



Teaching Inclusively: Changing Pedagogical Spaces



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Overview

Developing inclusive teaching and learning practices in higher education is a key component of widening participation (WP). Higher education (HE) pedagogies have the potential to contribute to creating inclusive cultures and spaces where all students can participate and develop a sense of belonging.

Teaching Inclusively: Changing Pedagogical Spaces is a continuing professional development (CPD) resource that addresses the challenges raised by a changing HE landscape, such as how teaching might be developed to provide better support to diverse students in twenty-first century university contexts. It points to the significant ways that pedagogical practices can contribute to widening participation, equity and inclusion. It is designed for lecturers, academic developers, senior managers, WP directors and policy makers to critically reflect on the complex processes in which inequalities and exclusions might be reproduced, albeit unwittingly, through HE teaching and learning practices.

It is devised to be used interactively: to think critically and reflexively about teaching practices in relation to questions about social inclusion in higher education; to consider how inequalities play out in complex ways in pedagogical contexts; and to reflect on the ways that students and teachers form and reform identities through pedagogical experiences and relations.

Teaching Inclusively starts from some principle concepts emerging from critical and feminist pedagogies. A key concept is '**praxis**' and this emphasises the dialogic relationship between critical reflection and action. A starting point is that in order to create inclusive teaching practices, conceptual resources are essential for reshaping both understanding and action and this is an iterative and cyclical process – reflection-action and action-reflection. Critical pedagogies understand that inequalities are deeply embedded in historical and institutional structures of exclusion, marginalisation and relations of power. Thus the dismantling of inequalities require pedagogical strategies underpinned by theoretical insights that help shed light on the nature and complexities of inequalities and exclusions. At the same time, critical practices, embedded in a commitment to equity and inclusion, are necessary in order to overcome the subtle processes of exclusion and derision that often take place in pedagogical spaces.

Guided by the principle of praxis, *Teaching Inclusively* consists of a set of '**Think Pieces**', which are constructed as **conceptual tools** to help inform and think through some of the complex challenges that might confront us in different pedagogical contexts and spaces. We hope that these think pieces offer resources to challenge those dominant assumptions, discourses

and practices in higher education that often exacerbate and reproduce inequalities in such subtle ways that they are difficult to make sense of in the context of our everyday, taken-for-granted experiences of teaching and learning. The think pieces aim to contribute to inclusive teaching practices whilst acknowledging the on-going complexity of power, difference and identity formation in pedagogical relations and encounters.

In addition we have designed a range of **reflective activities** in order to provide a structure and framework for reflexively engaging these '**Think Pieces**' in relation to your own practice.

Teaching Inclusively draws on the research findings of a Higher Education Academy (HEA) funded project 'Formations of Gender and Higher Education Pedagogies (GaP)', which was part of the HEA's National Teaching Fellowship Scheme. Extracts from the GaP data are used to illuminate the Think Pieces and generate reflection through the activities. This also aims to enable you to engage with the concepts in relation to the specific challenges you face, in the particular pedagogical contexts in which you teach. We invite you to use the activities as a resource for personal reflection on your teaching (for example, keeping a reflective journal of your responses to the activities), in small groups with colleagues as a basis for critical discussion and/or to establish a **community of praxis**, in which you meet regularly and use the activities as a resource in your discussions and reflections. You can use the resource chronologically or dip in and out of it, whichever suits your purposes and preferences. We have also included Further and Additional Reading which we hope will be of interest.

The 'Formations of Gender and Higher Education Pedagogies' (GaP) project aimed to explore the important interconnections between teaching, learning, identity formation and inequalities, with a particular focus on the intersections between gender and other social identities. The full GaP report and briefing paper is available from the following link:

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/project/formations-gender-and-higher-education-pedagogies>

Pedagogies



'Pedagogies have been produced through particular ways of being and doing, which tend to exclude those identities and forms of knowledge, which do not conform or fit in.'

The concept of pedagogies helps us to move beyond notions of individual teaching and learning styles, to consider the richness and complexity of teaching and learning identities, relations, cultures and practices. 'Pedagogies' emphasises the contextual nature of teaching and learning practices and the ways that these contexts might be tied in with historical inequalities and exclusions. For example, feminist work has emphasised the important historical context of higher education, in which men from certain (privileged) social backgrounds shaped the practices that are often taken-for-granted in contemporary universities. **Such practices have been produced through particular ways of being and doing, which tend to exclude those identities and forms of knowledge, which do not conform or fit in.** For example, knowledge that is associated with intuition or emotion, often characterised as feminised forms of knowledge, is often excluded in pedagogical contexts that emphasise the importance of objective or rational forms of knowledge.

Importantly, pedagogies are lived, relational and embodied practices in higher education, rather than simply styles, skills or techniques that we straightforwardly implement. The dynamics, relations and experiences of teaching and learning are intimately tied to the production of particular identity formations and ways of being a university student or teacher. This is not simply a rational process but also an *emotional* one; teaching and learning is entangled with desire, pleasure and pain. For example, teachers might desire to be recognised by their students as 'excellent' or even 'inspiring' lecturers. They might also desire the authority and institutional power that often comes with being a teacher in higher education. However, desire, pleasure and pain are complex sets of emotions, tied in with contradictory meaning and identities, and so teaching is necessarily fraught with emotional as well as rational processes. This is also true for learning and student identities.

Complex social relations of power and difference shape practices, experiences and identity formations in and through pedagogical relations. Differences of gender, class and race intersect in complex ways to form pedagogical identities, so that teachers and students will be positioned differently and unequally in relation to authority and authenticity. For example, whose and what kinds of experiences are seen as important or legitimate in relation to forming knowledge about a particular subject or discipline? Importantly, pedagogies are

shaped by and through different formations of knowledge, as well as identity, and so it is crucial that we think through teaching and learning in relation to questions about curriculum and assessment. These are not separate entities of practice but relational practices in higher education and are connected to questions of equity, inclusion and recognition.

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Reflective Activity: Pedagogy, Identity and Power

Teaching inclusively involves the creation of spaces and opportunities for students to make connections and engage with ideas through their own experiences and identities, rather than making assumptions about what their experiences might be. For example, in the extracts from GaP data below, the students being quoted suggest that it is helpful when their learning is related to significant aspects of their subjectivity, including sensibilities around national identities. However, this could also be a problematic imposition and assumption of identity – when students are being constructed in narrow ways that place overemphasis on particular aspects of their backgrounds. Although it is important to enable students the critical space to make the connections between their sense of self and the subject being studied, it is unhelpful when this is done through an imposed lens of the student (i.e. who the teacher thinks the student is). Thus, drawing on students' experiences requires highly sensitive pedagogical approaches that enable the students to develop their relationship to the subject knowledge but in dialogue with co-participants, including the teacher and their peers.

In Art History, he knows I am from Italy and it's great when he says things like, 'Am I right? You can find this painting in Florence?'

I really appreciated working on the kinship charts in Anthropology because I am Serbian and it was a real chance to think about my heritage.

- What is your response to the students' accounts?
- Do you feel you know your students?
Is it important to know them?
- Is it important to try to relate what you are teaching to something they can identify with?
- In a diverse group how possible is this?
- How might this be done dialogically and collaboratively with the students?

Furthermore, post-structural insight suggests that students (and teachers) might have different and contradictory responses and emotions at play in pedagogical contexts at the same moment in time, rather than a straightforward 'positive' or 'negative' experience. For example, the following student explains:

We had one class where they've got people up at the front to demonstrate stuff, which was really embarrassing, but it actually worked and you wanted to do it. We'd have these like quiz sessions, it was horrendous, everyone had a little keypad and you had to vote on the answer, and everyone got it wrong, but it was good fun.

Frameworks for student evaluations (including the National Student Survey) often reduce student responses and experiences to simplistic categories (e.g. excellent, good, poor and so forth). The notion that learning should only be experienced in positive ways might go against risk-taking in teaching, particularly in a context of increasing levels of performance management in which teachers are encouraged to be anxious of evaluations that might be interpreted negatively. Structures in higher education, such as modularity might exacerbate this problematic. For example it might take a whole year to engage students with controversial and challenging ideas and to develop a relationship with the subject and an understanding of what they're learning and why it is significant. Learning is often a challenging process, which involves struggle with new ideas, challenging assumptions and at times identities, and can involve fear, anxiety and resistance as well as pleasure and satisfaction.

- What is your response to these issues?
- Can you identify with the scenario that the student above describes?
- How do you or might you address these issues, particularly in a wider context in which student evaluations carry increasing levels of importance?
- How might your institution support teachers in developing pedagogical strategies that address the issues raised above?

'The Ideal Lecture Theatre'



'Knowledge is a source of power; its acquisition is part of the process of social reproduction.'

The ideal lecture theatre is vast, truly vast. It is a very sombre, very old amphitheatre, and very uncomfortable. The professor is lodged in his chair which is raised high enough to see him; there is no question that he might get down and pester you. You can hear him quite well, because he doesn't move. Only his mouth moves. Preferably he has white hair, a stiff neck and a Protestant air about him. There are a great many students and each is perfectly anonymous. To reach the amphitheatre, you have to climb some stairs, and then, with the leather lined doors closed behind, the silence is absolute, every sound stifled; the walls rise very high, daubed with rough paintings in half-tones in which the moving silhouettes of various monsters can be detected. Everything adds to being in another world. So one works religiously (Bourdieu, Passeron and de Saint Martin, 1994).

Although the book in which this student is quoted was originally published in 1965, the scenario that is painted here of the university lecture theatre, still has some resonance today. The seriousness of learning and respect towards the learning activity are aspects which as academics we most likely approve of. But there is something else here and that is a reification of knowledge, suggesting something monolithic and unchallengeable. This knowledge is absolute. But where has it come from? Who has constructed it? These are questions which one senses, are irrelevant. The Professor is the guardian of the knowledge; *he* holds the knowledge and is willing to impart it but there seems to be a requirement that it is accepted as given. The organisation and ethos of the lecture theatre is constructed in such a way as to facilitate this transaction. Bourdieu et al refer to the position and relationship of the Professor to the students as 'distancing' and where physical barriers are erected symbolising the 'no go' area of challenge. This is not a Community of Practice.

The age, masculine gender and reference to religion and Protestantism in particular, suggest where authority lies and who has the right to hold and control valuable knowledge. These are also the hegemonic values of White European society and Western society.

Knowledge is a source of power; its acquisition is part of the process of social reproduction. Gaining entry to university is rather like gaining entry into an exclusive club whereby you have not only to pass various tests to get there but once in and to ensure that the right kind of use is made of this 'exclusive' knowledge then a series of other tests are required. These are not the end of module exams but rather what Bourdieu has talked of in terms of the control exerted over students and learning, such as the 'distancing of teachers' (Bourdieu et al 1994) through, for example, this organisation of teaching outlined above and the 'professorial code' (ibid.). 'Professorial space' is designed to maintain control of what is learnt and how knowledge is imparted and what happens to the knowledge once it is released from the professorial hands – rather like Bernstein's (1975) systems of classification and framing. Bourdieu also talked of this process of 'distancing' as reciprocal that is, it is condoned by the students themselves as a defence mechanism; a way of protecting themselves against what they don't know and therefore failure/exposure/ridicule or as Bourdieu et al suggest as a way of maintaining their independence (p11) (see also Think Pieces on Pedagogy, and Disruption and Resistance).

Consequently decoding the often hidden 'messages' within the university (or invisible pedagogies in Bernstein's terms, 1975) are essential requisites to learning. The extent to which students can engage with this successfully will be influenced by their educational habitus and whether or not their tutors/professors assist them. Failure to successfully engage in this can result, as Bourdieu et al (op cit) say, in 'anomie': the tutor does not bother to correct the student/ensure s/he understands, and the student accepts that s/he doesn't.

Whilst the vignette of a lecture theatre, given above, may be somewhat of a caricature today there are elements that we suggest provide a requirement for reflexivity. There are certainly elements of this scenario reflected in the students' comments in our data, indicated in other sections of this pack.

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Reflective Activity: Power in the Lecture

In the data extract below, the student seems to be articulating her experience of unequal power relations in the lecture and the ways this often makes her feel 'silenced':

Some say they want discussion but they stand there 'we are the lecturer' and if you critique something you get a steely eyed stare and complete 'no way' and it's almost too frightening. We can't really say anything we feel and so there is just silence. Do they know it's easier to learn if you are arguing from your own point of view rather than being read out somebody else's ideas?

In response to the issues the student is discussing in the above extract, we have formulated some questions for reflection in relation to your experiences of power in the lecture situation.

- How do you feel when students challenge your ideas/work?
- How might you respond to that given our work is part of our identity?
- In this performative culture, we are encouraged to position ourselves as the 'experts' and 'holders of knowledge' – how might this disrupt aims of inclusivity?
- What kind of space is there for students to comment on and explore their provisional thinking?
- In what ways might we all feel uncomfortable being encouraged to share ideas that are not fully formed yet?
- What are the power relations in a situation where the lecturer has had much more opportunity to think through and refine their ideas than the students?
- How might students be differently positioned in relation to the expression of ideas?
- What kind of opportunities do lecturers have to create inclusive spaces?
- A lecture is not a great opportunity to create a 'dialogic space'... .e.g. students preparing their own papers and presentations for a debate with tutors and peers could be a better, more fruitful and engaging opportunity.
- Could this approach work for you?
- What are the constraints on achieving this approach?
- How might you overcome these?

Learning is risky: participating in meaning-making processes is challenging; there is also a certain level of risk for the lecturer in disrupting the usual practices of the university lecture.

- Do you agree with these statements? If so, does this sense of risk impact on your teaching? Students' learning?

One student from the GaP project explains that:

Sometimes the seminars are lecture seminars so it's like they do a lecture and then split the group up but it's like they don't have much time. She was like blah blah blah de blah and she had so much in her presentation and so many points and she was just basically reading them at us very fast and then not saying just adding more stuff on and it just goes completely over your head and you don't learn anything. I like it more when we are asked to think about things ourselves.

This is harsh criticism. Some student somewhere has probably said this about all of us at some point!

- Have you ever thought this about a colleague? Or yourself?
- Lecturers have a tendency to over-prepare and pack too much into their lectures. Why do we do this? Is it useful/good practice?
- What would alternative approaches be?

Paulo Freire: Pedagogies of Hope



I didn't understand anything because of my hunger. I wasn't dumb. It wasn't lack of interest. My social condition didn't allow me to have an education. Experience showed me once again the relationship between social class and knowledge (Freire in Gadotti, 1993: 5).

Paulo Freire's seminal work, which has had wide ranging impact globally on stretching our pedagogical imaginations, illuminates the crucial connections between self, social experience and knowledge formation to challenge processes of domination. His theoretical contributions continue to have resonance and are powerful for thinking through complex pedagogical relations and processes of inclusion and exclusion in contemporary educational contexts. His work highlights the profound relationship between education and relations of oppression but also develops possibilities for social transformation through pedagogies of hope (Freire, 2009). Through dialogic processes, his work invites teachers and students to collaboratively challenge the educational structures embedded in 'banking education' and to transform our self understanding in relation to others and with the world through 'praxis'. 'Banking education' is a device that perpetuates social injustices, privileging the knowledge of the powerful and excluding the knowledge of 'Others'.

Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is a spectator, not re-creator. In this view, the person is not a conscious being; he or she is rather the possessor of a consciousness: an empty 'mind' passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside (Freire, 1972: 56).

Within this framework, the teacher's role is to deposit knowledge into the repository (the student) in order to fill the student with the narrative of the teacher (the knower). As a result, Freire argues that 'education is suffering from narration sickness' and that students are positioned as passive recipients who internalise the perspectives of the oppressor, which profoundly shapes their self-understanding and sense of self-worth.

A key insight of Freirean pedagogy is the importance placed on the pedagogical relationship, which positions teachers and students as partners in the re-creation of knowledge for what he names 'humanisation'.

This relationship places emphasis on the 'creative power of students' to draw on their history and experience to generate understanding and meaning that challenges relations of dominance and exclusion. Teachers and students participate in collaborative processes of 'praxis' (bringing together critical reflection and action) to create possibilities for the transformation of unequal power relations. Freire challenges fatalistic positions, emphasising orientations of transcendence and the interplay between objectivity and subjectivity, permanence and change. He points out that people are in a continual process of becoming and remaking, which is what makes education 'an exclusively human manifestation'.

The point of departure of the movement lies in the people themselves. But since people do not exist apart from the world, apart from reality, the movement must begin with the human-world relationship. Accordingly, the point of departure must always be with men and women in the 'here and now', which constitutes the situation within which they are submerged, from which they emerge, and in which they intervene. (...) they must perceive their state not as fated and unalterable, but merely as limiting – and therefore challenging' (Freire, 1972: 66)

Freire insists on dreaming, which is 'not only a necessary political act, it is an integral part of the historico-social manner of being a person. It is part of human nature, which, within history, is in permanent process of becoming. 'There is no change without dream, as there is no dream without hope.' (Freire, 1972: 77).

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Reflective Activity: Freirean-inspired Pedagogies

A student from the GaP project explains the importance of the lecturer creating 'little steps through complex ideas':

My best lecturer is very engaging. He doesn't over complicate things. Obviously he can go up all the levels you want to go to but he gauges the class and wants us to understand. He allows little steps through complex ideas.

Helping students engage with disciplinary knowledge is an important aspect of inclusive teaching. A Freirean approach would take this further, to include creating opportunities for university students to gain epistemic access to 'powerful knowledge' but also to critique dominant epistemologies by drawing on those experiences and histories that are often marginalised or silenced in HE curricula.

Freire encourages teachers and students to work dialogically and to collaboratively develop understanding and meaning, drawing on marginalised knowledge and experience to challenge exclusion. Dominant discourses of teaching in higher education include 'styles', 'delivery' and 'personalised learning' – but Freire's ideas raise more profound questions about dialogic *processes of meaning-making* and the teachers' part in facilitating those processes with students. Freire's ideas also help to illuminate the power relationship between dominant knowledge, banking education and the reproduction of social inequalities and exclusion.

- In the current contexts in which you teach, what opportunities are there to explore processes of meaning making with students?
- How might your pedagogical approaches enable students to make connections between their experiences, histories and subject/disciplinary knowledge?
- What are the constraints and challenges? What are the possibilities?
- What is your view of knowledge? Is it unchallengeable? When is it appropriate and when might it be inappropriate for a student to challenge the knowledge that you are teaching?
- How would you describe your approach to teaching: as knowledge transference? As knowledge delivery? As 'banking' knowledge? As knowledge generation or co-construction?
- What are the implications of these philosophical positions for one's teaching?
- Do you feel there are constraints on the extent to which a teacher is able to change how they teach?
- What could you do to address these?

Reflexivity



'Reflexivity helps to bring out the subtle ways that some identities are privileged.'

Reflexivity is a concept that is largely associated with qualitative methodology and has been conceptualized as a framework in which the researcher might 'become more sensitive to the power relations embedded in the research process' and 'to interrogate their own social location and to disentangle how it shaped their definition of the situation' (Haney, 2004: 297). Reflexivity requires that researchers examine how their values insert themselves in the social processes of conducting research (Lather, 1991: 80). Reflexivity is a valuable concept not only for conducting research but also for providing a framework for *teachers* to address complex relations of inequality at play in pedagogical spaces. Reflexivity is a tool that helps teachers to interrogate some of the problematic constructions of students associated with 'Other' kinds of backgrounds and to critique the discourses of deficit that often create misrecognitions. It helps teachers to think about the ways that they might be positioned themselves by problematic social discourses and unequal relations of power. **Reflexivity helps to bring out the subtle ways that some identities, experiences, forms of knowledge and values are privileged and given higher levels of authority and esteem than others.** Further, reflexivity emphasises the important issue that values, culture, and social positioning are not dynamics which can be 'removed' or isolated when convenient to the teacher; rather teachers and learners are always entrenched in the historical, geographical, political, personal, emotional, economic, psychological and social dynamics of the moment, shaping their interpretations, perceptions and ways of seeing, hearing and knowing. These dynamics cannot be fully known, as they are never fully visible or audible to us. Skeggs suggests that rather than asking the question of whether those seen as marginalised can speak, researchers (and teachers) should be asking if they can hear (Skeggs, 2002: 369). Teachers thus need to pay critical attention to what they hear and see and what they do not and how this might be related to nuanced and complex relations of power, authority and difference in pedagogical spaces. It also helps teachers to critically reflect on their institutional positioning of power and authority and also moments in which they might feel disempowered.

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Reflective Activity: Creating Spaces for Reflexivity

Reflexivity encourages us to consider how our experiences, identities, values and perspectives shape the ways we teach and understand knowledge and reality. It helps us to think about the ways that power circulates in pedagogical spaces, sometimes in ways that we take for granted or overlook. The GaP data showed that teachers are reflexive about their approaches and critical of the gendered power relations at play in their classrooms, although this does not necessarily translate directly to inclusive practices. The teachers seem to be aware of the complexities of unequal power relations and describe the particular issues and dilemmas they face as higher education teachers. Their accounts support the theoretical assertion that not only are student and teacher identities gendered but so are subject/disciplines and their associated practices.

But a lot of Business language is around football, male sports, moving the goal posts, team player, all this rubbish and I just wonder if you know it's largely written by men, a lot of the Business Management literature and it's very geared towards the systems-type learning as well, that maybe women, female students are excluded to a certain extent and a sort of silent lecture until the questions at the end. I thought of that word silent, the bit of research I did with students about women's ways of knowing. Basically silence being the lowest level of engagement and you know by doing a lecture, we are imposing that silence but in the next minute, we're saying, - let's have a discussion about this and let's engage but we're controlling that as opposed to them really critically engaging. So I think there may be something wrong there in terms of imposing silence on the people. I mean I'm finding it more and more – they're just not able to engage. They don't take the risk and my group this year, there's only about one or two that would participate. Whereas previously it would be a really good dynamic, engaged (Male Lecturer).

You might want to keep a journal to support you in creating spaces for reflexivity. Drawing on your critical reflection, you and your colleagues might want to set up a forum in which you meet to discuss sets of reflexive questions such as:

- How are different 'voices' and ways of knowledge privileged, encouraged, excluded or marginalised through our pedagogical approaches?
- How does power play out in terms of institutional status, cultural capital, diversity and difference?
- What forms of experience and knowledge are drawn on through our pedagogical practices? What forms of experience and knowledge are privileged, silenced or marginalised? How does this happen? Is it connected to forms of assessment/teaching and learning practices? Disciplinary boundaries? Temporal and/or spatial concerns?
- What opportunities are there for you and your colleagues to practice reflexivity in your teaching approaches? What spaces are available in your university?
- What are the constraints on developing reflexive approaches? What strategies might you take up to ensure some spaces for reflexivity?

Gender



'Human beings 'make' reality'

It is probably not surprising to us that research by social anthropologists shows that some sort of division and distinction of people according to sex/gender is universal amongst human societies. However, interestingly, ideas about what it actually *means* to be 'male' and 'female', what is typically masculine and feminine, and what are the 'natural' jobs for men and women actually vary hugely from society to society. This lends credence to the social constructionist position that ideas about gender - whilst often seen or felt as 'natural' or inevitable - are largely – or wholly – socially constructed, and a product of being in a certain time and place (see e.g. Lorber, 1994).

From a social constructionist perspective, human beings 'make' reality (see e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Through a process of socialization, a child gains an understanding of what the world 'is' and her or his place in it. However these understandings are made through the lens of the particular culture or society that the child belongs to – they are 'constructed' via certain social ideas about how the world works that are specific to that particular culture, time or place and can be very different in different places and times. However, despite the fact that our views of the world are 'constructed', we grow up believing that our views of the world *are* reality, objective fact, or 'common sense' thought. This can include our ideas of 'sex' and 'gender', what it means to be male or female, masculine or feminine. We are not necessarily aware that we are doing it, but every time we speak or do anything, choose how to present ourselves, wear particular clothes, or conduct particular actions, we are drawing on particular sets of social ideas (what poststructuralists label as 'discourses') about what it means to be masculine or feminine.

Despite these variations, education researchers such as Becky Francis have argued that in most western countries in today's world, what is seen to be 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics are often quite similar, and often an attribute that is seen as slightly/strongly 'masculine' will have a counterpart which is characterised as slightly/strongly 'feminine'. To illustrate this Francis (2000. P. 15) draws up two lists of attributes that are often drawn on when people conceptualise 'masculinity' and 'femininity':

Masculine	Feminine
Rationality	Emotion
Strength	Frailty
Aggression	Care
Competition	Co-operation
Mind	Body
Science	Nature/arts
Activity	Passivity
Independence	Depenence

Human beings are often influenced by such culturally dominant ideas when constructing a sense of what 'masculinity' and 'femininity' means, and it may well influence how they act to others, even if they're not conscious of it. Of course they may draw on certain characteristics rather than others, and may well challenge such ideas. However, if/when people act in ways that are deemed to apply to those of the other sex, then rather than being seen as performing 'alternative' or 'different' versions of being their own gender, they will often be seen simply as acting or being 'unmasculine' or 'unfeminine', something that is often socially judged negatively.

These social constraints may sometimes then make it harder for individuals to feel comfortable appropriating characteristics or acting in ways that are deemed to fall under the remit of the 'opposite' gender. For example, some studies have reported higher numbers of women than men students saying they feel uncomfortable at speaking out in what they see as a quite 'competitive' environment of the university seminar, and more female students than male students say they feel unconfident about their ability to 'challenge' established academics when writing their essays.

Also, research in HE has shown that both the 'typical' student and the 'typical' academic are often conceptualized as white, middle-class, of school-leaving age (in terms of students), and also male. This is despite women being, at least recently, in a slight majority in terms of numerical representation as students in most countries in the western world. Women are still hugely under-represented in senior academic positions, and the implicit assumption that the typical student and academic are 'male' can be seen in current beliefs about the ways in which students and staff should act and behave – such as the idea of the successful student as an 'independent learner' who should be self-reliant, not needing to work outside their studies or have family commitments, and not need to make too many demands on support services, or the academic as someone who can work long hours at evenings and weekends and not need to juggle demands on their time from families or other dependents.

You may be able to point to other aspects of academic 'culture' that implicitly assume a 'male' or 'masculine' subject – or you may feel that such forms of culture have been successfully challenged or eradicated in your department or university in favour of alternative practices – either way we hope that this 'think piece' has evoked ideas for you that may help in considering how gender may make a difference in HE, and how we may mitigate potential forms of inequality in relation to gender.

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Reflective Activity: Gender and pedagogical relations

Pedagogical experiences are tied to complex power relations and gendered formations (and intersections with other social differences, for example class, ethnicity and race). These complex relations often reinforce the subtle workings of power, exclusion and inequality in higher education pedagogical spaces such as lectures and seminars. For example:

Discussions can make me feel anxious. I am scared of being [seen as] stupid and then no one says [any] thing and I am thinking it and the lecturer points it out. Then I think I should have said it to show how clever I was but I didn't and no one else did. But I am just too scared to put my hand up or just say it. Sometimes I even feel nauseous – like I want to be sick just to say a sentence. And I'm not a shy person but I'm just very nervous.

This female student expresses a fairly common set of feelings according to our GaP data. In your teaching groups (lectures or seminars) how does gender play out in the pedagogical dynamics of the groups? Who speaks out most in discussions? Is this gendered? If so do you think this is problematic? How can you address this issue? How could you encourage the student above to contribute more and feel more comfortable about doing so? How can you support students to feel less anxious and counteract their feelings of vulnerability and sense of inadequacy?

In higher education, certain practices are historically associated with masculinity, such as lecturing, professing, claiming authority, asserting an argument, being competitive and so on. Furthermore, certain practices are embodied in particular kinds of persons; for example constructions of “the professor” tend to be associated with White, middle-aged, middle-classed male bodies, subjectivities and dispositions. The embodiment of certain forms of masculinity in higher education is deeply connected to the politics of recognition. For example, the following young, female Philosophy lecturer explains that:

None of us fit the image, do we? The old White man ...you know, like whatever, elbow patches. But I think that's good because it very immediately breaks the stereotype, and then there isn't a problem with that at all, but it's interesting that sometimes you get that preconception. On occasion, somebody comes to your room to see you before you've started teaching them, and they are like—ooh. And also the age thing, because the image is also a very old one, and if you look a bit younger as well, it's kind of like, you know, oh, you are my professor.

Consider the ways gender and mis/recognition might support or undermine the development of an identity as a teacher/lecturer/professor/student in different disciplinary and pedagogical contexts.

- In what ways might our teaching practices and/or interventions challenge stereotypical constructions of who is a legitimate HE participant (across different subjects/disciplines)?
- How might the curriculum or modes of assessment reinforce or challenge feelings of anxiety/difference/not belonging related to gender?

Communities of Practice



'Learning comprises a process of social participation and engagement'

Communities of Practice is a term introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) and further developed by Wenger (1998). Wenger (1998) describes Communities of Practice as a theory of learning based on the premise that as social beings this aspect is central to our learning processes and endeavours and thus **learning comprises a process of social participation and engagement.**

If we accept that learning is a collective enterprise, then it involves, again as Wenger argues, the intersection of identity, the social context of the learning taking place (the community), the development of meaning (and values come into play here) and social practice (values may surface here also). Communities of Practice could therefore challenge or at least lead to tension in relation to competitiveness in the process of learning and also assessment as part of that.

A model of Communities of Practice, at least embryonically, is that of group working which in our research project was common practice in many subject disciplines. The group working was often tied to group assessment. Whilst there was a sound pedagogic rationale for this, the students in fact were highly critical of this practice and in particular the individual assessment based on group work. Their criticisms were largely based on resentment towards those who did not make an equal contribution to the work; those who found the work difficult and therefore could not make a useful contribution and relied heavily on others in the group for support. Most students did not regard this supportive function as their role. There were also those students who felt exposed through group tasks fearing that they would be regarded as inadequate in some way and would therefore lose respect from their peers. In each of these cases it could be argued that the community of practice was not working well. It suggests that the process had not been initiated in a concerted or thought-through way or developed as a process at all. This negative scenario raises the question about whether the diversity of the group in relation to identity, values, experience, expertise was considered at the outset.

Identity and learning are profoundly intertwined (Wenger 1998). Threats to one's learning can also be a threat to one's identity. As research in Higher Education has shown fitting-in to the university pedagogic and social and cultural experiences and milieu and feeling a sense of belonging, is not the same for everyone and most often is not straightforward particularly for Black, Minority Ethnic and Working Class Groups (Crozier and Reay 2009, 2011; Read et al 2003). Crozier and Reay also found that some students 'fitted in' academically and not socially or vice versa. In other complex ways the

Gap project has also found that women continue to be marginalised, or undermined or disadvantaged in the learning situation.

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Reflective Activity: Working towards Communities of Practice

It's done so much in schools, teachers are doing sessions that everyone can be involved in, and everyone can learn something. Yeah, it seems to be at university though they forget all of that.

Some of them are just a straight lecture. It can be very, very, very boring. I would prefer it to be a bit more interactive cause then you remember. Otherwise especially because all of mine are a 9am start and I've got to get up a bit earlier to get here but by the time you are here you are sitting here you are thinking 'this is so boring'. And you see this is number 5 of 48 slides! Some don't even have pictures – just too much text. Why are they telling us some of this stuff if we aren't learning it?

It's one of these bugbears I have, that students don't know what a university is, and what it's for, and what their role as a student is, and what our role is. And they, the perception is it's a bit like school, but not quite, so they come with a certain attitude.

These are some quotations from students and the last one from a lecturer indicating different perspectives on the learning experience. The lecturer raises an important question about what the university is for and what is the nature of the students' and lecturer's role.

- Have you ever discussed these kinds of questions with your students?
- Do you think they could form the basis of developing a Community of Practice?
- Is a Community of Practice feasible? What might it entail?
- The idea above that everyone can or should be involved in the learning process is part of the idea of a Community of Practice but does this also include being part of the teaching process?
- How could this work given that assessment is also part of the teaching process?
- Do you agree with the implied suggestion in the Think Piece that a Community of Practice could ameliorate the threat to a student's learner identity and address feelings of marginalisation?

Raced, Classed and Gendered Relations in Higher Education



'Antagonisms within the formal learning situation'

Over the past fifteen years or so the Widening Participation policies in Britain have led to an increase in students from Black and Minority Ethnic (B&ME) and working class (low socio-economic status) backgrounds in the university. Some have argued that there is a relative 'over representation' from B&ME groups. Research also shows, however, that with regard to B&ME students i) diverse minority ethnic groups are unequally represented and students from Black Caribbean backgrounds remain under represented; ii) Black and Minority Ethnic students are more likely to attend universities less well resourced and less research focused; iii) Black and Minority Ethnic students are not equally represented across subject disciplines iv) Black and Minority Ethnic students tend to graduate with lower degree classifications than their White counterparts (Tolley and Rundle 2006).

Widening Participation has however ensured that some universities have a greater social and ethnic mix than hitherto. It also seems to be the case from our GAP study that some White students are surprised and at times disconcerted by this diversity on coming to university which would appear to be a contrast to their experience of their home and school. Some White students embrace the diversity whilst others express anxiety and fear of the differences they perceive between themselves and their fellow students. Some White students described their university as like being in the sitcom 'How the Other Half Lives' or in the soap opera 'East Enders'. Their anxieties and 'othering' is classed and raced and very often gendered, since Black men seemingly pose a greater threat.

Apparently, the presence of Black and especially male, students draw attention to themselves. They are 'Black bodies out of place' as Puwar (2001) has observed. It is this terrain of difference which marks out implicit tensions and struggles. In the GaP study this is articulated in terms of stereotypical perceptions and also territoriality. Working class students but also Black and most often male students in particular are thus demonised as gangsters, bad boys, 'tearabouts', threatening and troublesome.

[Luxembourg College] people will generally be recognised as being, I suppose, I don't know, sort of bad boys on campus...a lot of Business students are guys. ...So, yeah, there's something about the business course that seems to attract a certain, certain, you know, mentality, kind of range of guys, and you end up with lots of, you know, [Luxembourg College] is madness, you know, after nights out, ... (White male, middle class)

Luxembourg College is thus characterised as a college dominated by Black and Minority Ethnic students with a larger proportion of men. Other students describe it as 'the ghetto' and where 'gangster boys', and 'rebellious or like from a working class background' students dominate.

The language of 'gangstery', 'bad boys' is racialised and 'tearabouts' is a confirmation of the threat they pose veering towards something out of control.

In addition, historically the White view of Black people is as exotic and entertaining. In this construction Black people are felt to be less threatening and can be kept in their place:

Different cultural backgrounds, they come together, you get different lingo, different culture. I just found it all hilarious and fascinating, I loved it all. I would entertain certain friends, you know, [with people] who speak like that. If you are living in [Luxembourg College] you are around people, you know, people [who] greet each other by saying – 'wa gwan, blud' - by me doing it. You've got this guy coming from [Home Counties, suburbs], saying this language, they found it hilarious, you know. I found them just all lapping it up and not taking it too seriously, not being prejudiced. (White male student)

The Other is both ridiculed 'I just found it all hilarious and fascinating, I loved it all' and exoticised as entertainment, 'I would entertain certain friends, by me doing it,..they found it hilarious'.

Riverside University is portrayed by students as a multicultural, life enriching experience whilst simultaneously giving rise to mockery and a sense of anxiety or fear of the Other. This is indicative of the complexity and dynamic of racialised, classed and gendered, peer relations. Running throughout these perspectives is a strong theme of competitiveness and a series of **antagonisms within the formal learning situation**.

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Reflective Activity: Raced, Classed and Gendered Relations

I think there's a few people that, there are those sort of cliques that people still sort of stick in that's like school a bit which I didn't really expect at university. I thought everyone would be like talking to everyone and getting on with everyone – which they do but you still have those cliques where there's the people that want to chat in the lecture room that all hang out together and then there's the people who are really determined to get things done...

Ethnicity I think is definitely a big influence. There are a lot of black people that tend to stick together...

I've heard people refer to other people as the 'football boys' and 'the cheerleaders' like as if yeah and it amazed me 'cause I was like – is this American high school or somethin'. But yeah there are cliques and stuff which is really weird.

... a lot of them didn't live on campus. So I don't know, they feel a bit detached from university or something. But they have their own issues, what's going on at home which they never left. So obviously everyone else who came and lived at university left everything at home so they can focus on university more. Whereas these people keep talking about what's going on at home...

In the GAP data, there was much discussion about student cliques from the students themselves and the expression of unease with social difference. Although some students talk about getting along well, being 'quite united' and loving 'the diversity', other students cited ethnicity and social class as key elements of cliqueness and informal segregation across the campus. There is also strong evidence of stereotyping of certain groups of students. These practices are divisive and not conducive to positive relations or positive learning environments.

- Do cliques exist in your teaching groups; subject area; department among students?
- If so can you identify the basis of these?
- Why do you think these cliques exist?
- Have the students ever commented on these to you?
- Do they interfere in the teaching and learning or social processes?

Using the following statements work with your teams of staff to deconstruct the statements and suggest strategies for challenging these sentiments

- Black and minority ethnic students always stick together.*
 - What does this actually mean?
 - Could you say the same thing about White students?
 - Are B & ME students a homogeneous group? Can we talk about B&ME students? When might it be appropriate/inappropriate to do so?
 - What are the opportunities in your subject area, department, university, for social mixing – that is across ethnicities, social classes, genders?
 - Is it ever appropriate for ethnic, social or gendered groups to mix separately along these lines? Discuss the positive and negative aspects of this.
- Black male/white working class male/ any particular social group - students come to lectures late; talk during the lecture; are constantly on their Blackberries/iPhones.*
 - If students are frequently late for lectures what do you do about it?
 - What is their response?
 - How effective have you been at addressing this?
 - The behaviour described above suggests a form of alienation or as Mann (2001) has suggested, resistance. Accepting this as a possibility, what might be the cause of this? How might you begin to address it?
- 'They're sort of more Urban. More working class sort of people. And then you've also got people, I dunno, tearabout maybe. I've heard it's quite hairy, not hairy but... is quite hard in the XXX Department. People who were rebellious or like from a working class background'.*
 - What do you understand by this statement?
 - Do you think it could affect peer relations in the learning situation?
 - How could you begin to address this type of attitude in your role as a lecturer?

Reference:

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Students and Age/Maturity



'Students are still often expected to conform to the norm of the self-reliant 'independent learner'.

Research in HE has shown that the 'typical' student is often conceptualized as white, middle-class, male, and also of school-leaving age. Whilst half of the student body in HE in the UK are over 21, such students are still labelled as 'non-traditional' – thus reinforcing the idea that students over 21 are the 'exception' to the norm of the young student straight from school. Such conceptions are reinforced by marketing images in HE websites, which overwhelmingly focus on young (and often white and female) images of students to populate their sites (Leathwood and Read, 2009).

Does this focus on the 'young' student actually make any difference to the experience of mature students at university? Research shows that **students are still often expected to conform to the norm of the self-reliant 'independent learner'**. Mature students often have more complex demands on their time than those of school-leaving age, with care commitments and/or demanding paid work to conduct as well as their studies. They will often also have experienced a prolonged period of time outside the formal education system and therefore might need extra support in relation to 'learning the ropes' of forms of academic culture such as language and writing style. Nevertheless the dominance of the 'independent learner' discourse means that those students who require extra pastoral or academic support are often implicitly classified as 'needy' and their academic capabilities are often questioned as a result (see e.g. Britton and Baxter, 1999). Particular difficulties may be faced by women mature students, who are often still expected to carry out the bulk of domestic responsibilities at home as well as dealing with their academic workload.

Combined with such pressures, studies have also shown that mature students (especially those who are women and/or from working-class backgrounds) can be more likely to foster feelings of inadequacy in terms of their ability to succeed academically (see e.g. O'Shea and Stone, 2011). This may be related to previous experiences of being judged as having 'failed' in formal education, or the prevalence of discourses and academic practices constructing universities as the province of the white upper and middle classes, which can contribute to the perception that university is 'not for people like me' (Archer et al. 2003). Relatedly, many can feel trepidation or anxiety about not 'fitting in' to a culture that is geared towards students of school-leaving age, leading many to choose universities known to include greater numbers of mature students (see Read et al. 2003).

There are also particular perceptions of differences between mature students and younger students held by both students and lecturers, which can affect both the ways that students interact with each other, and affect lecturers' expectations. Studies have shown that there can be friction between mature students and younger students, with mature students sometimes expressing frustration at perceived 'immature' behaviour attitude of younger students or their more cavalier attitude to work; likewise younger students can sometimes express annoyance with perceived dominance of mature students in seminar sessions and frequent discussion of their lived experiences in relation to the topic of the seminar sessions (Edwards, 1993; Merrill, 2001).

The experience of mature students might also vary in other ways that might not be immediately recognisable to lecturers and other academic staff. For example, the GAP study has shown a considerable difference in experience of friendship and social life in the university for those students who live 'on-' or 'off-campus' (mature students being amongst those groups of students much more likely to live off-campus due to outside commitments and established adult lives in other parts of the community). A repeated theme in the data is the importance of friendship groups in order to help with the stresses of academic study. For example one mature student states:

I've made a group of friends that have definitely kept me going and...uni has been made more bearable in [terms of having a] coping mechanism (Kate, middle-class mature, white).

However other students discussed how it was harder to hear of social events and make friends for students who live off-campus, and how social activities and events were mainly geared towards young white students.

Overall then the experience of mature students may differ in certain ways from students of school-leaving age – and it is hoped this 'think piece' can stimulate reflection on our conceptualisation of mature students – particularly the conceptualisation that their needs and experiences are somehow 'other' to the 'norm', and that such students' requirements in terms of support are seen as individual 'deficits' that have negative implications for their academic ability or success.

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Reflective Activity: The issues of Age/Maturity for Students in HE

I've kind of, I noticed that maybe with like more with mature students 'cause there are quite a few on the XXX programme that they're more like work focussed in the sense that they come to their lectures and then leave again. Whereas maybe obviously that comes with living on campus and stuff as well but not necessarily hang around but that comes with other commitments like children and various other work things that they've got to do.

... on my XXX programme there's a lot of mature students so it does seem like they speak a lot but I think that's just because of the ratio in the class...

- Have you noticed any differences between mature students and the younger students in terms of their learning?
- Have you observed a sense of anxiety and lack of knowledge about approaching their studies from mature students, as suggested in the Think Piece?
- If this occurs how do you/might you address this without embarrassing the student?

It is obviously important not to single out students but trying out different approaches is often useful and then observing how students experience these approaches.

- How can you address the diversity of needs in any group?

Mature students are often regarded as hard working and contributing enthusiastically to discussion, as indicated in the quotations above. This can have both a positive and negative impact on the rest of the group.

- Have you experienced that? How have you dealt with this?
- How can you harness such motivation and enthusiasm to enhance the learning of the whole group?

Embodied Identities



'Captures the working of power and difference and the ways that these are marked and inscribed on the body'

The concept of 'embodied identities' emphasises the ways that our identities are formed through embodied experiences of self and other. We make sense of who we are, for example in constructing our gendered identities, in relation to bodily practice, dispositions and the internalisation of social structures, discourses and power inequalities. The concept **captures the working of power and difference and the ways that these are marked and inscribed on the body**, as well as resisted or subverted through 'practices of the self'. This helps shed light on social differences and the ways that different bodies are positioned, mobilized and regulated in relation to complex inequalities across space, including pedagogical space (such as the lecture or seminar, for example). In the lecture, bodies are regulated in relation to the discourses of 'lecturer' and 'student' so that it is seen as legitimate for the lecturer to position his or her body at the front of the room, whilst the students are expected to normally position themselves in rows, seated and prepared to watch and listen to the performance of the lecturer. 'Embodied identity' thus helps us to think through the ways different bodies take up and use the different higher education spaces available, and the ways that higher education spaces are constructed and re/shaped in relation to the different bodies that move through and are positioned within them (Burke, 2012). Furthermore, identities are formed through embodied practices, and this is tied to unequal relations of gender, class and race. Bodies are signifiers of normative identity positions.

In drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and notions of embodied identities, Beverly Skeggs, (2004:13) explains that:

We need to think how bodies are being inscribed simultaneously by different symbolic systems; how inscription attributes difference and how we learn to interpret bodies through the different perspectives to which we have access.

The ways that students are differentiated and live out those differentiations is often misunderstood as being about differences in innate potential and ability rather than as the interplay of embodied dispositions, the intersubjective relations of the field and social structures (McNay, 2008: 187). Skeggs points out that the problem of differentiation in contemporary social contexts is increasingly posed in terms of discomfort about *proximity*. 'The problem is of perceived similitude by those who feel too close' (Skeggs, 2004: 96). As higher education is becoming increasingly characterised by diversity, the anxiety about the closeness of 'Other' and different bodies is expressed through narratives about contamination through the lowering of standards and the 'dumbing down' of university curricular and pedagogical practices (Burke, 2012).

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Reflective Activity: Embodied Identities in Pedagogical Spaces

As part of the GaP project, we conducted observations of pedagogic practices across different disciplinary contexts within a case study higher education institution. Dance was one of the areas we observed and we found that the Dance **lecturers embraced the insights of critical pedagogy and attempted to put this into practice.** Their identities as teachers are invested in critical pedagogical approaches. In drawing on such insights, the lecturers have a strong sense of the relationship between identity and pedagogy, and talk about the relationship between their own personal histories and perspectives and their pedagogical practices:

Female Lecturer: In dance we have a lot of assumptions about what dancers are, and their relationship with their teacher, and it used to be a very matriarchal kind of world, the training world, and for us to be in academia there there was a lot of thinking, clinical thinking around our roles, so we don't necessarily want to think of ourselves as mothers, teachers, in that sense. But there are moments where I think it is important to consider my biography, and the biography of my students, and I have found that these are the moments you take a risk, you might make a link that might motivate the student, might make them more aware of themselves and their own relationships, but I have also felt that there is a risk there, there is a risk for me, maybe, you know, not having boundaries as a, pedagogical boundaries and professional boundaries, maybe imposing my own understanding of what motherhood, what independence is. But I definitely think that there is, the two should be explored, and they come up organically in class, in conversations, and yeah, that's a recent experience that we had.

It was striking that Dance as a disciplinary framework presented opportunities for the lecturers to teach differently in higher education spaces, and the critical pedagogic framework that shaped the Dance team's approaches at the case study institution supported this. For example, the students were invited to lead different sections of their session and were encouraged to engage in reflexive discussions. Furthermore, the physical space, which included a spacious dance floor, provided a symbolic openness in which the dance students positioned their bodies through movement across space and this disrupted any hierarchical positioning of either the students or the two dance teachers. When the dance teachers presented ideas, they did this in short bursts, then opened up to the whole group for student contributions to develop and build on these ideas. The students observed were all female and White but they were physically and generationally diverse, displaying different levels

of dance technique, without any sense of hierarchical ordering. This provided an overall sense of inclusion and of encouragement to creatively express individual differences in what appeared to be a supportive environment.

Observation:

Conduct an observation of embodied identities within a Higher Education pedagogical space, e.g. either in your own class or in a colleagues'. Think about the following while you take notes of your observation:

- How do the different bodies use the pedagogical space?
- Are there differences of gender, class and race that are explicit (e.g. explicit groupings being formed around gender/class/race/age)?
- How do different students/lecturers position themselves (e.g. how does the lecturer position herself or himself in relation to the students)?
- What kinds of embodied performatives are visible (or more subtle) (these might include different body language, voice, positioning, dress and so forth)?
- Think about the implications of these embodied identity formations for teaching, learning and participation.

Mis/Recognition



‘Certain people have historically been misrecognised in different social institutions’

The concept of recognition is helpful in thinking about the processes by which students are differentially perceived and constructed, sometimes in ways that exacerbate existing hierarchies and inequalities. Recognition helps us to consider the politics of identity and the ways **certain people have historically been misrecognised in different social institutions**, including universities. In the context of wider debates about widening participation, and associated discourses of deficit and anxieties about ‘dumbing down’, this is about the struggle to be recognized as a legitimate or ‘authentic’ university student. This concept helps to shed light on the struggles of students from working-class and ethnic minority backgrounds to be recognized as ‘worthy’ of HE participation within a framework that validates and legitimizes the dispositions and identities of the ‘standard’ or ‘traditional’ student, often to the exclusion of ‘Other’ kinds of students, associated with derogatory perceptions.

Nancy Fraser explains that to be misrecognised is ‘to be constituted by *institutionalized patterns of cultural value* in ways that prevent one from participating as a peer in social life’ (Fraser, 2003: 29). Jenny Williams considers processes of misrecognition in terms of what she calls ‘polarising discourses’, which helps to challenge problematic institutional categorisations, which name and make visible students through ‘dividing practices’, for example, constructing students in homogenous categories of traditional/non-traditional and standard/non-standard, or increasingly as ‘WP students’. Williams explains in relation to admissions processes that:

Meanings are constructed through explicit or more often implicit contrast; a positive rests upon the negative of something antithetical. The normal, the worthy student and the acceptable processes of admission are legitimised by references to the abnormal, the unworthy, the unacceptable (Williams, 1997: 26)

Our GaP data show that processes of mis/recognition are intimately connected to formations of identity and pedagogical practices. Students must know how to decode the dominant pedagogical practices in particular disciplinary contexts in order to ‘do’ student in ways that allow them to be recognised as an authentic or legitimate subject. This requires that the student conforms to the dominant practices of the pedagogical context and at the same time master those practices. Students who do not understand the ‘rules of the game’ are likely to be misrecognised in problematic ways. Our research finds that misrecognitions are tied in with gendered, classed

and racialised values and practices. Students tend to either internalise processes of misrecognition, or express a fear of misrecognition, which constrain them from fully participating in their studies. Female students particularly express a fear of misrecognition.

Int: *And you’ve given an account of feeling quite anxious when you’re having to read because of your dyslexia. Are there any other times when you remember feeling particularly anxious about your studies?*

Student: *Well I basically feel anxious if I have to like, like I don’t like, I think it’s just because I’m scared of being stupid like I don’t like if I want to say something and I know that what I want to say is right and if I don’t say it, the tutor points it out. So I should have said it to show how clever I was but I didn’t and no-one did. But I’m just too scared to put up my arm or just to say it. And sometimes I even feel nauseous - I like I want to be sick just from having to say a sentence. And it’s not because like I sometimes, I got good stuff up there as well but it’s just scary to say it. And I’m not shy – I’m not a shy person. I get in contact with people quite easily and I’m good at speaking to people I think but I’m just very nervous. (Female student).*

Int: *how does it feel in a seminar compared to a lecture?*

Student: *Well in a lecture you can sit there and you can listen if they are a good lecturer, if they can engage me. And I quite like that as I write down my own notes and make up my own feelings so people contribute what they want if they want to. Whereas seminars you actually like you are meant to be contributing. So I feel like I look stupid because I’m not saying anything but I’ll sound stupid if I do say something so I just don’t really like them. (Female student).*

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Reflective Activity: The Politics of Recognition

One of the anxieties that was repeatedly expressed by GaP participants, was the assumption that widening participation led to more and more students needing to be 'spoonfed'. This is tied in with deficit assumptions that increasing numbers of students lack the skills or ability to become 'independent learners'. The gendered, classed and racialised construction of the 'independent learner' is not being interrogated while the focus on spoonfeeding tends to reinforce deficit assumptions that students are 'too needy'. This highlights a number of complex issues, including the ways that the politics of misrecognition tends to divert attention away from more difficult questions about the nature of teaching and learning in the 21st century university and the ways pedagogical frameworks might be developed to facilitate processes of learning and meaning-making for all students from a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds.

Female Lecturer: I think a fundamental problem lies, but that's one of these bugbears I have, that students don't know what a university is, and what it's for, and what their role as a student is, and what our role is. And they, the perception is it's a bit like school, but not quite, so they come with a certain attitude. They come, also, increasingly, understandably, with a consumer attitude, they want so and so many PowerPoints and so many hours contact, blah blah blah. But the particular kind of learning that should go on in universities is not fully understood. It is not about learning what has been every golden word we utter, but it's about thinking and thinking for themselves. And this is a painful process at times, it's not transmitted, because as soon as painful they don't like it, and then we jump, because they complain. So I think there is quite an unhealthy relationship between the purpose of what they are doing and the expectations of students, their lack of understanding of it.

- In higher education, there is a strong emphasis on independent learning: do you think there is a place for 'spoon-feeding' students?
- What is the role of the teacher in facilitating the learning process for students? Is supporting or providing 'scaffolding' (in the Vygotskian sense) the same as 'spoon-feeding'?

In the first year you were given so much help like borderline spoon-fed and in the second year they took it all away so you had no help, no support, nothing. You were just left to try and find... anyone you could find to help you were like 'oh thank God.' The first year was like school and then to have it taken away when it really mattered, starting counting towards your degree was very hard. That was when I started thinking, 'I don't know what I am doing here anymore (Female Student).

- Do you agree with this student that there is a sudden shift in support for students from Year 1 to Year 2 on your degree programme?
- If so, how might you ease the transition? How do you ensure that the scaffolding support does not lead to student dependency?

Many students who are described as 'non-traditional' university students, have had poor learning experiences prior to coming to university; they often have fragile learner identities. How might you take account of this? What does this statement mean to you? It is important not to stigmatise such students: how might you avoid this?

Transitions



Transitions... are complex processes of change, resistance, re/positioning and subjective construction (Burke 2010).

Thinking of *transitions* in relationship to the concept of *subjectivity* helps broaden our understanding of students' educational trajectories. First, it is important to think about the concept of *subjectivity* – *subjectivity* helps us understand that our identities are not formed in one particular moment or in a vacuum but instead, as Burke (2010) notes, through relational, discursive, and embodied processes. *Subjectivity* highlights that through these processes, we become recognized and included as viable subjects (ibid).

As our subjectivities are constantly in progress and fluid, so too are our experiences of transitions. Our transitions are not linear processes moving from one context to another; they include significant and defining moments of change and sometimes discomfort and disruption, in which a subject takes up a different positioning from before (ibid).

At the same time, transitions may also be everyday and ongoing processes of becoming. These transitions are less explicit and identifiable, as subjects are moving across and between fluid and contradictory contexts, relations and positions. In the same way in which *subjectivity* is tied to discursive practices, and ways of doing and being, so too are transitions which are also always tied to complex relations of power and embodied intersections of difference (Burke 2010).

According to Burke (2012) in relation to widening participation an understanding of transitions needs to be underpinned by an understanding and recognition of **difference**, **inequality** and **power** (p. 92). One example of the way in which this difference, inequality, and power may play out is in the context of academic writing and assessment. For students undergoing transitions and those in particular for whom this is a very new experience, research on assessment and feedback practices in higher education has shown that academic writing and assessment can operate in exclusive ways because they over-emphasize 'skills' and fail to focus on writing processes, methodologies and epistemologies (Burke and Jackson, 2007; Creme, 2003; Lillis, 2001).

Transitions from school or college to higher education also involve, for example, coming to terms with a new environment, a new set of people, different ways of being and a set of different and often unanticipated expectations. Transitions crucially generate an awareness of the need to belong and fit which in turn can lead to anxiety (Read et al 2003). Crozier et al (2010) have shown that the university context (or field in the Bourdieusian sense) can facilitate or confound the process of belonging. Linked to this is the impact of social identities (of 'race'/ethnicity, gender and class) and the disjunction between their habitus and field. In other words where the field is dominated by, for example White, male and middle class values and expectations, then the process of fitting-in will pose greater challenges to students from Black and Minority Ethnic, female and or working class backgrounds.

Other key issues related to transition may include: deficit constructions of certain groups of students (Archer, 2003; Archer et al., 2003), time problems caused by the intensive nature of the transition (Burke and Dunn, 2006) and by additional demands on working class students of for example domestic responsibilities and the need to take paid employment (Reay et al 2010); a disjuncture between forms of learning/experience of working class students and forms of learning demanded by institutions (Read, Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Burke and Jackson, 2007; Crozier and Reay 2011).

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Reflective Activity: Transitions

It's very much about you working out for yourself how to improve, what you need to do based on your reading and what you are gaining from the class and that. You do get lecturers saying 'oh well done' and sometimes maybe 'you need to do this to improve.' But it's not as much as at school and it's not on-going like 'K. your strengths are this but you need to work on this and this and this.' You need to work it out yourself kind of thing.

- Do you expect students to 'work it out for themselves'?
- What would influence your decision to do so? Do you think there is a place for individual student praise?
- Would you have to make sure that everyone gets some praise some of the time?
- How do you address the needs of those students who are hard to praise? What strategies might you use to win round recalcitrant and disengaged students?
- Students are very aware of gestures of favouritism: what strategies do you use to avoid this?

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