writing against the grain of dominant discourses and established expectations offers an opportunity to traverse disciplinary boundaries, enacting a Deleuzean process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, which resists governmentality and disciplinary power. As discussed in Chapter 3 (p.18) cross or multidisciplinary writing, can create new hybrid forms of writing which, as the New London Group (1996, p.66) asserted, 'highlights the mechanisms of creativity and of culture-as-process.' Experimenting with different kinds of writing is an example of an important 'practice of freedom' (Foucault, 1984), which allows the subject to resist being turned into a governable subject through a 'technology of agency and a technology of performance' (Davis and Peterson, 2005b, p.93). For example, Zander describes how:

> *My explorations (into academic writing) are ongoing and involve challenging my own and my students' perceptions of this marginal yet prestigious form of literacy.*

John was also keen to explore different kinds of academic writing.

> *[The] demands are varied but there are so many styles/modes of writing with regard to 'learning' for publication that I enjoy the opportunity to write differently and see if it still gets published.*

However, aware of the risks or moving out of the striated spaces conventional disciplinary writing allowed him, he was also anxious to avoid being seen as irresponsible. John was therefore at pains to make clear in his response to the elicitation that he had fulfilled his professional obligations and produced the specified number of articles for the REF.

> *[…] now I have enough for the REF I am thinking of experimenting in the next year with cross disciplinary writing – ecology and learning for example.*

Having been entered for the REF John feels free to (or has the space to) *'think of producing'* some *'cross‑disciplinary writing'*, which he calls *'experimental'*. In discursive terms this *'cross‑disciplinary writing'* challenges and resists dominant disciplinary expectations around academic writing, which often operate as fixed and given.

Cross-disciplinary writing encourages the formation of contingent, alternative liminal spaces between the usual academic writing practices. More experimental and creative forms of

academic writing can create different kind of academic writing identities that are experienced as freer or more personal. For example, Bob and Miriam relished the opportunity to experiment with their writing.

> *I guess what I'm trying to do is develop a research writing style for my own papers and that I'd like to take a bit further that may be a bit more creative or slightly less systematic and structured and more philosophical.* (Bob)

Writing experimentally across disciplines and developing a distinct writing 'voice' are often portrayed as stepping into unchartered territory.

> *It can feel quite scary trying something new, you might fall flat on your face.* (Miriam)

On the other hand, Martha asserts a conscious sense of a more hybridised professional writing 'self' that she is in the process of developing and which she defines though a number of disciplinary fields which she approves of.

> *I have developed a position as an academic writer in that I now know the sorts of writing I like to read – critical, feminist, politically engaged – and I aim to produce that sort of writing myself without being sure that I can.* (Martha)

Martha feels more agentic here than she did as an undergraduate; here she is making a choice about what kind of professional academic writer she wants to be, '*I have developed a position*'. Moreover, she is choosing that identity from within a set of potentially transgressive genres that are *'critical, feminist, politically engaged'*. However, despite the extent to which such genres proclaim their openness and contestability, they will still exert a regulatory function over the writers operating within them as part of disciplinary fields. Even those writers defining themselves as 'outsiders' to a field, are defining themselves through that which they reject, that is, they have to be cognisant of the field to even consider enacting transgression. As Foucault (1990) stated, taking up an 'outsider' position affirms dominant discourses even as it offers the possibility of alternative liminal spaces, which exists in the smooth space outside Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) striated lines. Aligning one's writing to marginalised or unrecognised academic writing practices, like Martha, or myself when writing up this thesis for that matter, can destabilise disciplinary fields, but will never destroy them. Not least, because, as Foucault (1980) insisted, power is inseparably linked to the ability to determine the

formation of dominant discourses, one can therefore never be free from social and cultural forms of power.

However, trying out and combining new kinds of writing can create a stutter or stammer around taken-for-granted field-congruent writing. Such hybrids allow for the possibility of different standpoints to be articulated, for new lines of flight to be followed and for academic writing to become more open-ended, so that interpreting what is written can become more subject to reinterpretation and renegotiation. Zander does not respect or value his status as an academic writer within the academy. In the following statement he stands out as someone who deliberately sets himself and his writing outside dominant practices:

> *The thing is that 'writer' to me does not imply that I'm any good at it. I think for me that writing has always been something I've attempted and 'growing up' has been about casting off any sense of how it's meant to be (or how good). I'm very productive, if not particularly good technically and I genuinely don't care. And, by the way, I make no* distinction between in and out of work life. *I'm a teacher for better or worse all the* time.

The use of quotation marks around the word 'writer' is a good example of how Zander constantly draws attention to the way that order words, like 'writer', function in academia. His use of the term 'writer' signifies the role he feels he has to perform as part of his professional identity as a lecturer in higher education. The academic writing self that performativity invokes appears remote from who Zander 'really' thinks he is. However, Zander knows he has to construct and place his academic work carefully in the wider field of his discipline if he is to be legitimately constructed in the dominant discourse as an academic writer (without inverted commas). Unlike Lona or Lucy, who discuss how their professional identity-work is reinforced by the adoption of conventional academic writing practices, Zander feels they disempower him and diminish the value of the writing he really values as an educator, which is how he prefers to define himself. As he writes:

> *If I'd been a careerist I guess I might have knocked out a few more articles and conference papers rather than text books but I'm a teacher first and foremost and want* to stimulate thought rather than defend my own positions.

In this sense one can read Zander's reaction to his more conventional academic writing as an act of resistance to the disciplinary power of academic writing practices and dominant

discourses operating in higher education. However, such is the power of dominant discourses around professional identity and their links to academic writing, that Zander cannot completely avoid the imperative to perform, although he may resist at the margins by producing work that critiques what academic writing and/or the whole process of performativity mean to lecturers.

> *I think scholarship is fun but it's also bizarre and the danger is you could take it all too seriously (I know I could).*

Bob, Zander and John all appear to feel more agentic, more in control of their academic writing and professional identities when they feel that they are writing outside of the normal/normalised parameters of dominant academic writing practices.

Although the elicitations did not reveal a great deal of overt resistance to dominant academic writing practices, they did suggest that there was a constant undertow of discussion and debate about the process of writing, the production of literacy artefacts within the Academy and the relationships between a professional higher education identity and a professional academic writing self as experienced by participants. These entanglements indicated the extent to which academics often struggle with, or are troubled by, the expectations surrounding academic writing that they experience during their time in education, not least as educational professionals in higher education.

Chapter 8: Reconceptualising Conclusions: Affective Assemblages, Provocations and Practice Imaginaries for Academic Writing.

Prologue

Like the opening chapter, this final chapter is a little messy, for I am still looking through the same glass darkly. I have not in any empirical sense made progress, moved on towards greater clarity, or gained a footing on more solid ground through my research. However, given my research approach, that was never going to be the point. That is not to say that nothing has changed; most importantly I have shifted (this is nothing if not a solipsistic (ad)venture). I have gained a deep appreciation of complexity, I respect subjectivity and diversity and I am moved to resist convention out of a profound suspicion that the status quo is invariably a manifestation of unequal power relations, especially whenever it appears as a given .

I have, however, formulated a number of ideas and suppositions about my research, which I shared in Chapter 7. These ideas and suppositions add, I hope, to all the other ideas and suppositions currently circulating in the Academy about academic writing practices.

I also hope that my ideas and suppositions will encourage others to think about academic writing practices in more interesting and innovative ways. This is probably the most I can hope for.

I am reminded at this juncture in the proceedings that this thesis originated out of the following research questions, which are more akin to Foucauldian provocations:

Q1. What is academic writing and how do dominant discourses about academic writing in higher education appear to inform lecturers in the research setting?

Q2. How can post-qualitative research into lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices open up a debate about academic writing development practices in higher education?

These provocations cannot be straightforwardly answered, rather they:

> *[...] multiply lines of investigation and possibilities for thought. They are not aspects of a single project, but [are] fragmentary – experiments... (Rabinow and Rose, 2003 p.vii)*

Provocations can be discussed, debated, disputed, explored and investigated, but they remain provocative, whatever conclusions I (or anyone else draw from them). For me, these provocations have engendered a new practice of thinking, what Taguchi (2013) calls a 'researching subjectivity' that manifests itself in this chapter as a:

> *[...] collective-researcher-assemblage of movement and transformation in its engagement with theory and data as mutually active agents. (p.708)*

In this final chapter, assemblages and imaginaries are offered as exercises in educational philosophy. These exercises in reflection are an attempt to write out/up/through my own subjectivity and respond to the subjectivities that my research participants bought to bear with their testimonies about living, thinking and working with academic writing practices in higher education.

8.1 The beginning of the end

A genre or field question arises in this thesis because in education doctoral theses tend to be tied to an ethic of improvement. This question creates an inevitable tension with the postmodern ontological position that I have taken and, the concomitant post-qualitative methodological approach outlined in Chapter 6. Traditionally, the concluding chapter of this thesis might address the question of whether lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices can be used to improve practice around academic writing, or identify and disseminate existing best practice in academic writing development within higher education. In those terms, the thesis might have insisted on enacting a reworking of the old binary, or dilemma between agency and structure, with regard to how individual lecturers function within the wider structure and politics of higher education. However, I have chosen to reject the assumption that a qualitative educational thesis has to make positive recommendations for the improvement of practice. Instead, this thesis seeks to stretch, or bend, the limits of its discipline-congruent field: that is, PhDs in education. It also tries to expand the genre within which it is located, namely, literacy studies research project about writing. Rather, it travels rhizomically across negotiated and re-negotiated terrains, traversing different genres and typologies, coming to rest, at this final juncture, in some liminal, hitherto unchartered space.

In this spirit, therefore, I have deliberately not claimed any primacy for the interpretations that I have drawn from my participants' responses to the elicitation. Rather, I have sought to use the elicitation to show how the various influences influencing lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices cannot be compartmentalised or hierarchised (as good/bad, right/wrong). I have tried instead, to show how they operate through a number of influences, which I have characterised as discourses. These discourses are realised and experienced through overlapping domains, such as individuated experiences of higher education institutions, disciplinary fields, degrees and even modules; which can be theorised, and ultimately deconstructed, through the nexus of theories outlined in Chapter 3. Moreover, I explored in Chapters 4 and 5, how these discourses play out differently as they shift and change over time. Yet, in spite of inevitable overlaps and the blurring of boundaries between and across the whole domain of higher education, I maintain that there remain a number of dominant, even hegemonic, discourses that colour and shape most lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices.

And yet…the imaginaries that I have outlined in this final chapter do make suggestions about

practice. They definitely require, or appear to require, institutions and lecturers and even students (the least empowered of the players in this research domain) to make choices, or act independently with regard to how they produce and develop academic writing within higher education for academic purposes. However, like Reay (2004) and Ball (2013), I choose to view what some may call questions of agency (and compliance), as the influence of dominant educational discourses on lecturers perceptions of academic writing in higher education. In this sense, individual lecturers' perceptions around academic writing are treated as acts of conscious or unconscious capitulation or adaptation to those dominant discourses; or more rarely, as overt acts of resistance to them. As discussed in Chapter 5, a disposition to act in a certain way, whether on an individual and institutional level, inevitably reflects the social context and/or structures in which such dispositions are acquired. Perceptions and expectations of choice are, therefore, constructed out of external, discursive influences, even though they may be viscerally experienced as agentic and personal.

In this sense, the imaginaries operate more as alternative 'conditions of possibility' (Foucault ,1972) in which more, or different, 'choices' about academic writing practices may be made available, than would normally be the case. Or even that the possibility of considering alternatives about academic practices might be made. As such, the imaginaries stay true to the principles of postmodern and post-qualitative research, in that they encourage all parties in the higher education landscape to consider a more generative muddle of past and present, individual and collective, impulses around the need for lecturers and students (under and postgraduate) to produce writing for academic purposes across the disciplines.

This generative muddle has resulted in a final chapter that does not attempt to unpick, or disentangle, the messy dynamic relationships that characterise the lived experience of lecturers' academic writing practices. The main purpose of the research is to insist that those practices *are* messy and entangled and that such a view resists the current, taken-for-granted orthodoxies informing academic writing in higher education. Moreover, it stresses that genres of writing about those practices, in the form of doctorates and articles and research reports, are, as I have discussed in Chapter 7, mobilised differentially for different individuals within the Academy. To do so is to contribute to an alternative and important understanding of the meaning-making processes around academic writing; especially where such meaning-making results in 'choices' about the quality and form of 'acceptable' or successful academic writing at all levels in the academy.

8.2 Assemblage

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage offers an alternative model for summing up qualitative educational research material through a flattened ontology, where no one element predominates and all associated elements are interconnected in multiple ways. The idea of using assemblage in this concluding chapter is a natural extension of the rich rhizomatic nature of the whole thesis. Accordingly, it offers a form of Maclure's radical analytic practice, which is:

> […] an experiment with order and disorder, in which provisional and partial taxonomies are formed but are always subject to change and metamorphosis as new connections spark among words, bodies, objects and ideas. (2013, p.181)

Assemblages challenge notions of originality relying on established ideas of individual or autonomous creativity. Johnson-Eilola and Selber (2007), in their work on remixing, maintain it is not possible to create any truly 'unique' cultural objects or ideas, as no 'thing' can be produced or evaluated in isolation from the many influences that inform its composition. Likewise, it is difficult to claim new knowledge using a post-qualitative approach that takes as one of its starting points the idea that any knowledge is always and inevitably part of a number of existing discourses or sets of epistemes. Originality in any academic writing, as discussed in Chapter 7, is a fundamentally problematic and misleading evaluative concept, when viewed through the lens of the problematised reconceptualisations of academic writing proposed in Chapter 3.

To this end, the thesis draws on Johnson-Eilola and Selber's (2007) alternative reconception of originality that is concerned primarily with how one organises material creatively into new assemblages of parts. Moreover, Johnson-Eilola and Selber maintain that it is the relationship between the parts, not any inherent originality associated with them, which can have a striking effect and be of wider interest. Writing up research in papers and books is, in post-qualitative research at least, about the awareness that the researcher (the bricoleur) is producing or picking only one possible assemblage out of, not only of their particular constellation of participants, researcher, events and practices etc., but of the wider discursive fields within which those elements exist.

Putting together my own assemblage has been a [re]creative, imaginative act which has broken down traditional barriers and boundaries between the various 'parts' that make up this thesis. I have called these parts respectively: *my(selves),* this assemblage refers to me, the researcher and the research selves created by this research,. These selves are bound up in a process of continual professional/personal reflection and reflexivity around the two associated and necessarily contingent Deleuzean rhizomes that constitute the other two parts of the thesis. These are, the research process and the participants, which I have called *(my)research* and the wider disciplinary field(s) which the research draws on, which I have called *(my)fields*. The over-arching assemblage, is *(my)thesis*; this represents the actual doctorate within which all three other parts (*my)selves*, *(my)research* and *(my)fields* are entangled and held together as a necessarily contingent 'assemblage of parts', as illustrated below in Figure 29.
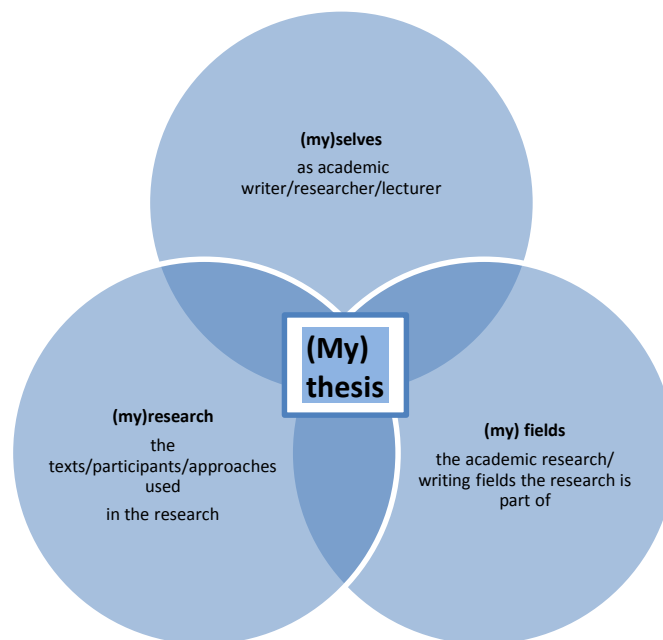
Figure 29: The thesis's 'assemblage of parts'

Through, and across these assemblages, I have temporarily 'captured' territory around my own and my lecturer participants' perceptions about academic writing practices in the research setting. Figure 29 should, therefore, be viewed, like the thesis itself, as a snapshot, a moment suspended in time. Like the second after any photo is taken, the elements that were fixed within it shift and change, even if only imperceptibly at a molecular level. The fixedness of the picture is an illusion, like the fixedness of a thesis; both depict a stable depiction of matter that is actually always, inevitably changing.

This use of assemblage does, I feel, more accurately represent the actual (not necessarily the final) stage in my attempted [re]territorialisation of the discursive, disciplinary fields associated with academic writing practices in higher education across which I have been operating as a post-qualitative researcher. As a concluding assemblage I hope *(my)thesis* offers more rhizomic territories to explore, it certainly does not represent a putative end point or set of final conclusions to this research project. *(my)thesis*, is also a text, a physical entity, literally bound into a book, it simultaneously and paradoxically exists as an unbounded conceptual space or interstice that incorporates manifold embodied relations/connection/entanglements which the research has thrown up.

Any post-qualitative critical assemblage, like this one, is offered as a point of departure, a Deleuzean 'line of flight'. The intention here is to destabilise ideas and received wisdom about academic writing practices in higher education in order to build new or renew thinking and/or action through the imaginaries outlined below. In the accounts elicited for Chapter 7, participants continuously referred to a range of phenomena such as texts (books they had read, their own written work, journals), events (teaching and learning instances and peer to peer professional interactions) and feelings (about their writing, their professional identity). I have also experienced this range of phenomena and have found that writing about them as a researcher has helped me look beyond their taken-for-grantedness, their invisibility. While thus '*looking through a glass darkly*' I have embarked on my own lines of flight about academic writing practices and crossed contingent boundary markers in the research, between my own and the various participants' perceptions and experiences.

8.2.1 *(my)selves*

Like many of my research participants I have also been changed through engaging in the doctoral research process; I am not the person I was when I began: I think differently; I write differently. As Ball (2013) asserts:

> […] research construct[s] objects of knowledge and subjects of intervention
> […]creat[ing] possibilities for who we are and who we might be, both in public policy
> discourse and institutional practices. (p.98)

During this thesis I have rewritten and recreated myself in many guises as a researcher/academic/writer/professional/lecturer/doctoral student. I have been inspired by Foucault, who wrote:

> […] when I write I do it above all to change myself and not to think the same as before. (Foucault, 1991, p.27).

When thinking about my past, present and future experiences of research and writing I am prompted to ask:

> […] what I have been doing, where am I going, where have I been, where are 'we' today, who is the 'we' of whom I write, who might be a future 'we', what might be the role of thought or the work of writing and thinking in clarifying and transforming who we are? (Rabinow and Rose, 2003, p.vii)

To reply, the thesis has been a form of "self-writing"; in creating it I have written various *(my)selves* into being, one obvious contender is the doctoral student 'self' or identity that the process of research confers upon me.

Ivanic and Simpson (1990) call the process of heightened self-awareness, when writing, 'finding the 'I''. 'Finding the 'I', however, can be expanded to include the idea of multiple selves or identities, such as a 'researching I' and a 'teaching I', which both involve different academic writing practices. This notion of multiple 'I's reflects Butler's (2004) concept of 'Other' selves, especially the 'spectral double' (p.233). In her work Butler explores how these disruptive and disturbing 'selves' emerge through radically reflexive academic writing practices, in opposition to the creation of a stable or unitary discursive self suggested by dominant academic writing discourses. In this way, critical pedagogies of academic writing development, such as those discussed in Chapter 3, offer an opportunities for lecturers (and students) to enact critical forms of academic identity-work that embody distinct, often conflicting and contradictory, writing identities.

Some of the writing selves encountered along the research journey I have undertaken have been discarded, such as my unquestioning qualitative research self. Others I have come to love; I am especially fond of my post-qualitative research self. I accept, moreover, that the 'doctoral self', resulting from the successful completion and examination of this thesis is, of course, as constructed as any other writing identity I might care to assume or construct. (I have for

example, cultivated a reasonably active creative writing self). It is perhaps worth noting that the writing selves that have been nurtured and evolved through the completion of this thesis are not what I, or anyone else, could have expected. They do not constitute any kind of finished product; instead they create possibilities for further self-invention and experimentation in institutional discourses and practices around academic writing practices. Like some of the participants in Chapter 7, I am looking forward to the freedoms that post-doctoral writing opportunities offer.

All my writing selves are constructions or fabulations (Foucault, 1980). It may therefore be more productive to see one's doctoral self as just as another version, the next (conflicted or provisional) writing self that one comes to inhabit as one lives live out one's writing life. On a more prosaic, professional level I also recognise, again like some of the participants in Chapter 7, that successfully completing a doctorate is recognised as a necessary, outward facing step, or gesture, towards a legitimised professional 'academic' identity. One can assume this new professional identity, even if one remains internally riven with doubts and anxieties about all those key features of academic writing that were identified by the participants in this research, namely: clarity, purposefulness, audience, status and originality. In this sense, the title 'academic writer' is just another identity that can be invoked in the Academy, alongside other available higher education identities, such as 'manager' or 'lecturer'.

As a commodified academic writing product therefore, doctoral theses can be viewed as one of the principal means by which the academy generates and polices new professional identities, in addition to its more established, yet very problematic, role as a vehicle for facilitating and policing the production of 'new' knowledge. As such, doctorates stand as a USP for higher education professionals, in that successfully completing a doctorate can be a game changer in the personal/professional identity stakes. Importantly, for the ideas developed in this thesis, academic writing practices are at the heart of any new, successful professional writing identity. Thinking personally along those lines, writing this PhD has reinscribed my personal relationships and connections to colleagues/other academic writers and the texts they produce, the research fields they inhabit and academic discourses they move between. Like Ingold, (2010) I maintain:

> […] that there is no division, in practice, between work and life… a practice [like academic writing] involves the whole person, continually drawing on past experience as it is projected into the future. (Ingold, p.240, in Brinkmann, 2012)

The research has also highlighted the extent to which academic writing practices involve and evoke strong emotions (in myself and my participants). These emotions are constantly mediated through the production and consumption of written texts, such as undergraduate written assignments, postgraduate dissertation and doctorates and ultimately through professional writing artefacts, such as journal articles and books. This constant emotional interplay between individuals and written texts, within the Academy, reflects the complexity and mutability of academic writing practices and the different (compliant and resistant) identities and constructions that they create for those using them.

8.2.2. (*my)research*

This research is a historically situated, reflective/reflexive analysis that has interrogated past and future and present perceptions of academic writing practices in higher education. St. Pierre (2013) argues that following qualitative research traditions, such as, the humanist 'I' and concepts of subjectivity and objectivity, and using them to shape qualitative research methodologies, such as observation, interviewing and coding, will over-determine the direction that any qualitative research enquiry can take. In contrast, post-qualitative ontologies accept that in practice, research is often dependent on events in the field and the approach of the researcher. Indeed, the field of research and the researcher are likely to act upon each other and undergo various transmutations during the research process. It was therefore impossible to determine in advance how this research (or one could argue, any research) was going to develop. As described in Chapter 2, over time I experienced an ontological change, occasioned by my adoption of problematised reconceptualisations of academic writing (Figure 19, p.148), which necessitated a corresponding change in my research methodology (Figure 20, p.149). For this reason, the 'writing up' of (*my)research* is perhaps better described as an act of recording the unexpected (and often unresolved) directions that the research eventually took, rather than any resolution or reply to the provocations posed by the research in the first place.

St Pierre (2013) uses Derrida's (1990) concept of deconstructionism and the 'New Materialist' concept of 'entanglement' (Bradotti, 2013) to displace established qualitative conventions, in order to facilitate new ways of thinking and doing research. For example, in post-qualitative

research, St. Pierre (2013) argues that researcher and researched are so inextricably entangled that it is impossible to separate them out. This creates a situation where definitive research findings and conclusions are impossible to draw, just as distinctions between the subjectivities of researcher and researched become blurred and meaningless, as I have discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

As a post-qualitative researcher, I have, like MacLure (2012), followed 'glowing' data, by which I mean research material that was agentic, which stood out and 'spoke' to me. As I began to write about this research material I often discovered that my thoughts and feelings about it changed. Sometimes I would discard a comment or set of comments only to return to them later to find that they spoke to me in new ways, or that they threw other parts of the research material into relief in unexpected ways. For example, the concept of 'recognition' emerged from a struggle to contextualise how participants presented their development as academic writers. It was a response to the fact that pre-existing terminology and conceptual frameworks did not express what I saw, or perhaps more accurately construed, about what they were saying (albeit, darkly). In order to territorialise new conceptual spaces, I therefore had to cast about for a new language that better encapsulated my new ways of seeing and thinking.

In addition to challenging ideas about academic writing practices this thesis has also tried to challenge some established certainties about qualitative research in education. In doing so it posits a case for a different, post-qualitative direction that challenges assumptions about subjectivity, language and representation. The thesis may, for that reason, produce more questions than answers, in addition to raising dilemmas about what education research is actually for, if it is not claiming to 'create impact' and 'improve best practice'. I think, therefore, it is important that I am still uncertain about the extent to which qualitative research material can actually 'tell' the researcher anything. I am still left, at the end of this research process, thinking about the different forms academic writing can take in higher education, and I still have more questions to ask about the question of research subjectivity and my own embodied responses to the academic writing processes.

Another key post-qualitative idea that I grasped in (*my)research* is that one's research can, and often does, redefine itself in theoretical terms as it progresses. I have changed and re-changed my conceptions about academic writing practices, and the research has been both informed, and shaped ontologically, by those changing reconceptualisations. As I illustrated in Chapter

3, theoretical frameworks can be usefully deployed to explore, but not necessarily resolve, ideas provoked by material phenomena (in this research, the situatedness of academic writing practices). Moreover, theories can act as a vehicle for studying a phenomenon, instead of trying to explain it, that is, they can be generative not illustrative. For example, this happened when I considered the extent to which disciplinary fields, which in practical terms express epistemes or systems of knowledge in higher education, are essentially social entities. This led me to contend that it is through execution of specific academic writing practices that presentation of those epistemes is defined or legitimated *as academic,* as opposed to, say, journalistic or, as is more often the case with students, inappropriately non-academic.

The resulting bricolage of theories and data emerging from (*my)research* are complex and complicating, creating Deleuzean 'lines of flight' (Figure 28, p. 199) that fashion exciting and unexpected rhizomic connections. One such line of flight tracks the connection between the journey towards a post-qualitative research approach (outlined in Chapters 2 and 6) as the most appropriate means of exploring and discussing my postmodern, problematised reconceptualisations of academic writing practices in higher education (which are explored in Chapters 3 and 7). Another is the idea that mimesis, and its opposite, the denial of mimesis, operate as a way of explaining how disciplinary fields maintain discursive power, whilst paradoxically simultaneously maintaining post-Enlightenment/neo-liberal truisms such as the idea that intellectual progress, represented by the discovery of new knowledge, resides in originality and individuated human capital.

One consequence of these connections has been the production of a thesis which operates along the lines of a Foucauldian 'writerly text', in that it does not tell the reader what the researcher has found out, instead it invites them to 'engage with the co-production of ideas' (Ball, 2013, p.12) engendered by the research. Ball (2013) invokes Foucault's concept of 'the author function' for his own work. This concept maintains that the author of a text, such as this doctoral thesis, does not just denote the actual individual who physically wrote it, but, also includes the wider beliefs or assumptions and corresponding conventions and expectations which govern (and regulate) the production, circulation, classification and consumption of texts in any given field which been used to 'make' it. Gubrium and Holstein (2003) discuss how post-qualitative research identities require researchers to acknowledge their own 'orienteering sensibilities' (p.4) when critically analysing research material, rather than claiming any original or unique perspective. I have attempted to reflect these alternative ideas about authoring

throughout the thesis by acknowledging a rhizomic interconnectedness between my reading about academic writing practices, my discussion of participants' accounts of their ideas about academic writing practices and my own ideas and writing practices.

With regard to the latter, since doctoral composition is by its very nature highly intertextual, I have constantly tried to highlight and explore my own interactions and struggles with wider beliefs, assumptions, conventions and expectations governing the production of educational qualitative research doctorate, and the academic writing practices that underpin them. Overtly, in post-qualitative educational research, the act of acknowledging intertextuality is recognised as central to the composition of new assemblages. In this thesis, the reader is invited to rethink textuality and intertextuality by exploring how the chosen research approach highlights and disputes established power relations between research-related texts and the academic writing practices and ideas that they embody. Ultimately this kind of rethinking demands that the assembled/composite nature of the singular text produced by the research, the doctoral thesis, be fully acknowledged.

Rethinking relationships between oneself as the researcher and one's secondary sources and primary research material in this way may, on the surface, seem to be at odds with the traditional purpose and outcomes of a doctorate, which is for an individual, working in a particular disciplinary field, to 'contribute new meaning and knowledge to the field'. However, as previously discussed in Chapter 6, one needs to question what constitutes 'new' knowledge (as well as exploring the related issue of what constitutes 'knowledge' per se). More pertinently, can definitive 'meanings' be unproblematically claimed in the field of qualitative research studies? Is it not more ethical to claim that qualitative research can only concern itself with recycling or reassembling lived or observed phenomena through the researcher's own subjectivity ('*through a glass darkly*') ? With this in mind, the selection and presentation of the statements discussed in Chapter 7, and the ideas that they have generated, are not claimed to represent anything 'new'. More accurately it is the particular assemblage that this thesis presents, out of the statements 'as research', that is new, as it has never been made before, and will never be again exactly in the form in which it appears in this thesis.

8.2.3 (my)fields

Post-qualitative researchers enact a rigorous epistemic and ontological reflexivity which challenges the disciplinary power of taken-for-granted assumptions about what qualitative research in education should look like, and what it could, or should, be doing. Post-qualitative reflexivity encourages researchers to explore how their work connects to other research and how it subsequently positions them within or across disciplinary fields (Woolgar, 1998, Davis et al., 2004). It also obliges researchers to develop a sense of themselves, *as researchers,* through a heightened use of Schon's process of 'reflection in action' (1983, 1987). Johnson and Duberley (2003) develop Schon's initial concept with their call for 'epistemic reflexivity' in practitioner research which, they explain, encourages researchers to question accepted practices and dominant discourses in their workplace, whilst critically assessing their role as a researcher in that workplace so that:

> […] the knowledge constraining and knowledge-constituting impact of the researcher's own beliefs […] derive from their socio-historical location. (Johnson and Duberley, 2000, p.179)

Charting the scope of one's disciplinary field (say, through a comprehensive literature review) is not enough in post-qualitative research (although it has, as the participants in Chapter 7, indicated often sufficed traditionally for qualitative research in education). In comparison, this thesis cuts across a number of disciplinary fields to explore relationships between nested fields of academic writing practices, professional identities and qualitative research in higher education, a sector that has not been studied or theorised to the same extent as other education settings, such as schools (Naidoo, 2000; Deem, 2004).

Various elements inform higher education disciplines and, as Chapter 7 has outlined, this thesis proposes that academic writing is one of the most important. In particular, it has examined the very specific ways in which academic writing practices, communities of practice and individual writing selves or identities are connected through a form of Foucauldian disciplinary power. Expressed on both a micro and macro level, disciplinary power produces what I have called 'field-congruence', a kind of tacit, discursive force-field that coalesces around academic writing practices. The processual nature of field-congruence is exemplified by the following concatenation of players and events in a typical higher education teaching and learning cycle. Students are taught disciplinary epistemes by subject-specific lecturers, the same lecturers (or

at least those in the same disciplinary field) devise written assignments, which are often informed by generic institutional descriptors of levelness. Students discuss and revise drafts of their responses to those written assignments with their subject lecturers and possibly peers. They then complete and submit written summative assignments which lecturers, not always the same ones who taught them, mark and grade their work. Each stage in this process requires the production of a particular academic writing text (assignment brief, assignment, written feedback) all of which involve different writing practices, which need to be field-congruent. For this reason, the educational process surrounding the production of written summative assignments can be seen to embody, as well as play out, the contradictions and dissonances, which characterise communities and practices around all forms of academic writing in any disciplinary field.

Lastly, in this thesis, through *(my)fields* I have been able to reflect on how different disciplinary fields, philosophy, linguistics, cultural studies and sociology can be combined and connected (that is, assembled) in different and contingent ways. For example, the theoretical frameworks assembled in Chapter 3 are applied reflexively in Chapter 6 to the academic writing practices that inform the thesis under construction, as well as informing the critical discussion of participants' statements in Chapter 7 and my account of myself as a researcher here in Chapter 8. In Chapter 5, a deliberately situated approach is taken with regard to how lecturers (in the setting) have reconceptualised their academic identities through engagement with the academic writing practices outlined in Chapter 3. On this transdiscplinary journey I philosophise about the extent to which academic writing practices inform lecturers' professional academic writing identities, socially, culturally, practically and linguistically. For this reason, the research does not try to establish a model of best practice in professional academic writing out of participants' responses to the elicitation. Instead, those responses inform a non-normative, enquiry-based approach that seeks to explore the complexities and tensions inherent in lecturers' lived experiences of the social/situated practice of academic writing in higher education.

8.3 Provocations

8.3.1 Provocation 1

What is academic writing and how do its dominant discourses appear to inform lecturers' perceptions of academic writing and writing development practices in the research setting?

Although the Academy contains highly differentiated disciplinary spaces, it lacks a sense of clarity and criticality about what actually constitutes and differentiates forms of academic writing, both within and across disciplinary boundaries (Lea and Street, 1998; Ganobscik-Williams, 2006). With regard to Provocation 1, this thesis has explored, since its earliest origins outlined in Chapter 2, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to define what academic writing is or should be. This contention is in stark contrast to the historical unwillingness of the Academy to acknowledge the inherent contestability and instability of academic writing practices across disciplinary fields.

As a response to such ingrained unwillingness, this thesis offers alternative poetics and politics of academic writing practices, aligned to the choice of a post-qualitative educational research paradigm. Key to this post-qualitative approach is the idea that what is important to the study of academic writing in higher education is the recognition that academic writing cannot, and should not, be defined in a particular way, at least not without asking critically whose interests any proposed definition serves. Moreover, by embracing complex and problematic reconceptualisations of academic writing practices, the thesis seeks to challenge, and resist, established, or taken-for-granted, academic writing practice, contending that they inhibit experimentation and risk. It is also arguing for change and challenge in academic writing practices, for example, by drawing attention to the need to bring a heightened self-awareness into academic writing practices, so that students and lecturers can see them as social practices not universal laws. As Richardson (2000) states, all writing:

> […] creates a particular view of reality; all writing uses grammatical narrative, and rhetorical structures that create value, inscribe meaning, and constitute the subjects and objects of inquiry. How we chose to write them involves many major and minor ethical and rhetorical decisions. (p.58)

In this spirit, I have used participants' statements in Chapter 7 to reconnoitre and explore their particular views of reality. My research approach recasts these 'realities' as situated perceptions on academic writing practices emerging out of, and informed by, a 'writing in higher education habitus' which reflects the hegemonic, dominant values and discourses informing academic writing practices in higher education. This is an inherently political activity because as well as governing lecturers' own writing practices, one can argue that dominant academic writing values and discourses help construct pedagogic assumptions and expectations for the students that lecturers teach and assess (predominantly through written

tasks). In this thesis I argue, therefore, that a largely tacit approach to academic writing development in higher education has fashioned entrenched polarising discourses which generate a crude binary between students who 'can' or 'cannot write' to an 'appropriate standard' (Williams, 1997).

Students are, more often than not, taught a subject without the opportunity to engage explicitly with the processes, such as expected writing practices for assessment, that underpin the self-conscious, field-congruent presentation of subject-specific learning through written summative assignments. As illustrated in Chapters 3 and 4, due to the dominance of the autonomous model of academic writing development, higher education lecturers do not traditionally spend time articulating and demonstrating the particular writing practices that they expect their students to produce in summative written assignments. This lack of an explicit, process-based critical pedagogy around writing, militates I would argue, against students' understanding about how they could, or should, write for their discipline successfully.

8.3.2 Provocation 2

How can post-qualitative research into lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices open up a debate about academic writing development practices in higher education?

The response taken to this question raises the need for what I have called 'new practice imaginaries for academic writing in higher education'. These new practice imaginaries for academic writing represent an invitation to struggle with academic writing. The use of the word 'imaginary' is Lacanian in origin. Lacan (1958) spoke of three domains that human beings inhabit, namely; the symbolic, imaginary and the real. New practice imaginaries for academic writing in higher education look forward to 'what might be', not what is 'perceived to be' (the symbolic) or not what 'is' (the real). Such imaginaries necessarily go against the grain of dominant academic writing discourses (which are rooted in the symbolic resonance of traditional forms of writing such as the formal essay) and which too often ignore the diversity of many students writing histories (the real). New practice imaginaries for academic writing in higher education insist that the relationship between higher education academic writing practices and those who engage in them, is one of difference. Difference can be expressed in many ways; it could be through the forms of academic writing experienced through the research process (as was the case in this thesis); in the use of critical pedagogies (for lecturers engaged

in teaching) or via alternative curriculum design and/or methods of assessment (experienced by students engaged in learning).

The 'imaginary' reconstituted as a noun is also a useful concept for signaling new ways of becoming an academic writer. New practice imaginaries for academic writing in higher education are social and reflexive. Unlike the 'real' and symbolic discourses they could replace, they are constructs defined by the interplay and rhizomic interrelatedness of texts, writing events and writing identities in higher education, not by the fixing of those elements into 'correct' configurations. Thinking through new writing practice imaginaries for academic writing could move lecturers' practice beyond the tacit and taken for granted academic writing practices that currently dominate in the Academy. For example, this thesis has discussed the ways in which higher education academic writing practices develop within disciplinary fields. These are highly pedagogised spaces in institutional terms, but often lack a sense of clarity and criticality about what actually constitutes and supports learning generally, and the development of academic writing specifically (Lea and Street, 1998; Ganobscik-Williams, 2006). It may be that creating new opportunities, and ways for discussing writing practices and development, between university managers, lecturers and students could begin to change the accepted pedagogic culture around writing and writing development currently extant in many higher education institutions.

Universities inhabit a 'supercomplex' world in which they are not sole, authoritative producers and reproducers of information or knowledge, in particular fixed forms as discussed by Barnett (2000). Indeed, Barnett argues that in a modern academy the nature and status of any epistemological claims are increasingly debatable and contestable, as are the forms of academic writing deployed to express them. One can argue, therefore, that all forms of higher education learning may, for this reason, benefit from an explicitly metacognitive pedagogic approach. This approach could foreground and problematise academic writing practices and identities, central to learning and teaching, across and within disciplinary fields (Biggs, 2003).

8.4 New Academic Writing Imaginaries

8.4.1 A new academic writing imaginary for universities

The ongoing debate about academic writing standards and students' preparedness for university is, this thesis contends, part of an important debate about changing functions of British

universities in the twenty first century (Barnett, 2000; Hayton and Paczuska, 2002; Cooper and Thomas 2000). Far from being a cause for concern, the indeterminism of academic writing practices, as discussed thus far, could serve as a pedagogic catalyst, opening up spaces for a whole new way of thinking about academic writing practices and supporting writing development practices within higher education teaching and learning at an institutional level.

Historically, higher education has defined itself through claims that it offers excellent teaching by experts in the field, whilst its research is characterised by unimpeachable academic objectivity, rigour and ethics. These claims cohere around the ability of students and academics to evaluate independently competing knowledge-claims, and counter-claims, through their teaching and learning, and, of course, create new knowledge, or at least develop and substantiate existing knowledge-claims through their research. Whilst postmodern approaches to knowledge and validity, as discussed in Chapter 6, reject simple concepts of knowledge transfer and research objectivity, they nonetheless share a sense of higher education's distinctiveness. Postmodernist approaches to learning and research reposition universities as a potentially radical space where academics are encouraged, and in turn encourage students, to challenge the 'taken-for-grantedness' of standards which inform dominant disciplinary epistemes, academic writing practices and the power relations that they often enact unthinkingly.

Expanding higher education should be about far more than simply recruiting a wider range of students to existing programmes and assessing those programmes using established forms of written assessment (Ivanic, 1998; Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001, Lillis and McKinney, 2003). There is an urgent need to challenge out-dated, often discriminatory political and academic orthodoxies informing ideas about which academic writing practices are 'correct', which institutions are the 'best' and who the 'right' kind of students are. Likewise, there is arguably a need to integrate academic writing development in universities beyond those students deemed to be 'at risk' (Haggis and Pouget, 2002). Not least, academic writing development in higher education could be much more cognisant of the diverse writing experiences that students increasingly bring with them to higher education.

For example, one could use the more complex reconceptualisation of academic writing practices developed in this thesis to challenge frequently expressed concerns in higher education that poor writing skills in widening participation students has contributed to a general

'dumbing down' of higher education in English universities (Burke, 2005; Leathwood, 2010). One could argue, using those reconceptualisations, that the different writing experiences that widening participation students bring with them to university could, far from being a cause for concern, serve as a spur to open up spaces in the Academy for whole new ways of thinking about and supporting academic writing and writing development practices through a range of critical pedagogies (French, 2013).

The statements in Chapter 7 indicated that participants, in this research setting at least, often experienced and internalised, academic writing practices as disciplining technologies encouraging field-congruent conformity. This had the tendency to:

> […] mediate academic writing practices, tending to constrain rather than open up possibilities for meaning making (Lillis, 1997, p.182).

Fairclough (1995) also thought it was important to challenge dominant academic writing practices in higher education because they are, to a greater or lesser extent, 'involved in educating people about the sociolinguistic order they live' (p.220). For this reason, one can argue that academic writing practices are an important agent of social reproduction and disciplinary power in higher education. Sword's (2009) research into professional writing practices makes a case for more incentives to experiment and challenge established ways of writing for publication in the Academy. She argues that despite protestations from editors, who state that that they want exciting and brave writing from potential contributors, what they actually publish:

> [...] reveals a startling gap between theory and practice: that is, between what most academics say stylish writing is and what educationalists actually produce and publish. (p.320)

Sword's (2009) frustration with professional academic publishing conventions was certainly echoed by participants in this study, they too wanted the freedom to write in different and exciting ways. However, Sword is realistic that the power to change has to come not only from journal editors and publishers but academics themselves:

> The status quo will begin to shift only when more and more academics dare to write differently, replacing impersonal research reports with real-life stories about students, teachers and researchers (human beings!) engaged in the challenging, frustrating, exhilarating work of higher education. (Sword, 2009, p.320)

The status quo embodied by an adherence to field-congruent writing practices is, as Chapter 7 outlines, maintained through forms of disciplinary power, both externally and internally imposed. However, the resulting hegemony belies the situated nature and inherent plasticity of writing and as outlined in Chapter 3, which explored how dominant academic writing practices can and do, function as sites of tension. Universities, therefore, could more explicitly and critically acknowledge and exploit these tensions to stimulate and reframe discussions and expectations around embedded and academic writing development approaches for students. Usefully, in this respect Foucault (2002) delineated criticality as the freedom not to be governed claiming that:

> […] critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. (p.47)

This goes to the heart of a more critical institutional imaginary for academic writing. Students and lecturers in every discipline could be encouraged to think about and question the academic writing practices that they are exposed to as readers, and engaged in producing themselves as writers. Critical pedagogic approaches (like those discussed in Chapter 3) encourage lecturers to foreground and problematise how academic writing practices mediate learning and teaching processes, not only the presentation of learning, but its assessment in higher education, for both undergraduate/post-graduate and post-doctoral students. Metacognitive pedagogic approaches to teaching and learning in higher education, such as those propounded by Biggs (2003), empower lecturers to question, and even contest, the principal 'givens', or 'truths' of academic writing across disciplines with their students. This includes discussing not only what one can write about, but, as this thesis has tried to show, *how* one can write within disciplines. The underpinning principles of meta-linguistic and dialogic pedagogic approaches explicitly relates academic writing development practices to critical thinking, not just as a vehicle for increased clarity of expression, but as an integral medium for students' cognitive reasoning. For example, creating a dialogic space to share and explore individual perceptions of and reactions to disciplinary-based academic writing processes, can function as a way of self-consciously organising and calibrating what one has learned as a situated practice.

Therefore, engendering lecturers' confidence and willingness to question and contest the ways in which disciplinary knowledge in the academy is presented and/or mediated through writing

is crucial. It speaks to Barnett's (2000, 2007) belief that universities inhabit a 'supercomplex' world in which they are not sole, authoritative producers and reproducers of information or knowledge in particular, fixed forms. Indeed, Barnett maintains that in the modern world the nature and status of any knowledge-claims are increasingly debatable and contestable, as are the forms, such as academic writing, deployed to express or mediate them. Learning in higher education should, according to Barnett, be progressively experienced via the supported, negotiation of a number of contested critical metanarratives, or frameworks, through which information and epistemes can be expressed, experienced and, of course, challenged (Barnett, 2000). Barnett's (2000) 'supercomplexity', however, requires contestable and fluid pedagogic frameworks which create new learning spaces for lecturers and students, enabling them to question traditional epistemic principles of 'truth' and 'knowledge' and the dominant academic writing practices that often support them. Like the approach outlined below, Barnett's (2000) supercomplex university gestures towards a more fluid and contingent evolved idea of an academic community of practice around writing practices, which does not just act to reify accepted, field-congruent ways of knowing and doing, but is prepared to debate and renegotiate the limits of that congruity.

8.4.2 A new academic writing imaginary for students

Finding new and innovative approaches and strategies to develop academic writing for students is a gradual process. Lillis (2003) states that:

> Whilst powerful as an oppositional frame, that is as a critique of current conceptualisations and practices surrounding student writing, academic literacies has yet to be developed as a design frame (Kress, 1997, 2000) which can actively contribute to student writing pedagogy as both theory and practice. (p.192)

As discussed in earlier chapters, many expectations and assumptions around students' writing remain implicit. Lecturers do not traditionally spend time articulating and demonstrating processes through which the subject specific knowledge, which constitutes the bulk of their lectures, can be translated into written forms for assessment purposes. This lack of an explicit, process-based critical pedagogy around writing, could, it has been argued in this thesis, militate against students' understanding about how they should write appropriately for their discipline. In spite of the obvious shortcomings of separating reflection from teaching and learning processes, from the acquisition of discipline knowledge, this remains the pattern in many

universities (Doloughan, 2001). Students are, more often than not, taught a subject without the opportunity to engage explicitly with processes, such as writing for assessment within that discipline, which underpins their subject specific learning.

Accordingly, as Chapters 3, 4 and 5 discussed, students and lecturers often feel anonymous and disempowered in higher education as writers. One reason for this, as was illustrated in the statements in Chapter 7, is the Academy's tacit allegiance to dominant, field-congruent academic writing practices which operate in largely conformist ways. As Chapter 6 suggested, academic writing identities are not personal, the identity they confer is, however, part of an individual's 'academic writing in higher education habitus' which is mutable, not essentialist. This mutability of identity is at the heart of education's potential to be a transformative experience. The development of a positive, and potentially transformative academic writing identity, is crucial to academic success for students (Ivanic, 1998). However, as discussed in the last section, lecturers need to get students more overtly engaged in exploring and challenging taken for granted, dominant assumptions about academic writing and writing development practices in higher education, (Ivanic, 1998; Lillis, 2001). This kind of approach could create a teaching environment where the talk would not be of students having to produce 'correct' academic writing. Instead, students could explore the cultural and historical situatedness of dominant disciplinary-based, field-congruent, writing practices in their subject, and be encouraged to consciously experiment with and challenge them. This approach could add to, and in some instances complement, students' already rich and complex writing in 'higher education habitus' which they, like their lecturers, are constantly developing as they move through higher education. A pedagogy which uses rhizomic conceptualisations of academic writing in higher education could help deepen students' conceptualisations of academic writing practices to include the following:

- Autonomous writing v ideological model of writing
- The mutability of writing practices
- Relationship between criticality and academic writing
- Notion of writing as process not product
- Connection between positive academic writing selves and academic success
- The importance of experimentation to effective academic writing.

Focusing attention on the multiple purposes and meanings of academic writing practices in this way, could encourage lecturers to draw students' attention to the often subjective and contested nature of the language they are using about academic writing, not only in their feedback to students but in assignment and assessment criteria. This attention to academic writing practices, *as language,* might take the form of preliminary discussions about how the specific disciplinary writing requirements of a particular subject have developed historically. Such discussions could include questions about historicity in History, the demands of scientism in Biology, or as has been discussed extensively in this thesis, the problems of representing lived experience in social science research. Such discussions would necessarily acknowledge that academic writing practices emerge and change, over time, that they are shaped by other factors such as technological advancements and social and historical events. This awareness could encourage lecturers and students to remain alive to the potential contestability and multiplicity of meanings, in written and spoken language. Explicit discussion, especially with regard to the language used in learning and assessment, could empower students to understand that academia requires their deliberate adoption of disciplinary-based academic writing practices. Using such an approach, students should be more able to respond to and act on feedback that is based on terms and concepts that have been discussed and shared, if not necessarily agreed on. For example, students could be given opportunities to discuss what they think about, and how they react to, the language used most frequently in written assessments and in the written feedback they are given by lecturers about their academic writing. This locates students as active agents in the production of their own written texts, rather than passive recipients of assignment instructions that they have had no opportunity to debate and written feedback which is vague and often predicated on a deficit model.

Students' subjective experiences and feelings about academic writing practices, including those experienced before they got to university, should be taken very seriously, as they form part of a distinctively complex, rhizomic writing pedagogy which takes account of the affective domain when learning. As discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7, the personal stakes around academic writing in higher education are high for academics and students. Individuals have a lot invested in doing well and are aware that a failure to produce appropriate academic writing will be detrimental to their achievement. Academic writing is a contingent, yet ever present 'thing', in students' lives, which they often feel positively and negatively emotional about. The new imaginary would take into account this affective domain by focusing on getting students to think about what they want to say through their academic writing and explore how they feel

about writing. This concentrates them on the importance and experience of *having something to say*. It is an approach that moves the discussion about writing away from the view that writing is just about getting a technical skill set right, refocusing both lecturers and students on the importance of academic writing as a medium for the development of thinking and ideas. This approach helps reposition lecturers and students as more active and agentic around their development as academic writers (as engaged thinkers). In such a scenario their writing in higher education could be more than just a vehicle for reproducing field-congruent writing styles, although of course that is important too.

8.4.3 A new academic writing imaginary for lecturers

The critical pedagogies discussed in Chapter 4 create opportunities to critique the 'invisibility' of many academic writing practices and using them could help shape new academic writing imaginaries for lecturers. In practical teaching terms, Barnett (2000) and Biggs' (2003) complex, metacognitive approaches to academic writing and writing development raise the issue of how discursive, disciplinary power impacts on individual lecturers through dominant academic writing and writing development practices. As Bourdieu, (in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), makes clear, in any communication process, such as teaching:

> […] even the content of the message itself, remains unintelligible as long as one does not take into account the totality of the structure of the power positions that is present, yet invisible, in the exchange. (p.146)

Pedagogically, lecturers could take into account the totality of the structure of the power positions informing academic writing practices, by translating, or at least opening up for discussion, taken-for-granted, dominant disciplinary academic writing practices for their students (Rawson, 2000). Openly discussing assumptions and the communities of practice that support dominant academic writing practices could facilitate the emergence of more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative approaches to teaching and learning and encourage the production of more experimentation in academic writing, at all levels. In Chapters 4 and 7 it has been argued that in any simple conceptualisations about the reification of academic writing practices into binary division of 'good' and 'bad' are compromised by the sheer diversity of literacies and writing practices which students bring with them and need to negotiate. Moreover, academic writing practices can, and do, cross disciplinary borders, mutate into hybrid forms and respond to technological change. For example, Knobel and

Lanksheer (2007, 2010) explore the ways in which the increasingly multimodal literacies that characterise 21st century life are transforming academic literacies and practices.

For these reasons the current status quo of any disciplinary-based academic writing practices should be more accurately regarded as a moment in its on-going development, not the culmination of the best possible practice. As argued in Chapter 6, academic writing practices, looked at through a postmodern lens, can be presented to students as rhizomically related, inhabiting a flattened landscape where various, possibly competing, writing communities territorialise and de/reterritorialise different educational landscapes all the time.

An uncritical acceptance of dominant academic writing and development writing practices in higher education legitimises their dominance, and has a number of implications. Before individuals even enter the Academy, a lack of familiarity with the types of writing expected of them can lead to lack of confidence and difficulties, once their writing has been judged. As discussed in Chapter 4 and 5, this lack of familiarity with accepted/expected academic writing practices reflects the unequal distribution of cultural capital in society. Moreover, within the university, across all levels, undergraduate, postgraduate and professional, a dearth of critical discussion around academic writing practices creates a compliant and conformist learning and teaching climate. This climate often results in a situation where lecturers expect certain kinds of writing from students (who are penalised if they fail to deliver) and where editors of journals and directors of study expect certain kinds of writing (so that academics are penalised by non-publication if they fail to deliver).

However, more innovative and integrated approaches to developing academic writing through critical pedagogies, like those outlined in Chapter 4, would pose a huge challenge to many lecturers, as there has often been very little tradition of lecturers operating in this way in higher education in the UK (Zukas and Malcolm, 1999). The negative influence of the deficit model around academic writing development, discussed in Chapter 5, and the concept of mimesis, discussed in Chapter 7, means that lecturers do not usually admit to students they have struggled, or do struggle, with their own academic writing. Instead, the achievement of academic writing, more often than not, appears to be 'a kind of trick' which lecturers, positioned discursively as expert writers, have mastered, and which students in turn, must learn to master themselves. If more cognisance was taken of how students learn to write for higher education purposes (like their lecturers did before them when they were undergraduates) then

closer links with writing development could be developed between what is taught, how it is taught, and what is learnt. In the new imaginary, lecturers could question how and why students need to learn to write in particular ways for their discipline. This could help explain the clearly demarcated territories between subject-specific content currently found within higher education.

Whilst supporting the basic premise that students do undoubtedly benefit from holistic and embedded approaches to writing development, this thesis suggests that there are institutional issues to be addressed about how prepared and supported lecturers in British universities are for being fully in charge of developing students' writing or even working collaboratively with specialist writing-developers. The provision developed in some universities, such as (Mitchell and Evison (2005) working at the University of London and Ganobcsik-William's (2011) 'Thinking Writing' project at Coventry University suggest ways in which more proactive institutional support around academic writing development can help lecturers, just as much as students, to develop more confident and self-aware academic writing identities and a clearer, possibly more critical, understanding of the historical and cultural values and assumptions underpinning writing in the Academy. However, there is plenty of evidence that academic writing development, for lecturers themselves and/or for their work with students, has not traditionally been viewed as an important aspect of lecturers' professional development (Biggs and Tang 2007; Ramsden 2003). Despite this, there is often little commitment in universities aimed at developing a coherent and systematic academic writing development programme (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Institutions could begin by acknowledging that lecturers' writing identities are increasingly complex and hybridised (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2006). Chapter 7 explored the extent to which lecturers, like students, have an often conflicted and always complex sense of themselves as academic writers who can belong, simultaneously and at different times, in their professional lives, to various writing communities as lecturers, doctoral students, contributors to journals, editors and so on; in addition, of course, to any other writing communities that they may be part of, in other spheres of their lives. This means that lecturers often not only need support to become more effective writing developers for their students; but they often need help to develop themselves into the kind of portfolio professional academic writers described by participants in Chapter 7.

Mezirow's (1997, 2000) research on reflexivity suggests one way individuals can challenge totalising and powerful discourses around academic writing. His concept of 'perspective transformation' in the early work, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (1991), explores how individuals can become critically aware through a more reflexive understanding of everyday professional practices, such as academic writing, which often become 'blackboxed' (Latour, 1988) and thus rendered invisible. This notion of 'perspective transformation' has been enacted through the analysis of statements in Chapter 7. They began to explore how and why lecturers' presuppositions have come to constrain how they perceive, understand, and feel about themselves, not only as the judges of students' writing but as professional academic writers, who themselves struggle with the various demands that the academy makes on them. This is a process that could be usefully incorporated into higher education staff development and teacher education programmes. However, as this study has already discussed, the programmes and qualifications currently offered to new lecturers, rarely offer any explicit development around academic writing practices.

One can argue, therefore, that there should be more opportunities for lecturers to discuss their own values and expectations about students' academic writing and writing development, particularly with regard to how they inform the content and purpose of the summative written assignments set for student assessments. Questions that a new imaginary for lecturers' academic writing development might frame as part of their everyday pedagogic practice around embedded academic writing development might include:

- What do lecturers want their students' writing to look like and are they aware of the extent they want it to resemble the dominant writing practices in their disciplinary field (and do they know what they are)?
- What do lecturers want their feedback to mean and/or do with regard to developing their students' academic writing, both within and beyond, field-congruent expectations and assumptions?
- How can, or should, written feedback from subject lecturers develop academic writing development strategies through summative written feedback?
- How can students be engaged more interactively and proactively with developing their academic writing, both within and beyond, field-congruent expectations and assumptions?

In these ways, lecturers, along with their students, could begin to negotiate and thereby territorialise and deterritorialise different academic writing spaces so that they remain open to change and innovation. This would, of course, also involve lecturers constantly and consciously renegotiating their own writing identities. This thesis has explored lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices in higher education precisely in order to open up such a process of negotiation and discussion around their own, and their students' academic writing identities. Openness to change offers lecturers ways of resisting and challenging the dominant discourses around academic writing practices, which have so often had the effect of closing down debate and stifling innovation in higher education about the forms academic writing should or could take.

Epilogue

I have found it very difficult to finish this thesis, but end it must. I have chosen to finish as I started, with three examples, this time they illustrate the process of producing this thesis, this particular writing practice. The first is a quote from Deleuze and Guattari's 'A Thousand Plateaus'. It is both inspiring and aspirational and I hope (if one substitutes 'thesis for 'book' in the quote) that it sums up my feelings about the status/meaning of this final write up of my doctoral thesis:

> A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 p.3)

I particularly like the way that this quotation draws attention to the relationships between the constituent elements or parts that make up a thesis, which is the 'workings of matter.

I remember how I experienced the ebb and flow of these 'matters' on me, emotionally, affectively, as the thesis (a product of part-time study) moved at different speeds at different times.

The quotation also reflects how the object and subjects of my research exist on the same plane. As I consider the phrase 'exteriority of their relations', I find myself thinking of Heidegger's concepts of 'thrownness' and 'in-der-welt' and the rhizomic connections and relations between all matter that such concepts imply. The research has enacted reterritorialisation and deterritorialisation in various ways on its nomadic journey. Indeed, a thesis like this looks both inward and outwards; it tries to articulate the lines of flight it has travelled, whilst gesturing and aspiring to lines of flight as yet untravelled. It recognises that hierarchies and stratification exist without subscribing to them.

The second concluding example is an image (Figure 30, p. 299) made by one of my favourite photographers, Francesca Woodman, whose take on the world I have always found fascinating and perplexing, engendering feelings of wonder and confusion. The work I have chosen reflects how I always feel about things that interest and excite me, in this instance, academic writing practices. The montage of related images represents

how I feel about my research journey and how it brought a particular version of myself into being (as writing always does). The montage begins with a series of empty frames, the emptiness reflects an absence, as my researcher self had not yet been brought into being. The next sequence of frames illustrates how my identity as a researcher, my subjectivity (represented by the body in the photographs), remained blurred and indistinct throughout my time as a researcher. The artificial frame that Woodman has *drawn onto the photographs articulates how the 'framing' of the research positioned me* in different ways as I moved through the research process. *In this sense, the drawn frame symbolises organisation, position and restraint. The movement of the body in the photograph through and beyond the frame represents how I was always moving, still changing as I developed through my research. The figure in the photographs is playing with the frame, exploring it, like I played with and explored the boundaries of exploratory, qualitative research in education. Taken together, these images illustrate the way I feel now as I look back on my research; they represent how I and my subject-matter, 'lecturers' perceptions of academic writing', have worked on each other and changed continuously throughout the research process.*

Figure 30: Francesca Woodman montage (reproduced here with kind permission from the Woodman Foundation)

The final concluding example I have chosen is a poem I wrote as I struggled with trying to articulate, in more conventional academic prose, my feelings about my subject matter and the whole process of writing a PhD, at the end of the doctoral writing process. I failed miserably and this is the result.

It is my last word on the subject (for now at least).

The working of matters

Lines of flight
  (articulated thoughts and feelings)
Movements to territorialise and deterritorialise
  (across landscapes often unknown and unexpected)
A new 'writing in higher education habitus '
  (for now, it will change again)
Changing professional practices around academic writing
  (they should shift again)
Writing liminally, in and about the spaces in-between
  (always finding new ones)
Negotiating through writing and research
  (not necessarily known)
Dialoguing, questioning and collaborating
  (entangling writing selves)
Rethinking academic writing practices
  (They should feel risky)
Through a glass darkly
  (inevitably)

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Appendices

1. CETL Briefing Paper: Supporting the development of academic literacy in first year Education and Early Childhood Studies students Research design: 2006/7

Rationale for the research

This research was part of a national research bid funded by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching to understand the first year learning experience in higher education. One of the concerns for first year students is the ability to develop the appropriate study skills. The Dearing Report (1997) identified that strong key skills were often lacking in university graduates. The Report advocated that these skills were embedded into the curriculum. This was further endorsed by the White Paper: The Future of Higher Education (2003) which recommended that communication skills, both written and oral, were integrated into individual subjects rather than offering a discrete study skills module. For the last ten years, in the School of Education in this university, first year students on HEFCE funded course (i.e. non-teacher training programmes of study) have studied a discrete, generic study skills module called Learning for Success that aims to give students study skills in academic reading, writing, presentation, team working, and communication and ICT competence. However, preliminary research on this module by the project team indicated that many of the first year students felt that they already entered university with these skills; in fact only 10/73 participants, (14%, all of whom were mature students) indicated that they wanted a specific study skills module.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the research was to identify common issues pertaining to students' academic writing when first attending university. The two main objectives were to identify any issues with academic writing the students may have and secondly to be able, through the research findings, to provide the most appropriate support to the students in order to improve and develop their study skills, to aid progression of SEd first year undergraduates and improve grades.

The student sample

The students were studying three core modules from the Early Childhood Studies, Education Studies and Special Needs and Inclusion Studies disciplines. This was so that the majority of Level 1 students were targeted and any problems that were identified could be addressed early on in their academic studies.

The research process

The data collection methods involved collecting primary documentary evidence from students' writing, tutors' feedback notes and focus groups of Level 1 students.

Collecting and assessing examples of students writing

An analysis of Level 1 student writing was undertaken during the third week of semester 1. Project members held informal discussions with the teaching staff involved. They explained the rationale for the task and suggested ways of enabling the students to complete it in a supportive environment as part of the Learning for Success module. The initial writing exercises were based on short (approximately 1000 words) extracts from relevant journals to the specific disciplines on SJA. Students were asked to read the extracts over the week as an out-of-class activity. They were then given a series of prompts and asked to write about what they thought about the extract. This exercise was used because the ability to show competence in critical reading and then demonstrate this proficiency through academic writing is the criteria for the eventual award of a degree (Goodwyn and Poulson in Goodwyn and Stables, 2005). The exercise was completed in approximately 30 minutes during a taught session.

In total, 149 students submitted their initial writing task that was marked against a set of common technical writing errors. (See Figure 1 below)

Error	Frequency	Total
Inappropriate/poor use		
Error	Comment	Total
Poor vocabulary		
Lack of clarity		
Spelling		
Sentence structure issues		
Unnecessary shift in tense		
Unnecessary shift in pronoun		
Its/it's confusion		
There/their		
Use of abbreviations		

Missing words		

Figure 1 Initial diagnosis of writing – most frequent errors)

The marked initial writing assessments were returned to lecturers involved in the delivery of the modules. Project members discussed any students who appeared to have done particularly badly on the assessment.

The feedback to students was given two weeks after completing the writing exercise (to give time for marking). In addition to their marked initial assessments a feedback sheet (Figure 1.) was given to students to help raise their awareness about seeking help with their writing and proof-reading their work. Feedback was given on an individual basis both verbally and using the marked initial assessment as a focus for discussion (Figure 2).

Feedback on Writing Skills

The aim of this feedback is to give you an indication of some of the areas of your writing that you might need to pay particular attention to when completing assignments later in the module.

NAME

Writing Skill	Check out learning support in the Learning Centre when preparing an assignment	Check drafts carefully yourself and ensure the final draft is accurate before handing work in	Generally sound – but proof read work before handing in

Clarity of expression			
Appropriate academic style			
Correct use of vocabulary			
Sentence structure			
Spelling			
Punctuation			

Figure 2 Student feedback form

Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted three weeks after the feedback. They focussed on the students' perceptions of both the written exercise and the feedback they received in order to further guide them, where necessary, to improve their writing skills. This guidance included information about specialist help available through the Learning Centre. The focus groups were composed of 16 students, 4 male and 12 female. This is representative of the gender breakdown in the School of Education. Six of the students were combining sports studies with education studies; four were Early Childhood Studies specialists; four were Special Needs and Inclusion studies and two were combining Education Studies with Psychology. Discussion from the interviews focussed on the following issues:

- their understanding of the written task
- their feelings about doing it within a restricted timescale
- the feedback they received
- future guidance and support with academic writing.

An additional analysis was undertaken from the students' formative assignments on Learning for Success which were submitted towards the end of semester 1 and evaluated against the same criteria as the initial writing task to determine any changes.

Focus groups

The first group comprised the Early Childhood Studies students who were reluctant to be taped so field notes were taken paraphrased with the participants' agreement and read back to them for confirmation. The second group comprised the Sports Studies' students who combined with Education Studies; this group was willing to be taped so the tape recorder was used and supplemented with field notes. This process was also applied to the third group of students. The prompts were a mix of general and specific questions relating to their writing experiences, including the writing exercise and the feedback they were given as part of this project.

Findings

• 149 first year students participated in the initial writing sample which was used to diagnose common errors

• Using the simple feedback criteria that went to students:

- 32 students went into the 'generally sound' column – this meant there were very few errors in the initial piece of writing. (The most common error in this category was misuse of/or missing apostrophes). This group included two Dutch students and at least two second year part-time students that I could identify.

- 20 students went into the 'should seek support from the Learning Centre before handing work in' column – this means there was a significant technical error rate frequently impeding understanding. Of this group four were identified as having EAL, two as Creole transfer and two as self-identified dyslexic, there may, however, be more students with one or more of these literacy difficulties.

97 went into the middle category which indicated that students should 'proof read their work carefully before handing it in'. At least one self-identified dyslexic student and several EAL students were included here. This category covered students who evidenced a range of consistent technical errors but whose work was not difficult to read.

Final summative marks for LFS were mapped to the initial assessment categories and the following broad conclusions were noted:

- Those students who achieved a high assessment for their initial diagnosis generally got a higher grade of B11 or above for their final summative. This was above the average for the module as a whole.
- No student in medium range of diagnostic assessment achieved higher than C10.

Institutional Implications

Stakeholders:

- University requires a more proactive and systematic approach to writing support. This should include a strong steer from senior management to progress this. This is important to the widening participation agenda, as it helps support all students and enhance their literacy skills set.
- It is important to embed academic writing skills into subject specialism.
- Embedding academic writing skills into the curriculum should also include a diagnostic approach, in order to pick up difficulties early in students' academic careers. This requires a loop to identity difficulties, to provide writing support interventions and feedback.

Sector

- Care should be taken to ensure that study skills should not be approached from a deficit model. They are important to all students and improvements can be made across the student body.

Business Case

- Opportunity: The School of Education are forging ahead with developments in this area. Firstly this is being approached through a proactive, systematic approach to personal tutoring, which provides more support for staff to support students holistically. A large part of the support students will receive will focus on developing their academic and writing skills.
- Risk analysis: In the current funding climate, it is important to ensure that students achieve and complete. As a result of the widening participation agenda the University of Wolverhampton educates students from a variety of educational backgrounds. Typically the Institution does not attract students with a high level of

English and writing skills. Consequently it is important to make this part of their learning experience to aid their achievement. Specifically this helps students who are in the D band to achieve better grades and may impact on graduating grades, however, longitudinal research is required to establish this.

- Threats: Workloads and time. Lecturers feel unsupported as a writing developer. They also report that they have difficulty in ensuring they cover the subject curriculum and find it a 'stretch' to also cover writing skills. As a result they prioritise expertise in the taught field. This is also complicated by the Learning Works Programme. The process of learning vs product of subject becomes an important debate. However, blended learning can be used to help embed writing skills and group work is also a counter to this. Lecturers comment that finding time to mark, fitting writing skills into lectures with the curriculum and having no support for as they try to do this, makes academic writing skills more difficult for them to embed.

- Resource implications: Investments need to be made so that the organisation can provide an atmosphere that supports and trains staff to work with academic writing skills.

Expert Contacts

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Appendix 2

C E T L Briefing Paper: Embedding writing skills.

A published account of this project is available at:

Rationale for the research

For the last three years a team of researchers based in Wolverhampton University's School of Education have been working on a research project, which focuses on developing secure writing identities in first year Early Years students. The Early Childhood Studies degree is vocationally based and underpinned with relevant academic theory. Many of the students are qualified, experienced practitioners who entered higher education because workforce development initiatives in early years' Educare have encouraged them to study for a degree. Others have worked with children either in a voluntary capacity or in placement or as employment. Many continue to work in early childhood settings whilst completing their degrees. For this reason their entry into higher education often represents a shift from the utilisation of largely practical knowledge in the workplace to a primarily theoretical knowledge base operating in academia. This shift may account for the fact that many students report experiencing anxiety and difficulty around academic writing, especially in their first year.

Earlier research by the team on this cohort had revealed that the majority of the students preferred an embedded approach to developing their study skills and confidence in writing Allan & Clarke (2006). This led to a decision by the teaching team to replace the stand alone module study skills module, that had previously been offered to all first year students, so that study and skills and writing development activities could be delivered as an integral part of all first year core modules. Experienced cumulatively, the activities were intended to introduce students to opportunities to practice different kinds of writing and receive structured feedback on how they could improve their writing. The writing activities that resulted were often followed up in class by discussions about writing in higher education, what it actually involves and why written assignments are designed in particular ways. Many of the activities were linked into formative tasks, which in turn fed directly into summative assignments.

Aims and objectives

To embed and evaluate a series of writing development interventions into core modules on the SJA programme. By restructuring students' experiences of writing as a process of practice, feedback and discussion the team aimed to provide students with some practical scaffolding and reassurance about their writing before they handed in their first piece of assessed work. The activities were also intended to create a greater awareness in staff and students around what was the purpose of each written assignment. Lastly, exposure to the range of activities was intended to deepen students' grasp of what was actually involved in the production of written summatives so that issues such as using secondary sources as evidence, synthesising and analysing a range of theories and expressing a personal point of view had been discussed and debated as part of the whole learning experience (Wall 2006).

This work was evaluated for its impact on students and staff.

Research design

A participatory action research approach was implemented in this project. Context-specific; it only involved students in the first year of their degree and it looked to the future; any changes resulting from the project were to feed in to subsequent iterations of the modules. This study started by concentrating on minor changes to pedagogic practice in the research setting, which participating individuals could manage and control. However, the long-term aim is that such small changes may eventually lead to more extensive patterns of change around our curriculum design and delivery.

The main theoretical approach used in this project drew on the New Literacy Studies (NLS) movement (Street 1996). NLS does not treat literacy as one self-evident set of skills that allows people to engage in reading and writing. Rather it argues that people use many literacies (different kinds of reading and writing) in their everyday lives (Barton and Hamilton 1998). These literacies are shaped by their context and purpose. For the sample population of first year SJA students, writing was shaped by the expectations and values that inform what constitutes learning within their subject-specialism at university level. Its purpose, meanwhile, was primarily driven by the need to assess that knowledge transfer had taken place. In line with an NLS approach the project team were determined to relocate writing development away from a techniscist, skills-based model that focussed on spelling, grammar and punctuation, towards the

concept that any writing can only be understood in terms of its context (Lea & Street, 2006).

To try and tease out these purposes, expectations and values the research team began by asking staff teaching on core modules to identify which writing tasks SJA students were being asked to complete on those first year core modules. (SeeFfigure 1. for a summary.)

Figure 1. SJA: Survey of writing practices on Level 1 modules

Subject Group	1. How often do you use writing in your core module(s)? What form(s) does it take?	2. What do you want **your students' writing** to show you they can do? Or, why do you ask them to write?	3. Do students have difficulties achieving what **you've outlined in 2? Can** you describe these difficulties?	4. Is the writing students do assessed? If so, how and at what stage in the module?
Child Development EY001	Summative and formative. Note-taking / summarizing. Presentation.	Technical accuracy. Expression and clarity of ideas. Understanding and application of key concepts.	Sometimes – some students don't come with very systematic note-taking techniques. Often students have very poor proofreading skills. Technical accuracy is variable – it is difficult to give specific support within subject areas. Need to refer to external support areas.	Formative and summative assessments do take account of the qualities outlined in 2.

ED STUDS. ED1161 Introduction to Education Studies	Sem 1: Summative written assessment focused on individual learning characteristics. Sem 2: Summative reflective account of experiences on the ED1161 module.	The written assignments for ED1161 provide opportunities for students to address the university key skills.	The main difficulty students encounter relates to building links between theory and practice. Paraphrasing and referencing remain problem areas at level 1.	Yes. Both pieces of work are summative assignments. They are assessed against detailed criteria.
ED STUDS. ED1002 Comparative Education	Formally only once – for assessment (summative). Assignment – formal academic discussion (for).	That they can produce a structural, evaluative and critical discussion.	Some students have trouble structuring their ideas coherently.	At the end of the module.
GENERAL COMMENTS ACROSS THE PROGRAMME	Summative and formative assessments. Presentations.	Understanding of texts. Formative ideas and arguments.	Understanding / communicating key concepts. Technical accuracy.	Yes. The writing students do is assessed through formative and summative assessments.

	Seminars. Prescriptive tasks. Note-taking.	Articulating ideas clearly.	Structuring ideas – this is usually a big problem. Confidence in their own writing abilities. Developing an appropriate academic style.	

First year core tutors were then interviewed to elicit their opinions on what writing development they thought was needed by first years for their module and how best it might be delivered. These interviews built on contact made as part of the previous CIEL project 'Supporting the development of academic literacy in first year Education and Early Childhood Studies students'

After a staff development session on writing development held for SJA and delivered by Jackie Pieterick a principal lecturer working in CETL as an academic mentor specialising in academic writing development. These academic mentors were located in lead CETL schools and worked with colleagues in different schools in advising in their specialist areas.

The project team then liaised, with subject-specific tutors to produce writing development activities that reflected the subject matter of the first year core module. These include the use of microthemes, which are short written pieces on a given subject, free writing, DEJs, peer review activities, note-taking and learning action groups. The researchers', in their role as insider researcher-practitioners, enjoyed an in-depth knowledge of the students; the curriculum that they were following and the written assessment tasks that the students would ultimately undertake. The researchers were therefore able to tailor the development of writing interventions to students' learning needs. This last step was particularly challenging considering the increasing diversity of students on the programme. However, there may be conflicts of interest related to the triple role of lecturer, colleague and researcher, for example, the issue of students' or colleagues' willingness to give honest answers.

Throughout the academic year, the project team worked collaboratively with colleagues co-teaching on the first year core modules to implement the embedded activities and gathering on-going feedback as to their usefulness.

Evaluation and impact of the Initiative
Staff feedback

The interviews with core module staff revealed that whilst there were problems with some students' grammar, spelling, punctuation and referencing, there was a general, more widespread inability to synthesise course reading effectively and express a clear understanding of concepts and theories in their summative writing. It was clear that writing development support needed to be proactively offered on the programme, but not only to

those students obviously needing support, but to all students so that they might improve their performance across the range.

One hoped for outcome to this embedded approach was that tutors and students might begin to see writing as not just the final 'product' of their pedagogy or learning (as represented by the production of a summative assignment that would pass assignment criteria) but more as an on-going process which mediated knowledge transfer. Early informal feedback suggests that this may be taking place. In terms of developing reading, all the tutors felt that focusing on writing created space for students to consider self-consciously how and for what reason they were reading. This resulted, they felt, in students reading "purposefully" and "being able to identify weaknesses" in their own reading practices. This was also reflected in students' feedback that often made connections between reading and the embedded writing activities.

Student feedback

A range of evaluation and feedback tools have been used as part of the project. In addition to formal evaluation instruments, focus groups and research field notes, post-its have been used to provide an immediate response. As the following typical quotes show many of the students made perceptive comments about how completing a microtheme had helped them to articulate ideas through their writing:

"(it) helped me look at things and put them into my own way of thinking."

The use of the DEJs encouraged some students in "*the development of a more academic style of writing*", providing "*different way(s) of recording information*".

There were also many instances of students talking reflectively about the process of writing as activities helped them to:

"identify the difficulties of developing reasoned arguments".

Tutors feedback agreed that DEJs, free writing and unassessed writing activities had created valuable opportunities for students to produce reflective and critical writing as part of their work on a module as:

"(They) helped (students) to process information rather than reiterate (what they had read)".

Some tutors also suggested that writing development activities had encouraged students to make useful links between their reading and writing. As one tutor wrote:

"…by encouraging them to explore the real focus or meaning of what they read… put(ting) students in a position to avoid being descriptive or anecdotal".

This project sought to explore if the use of DEJs could help establish some degree of meta-cognition around the process of producing writing for education purposes, which would support students beyond their first year. The reflective feedback with students seems to suggest that it had begun this process.

With regard to reflective and critical writing skills, there were many instances of students talking reflectively about the process of writing as the DEJ had helped them to identify the difficulties of developing reasoned arguments and aided students' ability to discuss and compare a range of opinions on any given subject.

Using DEJs across the course in different modules provided students with opportunities to develop analytical skills such as transferring knowledge, understanding different arguments and experimenting with linking different points of view and arguments in their own writing. Knowledge and understanding of the issues and subjects covered by the use of DEJs appeared to be improved. Often student and lecturer classroom discussion and reflection about the activity focussed on the importance of challenging theories rather than taking them at face value. Overall lecturers and students felt that DEJs reinforced what had been taught in lectures and this accentuated the importance of research and reading around the subject. As well as engaging students with a wide range of often difficult reading material, DEJs helped support students to actively use a range of reading to support their own arguments and to read them more critically.

In terms of developing more confidence and competence in their writing generally, DEJs appeared to give students a greater awareness of the role writing plays in articulating and presenting one's ideas within a written assignment.

Many students also mentioned how chunking, or breaking down materials for the DEJs had helped when it came to organising or structuring their ideas for summative assessments. It also focussed attention on what were the most useful quotes to use in their work. As such, DEJs were often taken up by students as a useful starting point or planning tool for summative assessments, they also frequently stated that although the DEJ had been initially challenging, the process of doing the activity and any subsequent feedback or discussion around it had been helpful.

In general, lecturers found the DEJs reasonably straightforward to deliver although it was felt that the sooner and more often they could be used with students, the more useful and effective they became. In particular tutors valued the DEJs as a tool for expanding students' awareness of what was expected of them in terms of reading and writing as undergraduates. The activity raised issues for lecturers not only about what students read but how they read, highlighting the process-led focus of the DEJ activity.

Reported disadvantages of using DEJs revealed that it was important to explain exactly how they worked and to think about when they were introduced to students.

It was also important that enough time was allowed for the activity to be carried out. Several students found the experience 'rushed' and the environment 'too noisy to concentrate'.

However the majority of lecturers' views suggested that DEJs are useful but very time consuming but in the long run, useful and effective.

Clearly it is important to recognise that DEJs, like any learning activity, may not be the best way of working for everyone. The need for a diverse range of learning activities echoed the aims of the project as a whole. These acknowledged from the start that students have different learning preferences. Whilst staff and students became accustomed to the different interventions, it was identified that the use of DEJs could become time consuming and occasionally, despite support and discussion, some students had trouble in interpreting quotes/information for the task.

Overall the student and lecturer feedback on DEJs suggested that our students were beginning to understand that when writing for academic purposes they were engaged in a process of making meaning, in order that understanding and knowledge transfer could take place.

DEJs, along with other interventions, helped lecturers introduce, though their subject specific material, the idea that students' understanding will often evolve and change as they interact with different sources of information and ideas. The importance of reflection, again aided by the use of DEJs was crucial to this growing understanding. Lastly, DEJs were shown, in this study, to have encouraged students to experiment with developing their writing before embarking on their all-important summative assignment writing.

Policy Implications

Stakeholders

- Effective teaching leads to greater learning and enhanced learning experience

- HE Sector

- International Market

Business Case

- Effective teaching leads to greater learning and enhanced learning experience. Further this leads progression, greater retention and ultimately to graduation.

Expert Contacts and Links

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Think about the different types of writing that you have had experience of since joining higher education'

Discuss how well do you think your previous educational experiences prepared you for higher education writing assignments?

Do you think you received enough support in your first year around writing development/preparation for written assignments?

What positive or negative feelings do you have about writing since coming to in higher education?'.

Can you identify any key words from your assessment briefs?

What do these key words mean to you?

How would you describe and/or rate the feedback written and verbal that you have received on your written assignments since coming to higher education?

Do you still feel writing support would be useful in your second year?

Is so what kinds of support do you think would be useful? If not, why not?

What aspects of your writing do you think have improved since your first year? Why do you think this is?

Appendix 4

The elicitation

<u>Introduction and Guidelines for research participants</u>

First of all, I would like to thank you for agreeing to help out with my PhD research. I really appreciate you taking the time and energy to contribute and look forward to reading/listening to your responses. I hope that you find the experience interesting too.

<u>Confidentiality</u>

Your anonymity will be protected and all participants can withdraw from the process at anytime. You may use a pseudonym if you wish, in any event, real names will not be used in the research and none of the data will be traceable back to individual participants.

How to record your answers

You can digitally record or write your responses to any or all of the questions. If you wish to 'speak 'rather than write the answers, I can arrange for you to borrow a voice recorder, otherwise you can use your own phone or computer/phone recording software.

Regardless of how you record your responses please email them to my university email: a.french@wlv.ac.uk

Responding to the questions
Feel free to leave out any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you would like to make additional comments or raise any other issues about your experiences or feelings about academic writing then please do.

Your answers can take any form that you like: stream of consciousness, lists or bullet points, continuous prose, basically whatever feels right for you.

The bullet points underneath each question are meant to act as prompts – as such you do not need to answer them specifically. Hopefully they will help you engage with the wider areas for discussion outlined in the headings.

You can take as long or as little time as you like over any or all of the questions. Feel free to stop and return to the questions as many times as you like.

PLEASE CONTACT ME IF YOU REQUIRE CLARIFICATION ON ANY OF THESE POINTS.

The data collected from participants as part of this research will be stored following the University of Wolverhampton's data protection protocols.

The Questions

How would you describe yourself as a writer?

• What role/s does writing play in your out of work life?

Writing is a part of my job but also figures in activities at home / outside work.

• Do you enjoy writing in your spare time? Yes, I do.

• Would you describe your writing as a social or individual activity? It veers between these poles. But the more I do, the more I recognise that it should be social and is best if it is. I think having a sense of this helps with the writing. It makes it more accessible to others and gives it a function and a purpose.

Writing as an undergraduate and postgraduate student?

• Was writing as a student at undergraduate and postgraduate levels different from the kinds of academic writing that you experienced in previous educational settings? How/How not? Writing at degree level was an intensification of writing at a level for me. The difference was, my degree required that I write as though I had an opinion and that the analysis I was including was my own. At A level it was largely regurgitation. Degree work encouraged me to view writing as being strongly linked to thinking. The model was a cloistered though – if it was a dialogue, it was between me and the 19th Century novel specialist or the Modern drama specialist. It also encouraged a kind of showy use of language and knowledge that I still

wrestle to escape from. Post graduate writing was and is interesting. At Master's level, my feelings and emotions were acknowledged but the tutor wanted me to tone them down. At PhD level, despite my understanding through literary theory that an 'objective' stance is a rhetorical device, I knuckled down to the conventions required of me. What is frustrating is that I always write from emotion. The stuff I want to write about has a moral dimension and I am often propelled by outrage. IN producing academic articles, I reach for a tone that claims authority through the way I use language – but the content / data and interpretation motivates me to toe the line.

• What feelings do you associate with writing at undergraduate and postgraduate level as a student? Undergraduate: learning to think and show off through analysis and language use; post grad: shaping thinking an emotional responses to meet conventions – there is some frustration in this, but it doesn't bother me that much.

Your professional background in HE

• How long have you been lecturing? 6 years

• How would you describe your subject specialism (s)? teacher Education Literacy – for me it is an extension of good English teaching.

• What does it mean to be a writer in the university context of your discipline? – do you see yourself fitting into this category, what sorts of demands does it make on you as a writer? I am adept at shaping style for context. I am sometimes astonished by the response of reviewers to articles I have written. The tone they adopt and their anonymity reveals that they are blind to their agency in the interplay of knowledge, power and language.

So, for example, a reviewer of a chapter for a book I wrote in the last year attacked my writing in an emotive and dismissive way and went out of his /her way to take a pop at the significance of the work. One key criticism, which I thought had something to it, was that my use of language (a bit obscure and showy – one of my weaknesses) contradicted the argument of the article. I think he / she had a point and I had a go at amending the piece to take the criticism on board. However, the tone of the comments demonstrated that s/he didn't have even the most basic grasp of writing as a means of communicating between people – because in any other context I would have told her/him to fuck off.

What do you think about academic writing?

• How do you define academic writing? A convention-ridden style of writing that is sometimes used like a hoop for students to jump through. It is somehow

entangled with assessment in an unproductive way. People are capable of profound thought and analysis and yet, we often seem to want to see this evidenced through academic writing. I think we need to find other ways of assessing.

•   Would you describe yourself as someone who produces academic writing? Why/why not? Yes. The journal articles. The chapters. Looking towards writing a book now.

•   To what extent would you say your academic writing has changed over time? I have learnt to revisit writing and rework it to meet the demands of different publishing contexts.

•   What or who would you say has been the biggest influence on your academic writing? Trying to walk the talk and write collaboratively with colleagues and students: there is a loose political grounding to that. I can't pick out a biggest influence. It is the logical working out of a position in terms of Literacy as a social practice.

•   To what extent, if any, does your academic writing bring you in to contact with other people? For me, that has become one of the main focuses.

•   Have you ever made judgements on other peers' academic writing e.g. journal, book reviewing? How do you feel about that process? What sort of things are you looking for in their academic writing?

Yes, I review articles for JET, JEAH and JEP and occasionally others. I view it as making a contribution and hopefully offering constructive comments and ways forward. I would prefer not to be anonymous. The reviewer I talked about above remains anonymous (I asked the publisher who it was) that seems to me be a bad thing. It meant that the comments were unattributable. And what other context could you make anonymous comments about someone's work? Also, there was no sense that he felt like he was part of a community of practice. It was sneery in a pathetic and mean spirited way.

In terms of what I am looking for, you get a feel for the way an argument unfolds. It does become kind of internalised. You can follow it, because it's clear, or it isn't. Another article that came back recently said the lit review was disjointed and difficult to follow. When I re-read it, I thought the reviewer was absolutely right.

Developing academic writing

•   How would you describe your students as writers? They are people who whilst on the course will develop their writing as a tool for thinking.

- To what extent do you see yourself as responsible for developing students' academic writing? Intimately.

- How do you feel about assessing students' writing? What kind of things are you looking for when you assess their work in terms of academic writing? I look for thinking. I'm not that bothered about accuracy or whether they've got Harvard right. If the thinking is mixed up or unclear, that is my area of focus. Accuracy is a way of sharpening up on that foundation.

- What was the last writing activity you did with students (any group, any level)? Students wrote a Learning Autobiography which responded to (in pencil on a hard copy).

- What types of writing do your students generally produce write as part of their course/programme? They blog a lot. There are a couple of academic pieces but that can opt out of some of these and go for another type of assessment.

- What influences the sorts of choices you make about what your students write for assessment purposes? We want to reduce the amount of assessment and the amount of formal 'academic' work. Using seminars for example gives students the opportunity to apply theory to their practice in a meaningful way without it being in essay form.

- How do you think your own ideas about academic writing impact on your work with students? A lot.

- To what extent do you share your ideas and expectations about academic writing with your students? Why? Why not? I reassure them. I take them through the conventions. I ask them to talk to me if they are concerned. I will look at and comment on drafts in some cases (big groups militate against a lot of this)

- If you were to ask your students what they do when they write for academic purposes what do you think they would say? Do you have those sorts of discussions with students? Are those sorts of discussions important? Strangely one or two end up taking the essay option rather than do another presentation at the end of the PGCE I teach on. I think some would say they felt rusty and out of it and would probably feel anxious about it. I tell them I go for fluency over accuracy and then hope to build their confidence that way.

- Do you think there is a link between academic reading and writing? Why/why not? Yes I do. I think reading and writing are closely connected. Both are about making meaning.

- What opportunities have you had to explore the use of academic writing in your practice/subject specialism? Off my own back, I have worked collaborative with students to produce academic journal articles. The latest of these was the best and the collaborators made significant contributions. But in all cases, the idea was de-mystify the process and to show how it is done and to learn together by doing it.

- To what extent any training that you have undertaken as a lecturer/teacher e.g. Cert Ed. PGCE facilitated your engagement with the development of academic writing with your students? Was this useful/? Why/Why not?

Not sure I have done anything like this.

Thanks once again for taking part in my research!

Mandy