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Learning in later life: using life biography to investigate the inter-relationship of learning and life course capital

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Abstract

Current demographics within the United Kingdom present a challenging picture, with older people forming a considerable proportion of the population. In particular, older people are spending a longer period outside paid work at a point in the life course constructed as retirement. Increasingly, some older adults are returning to learning as a means of remaining socially connected, keeping active and purely for pleasure. Research which seeks to understand the relevance and importance of learning in later life remains quite disparate and, in addition, there is a lack of longitudinal or biographical research which seeks to explore this phenomenon. The research reported in this thesis aims to offer new insights into later-life learning by exploring how retired older people narrate their experiences of learning, and through consideration of the interrelationship this experience to life course capital.

Data were collected from eight participants aged between 63 and 73. An experience-centred narrative method was employed to explore participant biography with a particular emphasis upon learning. Data were analysed thematically to ascertain the relationship of learning to life course capital and the interrelationship to later-life learning.

The narrative data revealed that each participant had accumulated capital over their life course: at the point of retirement they were able to successfully deploy this capital as a means to gain new social connections through their return to learning. Learning for pleasure in later life is a mechanism to enhance retirement through the promotion of activity and engagement and consequently improve physical and mental health and well being.

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Chapter one: Introduction to the thesis

Introduction to the chapter

This chapter begins an exploration into the interrelationship of life course capital and learning in later life (LLL). This investigation was developed through a focus on the ‘learning lives’ of 8 adults, all over the age of 60, and engaged in informal educational activity in the English Midlands.

Two concepts are central to the arguments elaborated in this thesis; life course capital and learning in later life. Within this chapter I offer a preliminary definition of life course capital and learning in later life. I then provide a rationale for my interest in this area and also reflect upon why learning in later life is a relevant and significant area of research. The chapter concludes with the research aim and questions, an overview of the key theoretical concepts, and an explanation of the organisation of the thesis.

Defining life course capital and learning in later life

Research into life course capital suggests that ‘*individuals accumulate valuable resources over time, which produce, reproduce, and increase various forms of social inequality*’ (O’Rand cited in Song, 2011:4). Capital can be conceptualised as a resource which yields power and where status and class position are derived from the relative weight and amount of capital an individual holds (Formosa, 2006). The possession and accumulation of capital varies considerably according to a number of social factors including; for example, race, gender, family origin and status, and opportunity (Song, 2011). Certain individuals in society will benefit from what is described as a process of ‘*cumulative advantage*’ (Song, 2011: 4) where throughout adulthood:

‘individuals are able to develop more social skills, take part in more social interaction, establish more new ties, and

maintain more old ties. Consequently, individuals accumulate more social capital from expanding social networks over their adult life course.' (Song, 2011:4)

As a resource, capital acquisition and attainment is dependent upon structural sources including social positions and social roles which may be achieved or inherited (Song, 2011). It is evident that the distribution of social capital is unequal and leads to reproduction or a '*perpetuation of the line*' (Bourdieu, 1999:507) or a continuation of existing class structures and struggles.

The links between experience and social structure serve to reproduce inequalities so, for example retirement from paid employment brings new challenges to adult life and brings a new configuration of inequality. In contemporary society paid work has frequently been the metric by which individuals have derived their status and income (Formosa, 2006). The transition from paid work into retirement may lead to changes in an individual's social space, as access to previously existing networks is no longer present. Opportunities which were previously available to accumulate capital no longer exist, as older people become marginalised, to different degrees, in society (Formosa, 2006). This situation may become more acute for women who may not have had the same opportunities to accumulate capital in comparison with their male counterparts.

Why I have chosen to explore learning in later life

For the purpose of this thesis, learning in later life has been interpreted to mean organised types of learning that occur after retirement age. The decision to investigate learning in later life originates from both the current significance afforded to LLL and from my own career journey. The experience and impact of a significant life event, the undertaking of nurse training in the mid-1980s, has

shaped this decision in particular. The impact of life events may be perceived and interpreted in different ways, and as such could be represented as stressful, negative, disappointing or even fruitful. But ultimately life events, however they are experienced, bring about transition (Jamieson, 2012). Thinking now reflexively, I have realised the impact of my biography upon my learning journey and the major personal transitions which occurred as a result of undertaking nurse training in the 1980s. Jamieson (2012) suggests that major life events lead to transitions, the process of which leads to an outcome; outcomes might then include a change in attitude, assumptions, relationships or roles. It was as a direct result of my experience of moving (a life transition) from an predominately National Health Service (NHS) culture, where I worked as a nurse, into higher education, working as a nurse teacher, which served to awaken my 'cultural unconsciousness' (Plummer, 2001), a major life event. The outcome of the transition was a direct and successful challenge to my ageist attitudes, which accordingly triggered my interest in researching learning in later life.

The impact of nurse education: a personal reflection

My biography has been pivotal in the development of this thesis and I am now able to reflexively locate the development of what I have learned to identify as my ageist habitus¹ and the life changing event which led to a major transition in my attitudes, values and beliefs in relation to ageing. I qualified as a Registered General Nurse in 1986. Nurse training, as it was then defined, was a rigid, organised environment where individuals had very little autonomy. Nurses were portrayed as obedient and submissive and consequently inferior to their

¹*'a system of durable, transposable dispositions that mediates an individual's actions and the external conditions of production'* (Bourdieu, 1990:53).

colleagues, in particular doctors (Scott, 2004). This image of nursing was further reinforced via a number of working practices and conditions including mediocre training and a general lack of knowledge and qualifications, male dominance, and poor working conditions (Scott, 2004). Institutional culture was dictated by the social norms perpetuated by the hierarchical order and as such professional working relationships were driven by a reductionist and medicalised model of health and illness.

Nurse training was socially and culturally constructed and as a consequence social norms were reflected within the 'syllabus' where the curriculum modelled a disease-focused, life course trajectory moving from birth to death and health to illness. The net effect of this type of curricular model was the portrayal of old age as the point of decay, dependence and ultimately death. Exposure to, or caring for older people were shrouded in negative stereotypes, and as I recall it was the only clinical assignment that I would have preferred to have avoided. The curricular model stipulated fifty percent of time to be allocated between practice and theory and each clinical placement was approximately two months long. Ultimately, the clinical allocation that filled me with trepidation arrived and I was there; eight long weeks on a geriatric ward. Unlike many of my peers I was unable to develop any affinity with older people and the clinical placement was consequently very traumatic. I was exposed to caring for a number of chronically ill older people who clearly had a variety of enduring mental illnesses which I completely failed to understand or care for. My ageist habitus was formed and embodied. This experience served only to reinforce the negative stereotypes of ageing which I had acquired. What I completely failed to recognise at that point in time was this experience was one aspect, one exposure to 'ageing' and I was unable or

unwilling to locate this within the broader context of ageing and societal reactions to this process.

I am now quite aware of the impact of the life event of my nurse training and subsequent post-registration experience, coupled with other extraneous factors including general negative stereotypes of ageing. Combined, these undoubtedly led to the production of an ageist habitus. Ageing had negative associations with disease, loss of cognitive function and a gradual withdrawal from society. As a nurse, trained in the 1980s, I was a product of a health system which then worked upon the following premise:

'it is dangerous to be in any way lavish to old age until adequate provision has been assured for all other vital needs, such as the prevention of disease and the adequate nutrition of the young'
(Beveridge cited in Kingston, 1999:2)

The experience of nurse training had led to the development of, or further reinforced my ageist stance, which unsurprisingly remained relatively unchallenged for a number of years as I sought job roles where I could largely avoid caring for a significant number of older people.

Challenging the ageist habitus

The impact of life events and any subsequent change or transition may take an unspecified amount of time (Jamieson, 2012). Moreover, it is difficult to anticipate the trigger. I had, over a period of years, worked consistently hard to develop both my clinical and academic qualifications. In 1994 I left clinical practice to work as a nurse teacher and then senior lecturer, the school of nursing in which I worked being subsumed under the local University. I found the annual cycle of teaching prequalifying nursing students restrictive; I had few if any opportunities to become

engaged within other academic pursuits, for example leadership of awards, curriculum development or committee work and therefore I began to seek out potential new areas of work where I could meaningfully contribute. It was at this time that I was offered a developmental opportunity, which I readily agreed to, and as a result the transition began, challenging my ageist habitus. I was approached to lead the development of a new postgraduate curriculum leading to a Masters award in 'Ageing and Mental Health'. Given that I had no experience in mental health and certainly very limited experience of the ageing agenda, this was to be a significant life event leading to major transitions, both personal and professional.

The undertaking and successful delivery of this particular curriculum challenged and changed my views of ageing and older people. I worked within a team of external clinicians from a variety of different disciplines including, consultant psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists and consultant nurses, who were all responsible for, or had a research interest in ageing and mental health. I was quite unprepared for the commitment and passion each member of the team held for their discipline (gerontology), their drive to improve services for older people, and the respect they held for each other. The intellectual challenge was realised and a bespoke curriculum was successfully validated.

Working within this team was empowering and I gained a greater understanding of how higher education could work in successful partnership with external agencies to bring about innovative courses. Additionally, I encountered new and more vibrant social networks and in so doing gained 'capital'. I was invited to contribute to research projects (ageing focused) where I was exposed to innovative, diverse and challenging modes of thought. Upon completion of the curriculum I found myself somewhat changed. Excited by new theoretical positions, I was

appreciative of the wider context of ageing and, more importantly, reflexively I had come to recognise the profound negative impact of the eight week clinical placement in geriatrics during my nurse training all those years ago. The writing and leadership of this curriculum led to a major transition where my ageing habitus was successfully challenged. I too wanted to be more involved with the ageing agenda but at that point in time I was unsure how I could meaningfully contribute. Personally, returning to clinical practice where I could be directly involved in the care of older people was, and still is not an option that I would wish to pursue as I found the demands of this type of work created a considerable amount of personal psychological distress, so I have been fortunate in seeking out other opportunities. As an educationalist with an enthusiastic and passionate interest in research I have been able to contribute to the ageing agenda through the leadership of a number of curricular developments which have resulted in larger numbers of clinicians championing services for older people. I have utilised scholarly activity to work as a member within a number of research teams investigating ageing-related issues. In so doing I have contributed to the data collection and analysis which has helped in the development of research skills, as well as advancing my knowledge of the subject discipline. Moreover, I have been able to contribute to several academic papers which have subsequently been published. This thesis has provided the opportunity to bring together my passion for learning with an interest in ageing, whereby I am now able contribute to the wider body of knowledge whilst continuing my own learning journey.

The significance of learning in later life

Two terms appear throughout the literature: 'lifelong learning' and 'learning in later life'. It could be assumed that any interpretation of lifelong learning is sufficient to encompass later life learning; however, the reality is an *'untidy field which is hard to delimit and define neatly'* (Schuller and Watson, 2009:9). To date, the notion of lifelong learning has been situated in an economic discourse synonymous with formal types of learning that lead to skill acquisition. It is quite evident that the interpretation and application of lifelong learning has been driven by policy-led definitions where the emphasis placed upon vocationalism has occurred at the expense of a wider, more humanistic approach which also considers learning in the post-work period (Field, 2006).

Learning in later life should be an integral element of the lifelong learning agenda but, to date, this has frequently failed to materialise. A tension exists between the terms 'lifelong learning' and 'learning in later life', and it cannot be assumed that references to lifelong learning recognise that *'learning is a process which commences with birth and only terminates at death'* (Cohen, 1975:83) and is therefore inclusive of **all learners**. As a result, learning in later life has emerged to represent a set of practices whereby older people are engaging in learning pursuits as part of a meaningful or active component of their retirement.

There are a number of varied explanations used to justify the enhanced societal interest in learning in late life: demographic changes are perhaps the most noticeable. Population ageing has also brought a renewed sense of urgency to academic and professional work in this area (Oancea, 2008). Coupled with this, older people are spending a longer period of time outside paid employment where their ideas of the purpose and meaning of later life are finally changing (Fischer, *et*

a/ 1992). Passivity and disengagement, widely associated with chronic health problems in retirement, have been replaced with a move towards activity and engagement (Oancea, 2008) where for some individuals learning is an important experience which brings both activity and engagement. Yet, despite, or perhaps because of these factors, government policy towards lifelong learning has been underdeveloped, and skewed towards the workforce and away from the retired section of the population.

Prior to 2008, and the current economic downturn, the emphasis of government lifelong learning policy focused almost exclusively upon meeting economic need at the expense of considering and including the widespread cultural changes which have occurred as a result of the shifting demographic profile. So from a strategic perspective, lifelong learning policy has failed to be sufficiently inclusive of all walks of society and older learners have been particular neglected. Governmental policy has adopted a somewhat myopic view of lifelong learning:

'Lifelong learning can only be an object of policy in relation to some of its meanings, namely those which reduce lifelong learning to the expansion of educational and training opportunities' (Griffin, 2000:13).

The political (New Labour 1997-2010) emphasis on the lifelong learning plan centred on the development of skills which are economically useful; indeed these skills are seen as a mechanism to promote economic or employment policy (Griffin, 2000). Yet this one-sided political initiative has been evolving at a time when evidence suggests older learners are making sense of, and enriching their lives through a more creative learning approach which incorporates studying or engaging in pursuits which are both intellectually or physically stimulating (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007; McCullough and Findsen, 2007). In this approach, learning is

identified as a mechanism to promote self-confidence and independence offering excitement, an opportunity for discovery and a means of both physical and intellectual stimulation (Jamieson, 2007). Learning matters in later-life as it helps older people to stay healthy and active, thereby reducing morbidity. In addition learning may also delay the effects of Alzheimer's disease (Fryer, 1997; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007). Further to any individual benefits, learning can contribute to strong social cohesion through fostering a sense of belonging, responsibility and identity (Fryer, 1997; McCullough and Findsen, 2007). Yet, despite the obvious advantages of learning in later life, older adults were identified within the Fryer Report as one of twelve underrepresented groups and, to date, this situation remains unchanged (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007).

Older people are not an homogenous group and the influence of sociological theory acknowledges the relevance of the important distinctions of gender, ethnicity and social class upon the ageing experience (Vincent, *et al* 2006). Therefore – as I suggested above - it is not surprising that the experience of later life is frequently determined by life trajectory including access to education, attainment of qualifications and the effect of paid work on savings, pension provision and overall health well-being. The current position of older people within society can be readily understood by reference to the (their) past. That is why it is important to consider learning in later life from the perspective provided by 'life course capital'.

Factors that impact upon learning in later life

Higher educational attainment in early life positively affects the quality of later life (Walker and Foster, 2006) yet the educational system reinforces the social processes that produce inequality (Dannefer and Miklowski, 2006). Educated

persons are more able to accumulate capital(s) via occupational choices. In addition, they also acquire a habitus which reflects and readily adopts healthy lifestyle choices. As these particular individuals move into later life they have acquired sufficient social, economic and cultural capital to successfully navigate retirement. Capital may have been accrued either through inheritance, work, savings or pension, friendship or social networks. At the point of retirement exposure to learning is considered an integral component of later life and assists in the maintenance or renewal of social capital. However, this picture may not be representative of a significant majority of older people, as increasingly there are large numbers for whom poverty is a reality (Arber, 2006): approximately 600,000 older people in the United Kingdom are recorded as being below the poverty line (Walker and Foster, 2006:49). Learning opportunities for older people who live below the poverty line are consequently restricted as quite simply there are insufficient personal resources to invest in these types of activity.

Ageing is frequently reported for its negative aspects, including the potential economic impact (cost of an ageing population) upon wider society. Previous commentary, warning of 'apocalyptic demography' (Robertson cited in Kingston, 1999) where it was considered older people would use a disproportionate percentage of welfare provision, is largely unfounded. Contemporary views of an ageing society observe this as a misnomer, suggesting it is more about the blurring of boundaries, as older adults lead active and independent lives including remaining in employment. Unfortunately the continued absence of detailed and accurate data about 'the ageing population' reinforces perceptions of ageing which are frequently influenced by destructive myths and negative images (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007).

The New Labour Government consistently failed to recognise the benefits of learning in later life; for example, the enriched social and cultural capital promotes both physical and mental well-being, prevents social isolation and challenges the stereotypical norms of ageism. Additionally, there is a double exclusion here for those adults over the age of 65 who have been expelled from the labour market. Firstly, there is a loss of status and income which is associated with a job title and role. Secondly, there is the threat to one's identity which may lead to a search for meaning and the desire to spend time meaningfully (Weiss and Bass, 2002; Jamieson, 2007). Policy was not alert to these issues, though researchers increasingly were.

Reflecting on the issues outlined within this chapter it can be seen that a combination of factors; personal, professional and societal, have stimulated this research study. Personally I have reflected upon the development of and the challenge to my ageist habitus and where the opportunity to work within higher education has been significant. More importantly, older people are living longer and spending an increased period of time outside of paid employment (in retirement) and returning to learning for pleasure. Despite these changes understanding of learning in later life remains scarce, a factor which is further compounded by the absence of a policy directive which is inclusive of later life learners.

Research aim and questions

The aim of this research is to explore how retired older people narrate their life experiences of learning and what light these narrations shed on the inter-

relationship of learning to life course capital. In order to realise this aim, my thesis pursues several research questions:

- How do later life learners perceive and interpret learning over their life course?
- To what extent are forms of capital identifiable over the life course?
- How do late life learners perceive, interpret and understand learning in later life?
- What are their motives for engagement with learning in later life?

In order to promote clarity I will now offer an explanation of the key terms of the questions.

Key concepts

Defining later life

In defining or drawing distinctions between the various phases of the life course, chronological age is the most frequently cited parameter (Withnall, 1995). Classically the First Age of the lifespan is a period of childhood and socialisation, the Second Age is associated with raising a family and work; the Third Age, that is, aged 50-74 years, is a period of active independence in the post-work phase (Carnegie Inquiry, 1993); the Fourth Age is identified as a period of dependence and decline (Withnall, 1995; Weiss and Bass, 2002). The term Third Age² is perhaps most frequently adopted, within the field of social gerontology. I have, however, chosen to utilise the term **later life** as this incorporates variations of definitional categories that define older adults, whilst also including learners from both the Third and Fourth Age.

² Laslett (1989:77) reminds us 'the Third Age is not to be defined wholly by the calendar nor are its true limits to be reckoned by birthdays. A point in the personal age of an individual- a point personally chosen- rather than a marker fixed in the calendar, biological or social age would be the occasion of the onset of the Third Age.'

Arriving at a conceptual framework

I have chosen to incorporate the sociological lens of Pierre Bourdieu and the social theory of critical gerontology as key conceptual frameworks to support this research. Bourdieu is an appropriate choice because his conceptual system can be operationalised at the micro level to explore the relationship between experience and social structure; in particular, how capital of various kinds is used to reproduce inequalities (Jenkins, 1992). An extended analysis of the Bourdieusian concepts 'capital', 'habitus' and 'field' is provided in chapter four alongside an evaluation of critical gerontology. I will here, however, briefly outline these concepts.

The concepts capital, habitus and field are inter-related and serve to explain social structuring and the structuring of individual qualities. Capital, from a Bourdieusian perspective, represents resource(s) which may be accumulated over time and which are deployed, transformed and exchanged within different fields (Moore, 2008). Bourdieu identified differing forms of capital; social, economic, cultural and symbolic, and his theory of capital embodies a complex interrelationship between capital, habitus and field. Bourdieu developed his own interpretation of habitus a concept he deployed as a tool to transcend the structure/agency dichotomy. Habitus is a set of dispositions, which in a Bourdieusian sense, serve to locate individuals at certain positions within a field. A field, in turn, should be understood as a social microcosm (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:97) which is occupied by individuals or institutions (Jenkins, 1992). The overall 'social cosmos' is constituted by several fields, for example, those of religion, art, education and work, and each field has its own set of unique rules. Within the differing fields '*constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate*' (Bourdieu cited in Thomson,

2008:74) and these define the situation experienced by the field's occupants (Jenkins, 1992). This research will, through a micro level analysis, employ the interrelated Bourdieusian concepts of capital, habitus and field as possible means to explain the interrelationship of life course capital to learning in later life.

Critical gerontology is likewise important to the thesis. As an educationalist researching later life, I believed it important to integrate a gerontological perspective. Critical gerontology has emerged as an important theoretical lens because it values the central role of agency, primarily the social values of individuals in later life. Critical gerontology represents an approach to the study of ageing, which is very different from those of medical or social gerontology, for example. As a theory it not only questions the theoretical traditions of main stream social gerontology, it calls to attention other important perspectives (Bengston *et al* 1977) like gender, ethnicity and disability which are relevant to understanding ageing. The aim of critical gerontology is to create positive models of ageing (Dannefer, 1994) which emphasise the strengths and diversity associated with ageing. It thus has ontological relevance.

A central tenet of the proposed thesis is the systematic and rigorous demonstration of reflexivity which is crucial in exploring and analysing my role as a researcher. A particular point of reference is the confrontation and examination of personal attitudes, values and beliefs surrounding ageing. Here, the Bourdieusian conceptual tool of habitus has been employed with a twofold purpose; on a personal level habitus has been employed as a means of critically analysing my own development as a researcher. Secondly, habitus is employed as a method to conceptualise certain social conditions of old age, of which ageism is a significant feature.

Organisation and structure of the thesis

In Chapter Two '*Exploring the policy context*', I present a critical analysis of pertinent contextual issues including, the impact of demography and policy upon later life learning, the evolving nature of the concept of retirement, and the relationship to learning in the post-work period. It is important to clarify at the outset the boundaries of the policy analysis – which refers to the period 2001 to 2010. This is a period referred to as 'New Labour' where Tony Blair and Gordon Brown led a new era in UK politics.

As a considerable proportion of this research is historically located, I have in Chapter Three addressed '*1950s Britain the evolution of a new social horizon*'. This reflects upon life in 1950s Britain economically, socially and politically, as a means of understanding more fully the life courses of my interviewees.

Chapter Four provides an explanation of the theoretical influences which have influenced both methodology and the research method. Within this chapter I outline and defend the key theoretical perspectives which support my position within this work. I then move on to describe the process of data collection where I have captured life biography through a narrative interview process. The undertaking of the thesis has occurred throughout a period of Labour Party dominance in government office. The data collection was completed in December 2010 and as a result the subsequent analysis and writing up has been written with reference to the political influences of 'New Labour'.

In Chapter Five I have chosen to adopt an integrated approach towards the presentation of the findings and subsequent discussion. I have worked reflexively to immerse and blend the research findings into a theoretical framework which owes much to '*The Weight of the World*' Bourdieu, *et al* (1999).

Chapter Six brings me to the overall conclusion of this thesis and I reflect upon a number of issues. The chapter opens with a synthesis of the findings. Secondly I review the process of undertaking the research and identify study limitations and then move on to outline what I have learned. The implications for further research within this area are identified, and finally I give consideration to the next part of my learning journey, as an individual, an academic, and a professional.

Chapter two: Exploring the policy context

Later life learning: introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the policy context relating to learning in later life. The first challenge is to note the absence of a clear definition of 'later life'. This leads to multiple interpretations of this stage in the life course, a situation which is

further compounded by utilising different metrics or models of classification. For example, chronological age, or life stage descriptors such as the third or the fourth age. In order to provide a clear focus for the review, the scope of the contextual analysis centres upon *the learning of older people in retirement*³ from a United Kingdom (UK) perspective.

The British population is ageing and repeatedly older people are portrayed negatively, with them frequently presented as a social, economic or political problem. This situation is unfolding at a period in time when older people are spending longer periods of time outside paid employment than ever before and in so doing are beginning to challenge the stereotypic norms of what it means to grow old. In seeking out a retirement that is meaningful, older people are returning to learning for leisure or pleasure. Later life learning brings positive benefits for older people, promoting well-being (Age UK, 2012), yet the social policy discourse has consistently failed to recognise and incorporate learning for leisure in later life: the official voices concerned with the education and welfare of the older population (Moody, 2004:29) have largely ignored this aspect of later life learning in favour of promoting learning as a means to retrain or reskill to keep older people in employment for longer.

Empirical research evidence relating to learning for leisure or pleasure in later life is limited and there is scant mention of later life learning within social policy. The focus of this chapter sets out the policy context of later life learning. In order to locate the policy context, the chapter commences by '*setting the scene*' and explores three themes; firstly: the concept of retirement, secondly how older people are challenging the stereotypical norms of ageing, and thirdly the relevance

³ The concept 'retirement' is also now becoming more nebulous as people may be working for longer. The focus of this review is upon those older people learning in the post-work phase i.e. they are no longer in paid employment.

of learning in the post-work period. An overview of current '*demographic trends*' highlights the challenges of the ageing population and the relevance of an active ageing strategy which is inclusive of learning in later life. Finally, a review of '*current policy*', presented chronologically from 2001 to 2010, explores the development of social policy pertinent to the evolution of learning in retirement. Note, this was the period identified as 'New Labour' where Tony Blair and Gordon Brown led the Labour Party throughout the party's period in governmental control.

Setting the scene

The post-work phase of the life course, which has more traditionally been referred to as 'retirement' is evolving; it is no longer a short period of relaxation before the onset of ill health and death. Retirement is fundamentally a social construct which has gained momentum in the last 50 years (Townsend, 1981) due to the changing demographic profile, and in particular to increases in life expectancy. Approximately one-third of the life course is now spent in the post-work period and as a result two of the major features of 'adult life' - that is paid employment and child raising responsibilities (McNair, 2009) - are absent. Consequently, adults entering the post-work period differ from previous generations; their expectations of growing old and retirement are evolving, leading to a transformation and re-conceptualisation of ageing. There has, and continues to be considerable debate in **policy terms** on what constitutes old age, normal ageing, quality of life, and the role and responsibility of the state vis-a-vis private or personal responsibility for optimal ageing. The complexity and multiplicity of perspectives on ageing have led to the emergence of a multi-profession, multi-disciplinary field, each with its own theoretical interest and research into ageing. In this situation, greater

interdisciplinary and inter-professional collaboration is required. Experts need to communicate and pool their intellectual resources to develop a common understanding and gerontological language if society is to benefit and develop its understanding of what it is to grow old (Estes, 2001).

Early paradigms of ageing (in the mid 20th century) tended to problematise old age (Withnall, 2000; Glendenning, 2001) which has consequently engendered and reinforced negative views of growing old. For example, Cumming and Henry (1961) presented 'disengagement theory', which became recognised as one of the primary theories, as an attempt to describe the ageing process in the mid 20th century. Disengagement theory presents ageing as an **inevitable** period whereby the individual and society simultaneously engage in mutual separation; for example, retirement equates to disengagement from the work-force. A controversial theory, it reinforces pessimistic perceptions of ageing which are also frequently influenced by destructive myths and negative images (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007). Townsend (1981) argues disengagement theory is functionalist in nature and creates a situation of structure and dependency for old people which consequently becomes a rationale for early retirement and expulsion from the labour market. Functionalism is a macro theory that endorses societal stability. In applying this to ageing it assumes a certain homogeneity of older people which is not so apparent within contemporary society.

In a society where older people are living longer, it is imperative to ensure ageing is conceptualised and lived as a positive experience where there are continued opportunities for all older people (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2002). The World Health Organisation has identified important changes in this area. In 2002 the WHO launched the policy framework on 'active ageing' and define this as '*the*

process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age' (WHO, 2002:12). 'active ageing' is a significant term, encapsulating an inclusive and positive message of ageing and, in so doing, it offers an alternative to theories such as disengagement. It provided a basis for the WHO (2002) to lead the way in encouraging strategic policy planning for older people to be rights-based as opposed to needs-based. This is an important paradigm shift moving from a position where older people are seen as passive recipients (a 'needs-based' perspective) towards an approach which fosters equality of opportunity and participation in political processes (a rights-based perspective). This policy framework recognises and promotes a number of important factors relating to ageing and has modelled the way for policy makers by promoting ageing more positively. Government can no longer afford to ignore or marginalise older adults - primarily because they are a significant proportion of the electorate (Giddens, 2007).

Currently and for the foreseeable future, there are increasing numbers of older people spending a considerable period in retirement or outside the labour market than previous cohorts (McNair, 2009). In developed societies, advances in technology, research, health care, medicine and education serve to make available more information about ageing than ever before. However, research into education in later life remains marginal and scarce and, as a consequence, policy development is inadequate due to the lack of evidence required to inform the process.

More recently key authors have made explicit the link between active ageing and learning in later life for its positive effects (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010). This is a challenge to the previous paradigm of ageing, suggesting that learning is not only

relevant to the younger population but should be supported throughout the life course. This trend has been gaining momentum recently, throughout the period of New Labour. Age Concern England makes the following declaration:

'Learning can be one way of moving into a new phase of life and making new social ties. One of the reasons people can have negative feelings about retirement is a fear of isolation and a lack of purpose to life without employment. Learning therefore provides not only a meaningful activity in itself, but also the social networks to replace those of the workplace. It can help retired people adapt their skills to play a constructive role in society, whether in voluntary activity or through the pursuit of interest that has meaning to the individual' (Age Concern England, 2008:15)

Learning may therefore be an important part of the post-work period for older people. Glendenning (2001) argues that we need to develop and test a conceptual model of the reasons for participation, including pathways through and outcomes from undertaking different types of learning activity. It is suggested that it may then be possible *'to move towards a refinement in lifelong learning which is inclusive of learning in later life'* (Glendenning, 2001:69).

Demographic trends

There are a number of varied explanations used to justify the enhanced interest in learning in late life; demographic changes are perhaps the most obvious. Demographic data, now for the first time highlight older people as a significant majority of the population. 2003 census data identify 20 million people aged 50 and over in the UK (Office for National Statistics, (ONS) 2007). This demographic trend has been evolving for five decades and has effectively doubled, reflecting a **45%** increase over this time period from 13.8 million in 1951. Predictions suggest that this is a trend which is expected to continue with the figure rising to 27.2

million by 2031, so effectively more people are living longer. This has arisen in part due to what commentators refer to as the 'baby boom' generation, which refers to the increase in fertility rates that occurred from the mid 1940s through to the mid 1960s (Leach, *et al* 2008). There were two peaks throughout this period: the first in 1947, immediately after the Second World War, and the second in 1964 (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010). This second wave in the increase in fertility rates, 1964, is referred to by Phillipson and Ogg (2010) as 'late boomers'. Yet attempting to accurately delineate first and second wave boomers is in itself problematic as by definition there is some degree of arbitrariness relating to what actually constitutes a cohort (Jones, *et al* 2008). So without such clarity it may be simpler to refer to 'baby boomers'. The important point is that the demographic shift has obvious sociological implications which have not been fully investigated. If it is the case that Gilleard and Higgs (2002:376) suggest '*the baby boom generation broke the mould of modern life course*' then it is important to ascertain what implications this may have for a post-modern society particularly when the baby boom generation reach retirement.

Leach, *et al* (2008) suggest that there is an absence of research studies exploring the UK context of the boomer generation and thus seek to offer some insight into this phenomenon. Using secondary data drawn from the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing and the British Social Attitudes Survey, combined with primary research of 150 interviews, this work explored aspects of social change in consumption and identity of baby boomers that are now entering retirement. The conclusions of this work suggest that boomers vary from previous cohorts and are presented as a 'bridging generation' where there are similarities with previous groups but also are significant differences. As a cohort, baby boomers are more

likely to have aspirations towards active retirement than their predecessors. This change in outlook towards later life may begin to influence wider societal stereotypes and so as a generation baby boomers may be responsible for transforming ageing

Current demographic trends are also reinforced by low fertility and advances in medicine and technology, leading to improved mortality rates and therefore increasing longevity (ONS, 2007). Longevity is now a reality as current estimates show increases in additional life expectancy years of 17.4 years at 65 for men and 20 years at age 65 for women (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010). The average male is currently estimated to live approximately 82.4 years and the average female 85 years.

The situation is further compounded by the decrease in the number of 16 year olds in the population. The decrease in 16 year olds may impact upon the economic support ratio or; *'the number of people aged 16 and over in employment for every other person in the UK'* (Khan, 2009:31). The economic support ratio is important as this is the metric which is used to determine the ability of the economy to manage the increase in the ageing population. With a disproportionate total of people aged 16 years and over in employment compared to the increase in older people, who are no longer in paid employment 'an ageing population', has now become a reality and poses a significant social economic and political test (Anderson, 2008; Phillipson and Ogg, 2010). Shifting demographic trends suggest that learning in later life may well be considered as part of an 'active ageing process' which could have a number of positive outcomes at macro, meso and micro levels (McNair, 2009). The case for active ageing is clear: it enhances

lifestyle choices in later life, increases well-being and supports self-care. The impact of the social burden of ageing is therefore relatively decreased.

Current policy

To date, the emphasis of UK educational policy has focused exclusively on skills for employment. This has evolved as the UK, like many other countries, faces a skills deficit which is amplified by the changing demographic profile. Government initiatives, addressed through a lifelong learning agenda, are in part attempting to bridge this divide by retraining older workers (Mollenkopf, 2002; Taylor, *et al* 2005; Stoltz-Loike, *et al* 2005). This policy-driven emphasis centres upon the acquisition of skills which are economically useful (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007). Yet less than one in five of the population over 65 identify themselves as learners (NIACE, 2005 cited in Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007) and learning to acquire new skills, with a view to promote economic outputs, may not be of central importance for older learners. The fundamental issue is the macro-level interpretation of learning and the relationship to the concept of 'lifelong learning'. The thrust of policy documents continues to focus upon the expansion of educational and training opportunities at the expense of more informal learning, or learning for personal interest (Griffin, 2000). Glendenning (2001) and Withnall (2000) argue for a shift in emphasis towards learning as opposed to education, encompassing a 'cradle to the grave' model which does not solely focus upon economically useful outputs. Yet the current situation is one where the *'front end model still drives policy... because the government cannot meet the needs of older learners'* (McNair, 2009:11).

The location of later life as a period of decline, retirement from society, illness and death has been evident in social policy for decades but this has been challenged

more recently by the concept of active ageing. However, the World Health Organisation in 1995 signalled an important change in the concept of ageing when it moved towards the production of strategy documents which were inclusive of a life course perspective and, in so doing, positively embraced ageing. In 2002 the WHO published: *Active ageing: a policy framework*, which stressed the need for social policy to be inclusive of lifelong learning opportunities as '*education can provide a major contribution to improving the quality of later life*' (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010:4). The WHO (2002) recommended policies and programmes in both education and training that would facilitate the full participation of older people and encourage and support lifelong learning as people age. This overarching framework has been interpreted and translated into the UK context through a number of disparate social policy documents. Unfortunately, the emphasis of government policy in training at the expense of learning for leisure or pleasure, remains largely unchanged. A number of policy documents, demonstrating this emphasis, are pertinent to this review and are presented chronologically commencing from the year 2000.

Winning the generation game: improving opportunities for people aged 50-65 in work and community activity, was written by the Performance and Innovation Unit of the Cabinet Office in 2000. Whilst the focus of this paper does not relate to learning in retirement it is of importance, as it signals an interest in older learners albeit in relation to paid work. The purpose of the paper was to engage with the decline in those aged 50 and 60 no longer in paid employment or who were considered to be economically inactive. The focus was to enable the over 50s to stay in work and to help others to re-enter the labour force as a means to promote

long-term economic prosperity. It is difficult to track the impact of this paper as a number of other policy drivers have impacted on the current situation, where we are witnessing an increase in state pension age and a worldwide economic recession.

The National Service Framework for Older People (NSF)(2001), published by the Department of Health, identified the way forward for improving standards of health care for older people. In addition, although the reference was brief, this document also signalled the importance of learning for older people. This particular framework identified a number of 'standards' which aimed to improve the quality of life for older people. 'Standard eight' reinforces the importance of health promotion strategies which includes encouraging older people to engage in learning in later life. A total of nine National Service Frameworks were produced, seven of which related to long-term conditions including stroke or cancer. The NSF for Older People differed somewhat from the other NSFs: whilst it representing a strategic view point, it lacked any financial resource. As a consequence the impact of the NSF for Older People has led to a few positive outcomes including stronger partnerships between NHS organisations, local councils, the private sector and older people themselves. But any direct measurable outcomes for lifelong learning, or learning which is relevant to later life learners, are yet to be realised.

The first policy document to specifically identify that older people in retirement also have learning needs (Withnall, *et al* 2004) was the White Paper *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* produced in 2003 by The Department for Education and Skills (DfES). It clearly identified the importance of learning in later life, as follows:

'We want to safeguard a wide range of learning opportunities for pensioners. There is good evidence that older learners

can benefit substantially from continuing to learn. For many it represents an important form of social activity. There are benefits to mental and physical health. It may help them support learning within the family or community, as well as pursuing hobbies and leisure interests....at the same time to ensure the continued availability of learning opportunities for pensioners which give so much benefit and pleasure. At present there is wide variation between different areas in the range of learning available, and the fees that are charged for it. It is right that local discretion should remain. But we expect pensioners to benefit substantially from the arrangements for safeguarding funding for leisure learning, and that in all areas learning for pensioners would be one of the priorities through the new planning and funding arrangements.' (Para 4.48)

Whilst this policy document was generally welcomed (NIACE, 2003) it lacked any clear definition or direction for a national lifelong learning strategy; in particular, it failed to include wider informal modes of learning. This reflects one of the fundamental problems of policy; that is the systematic failure of governmental departments to reach a consensus upon a working definition of informal learning and lifelong learning. Informal learning is widely interpreted to include learning that is structured or unstructured, part-time and non-vocational. Most importantly, for the learner, informal learning does not lead to any formal qualifications, or it may be that qualifications are incidental to the learning (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, 2008). If indeed learning does matter in later life (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007) then it becomes imperative for policy makers to communicate a clear definition of lifelong learning which encompasses a '*cradle to the grave*' (Glendenning, 2001) framework. Schuller and Watson (2009) suggest that this includes '*people of all ages, learning in a variety of contexts in educational institutions, at work at home and through leisure activities*' (Schuller and Watson, 2009: 10). To date, the Government has not developed any such framework.

Opportunity Age: Meeting the Challenges of Ageing in the 21st Century (2005) published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DfWP) sets out a strategy for active ageing. The vision of the Labour Government at that time was ‘*a society where later life is as active and fulfilling as the earlier years, with older people participating in their families and communities*’ (DfWP, 2005 para: 23). A lengthy document, it clearly sets out a comprehensive strategy to promote active ageing and, in so doing, recognises the importance of learning by ‘*ensuring that older people have fair access to learning opportunities*’ (DfWP, 2005:32). Reference is also made to ‘*safeguarding a wide range of learning for leisure, personal interest and community development purposes*’ (DfWP, 2005:37). Generally the schema was well received, particularly as learning in later life was endorsed as a means to promote active ageing.

Building a Society for All Ages (2009) produced by the Department for Work and Pensions was the successor to ‘Opportunity Age’. This paper continued to highlight the importance of learning but stressed the use of informal networks to achieve this aim and highlighted the importance of working in collaboration with agencies like NIACE and The Third Age Trust. This paper reinforces the economic challenges of a post-modern society with an ageing demographic where the government acting alone is unable to meet all the needs of older people (Achenbaum, 2010).

The consultation paper from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DfIUS), on informal adult learning (2008) reinforces the idea of ensuring that learning is locally situated. The paper advocates making use of available facilities including the public house or the community centre. Clearly the intention of this policy, in optimising the integration of local non-governmental agencies and

community located learning, is to shift the responsibility, and therefore the cost, for informal learning away from central government. This will only be a positive endeavour if there is sufficient local momentum to bring about change yet, if successful, it may lead to a vibrant learning community where there is strong social cohesion.

Continuing with the theme of informal adult learning, the government launched a number of key intentions identified within the publication of *The Learning Revolution* (2009) produced by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. The paper acknowledges the importance of informal adult learning and the variety of avenues through which this is actively pursued. In particular, the paper highlights learning venues and activities which are predominately initiated and supported by non-governmental funding; for example, a dance class at a local church hall, undertaking on-line research, blogging or a cookery class (DfIUS, 2009). Additionally it reiterates the '*top priority... as the practical training which can get people back to work quickly*' (DfIUS, 2009:4). Whilst there is scant reference to learning in later life throughout this paper, it does bring to the fore the relevance and importance of informal adult learning as one of a number of key milestones towards achieving a learning revolution.

Summarising the overall trends in these various documents is difficult; as the lack of a joined-up approach to working has led to a fragmented approach to policy formation. The emphasis of learning appears to encourage individuals to remain in employment for longer – this takes precedence over informal learning. However, it is possible to note in general terms that there has been some change in policy direction over the previous decade. This is suggestive of a lifelong learning strategy which is inclusive of informal learning for later life learners. Unfortunately,

overall statements of educational goals still focus almost exclusively on the preparation of young people for adult life (OECD, 2007:122) and on encouraging individuals to ensure that they are sufficiently skilled to remain in the workplace for longer than previous generations. The emphasis of policy is economically driven and therefore continues to focus on keeping individuals in the work place for longer. This is reflected in a number of important legislative changes including the reform of the state pension system and the Equality Act (2010) which outlaws unjustifiable age discrimination. The latter Act recognises the experience that mature and older individuals bring to the workplace and so reinforces positive images of ageing. However, current reforms to the state pension system will see the state pension age rise to 68 by 2046, thus lengthening the time people will spend in paid employment. This will reinforce the requirement to learn for work, rather than informally or for pleasure. A paradox seems to currently exist; older people may be wishing to explore a new and active phase in the life course beyond paid employment, whilst current policy is encouraging individuals to remain in the workplace for longer than previous generations.

Schuller and Watson (2009) undertook an enquiry into the future of lifelong learning in which they assert the need for opportunities for learning to occur where and when it is required. They also emphasise the inadequacy of current frameworks, as these neglect to satisfactorily account for the emerging growth areas which include the more informal areas; for example, learning for personal meaning and for social cohesion. Their enquiry recommends a four stage model of lifelong learning which makes explicit reference to ensuring adequate provision for the growing third and fourth ages. The absence of a clear direction of travel for lifelong learning may be attributed to the quagmire of government departments

who hold responsibility for the range of policy formation, funding, and delivery of education and training. Yet the numbers of individuals who are beyond the post-work period are substantial and learning as a means to meet a basic human need or '*creativity and stimulation*' (DfIUS, 2008:5) may be of significant importance. Lifelong learning policies, it is argued, must continue to build upon the concept of active ageing and, in so doing, meaningfully encompass a life course perspective which is inclusive of the requirements of the third and fourth ages (Schuller and Watson, 2009; Glendenning, 2001).

Who are the older learners and why do they choose to learn in later life?

There is limited evidence from which to discover the numbers of older learners currently engaged in some form of learning-related activity (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010). Unfortunately, statistical evidence of older adults' involvement in learning is captured by a multitude of organisations using diverse metrics. The net result of this is a fragmented and inconclusive picture of the current context. Part of the problem is the demarcation between formal and informal modes of learning. Formal learning can be captured by counting enrolments onto courses (McNair, 2009) as is done by organisations like The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). But HESA captures data on 'mature learners' and this single category pertains to any individual over the age of 30 who is currently studying within a higher education institution. There is no further disaggregation by age, mode of study, qualification or the reason for attendance. It therefore remains impossible to count the numbers of older learners within higher education. In a recent report Phillipson and Ogg (2010) have attempted to gather further intelligence on older learners within universities and have utilised data drawn from the Office for

National Statistics and the Government Actuary Department, combined with intelligence provided by the Learning and Skills Council to further illuminate the current statistical picture. Collectively these agencies hold some important information pertaining to educational qualifications, but fail to disaggregate the data by age cohort for example, so that it remains very difficult to gather accurate intelligence of older learners who engage in higher education study (Jamieson, 2007a).

In relation to capturing information on informal learning it is necessary to attend to survey data which provides insight about learning activities which are also inclusive of formal learning (McNair, 2009a). For example, The National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) carries out an annual survey which provides a general overview which encompasses participation in publicly funded learning, as well as learning that is self-organised. The NIACE survey is the most useful resource to refer to since it is based on considerable data which have been amassed from the annual survey of adult participants in learning. This survey has been consistently undertaken for over twenty years. Whilst the data are not particularly sophisticated, they represent the views of approximately 5000 adults over the age of 17 and are analysed and presented categorically to include; for example, age, ethnicity and socio-economic class. It is therefore possible to ascertain a clearer picture of learning and the involvement of older people. This section of the review will draw on a number of key reports where relevant data have been captured on older learners. This includes data that refer to older learners in both formal and informal learning situations.

Phillipson and Ogg (2010) commissioned the HESA statistics so that a more detailed analysis could be undertaken to ascertain actual evidence of the number

of people aged 60 and over undertaking degree programmes in the UK (see table 1).

Table 1: numbers of students aged 60 and over on undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the UK (adapted from Phillipson and Ogg, 2010)

Academic year	Number/ percentage of students aged 60 and over on postgraduate courses in UK	Number/ percentage of students aged 60 and over on undergraduate courses in UK
1988/89	829	15,726
	0.5%	2.5%
2002/3	877	19,939
	0.4%	2.8%
2007/8	1,415	20,164
	0.6%	2.6%

The statistics identified a small but incremental increase year-on-year in the number of older people studying postgraduate degree programmes. Whilst generally this represents only a tiny proportion of the total population who attend university, it also highlights the demand for formal learning in later life. The authors go on to identify how higher education institutions can undertake an active role in supporting the older learner, which includes the following: encouraging the development of ageing around extended economic; family and citizenship roles; supporting individuals beyond the post-work period; unlocking mental capacity and promoting well-being; and finally by providing support to professionals and voluntary groups who work on behalf of older people. Inevitably they call for investment in education, in particular higher education, as this should have benefits for society helping older people stay economically and socially engaged (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010).

It is not easy to ascertain the viability of this model, given the current economic climate, where higher education institutions are responding to the needs of the more traditional undergraduate student; who is usually attending university as preparation for a future career. Yet considerable uncertainty surrounds recruitment to undergraduate courses as a result of the new imposed fee structure, with a number of universities expecting a decrease in undergraduate numbers. Older learners have differing needs and learning styles which demand an alternative pedagogy (Purdie and Boulton-Lewis, 2003). This represents a cultural shift to which some universities may not be able to respond. Finally, given the relatively small numbers of older learners who return to learning within higher education, in comparison with the large number of informal learners, one might conclude that funding would be better situated within other agencies or organisations and outside higher education institutions.

Research undertaken by Jamieson (2007a) sought to explore the motivations and characteristics of mature part-time students currently learning within a higher education institution. The conclusions of this study indicated that gaining a qualification was not a key motivating factor for older learners, as they were more intrinsically driven by the desire to meet other people and engage in learning for personal development. Older learners expressed a genuine interest in the subject (see Table 2). This finding is not uncommon: as older people become disengaged from paid employment they are less likely to engage with formal education that leads to a qualification and become more inclined to learn for interest or pleasure. Table 2 reflects this change: as people age, interest in the subject, enjoyment, and the need to meet with people become motivating factors when engaging with learning.

Table 2: Older people's motivation to learn: by age cohort

Age cohort	45-54 %	55-65 %	65-74 %
Rising importance with age			
Interest in the subject	30.6	42.4	51.1
Enjoy learning	19.8	29.8	53.4
Improve self confidence	11.6	13.3	13.8
Meet people	5.6	7.6	15.5
Falling importance with age			
Help in current job	38.6	25.1	8.0
Develop myself as a person	29.0	27.6	19.6
Get a recognised qualification	20.7	9.1	4.6
Make my work more satisfying	16.8	12.8	5.5

Source: Edited from NIACE Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2005 (Aldridge and Tuckett 2007). Note the above statistics are based on a sample size of 2101 learners; that said, it is not possible to disaggregate the sample size - by age for example. It is, however, possible to gain an appreciation of the overall trends.

It is quite evident when comparing formal learning and informal learning that the former remains a minor contender, and this becomes even more apparent when compared to the latter and in particular when it is acknowledged that learning cooperatives like the University of the Third Age (U3A) accommodates large numbers of older learners. Currently the U3A has approximately 670 active groups with 190,000 older learners (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010) and is no doubt the largest provider of informal learning for older adults (McNair, 2009a). The current picture presents a vibrant learning community of older people; however, it is clear that the majority of this learning is not being *'supported or controlled by Government'* (McNair, 2009a:4). Jameison (2007a) argues for a refocusing of attention upon the

dynamic of structure and agency, as currently the emphasis is placed upon individuals seeking out and funding learning opportunities and much of that activity, for later life learners, occurs through learning cooperatives. This is occurring at a time when there is a clear need for adequate learning provision in later life that caters for formal and informal means of learning, which should be located within a robust and sustainable model of lifelong learning.

Without doubt, with the current economic tensions where the need to replenish the shrinking workforce (McNair, 2009) is a governmental priority, financial investment will continue to support formal learning by promoting the re-education or re-skilling of the older worker. This is a situation which is continuing to occur, primarily fiscally driven, as a means to drive down poverty in old age (Age UK, 2012). Khan⁴ (2009) reminds us of the importance of enabling the older worker to remain within the labour market for longer. There are obviously fiscal benefits for the individual and society, but more importantly older workers make a significant contribution to the workplace given that they have a complex skills set coupled with experience that is not readily replaceable by the younger worker. However, the anxiety is that the overt focus on formal learning as a means of ensuring a skilled workforce will be at the expense of promoting informal learning opportunities for the large numbers of older adults who are effectively retired from paid employment and yet wish to engage in learning, be it formal or informal.

What do people learn in later life?

Older people who are no longer in paid employment do return to learning in both formal and informal contexts, with the larger proportion preferring the latter. With regard to the types of subjects studied within a university context – a context which

⁴ Older workers are defined by Khan (2009) as individuals aged 50 and over.

is more formal than informal, Phillipson and Ogg (2010) identified four key areas: education; languages; subjects allied to medicine; and historical and philosophical studies. It is important to note however that those who were studying education and subjects allied to medicine were reported to be more likely to be retraining for redeployment within the labour market. A survey undertaken by NIACE, which explores what older people learn, offers further insight. Table 3 identifies the top ten subjects ranked in order of preference for individuals aged 55 plus. Reflecting upon the top three subjects studied, it is clear that there comes a time in the life course when the need for prolonged development in order to advance a career is no longer a priority. It is at this stage where individuals engage in learning *‘purely for the sake of their interest and for the actual pleasure of achievement’* (Gibson, 2000:774).

Table 3: The top ten subjects ranked in order of preference for individuals aged 55 plus (adapted from Aldridge and Tuckett, 2008)

All individuals aged 55 +	%
Computer skills	40.6
Foreign languages	10.2
Arts	7.2
History	4.7
Religion	4.5
Health and medicine	4.0
Music	3.2
Business studies	3.1
Social work	2.5
English literature/language	2.3

The interest in computer skills is clearly an area of significant importance and a proportion of the respondents may be utilising this learning as a means to secure employment. (It was not possible to draw any further disaggregation of information from the data). However, with the impact of information technology, a number of

older learners are enhancing their computer skills as a means to maintaining connections socially, in family terms and also more generally to take advantage of the internet to bank, shop or book holidays (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2008).

The increased interest in foreign languages echoes the personal changes in life-style (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010) as travel becomes a significant focus in the post-work period. Additionally interest in foreign languages is also strongly associated with social class where *'professional, administrative and those people with skilled backgrounds are more likely to learn a language'* (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2008:11).

Clear links have been established between social class and participation in learning in later life, a recurrent theme throughout the NIACE annual survey. Consistently, the statistics report a trend where the number of individuals engaged in learning in socio-economic class A/B is considerably higher than other economic groups (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2011; Aldridge & Hughes, 2012). In relation to gender and learning the NIACE surveys do not identify any significant difference, as both men and women participate in approximately equal proportions (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2011).

Benefits of learning in later life

The benefits of learning in later life appear to be varied and, to date, there is an absence of sufficient and robust research evidence upon which to draw conclusions as the current evidence base is drawn largely from small-scale studies. What evidence there is, however, does point to a number of benefits. McNair has conceptualised a *'three capital model'* (McNair 2009:13) which is intended to encapsulate the purpose of learning in later life and, in so doing, considers *identity, human and social* capitals.

Identity capital: here learning is purported to be important in promoting self-esteem (Dench and Regan, 2000) and in coping with the changes associated with the ageing process. This has been a key feature within research findings and a number of authors have found a direct correlation with learning as a means to meet new people (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010; Dench and Regan, 2000; Jamieson, 2007a). Both Jamieson, and Dench and Regan found an improvement in self-esteem and self-confidence as a direct result of engaging in learning. These findings are similar to the survey undertaken by Aldridge and Tuckett (2008) see- Table 4.

Table 4: Benefits of learning in later life - adapted from Aldridge and Tuckett (2008)

Age Range	55-64 %	65-74 %	75+ %
I have developed myself as a person	27.5	26.2	25.3
My self confidence has improved	21.9	18.5	8.0
have met new people/ made new friends	18.7	27.8	26.7
My communication skills have improved	20.3	24.9	11.5
I enjoy learning more	17.0	18.6	22.0

Human capital: McNair (2009) has a very narrow interpretation of this concept, relating human capital to the need to have adequate skills and knowledge for employment. Because it is narrowly focused, this may be less useful to individuals in the post-work period. However, those individuals who are not seeking employment also require certain skills to maintain and enhance their everyday life; for example, computer and financial literacy. These extrinsic benefits of learning in

later life are readily quantifiable, as outcomes of assessment or accreditation are tangible in the form of qualifications, this type of formal learning does not appeal to the majority of older learners (Jamieson, 2007a). As a result, the application of 'human capital' as conceptualised by McNair (2009) will require further development to encompass a lifelong perspective of learning which is inclusive of learners in the post-work period.

Social capital: For McNair, 'social capital' refers to individuals' needs for skills to ensure sufficient social connectivity to function effectively on a familial as well as a societal level. Here Jamieson (2007a) found that individuals who returned to learning made the transition from work to retirement more easily and, as a consequence, found that retirement was more meaningful. Equally those individuals who participated in activities within learning cooperatives like the U3A identified an improvement in their quality of life, achieved via the development of new skills and increased social connectivity (Gibson, 2000). The development of social capital, which is realised through learning in later life, is important not just for the individual but also impacts positively upon society, creating supportive communities.

Barriers to learning in later life

There are a number of reasons why older people fail to engage in learning in later life. Slowey (2008) provides a useful framework which encapsulates attitudinal, situational and institutional barriers. Attitudinal barriers include a lack of interest or motivation, a lack of self-confidence and the notion that older people cannot learn anything new (Withnall, *et al* 2004; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007). Prior experience of learning, and poor skill or qualification attainment are also key barriers which prevent engagement in lifelong learning.

Situational barriers are perceived to be largely beyond the control of the individual and are related to the context of '*the individuals' life situation at a particular time*' (Slowey, 2008:26). A survey undertaken by Help the Aged (2008) highlighted a number of situational barriers, which included concern over the price of the course, which for a number of respondents (39%) was beyond their means. A further 37% had no means of transport so were unable to get to the venue, and 64% were anxious about their safety and the threat of crime. Unfortunately the report fails to provide the technical details of the survey method, and without knowledge of the sample size or response rate it is difficult to measure the accuracy of the outcomes. Mobility and disability issues are also identified as barriers to learning, suggesting that it is therefore important to meet the needs of older learners by ensuring that learning is accessible and increasing the use of technology is a further important consideration (McNair, 2009).

Institutional barriers are the organisational procedures which deter older people from engaging in learning. These may include the physical and social environment or be pedagogical in origin (Slowey, 2008). The evidence, to date, suggests that older adults are more likely to return to informal modes of learning, outside traditional institutional venues.

It is clear that older adults do not enjoy equal access to educational opportunities. Participation requires interest, motivation, financial resource and the opportunity to join in. (DfIUS, 2008). There is, however, a significant proportion of older people who are unable to participate, as a result of one or more 'barrier'. Cost is one of the most tangible barriers - particularly as one in five pensioners in Great Britain lives below the poverty line (Help the Aged, 2008). This reinforces the link between learning in later life and socio-economic class. Presently a number of

agencies: for example, Age UK, continue to work to improve the situation for older people, particularly those who are considered to be socially excluded.

Conclusion

Without doubt the ageing population is one of the biggest political, social and economic challenges of the 21st century (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010). The current policy response is encouraging people to remain in paid employment for a considerable period beyond what was previously considered to be the 'retirement age' and so directs the focus of learning towards formal approaches. This is desirable for the economy as, in part, it helps to reduce the current skills deficit, but it neglects those individuals who are effectively retired from paid work and are entering a new stage in their life course. Currently there is a large number of individuals who have effectively retired from the labour market and wish to engage in learning for reasons other than career development. For this reason McNair (2009:9) advocates a *'rebalancing of policy attention'*. It is essential that policy attention and resources should be refocused to consider how learning is distributed across all stages of the life course and without an over-emphasis on the young (McNair, 2009). Attention to learning for personal meaning and social cohesion must be given equal consideration to learning for paid employment. McNair goes on to recommend that individuals should have access to a mid-life review in order to aid readjustment to employment in the later stages of life and the transition to retirement. This is especially relevant, given changing patterns of employment. Additionally, policy makers need to engage actively with those individuals who are in or entering later life to bring about a social policy perspective which is inclusive of the voice of older people. Learning can be an

important mechanism to promote constructive roles in social engagement and improve health and well-being in later life. But accurate and reliable data on the demography profile of older learners and their interests is urgently required if policy is to reflect an evidence-base.

Learning in later life is occurring through two distinct models - formal and informal. Formal learning would normally be undertaken for career development or retraining and therefore indicates an assessment leading to a qualification. It is difficult to anticipate how it will be possible to increase the numbers of older adults entering formal learning, primarily as the requirement to learn for career development or retraining diminishes with increasing age. This situation may change however if individuals wish, or are forced due to fiscal concerns, to remain within the paid workforce for longer.

Informal approaches to learning are flourishing particularly through learning cooperatives. Yet to date there remains an absence of a coordinated and unified body of evidence. This serves to reinforce the need for accurate and concise monitoring and draws attention to Moody's (2004) argument that *later-life learning even as it has grown in scale, has remained marginal, even invisible from the standpoint of 'official' systems of understanding and control* (Moody, 2004: 29).

The evidence available fails to provide sufficient insights into the world of the older learner to enable accurate and reliable conclusions. Social policy has consistently failed to represent informal approaches to learning due to the economic pressures upon the economy and the apparent inability to represent the needs of the growing numbers of older learners. Where survey methods have been employed there remains a limited amount of statistical information upon which to make a judgment. All too frequently data-capture tools are unsophisticated and fail to disaggregate

data by age cohorts. Certain organisations work tirelessly to investigate and promote the role of learning in later life for example, NIACE. However, the data captured from the annual survey on adult learning is somewhat unrefined, though it does identify trends over time.

Yet it is imperative that we are able to understand the basis on which older people make choices about engaging in learning within both formal and informal contexts in a changing world. More is becoming known about older peoples' learning and their motivations for engagement, but it remains unclear as to what constitutes a successful learning experience and the relevance of such experience within the context of their everyday lives. Older people in the post-work population do not comprise a homogenous group and it may be difficult to accurately conceptualise learning in the post-work period without having an understanding of the influence of different events and beliefs over the life course (Withnall, 2000:94). This is difficult, however, without longitudinal and or biographical research. Withnall (2006) calls for evidence which seeks to provide a greater understanding of how older people make sense of learning, and how this may be influenced by both collective and individual experiences over the life course. Capturing this type of data should then offer a distinct perspective on the factors which influence older people in their pursuit of learning (Withnall, 2006). It is this absence of a life course perspective (Blekesaune, *et al* 2008; Withnall, 2006) which has influenced the development of this thesis. Beginning from a sense of this gap, this thesis has therefore employed an experience narrative in the form of life biography as a method of exploring the interrelationship of learning and life course capital and, in so doing, it brings new insights to a previously neglected area of research.

To this point in the thesis I have considered the key policy-related documents which have influenced the current position of older learners. However, my research aim and questions call for me to go beyond the present, into a detailed review of the past. Because in my research I have focused upon lives that have been lived and formed over a period of several decades, it is relevant to provide a contextualisation not just of the present but also the past. A number of key themes are identified within this next section which are further developed in the analysis of the participant biographies.

Chapter three: The importance of history: 1950s Britain and the evolution of a new social horizon

Introduction

Given that I chose to implement an experience-based narrative, in the form of life biography, as a method of data collection for this research (see chapter 4), and

since many of the participants were born and educated primarily in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, it was inevitable that I would have to engage with this period in history. A contextual understanding of this period in history was crucial to the successful process of data analysis, as a number of significant macro-level changes occurred throughout the post-war period, the impact of which was revealed within the data at a micro level.

This section of the thesis provides a historical synopsis of 1950s Britain, reflecting upon the key social and economic factors which shaped the period, and individual lives. In order to appreciate the context of 1950s Britain it is necessary to reflect upon the immediate post-war period. Three major policy reforms are considered here: the 1944 Education Act (and the tripartite system of secondary education); the Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services (1942); and the introduction of the National Health Service (1946). In addition, I have chosen to reflect upon the impact of social policy changes and the expanding post-war economy upon *the changing world of work and family life*.

Political ideology and the impact upon the post-war settlement

A coalition government led by Winston Churchill was responsible for the successful management of Britain throughout the Second World War, yet in the immediate post-war period the country wanted change and in particular an end to austerity. Confident of a continued period in office Churchill called a general election in July 1945. The Conservative Party were heavily defeated (Ainley, 1999) in this election and the country witnessed for the first time a majority Labour Party Government. The Labour Party was led by Clement Atlee who, whilst being described a shy man, was a firm believer in social justice. Throughout this relatively short period in office, between 1945 and 1951, the Labour Government

began a period of reform based upon the premise of nationalisation and major change in social policy. The post-war Labour Government set about and introduced a number of significant changes, the coal mining industry, the railways and other institutions were indeed nationalised. In 1946 the National Social Assurance Act was passed leading to the formation of the welfare state, and 1948 saw the birth of the National Health Service, following legislation introduced two years earlier. Educational reform was driven by the 1944 Education Act with the introduction of a tripartite system of schooling. Additionally the provision of sanitary, modern housing was a clear part of the manifesto underpinned by major slum clearance. Significant emphasis was also placed upon securing high and stable levels of employment (Ainley, 1999).

With the country near-bankruptcy, the political landscape was complex. By 1950 it became evident that the Labour Government was unable to deliver on its entire manifesto. The war effort had hugely depleted the state coffers, and as a result the NHS plan had to be slightly redesigned. It was impossible to deliver on all the proposed expectations of free health services and related goods for all and, as a consequence, the inclusion of free glasses and dental care were withdrawn. Sometime later prescription charges were also introduced, which so incensed a number of eminent politicians that they resigned from office in protest. Unfortunately, at the same point in time a shortage of materials and labour led to a failure to build a predefined number of new houses, and voters clearly believed that the government had not delivered on its promises. Thus in 1951 a Conservative government was re-elected and under the leadership of Churchill the country enjoyed a number of years of economic success. Arguably any such achievement was notably due to the decision for continuity and, in so doing,

embracing and capitalising upon the achievements of the previous Labour government. The coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953 aided this process as the country witnessed the dawn of a 'New Elizabethan Era' (Spencer, 2005) which was driven predominately by the optimism associated with near full employment and social policy initiatives, such as, the birth of the NHS. The emphasis of the 1951 Conservative manifesto was on rebuilding Britain by increasing productivity (Kynaston, 2009): and in the period up to the mid-1970s the country went on to enjoy a number of years of, what has been described as '*Welfare Capitalism*' (Ainley, 1999:31). For many of the participants these were the formative years of their life course.

Educational reform

The 1944 Education Act was a blueprint for schooling in the post-war years and was led by the Minister for Education within Churchill's coalition government Rab Butler. The bill had been drawn up during wartime, being first proposed in 1943 and enacted in 1944. It was a product of '*cross party consensus in a war time coalition government*' (Ainley, 1999:27). Butler proposed a tripartite system of secondary education which raised the school leaving age to 15 and offered free schooling for children in either a grammar, secondary modern or a technical school, with allocation to these schools based upon aptitude. The 'elites' (McKibbin, 1998: 235) remained outside of the state system, educated through a complex system of public and private schools. The process of selection within state school system was the 11-plus examination. The ideological basis for this model was the premise of levels of intelligence: those with sufficient academic ability, usually the top 25%, would go onto populate the grammar schools and

subsequently attend university. These individuals were consequently destined to move into professional roles. The majority of the remainder of 11-year-olds generally found themselves at the local secondary modern school where the subjects within the curriculum were decided by the school and focused upon very basic topics including mathematics, cookery and woodwork. As a result, these children were prepared for little more than a life of menial work which required few, or even no qualifications. The number of children that entered a technical school, where curricula focused upon science and engineering, was very low. In reality this piece of legislation created a socially constructed tripartite system of education which continued to reinforce the traditional division of labour and class structures. Even as the Labour Party became the majority governing party, following the end of the war time coalition and the general election in 1945, no attempt was made to establish a universal system of education which would be open to all equally. Instead the Labour Government chose to accept and implement the 1944 Act (Ainley, 1999) which embodied Tory ideology:

' it incorporated many Conservative beliefs, notably the belief in the relevance of traditional religious values, the belief in variety and quality rather than gross volume, the belief in desirability of preserving educational privileges and the belief in hierarchy' (Kopsch cited in Ainley, 1999:34)

The purpose of the 1944 Act was to allocate children to schools based upon their aptitude or ability and, in so doing, promote social mobility; but the reality was a system which served to reinforce social differentiation (McKibbin, 1998). Grammar schools were generally populated by the children of middle-class families as the working-class children attended secondary modern schools (Spencer, 2005). Middle-class families recognised the importance of a grammar school education and resorted to ensuring their children were well prepared for the demands of the

11-plus examination, so many of these children received extra coaching, paid for by their parents (McKibbin, 1998).

The vision of technical schools never became a reality, as they were expensive to build and equip, so ultimately very few were ever constructed. This position became further aggravated by the restrictions which were imposed by the government upon capital spending (Jones, 2003). In those areas where technical schools did exist, the pupil numbers were relatively small. By 1958 the availability of the technical modern school could be found in less than 40% of local education authorities and contained less than 4% per cent of the secondary school population (Schilling cited in Ainley, 1999). Technical schools were seemingly unpopular with many employers although they were favoured by the engineering and construction industries (McKibbin, 1998). Furthermore, the technical school was perceived as a threat by schools in the independent sector who identified these types of school as direct competition. As a consequence, the plan to develop secondary technical education failed to materialise and what instead emerged was the public (private), grammar and secondary modern system of tripartite education (Ainley, 1999).

Public schools were excluded from the 1944 Act and faith-based schools continued to exist but with different funding streams. In reality, those parents who could afford to privately educate their children continued to do so. Children who were able to pass the 11-plus with or without the assistance of additional coaching usually went on to grammar school. The majority of grammar school pupils were of middle-class parentage as the secondary modern became the domain of working class children (Spencer, 2005). In effect, this enabled the middle classes to maintain their relative position in the social hierarchy, particularly as many children

left the secondary modern school without having completed any examinations, which severely restricted career choices (Spencer, 2005). The tripartite system of schooling did theoretically purport to be a mechanism to bring about social mobility, but in reality this was achieved by a relatively small number of working class children, who were usually boys (Heron, 1985). As the technical modern schools failed to become a reality, secondary modern schools which were renamed comprehensives after 1965 (Ainley, 1999), became home to the majority of working-class children. The expected outcome for these children was to enter the world of work, but only to undertake the more menial job roles including factory work.

In curricular terms, educational pedagogy and philosophy was also socially constructed. The emphasis of social policy, and indeed the formation of the welfare state, reinforced the role of woman as wife, mother and homemaker. It was men who were intended to be the breadwinner, the provider, the decision-maker. Spencer (2005) reports how girls were effectively '*written off*' if they failed their 11-plus and were destined to be '*brought up to be wives and mothers*' (Spencer, 2005: 181). Effectively, relatively few girls entered higher education in 1959: 3,310 girls out of 271,778 who left school went onto university, a figure which represented approximately 24% of the whole university intake. In comparison with the year 1920, this statistic was unchanged (Kynaston, 2009) so over a period of 40 years the numbers of women entering university had remained relatively static, but marginal in comparison with their male counterparts. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of women entered the labour market at an early point (Spencer, 2005) and for the vast majority they usually only remained until they became pregnant. This situation was typical for the female participants of

this study. Equally the male interviewees also identified how their wives also left the labour market once they became pregnant.

The world of work and family life

Driven largely by social policy the introduction of welfare provision and increased job prosperity, which occurred throughout the post-war period, brought about a period of enhanced social change. The Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services (1942:6) had set the wheels in motion to banish '*five evil giants*' of *Want, Idleness, Disease, Squalor and Ignorance*. There remained a pressing need to continue to build new homes and, more importantly, to move people out of the remaining slums. This, in part, gave birth to the high-rise flat. Local authorities, amongst others, were not advocates of this type of architecture but were influenced by '*favourable government subsidies*' (Kynaston, 2009:282). This type of dwelling was not a popular choice of home and there was considerable criticism of approaches to modern architecture: '*industrialisation and urbanisation had already gone a long way to killing off the extended family*' (Kynaston, 2009:580). Improved housing conditions were largely provided on new housing estates, which frequently incorporated the less desirable high-rise flats and maisonettes. Consequently, the political drive to rid the country of squalor, brought about through the mass slum clearance, did indeed bring new homes and with it new sociological ideals for the working class, and the demise of the extended family.

Women were increasingly going out to work and family size was decreasing (Zweig, 1961; Brooke, 2001). The proportion of married women in the total female workforce rose from 43% to 49% between 1951 and 1957 (Kynaston, 2009), but the positioning of female paid work remained low with the assumption that for the

majority they worked for pin money (Kynaston, 2009). Typically, working class women who worked full time, were employed in factory work, clerical positions, nursing and shop work. Those who worked part-time were engaged as cleaners, serving in canteens in factories, schools and shops and undertaking differing types of factory work. There was a distinct lack of equality with regards to earnings, as there was no equal pay legislation: in the period between 1924 and 1970 the average wage differential was reasonable stable at 50.4% (Brooke, 2001). Given that both the trade unions and Labour Party Government were male-dominated there was little impetus to challenge this normative culture. Despite the fact that the 1950s brought about many opportunities, it remained predominately a man's world where equal opportunities were yet to become a reality. I quote here Joan Bakewell (2011) from a recent newspaper article, as she recalls the difficulties for women at that time:

'Things weren't as easy for women as for men, of course. A contemporary of mine with a double first from Cambridge applied for the BBC's general traineeship only to be told women weren't even eligible.' (Bakewell, 2011:33)

The normative culture had, through its educational processes, social policies, societal values and expectations, reinforced the female role as one of wife and mother. As a result the relative domestic isolation that they experienced led to limited exposure to the macrocosm and consequently they had been prevented from engaging in any wider discourse, for example, that related to political or social action (Hart, 1989). Bakewell (2011) argues that generally women had to utilise more subversive weapons to get ahead and sex appeal was a useful tool. However, there was a number of complex changes occurring which influenced changes to the status of gender. Brooke (2001) suggests that a transformation of

female identity occurred as the bonds to motherhood no longer imprisoned women in their homes and the workplace was no longer the sole province of men, and this accordingly led to an evolving and 'complex femininity' (Brooke, 2001). Alternatively, Spencer (2005) presents women's lives as a series of stages; these being, marriage, childbirth and children leaving home. Her theory highlights how women constantly reweave their web of identity as they move through these different stages and, as they do so, how they are able to accommodate change.

Research undertaken by Zweig in late 1958 and 1959 sought to explore the intersection between working and family life. He gathered his data from a number of working-class industrial areas across the country; his conclusion identified social change where *'working-class life finds itself on the move towards middle class values with middle class existence.'* (Zweig, 1961:ix). He identified a number of factors which had influenced this change but, centrally, he conceptualised change around the term *'home centeredness'* (Zweig, 1961). The increased affluence which was enjoyed by many working-class families revolutionised the way in which individuals lived their lives. As new homes were built and occupied there was a rise in consumerism and an overt interest and desire to ensure that the family home was well maintained and also filled with a range of modern electrical items including a television and washing machine. It was not unusual for women who went out to work to use their wages to purchase such items (Zweig, 1961). Yet the reasons for women going out to work were somewhat complex: the prevention of social isolation was frequently reported throughout a number of studies, as was the desire to contribute to the household income and to provide extras for the children (Zweig, 1961; Kynaston, 2009). Kynaston (2009) explored the findings of the Mass Observation archive survey of 1957 and found that many

women went to work for the companionship and mental stimulus as there was '*not much to do at home*' (Kynaston, 2009:577). The same survey interviewed full-time house wives and 53% said that they would not like a job, with reasons cited including child-care responsibilities, poor health, or that their husbands would disapprove (Kynaston, 2009).

Attitudes of working-class men towards fatherhood were also beginning to change; as their focus shifted towards the home fathers became more involved with their children. In particular, fathers recognised the importance of education as a means to improve prospects for their offspring, clearly fathers; '*...want to give them a better chance than we had*' (Zweig, 1961:20). This also changed the nature of the husband and wife relationship from one of control and dominance towards a more egalitarian partnership. This era also brought some pressure for men to engage in overtime working and, with increasing numbers of women joining the paid workforce, there was a greater emphasis and ability to save money.

Conclusion

The post-war economy created a situation where working class people aspired to move away from the old norms and customs: in Zweig's words; '*working class life finds itself on the move towards middle-class values with middle-class existence.*' (Zweig, 1961:ix). The post-war era was a period where the country witnessed great change and significant prosperity. This prosperity led to, for some, the opportunity to move towards middle-class existence.

The participants of this study, as baby boomers, were born in this era. They have, as a result, been exposed to different opportunities for schooling, health and social care and job roles when compared to their parents. These experiences may have

influenced the development of the habitus through the exposure to new 'fields' for example, the world of work (particularly for women – who traditionally may have been more bound to the home). Exposure to new fields may not only influence the habitus, but also the ability to accumulate capital. The capital accumulated over the life course, the fields inhabited, and the habitus acquired – all are significant for later life. Capturing participants' experiences of this, as told through their narratives, will add considerable insight and provide further understanding of the interrelationship between the life course and learning in later life.

Chapter Four: Theory and method

Introduction

Having presented the policy and historical context which impacts upon this research study this chapter will now identify, discuss and defend both the

theoretical perspectives and the methodological approach adopted for this investigation. In order to coherently defend the discussion within this chapter I have reflected upon and appraised the theoretical influences on methodology. Approaching the organisation of the chapter in this manner has led to the incorporation of relevant literature accordingly. The chapter commences with the research aim and questions followed by theoretical perspectives and the methodological approach. Here I have considered: the application of critical gerontology as a conceptual perspective; alongside models and theories of the life course; and a review of the 'concept' capital. Finally, a discussion of research methods addresses the study design, including the choice of method for data collection; sampling; ethical considerations; and the method of data analysis.

Research aim and questions

The aim of this research is to explore how retired older people narrate their life experiences of learning and what light these narrations shed on the inter-relationship of learning to life course capital. As previously stated, the research questions are:

- How do later life learners⁵ perceive and interpret learning over their life course?
- To what extent are forms of capital identifiable over the life course?
- How do late life learners perceive, interpret and understand learning in later life?
- What are the motivations for engagement with learning in later life?

Theoretical perspectives and methodological approach

⁵ Later life learners are not a homogeneous group, whilst they may have some common or discrete characteristics they are in fact constantly evolving (Withnall, 1995).

I have chosen to adopt the conceptual frameworks of critical gerontology and the Bourdieusian concepts 'habitus', 'capital' and 'field' as thinking tools to both frame and operationalise this research. The purpose of this enquiry is to explore the multiplicity of sources of capital, ensuring analysis captures both positive and negative perspectives with equal attention (Portes, 1998).

In order to provide an explanation to the research questions I have, from a methodological standpoint, chosen to implement the 'experience narrative' method (Squire, 2008) to capture participant biography. Through the employment of an 'experience narrative' I will be seeking to understand the life trajectories of the participants and, in particular, the impact of habitus and capital upon their learning experiences as they have occurred throughout the life course. Using a narrative method in this way will generate explanations of the interrelationship of learning to life course capital over time.

Why critical gerontology?

I discussed earlier in this thesis my evolution as a researcher and the challenge to my ageist habitus. Reflecting upon my biography has influenced my position both personally and professionally and I find myself interested in certain aspects of gerontology, and this interest has influenced the decision to explore learning in later life. Essentially I am an educationalist who values and appreciates all the benefits that learning can bestow throughout the life course and who acknowledges and values the significance and importance of lifelong learning in whatever form it presents itself. I developed an interest in older adults through my work as a university lecturer and as a researcher over some years, and this thesis has provided the opportunity to bring together those interests. Thus, I am not a gerontologist but will make use of critical gerontology, which ontologically has

relevance: critical gerontology emerging as a counter theory to the structured approach of gerontological political economy. Critical gerontology is conceptually and ontologically congruent with my worldview: moreover its stance is congruent with the study design which focuses on personal experiences and the understanding of 'agency' in later life. (Estes, 2001) Ageing is a complex and multidimensional process involving multifarious changes of a psychological, biological and social nature. Furthermore, the study of ageing is underpinned by a complex framework of models and theories which warrant further explanation in order to offer a rationale and justification for the adoption of a critical gerontological perspective.

Models and theories of the life course

The study of ageing remains somewhat segregated into differing disciplines (see Table 5 on page 75 for an overview). Geriatric Medicine emerged in the 1940s as a distinct medical discipline, a sub-speciality of medicine. The interest of 'geriatricians' focuses upon the healthcare of elderly people where the primary concern is upon the disease processes associated with ageing. Quite differently, Bio-gerontology seeks to understand normal cellular ageing and thus, unlike geriatric medicine, is not concerned with the medical conditions of ageing. Hence a considerable amount of knowledge of the ageing process is directed toward understanding ill health and disease, as well as normal cellular ageing. Both of these approaches, whilst important, neglect the psychosocial perspectives of ageing.

Social gerontology emerged as an academic focus in the 1930s, sponsored originally through 'The Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation'. The Foundation, based in

New York began a series of conferences on ageing, and these subsequently led to the publication of Cowdry's book, 'Problems of Ageing', published in 1939. The discipline soon emerged as a distinct and important area of research. (Table 5 identifies key journals and types of publication). The 1950s was a period of intense research, with the seminal studies of Cummings and Henry leading to the first articulation of a mid-range theory of ageing, namely 'Disengagement Theory'. This seminal theory was based upon the book '*Growing Old*' which emanated from research undertaken in the '*Kansas City Study of Adult Life*'. Researchers from Chicago University followed several hundred adults from middle to late life. Ageing is viewed as an **inevitable** process whereby the individual and society simultaneously engage in mutual separation; for example, retirement equates to disengagement from the workforce. The process of aging is interpreted as natural and universal, biologically-based, and therefore a normal part of the life course. As Cumming and Henry (1961:14) suggest, '*...withdrawal may be accompanied from the outset by an increased preoccupation with himself: certain institutions may make it easy for him.*'

'Disengagement' is considered to be a controversial theory, yet from a theoretical perspective there are some societal and individual benefits to think about. Withdrawal from the labour market ensures a viable and competent workforce as older workers are replaced with younger individuals. Secondly, full disengagement frees the older adult to die. Whilst this theory is not widely accepted amongst researchers, its influence is evident within the formation of social policy. Disengagement, has previously, been utilised as a theoretical rationale for early retirement and that arguably creates a situation of structure dependence for the elderly (Townsend, 1981).

Early theories emerging from social gerontology in America clearly had limits, in its positioning of older people as victims of an inevitable process of marginalisation. It would be twenty years before the first articulations of an alternative social narrative on ageing emerged in the UK. This is somewhat curious given the emergence of geriatric medicine in the 1940s. Certainly until the 1970s, British sociology demonstrated a notable lack of conversations relating to ageing in the UK, with the British Society of Gerontology being constituted only in 1971. For the last 25 years of the 20th century, social gerontology focused on the political economy of ageing. Essentially, political economy had emerged as a rejoinder to the predominant focus on ageing through the lens of health and social care. This riposte challenged both a detrimental emphasis on ageing and the focus on structured dependency in later life. The seminal paper by Townsend 1981, '*The structured dependency of the elderly: a creation of social policy in the twentieth century*' was the first call for the re-conceptualisation of the dynamic of ageing in terms of social structures rather than individual experiences.

Table 5: Overview of key academic disciplines within ageing

Academic Discipline		
Social Gerontology	Medical Geriatrics	Biogerontology
Academic focus		
Gerontology (from the Greek γέρων, <i>geron</i> , "old man" and -λογία, <i>-logy</i> "study of"; coined by Ilya	Geriatrics The term <i>geriatrics</i> comes from the Greek γέρων <i>geron</i> meaning "old man" and ιατρός <i>iatros</i> meaning "healer". Geriatric medicine is a sub-	Cellular ageing science focuses on the cell level causes of ageing. It is not concerned with medical

<p>Ilyich Mechnikov in 1903) is the study of the social aspects of ageing. It is distinguished from geriatrics which is the branch of medicine that studies the diseases of older adults.</p>	<p>specialty of medicine that focuses on healthcare of elderly people. It aims to promote health by preventing and treating diseases and disabilities in older adults. There is no set age at which patients may be under the care of a geriatrician or, a physician who specializes in the care of elderly people.</p>	<p>conditions of ageing, rather it is concerned with NORMAL cellular ageing.</p>
Professional bodies		
<p>British Society of Gerontology Established in 1971, the Society provides a multidisciplinary forum for all those interested in the situations of older people, and in how knowledge about ageing and later life can be enhanced and improved.</p>	<p>The British Geriatrics Society (BGS) is a professional association of doctors practising geriatric medicine, old age psychiatrists, general practitioners, nurses, therapists, scientists and others with a particular interest in the medical care of older people and in promoting better health in old age. The BGS strives to promote better understanding of the healthcare needs of older people. It shares examples of best practice to ensure that older people are treated with dignity and respect and that wherever possible, older people live healthy, independent lives.</p>	<p>The British Society for Research on Ageing (BSRA) promotes research to understand the causes and effects of the ageing process. BSRA encourages publication and public understanding of ageing research and holds an annual scientific meeting. The Springer Journal, <i>Biogerontology</i>, is the formal affiliated journal of the society.</p>
Professional Journals		
<p>Ageing and Society <i>Ageing & Society</i> is an interdisciplinary and international journal devoted to the understanding of human ageing and the circumstances of older people in their social and cultural contexts. It draws contributions and has readers from many academic social science disciplines, and also from clinical medicine and the humanities. In addition to original articles, <i>Ageing & Society</i> publishes book reviews, occasional review articles and special issues.</p>	<p>Age and Ageing <i>Age and Ageing</i> is an international journal publishing refereed original articles and commissioned reviews on geriatric medicine and gerontology. Its range includes research on ageing and clinical, epidemiological, and psychological aspects of later life.</p>	<p>Biogerontology Biogerontology offers a platform for research which aims primarily at achieving healthy old age accompanied by improved longevity.</p>

Gerontological theories of ageing are more than 60 years old and yet remain relatively disjointed with many of the early theories failing to evolve (Achenbaum, 2010). Criticism has been levelled at the contradictory (debates around the conundrum of structure and agency, with structure as the dominant paradigm)

approaches of early theorists, coupled with a lack of empirical evidence leading to conceptual oversimplification and subsequently lack of development within the field (Estes, 2001).

Ageing theories offer various insights into the study of gerontology from differing perspectives (as is highlighted in Table 5): essentially three dominant paradigms emerged. Social gerontology therefore challenged the dominance of the biomedical model and was shaped predominately by the demographic and political landscape of the day and an absence of a sociology of ageing. As a result political economy (PE) (see Table 6) appeared as a structure-led discourse which sought to understand the relationship between ageing and economic structures (Powell, 2001). The underlying assumption of this theory tethered ageing and the experience of growing old to social class. As a 'grand theory' it focuses at the macro level to offer insights into ageing from a structural perspective. Whilst this is useful, social gerontology fails to seek out and incorporate micro viewpoints and, as a result, the voice of the older person is not captured. Additionally, social gerontology does not seek to bring about a change in the conditions of older people (Bernard and Scharf, 2007), but only reports upon those conditions. So whilst more becomes known about ageing, the drive to promote the strengths and diversity associated with ageing remains inert.

By the 21st century the change in demographics led to larger numbers of older people living longer than previous generations. In addition, attitudes towards retirement and the post-work period were changing. Older people are now challenging preconceived notions and theories of ageing as they live longer and more active lives. As a response, critical gerontology has begun to argue that a more balanced approach, moving from a structure-led discourse towards

encompassing an agency-driven discussion is necessary. Table 6 below presents an outline of the evolution of critical gerontology.

Table 6: The evolution of critical gerontology

Critical Gerontology →	
Political Economy (PE) Emerging in the late 1980s	Moral Economy Supplementing PE in the mid/late 1990s
A structure-led discourse which argues that politics, economics and society shape the conditions, experiences, treatment and health of older people. As a result, growing old is intimately tied to class position.	The failure to integrate agency and humanities led to the emergence of moral economy, for example, Friedan notes an establishment position in the 1980s: <i>'The gerontological establishment had refused to let them set up a division of humanistic studies of ageing; it was dismissed as "not scientific."</i> (Friedan, 1993:123)

Historically, gerontology had emerged through two distinct lenses. Firstly, an obsession with the psychology of decremental decline; and secondly, with political economy (ageing as disadvantage, see Table 6 above). These particular conceptual frameworks and theories have consistently failed to capture or integrate the voice and experience of older people. Whilst more became known about ageing, grand theory, which reflects macro-viewpoints, offered little direction or impetus to challenge the stereotypical norms of ageing or bring about change. The 1990s also saw the development of a moral economy (see Table 6) bringing the humanities into the discourse on ageing as a means to reinforce and incorporate a more agency-led debate. Critical gerontology is an approach to the study of ageing which has its origins in critical theory. It has developed as a direct challenge to the positivist and empirical ontology of social gerontology, and therefore rejects the notion of an understanding of ageing through a 'structural' lens (PE) or decline (geriatrics). *'Critical gerontology is concerned with the emancipation of older people from all forms of domination'* (Moody, 1993:xv). Epistemologically the critical spirit inherent within this approach seeks to

understand the concept of ageing, without the desire to control or maintain the status quo which leads to the perpetuation of dominant structures (Moody, 1993). This is a value (agency) committed perspective and thus agency gains as much importance as structure and the outcome of enquiry should accordingly *'identify possibilities for emancipatory social change including positive ideals for the last stage of life'* (Moody, 1993:xv). I will therefore make use of this agency-centred gerontological approach in conjunction with another set of themes in which questions of macro-level structure are central. These themes are developed in the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

Capital: the adoption of a Bourdieusian perspective

The use of the term 'capital' has over the 1980s and 1990s been the subject of considerable attention from a plethora of sources, rendering its move from metaphor to concept more complete (Field, 2008). The theoretical origins of social capital can be traced back to a number of classical theorists including Marx and Durkheim⁶. Thus the concept of capital is not new and its use proliferates in various educational research studies undertaken in the early 20th century by prominent figures.

Lyda Judson Hanifan is allegedly the first author to make use of the term in his 1916 analysis of community in rural districts (Farr, 2004). However it is believed that, it was John Dewey, prior to Hanifan, who actually made the first direct reference to capital in his text *'The School and Society'* in 1899, though unfortunately, he failed to offer a definition (Farr, 2004; Field, 2008).

⁶A review of the grand theorists of economic sociology has not been undertaken here as this would not illuminate why this idea has gained momentum in recent years (Portes, 1998).

In contemporary society, capital has been presented as a theory of reproduction where the acquisition and trade or exchange of capital facilitates the replication of social conditions. Capital has its origins in economics where it is defined as ‘*an accumulated sum of money, which could be invested in the hopes of a profitable return in the future*’ (Field, 2008:14). Marxist economics referred to the physical production and distribution of goods which enabled economic reproduction. This early economic view of capital was narrow and failed to accommodate the wider complexity and importance of the sociological perspective. Subsequent authors have developed the theory and, whilst it remains a theory of reproduction, more recent interpretations have varied in scope, depth and application and the concept has been stretched to include all sorts of resources from ‘*an individual asset to a feature of community and even nations*’ (Portes, 1998:21).

‘Capital’ re-emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s with several mainstream authors – Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam - developing the concept in very different traditions, becoming identified as the leading contemporary exponents or ‘*founding fathers*’ (McGonigal, *et al* 2005:1) of the field. Each exponent of capital is located and influenced by differing intellectual, political and theoretical perspectives and this has clearly influenced the conceptual development and application of ‘capital’ (McGonigal, *et al* 2005). What follows here is a review of the similarities and differences between the three authors: Table 7 presents an overview of the key perspectives of each author.

Table 7: An overview of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam

Author		
Bourdieu (1930-2002) French sociologist, anthropologist and	Coleman (1926- 1995) American	Putnam (1941-) American political scientist

philosopher	sociologist	
Definition of social capital		
'Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' ... capital presents itself under three fundamental specieseconomic, cultural and social with the addition of symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:119).	'Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities, having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure' (Coleman, 1990:302).	'... social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.' (Putnam, 1995:67)
Résumé of genre		
Bourdieu developed a number of key concepts 'thinking tools' – he developed a theory of practice where he deployed his concepts a means to understand the social world and transcend dichotomies for e.g. structure agency. He was particularly concerned with the reproduction of social groups and how forms of capital served to maintain class position or advantage.	Drawing upon rational choice theory he explored social capital as a means to illuminate the nature of social structures. Coleman believed that social capital was defined by its function and its possession was deemed to be a positive attribute benefiting those individuals who were in possession of this resource.	Working as a political scientist Putnam broadened the notion of social capital to encompass a macro perspective he studied regional governments – initially in Italy and later in the United States.
Micro/ meso/ macro (after McGonial <i>et al</i> 2005:21)		
Closer to the micro- social, cultural, economic and cultural capital .	Closer to the micro- family/ community based/individual social capital	Closer to the macro- community/civic society based social capital
Analysis (after Winter 2000:5)		
Individuals in class competition	Individuals in family and community settings	Regions in national settings

For all three authors the emphasis of their work is influenced by the definition of 'capital', the line of enquiry or research, and the scale of the analysis (McGonigal, 2005). Despite the difference in emphasis, set out in the table, capital is deemed to be a resource that is acquired over time by groups or individuals to facilitate or benefit individual or mutual good (Winter, 2000).

James Coleman

James Coleman, an American sociologist born in 1926, received considerable acclaim in the United States, in part due to the political influences which served to underpin and direct his research and the impact of his research findings upon educational policy in particular. Coleman was responsible for undertaking a number of influential government-funded projects which explored major public policy issues, for example Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966), more frequently referred to as the Coleman Report, which served to change educational policy and led to moves towards racial integration in the United States' school system.

The epistemological base of Coleman's understanding of social capital was linked firmly to social science, drawing on both economics and sociology (Field, 2008). Sociology was for Coleman a mechanism of social engineering and he believed that *'the principal problem to be addressed is social integration and control'* (Coradini, 2010:569). Coleman located his work on capital within rational choice theory, which operates within this schema on the premise that all behaviour occurs as a result of individuals pursuing their own interests and interactions which occur throughout this process as a form of exchange (Field, 2008; Coradini, 2010). Hence his application of the concept tends to operate at the micro level (see Table 7). For Coleman society was therefore an aggregation of social systems of individual behaviour which could be readily understood through the analysis of individuals' choices and their actions (Field, 2008). Coleman defined social capital as;

'a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate

*certain action of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-
within the structure'* (Coleman, 1990:302).

Coleman defined capital by its relationship with two key elements: firstly, that it is part of the social structure; and secondly, it facilitates behaviours both individual and collective. Where Coleman sought to apply the concept 'capital' to education the definition was further refined:

'Social capital is the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organisations and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person' (Coleman, 1994:300)

Capital, as an attribute in Coleman's thinking, was a positive feature of benefit to those who held this as a resource. Coleman sought to use 'capital' to provide some insight into the nature of social structures, and explored how non-elite or marginalised groups could benefit from the possession of capital. Much of his work related to the exploration of capital at the micro level applying this to the individual, family and community structures (as in Table 7).

Coleman places social capital within the framework of rational choice theory and, in so doing, draws heavily upon classical economics which subsequently led to a highly individualistic model of human behaviour (Field, 2008). In attempting to draw two fields together in this way, Coleman indicated a belief that individual actors gained capital not only for their own benefit, but also for the good of the collective. In this way the community and wider society both benefited from individual 'investment', leading to a utilitarian maximisation of common gain. Yet a tension exists here, as rational choice theory implies that actors are supposed to rationally pursue their own interests (Field, 2008). The notion that the individual agent is accumulating capital for the greater benefit of society may be somewhat

contradictory. This is similar to free market thinking where the unintended consequence of the pursuit of self-interest is the creation of things that serve the common good. In practice, the accumulation of any kind of capital by individuals may, depending the on circumstances, have a problematic social effect. The tension here is how to apply this mode of thinking in a free market economy such as the United States where capitalism benefits most those individuals who make gains. How can personal gains be reinvested for the benefit of the wider society?

Robert Putnam

Robert Putnam was born in 1941, an American political scientist who won renown acclaim for the publication of 'Bowling Alone' in 2000. This particular text located its author as the most widely recognised exponent of 'social capital'. Putnam sought to analyse social capital at a regional level (Winter, 2000): his empirical research explored the influence of agency acquired capital on system-level behaviours as a means to explain economic and political development at the macro level (Winter, 2000:3). He defined social capital as '*...features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.*' (Putnam, 1995:67). His early research was undertaken in Italy and focused upon a macro-level analysis of various regions and cities where processes that he understood in terms of social capital were identified by him as a vehicle to draw together political and social science. This was a conceptual and empirical departure (see table 7) from Coleman, in that the application of the concept 'capital' focused upon a broader social scale. Putnam utilised the concept of social capital at a societal level (macro) to provide insights and therefore offer solutions to major social problems of cohesion.

However, whilst this definition of capital remains very similar to Coleman's (Winter, 2000), there is some difference in the interpretation and application of the concept. The thrust of Putnam's argument was to assert the relative importance of reciprocity and trust as a means to readily solve collective problems, enhance business and social transactions, and develop social awareness of others. Applied empirically at the macro-level this conceptualisation of 'social capital' has value but, to date, there is limited evidence to suggest that this perspective has impacted upon the American national agenda as it was intended (Portes, 1998). The primary criticism of Putnam's approach relates to the emphasis that is placed upon involvement with voluntary associations, and his assumption that trust and reciprocity are automatically accrued as a result (Winter, 2000).

Pierre Bourdieu

Finally I turn to Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher who was responsible for a major contribution to sociological thinking, research and theory-generation. Bourdieu was deeply influenced by Marxist sociology; however his departure from the economic theory of reproduction postulated by Marx was significant. From a Bourdieusian standpoint, the narrow Marxist economic perspective was inadequate and as a result Bourdieu moved towards developing a theory of capital as a social science concept which he defined as:

'the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' ... capital presents itself under three fundamental specieseconomic, cultural and social with the addition of symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:119).

In contrast to Coleman and Putnam, Bourdieu produced a complete set of thinking tools, which has subsequently become '*a tremendously useful intellectual resource*' (Jenkins, 1992:11). Bourdieu was presenting a repertoire to guide or inform social science research, with a particular interest in inequality and its reproduction, and was primarily interested in how capital was used to create and reproduce inequality (Jenkins, 1992). What Bourdieu offers is not only a more complex sociological toolkit than Coleman and Putnam, but a '*scholastic device - a complete epistemological and methodological heuristic*' (Thomson, 2008:74). Bourdieu's work is therefore distinguished by a number of sociological tools. This armoury of sociological 'thinking tools' provides a significant resource for researchers which can aid the sociological imagination and further develop the understanding of social phenomena.

Unlike Coleman and Putnam, Bourdieu's emphasis is on the theorisation of social relationships, in an effort to link questions of structure and determination with those of experience. He developed a complex framework of 'capitals' which were interrelated with the additional concepts 'habitus' and 'field' – which I briefly discussed in the introductory chapter. Throughout his research Bourdieu employed his theoretical concepts to aid the understanding of social hierarchy. Working predominately from a micro-level perspective he sought to understand the subject (agent) within the constraints imposed by structure.

As identified in Table 7 all three authors offer social capital as a concept to utilise within empirical investigation. Coleman and Bourdieu, working from a sociological perspective, offer very similar definitions of social capital but differ in their application of the concept. Bourdieu was interested in how forms of capital served to maintain class position and advantage, reinforcing notions of reproduction and

inequality. He argued that those agents with sufficient amount of capital were advantaged throughout the life course. In particular, he focused upon the education system where he identified that those who benefit held the greatest amount of social and economic capital (Johannesson and Thomson, 2008). Putnam's work is heavily influenced by his political science stance. This position influences the application of the concept 'capital' at the macro level. Putnam believed social capital was a means to secure an effective democracy and economy (Winter, 2000).

Having critically analysed the three key exponents of social capital I would suggest that Bourdieu provides a sound framework to examine everyday life and critically analyse the application of theory to practice in the way that I am attempting here. Bourdieu's definition of social capital is *'more accurate and not committed to political interest and prevailing ideologies'* (Coradini, 2010:564) than either Coleman or Putnam. These three intellectuals offer different entry points to the theory of 'Capital': it is important for me as a novice student of social theory to understand the varied and rich aetiology to debates in this field.

My research will employ the interrelated concepts '**capital**', '**habitus**' and '**field**'. The nature of this enquiry will seek, through a micro-level analysis, to identify forms of life course capital and to uncover patterns and relationships amongst forms of capital and the effects upon learning in later life for individuals. Capital is related to the concepts habitus and field and, used together, the three tools serve to explain both social structuring and the structuring of individual qualities. Bourdieu further sub-divides capital into four categories (as in Table 7): social (networks, affiliations); cultural (aesthetic, taste); economic (money and assets);

and symbolic (credentials) (Thomson, 2008). To promote clarity, the following working definitions for capital, habitus and field will be applied within this research.

Social capital is perhaps the least developed of the four categories. The seminal text 'Distinction' notes multiple indicators of other types of capital, yet membership to golf clubs is identified as the sole indicator of social capital (Field, 2008). This is defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant as follows:

'Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:119).

Cultural capital is one of Bourdieu's most innovative concepts: it is a relational concept which exists in conjunction with economic, symbolic and social capital and for that reason it cannot be understood in isolation (Reay, 2004). Grenfell (2008:222) defines cultural capital as *'symbolically powerful cultural attributes derived from education, family background and possessions'*. Cultural capital is primarily transmitted via the family; in this way children acquire certain dispositions and habitus forms which reflect the family's status and value.

Economic capital is quite simply wealth. Economic wealth may be inherited or generated via employment or investments. It may take the form of property, a pension fund or savings. Other forms of 'non fiscal' economic capital may include educational achievements.

Symbolic capital relates to more personal qualities including charm, presence, authority and charisma (Reay, 2004). Symbolic capital is described by Bourdieu and Wacquant as:

'the form that one or another of these species (namely: economic, cultural and social capital) takes when it is grasped through categories of perception that recognise its

specific logic ...or misrecognise the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119).

I am mindful that the definitions of capital, as identified above, vary in depth and in terms of Bourdieusian research, considerably more attention has been afforded to cultural capital (Field, 2008) than the remainder.

Habitus relates to a set of dispositions which locate individuals at certain positions within a given social microcosm or field. The Bourdieusian definition and interpretation of habitus is described as '*a system of durable, transposable dispositions that mediates an individual's actions and the external conditions of production*' (Bourdieu, 1990:53). Habitus operates only in relationship to specific 'fields' which are identified as: '*a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them*' (Wacquant cited in Jenkins, 1992:85).

Capital, habitus, field and reproduction

Capital does not function in isolation and is considered alongside the conceptual tools of habitus and field. A complex interrelationship is considered to exist between the relative weight and volume of capital, habitus and the social space, field(s). For Bourdieu, the dispositions which form the habitus are acquired through social experience. This point is of importance because '*habitus is inculcated as much if not more by experience as explicit teaching*' (Jenkins, 1992:76). Once acquired, the habitus is a vehicle which informs all subsequent learning and social experience (Jenkins, 1992) as Bourdieu explains:

's/he [knows] the world in a sense too well, without objectifying distance [s/he] takes it for granted, precisely because he is caught up in it, bound up with it; he inhabits it

like a garment ...or a familiar habitat. He feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus' (Bourdieu, 2000:143).

The very subconscious nature of the habitus is postulated as an explanation for reproduction, as agents are driven by a routine habituation without reference to any particular body of knowledge (Jenkins, 1992) as is suggested below:

'the power of the habitus lies in the thoughtlessness of the habit and habituation, rather than consciously learned rules and principles. Socially competent performances are produced as a matter of routine, without explicit reference to a body of codified knowledge, without actors necessarily knowing what they are doing, in the sense of being able adequately to explain what they are doing' (Jenkins, 1992:76).

The habitus does not function in isolation (Maton, 2008); actions come about as a result of an '*unconscious relationship*' (Bourdieu, 1993:76) between habitus and field. Actions, or practice, as Bourdieu would term it, originates from the interrelationship between habitus and the relative amounts of capital held by an agent within a given field (Maton, 2008). The exchange, transfer or accumulation of capital occurs within the social space conceptualised by Bourdieu as 'field'.

Multiple fields exist within the macrocosm; for example, education, work, politics, and the arts. I have represented this diagrammatically, see Figure 1. Agents, who are in essence shaped by the conditions of the field, may occupy more than one field at any given time wherein they use both the process and product of capital to maintain or improve their position (Thomson, 2008). The field is not 'level': it ultimately benefits those who already have capital. Bourdieu relates the concept of field to a game where agents 'play' (Adkins, 2004) to maintain or improve their position. In order to successfully engage in this endeavour agents need to comply with the rules and regulations of the field, or to what Bourdieu would refer to as the

field's distinct logic. The three concepts are thus interlocked and are represented by the following equation:

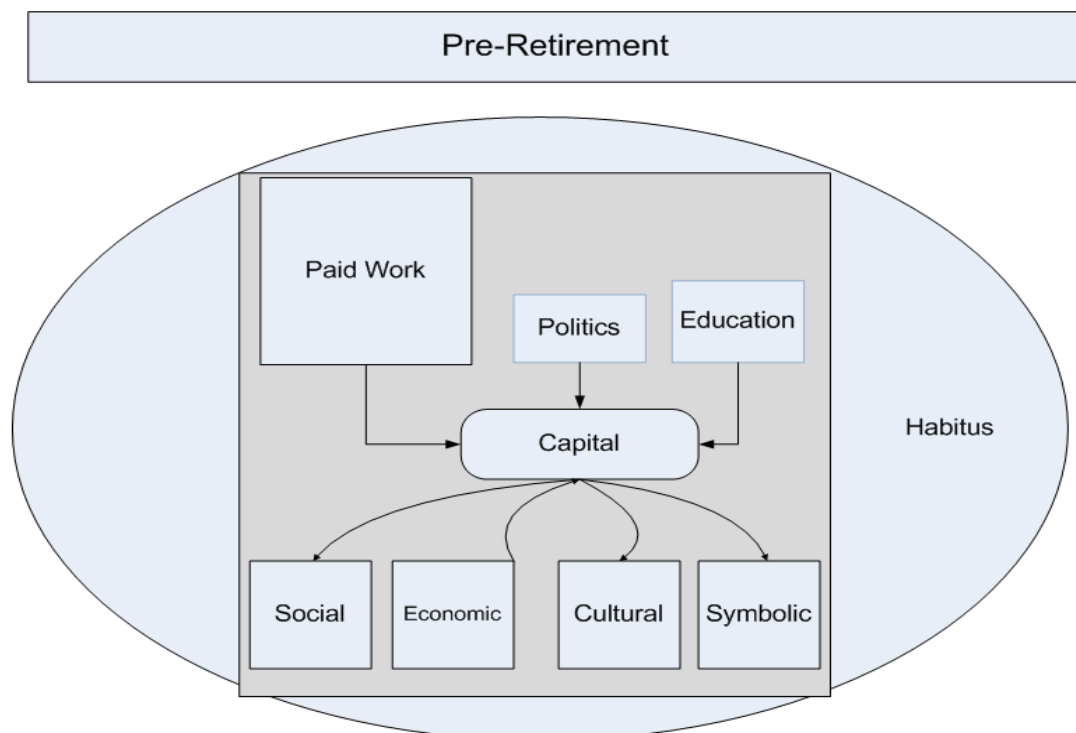
$[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$ (Bourdieu cited in Field, 2008:51).

Collectively, as conceptual tools, these are deployed to aid the theorisation of the nature of reproduction of social relationships, and the way that reproduction relates to questions of power and inequality.

Capital, habitus, field and the relationship to learning in later life

Having presented a general overview of Bourdieu's theory I will now explain the application to this research. Prior to retirement, individuals will be established within a given a social space and will be exposed to a number of different but familiar fields (as identified in Figure 1)

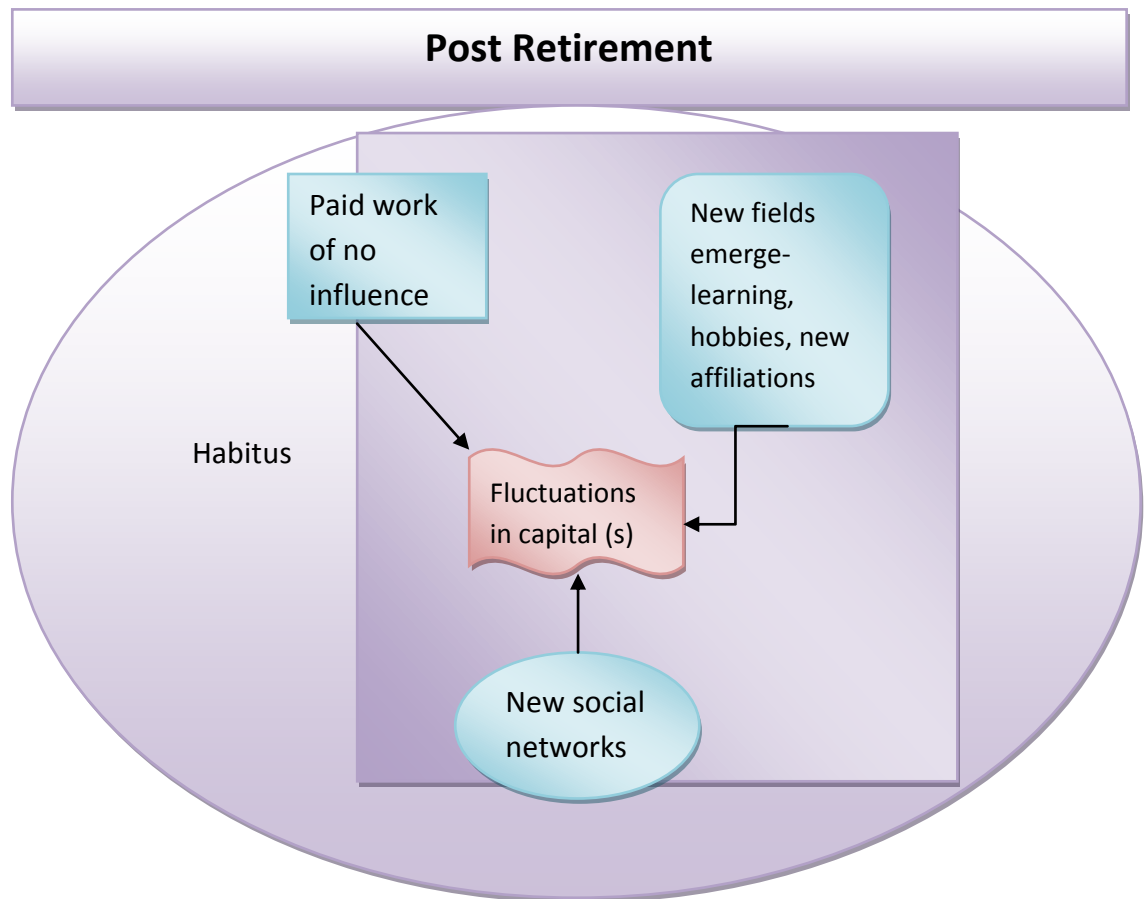
Figure 1: Capital, habitus and field–pre retirement



At the point of retirement there will be changes, as some fields are no longer relevant; for example, paid work. Yet new fields may emerge which involve

hobbies or affiliations to clubs. At the same time there may be some fluctuation in the relative amounts of capital, as individuals seek to locate themselves within a new and emerging social space (retirement). See Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Capital, habitus and field—post retirement



Retirement will therefore bring change for individuals and I am seeking to explore how later life learners deploy transform or exchange capital within new and emerging field(s).

Moving on to research method

Having discussed the conceptual frameworks which underpin this research I shall now attend to the methods adopted to provide answers to the research questions. I will identify how a narrative method has been employed in this research. Narrative has been chosen as the most appropriate method because it encompasses life–history stories, where researcher and participant work in a participatory way to elicit the story. This method is also congruent with the theoretical position I have adopted for this study.

What is narrative research?

Narrative research is diverse, theoretically and methodologically, and yet has evolved to have utility in a multi-disciplinary context (Riessman, 2008) despite the absence of a consistent understanding of its definition and application. In essence, narrative is a particular type of qualitative inquiry (Chase, 2005). Broadly speaking, narrative researchers are seeking to use a type of discourse analysis to understand events or happenings in human lives (Holstein and Gubrium, 2012; Polkinghorn, 1995), which is an approach most closely associated with qualitative research methodologies (Sikes and Gale, 2006).

The concept can be developed further through considering its etymology. The etymology of ‘narrative’ is derived from Latin *gnarus* meaning ‘knowing’. Narrative research serves to generate and understand explanations of phenomena (Barton, 2004) through stories; ‘*these can be stories as told or stories that we enquire into*’ (Sikes and Gale, 2006). ‘Story’ comes from the Greek and Latin *historia* which also means knowing (by enquiry) as well as an account of events (Holloway and Freshwater, 2007:5). Given that narrative research is multi-vocal and diverse (Riessman, 2008a), methods of inquiry differ and as a research approach it can

incorporate any appropriate mode of enquiry which seeks to analyse narrative material in order to gain a greater depth of understanding of given phenomena (Lieblich, *et al* cited in Holloway and Freshwater, 2007; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008). Data can include visual media; for example, video diaries, photographs, memorabilia, art, textual material (such as diaries and documents, policies), interviews, conversations and letters. Given the variety of approaches which can be used within narrative research I shall move on to discuss 'experience centred narrative' as this is the most appropriate method for this research.

'Narrative' as stories of experience

Experience-centred narratives are defined as *'texts which bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of the past, present and future or imaginary experience'* (Patterson, 2008:128) and represent a theoretical position which recognises how experience can, through stories, become part of one's consciousness (Squire, 2008). Encompassed within this paradigm is the life-history or biographical narrative which is usually captured over several interviews (Squire, 2008). Life-history narrative is specific in so far as it represents a term which researchers adopt to describe an *'extensive autobiographical narrative'* (Chase, 2005:652). In exploring the inter-relationship of learning and life course capital with older learners, I considered experience-centred narrative, which captures the biography of the participants, the most suitable method to address the research questions.

I have already indicated my preference for a research framework that incorporates the participatory approach to research advocated by critical gerontology: older adults are not merely objects of study but co-contributors to knowledge and

understanding. Experience-centred narrative is a mode of enquiry that is compatible with such a framework, enabling a holistic approach as a means of producing a coherent life story. The adoption of the Bourdieusian concepts of capital, habitus and field when applied at the micro-level facilitates the exploration of the interrelationship of learning to life course capital, as it emerges through personal narratives.

Validity

Before I proceed with the detail of the method I wish to outline the approach(es) that have been adopted to promote rigour throughout this research. Much is written about the promotion of validity in qualitative research - couched in a variety of terms including, for example, 'rigour' or 'trustworthiness'. There are varying theoretical models, frameworks and principles that can be applied to qualitative data and yet validity largely *'depends upon the relationship of your conclusions to reality, and there are no methods that can completely assure that you have captured this'* (Maxwell, 2010:279). But it remains an imperative to ensure that I have measures or strategies in place to deal with any threats to validity (Maxwell, 2010). I acknowledge that validity is a goal not a product of this research and in so doing integrate the most appropriate strategies for ruling out validity threats as identified by Maxwell, (2010:282). In the same context, I have borrowed from Luttrell (2010:258) the phrase *'good enough'*, a phrase which she specifically applies to life story analysis. Her argument for the use of 'good enough' within life story analysis is proposed as a vehicle to address the tensions which exist when researchers are working to listen to, make sense of, and represent the stories of participants when this is balanced against particular theoretical and ontological

positions and other tensions, for example, unequal power relations. Acknowledging that tensions, power imbalances and contradiction all exist both within the world that the researcher studies and the research process itself, means that it is imperative to be alert to these factors and a reflexive approach can help to achieve this purpose. Luttrell offers a different lens through which to reframe tensions and cites Mathner and Doucet (1997):

'The best we can do then is to trace and document our data analysis processes and the choices and decisions we make, so that other researchers and interested parties can see for themselves some of what has been lost and some of what has been gained.' (cited in Luttrell, 2010:258)

In undertaking this research I acknowledge that choices have been made and rationalised based upon what is good enough as opposed to attempting to defend what might be considered the theoretical ideal. That said I wish to return to the notion of a validity checklist as postulated by Maxwell (2010). I will outline here in advance the research controls that have been designed to deal with validity. Qualitative research differs from quantitative methods and frequently it is necessary to *'try and rule out most validity threats after the research has begun'* (Maxwell, 2010:280). However, Maxwell (2010:283) offers an eight-point list of strategies, of which I have addressed those most relevant to the kind of narrative enquiry that I am undertaking here.

'Intensive long term involvement'; interviewing participants iteratively has allowed time for the development of the investigation. This has included working reflexively with the data and returning to the participants, for example; where further elaboration or clarification of certain aspects was required.

'Rich data'; the long term involvement with the participants has led to the collection of lengthy and rich data providing very valuable insights into learning and life

course capital. Equally, the use of a narrative question, adopted for the initial interview, (see page 104) coupled with a facilitative interview style assisted the development of person centred approach which enabled the participants to tell their story.

'Respondent validation'; I make no claims to have used respondent validation as a means to encourage the participants to check their individual transcript for accuracy. However, following the initial interview (phase one) I returned the transcript to each participant accordingly, to serve as an aide memoire prior to the second interview.

'Intervention'; this is a term used by Maxwell (2010) to encourage researchers to recognise the impact of their presence within the field. Reflexively, I recognised that my presence as the researcher was a form of intervention (Maxwell, 2010). Proactively, I had planned a number of initiatives to deal with 'being in the field' including; giving consideration to my position as a researcher, insider outsider perspectives, power, age and gender issues. However, a number of issues arose as a result of the fieldwork and data analysis that were not anticipated, for example the personal internal dissonance the life biography method evoked. These aspects are discussed further within this chapter.

'Searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases'; a number of steps have been taken here to ensure that the conclusions I have reached are plausible. Obviously I have written elsewhere in this chapter of the data collection and analysis, but the most important activity has been one of working reflexively. I have sought the advice of my academic supervisor to discuss issues of positionality and bias, and have tried to remain constantly alert to any personal dissonance. In relation to the transcripts I have constantly compared the historical

detail of the participants' stories with contextual readings which so far as possible verified the detail of the narrative. The employment of these strategies has served as a means to check for validity throughout the research process.

Sample design and selection

In maintaining an approach which is congruent with narrative inquiry, I utilised a non-probability (purposive) approach to the sampling procedure (Morse, 1991) and would suggest that selecting a purposive sample has both promoted and enhanced epistemological rigour. Purposive sampling is deliberately and unashamedly selective (Cohen, *et al* 2007), and therefore the elegance of the technique rests in the ability to deliberately select individuals for participation in the study who are perceived to be 'information-rich' cases.

Primary selection by its nature is efficient and the sample was accordingly small (Morse, 1991) but of sufficient size to address the research questions effectively: the mode of data collection did indeed yield rich stories. The final sample consisted of eight participants: four men and four women (see Table 9:100). Small samples are not unusual in an inquiry of this nature, as depth as opposed to breadth in data collection is sought and there is no set sample size (Holloway and Freshwater, 2007). As Patton argues:

The validity, meaningfulness and insights of qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size' (Patton, 2002:45).

My research choice here benefited from the experiences of other researchers. Singer and Riff (2001) selected a random sample of between six and ten participants to investigate life history narratives, whereas Barton (2004), when

exploring Aboriginal people’s experience of living with diabetes, worked with a sample of just four. This suggests that the sample selected here compares favourably with similar studies. The emphasis of this research is not to move toward generalisation, but to capture experience-rich narrative (Holstein and Minkler, 2007). The fundamental criticism of the purposeful sampling technique relates to the inability to evaluate the precision of the researcher’s judgement (Burns and Grove, 1995). In seeking out a sample of suitable participants I worked very closely with the Chair of two U3A groups, each of whom acted as a ‘gatekeeper’ and liaised closely with myself to locate a range of potential participants. Sampling in this way, where I had access to the gatekeeper’s insider knowledge of the population and information systems, facilitated the identification of a number of different participants. Table 8 outlines the sampling process and the role of the Chair as gatekeeper.

Table 8: The sampling process

U3A	Gatekeeper	Launch of research with the U3A members	

1 (local group)	Chair	Formally at the AGM in 2007	Interested individuals made contact with Chair who then passed on details to myself – this led to four referrals – two of whom did not translate into participants. Secondly, the Chair sought out individuals whom he believed would be keen to become involved. This led to a further four referrals all of whom translated into participants.
2 (geographically distanced group)	Chair	Informally - via committee	In this instance the Chair referred two individuals both of whom were excellent participants.

Ultimately I remain responsible and accountable for the selection of the sample used here. Given that purposive sampling techniques are often implemented for qualitative research (Sarantakos, 1998) a number of measures were implemented to promote a degree of rigour. The initial point of reference was to ensure that all participants fulfilled the criteria for involvement with the study. Participants had to be over the age of 50 and actively engaged in any type of formal or informal learning. Participants needed to be willing to enter into a research relationship where researcher and participant could become co-constructors of the narrative as the process of data collection evolved.

The final sample was selected from two large U3A groups, both having in excess of 750 members. These groups are situated within affluent geographical locations and reflect a predominately white, middle-class, well-educated population. In relation to the local U3A, (Group 1) I had prior working knowledge of this group, having made contact in 2006 to gain some insight into the type of learning taking place within learning cooperatives, and this also facilitated the completion of an earlier module on Part One of the doctorate titled 'Organisational Work Ethnography'. It was this exposure that led to the refinement of the research

questions and the opportunity to utilise this forum as a population from which to draw a sample. This group were very keen and willing to enable the facilitation of the research, which was formally launched and discussed as an agenda item at the Annual General Meeting in 2007. Despite the size of this group, in excess of 750 members, recruiting to the sample was not particularly straightforward. Table 9 identifies the number of referrals and the rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of some individuals.

Table 9: The transfer of referrals into participants

U3A	Number of referrals from gatekeeper	Number which transferred into participants	Reasons for not selecting individuals to participate in the study	Other comments
1 (local group)	8	6	One male did not have sufficient time to be available for more than one interview. One female who I found very difficult to engage with over the telephone: I did not believe I could develop an effective relationship where we could work to elicit her biography.	The six individuals who agreed to participate in this research were very willing and eager to work with me from our initial contact.
2 (geographically distanced group)	2	2	N/A	The two participants who were referred to myself from the gatekeeper were very keen to participate in the research and I was quite confident from our initial telephone conversation of their commitment to engage.

The opportunity to sample from the second U3A group arose from my contacts within the University where I am currently employed. The Chair of this particular group had attended the University on other matters of business that I am involved in, and very quickly offered to work as a gatekeeper to locate research

participants. Given the similarities between both groups and the possibility that I had exhausted the gatekeeper for Group 1, it was both opportune and worthwhile to utilise the second group. On behalf of each group the Chair acted as a gatekeeper in identifying potential participants and undertook to have the initial discussion with each individual. This was a vital role, as the Chair had an insider working knowledge of the group and was familiar with the research; they were therefore able to identify individuals who were information-rich cases.

The sample used within this research (see Table 10: characteristics of the sample) consisted of eight participants four men and four women, who were accessed from the population of two very similar, although geographically distant, U3A groups. The initial six participants were drawn from Group 1 (a local U3A) and the remaining participants (two) were located through Group 2 (a geographically distanced U3A).

Each U3A group had similar characteristics, in so far as both were located in white, affluent, middle-class areas, and they each enjoyed a large and very active membership well in excess of 750 individuals. The final sample, whilst not homogeneous, did share some similar characteristics indicative of the population.

Table 10: Characteristics of the sample

Participant	Gender	Age	11 plus exam	Post compulsory education	Status	Previous job role
One	Female	63	yes	1 st Degree (physics) postgraduate certificate (Education)	widowed	secondary school teacher

Two	Male	70	yes	1 st degree English	married	secondary school teacher
Three	Female	68	no	Numerous qualifications road safety officer/driving instructor	married	road safety officer/driving instructor
Four	Male	69	yes	1 st degree and numerous NVQ qualifications	married	professional/managerial
Five	Female	63	no	FE college - shorthand and typing	married	secretarial roles
Six	Male	69	no	Qualifications/training directly related to job role – participant unable to specify which qualifications	married	communications civil service
Seven	Male	73	Not sure	1 st degree in pharmacy	married	pharmacist
Eight	Female	69	Yes	1 st degree and MSc also postgraduate certificate education and multiple other courses mainly Open University	widowed	teacher

Data collection: the narrative interview

Employing the method of narrative interview has required the development of a relationship where I have worked together over time with the participant to co-construct the narrative (Riessman, 2008). This process locates the data in a framework of life biography as opposed to autobiography. The following definition has been adopted:

‘The subject matter of the biographical method is the life experiences of a person. When written in the first person, it is called an autobiography, life story or life history. When written by another person, observing the life in question, it is called a biography’ (Denzin, 1989:13).

There is considerable debate around the question of biography and truth. I have chosen to refer here to Czarniawska (2004) who believes that participants do not make up whole stories in order to provide research data. The stories that I have

been party to are well crafted and at times deeply thought-provoking. I therefore adopt the following stance:

'When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was,' aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences..... Unlike the truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narrative are neither open to proof or self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters outside the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them.' (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 261)

Accepting this position regarding truth allows for the voice of the participant to be heard through the narration of their stories. My role as researcher is to facilitate the telling of the story and ensure that data analysis attends to the context which has shaped each story. I thus accepted that social constructions shape the stories, both in the telling and the subsequent analysis (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 2008).

In undertaking each interview I deliberately engaged in a process of co-participation with each participant, where, as the researcher, I helped the participant with the narration of the story. This person-centred approach did provide each participant with greater power, in so far as it was the participant who controlled the story: it was not in any way guided by the researcher for example, as it may be in a semi-structured interview (Holloway and Freshwater, 2007). (See examples of transcripts in the appendices). The accomplishment of this, through the interview process demanded that I as the researcher was neither neutral nor

distant, but empathetic (Barton, 2004). I therefore worked to elicit the storytelling through an approach which was relatively passive, stimulating and friendly (Sarantakos, 1998; Flick, 2006). This period of engagement throughout the interview process was crucial to the success of the thesis and I was thus continually mindful that each interview was not a tool but an encounter; an event amongst others in the lives of the participants. Each encounter therefore required planning, forethought, foresight and interpretation (Schostak, 2006). In keeping with the conventions of an experience-centred narrative, the data collection occurred iteratively and each participant was interviewed twice.

Phase one

The first interview was based upon the following question:

'I would like you to tell me the story of your learning experiences to date. The best way to do this is start from your earliest memories perhaps in childhood at home or at school. If you could tell me all the things that happened one after the other until today. Please take your time in doing this and also give details, because for me everything is of interest that is important for you.'(Adapted from Flick, 2006).

Throughout this process participants were invited to tell their story as narrators. My role was to not only actively listen, but to work at facilitating the stories. Preparation for both undertaking and conducting the interview was essential and time-consuming. I spent an extensive amount of time ensuring that I was sufficiently ready to enter the field by thinking through how to listen to, and work with each participant to enable the generation of the story. I avoided the use of closed questions and moved to a more reflective or clarifying style where participants were encouraged to expand upon, or further illuminate particular issues. This approach worked well: interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes

(Riessman, 1993) yielding considerably rich and lengthy transcripts (see Appendix 7 and 8). This way of working represented a conceptual shift from an interviewer-interviewee relationship to one of narrator and listener (Chase, 2005). The use of the narrative research question allowed for the progression of the interview in a manner that was sequential, and usually chronological (Squire, 2008).

Upon conclusion of the first interview, each participant was given a copy of their transcript. The purpose of this was not essentially to check for accuracy, but more importantly to prompt the participant's thinking prior to the second interview. All the participants read their transcripts with due diligence and did point out any matters they wished to be changed. Whilst I had transcribed each interview accurately: one participant pointed out minor spelling errors; and another requested that I changed the names of a primary school and the place of work, I attended to these matters accordingly and furnished each participant with a revised transcript. Upon completion of the first phase of interviewing I revisited the research questions, based upon the initial findings and identified areas which more generally required clarification. I therefore developed a brief interview schedule to guide the second interview (see Appendix 5)

Phase two

The second interview focused upon the questions identified in the schedule and provided the opportunity for in-depth probing around specific issues. A range of questioning techniques was employed in both interviews but, at this point, the emphasis was on reflective, clarifying, open and direct forms of questions.

Participants were also encouraged to talk both generally and abstractly. This was interesting in so far as not all participants were able to provide answers to abstract issues upon initial questioning, but frequently went away and sent an additional memoire via e-mail. For example; after the first interview Alan reflected upon his father's general attitude to parenting and he later corresponded with me via e mail, telling of how these 'messages' from his father had now become a very real part of him. As he stated:

'My father would also recite poetry: Robert Service, The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam and "The Revenge" as well as comic songs and monologues (Stanley Holloway especially). They're all part of the fabric of my brain'.
(personal email communication from Alan 2010)

Likewise, Jeanette also communicated in between interviews via e mail as follows:

'Can't remember me mentioning it the last time either. So I have practised Yoga since I was 16-17. My father was interested in it too. I started practising it by watching Hittleman on TV, then I went to a class while @ Uni. and have carried on from there - sometimes going to classes - sometimes taking them'. (personal e mail communication from Jeanette 2009)

As with the previous interview, this was a lengthy process, but overall it was shorter than the initial interview. Typically, the second encounter lasted between 40 to 100 minutes yielding, as before, a considerable amount of rich data.

Ethical Considerations

In complying with ethical principles two frameworks are of importance here and underpin this research. The first is provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) guidelines, whilst the second is from a nursing perspective. As a registered nurse who holds a professional recordable

qualification, I am also bound to adhere to a *Professional Code of Conduct for Performance and Ethics* (Nursing and Midwifery Council, (NMC) 2008). Each of these codes is important in upholding and adhering to the appropriate ethical standards. Whilst there is some overlap between the two codes I have adhered to the relevant principles from each. In relation to the BERA (2011) guidelines this research has been conducted with '*an ethic of respect for the person*' (page 4) which includes; *voluntary informed consent, openness and disclosure and a right to withdraw* (BERA, 2011:6). With reference to the professional code of conduct it is imperative that I: '*be open and honest, act with integrity and uphold the reputation of your (my) profession.*' (NMC, 2008:7). Equally, I am personally accountable for any acts or omissions in my practice and I must always be able to justify my decisions. Any failure, on my part, to comply with this Code can bring into question my fitness to practice and could potentially endanger my registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC, 2008). I will now discuss how I have interpreted and applied the relevant aspects of these codes of practice to this research.

There were number of ethical issues to be taken into consideration in the undertaking of this research. These have been interpreted through two lenses: first, the more reflexive and conceptual application of ethical principles and theories which will be discussed below; and secondly the application of these to practice, including the more formal process of ethical approval and subsequent issues pertaining to participant information and consent. Ethical approval was sought and granted from Keele University Ethics Committee in 2008 (see appendix 1).

Following successful ethical approval, and moving onto the application of ethical principles to practice, an issue of the utmost concern was my need to enter into a relationship with participants that aspired to egalitarian principles and for this reason demanded accountability and responsibility (Barton, 2004). It was of paramount importance that all participants were fully informed of the nature of the proposed enquiry before they chose to consent (Oliver, 2003). I believe that I approached this aspect of the work in a sensitive manner, which was promoted via a number of methods. All participants had been in contact with the gatekeeper and therefore had some understanding of the overall nature of the research. Once potential participants had been identified I was informed via the gatekeeper and at this point provided with contact details. Subsequently, I made contact with these potential participants either via email or a telephone call. At this time participants were issued with the 'participant information sheet' (Appendix 2) which contained detailed information about the project. This phase of the project occurred via a number of methods based upon individual participant preference, and these methods included; email, telephone and the postal system. Not all participants were able to access email on a regular basis, and some were not in a position to print the information themselves. However, all participants received the information sheet in advance of agreeing to participate: providing the information in this way afforded participants the time and opportunity to have access to the details of the purpose of the study free from coercion (Parahoo, 1997).

Once participants agreed to take part, a date, time and venue to meet was mutually agreed. The completion of the consent form, (see Appendix 3) (with the exception of one individual who arrived with a fully completed form), was undertaken at the first meeting and prior to commencing the interview. For all

participants the consent process enabled consideration of a number of issues which included ensuring that they had read and understood the information sheet. They were also allowed time and the opportunity to clarify issues and ask any further questions. I ensured that each participant was aware of exactly what they were agreeing to, as this included a number of separate items: for example that is, the fact that they would be interviewed iteratively, that the interview would be audio recorded, and that the interview would be stopped at any point should this be necessary. It was equally important to ensure that participants were aware that they had (indeed have) the right to withdraw at **any** point and are/were cognisant of this. A full and frank discussion therefore occurred prior to the commencement of the Phase One interviews. Consent was revisited at the second interview. Though it was not considered appropriate to sign a further consent form, participants were reminded of the fundamental issues and again afforded the opportunity to ask any further questions.

Ethical sensitivity and the side effects of research

Adhering to the dimensions of an ethical framework (and indeed ethical sensitivity in general) are activities which completely encapsulates the whole research process (Dowling and Brown, 2010) and I have remained constantly vigilant, working reflexively, in order to adhere to ethical principles throughout every stage of this research. Prior to commencing this work I had given serious consideration to my position as the researcher. Theoretically, I had positioned myself as an outsider, a professional stranger (Flick, 2006), believing that the influence of my own biography would be no more significant than my passion for the value of continued (lifelong) learning.

The reality however, was very different. Very early in the first phase of data collection I became extremely affected by the interview process. The internal dissonance I encountered was not dissimilar to what Riessman (1990) describes in her research in which she interviewed divorced men and women: she also found herself completely unprepared for her own response. Akin to my participants, I had my own unique biography to consider: my own distinctive and sometimes painful learning journey was replaying, causing me some psychological discomfort. Consequently, I found myself reliving moments which had occurred throughout my lifetime and I was utterly unprepared for the subsequent effects this had. I now recognise, '*The woman who forgets the girl she harbours inside herself runs the risk of meeting her again.....*' (Behar cited in Luttrell, 2010:489). This was a meeting I found very painful.

Predominantly, I found aspects of childhood and approaches to parenting particularly difficult to consider. I was born and 'raised' in the 'Black Country' the heart of the industrial revolution. My family, and indeed many previous generations of my family were traditionally working-class and within this modern industrial society we were subject to the subjugations of the industrial capitalist approach (Marx cited in Giddens, 2006) where in particular, gender inequalities were stark. I grew up in the 1970s on a newly built council housing estate separated from my extended family and existing within the private world of the then 'nuclear family' (Giddens, 2006). Social norms dictated patriarchal male dominance and as such my mother was not allowed to work, severely affecting her position in other social relations (Crouch, 1999). My father a blue collar worker (Marx cited in Giddens,

2006) would only be described as having 'feet of clay'⁷ (Wilde, 1891). In short, I was the eldest daughter within a dysfunctional family where domestic violence was a regular occurrence and my mother and I were ensnared in a world of male domination. I, perhaps naively, thought I had escaped this past yet through the process of interviewing, analysing data and contextual reading I was allowing aspects of my 'childhood self' to hinder progression with the research. I felt completely disabled for some time. I recognised the impact of the male dominated world in which I had lived as a child, but did not anticipate how this may surface at this point in my adult life. Steedman (1986) refers to this as '*patriarchal law*', where even in the absence of the father he is 'psychologically' ever present as she identifies:

'who is seen to be present even in his absence: ...whether he is there or not does not affect the perpetration of the patriarchal culture within the individual: present or absent 'the father' has his place. (Steedman, 1986:77/78)

Pragmatically, I had to find a mechanism to deal with the psychological dissonance I was experiencing in order to avoid the potential derailment this could have caused. In other words I had to find a mechanism of dealing with other aspects of self that had the potential to seriously hinder the continuation of the data collection and analysis. Following extensive discussion with my academic supervisor, and indeed with myself, I found the process of writing my own narrative

⁷Oscar Wilde uses the term 'feet of clay' to describe the protagonist Dorian Gray, whilst exquisitely beautiful he was significantly lacking intellectual capacity. Etymology: FEET OF CLAY -- a vulnerability; a failing or weakness. The image is from the Book of Daniel (2:31-40) (in the Bible) in which King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that Daniel describes and then interprets: 'Thou, O king, sawest, and, behold, a great image. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.' The whole image then broke, and the pieces were carried away in the wind. Daniel's interpretation was that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, a king of kings, but that after him would come a series of weaker kingdoms that would finally break up, like the image with feet of clay, and be replaced by the kingdom of God."

in a journal a suitable avenue of expression and outlet. This enabled separation of these very personal issues from the actual process of undertaking the research and allowed the research work to move forward without constant reference to my childhood past.

This example serves to highlight the importance of working reflexively. The continual process of reading, questioning and reasoning was invaluable. Critical self-reflection, where I was able to consider any bias, theoretical position and preferences, was essential to a successful outcome, as I recognised that '*the inquirer is part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand*' (Schwandt cited in Luttrell, 2010:3). Throughout the entire development of this thesis I have spent considerable time engaged in critical reflection, not only to myself but also with others. This socially orientated process of reflection has included the research participants, critical friends and my academic supervisor. These reflexive activities have provided a mechanism via which I was able to work proactively as a researcher who was able to both think and feel (Luttrell, 2010) and this has accordingly enhanced the development of the research.

I am in no doubt that my position changed from that of a professional stranger to an initiate (Flick, 2006); I was ultimately neither on the outside nor completely on the inside. As a 'professional stranger' I had located myself as an outsider because I needed to find ways to orient myself to the field and the participants. Other factors which contributed to this thinking were: my age, I was generationally distant from the participants, and my experiences of learning were considerably different from theirs. Over time as I became more familiar with the participants and their narrative I was no longer an outsider as I was able to work reflexively to

perceive the field work as a learning process. This change occurred after the completion of the first phase of the interview process and, having recognised this shift, I became less anxious. Consequently, the nature of the relationship altered, familiarly with the participants and their stories brought me closer to their world. The nature of the interaction between us became very fluid and open and I was able to ask pertinent searching questions when necessary. The participants were able to relax into the interview and I was able to work as a feeling researcher (intuitively) and as a thinking researcher (Luttrell, 2010).

Data analysis

Prior to the process of data analysis each interview was transcribed into a workable transcript where all 16 interviews were transcribed verbatim. This was a lengthy process as the audio interview was in the first instance written out in longhand (see Appendix 6) and subsequently word-processed into a typed document. This whole process was undertaken by myself and, whilst time consuming it allowed for considerable familiarisation with the data (Dowling and Brown, 2010) given that I had collected the data, listened to the recording in order to write this out longhand and then reread the handwritten version in order to produce a typewritten format (see Appendix 7). Finally each typewritten transcript was compared with the audio file and corrections or amendments made accordingly. This very personal immersion in the data without doubt enabled a comprehensive analysis.

The decision I ultimately reached with regard to the most appropriate approach to data analysis occurred following considerable reading, and a number of models were considered. On the whole I have found the work of Riessman and

Czarniawska the most useful. For them, the analysis of narrative textual data can be classified into three categories; structural, thematic, and dialogic/performance (Riessman, 2008). The application of one of these approaches will largely depend upon the overall definition of narrative and how the researcher chooses to interpret the data. This will obviously be influenced by the epistemological, ethical, and ontological positions of the researcher (Sikes and Gale, 2006). Thematic and structural analysis focus upon '*what*' is said and '*how*' (Riessman, 2008:105) this focus is, however, achieved via different approaches. Structural analysis has its origins in linguistics and the principal exponent of this model is Labov. In this approach, the interest lies in how the narrator uses language, for which purpose the researcher examines deep and surface structures of speech (Riessman, 2008). A thematic analysis is concerned with content rather than structure and looks to explore commonalities and differences within data to reveal thematically recurring issues. The task of data analysis is to identify and report the patterns which occur (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This approach towards data analysis is not tethered to any particular philosophical stance or theoretical framework, which fosters its appeal (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). A dialogic/performance analysis combines features of both structural and thematic analysis with the addition of drawing on contextual issues which bind the stories.

For the purpose of this work a thematic approach has been adopted as the focus is upon patterns or themes and not individual life stories. A structural analysis was rejected because I am not seeking to examine the use of language or the structure of speech. In undertaking the data analysis I have adapted a framework suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) as follows:

- Familiarisation with the data

- Search for themes
- Review themes
- Define and name themes
- Produce the completed analysis.

Each interview or story was quite naturally chronologically ordered, since the focus of the initial research question had guided the participants to progress sequentially. As a result the stories focused upon learning experiences in an ordered manner, commencing with the earliest memories of learning and progressing through the formative years, schooling, post school, work and finally on to retirement. This ordered approach to the interview data aided the analysis considerably as, in effect, the themes were ‘naturally’ occurring. In reading the transcripts and reflecting upon the research questions a number of categories emerged. In order to aid the analysis I used a colour coding method to highlight the relevant categories within each transcript, as I outline in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Colour coding of categories

Colour	Category
Yellow	Cultural capital
Green	Social capital
Teal	Economic capital
Purple	Reflexively discussing issues
Red	School
Light blue	Parents- father
Dark blue	Parents- mother
Dark green	Retirement
Grey	Learning in later life

Coding the data in this way made each category visible within the context of the whole narrative and allowed for further exploration of the relationships between each category and the final theme. Arriving at the final themes was enabled through the contextual reading that had been undertaken to: inform the historical perspective; reflections on social policy regarding learning in later life; theories of ageing; and using Bourdieu's interpretation of the '*Contradictions of inheritance*'. I constantly moved between the data, the research questions and the contextual reading which facilitated a very intuitive approach to the thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is only through complete immersion in the data, as I have described here, that I was able to identify the '*connections and interconnections between the codes, concepts and themes*' (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013:440) and produce the final report.

This chapter has outlined the research aims and questions and the key theoretical perspectives which framed this research. The research methodology and method, which were adopted to enable the exploration of the study, are also identified and justified. The following chapter presents the results of the research and discussion.

Chapter five: Findings and discussion

Introduction

The following chapter presents the findings and discussion of the research. In seeking a conceptual thread to bring the data analysis into being, inspiration was sought from 'The Weight of the World' (Bourdieu, *et al* 1999), in so doing, I have chosen to borrow from Bourdieu *'The Contradictions of Inheritance'* as this provided a sociological lens through which the findings have been located. In Bourdieusian terms, the essence of inheritance is the *'perpetuation of the line'* (Bourdieu, 1999:507) the continuation of which is determined via the parental transfer of capital and the outcomes of the school system. Parents, or 'the father', in Bourdieusian speak, are responsible for managing the 'order of succession' and as a result encouraging the children to reproduce the social position of the father. Should the child find him/herself 'overtaking' the social position of the father, this is likely to be interpreted as an act of wrong doing and lead to 'contradiction and suffering'. Coupled to this Bourdieu asserts that the school system is responsible for 'failures and disappointments' which act as a means to reinforce the transmission of inheritance, and as a result the maintenance of social positioning.

The participant stories have demonstrated, as a consequence of their inheritance, in different ways, evidence of what I have identified to be consequential dissonance. I have interpreted consequential dissonance as the irresolvable issues which have emerged as a result of life courses choices, either imposed or other, relating to education, career, power, gender, marriage and childcare. As a result in later life participants exhibit varying degrees of regret as these issues are both unresolved and irresolvable. Without exception the participants began their stories with their earliest memories of learning and continued their journey chronologically. This has influenced the organisation of this chapter and a

sequential approach has been adopted for the organisation of the material. By way of setting the scene and providing insight into the world of each participant, the chapter commences with a synopsis of each participant's narrative. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym, and place names are generally referred to only in the broadest context. What then follows is a thematic representation of the findings based upon the key issues which have emerged from the collective narratives. An integrated approach has been chosen for the presentation of the findings and the discussion. To aid clarity and to promote consistency throughout this section each broad theme is divided into sub-themes followed by the discussion.

A considerable proportion of participant stories are told with reference to the past and consequently Part Two of this chapter is historically located. The overarching theme of this section relates to: *the impact of inheritance and schooling upon lifelong learning and reproduction*. Opening with a presentation of the findings of the social condition into which the participants were born, and the effect of this upon their learning, I then move on to present the notion of the pedagogic contract and the implications of this throughout the formal learning years and the effect of this on lifelong learning. The final sub-theme presented here relates to the impact of the gendered habitus upon lifelong learning and the effect that this had upon the participants' career progression.

In the final section, Part Three, I return to the present day and the key theme is: *the transition from paid work into retirement and the importance of learning for pleasure*. Here a number of important sub-themes emerged including how the participants redefined the post-work period and the continuation of their learning journey as well as the meaning and importance of learning at this stage in their life

course. I stated at the outset of this thesis the importance of the notion of life transitions which was defined as '*changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles*' (Sugarman, 2001:144). In this third section the transition from paid work into retirement highlights the '*contradictions of inheritance*' where a number of participants have successfully challenged the '*order of succession*' (Bourdieu, 1999:507) and moved into a very different social space than that which was occupied by their parents.

Part one: Participant narratives; synopses

Introduction

This part of the chapter represents a synopsis of each participant's narrative and maps out each individualised learning journey across the span of the life course. Organising the data in this manner offers a holistic lens through which participants' stories may be viewed and allows for some of the pivotal issues which have led to habitus formation to be contextualised; for example, educational choices and opportunities, and access to and subsequent acquisition of forms of capital. Most importantly the participants had given very generously of their time and energy and as a result they provided rich interview data, I thus believed that it was essential when reporting on the findings that the individuality of each story was articulated, as well as representing the key themes that were deduced from the collective data. Each of the eight participants are referred to by a pseudonym and place names are generally omitted, changed or referred to only in the broadest context.

Jeanette

Jeanette was born the youngest of three daughters, one of whom is her twin, to parents who she describes as *'absolutely wonderful.'* Her father was a university graduate and an engineer, and her mother a postmistress. Living and educated in Northern Ireland, Jeanette was obviously academically able from a young age; she had a flair for maths and science, and what she describes as a *'natural curiosity'* for all things. From her description of her early life at home and her parents there was evidence of social, economic and cultural capital and all three were utilised accordingly to provide an enriched childhood. She describes with reverence her upbringing; *'the influence of my father, although he was an engineer, he appreciated art and music.... my mother and father both loved music.'* Learning was highly valued by her parents as she recalls; *'and so we were always*

encouraged... we very much wanted a television set and my father wouldn't buy us a television..... but he did buy us a full set of encyclopaedias.' The house was filled with books and she was encouraged to read and look up issues that she may not understand, as a result Jeanette *'loved school'* and *'worked hard.'* Primary school education was followed by attending an all girls' school (it was unclear if this was a fee paying school or other). More importantly, this was deliberate parental choice as it removed the distraction of *'boys'* and yet Jeanette was completely comfortable with this decision and thoroughly enjoyed her time at this institution. Successful in all the necessary exams she moved to university and read physics. Jeanette highlighted the gender imbalance of recruitment to physics recalling that there were *'100 men and eight women.'* Jeanette was not however daunted by the high ratio of men to women and achieved her undergraduate degree. Following graduation she married, moved to the UK with her husband and found employment in a hospital as a medical physicist. However, when Jeanette became pregnant with her first child she gave up her career and she appeared quite content with this decision as she stated: *'I left when I was pregnant because I wanted to bring up my children myself.'* With a natural curiosity, a degree in physics and an appreciation of arts and music there were many jobs that Jeanette could have considered when she decided to retrain to be a teacher. The notion to do this occurred during her time working as a volunteer in her children's school. Undertaking a postgraduate qualification in teaching, Jeanette returned to full time work in school to fit in with the demands of childcare and her husband's career as an engineer.

Jeanette talks of not being a *'high flyer'* or *'not being ambitious'*, yet her life in teaching was still not particularly fulfilling. Jeanette constantly referred to making

'the logical choice', or taking the pragmatic route. It appears she made decisions with regard to the best interest of others, in particular her husband and family, at the expense of herself. She was however very happily married. She retired from school life at the same time her husband was unfortunately diagnosed with a terminal illness.

Her recovery from the death of her husband has been slow and painful, and she has found adjustment to widowhood difficult. Here, involvement with the U3A has been instrumental in helping Jeannette to rebuild her life. She has been able to re-engage with *'like minded'* people and pick and choose the sessions that she most enjoys. Active membership of the book club and the walking group, as well as language sessions, have helped her to build a new sense of identity and engage her passion for learning. She now has the emotional and physical energy to be a group leader for yoga, a session she runs once a week. Learning at this stage in her life has brought together both mental stimulation and social contact without *'exams at the end.'* Jeanette believes that she has now rebuilt her life and she recognises that she can *'stand on her own two feet'* and that *'I can be me.'* With this new sense of self, Jeanette now attends painting classes and other lectures at a local university where her circle of friends had widened and her newfound interest in life as *'me'* continues to flourish. Looking to the future, Jeanette tells me that she will always be involved in learning somehow:

'if I am living in a one bed roomed little house I will still have the internet and I will still have the programmes on television and I will still read.... and I hope to emulate my mother who sent me a letter once, and she was 90, isn't the remote control on the television worked by infra red?'

Alan

Alan's life has been for him one of failure and underachievement, '*never being quite good enough.*' The perceived inability to live up to his father's high expectations leads Alan to describe both his life, and his career in teaching as '*mediocre.*' Born the third and youngest son of an '*uneducated father*' and a somewhat '*repressed mother*' he recalls being '*forced to do well at school.*'

There was little economic capital available within this family; Alan attributed this to his father losing a very good secure job at the post office due to the fact that '*he was working a scam.*' Following this, Alan's father failed to remain gainfully employed, earning money instead through training and racing greyhounds and gambling. This type of life style provided a variable and unreliable source of income for the family and Alan reported that there were periods of relative affluence and other times where they lived on the poverty line. Alan recalls fondly a two week holiday in a hotel by a river where '*they had a wonderful time.*' On reflection Alan recognised this holiday occurred during a period of prosperity.

Plagued with illness as a child Alan quickly turned to reading as a means to alleviate the boredom and as a result he discovered a passion for literature that has remained with him to this day. He describes his father as a '*shady character who moved in a twilight world*' yet he valued education and consequently Alan was '*hounded into doing well in education*' by his parents, and father in particular. As a consequence, Alan not only passed his 11-plus but also successfully attained the entrance exam for two grammar schools in the local area. Alan was quite desperate not to attend the same grammar school where his brother had previously been a pupil, but once again his father intervened and made the decision on his behalf and without consultation and as Alan recalls; '*I was very*

upset about that. It can be seen that Alan's father took an active and controlling interest in his son's education: the boundaries were clearly dictated and non-negotiable.

Unfortunately, bankruptcy was the net result of the father's gambling. Additionally, dominant patriarchal attitudes pervaded the family and Alan's mother was not allowed to go out to work; her place was in the home. This situation led to a major disruption for the whole family but in particular Alan. With the family homeless and in financial difficulty, Alan was forced to board at secondary school. Alan recalls being desperately homesick whilst boarding at school but was driven by fear of failure. Consequently, he successfully achieved appropriate qualifications to enable the move to university. The premature death of his father did not, and has not provided a '*release*.' Alan remains taunted by the invisible patriarch, describing him as '*ruling from the grave*.' Whilst Alan read English at a prestigious university in London and successfully obtained his degree he described this as '*second best*'; the expectations for him were to go to Oxford and consequently, in his mind, he had failed again.

Alan retired from teaching nine years ago and regrets not leaving paid employment earlier. Teaching for him was a '*good thing*' and fits well with what he describes as his '*over-inflated sense of duty*.' He describes the post-work period in his life as a '*release*'; he appears to have reached a point in his life without the constraints of family, work or deadlines where he has total freedom to do '*anything I want, well almost*.' On reflection he believes that conforming to the social norms of job, family, mortgage and career are prohibitive.

This period of release has provided the opportunity to reengage with learning in a more meaningful way. Whilst somewhat reluctant at first, Alan has reignited his

interest in literature which he has found immensely enjoyable. Additionally, he has pursued a number of his passions including politics and discussion groups. As a consequence he has attended a variety of different learning environments including the local university, the U3A and other learning groups held within the vicinity of his home.

Alan did not enjoy his formative education, partly due to his father's overbearing attitude and general interference. This has left Alan with the belief that '*education is wasted on the young.*' Later life learning has brought with it a freedom to learn what he desires without the pressures of deadlines or exams. Alan finds this both liberating and exciting and with the luxury of time and the absence of work pressures, Alan frequently spends weeks researching particular poems or letters.

Alan appears to remain quite scarred by the impact of his father's influence and is unable to shake off the notion of the now invisible patriarch; he talks of the '*voices in his head*' as he recalls some of the edicts from his father that he refers to as '*playing out little Socratic dialogues.*' His fear of failure remains quite profound and he talks openly about his beliefs on life after death and why he does not subscribe to the theory of eternal life as; '*I might fail again in the afterlife.*' He has come to realise only latterly how '*steadfast, caring and loving his mother was.*' Upon reflection he longs for the opportunity to reassess his parents from an adult perspective unfortunately, he has only his memories upon which to formulate his judgements.

Maggie

Maggie is the only daughter of a '*working-class*' family who in her early years lived in the heart of the steel industry; her father was a tool grinder, her mother a

housewife. Maggie believed her destiny was to look after her parents in their old age. Consequently her parents paid little attention to her education; she was not thought of *'as being super-intelligent'*, was not expected to pass the 11-plus and subsequently when she failed to achieve this her educational options were limited. With grammar school out of the question she attended a local secondary modern school. She referred to this quite positively and compared it with another local secondary modern school, declaring that it was; *'a bit above the other one.... it actually offered more, a varied range, it did languages, which the other one didn't....'*

There was limited evidence of any social, cultural or economic capital, and in particular cultural capital was lacking. Maggie did succeed at ballroom dancing but did not consider herself good enough to undertake the exams required to enter into teaching. This may have been a missed opportunity for Maggie but is an example of her lack of self-esteem. At this point in her life course, her parents were quite controlling and this served to reinforce a lack of autonomy. Additionally the social norms of the time dictated the female gender role as wife, mother and homemaker. This was a view to which her parents clearly subscribed and this reinforced their ambivalence about their daughter's education. As a result, the lack of investment in Maggie's schooling and the controlling attitude of her parents led to a series of life events which rendered Maggie unable to pursue the job of her choice. Maggie was desperate to undertake hairdressing, as she recalled; *'I wanted to be a hairdresser, that was what I really wanted to do and I wasn't allowed to do it.'* Forbidden to by her parents, Maggie had to seek alternative employment prospects which led to a number of struggles to achieve qualifications.

In a quest to find an alternate job, a friend suggested to Maggie that she might enjoy working in a drawing office and so, without any significant consideration, Maggie found herself in such employment. Whilst working for a number of different companies, Maggie worked her way through night-school and one company sponsored her to attend day-school so that she could achieve the relevant qualifications. But with no grounding in the basis of the subject areas, Maggie struggled and subsequently moved from job to job. Once married Maggie gave up paid work on the birth of her first child and remained at home to bring up her second child, believing that her place was in the home. Bored and frustrated but encouraged by her husband, Maggie pursued and achieved the advanced driving instructor qualification. This led to more qualifications within this area and a job that was sufficiently flexible to fit in with the demands of childcare and her husband's career.

Maggie admits that she is not academic and has struggled to achieve the qualifications that she has. She also regrets not pursuing hairdressing. On reflection she believes this has led to the disjointed job roles that she has pursued; *'but it was that initial leaving school and not being able to do what I had chosen to do, and I think that's probably why I have gone from one thing to another.'* She describes her retirement as *'relaxed, but not without commitments.'* Initially Maggie enjoyed her retirement to the full, engaging in a number of different activities ranging from tap-dancing to crown green bowling. There is sufficient economic and social capital to provide for a comfortable retirement where engaging with learning, although *'nothing academic'*, provided mental stimulation and social contact. Maggie also loves travelling. Over time however, Maggie has found that she is *'quite restricted by mother.'* Her mother at the age of 91 is only able to remain in

her own home due to the constant support of her daughter and husband. Whilst Maggie is still actively engaged with learning, only recently undertaking a week-long craft course at a local college, she states that *'she has less time for herself now.'* Quite clearly the burden of caring for her mother is taking its toll both physically and mentally. For Maggie it is as though her life has gone full circle from childhood and adolescence where she had little autonomy over her life choices and today in the post-work period she likewise feels *'mentally restricted.'* The cumulative effect of this has led Maggie to give up a number of her learning interests including tap and line-dancing. She is left feeling resentful of this situation as she states; *'I resent it because you know we are both pushing 70 and we are still restricted and I can't see any end to it.'*

Sebastian

A self-proclaimed extrovert, Sebastian was an eternal optimist whose personality was quite infectious; he greeted life with hopefulness and warmth; *'yes I like people, I enjoy life and while ever I can I shall keep going, I am going to live to be a 110 and be a damn nuisance.'* He had grown up in the heart of a working-class area where the steel industry dominated as a source of employment and therefore income. His father was a tool grinder and his mother a housewife. There was little evidence of economic capital and Sebastian recalls that food was sparse. His father, through his connections within the workplace, demonstrated some evidence of social capital. His parents were evidently encouraging of their son's education and there was some transfer of cultural capital in the form of private piano lessons and general encouragement to do well at school.

Sebastian declared he was; *'rubbish at school'*, he found the didactic teaching methods did little to promote learning for him. He was naturally left handed but was forced to write using his right hand, with his left hand tied behind his back. He would be reprimanded if he was witnessed using his left and physically hit over the knuckles with a ruler by his teacher. This he believes reflects the *'Victorian'* attitudes of the teachers, who were myopic and punitive. It is not surprising that he was *'unimpressed with the whole schooling system.'* Whilst he passed the 11-plus he failed to attend a grammar school and left the secondary modern with no qualifications. Under parental duress to find work he commenced an indenture at the local steelworks. He remarks:

'my father sort of made a lot of the decisions that affected me, as most parents did in those days so when I got the opportunity to become a trainee manager, that I would be indentured for five years my father saw it as a step up the ladder and a big improvement in my life so with some arm twisting I signed up.'

Life in the steel industry was hard and on completion of the indenture, having successfully achieved the HND, Sebastian turned his back on the prospects of this as a long term career; *'there were a lot of people that worked there that never retired, they never made it to retirement age they were dead before retiring.'*

Working in sales and travelling the country it was Sebastian's wife who suggested he pursue a change of direction with a view to obtaining a better quality of life.

Serendipitously, in his new job as a school caretaker, he found himself in an environment where he could make a significant difference and this served as a platform to launch his career in management. Consequently, Sebastian returned to learning and gained a range of qualifications and then went on to university to undertake a degree in management at the age of 44. It was here that his passion

and enthusiasm for learning was ignited, with him acknowledging; *'that education is probably one of the best things that you can do in life providing 'a', you want to do it and 'b', you have got good tutors'*. Utilising learning to support and improve himself, Sebastian moved through the hierarchy of management stating; *'I didn't realise I was ambitious until my wife said to me "do you realise what it means if we stay in the education department we can have quite a nice life".'*

Retiring at 60 Sebastian describes this period in his life as; *'Nirvana, reaping the benefits...'* By this he is referring to his career trajectory and the sacrifices he made by returning to college and university to gain additional qualifications to enhance his promotion prospects. Learning that is undertaken is now both meaningful and interesting; the need to learn and gain qualifications for the job has long since passed. Currently his learning includes undertaking history, politics, industrial archaeology and travel. He lives every day to the full; *'I can't understand how people can sit in a chair. I get up in a morning and we start and every day we have to achieve something, every day... I am unbelievably glad for every day...'* As we concluded our second interview he was teaching himself Portuguese, taking up archery and clay pigeon shooting whilst laughing, loving life and embracing it to the full.

Karen

Born and raised in a close knit semi rural community, Karen was the eldest of two children. Her father was a manager in a local brewery and her mother a housewife. Neither of her parents was considered to be particularly outgoing and consequently their life revolved around the wider extended family and the very immediate community. As a result of this very myopic upbringing, social capital

was not apparent in any quantity and this perspective was reinforced when Karen described herself as; '*a very shy person.*' This is a trait she believes is inherited from her mother. Yet Karen does not recall there being any shortage of food or other commodities, so her father earned sufficient economic capital to maintain a reasonable standard of living. There was no real indication of cultural capital within this household as Karen made no reference to any such indicators.

Attending the local church school, Karen enjoyed learning and did well up until the final year prior to the preparation for the 11-plus. The loss of the regular teacher, due to long-term illness, led to a succession of events where, due to poor management, the majority of the class failed this very important examination.

As a result, a grammar school education was not an option, and on reflection, Karen believes she was disadvantaged by the secondary education she received. The curriculum did little to prepare her to think critically or encourage development in wider learning which, in turn, may have led to alternative opportunities. Although she had aspirations to train to be a nurse Karen failed to apply; this is a decision she will always regret. Lacking in confidence, she noted that her peers were seeking clerical employment and combining this with secretarial courses at college. Karen recalls:

'I have kicked myself now, from when I was little I wanted to be a nurse but I was just such a shy, unconfident person and nobody else that I was friends with wanted to do that.'

Married and working for a local solicitor, Karen became pregnant at the age of 19 and her second child quickly followed. Unfortunately, the marriage ended in divorce and with two small children to provide for Karen was forced to combine part-time work with childcare responsibilities.

Working has always been a large part of her life and, on reflection, the divorce from her first husband forced her out into the wider world and also helped her to establish a sense of self; *I had to do a lot of things that I probably wouldn't have had to do otherwise.* Life has not been easy for Karen, she remarried and her second husband died. This was a traumatic time on a number of levels; she describes the relationship as *'not easy.'* Now widowed, Karen turned again to work not only as a source of income but, more importantly for the social contact. Securing employment within the NHS Karen was able to engage in a variety of learning opportunities, some mandatory and others out of interest. Reflecting on her working life she believes that; *'I should have done better'* and *'I really envy my granddaughter going to university and getting out into the big wide world.'* Because she failed the 11-plus and as a result did not attend a grammar school, university was for Karen; *'never an option'*. This is a cause of significant regret.

Happily married for the third time Karen took early retirement from her NHS post at the age of 59 and found it *'a culture shock.'* Desperate for social contact she joined the local U3A and discovered a whole new world which provided new learning experiences and much needed social contact. As an active person, Karen is particularly interested in tap-dancing, canoeing and aerobics but has also undertaken a digital camera course. At our second interview Karen was finding her time to engage with learning pursuits was more limited due to her care responsibilities for her elderly mother and yet she stated; *'I am still interested in learning something new'* but was unsure what to try next. Her motivation for learning is predominately *'to have company ...although I do admit I do enjoy learning something new.'* There are however some self-imposed restrictions as Karen would not join in a discussion group, or similar, for fear of making herself

'look stupid' by failing to understand the thrust of the discussion. She acknowledges that her way of thinking *'has held me back and it probably has done all my life.'* It appears that this is a consequence of her inheritance.

Chris

Chris was the eldest of three children who, due to his father's occupation in the Royal Air Force as a higher executive officer, had quite a disrupted school life. He recalls his time at his first school where, in 1947, they still used slates and chalk, and lessons in the summer time were frequently taken outdoors. Living in a small rural community, the curricular emphasis focused upon the basics of maths and English, and these were not subjects that he particular enjoyed or succeeded in. Chris referred to himself as a *'slow learner'* and *'a late developer'*, he was not particularly academic and preferred the practical subjects. He claims; *'I was always a bit behind.'* There was within the household an indication of some economic capital as he recalls; *'mom never wanted for anything.'* Additionally, via his father there was some social capital due to his connections within the RAF. The transfer of cultural capital was apparent particularly from his father; *'Dad used to write to the form teacher and say he could do with some homework but you know I used to do it and then forget it.'* Whilst his father read widely, clearly the parental attitudes towards education suggested that 'school' was the place where learning occurred and consequently there was little evidence of any direct help from home other than general encouragement.

Moving from one rural school to another due to the relocation of his father's work base, Chris failed his 11-plus and was also unsuccessful in achieving a scholarship to college. His exposure to a very narrow curriculum, with a focus

upon agriculture did little to enhance his academic success; he described his father's response:

'I think I was the odd one out but dad was yes he was disappointed I can understand.... but he didn't take it out on me at all he just said he was a little disappointed so that was it.'

Leaving school and entering employment at 15, Chris had several jobs where, with the support of his father he gained employment within the RAF where he remained for '33 years and 67 days.' Due to 'official' restrictions Chris could say little about the nature of his job and he did not disclose his rank; but he did explain however that he took part in regular on-the-job, in-house learning as this was a requirement of the role. Retiring early from the RAF, at the age of 53, Chris did have the option to stay on beyond this age, but this would have involved a move to a distant geographical location. With three children residing in the family home Chris remained committed to helping them and believed the disruption of a move would be counterproductive for his family.

After taking his redundancy from the RAF Chris sought part time employment and has had several jobs, one of which he still undertakes as the Mayor Sergeant.

When reflecting upon the notion of retirement he states:

'I do something every day I will not sit.... you have got to keep the brain active... when I think back men of my age have been retired at say 65 and they have always looked very old and they vegetate and I don't want that.'

It was his wife who introduced him to the U3A and, given that Chris learns by watching and doing, he prefers being active and consequently his involvement with learning relates to his preferred learning style and his interests. He has joined the walking group and together with his wife he has learned sequence and old-

time dancing. This has opened up their world to a whole new group of friends they now have a very busy social calendar; indeed they cannot believe the positive difference this has made to their lives. Chris is very fit and swims two or three times a week; he is also actively involved with his family and talks fondly of his wife, children and grandchildren. He talks optimistically about the future.

Jack

Jack was the only child of a professional couple; his father worked as a pharmacist in his grandfather's chemist shop, whilst his mother was a housewife who did work but only as part of the war effort. His parents enjoyed some degree of affluence; Jack spoke of the family home, holidays and the use of a car. His parents also introduced him to classical music and opera and he fondly recalls listening to radio programmes with his parents. Collectively there was evidence of social, economic and cultural capital, all of which were deployed accordingly. Economic capital was utilised to buy the family home and fund an independent education for their son. As a pharmacist at the local hospital, and working part-time in the family business, Jack's father had considerable standing within the wider community. Jack spoke warmly of his parents enjoying the radio, listening to music and plays and introducing him to photography when his father purchased a camera for his use. Educated in the independent sector, Jack was unclear about the actual funding classification of the primary and secondary school he attended. His descriptions of the teachers as '*masters*,' and the degree of variation in the curriculum, leads to the conclusion that both of the schools Jack attended would have been independent, and possibly fee-paying. Successful at school, Jack enjoyed the diversity in the curriculum and grew accustomed to the lengthy day. As an only

child his parents decided that it was in his best interests to board at senior school to ensure that he socialised with other children. Very reluctant to do so, Jack spoke stoically of the abusive culture inflicted by the older boys but nonetheless endured the system. In many ways Jack's educational destiny was prescribed by his father. Who, taking a very active interest in his son's education, attended regular meetings with the masters to ensure that his son gained the right qualifications to apply for a university place to study pharmacology. This was not Jack's choice of career:

'I wanted to be a doctor, I wanted to be a surgeon really and I was persuaded by my father, my grandfather had a chemist shop and my father worked for my grandfather and of course eventually he was going to inherit the shop..... it was put to me that if you went in for pharmacy what a marvellous doctor you would make and it really twisted my arm to go in for pharmacy.'

The transition to university was unremarkable as Jack had effectively lived away from home from a young age. Consequently, Jack made the very best of his time at university engaging in number of extracurricular activities including painting and woodwork. The city location of the university provided the opportunity to visit the theatre regularly to listen to music and watch plays. Successfully qualifying as a pharmacist, Jack then attempted to apply for medicine only to be turned down on the basis that he already had a career. Dismayed, he reluctantly followed his father into the pharmacy business where he remained until his retirement.

Remaining in the pharmacy business almost all of his working life, Jack had relatively little time for leisure or holidays but he did take the opportunity to collect books, CD's and opera music with the view that he would spend his retirement enjoying the fruits of his collection. Upon his retirement he found it difficult to adjust; it was clear that he and his wife had grown apart and no longer shared the

same interests. Jack states; *'you can have too much of your own company and unfortunately my wife and I really in some ways we have grown apart.'* Having difficulty finding a sense of identity in the post-work period, it was his wife who suggested attending the U3A and this had a positive outcome; *'I was very impressed I signed up and that's been I would say 80% of my retirement.'* Jack attends a variety of classes including Shakespeare, philosophy, science club, book club and poetry. In addition to the U3A Jack is also a member of at least two choirs and spends two evenings a week practising. Jack can now enjoy learning without the pressures of homework or detention, or the fear of exams or punishment. Without the U3A I am not convinced Jack would have such a positive sense of self or a reason for engaging with society: the mental and social stimulation brought about through his exposure to learning fills a void in his life:

'I missed so much when we were away on our holiday everything seemed to be happening.... here's me sitting there reading a book on the deck, but you know it's funny isn't it you miss it.'

Constance

Constance is the eldest daughter of a working-class family who, through her love and passion for learning, achieved noteworthy academic qualifications. Yet, as a result of the choices she made in early adulthood, Constance is disappointed that she failed to achieve her full potential; *'I've looked back with great regret that I didn't stick at it and get my PhD actually.'* Whilst there was little in the parental home by way of material wealth, no economic capital, both parents recognised the advantage that an education could bring for their daughter. Her father had achieved a scholarship to a prestigious school but was unable to take up this place; quite simply, the cost of the uniform was beyond the means of his parents. Her mother, a talented woman, had aspirations to be a carpet designer, but was

thwarted by her parents at the age of 14 when she was sent to work on the factory floor as a carpet weaver. As a consequence, Constance became the focus of attention as her parents lived out their ambitions through her educational achievements.

Attending a local church school at the age of 5, Constance could already read and write her own name. As she was so far ahead of the other children, she was '*promoted*' into a higher class. Her mother, whilst lacking in economic capital had transferred sufficient cultural capital to promote a learning habitus. Successfully achieving the 11-plus Constance moved to grammar school, whereupon she became '*ostracised*' by the local children, which reinforced the importance of learning as a means to move on. Learning became a '*comfort blanket*': it was for Constance her constant companion. The natural progression was university, a place where her educational success continued, indeed flourished. Achieving a degree in zoology she was asked to continue her studies and undertake a PhD. Whilst undertaking her doctorate studies her fiancé, who was unable to secure funding for his PhD, sought and obtained a teaching post overseas. A difficult time for Constance, her university professors and parents were willing her to continue her studies, whilst the boyfriend was luring her away with the promise of continuing her PhD at a later date. Deciding to leave university with a Master's degree Constance found work in the same employment as her fiancé whom she married and later they had a son.

Upon their return to the UK her husband was diagnosed with a terminal illness and died five years later. Constance was never able to resume her doctoral studies. She sought work as a supply teacher and gained her teaching qualification and later remarried. The second marriage was a happy one however, Constance once

again found herself in a position where she nursed her husband through a protracted illness. Unfortunately, at the death of her husband Constance found herself widowed for the second time. It was following these events that Constance returned to learning through the Open University and undertook a variety of courses as; *'the deadlines gave focus.'* Over time the U3A started a local group and Constance was able to join a number of sessions as well as undertaking the role of social secretary for the committee.

At the age of 70 she finds herself lonely and isolated; she does not enjoy being on her own. Whilst she *'has to work hard at being happy.... learning is big part of trying to stay positive.'* The engagement with learning brings both mental and social stimulation nonetheless she *'wishes she could turn the clock back 20 years.'* Realising how fortunate she was to have such educational opportunities she now reflects with regret; *'it's the biological imperative.....I mean it was for me I should have stayed until I had done my PhD.... I just wanted to get married.'* The consequential dissonance expressed throughout the narrative reflected the social norms of the day, what Constance described as; *'these outside influences coming in.'* Despite her academic success she was ill-equipped to deal with or challenge the social norms of marriage and family.

Reflecting upon participant synopses

The purpose of this section is to reflect upon the whole life biography of each participant and briefly discuss some of the key issues which have arisen as a result of life courses choices relating to; education, career, power, gender, marriage and child care. I have identified this as consequential dissonance given that, due to the legacy of their inheritance, participants in later life exhibit varying degrees of regret as these issues are for them unresolved and irresolvable. In

effect, the participants' are long-term sufferers due to them having unfulfilled career or academic ambitions. The inability to live up to parental or school expectations, or conforming to the societal norms of their era (for example; marriage, having children, home ownership and job security) meant they made certain decisions which now, from the vantage point of later life, they now view as incorrect or dubious.

It was evident that each participant reflected upon their decision as a mature adult and, in so doing were unable to recognise the patterns of constraints they experienced at that time which were an influential part the decision-making process and the outcome. There were a number of constraints expressed throughout the stories.

Gender difference was a clear issue and the women had regrets or frustrations which were quite diverse when compared to the men in the sample. Constance was quite a sad lady and she openly talked of a number of frustrations:

'I was frustrated I would have loved to have done medicine but I wasn't good enough at physics in those days it was really strict so I did the next best thing I did zoology, but I would have loved to have been a doctor.'

She is a bright and intelligent woman who gave up her PhD scholarship to move abroad with her fiancé as she describes:

'It's the biological imperative I think for one thing I mean it was with me I should have stayed until I had done my PhD that was a totally biological imperative, it was wasn't it ... I mean I just wanted to get married I mean not quite the same today... you can see how it still eats me up.'

Despite her excellent academic ability she chose to conform to the social norms of the day and marry and have her son. However she remains haunted to this day by that decision.

For Maggie, she was the daughter of controlling parents who made no attempt to encourage her educational endeavours whilst at the same time forbidding her to pursue a career in hairdressing. Her biography was interwoven with the fundamental belief that her role as a daughter was to care for her parents in their old age. As she herself approaches 70 years of age she is prevented from undertaking a variety of activities due to her caring responsibilities for her mother as she identifies:

'it's mentally restrictive because I am always thinking should we go here or did I ought to ring her did I ought to invite her.'

Resentful of the situation she finds herself in, but unable to exert her own autonomy, she has given up many of the sessions that she was previously attending with the U3A.

Karen described herself as 'very shy', a characteristic that she believes she inherited from her mother and the limited social exposure to a 'wider world' during her formative years. This introverted behaviour prevented her from pursuing nursing as a career:

'but I think it's down to me not having much confidence that I didn't do it ... yes I have always regretted it .. I think mum was quite shy and I think we probably got that from her and also I think with mom not going to work we didn't have a lot of contact with other people....'

She bitterly regrets not undertaking nursing and she talked openly about her granddaughters going to university and their experience of the macrocosm, an experience she herself was denied.

Jeanette did not speak overtly of regrets, for her the decisions she made throughout her life course were made based on 'logic' and as a result were, for her, the right decisions. She gave up a promising career as a medical physicist to

retrain as a teacher in order to meet the needs of her husband and their children. At the point of retirement two major issues occurred; her husband was diagnosed with a terminal illness and she realised that her children had grown up, left home; and had very busy lives of their own. The immediate period post retirement was spent caring for her husband until his death and there was little time, if any, to give consideration to her own needs. Following the death of her husband Jeanette spent a lengthy period grieving. Located now in the post-work phase of her life course, without her family; the very reason she gave up her career has forced Jeanette to re-evaluate her current position as she states: *'I actually, consciously said "ok you're on your own what were you interested in before you were a wife and a mother".'* The consequential dissonance she describes relates to the abandonment of herself as a career woman, following which she became immersed in her role as wife and mother. In the post-work phase and alone she has now had to spend time to find herself, the person she was before she became a wife and a mother.

The male participants' experiences differed from the females: there were differing expectations for them which led to differing outcomes. Like the females, the men had limited choices about their future learning but the expectations were for the men to become the breadwinners, the providers for their future wife and family.

Alan believes that he missed opportunities throughout his life course as, in his formative years, he was exposed to a very dominating and controlling father who failed to promote any autonomy in his son, as he recalls:

'I didn't have any freedom of choice in regards the school I went to that was entirely his choice... he was anti social and difficult you had to do exactly as you were told .. he dominated everything..'

As a result this individual lacked drive and independence so he reflects upon his life course with some regret:

That very expensive education wasted on me because I didn't extract enough from itif I could go back now oh my goodness I am not saying that I would earn more money.... but I would perhaps have led a very different life ...'

The situation was not dissimilar to other male participants', where the father was often the protagonist, the decision-maker, the breadwinner. Sebastian describes his father's influence over his initial career choice:

..... no I did not want to go into the steel works I wanted, I really wanted to join the police force.... the police weren't regarded in those days as a suitable profession, then again it's my father's perception of life ...'

Sebastian was able to overcome this paternalistic dominance but not before he had wasted a number of years training to be a manager within the steel industry. Unlike the other individuals in the sample he reflected upon his life course more optimistically and used his inheritance positively.

For Chris, his school life was interrupted on several occasions to accommodate the relocation of his father's job. Finally, as he approached 15, he was moved yet again but on this occasion it was due to a period of hospitalisation for his mother. This time, Chris went to live with his aunt. It was not surprising that he failed the 11-plus and did not consider himself to be very academic.

Jack spoke of a number of regrets not least being unable to pursue a career as a doctor. His father had made a number of decisions on his behalf including sending him to boarding school, where he described the abusive culture inflicted by the older boys as the norm. The narrative was littered with stories of conforming to expectations; be it those of his father, his wife or his children. For all of his

achievements this man was in the post-work period married, with sufficient amounts of capital but yet quite isolated. As he states: *'you can have too much of your own company and unfortunately my wife and I really in some ways we have grown apart.'* In carrying out the wishes or instructions of his father and working long hours within the family business, the net result in retirement was one of social isolation which was alleviated by turning to learning as a mechanism to find a sense of self and lessen the social isolation.

Conclusion

Each participant has presented a learning journey which when subjected to a detailed analysis, is bound by constraints be it parental, societal, educational or gender. Moving away from these synopses what now follows is a report and discussion of the key themes that have emerged from the data.

Part two: The impact of inheritance and schooling upon lifelong learning and reproduction

Introduction

This chapter presents the thematic findings of the learning journeys of the participants' biography and therefore, it is historically located. It commences with the formative years and continues to include secondary education, post-school learning and working life. In reaching conclusions about the key themes which emerged from the data, it was necessary to give due consideration to the social, economic and cultural context into which the participants were born and educated. The findings discussed in this section are chronologically organised into four sub-themes. The first theme explores the social space occupied by the parents of the participants and the influence that this had on education and the outcome of this 'inheritance'. The second theme considers the parental acquisition of capital and the impact of this on the formation of the habitus. The third theme attends to the concepts of capital, parental habitus and the pedagogic contract, a complex and dynamic interrelationship which impacts upon reproduction. The fourth and final theme considers *the consequence of the gendered habitus and its impact upon lifelong learning: careers for the men, jobs for the women*. An integrated discussion is followed by a conclusion for this section.

The parental social space, class and inheritance

The findings from this research present a varied picture of the social spaces which were occupied by the participants' parents. To explore these phenomenon, social space, with this particular sample, a comparative approach has been adopted by making a evaluation between the concept of capital and the Registrar General's

(RG) scale of social class circa 1951⁸ (cited in Rose, 1995; Prandy, 1999) (see Table 12:150). The RG representation is a social taxonomy where the social space is organised on the basis of economic outputs, i.e. work (Rose, 1995; Prandy, 1999). However the social field is a multi-dimensional space which can be organised and theorised in different ways (Bourdieu, 1985) and consequently I shall return to capital and the transfer of capital in relation to the impact upon education.

The RG scale is a useful reference point but it is not without flaws. Marriage, for example, removed women from the system. Given that all of the participants' parents were married allocation to a grouping is made here on the basis of the father's occupation. It can be seen that participant's parents came from different social backgrounds (see Table 12:150). Only one parent could be assigned to a 'professional class' due to his occupation as a pharmacist. Three parents were allocated to the managerial class; an engineer, a higher executive officer in the RAF, (a role that was largely managerial), and a 'white collar' office manager. Two were allocated to the skilled manual class as they worked within the steel industry. One parent was unclassified as he had no gainful employment and one parent was in the unskilled category working as a bill poster. Seven of eight of the participants' mothers were housewives; and all the women were married therefore, their class status would be captured by reference to their husbands employment. This reinforces the inadequacy of measuring and defining social class purely by occupation and (male) gender, as women once married become invisible and in so doing the dominant status of the men is reinforced.

⁸ This version has been utilised here as the parents (fathers) of the participants would have been working at this time and therefore classified according to the 1951 scale.

Table 12: Disaggregation of sample by parental social class circa 1951

Participant	Fathers Occupation	Mothers Occupation	Social Class (1950 schema)	Capital
Jeanette	Engineer	Post mistress	Managerial and technical Class II	Evidence of cultural, social and economic capital
Alan	Initially working for the post office – then became a professional gambler (not in paid employment)	Housewife until widowed then sought employment as a cook.	Unclassified	Father held some social capital, economic capital was acquired and lost, evidence of some cultural capital
Maggie	Steel worker-manual tool grinder	Housewife	Skilled manual Class III M	No evidence of capital
Sebastian	Steel worker tool maker	Housewife	Skilled manual Class III M	No evidence of social or economic capital some cultural capital
Karen	White collar job-manager in a brewery office	Housewife	Managerial and technical Class II	Some economic capital no evidence of cultural or social capital
Chris	Royal Air Force (higher executive officer)	Housewife	Managerial and technical Class II	Social and economic capital evident cultural capital limited but not absent
Jack	Pharmacist	Housewife	Professional Class I	Significant economic, cultural and social capital
Constance	Bill poster	Housewife	Unskilled Class V	No evidence of economic or social capital some limited cultural capital

The parental acquisition of capital and the formation of the habitus

Of the 16 parents only two had any formal qualifications; one as an engineer, the other as a pharmacist, which suggest that their parents had sufficient economic capital to fund education beyond an initial elementary education of maths and English. One parent was in the RAF, initially as an Executive Officer and later promoted to a Higher Executive Officer. For the remainder (13 parents) departure from elementary education occurred at 11, 12 or 14 years of age, and this was usually dependent upon the nature of the home circumstances. For example, those households with limited income were the most eager to ensure their children entered paid employment. One participant (Alan) described how his father worked as an errand boy aged 12 and another (Constance) how her mother was sent to work at the carpet factory aged 14 so that she could contribute to the household income. One other parent (of Jeanette) had to start work in the post office aged 14 so her mother could care for her sick father. Clearly the norm for the majority of participants' parents was to leave school upon the completion of elementary education and seek paid work relative to their skills and abilities, or simply take up whatever job was available to them. With one exception, the female parents of the participants withdrew from the labour market at the point of marriage or childbirth. Only one woman remained in employment as a post mistress throughout her marriage; she combined this role with childcare as the living accommodation was adjacent to the post office. A second woman was forced out to work in order to provide an income for herself and her son following the death of her husband. With no qualifications there were limited opportunities and she found employment as a cook. Her son recalls the following:

'Yes she did I am sure it killed her I mean heavy work in the kitchens at the age of 60. I mean it's hell isn't it really but she

never gave it away, I saw her once walking home not long before she died and it was quite a walk from the station and I was standing in the front window and I looked at her coming up the road and I thought God she looks tired and she saw me looking and she immediately perked up but I realised that she was much more tired than she would admit; used to dye her hair to pass for 10 years younger, hard in those days.' (Alan)

The gender division of labour as it is depicted here for participants' parents accurately reflects the social expectations of the day and was actively reinforced in social and welfare policy. More importantly there were differences in the relative amounts of capital the women had either obtained, or had the opportunity to accumulate when compared to the men. Predominately the female parents, seven out of eight, were housewives and consequently had limited exposure to alternate fields where capital could be acquired:

'even the experience of the position occupied in the social macrocosm is determined, or at least modified, by the directly experienced effects of social interaction within these social microcosms (office, workshop, business, neighbourhood, in the extended family).' (Bourdieu, 1999:6)

With the exception of one participant's mother who worked, the gender inequality which existed for the remainder went unrecognised and was reinforced by the lack of exposure to the macrocosm, so the women's identity was of wife and mother and is reflected in the following extracts from the data:

'Nothing, because in those days your mother didn't she was repressed... she was not without talent she sang on the radio... she was allowed out once a week.' (Alan)

'No it's the old age Victorian thing women don't work' (Maggie)

'I was very lucky you know I never had to come home to an empty house, mum was always there.' (Jeanette)

'.....you know that was what was expected in those days you know dad like had to keep her.' (Chris)

The important issue for consideration here is how far this masculine domination influenced the habitus formation of the participants in relation to educational choice and opportunities. One participant recalls the difficulties this led to for her:

'So my mother lived quite an unfulfilled life I think and part of the way that my mother sort of expected so much of me was because she probably lived out her ambitions in me which was quite hard for me and which has had quite an effect on me over the course of my life.' (Constance)

It was very unusual for the women (parents) to inform what would be considered to be 'important' decisions or have a significant influence. With one exception, participants either identified that 'their parents' or 'their father' made the decisions for the family as a whole and for the participant on an individual basis. Overall, participants grew up within a family where the social norms of the day dictated a traditional family structure. The men (fathers) had the advantage of gaining and utilising forms of capital, relative to their position within the social space, by the very exposure to the macrocosm, which was much wider and more complex than for the women (mothers). The men through their exposure to the various fields of work, family, friends and community utilised this capital to maintain and sustain gender inequality. The embodied habitus of the participants' parents reinforced the gender division of labour with the woman as wife and homemaker and the father as the worker provider. As a result seven of the eight participants were exposed to the habitus of a dominant patriarch and a subservient mother, which has consequences for the participants. This matter will be attended to throughout this chapter.

The availability and transfer of capital and the impact upon the educational field

In the work of Bourdieu and Passeron, as presented in *'Reproduction in education, society and culture'* (1977), the father's occupation was utilised as the measure of cultural capital. As a result working-class families in particular were not considered to have any cultural capital, with the middle and professional classes holding varying amounts accordingly. The findings of this current study contradict the perception of working-class families as 'cultureless'. The data revealed rich insights into the family status and value which move beyond the stratification of class based upon the father's occupation, and this has accordingly led to the conclusions regarding capital.

Participants were born into different amounts of capital as can be seen in Table 12, which identifies the indices of capital that was located. It is evident that the provision of cultural capital was varied and it included: the provision of books; additional coaching for school examinations; encouragement to undertake additional extracurricular activities including piano lessons; and trips to the museum; and exposure to the theatre, arts and music. I would suggest that the provision of additional resources to promote educational success, for example books and coaching reflects parental motivation and their perceived or desired educational aspirations for their child. These aspirations took priority over other forms of cultural capital. Where parents had sufficient money there was exposure to the theatre, music, dancing or piano lessons but this was secondary to, or less important than, encouraging academic success.

Table 13: Indices of cultural social and economic capital

Participant	Cultural capital	Social capital	Economic capital
Jeanette	Books, music, radio, theatre trips, art. Both parents invested 'time' with participant. Denied a television until exams were complete	Wide circle of friends for both parents, community networks evident	Both parents worked, owned or had access to a car. All three children attended university
Alan	Various types of books at home, father and brother read. Father spent considerable time with participant-positive emphasis on educational achievement	Some social capital for father via circle of acquaintances. Mother had very limited access to social capital	Was a home owner – became bankrupt. So had both gained and lost economic capital, once lost it was not recovered. Mother was forced out to work when widowed to provide for participant. Holidays prior to bankruptcy
Maggie	Participant had dancing lessons but beyond that there was little material evidence of cultural capital. No evidence of support for educational achievements or encouragement to progress into a career	Some evidence of social capital for the father largely through his working life – mother a housewife. Both held very narrow and uninformed views of societal issues reflecting an overall lack of capital	There was limited evidence upon which to make a judgement other than the status of the father as a working class man – no indication of economic capital e.g. car, holidays etc.
Sebastian	Piano lessons, additional coaching for the 11 plus. Parents were positively motivated towards ensuring academic success	Father had some social capital via his exposure to work and the associated networks. Mother a housewife. So generally limited social capital	Very limited economic capital – father changed jobs to support his family even though he disliked the shift work- it bought in additional the monies required for basic subsistence
Chris	Books were available and the father read-participant describes himself as more practical and as a result more interested in 'doing' than reading. Father was very motivated towards ensuring his sons success-recognised when academic help was required yet expected the school to meet all learning needs through extra homework.	Father had social capital via his rank in the RAF. Mother a housewife so limited exposure to capital restricted to the immediate community and the immediate family	Sufficient economic capital to ensure all basic subsistence needs were met. Participant suggested that the father ensured his wife had all the latest gadgets. Yet no mention of holidays or a car

Karen	Whilst there were books at home there was an indifference or ambivalence towards learning. Caring and supportive parents but the expectation was that learning occurred in school	Some exposure to social capital for the father – mother’s role focused upon caring for her family and her parents. Semi rural community very restricted exposure to the macrocosm	Sufficient economic capital to ensure all basic subsistence needs were met. No mention of holidays or car or any consumer goods
Jack	Books, music, radio, theatre trips, art. Considerable transfer of cultural capital – father highly motivated towards ensuring academic qualifications were achieved	Father well connected through his ‘business’ both with the community and more widely	Father had his own pharmacy business, home owner, also had a car, enjoyed holidays as a family
Constance	Books, reading, encouragement to learn, encyclopaedias. Considerable transfer of cultural capital (within their means) both parents were highly motivated towards ensuring the academic success of their daughter	Very limited access to social capital for both parents, father a ‘bill poster’ described as a ‘ <i>very lowly job.</i> ’ Mother a housewife-living and working in a deprived area	No economic capital

Only two of the eight participants (Jeanette and Jack) were born into considerable amounts of economic, social and cultural capital. Indicators of this have been taken to include: the professional occupations of the parent(s) resulting in economic capital; wealth in the form of home ownership; cars, books, television and radio, private education; and holidays. Social capital is evident from the descriptions the participants provided of the connections within the macrocosm, including the workplace and the wider community. Cultural capital is apparent from the range and choice of music (usually opera and classical), an appreciation of art, trips to the museum and a healthy appreciation of literature. The two participants (Jeanette and Jack) who inherited this capital both attended university and successfully achieved their undergraduate degrees: a classical example of reproduction.

Six participants were born into a limited availability of capital, but in particular economic capital was restricted, as is reflected in the following excerpts:

'..... we were frequently out of money by Wednesday and it was bread and lard for Thursday and Friday me mother would go down to the works gates to get money off me dad so that she could call in at the local shop and bring some food.....we always had a Sunday dinner might not have had meat again the rest of the week but we always had a Sunday dinner and you know the house was filled with love.' (Sebastian)

'.....because she was a very good mother she ran a very tight ship on a small amount of resources we always looked very good, she always wanted us to do very well.' (Constance)

'...so he scraped a living after the war (as a professional gambler) until he died but again that was in decline and I don't think it helped that I was going to school and needed a uniform...' (Alan)

But the most important point for consideration is not necessarily the relative amounts of capital, but the ability to utilise what was available effectively; that is to negotiate the educational field. The relative amounts of capital held by the remaining participants' parents was not a positive indicator of the promotion of education as a means of improving life chances. Both Alan and Constance achieved the 11-plus and went on to a university education even though the amounts of social and economic capital were limited or absent. It was evident from the majority of the data, six of eight narratives, that the parents realised just how important and relevant education was a means of improving life chances, and a grammar school education was deemed to be essential if admission to *'middle class'* occupations was to be achieved (McKibbin, 1998:210).

Of the remaining sample, the parents of Maggie and Karen were somewhat ambivalent with regards to education; indeed there was no evidence to suggest that they placed any value in education or learning. There was a complete lack of any parental motivation towards encouraging their daughters' learning in a

meaningful way: for example, there were no aspirations for them to work towards a career. There was some evidence of limited economic capital, as neither participant suggested a lack of resources to buy food or other basic essentials. What was lacking was the transfer of cultural capital; there was no overt parental interest in encouraging their daughters' academic pursuits and consequently both women failed their 11-plus. This finding is a further example of 'reproduction': the replication of the social norms of women as wives and mothers and, as a consequence the reinforcement of the parental habitus.

Both Sebastian and Chris were strongly encouraged by their fathers to do well at school; a high degree of parental motivation was manifest throughout the narratives. Sebastian had access to less economic capital than Chris, and he told how his father changed his job to try and improve the financial situation for his family. For Chris, whose father was in the RAF, he recalled how his father ensured that the family were well provided for. Whilst Chris had access to larger amounts of capital than Sebastian, he failed the 11-plus and subsequently left school at 15, by which time he was simply quite desperate to go to work. Sebastian successfully achieved the 11-plus but did not go to grammar school; he really did not enjoy his school years. Whilst there were differences in the relative amounts of capital, here the individual with the least capital was able to attain the educational advantage, yet rejected the opportunity to attend a grammar school.

Returning to cultural capital

Whilst social and economic capital are significant when considering the educational field, cultural capital and its successful transfer is of paramount importance because 'the family' is primarily responsible for its transmission. As a consequence of this transfer, children will acquire a habitus which reflects the

'family' or parental dispositions. The attention the participants' parents offered to their child throughout the formative years, but principally prior to attending primary school, influenced the transfer of cultural capital and the formation of the 'learning' habitus. Whilst mindful that cultural capital is a relational concept, and that it cannot be viewed in isolation from the other forms of capital, there were varying degrees of evidence of cultural capital throughout the data that were quite distinct from both social and economic capital.

As would be expected with those families where there was evidence of large amounts of capital, (as was the case for the families of Jeanette and Jack), each child developed a successful and healthy 'learning habitus' as a direct result of the availability of economic capital, in particular as this financed schooling within the independent sector. But the transfer of cultural capital was also important and the process differed somewhat from the remaining participants in that they received a varied and wide exposure to the arts, music and theatre, in addition to the very important social transfer which occurs as a direct result of positive parental motivation. Jeanette noted of her parents:

'she was there for us when we came home from school.... so that you could come home and tell her what happened in school...and she didn't say I am too busy.'

'.....on a Saturday morning he would say right who's coming into town with me..... and I'd go and we'd look around the shops buy something have a coffee and talk about things and come home.... so my father was very special.'

Jack recalled how *'dad used to take me to school every morning'* and how he came to appreciate opera as he describes:

When I was a young lad ...we had a roaring fire... and they used to have on a Sunday night Palm Court Hotel and they used to have

people singing classical music songs from the shows operetta and mother and father listened to that.... and that's where I suppose I must have got my first love of that type of music really...'

Those families with relatively little social or economic capital, for example, the parents of Alan and Constance, were also able to utilise the transfer of cultural capital to successfully influence the 'learning habitus' of their child, which facilitated the academic success and ultimately elevated the social space they occupied as adults in comparison to their parents. Constance remembers being taught by her mother to read at a very early age:

'...is that my mum had two books..... and I could actually read before I went to school because my mom had taught me to read.... I could write my name.' (Constance)

In addition to this, her father encouraged her learning and at Christmas time he would purchase a children's encyclopaedia.

For Alan the situation was very similar, his father was the protagonist in driving his education as he recalls: *'so he came out of the slums and was passionate about education, so education was very important and I was desperate to go to school'*.

Yet Alan unfortunately missed a considerable proportion of school after contracting quite a protracted illness and he remembers:

'I missed so much school.... they put me down a year.....my father was furious because he had been coaching me in my absence..... and he went up the school.....'

As a result of this parental intervention, Alan was returned to his original school class. Cultural capital is far more than the physical material provision of books, or trips to the museum or art gallery. Perhaps more importantly it is the provision of

parental motivation and support given to children in the desire to ensure success in academic pursuits.

I now return to the participant families of Maggie and Karen who occupied a similar social space and comparable amounts of capital to Alan and Constance and yet the transfer of cultural capital was nonexistent. Neither Maggie nor Karen made reference to any evidence of cultural transfer of capital; there was no parental motivation to impart a 'learning habitus'. Both participants were female but their stories reflected differing parental attitudes. Maggie was born and raised in an industrial town and as an only child reported a difficult relationship with her parents and there were no expectations for her to develop beyond the stereotype of wife and mother. For Karen the situation was somewhat different, as she was born and educated in a close-knit semi-rural community and she enjoyed a healthy relationship with her parents, she describes a warm and loving environment which was also one without any pressure to succeed. Therefore without parental motivation, there was no transfer of cultural capital and no incentive to develop a learning habitus.

The transfer of capital, but in particular cultural capital, has led to the formation of the habitus reflecting family status and value. Whilst this is a dynamic concept which is constantly evolving through exposure to other life experiences, parental influences upon the evolution of the habitus are profound and emerge throughout the participants' stories. As a result of parental influences, or as a consequence of the inheritance, all the participants have experienced varying degrees of consequential dissonance (as alluded to in Part One of this chapter). This is an issue I shall return to throughout the findings and conclusion of this work. These findings serve to reinforce the Bourdieusian perspective of the complex

interrelationship of capital, habitus and social space. I refer here to Alan and Constance who were born into working-class families with very limited amounts of capitals. However through the provision of cultural capital, mainly transferred via the provision of books, encouragement to read and spell, and additional coaching they both passed the 11-plus and went on to a university education. These individuals were able use their education to move into professional working roles and, in so doing, make advances within the social space.

Capital, parental habitus and the pedagogic contract

A further issue that emerged from the data was the complexity of the tripartite relationship between the child (participant), the parents and the school. It was evident throughout the data that different types of relationships existed, that might be identified through a concept Bourdieu terms the '*pedagogic contract*':

'It would be necessary to examine more completely the different forms of the relationship between the often essentialist and totalizing decrees of the school system and the parental judgements made both prior to, and especially as a consequence of, those of the school. This relationship is heavily dependent on the representation, which varies considerably by social category, that families make of the 'pedagogic contract' which itself varies simultaneously in the degree of trust placed in school and the teachers and in the degree of understanding of their explicit and, above all, implicit requirements.' (Bourdieu, 1999: 509).

The pedagogic contract is a complex phenomenon which brings together capital, habitus and field and reflects the parental ability to navigate the educational field to '*successfully play the game*' on behalf of their child. The contract is dependent upon a number of factors including; the degree of trust placed in the school, parental judgement, and the implicit and explicit expectations of the teachers and the parents (Bourdieu, 1999). What is also significant is the relative weight of

social and symbolic capital held by the parents, as these are key to achieving and maintaining a successful dialogue with the school. The degree of autonomy of the child within this contact was minimal: generally the participants followed the instructions or wishes of their parents and teachers, and the child had either a passive voice or no voice at all. There were significant degrees of variation within this contract for each participant and therefore a summary is provided in Table 14 below.

Table 14: The pedagogic contract

Participant	The 11 plus examination	The pedagogic contract
Jeanette	Passed (or equivalent of)	Parents took an active interest in all aspects of schooling. Importance placed upon homework – secondary schooling attended an all girl’s school – to avoid distractions. Regular discussions with both parents to promote the importance of educational achievement. School was a positive environment with female teachers, who had degrees, as positive role models.
Alan	Passed	Father very controlling and domineering in relation to all aspects of school would visit school, or write, frequently if he was unhappy with any curricular issues. Actively coached his son through the 11 plus. Upon the death of the father, the mother stepped in and found paid work to provide financial support for son to complete his university education.
Maggie	Failed	Parents quite controlling indeed domineering they would not allow participant to pursue her job of choice yet did not liaise with school about alternative subjects to aid job/ career prospects.
Sebastian	Passed	Parents encouraged participant to pass 11-plus, yet did not attend grammar school and left secondary school with no qualifications. Participant did not enjoy schooling. Parents voice dominant, not allowed to pursue job of choice as a policeman. Yet parents made many sacrifices paid for piano lessons despite little or no economic capital.
Karen	Failed	Parents caring and supportive but a closed existence within the extended family. No hard evidence of pedagogical contract, no expectations of grammar school attendance.
Chris	Failed	Father very actively engaged in participant’s education particularly as there were several disruptions due to his job. But the role of educating the child was seen to be that of the teacher and the institution or the school system. There was no evidence to suggest that the father personally coached his son at any point in his development.

Jack	Passed	Participant privately educated, father played a key role in education made many decision on behalf of his son, was frequently in meetings with school masters re: progress and progression routes ensuring the undertaking of the correct O and later 'A' levels to apply for pharmacy at university.
Constance	Passed	Whilst this participant was born into a family with very little social and economic capital both parents recognised the importance of education thus there was a considerable investment to ensure a successful outcome. Actively coached through the 11-plus, passed and went onto read zoology at university, invited to stay on and undertake PhD.

The impact of the pedagogic contract upon primary school

The social space occupied by the participants and their parents, combined with the relative strength and impact of the pedagogic contract, led to differing experiences within the educational field across the whole sample. The degree to which each participant was successfully prepared, or ready to attend primary school was influenced by the amount of cultural capital that had been invested in, or transferred to the child (participant) by their parent(s). The greater the transfer of cultural capital, the better the child adjusted to the demands of school life. Obviously Jeanette and Jack had a productive school life, as the transfer of cultural capital was evident throughout their descriptions of the home environment. Yet those individuals who may be seen to hold very limited amounts of cultural capital, for example Alan and Constance, were able to use what capital they had as a means to *'off set the educational handicaps related to the unequal social class distribution of linguistic and cultural capital'* (Bourdieu, 1990:76). The parents of each participant made use of what recourse they had to give their child the best possible preparation for school. Constance for example was able to read and write by the time she commenced school at the age of five; these were skills she had been taught by her mother. Alan identified the period before he commenced primary school as crucial and recalls watching his father and brother read, and

sitting with his mother whilst trying to spell. He also spoke of his father's determination for him to attain the 11-plus; *'there had been a lot of home coaching from my father who was determined I would, he had become obsessed with the 11 plus.'* With regard to these four participants there was evidence of a strong pedagogic contract.

The strength of the pedagogic contract was not related to the volume of capitals *per se* but was more dependent upon the habitus or the parental aspirations for their child's educational development and the potential impact that this may have upon their future. For a number of participants, for example Maggie and Karen, their parents were somewhat ambivalent with regard to their daughters' education and neither exhibited any evidence of transfer of cultural capital or a strong pedagogic contract. As a result of this apparent lack of interest, neither individual passed their 11-plus, as they recall:

'I remember that I was never top of the class so I wasn't expected to pass the 11-plus and I didn't so I didn't disappoint anybody there.' (Maggie)

And for Karen; *'I'm not too sure we had the best education, it was a lovely small school.... I didn't pass my 11-plus.'*

Sebastian and Chris each had parents who were interested in their child's schooling, but the evidence suggested that learning was viewed to be something that occurred only at school and for which the teachers were solely responsible:

'I went to school, I was rubbish at school.... the teaching methods were not suitable for me to learn, most of the teachers were very oldI learnt by rote anyway I passed my 11 plus went to a secondary modern school ... left with virtually no qualifications....' (Sebastian)

The realities of the pedagogic contract were very different for each participant and reflected the complexities of the relationships between the parents, the school and the child. The varying degree of attention this was afforded by the parents of the participants was closely linked to their educational aspirations and motivations for their child. I would suggest that the strength of the pedagogic contract at this point would be tested by the ability to achieve the 11-plus examination and move to grammar school, which for many parents would be seen as the first step on a journey to achieving a successful career.

The impact of the pedagogic contract upon secondary school and the implications for lifelong learning

Experiences regarding secondary schooling differed for individual participants. These experiences can be divided into three categories and this mirrors the educational provision of the day: half of the sample (four participants) attended secondary modern schools; two participants were educated in the independent sector; and two participants attended grammar school. The 1944 Education Act signalled a '*free and universal system of education*' (Jones, 2003:16) yet the reality was schooling via a system of selection, with the mode of selection being the 11-plus examination. The primary subjects considered were English and maths, and for many participants this had been the key focus of their educational endeavours. Private education was still allowed to operate outside the state system and served to reinforce the impacts of social disadvantage: those with sufficient capital who could play the game educated their children through a system of private education. Through a system of selection, others were able to obtain grammar school places and the remainder found themselves at the local secondary modern school. A hierarchical tiered system of schooling existed which,

in theory, did little to promote social mobility as is demonstrated in Table 15 below. For the two participants who were educated in the independent sector, Jeanette and Jack, their learning journey continued to university as it did for the two participants, Alan and Constance who both attended grammar school. The four participants who attended the secondary modern left with few, if any qualifications. It is however important to locate these findings contextually, as generally the participants have experienced varying degrees of social mobility. The Conservative Government of the 1950s built upon the achievement of the previous Labour administration and was fortunate to enjoy a number of years of economic success. The participants of this study were undertaking their compulsory education and moving into the job market at a time when the country was enjoying a period of what Ainley describes as '*Welfare Capitalism*' (Ainley, 1999:31). Throughout this time, up until approximately the 1970s, there was both increased educational opportunity and job prosperity from which the participants of this study have benefited.

Upon the conclusion of their initial educational journey, which for some was the completion of secondary school and for others the attainment of a university degree, the participants entered the world of work. A number of participants continued their learning journey at different points throughout their working life, usually to gain additional qualifications required for retraining or promotion.

Table 15: secondary education and the impact upon post school learning

Participant	The 11 plus examination	Secondary school	Post school education	Other qualifications	Job/Career
Jeanette	Passed (or equivalent of)	Privately funded college for girls	University- degree in physics	Postgraduate teaching qualification	Medical physicist then became a teaching (to fit in with childcare)
Alan	Passed	Scholarship to grammar school (partly boarded)	University- 1 st degree in English	Postgraduate teaching qualification	Teacher- all his professional working life
Maggie	Failed	Secondary modern	Undertook HND at night school and then day release when moved employ	Advanced driving instructor Road safety officer	Numerous job roles to fit in with child care – driving instructor, road safety officer
Sebastian	Passed	Secondary modern	Successfully completed apprentice in steel industry	Achieved numerous other vocational qualifications and in addition a 1 st degree in management	Steel worker, sales, caretaker, and finally senior role within local authorities - contracts
Karen	Failed	Secondary modern	Shorthand and typing	European driving licence. Various NHS mandatory courses	Numerous secretarial roles to accommodate child rearing
Chris	Failed	Secondary modern (moved on two occasions)	Unable to state to the nature of the work (official secrets act)	Typing qualifications	In the civil service for 33 years.
Jack	Passed	Privately funded boarding school	University	Pharmacist	Pharmacist- inherited fathers business
Constance	Passed	Grammar school	University – 1 st degree in zoology MSc Zoology	Postgraduate teaching qualification Various OU qualifications (for interest only).	Worked in Australia as a demonstrator/lecturer on return to the UK worked as long-term supply teacher in an independent school.

The consequence of the gendered habitus and its impact upon lifelong learning: careers for the men, jobs for the women

The participants of this study were entering the world of work in the late 1960s and early 1970s where the effects of post-war Britain were beginning to embed political, social and cultural changes. Of particular significance here are the changes that occurred between learning, gender and the occupation of the social space. Masculinity was undergoing transformation, and as femininity became less resolutely connected to motherhood, (Brooke, 2001:774) work was gradually becoming the domain of both men and women. As women moved between the microcosm of the home and the macrocosm of work, their social space and the availability of capital was enhanced which challenged previously held stereotypes of femininity.

The findings of this study reflect the changing concept of femininity but this is contrasted with a gendered habitus where women, as opposed to men, have combined the world of work with the demands of home and child-care. The outcome of this 'compromise' has led to a complex series of jobs for the women, in complete contrast to the men who have generally been able to pursue their career uninterrupted and supported by their spouse. The contradiction of the female inheritance is the gendered habitus which has rendered the women in the sample unable or unwilling to pursue their own career, despite their educational achievements. The stark contrast between the male and female participants' working life is demonstrated by the fact that the women have submitted to the 'gendered habitus' and, in so doing, marriage and childcare have taken precedence over any career aspirations. One important point to note was the family size for each of the participants, which in comparison to previous generations was notably reduced (see Table 16 below).

Table 16: number of children born to each participant

Participant	Number of children
Jeanette	2
Alan	1
Maggie	2
Sebastian	2
Karen	2
Chris	3
Jack	2
Constance	1

Women and the impact of the gendered habitus upon working life

Table 17 reflects the female participants by qualification and the range of job roles each has undertaken. Without exception every woman gave up their job when they became pregnant and normally did not resume any paid employment until their children entered the school system. This reflects the social norms of the period and reinforces the impact of social policy; a matter I attended to in Chapter three. Even then employment had to be sufficiently flexible so that it could be reconciled with the demands of childcare, for example during school holidays. Regardless of the type of education the women had received, or the nature and amount of qualifications they had attained, for each of them there was a clear drive to combine childcare whilst working to make a contribution to the household income. Lifelong learning in any form was a tool to be utilised to retrain as a means to have sufficient skills to find alternative sources of income. Educational achievement was not sufficient to override the power of the gendered female habitus. In contrast to their mothers these participants combined paid work with the demands of marriage, home and childcare.

Table 17: female participants by qualification(s) and job roles.

Participant	Post school education	Other qualifications	Job(s)
Jeanette	University-degree in physics	Postgraduate teaching qualification	Medical physicist upon graduation, left when pregnant with first child later retrained as a teacher, to fit in with childcare.
Maggie	Undertook HND at night school and then day release when changed employer	Advanced driving instructor Road safety officer	Numerous job roles left work when pregnant with first child retrained as a driving instructor to fit in with childcare the later became a road safety officer
Karen	Shorthand and typing	European driving licence. Various NHS mandatory courses	Initially a secretary for a solicitor – divorced and with two young children undertook numerous secretarial roles to accommodate child-rearing and provide an income. Later worked within the NHS.
Constance	University – 1 st degree in zoology MSc zoology	Postgraduate teaching qualification, various OU qualifications- (for interest only).	Worked overseas as a demonstrator. Finally employed in teaching (supply only)

Jeanette had gained a degree in physics from a prestigious university, following which she successfully gained employment in the NHS as a medical physicist, yet she had no difficulty in giving up what most probably would have been a promising career (as she herself remarked '*medical physicists are a rare breed*'). On jobs and children she said:

'When I went for job interviews in certain companies where they said 'have you got a boyfriend?' – yes 'oh well you will just get married have children and leave' ... and in fact that's what I did.... I left when I was pregnant because I wanted to bring up my children myself.'

With this particular woman, despite her excellent educational achievements, her key focus was clear: *'my husband was my whole life, and the children.'* As she reflected upon her life she acknowledged the significance of her own mother who fruitfully combined the role of working wife and mother *'she was the type of mother that I had wanted to be.'* In seeking to emulate her own mother, but not wishing to return to the demands of working within a hospital environment, she returned to university and studied a postgraduate teaching qualification; *'because of looking after my children, what can I do? I want to be with them, and then logically I said "ahh I can teach".'* She then combined supply teaching with her family commitments. Typically she did this to contribute towards an improved standard of living for the family:

'I was teaching looking after two children a quarter of an acre garden and a husband... when my children were through university my salary was going straight out to them and so when the children were earning my money was my own.'

Whilst this participant enjoyed her teaching job she had no ambitions to develop this into a career as she clearly identifies:

'I never wanted to be a head of department, I never wanted to be head mistress, I would worry myself sick I was quite happy that I taught in the lower school.... I have been very fortunate in that I wasn't permanent but I was there at that school for 20 years.'

Maggie had been prohibited from pursuing the career of her choice by her parents, she so desperately wanted to be a hairdresser, but being unable to do this resulted in a very disjointed job history, as she recalls:

'but it was that initial leaving school and not being able to do what I had chosen to do and I think that is probably why I have gone from one thing to another.'

After a number of jobs working in *'technical drawing'* she finally found a job she thoroughly enjoyed selling cosmetics for a company in a large chemist organisation. Once married she became pregnant and as a result had to leave a job she very much enjoyed:

'...then my first child came along and not like these days you left work and you didn't go back so I was a stay at home mom for a while. Well she was three, almost three, when my son was born and we moved around with my husband's job quite a bit ...'

The family were disrupted on a number of occasions as they geographically relocated to accommodate the husband's career. Anxious to make a contribution to the family income and look after the children, Maggie began to seek out opportunities and gravitated towards becoming a driving instructor as she believed that this would provide an income and sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of children, as she recalls:

'I was wanting to get this qualification (advanced driving instructor) so that I could have it under my belt, so that when they were a bit older I could start to work.'

Over a number of years this woman struggled to fund herself though all the necessary stages to become a driving instructor and finally bought her own business:

'I sort of worked around the school you know worked around the kids.....I felt that my place was at home with them and that is why I ran my own business because if the children were ill, the children would come first...'

Karen was married at the age of 19 and in quick succession had two children. Qualified as a shorthand typist, Karen sought out varying types of work and was

able to do this as her mother cared for the children. Reflecting on her first marriage, she comments:

'when we got married I did a succession of things. I worked when the boys were little.....in the meantime my husband and I split up... I had got the boys who were about 6 and 7he didn't pay me any maintenance or anything so I'd got to find something.'

As a young divorcee she was forced into the world of work in order that she could provide for her children. She was limited; however, to the relative amounts of economic capital that she could acquire and after working part-time in an office and delivering papers she contacted a private agency with whom she found employment at a local insurance broker. Initially this was part-time but it became both full-time and long-term as she remained there for 27 years, only leaving when the company were taken over by a larger organisation.

Similarly to Jeanette, Constance had attended university and gained a degree in zoology. Furthermore, she secured a funded place to undertake a PhD immediately following her first degree, an option that ended prematurely when persuaded by her fiancé not to pursue it. She quit university and followed him overseas. She reflects upon this decision with great regret; *'but my own career was shattered right from the time that my first husband was ill'*. Leaving university with a first class degree and settling for a Master's degree, she never managed to achieve her PhD, yet supported her fiancé (then husband) through both his PhD, and a terminal illness. Looking back she recalls:

'Because we had five good years out in (place omitted) my husband got his PhD and then we came back home, I'd just had my son before we came back.....we came back in 1969 and in 1973 my husband was diagnosed with an incurable brain tumourI had realised that I wasn't made to stay at home and look after babies and I thought to myself well the only thing I can really do is go into teaching.'

This was not a job prospect that she relished, in fact she *'definitely didn't like it'* but the home circumstances dictated, out of necessity she must be the breadwinner. Returning to university to undertake a postgraduate teaching qualification, she found employment teaching in a private school but was both mentally and physically exhausted after the death of her first husband and eventually gave up work. She remarried quite quickly following the death of her first husband and she remarked:

'we can't mess around here my son was only 9 and he needed a man around the place and it worked out very well..... I didn't work for about for four years ... but even then I used to get totally frantic when I was at home. I used to feel caged.'

Constance did eventually return to teaching as a source of both economic and social capital. Whilst she was able to return to employment it is quite evident that, when circumstances arose throughout her life, she submitted to a gendered habitus, much like her mother before her, and put the needs of others before herself.

Men and the impact of the gendered habitus upon working life

The working lives of the male participants were far less complex when compared to the women. In general the men in the sample did not compromise their career journey to accommodate maternity or childcare. The male habitus reflected, in part, that of the father as the major wage earner, the patriarch. There were however a number of differences within this sample or 'this generation' when compared to their fathers', which have impacted upon career trajectory. Three male participants Alan, Sebastian and Chris were born into limited amounts of capital yet, despite this Alan and Sebastian were able to utilise their learning, in particular their university qualifications, to advance their career. In so doing they

were able to gain additional social and economic capital which advanced their position in the social space. Chris failed the 11-plus and did not go on to any further education; he acquired a long-term post within the civil service where he was engaged in on-the-job learning. This provided both social and economic wealth and his position within the social space was very similar to that of his father who had served in the RAF. Jack was a classic example of reproduction. Having access to large amounts of capital from birth, he was privately educated, attended university and, albeit somewhat reluctantly, he followed in his father's footsteps as a pharmacist and worked in the family business. Table 18 below reflects the male participants by qualification and their career trajectories.

Table 18: Male participants by qualification and their career trajectories.

Participant	Post school education	Other qualifications	Career
Alan	University - 1 st degree in English	Postgraduate teaching qualification	Teacher - all his professional working life. Did move schools several times and achieve deputy head/ head of 6 th form
Sebastian	Successfully completed apprentice in steel industry	Achieved numerous other vocational qualifications, in addition a 1 st degree in management	Initially entered and completed indenture within the steel industry. Left and moved into sales, became a caretaker at the request of his wife which led into a senior management role within local authorities tendering for contracts
Chris	Unable to state the nature of the work (official secrets act)	Typing qualifications	Prior to entering the civil service where he remained for 33 years he briefly held two jobs one in a factory and the other working in 'stores'. Retiring early he also undertook part time work - indeed is still doing one job part-time at the age of 69.
Jack	University	Pharmacist	Pharmacist - inherited fathers business and worked there until he sold the shop and retired at the age of 68 when he sold the shop.

There were considerable differences between the narrative of the women and the men in this sample. For the females their working lives were disrupted by maternity and childcare which often led to a series of compromises where 'being there for the children' was the focus of their lives with the obvious impact this had upon any future career development. The men spoke of their responsibilities towards the home in a very different manner to the women; I have referred to each male participant accordingly:

Alan having decided to enter the teaching profession was able to progress in his career journey uninterrupted and, as a result, gained in both social and economic capital:

'Well I have moved about the country in a fairly restricted area London University and then Nottingham University then I went to Kettering for the grant school. I was an English teacher there then I set myself some targets which was that I would be successful and that I would achieve head of department.'

Without the constraints of maternity and childcare this participant was moved around the country working to gain experience in different schools until he became head of sixth-form and he reached his target; and ultimately his *'final designation was assistant head teacher.'* Despite the good career profile there remained a sense of unfulfilment:

'For somebody who is very lazy and has an over-inflated sense of duty, I think it may be an early grounding by my father in particular,.... but I was always doing things I didn't want to do because I felt it was the right or the logical or the necessary thing to do.'

He made reference to the demands of conforming to social norms:

'So many inhibitions on you as a person in order to marry and have a house and keep your job... and yet you are not aware of it too much when you are doing it.'

The effects of submitting to the male gendered habitus was reinforced in the absence of dialogue about his children: to whom he made only two minor references, one to his own son and one to his step-daughter.

Chris made little reference to his children; childcare was clearly the domain of his wife and he acknowledged the importance of her position as mother:

*'We are always giving them guidance one way or the other **the wife's a damn good mother you know, like my mum was** and a lot of it is down to the mum and dad's there for keeping the discipline.....'*

What was very apparent was the gendered, masculine role of husband and provider meant that he was not prepared to compromise the children's home, school and work life when he chose to accept voluntary redundancy after 33 years service. He consciously decided to opt for voluntary redundancy as opposed to a relocation package as all three children were still living at home and the youngest son was still in the school system. Chris stated clearly: *'so you see I wasn't prepared to give up the home... the children needed it.'* At the age of 53 he was not eligible to receive his pension so he undertook a number of part-time jobs to support the family, and he continues to work part time at the age of 69.

Jack, was quite obviously born into considerably more capital than the other individuals in the sample and his learning journey centred on gaining the appropriate qualifications so that he could inherit the family pharmacy business. Clearly, economic capital was important and reflected a gendered habitus of patriarchy, as he recalled; *'and you can't get married on no money.'* With the premature death of his father at the age of 55, maintaining the business became the focus of his life; *'so that was it then I had the shop on my shoulders from then on really.'* There was an additional burden in so far as his father had left two

instructions; *'whatever you do, two things; don't go into partnership with anybody, cause he'd seen that go down the chute, and don't buy more than one shop.'*

Consequently he worked very long hours to support his family and replicated his own school experience as *'both children were privately educated.'* He had also enjoyed family holidays when the children were young; *'and most of our married life when the children were young anyway we tried to have a couple of weeks holiday in Majorca that took the money'*. His relationship with the children was therefore as provider and it was his pharmacy career which enabled this.

Work became for him the focus, which provided the economic capital to provide for his family. This was a pattern which continued once the children were independent of their father:

'well I mean I used to leave here at quarter to eight in the morning and get back at half past seven at night have me dinner do the prescriptions and the VAT do all the paperwork I was going to bed at 2 and 3 in the morning.'

This pattern continued until the age of 68 when Jack decided to sell the business and retire, which was a difficult decision as the pharmacy shop had been in the family for over one hundred years. He had been working so hard that he had not taken a holiday in a number of years; *'In fact when I retired my passport was 19 years out of date.'* There were no expectations for his son, a qualified doctor, to inherit the business.

There was for one participant, Sebastian, a need to provide not only economic capital for the family, but in addition to take a more active role in the children's upbringing. In order to do this he gave up a very well paid job in sales to become a school caretaker:

Because of the amount of time I was spending away from home cause I was selling at the time, with two young kids and my wife persuaded me that it would be in my best interests to take a job as a school caretaker so I could see the kids.'

This led to a significant improvement in their overall quality of life; *'my quality of life improved no end I saw my kids growing up I could take them to school'*, but it was only ever intended to be an interim measure. In the long-term it would have been financially unsustainable, as he stated that he intended to; *'find another career before he was 40'* and quite serendipitously this did lead to a completely new career. Utilising his previous experience he was able to make significant changes within the workplace, and gain promotion. He also attended University, as a mature student at the age of 44, to undertake a degree in management. Following on from this he also achieved a range of vocational qualifications.

The country was at this point driven by the political ethos of Thatcherism where the notion competition was key, he described this as:

'Maggie Thatcher's regime I ended up sort of trying to learn as much as I could about competition and sort of flying about all over the country, so I went through a very intense period of about two years ... there was a very stark attitude at the time if you don't win you have lost your job and being in my fifties by this time I thought well if I lose my job that is it I shall never work again.....and I just continued to learn all the way through to leaving work when I was 60.'

One of the perceived outcomes of the 1944 Education Act was, through a system of selection i.e. the 11-plus examination, to open up education to any individual who demonstrated the capacity to benefit from it. It would be an over-simplification to suggest that the participants of this study were able to gain additional capital or social mobility solely through their educational endeavours. I am constantly mindful of contextual significance of growing up in post-war 1950s Britain and the opportunities that this context afforded individuals generally. There were more jobs, better and improved housing the nature of the family and gender roles were

beginning to change. More women were seeking employment and, as a result, contributing to the household income as well as gaining social networks. Yet, for this particular sample, there was a tendency to either equal the status of the parents (or father) or improve upon this. Table 19 compares the participants' social class to that of their parents (father) using the same scale.

Table 19: genogram comparing participants to their parents' social class.

Participant	Fathers Occupation	Mothers Occupation	Social Class (1950 schema)	Participants occupation(s)	Participants Social Class (1950 schema)
Jeanette	Engineer	Post mistress	Managerial and technical Class II	Medical physicist Housewife and mother Part time teacher	Professional Class I / Managerial and technical Class II
Alan	Initially working for the post office – then became a professional gambler (not in paid employment)	Housewife until widowed then sought employment as a cook.	Unclassified	Teacher – assistant head master	Managerial and technical Class II
Maggie	Steel worker-manual tool grinder	Housewife	Skilled manual Class III M	A number of jobs - including working in a drawing office, selling cosmetics, driving school instructor – but also housewife and mother during the maternity and early school years	Skilled manual Class III N
Sebastian	Steel worker tool maker	Housewife	Skilled manual Class III M	Apprentice in the steel industry, caretaker in schools and then moved into senior management	Managerial and technical Class II
Karen	White collar job - manager in a brewery office	Housewife	Managerial and technical Class II	Secretarial roles – but worked constantly throughout her life	Skilled manual Class III M
Chris	Royal Air Force (higher executive officer)	Housewife	Managerial and technical Class II	Worked within the civil service for over 33 years	Managerial and technical Class II
Jack	Pharmacist	Housewife	Professional Class I	Pharmacist	Professional Class I
Constance	Bill poster	Housewife	Unskilled Class V	Demonstrator/Teacher	Managerial and technical Class II

Reflecting on Table 19, four participants (identified in yellow) equalled the class position of their fathers. One participant Karen, (identified in white) is theoretically in a lower class than that of her father. I use the term 'theoretically' because as I reflect upon her current social position is difficult to appreciate that she 'belongs to the equivalent of social class III. Karen has over her life course acquired considerable social and economic capital, she identifies that 'she has a comfortable life style.' Karen lives in her own home and travels frequently, enjoying holidays and a productive leisure time. An example like this highlights the inadequacy of allocation to social class on the basis of job occupation.

The remaining three participants (identified in grey) Alan, Sebastian and Constance were able to '*offset the educational handicaps related to the unequal social class distribution of linguistic and cultural capital*' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977:76) and were able to improve their social position in comparison to the fathers. All three participants were from working class backgrounds and yet utilised education as a means to improve their social status.

Discussion

The allocation into a social 'class' (RG schema circa 1950) has been made on the basis of the paid work undertaken, which may not be an accurate representation of the qualifications that individuals may have. Judgement was based on the job that individuals were undertaking, which may not be an accurate reflection of their capabilities or potential. Normal practice, where women were married, was to assign them to the husband's social class regardless of what paid work they might be undertaking, or any qualification they may themselves have obtained. Additionally there was no recognition of any unpaid work undertaken by the women in the household. Those men not in paid employment were regarded as

unclassified. Viewing the parental class through this lens provides a very limited amount of data upon which to make a judgment but nonetheless provides a point of reference upon which to make a comparison.

Analysis of the parental social position has to be considered contextually due to the considerable differences between the first-and second-half of the 20th century as a number of changes occurred resulting in the transformation of class structure and its boundaries (Scott, 1999). The end of the industrial revolution signalled the move into a postmodern world and two fundamental changes are particular relevant here; the 1944 Education Act and the formation of the welfare state. The impact of the welfare state was to drive social progress through the abolition of want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. Post-war Britain emerged with, amongst other problems, a rapid decline in total fertility rates. As a result supporting childhood and safeguarding maternity was a priority within the formation of the welfare state. There was an urgent need to increase total fertility rates which served to reinforce the position and status of women as mothers and housewives. Furthermore, as housewives, that is married women of working age, women were allocated to 'Class (3)' where their access to 'security' would be offered by means of the husband's contributions. This position, in policy terms acknowledged the 'variety of special needs that arose out of marriage' (Beveridge, 1942). Consequently whilst the nature of parenting models were beginning to change they remained largely male dominated and the woman's role was traditionally one of subservience, which relegated her to housework and child-rearing. The social space in which the parents of the participants were located meant that the habitus formation had developed based upon their relative exposure to the macrocosm. Yet this situation was quite different for their children

(the participants). Generally, the participants have benefited from wide social exposure which has enabled the accumulation of capital.

Life chances are influenced by the social space and conditions inherited from birth (Scott, 1999). Viewing this position through a Bourdieusian lens, the social space that the parents of the participants occupied varied according to the relative amounts and types of capital that they had either acquired or inherited, and also their ability to utilise this effectively within given fields. The social space occupied by individuals will influence the opportunity for social mobility. Perhaps a more important point to note is inequalities in socio-economic background may be associated with reduced educational opportunities and, as a consequence, fewer achievements. The typical outcome of this 'inheritance' is a reproduction of existing conditions; a preservation of the social structure. The findings of this study both replicate and challenge this perspective. Certainly those with considerable capital at birth were able to achieve equally as well as their parents. But those with limited amounts were also able to advance in both capital and social positioning. This latter finding I have argued is grounded in the opportunities which presented themselves in the latter part of the 20th century.

Conclusion

The social space into which the participants were born was enormously significant, but so too is the ability to 'play the game', that is to move between different fields using capital effectively. The dynamic interrelationship between capital, habitus and field had differing consequences for participants accordingly. Failure or achievement of the 11-plus examination was a pivotal point in the learning journey as this process of selection signalled future prospects. Those who attended the

grammar school, or who were privately educated, achieved significantly more qualifications which in turn led to the accumulation of certain kinds of capital advantaging this group socially, culturally and economically. In addition, their ability to 'play the game' and operate within different fields was more effective. Yet those with limited or less capital were also able to benefit from the mass reforms and increased opportunities which occurred in post-war Britain. For example: Sebastian, who although he did not attend grammar school, was able to progress in his career by taking advantage of the opportunities which 'Thatcherism' provided.

I find it important to return to the issue of gender which is interwoven throughout the stories and has emerged as a key theme affecting both male and female participants albeit in different ways. Throughout my reading of Bourdieusian social theory I have found very little which has pointed to understanding gender difference *per se*. Furthermore, with the exception of the text: *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu, 2001) Bourdieusian social theory has little to say directly about women and gender (Moi, 1991). Yet the participants have been exposed to a world where the very nature of gender and gender roles has evolved considerably. Despite this evolution, the participants appear to have been trapped in a time period where the men were predominately the breadwinners and the women worked solely to earn money to contribute to the household income and, therefore, not in the pursuit of a career. Spencer (2005) would argue that marriage, childbirth and childcare were socially and politically constructed within social policy; and the data from this study reinforces that position. It is evident that the men and the women occupied different social and emotional worlds (Evans,

1998) and the essential issue is that the women have not been able to generate 'capital' pro rata when compared to the men (Reay, 2004).

There were a number of political and social drivers in post-war Britain which influenced the availability of capital, including the formation of the welfare state and school reform. This, coupled with a period of economic prosperity and increased job prospects, brought about an era of consumerism where there was a significant increase in the purchase of household appliances and consumer goods. Contraception was becoming widely available and people were better educated on the subject of family planning. As a result of the decrease in family size and the reduction in household labour (brought about by household appliances), women began to enjoy greater freedom and numbers of female employees in the workforce accordingly increased. The world of work exposed the women to the macrocosm, but combining this with housework and childcare responsibilities led to consequential dissonance, for some, either knowingly or more unconsciously. Constance, for example, intentionally decided to give up the opportunity to undertake her PhD so that she could follow her fiancé overseas. Perhaps more unconsciously, Jeanette, Maggie and Karen sought to combine the complexities of childcare and work as a means to earn money and contribute to the household income. The female participants of the sample submitted to a gendered habitus and what evolved is a concept that Brooke (2001) identifies as 'complex femininity' where there is a constant interweaving of home, child care and work.

Learning throughout childhood, adolescence and working life was, for the participants of this study, a means to an end. Individuals gained qualifications to enable the accumulation of economic capital. The male participants were the main wage earners and were able to pursue a career path which the women had more

complex working lives often retraining to enable a flexible working pattern. The participants of this study have benefited not only from the prosperity brought about by the economic prosperity of the post-war era but also the period of 'Thatcherism'. Without doubt the whole sample gained in social capital brought about by their exposure to the macrocosm. I believe that the desire for social capital is an essential reason for returning to learning for pleasure in the post-work period and is a theme that I will now discuss in the following section.

Part three: The transition from paid work into retirement and the importance of learning for pleasure.

Introduction

Moving away from the historical context, this chapter returns to the present and reports the findings of participants' attitudes values and beliefs about the post-work period and the role of learning. The post-work phase, more traditionally referred to as 'retirement', is no longer a short period of relaxation before the onset of ill-health and death. Instead, retirement is a protracted period, approximately one third of the life course, spent without two of the major features of 'adult life'; paid employment and child-raising responsibilities (McNair, 2009). In comparison with previous cohorts, individuals are living longer and are currently spending a considerable period of time beyond paid employment. With increasing numbers of adults in the post-work phase of the life cycle, the nature of and thinking around ageing is now beginning to change as the social and cultural aspects of ageing evolve. The results of this research reflect micro-level changes where ageing is redefined as a busy period and learning is well situated.

Organised around three key sub-themes, which reflect the chronological progression of the participants' narrative, this section commences with 'redefining the post-work period'. Several key sub themes are articulated here including the rationale for retirement from paid employment, and more importantly, how this period in the life course is now perceived. As this is interpreted to be a period of activity and involvement, I then move to 'the role of learning in later life' which identifies what individuals choose to learn and why, and the associated benefits of this type of active engagement. The discussion and conclusion draw both this section and the chapter to a close.

Redefining the post-work period

As I reported earlier in the thesis, the whole sample had been engaged in differing types of paid employment throughout their life course, which varied according to a number of factors including; gender, the types of educational achievements attained, parental influences or aspirations, and life circumstances. For some participants, learning had been a very important part of the life course but the principal outcome, for the whole sample, was to ensure financial gains through job roles or career progression in order to conform to the social norms of the day. This involved marriage and the bringing up of children and the promotion of 'family life'. Learning had therefore been outcome driven and product-focused with little emphasis upon the process or the learning journey.

Each biography portrayed different experiences of life within the macrocosm and, as a result, each participant had attained varying amounts and types of capital. In addition, the habitus of each participant had evolved over the life course as a result of their exposure to, and experiences of the parental habitus, socialisation, schooling, further education, working life, marriage and family. This is a very important point for consideration as the habitus is a complex and dynamic concept which has influenced certain life choices, but has also impacted upon participants' perceptions of retirement. Therefore their attitudes towards ageing or, alternatively, how they have contextualised this particular phase in their life course are very different to previous generations of retirees.

The sample had, through their exposure to the macrocosm, gained in social capital during their time and experiences within the 'work field' and demonstrated the capacity to deploy this very effectively. All participants were well connected within their work environments, their family and the wider community. It was evident

however that significant change occurred at the post-work phase and the expulsion from paid employment led to a redefinition of this particular phase in their life course. The movement out of the workplace was a major life transition which indicated a loss of some social connections which were important in maintaining a sense of self and having a purpose or a reason for being. The narrative data were very interesting as each participant identified the reasons why they retired. Furthermore the sample identified what this time in their life course meant to them and why learning was important in aiding the transition from paid work into retirement. This section therefore commences by reporting upon what brought each individual to the point of retirement from paid employment and more importantly how they interpret this particular phase in their life. Once more, gender differences were apparent throughout the narratives and this will be reflected throughout. Finally I identify the role and importance of learning in later life.

Retirement

There were varied approaches towards retirement with clear differences for the female participants in comparison with the men. Retirement could be categorised variously as very well planned, prematurely enforced as a result of redundancy; associated with ill-health or the death of a spouse; or more serendipitously when organisational changes provided an opportunity to leave the workplace. Three of the male participants, Alan, Sebastian and Jack had planned their retirement with the first two individuals leaving at the age of 60 and Jack when he was 68. Sebastian recalled; *'yes it was planned for a long time guided by my wife.... we knew we would have sufficient money when we retired'*. Alan was eager to leave work at the age of 60 and recalling the demands of paid working life, he stated:

'The grinding of the job thing is no longer there so it is a wonderful time I wish I had retired earlier ... I walked away without a second glance and haven't missed work for a micro second.'

Each of the above participants had worked within the public sector and therefore had contributed towards an earnings related pension; consequently some economic capital was assured, as is reinforced by Alan:

'Yes I mean money is important. I wouldn't say we are not wealthy but there is enough for my modest requirements so that's a worry removed.'

Indeed, reference to ensuring there was sufficient economic capital was referred to throughout the data and it was clearly a very important factor for consideration when deciding to leave paid employment, and this was an issue which lengthened working life for Jack. As a self-employed pharmacist who worked from his own shop premises Jack was unable to retire until the age of 68 primarily because he had failed to make adequate pension provision as he recalls:

'I never started paying into a pension a private pension until quite late on because both the children went to privately educated and that took the money.'

Consequently he worked on until he was in a position to sell his shop. He had given little consideration to his retirement generally, as he identified:

'no seriously you know you work all your life and you think you know you don't think about retirement you just carry on and carry on and a situation arose where I had the chance to sell the chemist shop.'

Chris encountered a more phased approach towards retirement. Aged 53 his place of employment was relocated some considerable distance away. Consequently he was offered voluntary redundancy, as he recalls:

'.... like an early retirement you see because I had done 33 years and 67 days they made up my pension so I finished up on half-pay....'

However, given that he could not access his pension for two years, and he still had all three children at home (one of whom was in further education) he sought out a number of part time jobs to ensure sufficient financial income (economic capital) and, of equal importance, to keep himself busy. In undertaking these varying job roles he has also learned, through exposure or experience, new skills and abilities including how to assemble computers. At the age of 68 he remains in part time paid employment he also undertakes a considerable amount of voluntary work, relevant to his interests and hobbies.

The female participants entered retirement for different reasons to the men and none of them had necessarily planned to leave paid employment. As identified in earlier in the thesis, the women had undertaken varying jobs in order to accommodate the demands of childcare and also make a contribution towards the family and household income. There was no significant reference in the data to pension plans, but given their breaks in-between jobs and movement between different employers, this leads to the assumption that they may not have amassed significant pension funds. The women in this sample may be dependent upon either their state pension, or any pension provision made on their behalf by their spouse, or any economic capital that may have been amassed over the life course.

Jeanette and Constance left paid employment aged 60 and 57 respectively. Both women had been employed as long-term supply teachers one of whom Constance, was employed in the independent sector whilst Jeanette was working at a local state secondary school, where she had been teaching intermittently for

20 years. Neither participant had really enjoyed teaching; it was a means to an end. Jeanette had over time become quite disillusioned with the process of school life. She found the bureaucracy and the quality assurance procedures traumatic but in particular external inspections were not welcomed, as she recalled:

'so I swore I would never be Ofsteded⁹ again... I was told I was a good teacher but I swore I never would go through that again.'

As a result of this negative experience of Ofsted inspection, Jeanette decided to leave teaching:

'So I retired but also because I wanted to spend time with my husband and I wanted to go and see my mother and then as it transpired it was the best thing that I ever did because then my husband was so ill that I didn't go back....'

The initial years of retirement were spent caring for her terminally ill spouse and upon his death she spoke at length about her own recovery which had been a time of rebuilding herself in the years following the bereavement:

'....and you have got to discover who you are again ... and although I would always miss him that I could be independent I have discovered that I can be me.'

At the point of retirement she had sufficient economic and social capital to navigate her way through the illness of her spouse and re-emerged to return to learning as a mechanism for social contact as well as mental and physical stimulation.

Not dissimilar to the Jeanette, Constance was not really enjoying her job as a long-term supply teacher but it kept her busy as she identified; *'that was fine...'* When her second husband became ill following cardiac surgery she left work at

⁹ By 'Ofsteded' the participant is referring to being scrutinised during an Ofsted inspection. The Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills who are responsible for, amongst other things, inspections of state schools.

the age of 57 to become his full-time carer and yet she acknowledged that she was not ready to retire:

'...I said "I don't want to hang up my boots yet" I was too young cos I knew I'd just be going back to the frustrations scenario again... but I had to.... I didn't have any time to think about anything but looking after him because it was very, very difficult in the end very, very difficult.....'

Given that she was almost 60 by the time her second husband died she felt unable to return to work and yet she now had the luxury of time, a void that initially she found difficult to fill. Her only son was working overseas and her sister lived some distance away; isolated from her family and entering a period of enforced retirement she returned to learning as a mechanism for *'pulling herself back.'* In a similar fashion to Jeanette, Constance also had sufficient economic and social capital but, in addition, she possessed a learning habitus and utilised this to engage very successfully with the Open University where she undertook a variety of academic courses.

Maggie and Karen had journeyed through fairly complex working lives and each woman found it quite difficult to decide to retire and readjust to the post-work phase. Working latterly as a road safety officer Maggie had previously accepted early retirement at the age of 56 which was short-lived, lasting approximately 16 months before she retrained as a driving examiner. She then worked part-time combining examining and road safety work until she was 60-years old. Unfortunately, following a series of family problems she gave up her role as a examiner and worked a small number of hours undertaking talks and visits on road safety issues. Maggie finally left paid employment at the age of 64 as she recalls:

'....well he (husband) kept asking me when I was going to give up even though he enjoyed what I was doing and me mom kept asking..... but when I first did it was difficult...'

In helping to overcome the difficulty of adjusting to retirement, engagement with learning became a significant focus as it helped to promote social connections. As with other participants in the sample, economic capital and social contact was an important factor as she stated:

'.....you can always use more money, but I can't say that I miss anything else and I don't, we are ok.... for money so apart from that no because I still come into contact with people.'

For Karen work had been '*....a big part of my life*' the stability of working for one employer for 27 years was in complete contrast to her experience of employment within the NHS, which was one of constant reorganisation leading to frequent job changes and ultimately redeployment. Hence, when the opportunity arose to take voluntary redundancy at the age of 59 this was readily accepted. There was no evidence to suggest that economic capital was in any way limited and as she suggested that '*we're all right*' when she referred to financial matters and she also talked openly about holidays and the desire to move house. Additionally, she had gained considerable social capital throughout her life course and enjoyed being with people. Consequently she found the readjustment to the post-work phase difficult as she recalled:

'.....found it quite a culture shock, I thought what have I done, cos it was October, it was the beginning of winter which I didn't really like...'

Karen was approximately three years into the post-work phase before she was completely able to readjust to her life. She found herself at a loss, as she identified, '*I needed something else.*' She therefore also turned to learning as a way to meet with other people and maintain an active and engaged life.

The data revealed a number of different reasons which brought each participant to the point of retirement and, unlike previous cohorts, their attitudes towards this

period in the life course were changing. I will go on to discuss this in the following sections.

Retirement: redefining the post-work period of the life course

The data reveal the complexity of factors that led each of the participants to the point of retirement. For the majority this was not linked to chronological age *per se* but was the culmination of a number of factors including adequate pension provision, financial stability and caring responsibilities. Yet their perceptions of the post-work phase were influenced by their observations and exposure to other individuals who had retired in previous generations. Their perceptions of ageing were conceptualised with reference to negative images where retirement was closely associated with a sedentary lifestyle, decline and death. As a result there was an obvious desire not to replicate the retirement lifestyle or pattern that had been witnessed in previous cohorts of older adults and this led to a redefinition of the stereotypical norms of retirement and ageing. In particular, the male participants in the sample had shifted their perceptions of retirement, a point of reference clearly informed by the images of ageing they had witnessed as a result of their exposure to the macrocosm, as Chris recalls:

'.....well I have seen quite a few of these people they just seem to when they retire vegetate..... I don't think they've any hobbies or interests when you look back at life style changes we look at the old people at the age of 60-66 they were really old they looked old.....'

It was not unusual for the male participants to refer to their recollections of ageing in this way and it usually related to their experiences or observations of the workplace as follows:

‘.....the things I did learn at English Steel was that a lot of people that worked there never retired, they never made it to retirement they were dead before retiring they were very old by the time they got to their mid fifties very hard industrial work....’ (Sebastian)

Furthermore even those male participants who had no experience of heavy manual work recognised the consequences of being employed in physically demanding, labour intensive jobs, as Alan states:

‘.....and yet we are a lot better off than a lot it’s no good complaining and in my case my job would have been far better I would have thought than down the mines.’

Therefore the data yielded evidence that the participants associated hard manual work with premature ageing and a reduced life span. The female participants were eager not to associate retirement with inactivity, withdrawal from society, decline and/or death. Yet their narratives differed subtly from the men in so far as they had not experienced the same exposure within the workplace or other so their stories were more generalised. All the female participants were very keen that they needed to keep active as Jeanette identifies; *‘....but you all want to do something other than just sitting....’*. She clarified this further by suggesting:

‘.....and I don’t think any of us feel old, I certainly don’t feel old, and that you aren’t prepared to as I can remember somebody saying to a friend of my fathers who resigned now don’t die next week because you know when you are 65 and not doing anything you can drop dead....’

This notion of reaching 65 years of age as being a time of chronological significance was apparent throughout the data and it was not unusual to read statements similar to the following; *‘....years ago ...when they reached 65 retired and they probably lasted two months they just sat in a chair and did nothing...’* (Maggie). This reinforced the importance of not reproducing the sedentary retirement behaviours of their forefathers as Karen suggested:

'once you've retired if all you did was sit perhaps go into town a couple of times a week and watch the telly you know I think your world would close in.'

Interestingly the female participants were keen to break away from the bonds of domesticity and none of the women viewed retirement as a time to be spent bound to the house engaged in domestic activities. This is reflected in the following response from Maggie; *'I actually wouldn't spend me days in the house cleaning....I wouldn't sit around doing nothing I couldn't do that.'* Additionally they were quite selective about how and with whom they wished to engage as Constance reflected upon her academic life:

'.....and they come to retire and they come out of their academic thing....they just can't go into sort of playing scrabble and watching telly and going to the bowls, well I can't and there must be an awful lot of people like me.'

These findings imply that the habitus is acquired as a result of direct experience and indicate each participant's habitus has been influenced, indeed modified by what they have perceived to be the negative outcomes of other peoples experiences of work. That is people work until old age retire and become sedentary as they withdraw from society. They have defined their own identity against others, and their acquired habitus gives them a position from which to make a comparison – a comparison based on their own sense of superior achievement. They were not going to engage in a sedentary or isolated retirement for the fear this would result in decline and death. The participants recognised retirement as a new field and with sufficient amounts of capital were able to successfully play the game in the post-work phase where engagement was interpreted to be vital. One such means of engaging was through returning to learning which led to new forms of social capital and, for some, cultural capital.

The narrative data were richly interwoven with the descriptions and expectations of retirement. In general this was interpreted to be a positive and active phase in the life course where mental and physical stimulation were vital in preventing inactivity and boredom. In addition, all participants recognised that it was important to have sufficient money (economic capital) to be able to *'get out and enjoy life to the full'* (Chris). Upon leaving paid employment, participants attitudes were generally very positive and they were enthusiastic about their retirement as Alan describes his thoughts of the post-work phase:

'Release... it is a release from, and we are very fortunate in being able to do this because of the wealth of the country and longer lives but it is release from the constrictions of everyday life up until the time of retirement.'

Sebastian was equally as enthusiastic about his retirement he stated:

'It's Nirvana.... I can choose what I do.. I have sufficient money, I am warm and dry... we have got everything it's just brilliant so yes its excellent.....so I am in the retirement phase and reaping the benefits of what I did.'

Whilst all participants wished to engage in an active retirement, akin to the desires of Jack, as he declared; *'I am not the kind of person to do nothing you know'*, there were some gender differences in responses towards retirement which limited or restricted some of the activities that the women were able to undertake. These same issues did not affect the male participants in the sample. Maggie described her experience of retirement as follows; *'more relaxed to a degree but we have commitments which restrict a normal retirement ...'* Here she was referring to being the principle carer for her 90-year-old mother. This has restricted her retirement and she is prohibited from being as actively engaged as she would like and, in

particular she finds that she is unable to travel on holiday as freely as she would wish to or to travel for any length of time.

Karen found it somewhat difficult to adjust to life outside of paid employment. She described retirement as:

'...a happy phase, busy I have quite a lot of things to do for mum now she's 90.... retirement is more laid back the things you worry about are much less important....'

Similarly to Maggie, Karen also has caring responsibilities for her elderly mother who, whilst in her nineties and registered blind, still lives in her own home supported by her daughter. This however is a cause for concern and prevents Karen from taking either exotic or lengthy holidays. Unlike Maggie, Karen does not view this responsibility as a restriction, the nature of the relationship with her mother is quite different and appears to be more egalitarian and underpinned by a mutual respect for each other.

Constance was by far the loneliest person within the whole sample, widowed twice in her life and with unfulfilled career and academic aspirations she describes the post-work phase as follows:

'It's not a terribly enjoyable phase in my life ... I wouldn't be on my own yes a deep sadness I mean I'm ok in this world cause I don't want for anything, I'm all right financially, I've got a nice house, I've got friends, but I haven't got the thing that matters most.'

Constance had sufficient amounts of economic and social capital, but she lacked the companionship of her late husband. Jeanette, who was also a widow had a far more optimistic outlook; she had the close support of her two children who lived in close proximity to her, so was not as socially isolated as Constance.

It was evident that each participant had arrived at the post-work period with a different rationale for retirement. Coupled to this, perceptions of retirement were clearly changing and this sample of people were looking forward to a period in their life course of positive engagement and fulfilment, where learning could be undertaken for pure pleasure or leisure. In effect this sample was able to challenge the habituation of ageing as a period of decline. I think it is very important to note that this particular sample had sufficient economic, cultural and social capital to successfully take on that challenge. Given the findings of this sample there is a clear disjoint between reality and current social policy. As I reported in chapter two, currently the emphasis of lifelong learning policy continues to exclude or marginalise later life learners from its agenda. With older people living longer outside of paid work it is imperative that social policy adopt a more eclectic stance on lifelong learning. A policy stance that actively incorporates the plethora of learning which occurs in later life and therefore moves beyond learning as a means to retrain or re-skill in order to remain in employment for longer.

The role of learning in later life

With the pressures of paid work now behind them, and sufficient time and freedom to engage with other aspects of life, the post-work phase was interpreted to be a period of activity. It was apparent throughout the data that it was very important to avoid boredom or just sit around and do nothing and, consequently, for different reasons the whole sample had returned to learning as a mechanism to promote social contact and mental and physical stimulation. Learning provided a sense of purpose, but was also a pleasurable, fun and an enjoyable pastime; the following

comment from Sebastian captures the essence of the views with regard to the post-work period:

‘.....so yes we don’t seem to have much time for retirement ... my daughter will say when are you going to retire and I’ll say never.’

Each participant was learning a variety of very different subjects through quite diverse approaches. See Table 20 below.

Table 20: Learning undertaken in later life

Participant	Types of learning undertaken in later life
Jeanette	Attends the U3A where she undertakes the book club, discussion circle and language classes. Also runs the yoga class. In addition is enrolled at the local university for painting but also frequently participates in the politics lectures and anything else of interest.
Alan	Was until recently running the discussion forum at the local U3A has more recently chosen to return to a class on art history and literature and politics group.
Maggie	Was initially undertaking a range of informal learning sessions with the U3A and at a local dance centre including tap and line dancing, crown green bowls, sewing. Has also enrolled at the local FE college to do a crafts course and is interested in doing more craft related learning.
Sebastian	A wide range of informal academic and more practically focused sessions with the U3A including industrial archaeology, crown green bowls.
Karen	All informal learning, non academic sessions, mainly with the U3A including; canoeing, line dancing, old time dancing, aerobics.
Chris	This participant still works part time but yet finds time to engage with the U3A mainly to learn old-time and sequence dancing which he attends with his wife.
Jack	Attends approximately 22 different sessions at his local U3A ranging from science club to poetry and Shakespeare – noting nothing physical. In addition, regularly takes part in local amateur productions, still active in several choirs.
Constance	Enjoys both academic and non academic sessions with the local U3A. Plays cards, hand bells and organises the social functions, visits to the theatre and the opera as well as attending the science club and currently looking to help start a Latin group.

At one time or another all participants had been, or are still active members of the U3A. In addition to this, learning is also undertaken in a variety of other places, for example, via the local college of further education or university and through informal organisations such as political groups or church choir and amateur dramatics. Participants chose to learn in places or spaces where there was a high degree of psychological security, so for example; with 'like minded' individuals. Of equal importance was a keen interest in the subject(s) and the absence of exam or assessment pressure. Collectively this helped to promote psychological safety. The physical place or space was also important as generally participants were most comfortable in venues that were familiar and within a relatively close geographical proximity.

As can be seen in Table 20, the range and variety of learning activities undertaken are considerable and participants naturally gravitate towards what they are genuinely interested in and/or subjects that they may not have had the opportunity to learn previously. What each participant did have was the luxury of time and a great interest in learning. Sebastian articulates this quite clearly:

'...you never stop learning so for me to get the best out of life I look at what I am interested in history, politics industrial archaeology, travel....' we have the choice to do anything we want to do....'

It would be naive to conclude that it was a simple choice about what to learn and where. Each participant had economic, cultural and social capital combined with a habitus which enabled the deployment of capital within the post-work field and as a consequence this ensured an active and enriched retirement. It was through learning that they remained socially connected, and this helped to negate the

social isolation some individuals experienced as they left the field of paid employment.

Additionally there was a link between the types of subjects that they had been exposed to via the school curriculum, for example, poetry and history, and the subjects that they learned in late life. The pedagogical exposure to teaching methods in their school lives had been predominately one of learning by rote as Jack described:

I really enjoyed English at college... one of the things I really enjoyed was poetry but they spoilt it the master that we had... he was very strict and he'd say right we'll have ten verses of the ancient mariner for homework.. you'd got to learn it ... you stopped enjoying it ... the same with history.'

Participants frequently reflected upon this formalised approach to education to which they had been exposed. Learning was then obviously outcome driven i.e. success was measured by examination achievement, and failure to learn frequently resulted in punitive measures as Sebastian describes:

'Formal learning was more often than not by rote because what you are trying to pass is an exam what I do now is far more interesting I mean if I'd had a history teacher who actually taught me history instead of dates I would d have been intensely keen on that but the objective in those days was you will pass the exam.'

Regardless of their previous, and frequently negative, experiences of learning all the participants were now actively engaged in learning; however, they were quite selective about what they chose to learn, with whom and how. There was quite a clear distinction between the topics chosen by individuals who preferred the more academic type of learning for example science and book club, when compared to those who considered themselves to be less academic and more practical. There was a correlation here between their academic qualifications and the type of

learning they returned to in later life. In short, the more well-qualified they were, the more academically inclined they were. Therefore, as Alan stated, learning had to be *'Structured with a theme to it not just idle chit chat.'* This provides an example of a university graduate conceptualising his learning in later life. Consequently it was not uncommon to read in the transcripts excerpts like; *'getting together with like minded people'*, (Jeanette). Reinforcing not only the importance of appropriate social connections, but what were considered to be the right social connections. Ultimately they were all somewhat selective about what they chose to learn and so they gravitated towards people or sessions where they would be with other individuals who shared a similar aptitude for the type of learning being undertaken.

Karen who had failed her 11-plus remarked; *'I quite enjoy the informal learning rather than sitting in a classroom-type situation.'* She was very concerned about her apparent lack of academic ability and as a result Karen chose to do a range of activity-based sessions including line dancing and canoeing. These were all new experiences, as she was keen to *'learn something new....'* whilst having company, as she remarked; *'I like to talk to people.'* Learning in this way provided the opportunity to meet these needs in an environment that was non-threatening.

Maggie's perspective was similar, as she recalled:

'I like to be creative I like to do something that I can see, create and get pleasure out of.... I'm not an academic I am a doer I like to make things...'

Jack also articulated his preference for learning as he said:

'...I'm not an athletic sort you know I don't want to be doing pilates and all this acrobatics..... my physical part of it is gardening and I walk.'

As a result Jack was very busy learning a variety of subjects from Shakespeare to geology.

For this sample, learning occupied a very important part of their life as it brought new social connections as well as mental and physical stimulation. However, each individual was very selective about what they chose to learn and with whom.

The language used by the participants to describe their involvement in learning in later life was frequently connected to very positive emotions. It was a common theme to have responses like '*sheer joy*' (Alan) or '*brilliant*' (Jeanette). Jack articulated this aspect of the findings very well as he stated; '*you go along and you enjoy.....you don't want to miss a thing.*' The freedom to learn new subjects, which were not associated with work or career progression, was for many of the participants a new and liberating experience as Sebastian remarked; '*we have the choice to do anything.*' Maggie suggested that learning now provided an '*opportunity for expression*' which in turn brought significant '*self- satisfaction*'.

The participants described how their involvement with learning at this stage in the life course had positively affected their lives, as Chris stated; '*....changed our lives....with the dancing we have met so many people.*' Equally for Constance she described learning as follows; '*it's more or less like escapism.....it takes me away from other situations in my life.*' The '*physical act of being engaged*' [in learning pursuits] (Jeanette) clearly enhanced participants lives and is reflected in the language each of the participant use to describe this.

Why learning in later life?

There is a complex interrelationship between the participants' understanding of retirement as a busy, enjoyable and active phase in their life course, and relevance of learning for pleasure. Reflecting upon their biographies it was quite evident that learning had been a key component in achieving economic capital. In addition, each participant had been actively engaged in the workforce and therefore had gained social capital through the exposure to the macrocosm associated with this. Hence this particular sample had well established social networks. As part of the baby boomer generation the sample had exposure to opportunities and experiences unavailable to previous generations and, as a result, their life course was different in comparison. The net effect of this was, unlike previous generations, they were unprepared to endure retirement as a period of decline and inactivity. All the participants were very keen to avoid boredom, and as Jeanette noted it is important to remain engaged:

'To retain an interest in what's going on around you.....and gorpung at the telly aint the answer I can imagine being dead and pretty quick.'

Therefore learning was central to promoting both mental and physical well-being as the majority of the sample remarked that learning keeps the brain active. As Karen remarked; *'...because I think you have got to keep your mind active if not then well it's a problem if you don't ...'* Sebastian provided further elaboration of this point:

'If I can keep active at this stage of the game then I should retain some of my brain that is leftI am going to keep active while ever I can.'

But equally it was important that learning should be great fun, and a joyous experience as Alan remarked:

'.....so learning in one form or another... is central to my pleasure in life I love learning' I get so much more out of learning now than I did when I was young.. I take it more seriously..... although it's no use to me in terms of career or money..... it enriches me as a person and life becomes even less liable to be boring'

For some participants learning was almost part of their embodied habitus as both Jeanette and Constance identify respectively:

'I say in some cases its more or less like escapism I just like knowledge for knowledge sake..... I am doing it for the pleasure of either enjoying what you do or developing it a little bit further.....'

'I always liked learning for learning sake and I have always worked as hard as I could not so that I would get something but because I was interested.'

Without doubt one of the most important factors for returning to learning in later life was the absence of exams as Jack identifies; *'I enjoy it now [learning] because nobody tests me at the end.'* With the exception of Constance, who had undertaken some formal qualifications with the Open University, the remainder of the sample were very keen that learning should be for pleasure and not being tested in any way was part of the appeal. Learning in later life comes without the associated pressures that had been present earlier in the life course, there was nothing to prove in terms of academic success, the primary outcomes now are to ensure an active and enjoyable life and as Sebastian suggests, *'learning something new is a bonus.'*

The drive to maintain good health was interwoven throughout the transcripts; *'It's so important to keep healthy and physical and be out in the fresh air'*, (Jeanette).

The mental and physical activities which occurred as a direct result of learning

were seen to offer significant personal benefit; indeed these were viewed as essential as Sebastian suggests:

'I am interested in all sorts of things I can't help it but I think if I had to sit down and sort of put me slippers on then you might as well inject me now or get me a passport to sort of Switzerland one way ticket.'

Learning in later life brings a capital of social relationships which clearly provides useful supports: *'a capital of honourability and respectability which is often indispensable'* (Bourdieu, cited in Field, 2008:17). The combination of intellectual stimulation and social contacts that learning elicits is vital and does indeed promote a sense of value in later life. Learning brings not just social capital, but also new friendships are also created as Maggie suggests; *'...so that you can have the conversations, other conversations about other things...'* A number of the participants referred to their experience of the U3A and Constance notes how this helps to fill the lonely void in her life; *'I mean there are at least four days a week I am probably doing something...'*, but for this particular woman it also meets her intellectual needs as she describes:

'I am really academically inclined and this (the U3A) has got a good blend of the sociability and if you want to do a little bit more learning then there's the opportunity to do it.'

Learning in later life has a number of benefits; it promotes mental and physical activity, both of which are considered vital to ensure a healthy and prolonged retirement. It enables social connections and new friendships but more importantly it is helping to transform perceptions of ageing, and in so doing, move these perceptions away from the stereotypical images of retirement as a period of gradual withdrawal from society and slow decline towards death.

Discussion

I opened this chapter by drawing upon the '*Contradictions of Inheritance*' (Bourdieu, 1999) as a thread to link the data analysis. The findings of this study reveal how participants are actively moving beyond their predecessors by challenging the habituation of ageing as period of decline and moving towards a redefined view of retirement. In the post-work period life is busy for participants; they are very actively engaged with learning for pleasure. In effect this is a further manifestation of the contradiction of inheritance: the move towards activity, as opposed to inactivity is, in part, formulated from their observations of others retiring and moving into a period of decline, withdrawal and death. This has been conceptualised as disengagement theory (Cumming and Henry, 1961) and I have discussed this earlier in this thesis.

The participants in this research present a picture which portrays ageing as the antithesis of disengagement theory, and this perspective has arisen for them out of their observations of others who have seemingly '*disengaged*'. Therefore in contrast to the former discussion these individuals can be seen to be actively engaged in later life. Here, life satisfaction for older people is dependent upon the conditions that allow them to remain in roles and relationships (Berk, 2007). It is based on two central tenets; firstly that individuals construct ideas about themselves from the things that they do in life, and secondly from the roles that they undertake which collectively help to formulate a sense of self. Ageing brings change and with this an altered sense of self, or lack of identity. Reengagement in different, new or alternative forms of activity can be a mechanism to boost well-being and therefore recreate a new sense of self - or perhaps more simply put to react to the change of ageing in a meaningful way. The individuals in this sample

have returned to learning as a means to remaining mentally and physically active and engaged whilst building new and different forms of social capital, and also forming new friendships – but the marks of their life experiences have not left them, and are reflected on their choices of and attitudes to U3A activities. When returning to learning they were, however, quite selective about what they chose to learn and they naturally gravitated towards subjects that they were most interested in, and also where they could learn according to their preferred learning style. With the luxury of time they are able to seek out and pursue what they enjoy without the pressures of having to learn for the requirements of the job.

This has enabled a new picture of ageing to emerge which negates the previous stereotypical images and challenges societal perceptions. The participants of this study are rejecting classic theories of ageing, such as disengagement, and moving towards a lifestyle where they embrace a more active approach towards ageing where opportunities for optimising health, participation and security are sought (WHO, 2002). In carving out a new role these individuals are an important societal group as their attitudes, values and beliefs may shape future policy if their voice is sought out, heard and utilised (Leach, *et al* 2008).

Conclusion

Ageing is a complex and multidimensional process involving multifarious changes of a psychological, biological and social nature. The results of this research suggest that participants are cognisant of the ageing process and deliberately employ strategies to promote both physical and mental well-being, and learning is a very important part of this process. Chronological age had a limited association with the concept of retirement, but sufficient economic capital was a significant

factor and so to was the readiness to leave paid employment. In particular, the females in the sample found it more difficult to readjust to the post-work period than the males.

This sample of individuals experienced a formalised education system where the philosophy of learning fostered a pedagogy of 'rote and dictate'. The curricula of the era did not encourage the development of transferable skills or critical thinking, leaving each participant with different memories of formal education and varying degrees of satisfaction. Yet despite their experiences of the education process all participants have returned to learning as a mechanism to avoid boredom, keep the brain active and remain socially connected. It may be the conscious or the subconscious habitus which moves these individuals towards learning. Or, given that they each have varying amounts of capital they are able to effectively utilise this in the field, it could be said that they have the skills and ability to 'play the game' and it appears that they do this very effectively.

Chapter six: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the process of undertaking this research and I will consequently review four areas. The first section titled: *The contradiction of inheritance: challenging and reinforcing reproduction* presents a synthesis of the findings which challenge the notion that working-class families are incapable of transferring cultural capital: and further identifies the relevance of the pedagogic contract, consequential dissonance, and finally presents the challenge to the reproduction of ageing as a period of decline and learning in later life.

In the second section I reflect upon the process of undertaking the research and offer insights into my own learning both personally and professionally. Here I will identify and discuss the limitations and unintended outcomes of the study. In the third section I move onto offer a number of avenues which warrant further investigation. The final section identifies how my personal learning journey may continue.

The contradictions of inheritance: challenging and reinforcing reproduction

I set out to explore how retired older people narrate their life experiences of learning and what insights these stories offer for the interrelationship of learning to life course capital. The findings have been conceptualised in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1999) *'The contradictions of inheritance'* and challenge and reinforce Bourdieu's theory of reproduction. In challenging this theory, three participants (Alan, Constance and Sebastian) who were from a working class background were able to achieve social mobility, moving into a higher social class when compared to their parents. This, I believe, challenges the notion that working class families are unable to facilitate the transfer of cultural capital to their children. There was,

for each of these participants, a transfer of cultural capital and a strong pedagogical contract which, when coupled with positive parental aspirations, facilitated academic success. This, in turn, enhanced the acquisition of capital which has been successfully deployed over the life course. Each of these participants values the importance of learning and has returned to learning periodically as a means to retrain or re-skill in order to remain employed and gain additional economic capital. There were, however, distinct gender differences which influenced the decision making process with regard to employment opportunities. The women submitted to a gendered habitus where they sought to combine the complexities of working life with childcare and the house work. Consequently this influenced the types of learning that they engaged with in post-compulsory education.

Four participants (Jeanette, Maggie, Jack and Chris) occupy the same social class as their parents and are examples of how reproduction works to maintain the social order. The parental social class of these participants ranged from Class I to Class III. In a similar fashion to those participants who were able to achieve social mobility, there were clear gender distinctions in the decisions women made regarding their education and job roles in comparison with the men.

One participant, Karen, is something of an anomaly as she would appear to have found herself in a lower social class than her parents. If, however, I viewed her social position through a Bourdieusian lens she holds considerably more amounts of capital than her parents, and her exposure to the social space is wider and more varied. In comparing social class with the concept of capital, all of the participants in the study have large amounts of social and cultural capital regardless of their allocation to a social class – as you would perhaps expect,

given their participation in U3A. In addition the members of the sample have varying degrees of economic capital to ensure what could be identified as 'a comfortable lifestyle'. Social status is not always a true reflection of social class stratification and employing capital as alternative lens through which to view this provides a more insightful and thought-provoking approach, which reinforces the inadequacy of social grouping organised by occupational status alone. The participants of this study are quite a unique cohort as part of a baby boomer generation they have lived through an era of change, growth and opportunity. This may also account for why some participants have successfully achieved social mobility. Each participant has amassed over their life course differing amounts of social capital. At the point of retirement from the labour market there was, for all participants, an overt need to remain socially connected. Engaging in learning, as this group have here, has brought new social connections and a more active retirement phase. This has assisted the transition into retirement and brings about a new sense of self.

I have identified the notion of consequential dissonance as a key finding of this research. I identified in chapter five that consequential dissonance has been interpreted as the irresolvable issues which have emerged for participants as a result of life course choices. Choices which may have been imposed or made 'voluntarily' that relate to important life events for example, education. The lives lived by the participants reveal a complex interrelationship between a number of factors including; gender, power, parental attitudes and career choice. Participants in later life identified certain life choices made within their life course which were made 'voluntarily' but yet appeared to be driven by habituation. Bourdieu suggests:

'Such experiences tend to produce a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and with its ambivalence, and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities.' (Bourdieu, 1999:511).

Of the three conceptual Bourdieusian tools I have employed within this study the formation of habitus particularly, has been powerful. Participants have frequently made decisions which are driven more by habituation than reasoned logic. For example, participants have generally followed the wishes of their parents with regard to schooling and career choice and the women have been seen to submit to a gender habitus and have given up career opportunities in order to be at home and raise the family. The life biographies are littered with stories of conflict, negotiation and unfulfilled desire.

From a theoretical perspective the Bourdieusian concepts of capital, habitus and field, when applied at the micro-level, have revealed new insights into the interrelationship between these tools as they have been deployed across the whole life course. For example, the relationship with the parental habitus and the subsequent impact of this upon the participants emerged quite clearly as a key factor within this research. Bourdieusian theory was for me, at the writing of this thesis, not readily explicable; however when I had the 'hard data' to work with, the concepts became tangible. The application of the concepts of capital, habitus and field as applied here with life biography have enabled a complete picture of participant stories which identifies complex trajectories where capital has been amassed and utilised effectively. The outcomes of this study have been influenced, not only by the social position into which the participants were born, but also life chances. As part of the baby boomer generation this sample has availed itself of opportunities unique to the era.

All participants are successfully challenging the reproduction of ageing as a period of decline. Moreover, expressed more positively, they are championing active ageing (WHO, 2002).

Reflections on the process of undertaking the research

Limitations of the study

In accessing the population of the U3A in order to select a sample of participants for this research I recognise the gains and losses which were associated with this recruitment process. The sample was predominately white, affluent and middle-class, so the results reveal insights into this socio-economic group at the expense of insights into the other groups of older adults. Clearly I am not in position to shed any insights into the learning journeys of people from ethnic minority groups and their learning needs in later life. Thus it is not possible to generalise the results beyond this socio-economic group. However there were some key aspects relating to cost, types of learning (for example academic versus more practical subject such as gardening), location of venue and the need for social connectivity which resonate beyond this study.

Life biography, narrative research and the experience-centred narrative

One unintended outcome of the interview process was the therapeutic or cathartic effects experienced by the majority of the participants, which I have not alluded to previously for two reasons. Firstly, I did not set out to explore therapeutic effects and secondly, the participants waited until the digital recording was complete and the recorder turned off before attending to these aspects. I am therefore mindful that these observations are my recollections of the process drawn from field notes. Generally participants thanked me for listening with genuine interest and stated

that they would not have taken this opportunity to reflect upon their life biography in this way had I not prompted the process. The interview method had provided an environment where each participant was able to reflect upon and explore aspects of their life course and, in so doing, contextualise events, or organise these events into some perspective or frame of reference. As a consequence, these encounters (interviews) that we shared were deemed to be a positive and helpful experience for the participants.

As a method of data collection utilising the 'narrative interview' question to capture the whole story worked extremely well as the data were quite naturally chronologically ordered and focused. As the first round of interviews developed I was able to see where further information would be required to fully address the research questions and further assist the development of the interview schedule for use in the second-wave of data collection. Whilst, in retrospect, I would not change the approach to the data collection and analysis I did underestimate the intellectual, emotional and physical demands that this would place upon me. Adequate preparation for interviews with participants is always essential. The need to become familiar with the narrative to aid the undertaking of the second interview, adds a further layer of intensity to the interview process which I found to be somewhat demanding (emotionally, intellectually and physically). In effect I had to become familiar with the life biography of each participant, as they had presented it to me, so that I could facilitate the elucidation of answers to the research questions. That said, I can state with every confidence that I was able to become fully immersed and conversant with the data. If using a method of this nature, with a sample larger than that used here, alternative approaches may need to be considered with regard to the transcription and analysis of the data.

My very personal reflections on this process have enabled a deeper understanding of self which developed predominately from thinking about my own biography. Perhaps I was naive but I did not anticipate the impact of exploring life biography on aspects of my sense of self; I was completely unprepared for this occurrence and extremely appreciative of the advice and support of my academic supervisor in helping me to deal with this issue effectively. Such reflection reinforces the importance of working in a reflexive manner as a researcher who makes effective use of both the cognitive and affective domains (Luttrell, 2010) as I have discussed earlier in this thesis. With reflection in mind, I wish to add a note about the value of a high-quality supervisory relationship. The importance of this relationship cannot be underestimated and I have benefited enormously from the advice, guidance and support of my academic supervisor. I have learnt many lessons here which will be invaluable as my academic career progresses and I am very keen to undertake the supervision of doctoral students in the near future. Finally there has been considerable intellectual growth and development which has fostered a new self-confidence. I am now more aware of my key strengths and weaknesses and recognise how the undertaking of the doctoral programme has broadened my mind in so many ways. The exposure to new ways of thinking, alternative theories and the constant challenge of the overall task has been, for me, a joy. I am not the same person I was.

There is just one caveat here that I wish to share regarding theory-gerontological theory. I am not a gerontologist and have found ageing models and theory most difficult to internalise. Prior to undertaking this doctorate I had very limited exposure to 'ageing issues' either professional or personally and as result my encounter with ageing theory was new territory. As I reflect on my ageing habitus,

whilst it has been challenged over time, I believe my difficulties with understanding gerontological theory have more to do with habitus than perhaps I realise. I have to remain vigilant to such matters.

Further areas of investigation

Social policy continues to neglect the needs of older learners. The experiences of the interviewees of this research highlighted a broad concept of lifelong learning which also has significant benefits. The demographics of an ageing population can no longer be ignored by government, politicians and policy-makers. To continue to marginalise older people from social policy in a lifelong learning context is a mistake. Clearly there is an urgent need for a coherent, planned strategy for later life learning which must be informed by research evidence, where the voice of the older learner is captured. This would enhance a cultural and paradigm shift towards critical gerontology and consequently the promotion of a positive image of ageing.

Having identified the gains and losses associated with the sample for this research more becomes known about older learners from a specific socio-economic group or background, largely white affluent older people. Given that learning in later life has positive effects, particularly in maintaining social connectivity, there is an urgent need to explore this phenomenon with other more disadvantaged groups of older people. I would suggest the replication of the research questions posed here to undertake a comparative study with later life learners from lower socio economic groups and from ethnic minority communities.

Life biography as a therapeutic/cathartic intervention may have considerable utility in a number of areas, health and social care in particular. As a nurse and an

educationalist this is an area of enquiry I am particularly interested in pursuing beyond this thesis.

The learning journey – where next?

I was recently reading Ivor Goodson (2013) where he articulates his working-class background and how social position influences our dispositions and capacities. Indeed his work resonates with much of what I have explored within this thesis.

Yet he states:

'I never at any time had any desire to leave my working-class culture behind. I wanted to travel with it. I was coming from the margins but had no great desire to arrive.' (Goodson, 2013:4).

I too have no desire to leave my working-class background behind; indeed I believe I am able to use my dispositions and capacities wisely and effectively in both a personal and professional context. The notion of 'arriving' assumes one is cognisant of two facts; firstly the destination, and secondly how to get there. At this point in time I am unsure of both. This is, for me, now a time of consolidation and reflection whilst I gather my intellectual and emotional resolve so that I may see, or plan the way ahead.

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Appendix1: Confirmation of ethical approval

Dear Louise

thank you for responding to the comments made by the ethics committee. I can now confirm that your study has now been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Good luck with your research.

Roger

> Roger
>
> See email from Louise Taylor which includes the updated proposal
> information for approval.
>
> Pauline
>
>
> Pauline Nelson
> PA to the Dean of Humanities & Social Sciences
> Keele University
> Staffordshire
> ST5 5BG

Appendix 2: Letter of invitation to participate in a research study and accompanying participant information sheet.

Louise Taylor
Principal Lecturer
Postgraduate Education
Staffordshire University
Faculty of Health
Blackheath Lane
Staffordshire
ST18 0AD

Dear

Would you be kind enough to participate in the research study identified below? Please find details of the proposed study enclosed within the participant information sheet.

Study title

Learning amongst later life learners: using life biography to investigate the inter-relationship of learning and life course capital.

Please feel free to contact me via the details below to discuss the study and your involvement.

I look forward to hearing from you

Lou Taylor

Participant Information Sheet

Louise Taylor
Principal Lecturer
Postgraduate Education
Staffordshire University
Faculty of Health
Blackheath Lane
Staffordshire
ST18 0AD

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, please take time to read the following information and talk to others about the study if you wish.

Study title

Learning amongst later life learners: using life biography to investigate the inter-relationship of learning and life course capital.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this research is to explore your learning experiences over your life course and analyse these experiences to help discover and understand the motives for engagement with and perception of learning in later life.

This study forms part of the Doctorate of Education currently being undertaken from Keele University.

Why have you been chosen?

You have been selected to take part in this study because you are actively engaged in learning as a member of The University of the Third Age.

Do you have to take part?

It is up to you whether or not to take part, if you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to you if you take part?

If you choose to take part I will contact you to make arrangements so that we can meet to commence the interview process. I anticipate that we will need to meet approximately three times for between one and two hours on each occasion. We can meet at a venue local and convenient to yourself.

What do I have to do?

We will work together over a series of three audio taped interviews to capture your story of learning experiences over your life course. The approach I would like to use is 'person centred' this means that the interview is not in any way guided and is controlled by yourself. Following each interview I will transcribe the conversation verbatim and this transcript will be returned to you and will form the basis of the next interview. This allows for two very important mechanisms to occur; you are able to confirm the transcript and make any relevant comments, and secondly I will then focus on and discuss with you aspects which have relevance to the research in order to provide further clarification.

What will happen to the information that is provided during the interview?

All interviews will be anonymous. The audio tape containing the interview recording will be dated and labelled. The interview will be transcribed without anyone's name and only pseudonyms will appear on the tape or its transcripts.

The transcribed conversation and any publication associated with this study will not contain your name, although some of your words may be included in these reports. All audio tapes will be kept for five years.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no direct benefit to you taking part in this study; however, I anticipate that the findings will enrich knowledge and understanding of learning in later life and therefore contribute to the continual development of educational gerontology.

What happens when the research study stops?

The interviews will occur over a twelve month period after which time the research will be written up into a thesis format for submission to Keele University as part of a degree award.

What if there is a problem or you need advice?

If you need to contact someone regarding this research, please contact myself, the researcher on l.m.taylor@staffs.ac.uk or ring 01785 353682.

If you have any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study you may alternatively contact Professor Ken Jones on k.w.jones@keele.ac.uk or ring 01782 583554.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your participation in this study will remain confidential. However, some of your words may be used as quotations in the final write up of the study but you will not be identifiable. This is normal for this type of study.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be formally presented for the award of Doctorate of Education (Keele University). I would also anticipate that some parts of this work will be presented for publication in educational or gerontological journals and at relevant conferences.

You will not be identified in any report / publication. If you decide to take part, I will ask you if you wish to be sent a copy of the paper or a summary of the results on conclusion of the research.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being organised and undertaken by myself (Louise Taylor) as the principal researcher and forms part of the Doctorate of Education (Keele University). I am not in receipt of any funding to undertake this work and therefore any costs for carrying out the research are absorbed by myself.

Throughout the process I am working with the supervision of Professor Ken Jones (details as above).

Who has reviewed the study?

Prior to any work being undertaken this study has been reviewed by the Faculty Ethics Committee, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Keele University.

Thank you for considering taking part in the study and taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 3: participant consent form

Consent Form

Project title: learning in later life: using life biography to investigate the inter-relationship of learning and life course capital.

I (print name please)

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study, have had the opportunity to ask questions and that all questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop the interview(s) and withdraw at any time or remove my consent for any information I have given to be used, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that the interviews will be audio taped and I agree to this.

4. I understand that following the interview, the conversation will be transcribed, but my name will not be on the transcription associated with the study, or on any publication resulting from this research, although some of my words may be included in these reports.

5. I agree to take part in the above study and consent to being interviewed by Louise Taylor

6. understand that at the end of the research, the data will be kept by the researcher on a computer and tapes will be erased. All data will kept for 5 years.

Signed Date

When complete: 1 copy for participant, 1 copy for researcher site file.

Appendix 4: Phase one narrative interview question

Thesis Title

Learning in later life: using life biography to investigate the inter- relationship of learning and life course capital

Research questions

- How do later life learners perceive and interpret learning over their life course?
- To what extent are forms of capital identifiable over the life course?
- How do late life learners perceive, interpret and understand learning in later life?
- What are the motivations for engagement with learning in later life?

Narrative question

“I would like you to tell me the story of your learning experiences to date. The best way to do this is start from your earliest memories perhaps in childhood at home or at school. If you could tell me all the things that happened one after the other until today. Please take your time in doing this and also give details, because for me everything is of interest that is important for you.”

Appendix 5: Phase two interview questions

Phase two interview questions

Looking at the here and now:

Thinking about this phase in your life course, how would you describe this?

What might be the rationale for your description/ why

Can you identify specific incidents/examples to further illuminate your understanding of this?

How would you describe your involvement with learning?

What might be the rationale for your description/ why

Again providing further examples/ specific incidents to further illuminate this?

Why do you engage with learning/U3A? What motivates you to do this?

Looking back and looking forward:

Reflecting on all the learning you have undertaken over your life how does that relate/compare to what you do now?

Have your experiences relating to learning to date influenced what and how you choose to learn now? Can you identify specific incidents/examples to further illuminate your understanding of this?

Appendix 6: example of hand written transcript -

So I went there and at that school I was in the top of the stream.

So what changed from the primary school to the secondary school.

• Because I think all the cream went to grammar school — so everybody that passed the 11th went to grammar school and that was a higher standard of — as I understand it — education but this secondary modern that I went to was a bit above the other one or two — they were different it was different years ago wasn't it to what it is now.

Can you remember what year that was?

When I went to — it would be 1954 I think when I went to the secondary modern because I left in '59 so I didn't take any — the grammar schools did the GCSE's and we didn't.

So what did you do then.

Well — in school — well I wanted to be a hairdresser that was what I really wanted to do and I wasn't allowed to do it so then I had to try and find something else to do. I had thought about being a dentist but I was told that that was quite difficult to get into and I was particularly good at geometry and maths so a friend of mine

then his father was a draftsman and she said her father had said well you know I might sort of slot into working in a drawing office so the school was pretty good and then I decided I wanted to do that because we did different subjects you see being all these years ago the boys did woodwork and the girls did cooking so the girls never did any sciences - biology but no actual science and no Technical Drawing - so when I told the school what I wanted to do for the last, I think it was only the last term they put me in with the boys doing (TD) and science but I hadn't had the grounding on but I did get a job in a drawing office, - the drawing office but I was just general doing scribbles and printing and I wanted to go, well I was going 3 nights to night school to take a course it was the ONC for mechanical engineering so what I had to do was I think from memory there was two years like a general course and then you did - 3 years to get your certificate and I think from memory - it's a long time ago - I think I slotted in the 2nd year of the general course but obviously I was again - I was the only female the boys had done science so what I was taking was science TD or had to do general studies and English yes so English obviously I had done for years but I hadn't done the TD nor the science and the science I found pretty difficult because I had got no grounding at all

and I could remember the formulas but when you got to questions like talking about a Lath you know if you were talking about faces and a Lath I didn't know what part of the Lath was the face and can you understand what I mean so even though yk I could do the formulas and I could use it out when it was applied to a proper question as an engineer because I hadn't used a machine, that pattern machine I — skipped i.e. I skipped actually in the exams —

I don't know how I was going from here. At any rate I went to night school 4 3 nights a week and I actually said I wanted them to pay for me to go to day school and one of the workmen said — I said it's a rubbish firm this won't pay somebody unless an apprentice to go to day school — and he said well if you're not satisfied find another job — so I did just up the road I saw an advert for a job they wanted like a junior in the drawing office and it was Bassett Liqueur's Alberts place so I went, I got the job and became the chap they said might have you done any printing in the photography but it was a big printer machine and I said yes then mainly what I am doing and filing so he said could you do to take a print of this drawing and I said oh it's the same machine as what I am using so I pulled at the string and did the interview and I got the job and they set me to day school cause they were very good employer was Bassett it was a family concern originally but I

Appendix 7: example of type written transcript

Participant three: interview 1

P: Well I can remember my first day at school which to me was traumatic just going from being at home all day to going to school all day

I: how old were you then?

P: 5 I would be 5, I think the thing sticks out in my mind memory in the first years of learning is learning the times tables, I remember that I was never in the top class so I wasn't expected to pass the eleven plus, and I didn't (I), so I didn't disappoint anybody there

I: why weren't you expected?

P: I suppose because I was thought of as not being super intelligent you know because I was never in the top stream so I think my parents accepted that I wouldn't pass, so as I say it was no disappointment there, so I think I didn't expect to pass it either, went to a secondary modern school which there was one particular school that the, where we lived I should have gone to but I went to another one which actually was a bit nearer but not many people went to from our junior school but it did actually offer more, a varied range it did languages which the other one didn't well it did French actually so I went there and in that school I was in the top of the stream

I: so what changed from the primary school to the secondary school?

P: because I think all the cream went to the grammar schools you see so everybody that passed the eleven plus went to the grammar school and that was a higher standard of as I understand it education but this secondary modern that I went to was a bit above the other one you know, they were different well it was different years ago want it to what it is now

I: can you remember what year that was?

P: when I went to, it would be 1954 I think when I went to the secondary modern because I left in 59 so I didn't take any, the grammar schools did the GCE's and we didn't

I: so what did you do then?

P: well in actual, well I wanted to be a hairdresser that was what I really wanted to do and I wasn't allowed to do it so then I had to try and find something else to do I had thought about being a dietician but I was told that that was you know quite difficult to get into and I was particularly good at geometry and maths so a friend of mine then her father was a draftsman and she said her father had said well you

know I might sort of slot into working into a drawing office so the school were pretty good and when I decided I wanted to do that because we did different subjects you see all those years ago the boys did woodwork and the girls did cookery so the girls never did any sciences, biology but no actual science and no technical drawing (TD) so when I told the school what I wanted to do for the last, I think it was only the last term they put me in with the boys doing TD and science but I hadn't had the grounding but I did get a job in a drawing office, the first drawing office but, I was just a general dogs body and printing and I wanted to go, well I was going three nights to night school to take a course it was the Ordinary National Certificate (ONC) for mechanical engineering so what I had to do was I think from memory there was two years like a ground course and then you did three years to get your certificate and I think from memory, it was a long time ago, I think I slotted in the second year of the ground course but obviously I was again, I was the only female, the boys had done science so what I was taking was science, and TD, we had to do general studies and English, yes, so English obviously I had for years but I hadn't done the TD nor the science and the science I found pretty difficult because I had got no grounding at all and I could remember the formulas but when you got to questions like talking about a lathe you know if you were talking about forces and a lathe I didn't know what part of the lathe was the force and, can you understand what I mean so even though you know I could do the formulas and I could work it out when it was applied to a proper question as an engineer because I hadn't worked a machine, that particular machine I struggled therefore I struggled actually in the exams. I don't know where I was going from there but anyway, I went to night school for three nights a week and I actually said I wanted them to pay for me to go to day school and one of the draftsmen said, I said it's a rubbish firm this won't pay somebody you know an apprentice to go to day school, and he said if you are not satisfied find another job, so I did. Just up the road, I saw an advert for a job they wanted like a junior in the drawing office and it was Bassetts Liquorice Allsorts place so I went, I got the job and because the chap there said right have you done any printing, it's like photocopying, but it was a big print machine and I said yes that's mainly what I am doing and filing so he said would you like to just take a print of this drawing and I said oh it's the same machine as what I am using I pulled out the thing and did the interview and I got the job and they sent me to day school cause they were very good employer were Bassetts it was a family concern originally, but I struggled I got through the first year but the second year I was just struggling I just couldn't you know, I hadn't got the basic background that I needed but they really didn't mind I was doing mechanical engineering and I think would have been better because we had got a draftsman there that was a civil engineer, buildings and things like that, and I think I would have fared better there and I asked them if they would let me take the civil engineering one and they said no, we don't really, we have got a civil engineer, well a draftsman with a civil engineering background so we don't need anybody else, but I really enjoyed that job it was, I used to get out into the factory and measure up because they used to do all their own, they

has their own electricians shop and joiners shop and if they moved any machinery then it all had to be drawn out and my particular job there we used to have to keep drawings but they were only A4 size so they used to have to be reduced to A4 size of the floor every single floor where the machinery was for the fire department so any machinery that had to be moved these had to be bought up to date for the fire department and that was mainly my job to keep it up to date, so yes, you know, it was ok and then I moved from there to work for the Royal Naval Ordnance and I didn't do any studying there at all it was just and that wasn't hands on that was mainly well, I really didn't know what I was doing there because all I seemed to be doing was booking drawings in and booking them out, altering what they call schedules and then I just got a bit sick of it and left as you did years ago because there was always other things and I went into, well I went into something I was interested in as well and that was make up I worked for Boots, well I worked for a cosmetic firm within Boots selling cosmetics but then my first child came along and not like these days you left work and you didn't go back so I was a stay at home mom for almost, well she was almost three when my son was born and we moved around with my husband's job quite a bit and I was getting, is this relevant?

I: yes, it is

P: I was getting on my husband's nerves because you know because I was I was getting quite frustrated and he said for goodness sake find yourself a hobby, so I always wanted to do the advanced driving test so I thought right well I'll do that so I joined the local institute of motoring and they sort of coach you through and I passed that and then you help others to get through you see what you call an observer and I was doing that and I thought I wouldn't mind teaching driving so I tried to find what you had to do to be an instructor and found it very difficult to find out because they were all sort of closed ranks because self employed there and then somebody put me on to this chap not in the area, just outside where we were living and I went to see him and I said can you tell me what I have to do and he said well I'll help you if you promise not to set up business on my doorstep and I said well I don't live anywhere near here so obviously not and he told me what to do you had to take a written exam first so I paid for myself to do the written exam and it wasn't until I had done the written exam for that, that I realised that you have really got to be doing the job to keep your licence because that is one job where you are re checked at least every four years so you've got to have a pupil they say we are coming along at such and such a time and they sit in on your lesson and then you know you were graded, well originally you weren't but that then they started a grading system and I thought oh crickey I was wanting to get this qualification so I could have it under my belt so that when they were both a bit older you know I could start to work or work for somebody else so I thought oh well I'll take this I had paid for the written exam and if I don't pass then I'll leave it alone because there's no way I can you know sort of go to work and bring up a family, and so I passed the written exam and so then I had to start thinking what to do so I

was self, I had taught myself sort of read up meself for the written exam but then obviously for them you have got to do a practical whereby you teach at three different stages you know, you have an examiner sit in a car and you teach and he'll say what he wants you to do what we are doing today type of thing and I found out that there was a course going and I am sure it was funded by the council I am not quite sure, as I say it was a long time ago and I got myself on this course and they'd all been, they'd gone on the course to be sort of scheduled for the written exam I'd actually passed the written exam so he accepted me on there and passed the second part as well, so then I got to think because as soon as you've passed you have to have a check test then so I'd got to get a car from somewhere with dual controls and some pupils and then that's what I did I sort of worked around the school, you know, school times and dog walking and I just did, just did it part time I didn't make very much money but at least I was keeping my licence on I built it up and built it up then I decided, I think I decided, I had had enough and I started to wind it down and then I decided I didn't want to wind it down and built it back up again and then my husband got a job in East Anglia in (place omitted) so we moved down there and I started to pick up the business there as well and I did exactly the same I sort of worked around the school you know worked around the kids and then he got a job, I did it five years down there, I did it five years in Sheffield, five years in East Anglia and then he got a job in (place omitted) didn't he so at that point I had no tuition car we had just got one car between us oh and my daughters car so we moved up here and then I was looking in the paper one day and it said driving school for sale car, pupils the lot you know, buy it so I went to see him so I decided to buy the car and buy the pupils oh crickey he knew he was leaving so what he had done is he'd built the business up but they were from, I mean bear in mind I had only just more or less just arrived in this area, I didn't know the area he was based in (place omitted) on, no he was he lived out (place omitted) way but he had built the business up in (place omitted) I didn't know where the driving test centre were and he had got them from one end of (place omitted) to all over the place as far as (place omitted) I mean I can remember trying to drive through (place omitted) trying to find (place omitted) and I just hadn't a clue and I did ask him to write some notes down about each pupil I wanted to know what stage they were at and I got this note pad and it just described the pupils saying like I don't know what one term was something like she'll never pass while ever, I don't know you know something just impossible and I he was taking money off a woman she was having I think it was two lessons a week, she was absolutely hopeless, I had got a 64 year old woman who couldn't actually, that car that I had bought the Uno that I had bought, she couldn't pull the handbrake on it wouldn't hold, trying, trying to teach her things when you needed the handbrake on I was having to pull the handbrake on for her so I had to swap me car, but gradually I got it all back to the (place omitted) area even though I took me pupils across to (place omitted) I only took one test in (place omitted) I got used to the (place omitted) area and so I would take them from (place omitted) to there and I built it up and built it up and I did five years there but I also been trying to get, I had

seen an advert once for a road safety officer working for councils so I started to think well what do you have to do to do for that and I tried to get in I had tried for a job down in (place omitted) where we were living and I got to the interview stage but didn't get the job and there was a course for a certificate in road safety studies that you I think could do I think it was Henley, you could do like a correspondence course but the other place they did it at was Manchester so when I arrived in this area I thought well wonder if I could get to do that so I funded myself and one day a week I travelled to Manchester to do this course and the chap that was in charge at who was the main bloke in (place omitted) the chief road safety officer did say that he was on like a board of managers for the college in Manchester he said well he would be, he would look favourably on somebody who did actually fund themselves to show that they wanted to do this when there was another vacancy come up so I did a year and during that time a post came up in (place omitted) and I applied for it and I never even got an interview so I was disillusioned I was offered work experience by the chap in Shropshire when I did find time because I was running the driving school, when I did find the time to sort of work a week where I could actually go and do some work experience he was on holiday, in the mean time I had seen an advert for a driving examiner so I applied for that and went to Nottingham for the interview and this all sort of fell into place at the end of this first year for the certificate for road safety studies and on the very last day I phoned home because I had waited for this letter, the very last day I was at the college phoned my husband and said has a letter come and he said yes so I said will you open it up and tell me what it says, he said, he read the first line which was, thank you for the interview we find that you are a suitable candidate for a driving test examiner, so I thought right, I thought I had got the job I thought right great so I said to the lady that ran the course I'm not gonna do the second year it's pointless because you know that chap did say himself at (place omitted) that he would look favourably on me I said and I never even got an interview and I you know, so I don't think there is much point in me coming back so she said ok fine and when I got home and read the letter it said however, there are no vacancies in your area at the moment so we will put you on the waiting list and let you know when there is, well the waiting list existed for a number of years and then they wrote and said that test numbers had dropped and so therefore it was that long since that you know, they were now abandoning the list that they had got so I went back and did the second year, oh wait a minute, so during the holidays that was, (name omitted) phoned me up and said I know how you feel about this and you said you weren't coming back and you were really disillusioned but she said there is a post coming up in (place omitted) would you contemplate applying for it and I said I'll think about it and I thought about it and phoned her back and said I will I said but this is the last time I'm you know, don't tell me about any more I'll apply if I don't get the job then it's not to be and I applied and I got the job, there were two posts actually and I got one of them so I did the second year (L) and passed that so I have got a certificate that's no use for any other job except for road safety officers and I stayed there I was with them for over ten years as a road safety

officer and I did enjoy that actually, I didn't enjoy the first job I had because that was cycling proficiency officer and I never even had a bike when I was young but, they gave me that job because of me driving knowledge you know, it would go like road positioning for the bikes and things like that but oh crickey I didn't know the first thing about bikes but then the head, the chief one, the main one that was in charge he took early retirement and so did the deputy and the deputy's post was high schools, looking after the high schools everything like from the age of 11 -12 onwards right up to old age and I 'd wanted to oh he was so obstructive this, he was idle this bloke that was in charge and he didn't want anybody to sort of he didn't want to make any progress at all was itching to do other things and I wanted to do something for older people for road safety and the deputy said there was a post for older peoples road safety officer but they have never filled it and if somebody takes it on now they never will fill it so I said well do you really think they are going to fill it after all these years, they won't but I was held back again but when the deputy left and I moved sideways, not that I was deputy but I moved and I took over his area and then I made it, I did loads of other things and I did do the older people and that's actually how I first come in contact with U3A because we did some work for, I can't remember what year it was but it must have been in the 80's there was a European year for older people right so I did some work with that and that's how I came into contact with U3A

I: so that was 20 years ago now?

P: I left there in 2000, started in 89, I left in 2000 because they were offering, well there was a personality clash, I wasn't, I loved the job but I wasn't getting on in the office and they were offering early retirement, so at 56 would it be, I retired, well I took me early retirement and it lasted about sixteen months and then I suddenly thought I wonder if they are recruiting for driving examiners and I picked up the phone one day and I phoned Birmingham and I spoke to this chap and I said are you recruiting at all for examiners and he said well in actual fact yes we have been recruiting he said and I think this was the Tuesday he said the closing date was last Friday I said I don't believe this I said I have been trying for years I have been looking out for the adverts and I said and I was on that waiting list well he said I'll send you a form and I'll wait for it to come in so you know, I'll look out for it so he said yes you are ok, so I filled it in went for the interview in Birmingham and got a job so yes road safety officer was the one that I really enjoyed because that got me out and about I am not an office bound person, and that was a month's residential down in Cardigan near Bedford so I did that, I mean that was horrendous actually because that was, that was actually you know the cant think of the 9/11 remember 9/11 we were on holiday then I was doing October, I was there for the full October, so September we'd got two weeks off and we didn't know cause I don't think I, we had got the television we just heard something on the radio we didn't know anything about it so that was just prior to me training and we phoned home and me daughter was absolutely devastated because her husband

was in Saudi Arabia but was in Riyadh is it? He was working there and she was saying it's they're saying it's an Arab and you know he's there and you know, not only that she was packing up to move from Berkshire up to (place omitted) all at the beginning of October when I was starting to train and she was going through all that packing and he was away and but anyway and I struggled with that training as well and I nearly gave that up, I did say I am going home I can't I just cannot grasp this so they said well we don't want to see you go just take the morning off go and you know have a mooch around somewhere, go and have a coffee somewhere, I was having a coffee and two of the other women come in but these two women were not really training they were re-training they'd had some time off and so they were just doing a bit of a refresher course so the chap had sent them to talk to me and to try to convince me to stay and I did actually pass it but it was a struggle. I struggled all the time with that because I got a job in (place omitted) I was at (place omitted) driving test centre and the travelling got me down cause I was very often going in the dark and coming home in the dark in the winter and the boss I had got there was absolutely useless in fact so useless that after I left and got a transfer to (place omitted) he was sacked for not doing a full driving test just coming back you know too soon, and he was supposed to be training me and he used to say to me if they fail bring them back, if you know they have failed bring them back, well if they fail, if they fail right at the very beginning you have to complete, legally you have to complete the full driving test which includes all sorts of things, unless they say they want to go back you know, otherwise and he just used to bring them back, in fact I was queried once because he was standing in for the main chap that was in charge, well and when the main chap came back and was back for a few weeks he took me on one side once and said umm you always seem to be the last one back to the test centre he said, I don't know why but he said it does look bad he said because it looks as if you are giving a harder test than you should do and there I'm like a little rat if you tell me to do something I'll follow it to the letter and I think I was the only one that was actually completing a full test route they were all cutting corners and coming back but anyway that obviously came out later on after I had left so I did that and then decided when I got to 60 I think (p) yes when I was 60 you could retire obviously so I decided to take retirement but what I was also doing with the driving test which was which was very similar to what I was doing with the road safety officer they went out to give talks to high schools with videos and talk about the driving test you know what's required but also about safety and things like that and I loved doing things that because that's what I was doing in the previous job and also I went to U3A groups which is how this one started because I gave a talk to (place omitted) U3A and I said to the chap there we could do with something like this in (place omitted) and he said well if you want to start one off then let me know, well I didn't because that particular year when I was 60 our first grandson was born in the January but he was born with only half a heart and he died in the November, so it's quite traumatic so that's why I took the retirement because I just couldn't I couldn't concentrate on what I was doing but I said I would because you could be part time

you could go back as and when required so I said I would do that but what I did which was I know fairly crafty which was I didn't go back and do driving tests but I continued to do the talks around the schools and around you know the women's institutes which was wrong really because you are supposed to be actually doing the job to do the talk but I was having a whale of a time going because I was covering and they could call on me with me not doing driving tests, they could call on me at short notice, I was in Shropshire, (place omitted), Cheshire down to Birmingham even across to Derby so I was all over the place my husband was coming with me so you know, I got me travelling expenses, expenses for doing it and we'd have a coffee out so we were having a real time but then my husband kept saying when are you going to retire because he'd retired in 2000 as well you see and I said oh I don't know but then but then I thought well its probably better if I say I'm leaving before they catch upon me and say sorry you can't do it any longer so you know I said I'm not doing it anymore so I retired then so where do I go from here, I started the U3A

I: can I ask you before we go onto the U3A, can I ask you about your parents what they did?

P: as a living, well me mother, they both originally worked at a printers, they didn't meet there they were at school together they knew each other from school, from what I can gather they both worked there but then me mother worked for an opticians and me dad went into the steel works he was a tool grinder

I: so would they have been described as working class?

P: yes

I: and brothers and sisters?

P: No

I: just you?

P: um

I: so from your parents perspective they didn't push you or coach you towards that eleven plus, was it just

P: No it's the age old like Victorian thing women don't work you know women they're really to look after them in their old age

I: and they would have been quite content with that that would have been their expectation

P: they did want me to be, I took up ballroom dancing and got quite well, the next medal I would have taken would have been for teaching for both old time and for modern and they wanted me to be a dance teacher and I didn't want to be a dance

teacher, I didn't think I was good enough and I wanted to be a hairdresser they wouldn't allow

I: was it your parents that stopped you from doing that

P: they said it was unhealthy because the hairdresser that me mother went to said that she had TB and blamed it on the hairdressing I once said to me father cause we, I don't know if it was when we were cause we lived together in a big house once at one point down in (place omitted) but he made a comment about a mobile hairdresser and the charges and it must be making quite a lot of money and I said yes, I said and if I had taken up hairdressing I might have been worth a bit more than what I am now and he said and you might have been dead as well, so I did get to the pitch actually I got really, because my husband was in caretaking in Sheffield and he was a building supervisor for a large college and one of the heads of departments there his wife was head of department for hairdressing and beauty at another college in Sheffield and I used to get on with him really well and I thought I had got to the point where I thought I'm gonna ask him to have a word with his wife and see whether I can actually go along, I was teaching driving at that point but I thought I can make my own mind up now I can, I'll see if I can go to college for hairdressing and do it eventually but then my husband got the job down in East Anglia so that was never to be but yes I still love anything to do with hair and make up

I: so that would have been your dream job?

P: yes

I: and it was really parents influence that stopped you from pursuing that

P: you see that wouldn't happen these days would it?, I mean I think they'd go out and do their own thing, when you think about it they'd I suppose legally, legally got no right had they

I: no but it brings us back to that issue we were talking before we started about discipline and respect and if your parents said you did

P: they say jump and you say how high

I: when you have worked and trained over your life because you have clearly gone back to work and retrained and put yourself through an awful lot of re education over time to do your jobs, has that been because financially you had to go back or because you were bored?

P: it's well (P)

I: what motivated you to do all those things because you have had the road safety and driving theme that has run through?

P: yes, which is totally different to hairdressing because I finish up really in a man's world mainly, I don't know, I think it's just the Yorkshire terrier in me that says I am, I will do this or I'll have a darn good try, crack at it financial, we have been through some financial difficulties but that was when the children were younger and I, I felt that really my place was at home with them and that is why I ran my own business because if the children were ill, the children would come first and I wouldn't want to let anybody down, I'd be letting my own pupils down but I wouldn't be letting somebody that I worked for, I wouldn't be letting them down. I don't know, it was, it was I think the boredom with the first step about the hobby and the taking the advanced driving test but I mean that developed into being an instructor and my husband said I don't know anybody else that like turns a hobby into a job, I don't know, I think something just drives me all the time I don't know, I don't, I just get an idea in me head and think oh but it's certainly not, it's been nice financially but no finance didn't really drive me because I really made nothing at the driving school because I, you know, I didn't charge as much as anybody else and if I'd got no lesson after I used t give extra time you know, I was like a mother hen with them, I used to mother them through the driving test

I: so was the U3A another idea or was it

P: it was coming in contact with going to (place omitted) well in actual fact when I first found them out at Newcastle they were paying fifty pence a session and they were doing things like calligraphy and I thought I can't wait to retire you know and do something like this and it was, it was just a bad year you know as I say I did that talk at (place omitted) and he said if you want to start, but I didn't pursue it because well we were absolutely devastated I mean the whole of that almost ten months was dreadful to live through but he phoned me up and said have you thought about it and I said I don't know, oh he said oh go on and cause I don't like to say no I said oh alright then, he said if I put, if I send something to the magazine the what do you call it? The gazette, the (place omitted) gazette he said can I put you as a contact name and that's how that started

I: and now it's flourishing

P: it has yes

I: well it has from the start, so what classes do you go to now then?

P: not as many as I did we go to Ti Chi, line dancing, I did go to sewing but I was only going to sewing if I wanted anything shortening and there's, you know, I've not needed it so I've not gone back and we did go to bowling I enjoyed the bowling, but they have changed it, it used to be a two hour session and then a gap and a two hour in the afternoon it used to be I think 10-12 and then 2- 4 and we've had to have a block of four hours and the morning one that we went to is more popular and we went back and there was just too many there so really the afternoon one is not convenient because we are normally either walking me

daughters dog or sit in with the little boy while she walks, cause she has got another little boy now so, so it's not convenient so we didn't go back to bowls so I think just the two I think yes oh, oh sorry that's my husband you'll be interviewing him, yes Ti Chi and the line dancing

I: but you have done other classes there as well

P: yes we did tap but that folded after two years

I: two year is a long time though

P: its s long time to learn nothing, I persevered about half a dozen of us and we just, he was just not a very good teacher, but I do go to tap now anyway I go to tap on a Tuesday evening where we are learning you know the different grades, the different steps

I: so is that, has the one thing led to the other

P: yes

I: so you have developed an interest in tap

P: I was always interested in tap yes but we were just disillusioned because he'd, we'd be doing tap to the Lambeth walk and it was what he'd done at the U3A in Wakefield, this was our chairman actually and we'd do so much of it and then he'd move on and we hadn't even, we didn't even know what we were doing for the first bit and it was so confusing and it wasn't just it was all of us so I mean there was something not right so we actually I started to go myself I found this tap class at the Jordan centre and I went there and one or two of the others came as well so I have proved that we can learn tap (L)

I: that's grown out of the U3A so your exposure of one thing has led you to go off and find that somewhere else

P: and we couldn't get anyone to do the line dancing at first oh because I was publicity officer to start with we kept advertising and nobody was coming forward for the line dancing and then somebody happened to say that there was a line dancing class at Barlaston on a Thursday night so my husband and I went along there's an older lady there that's quite good, not the teacher, the teachers very good don't get me wrong but there's an older lady and I kept thinking well she seems pretty good I wound if she might like to be a group leader but I never got around to asking her and I was talking to (name omitted) the teacher actually and I don't know how it came about, oh I said do you do any day time classes(name omitted)? If I did one it would be in (place omitted) you know, I wouldn't do it out of (place omitted) cause she lives in (place omitted) so I said cause I could do with a day time one I said could really do with one for the U3A but I said don't like asking you because she is actually a dressmaker and she was looking after her dad then

her dad was, she was a carer for her dad and her mom and I thought she'd got enough on her plate I didn't really like to ask her but she said I said, I didn't like to ask you but you wouldn't think about it would you and she said well I wouldn't mind cause I am thinking about joining the U3A myself so her mom joined and she's joined and so she does a class now for us on a Tuesday and she really enjoys it because she gets quite a lot of people there but we still go to her Thursday class as well, I have gone on a bit haven't I

I: no that's good. If you didn't have the U3A, if you didn't go to the U3A, have all those interests what would you do?

P: umm well I'd find something

I: I am sure you would find something

P: yes, I don't know because I actually wouldn't spend me time in the house cleaning and I like gardening, I love gardening but me back plays me up quite a bit so you know I can't do as much as I would like to do in the garden, dancing I would probably go dancing, as I say I wouldn't sit around doing nothing I couldn't do that

I: so if I said what does it do for you, if you had to write a list of things of what going to the U3A does

P: well it gets you talking to other people doesn't it cause I think you do need other people and friends don't have to be particularly, well yes in your life I think you only have one or two very, very good friends but you can have loads of colleagues, acquaintances' and it just gets you out I mean because years ago I mean it just happened quite a lot didn't it when me reached 65 retired and they probably lasted two months they just sat in a chair and just did nothing and I think that's just so sad because what I do think is sad is the fact that when you're at work and you are earning the money and you can't make the most of it you know because you are working and then you retire and fine we are not badly off but you know we have the opportunity to do it but you know not the amount of income that was coming in before but I like to travel I have to say that if I get half a chance I'd be off but me moms 90 next Friday so and I've said I'm an only child so yes she doesn't like us to go on holiday but yes if, I'd be out and about I'd be travelling anywhere

I: the U3A do you like the informality, that's a very closed question

P: yes

I: does that suit you

P: yes, we have a laugh if you know if you know if we can't do it right the Ti Chi, the line dancing it's just a laugh its good for your body but also its good to have a

laugh isn't it, you know, cause I wouldn't, I certainly wouldn't want to go back learn anything, nothing like a degree or I've had enough of that I find I struggle with anything like that but craft or dancing or that type of thing I'm fine with so and I enjoy it and so yes crickey I dread to think what I would do if but yes I would find something I couldn't sit down and watch TV all day even though I do watch more now than I used to watch I'd probably be out round the shops if there's nothing else to do I should just be wondering round the shops looking at clothes and make up sad isn't it well even just looking

I: well even just looking is important to maintaining that interest, it's that mental stimulation

P: and it's a dream as well int'it sometimes isn't it you know walk round John Lewis I think oh you know I spend thousands here you know oh I'd love one of those

I: shall we leave it there for today

3 Appendix 8: Example of a thematically colour coded transcript

Participant two: interview one

P: Right so you want me to start

I: if you wish

P: If I wish, right I hadn't expected an autobiography, I mean I can talk about early memories whether it's to do with education or not I am not so sure but one of my early memories if you are interested is in an air raid because we were in Birmingham and I don't know how old I was but my brother was there and he's twelve years older than me and there was a Morrison shelter in the front room, which was one of those steel cages and it was there until quite a long time after the war as I remember and the only time I remember using it was when there was an air raid and we were hauled out I used to sleep with my parents, I presume for safety and I was very upset when I was kicked out at the end of the war and put into my own bedroom, I was very upset about that, and so we all went down to the air raid shelter with my mother and my brother and me and my mother said I'd like a cup of tea and so dad had to go and make a cup of tea with the bombs coming down and he was grumbling about that he'd been sent out but he had gone through years of the first world war so I suppose perhaps it wasn't so funny- so that's an early memory. Apart from that and thinking in terms of education I came from that generation which, that's a fatal phrase isn't it?

I: yes 'that generation' yes

P: whose parents hounded them into doing well in education, a huge amount of pressure on you to do well because my father was from a slum I have been doing my family tree with a name like mine you'd think it wouldn't work but in fact, I can ramble can I? You don't mind ramble?

I: yes please ramble fine

P: in fact they never moved out of the (place omitted) street slums of Birmingham so I can actually find them right back to 1815, 1816 something like that so he came out of the slums and was passionate about education, which he didn't have much of himself, although he was a very clever man he used to do the Sunday Times crossword, so he forced my brother and me, my brother was more successful than me, to do well at school. There was another brother who died an older brother, so my own brother (name omitted), had the unfortunate experience and I am sure it scared him of being first of all being the younger brother who was rather mischievous and naughty, then he became the youngest son and then he became the elder brother and I don't think it did him a lot of good actually, so education was very important and I was desperate to go to school when I was, I can remember sitting at the kitchen table writing down letters at random and saying to my mother 'is that a word?' You know and she'd say oh no it isn't, so I'd try even more letters so 20 letters - 'is that a word?' no, no sorry you will have to wait until you go to school, so I was very anxious to start that, what one of the things that I think won't happen now in the same way was that I used to watch my brother and my father reading books and enjoying them and I'd say oh that looks

rather good so I did want to be able to read so I suppose that's the start of it, having said that I wasn't particularly successful at school at all I don't know why I wasn't, but for instance I forgot, I am a bit of a dreamer and I would sort of sit there thinking oh I'm at school but I wasn't learning and so there was a big problem once I got home and I got ticked off because I had been miming to things like the alphabet and not knowing what the alphabet was my father was furious when he found out and I was forced to learn the damn thing so I was a bit although I wanted to do it I wasn't actually particularly smart at working on it, but once I had learnt to read I then started reading heavily cause I used to read all my brothers stuff once I was sort of the age of seven, eight, nine, ten or eleven I was reading (in audible word) you won't remember these but there were lots of magnet and Jem magazines and little paperbacks and I was ill a lot and so I was in bed a lot with long, yes quite a sickly child and consequently I had to entertain myself so in many ways to be honest my almost the foundations of my education where I actually go through reading because my parents bought they were encyclopaedias, the children's encyclopaedias and err Noons Pictorial Knowledge which they bought for me they are children's encyclopaedias as I believe and my brother and cause I would spend hours reading you know the myths and literature and all the stuff you know science and so on so there is a kind of basis there which I acquired just by accident I suppose, I missed so much school in fact that they put me down a year I went back into what should have been my right year, I went to school in the morning up the hill to the main school and they said oh no you have missed so much school you have to go down to the Hollow which was sort of the annex a year down, so I sort of did a circuit and came back at lunch time and said I have been sent down and my father was furious because he had been coaching me in my absence and he said you are perfectly capable and anyway because that the ambition and he went up the school and said you are not going there again and so I went back into the, but probably I was the, it may not have been a good idea because I was probably a bit behind my writing had to change because my father had taught me a particular kind of early twentieth century thing and they wanted something different, my writing is terrible, so I was always a little bit lagging right the way through I think, probably throughout, I look back now with the advantage of years and I think I was always not behind mentally exactly but probably developmentally not quite seeing what it was all for so I was always lagging a bit so umh by the time I got to, I got over that and then we got into class one which was the top class at school and I got a scholarship to Solihull school which is, it was alright, but again there had been a lot of home coaching from my father who was determined I would, he had become obsessed with the eleven plus which had come in 44, not that I know that but he did and suddenly he was talking about the eleven plus and how important it was, and I couldn't see what he was on about you know but there I was practicing all these tests and you know what's the odd one out and all that sort of thing so I did quite well in fact I am going to boast now because in those days such it was we lived in Olton and there was Solihull, which was where I went, and Birmingham that way and at the age of nine I was sent to the grammar school entrance exam at Moseley Grammar School, which I passed and I was desperate to go to Moseley Grammar School rather than go to Solihull where my brother had gone and my dad he turned it down and I was very upset about that so that, because that was just a practice so then the following year I sat for the common entrance at Solihull and re-sat at Moseley, I think I failed the Moseley one, I didn't care but I got into Solihull so in those days Solihull was a

public school but it was taking a sort of there wasn't a grammar school, it was amazing there was no grammar school in Solihull

I: not at all?

P: not at all there is, Tudor Grange was being built, which was the local grammar school, probably by the time I left so they were taking in the cream of the Birmingham area that right so they were taking in 30 kids who passed this test so that's, that was the kind of progress

I: so was that a publically funded school?

P: privately funded school but these were publically funded places, does that make sense?

I: oh ok, if you hadn't have won the scholarship would you have gone to the local sort of equivalent?

P: Charmans Cross

I: ok, what would have been the equivalent of

P: a secondary modern, my father used to say, when he could see that I wasn't actually putting in the effort he'd say 'I saw the window cleaner the other day' and I can remember this window cleaner, 'it was a frosty day and it was cold and the window cleaner was at the top of the ladder cleaning windows and at the bottom of the ladder' he said 'was a lad whose job it is to stand there all day standing on the ladder he went to Charmans Cross' so he had a gift for it in a way

I: that reinforced

P: So I was not allowed to fail was the and I think I probably would have failed if I hadn't had him pushing, he was noted for it I remember I talked to an uncle of mine, sort of an uncle of mine years later and almost the first thing he said about him was how he had made (name omitted) my brother, you know

I: really and yet you dad had got no formal qualifications himself not one?

P: No he left school well 1897 he was born, I was a very late arrival they were 44, I think probably an error, so 1897 I don't know what the school leaving age was before the war but he would have left school before the war started so even if it was 14 he would have left in 1911 wouldn't he and I know he used to talk about his school days, how hard, well actually he spoke in admiring terms of his school master Mr Perrin but I understand from talking to somebody else that he was a absolute brute, you know he would cane you on the slightest so he was very, very fierce but dad had, I think they all did I mean it was narrow but it was well grounded in figures and reading and poetry he could quote you reams of poetry all kinds of things Henry Newbold, all tended to be the empire building stuff but he, and Shakespeare, and so he had kind of an education and read a lot

I: so what did he do for a job

P: well he started off working for the post office in Birmingham the old, do you know Birmingham?

I: I do

P: opposite the town hall the old post office he worked there and when the war came he went into the Royal Flying Corps and was in the telegraphic bit when they were doing this feeding the information and when he came out he went back to the post office, which is where he met my mother who was working on the counter I think there, a bit more refined, and then it's all a bit murky, it is, I can't get to the truth of it, it is said that he had a scam going because he was in the top room friends of his and maybe one of his brothers were working a scam whereby they would get the results of things to the telegraph office before the street bookies knew and they were exploiting that gap. My brother used to vehemently deny it but he certainly left and he made money as a greyhound trainer because that was a new thing in the twenties and he did very well at that actually I was looking up the other day, well about a year ago actually when The Times let its archive out free I had a look and I found in there selling his dogs because he crashed in 1936/35 and he had a nice house in Withenall big garden four acres I think it was and stables or kennels but something went badly wrong and so we ended up at Olton in a semi, although I wasn't born then obviously and so he then became a professional gambler, on the dogs, yes Hall Green dog track

I: yes I know it very well, I like the dogs

P: oh do you, oh stay away, there was quite a syndicate, there was my father and his brother my uncle Len and various odd folks called the bat and shimka the shifter and all sorts of semi shady people and so he scraped a living after the war until he died in 57 but again that was in decline and I don't think it helped that I was going to school and needed a uniform and you know all that kind of thing, so that was his job, well that's one way of making money I suppose

I: he was clearly a bright man

P: he was a bright man yes, just wasted, I mean it was a good example of why you need education it seems to me, I mean all that brain which was largely went to waste I guess, he used to keep, lovely, beautiful I tell you what he used to do his books every Sunday or Thursday, that's right he used to go to the track on Wednesdays and Saturdays and the books were beautiful copper plate you know, with all the runners and the odds and the going all this kind of all wonderful stuff, so I shouldn't have thrown them away, he was an intelligent man yes proud and rather embittered as well but very interested in words as I think a lot of them were you know with the 1870 education act there suddenly realised the possibility of puns and word play and so on I have got it in this book (patting book on the table) I have got it in there as well and he was an absolute sucker for a pun or for definitions or for, and I am the same, just the same and that's where I think the interest in education comes I suppose – shall I stop now ?

I: no

P: I have rambled haven't I? He said defensively

I: No I need to know this information, what did mom do?

P: nothing, because in those days your mother didn't and she was repressed

I: was she repressed?

P: oh yes I think so, she once said to me after he had died 'never again' she said and I don't know how true that, how accurate that is but she certainly said it. So she was at home looking after the house after the children, she was allowed out with, do you remember what we used to call the fish fags, which was the women's institute I think or one of those and she would go once a week to these things, otherwise her place was home, but I think she was not without talent because she sang on the radio, roundabout, I am not sure of the date now, my brother dying when he did is a damn nuisance cause there is so much information he had and its gone – it was somewhere, it was when it was the BBC so that's British Broadcasting Company not so I am not quite sure when that puts it, but Ron remembered gathering in my uncles or one of my uncles houses listening to the wireless and hearing her sing live over the radio waves, I think it was a local thing, she was, she has sung in a choir as well (in audible word) she had training because she used to describe to me how to project your voice through the facial bones and how when you were learning it how you had really terrible headaches doing it so, she was not without talent at all and she wasn't stupid either so but that was her life but when my father died unfortunately in 1957, June the 18th just gone she had to get a job to keep me going and the only job she could do was cooking, so she ended up in my school as a cook for a time and then I think she found that rather embarrassing as I suppose you would wouldn't you and so then she went as a cook in the COOP in the high street in Birmingham, staff cooking and she was there when she died, but she was very young looking, so she died her hair and she took ten years off her age so she, she was 66 1897- 1963, she wasn't quite 66 when she died, so she was still working when she shouldn't of actually been finished so to keep me going

I: if you had been a girl, do you think your dad would have pushed you quite as hard do you think?

P: that is a question I have never, ever contemplated and I don't really know the answer to it, I think he might have still pushed, I think he might because, because he you know he was very ambitious and he lived his ambitions through his son, I was a bit of a failure for him a bit of a disappointment and Ron did better than I did, I can't imagine that he would have allowed a daughter not to be clever and educated, I can't believe that he wouldn't have done so I think, but it wouldn't, but that is not the same as believing in equality for women is it ? So I mean his attitude towards women and people of colour was deplorable and Jews, but then he is of his age

I: but that takes you back to that generation, so that would have been for his cohort that would have been

P: quite normal, so it wouldn't have been for that reason but he would have done it for sheer pride because you are always told, when you go out you are our representative, when you go out you represent me and you had better not let me down, which I did frequently

I: Did he tell you that, or did you just know that?

P: what, when you go out of this house?

I: No, that you had let him down

P: Oh, gosh, this is like the psychiatrists couch isn't it

I: oh, sorry, if you don't wish to answer then don't

P: no I will answer all of them, yes I knew yes, I mean because my reports were always could have done better, that kind of thing and he every time the report came home it was hell for about four days and he'd keep quoting at you the things there another bloody phrase that my French teacher used to use, being young and foolish, can't help being young and he would go on about this for months afterwards he was so yes I knew that he told me in effect yes that I was a disappointment to him yes, funnily enough it came back to me about disappointment when I did one of those AGM's it may have been the one that you were at and when I came away I thought gosh he would have been proud of me to have, it never occurred to me at the time as I was walking away thinking, you know addressing 100 or so people that he would be ever so proud, but anyway, that's

I: generational, may be?

P: yes so where am I

I: you succeeded in your eleven plus

P: yes twice, go to Solihull, not particularly successful at Solihull, education is wasted on the young I think, I am convinced of this if I am anything like typical because I love learning, I love learning but I wasn't particularly enjoying it when I was at school at all I never got to work out why that was but anyway, I messed around so much I suppose in a way of some self defence, it not much of a one to be honest, but my father crashed again in 56, sorry 55 and he had to sell the house to pay off all his debts and I to board and we had a wonderful holiday in, my first ever holiday in Bewdley for two weeks and I had a fabulous time there, just nothing much, just being in a hotel and then I couldn't believe it when they said but you are going to board this term and I thought surely they won't send me off to that bloody place and I went and boarded and I was desperately home sick and I was coming home three times a week or where ever they were three times a week, it was awful and that was my GCE year so I did, I think I wouldn't have done well anyway but it certainly didn't help so I only got four O levels, English, English, Latin and French I think and then I took three more at Christmas and made up the maths and whatever else I did history and can't remember, German, that's right I caught up at Christmas and obviously I had gone into the sixth form by then so I did the English, History and Latin then, but I have often thought you know looking back, that if I had paid attention when I started at school I probably, I might have been more interested in science but again I was too busy you know public school and missed the key sort of first six months of how science worked and what it meant and never caught up so I gave it up so anyway I am sure because I notice these days I am quite interested in, I love literature and arts but I am also quite interested in science, so it might have gone differently if I'd paid attention, but I didn't, so you never know with people quite how they are going to turn out, my son who is unemployed, he's a layabout but, he's mad about engineering and things he's bright as well but he doesn't do anything but I can see I think my father kept

me sufficiently on the road to where I am now don't think I would have got here without him

I: Don't you

P: No I think probably not

I: and that's definitely father and not mother, mother

P: mother never does, she was always in the background and she was the go to person you know dad not the person you confided in always but my mother always was loving and supportive, she was fabulous she was, everyone loved May she was one of those sunny people that everyone liked, my father was one of those people that no one particularly liked he was a bit acquad and spiky and forbidding sort of fellow so no she didn't, the only influence she had on me, I say the only perhaps that's not fair but, in terms of education because after my father had died and I was we were living in Hampton in Arden by then and I was still at school and I said to her I don't think I will go to university I think I will get a job in the civil service at an intermediate level and she absolutely wouldn't let me do it and dug her heels in so I had to give in and so that's a key moment but never the less the only one that I can think of but then again she was on her own so she had to do it because dad would have done it otherwise obviously

I: so did mom then support you through university financially?

P: she did, poor thing she supported me right through three years and she died on June the 13th about a week after my final exams so she never knew the results unfortunately in fact the last time I spoke to her was I said I think I have failed and she said oh well never mind pet we will do it again next year but she died and that was her rather sad in a way, rather sad, but I think that's the result of being a late baby I think you know they talk about having later children I do hope they live a long time to give them that support, so I was on my own from the age of 22 onwards then I did my education year at (place omitted) and then have been teaching ever since really

I: how was university life?

P: again only with hindsight I was always slightly off the pace but I enjoyed university, well I enjoyed the social side I enjoyed some of, I did English obviously I enjoyed the English, most of it, I enjoy it more now I mean all that (inaudible word) and stuff I couldn't stand but I am fascinated by it now so as I say its wasted on a younger person I think, so I was ok, I got a 2:2 which was, I didn't work terribly hard but worked from Christmas of the last year and just got through, but I have always done that, just got through I am far more now, far more sort of what's the word, dedicated to learning than I was when I was younger I think

I: is there a reason for that?

P: I have always been very curious about things, so much so that my father would say, 'For God's sake, why? why? why?' and I suppose and certain lessons really fascinated me history fascinates me, English fascinated me, I am sure science would have done but of course that's quite a narrow, I was operating on quite a narrow way and I never really I never revised anything revising was something that

only came to me A levels, not ever A levels the degree what's this revision thing, see what I mean about me being slightly off the pace all the time so I underperformed I would think probably all the way through my educational career

I: is that about you or is that about the environment?

P: I can't give a straight answer to that I think, I mean I have been interested in these accounts of children born late in the year being at a disadvantage when they start school, now I was born in June so that I am not the worst example of that but my brother was born in September and I think and I have thought about this a lot and I think that is why I have never really know when I have been in a class why I am there, what it's for, and I have just gone along and done things without thinking about what is going to come out of this at the end whereas people a bit older may be do, I don't know but that certainly my experience and I would also say, this is oh, I suppose this is education, one of the mistakes my parents made (inaudible word) relationship with my brother because he was always being held up as an example you know, (name omitted) has done this, (name omitted) has done that, and (name omitted) is, (name omitted) is twelve years older I couldn't compete so I gave up because, you know seeing (name omitted) go to university when I am just still at junior school it's no relevance you know, so I think probably the gap in ages meant that, it was only after I the whole family had gone I suppose that I could see better so I think that probably wasn't a great help to me and it must be true of other people I would think with older specially when you father does that he reminded me later so and so at the time he was perfect and I certainly wasn't so I think that's probably not a good thing

I: So there was that, did you dad promote that sibling rivalry? Did he attempt to promote that?

P: yes I think the idea was that I would be inspired to emulate the successful older brother and he did do I mean he was, well at every stage he did better than I did I think I mean to be absolutely fair he was deputy head of the school and I wasn't he went to Cambridge and I went to London and then he went into the, he tried to get into the foreign office twice and failed so he went into the civil service which is where he stayed all is life and I went into teaching which is just a bit further down so you know you can sort of see, by way of compensation my parents always said that I was smarter than he was, cleverer than he was but he was harder working, better organised, more focused on things which he was yes

I: that's not necessarily about intelligence is it?

P: not necessarily no but he certainly made better use of what he'd got there's no question of that

I: University in London what University was year was that?

P: 60 to 63 just before the sixties started, I missed it! Another few years and I'd have been there, drugged to the eyeballs no doubt, so I didn't get any of that

I: London so was that London University or...

P: Kings College

I: Kings College, Ok

P: So I did three years there, my only claim to fame is that I sat in the same room as Susan Hill, she's a novelist, she got that umh, I mean she must be worth millions, woman in black in the West End which has been playing for, she wrote that, she's written various things so she quite well known, didn't like her much, but apart from that three years doing English, that was it, got a 2:2 which again not a 2:1 but a 2:2 always slightly

I: but to be accepted for Kings must have been quite, how do I put this? I mean it's a red brick, you know it's a very important University, so it's quite an accolade really to be accepted for Kings?

P: you have to look at the context because Solihull always sends its kids to Cambridge or possibly Oxford and there were honours boards up there with exhibitionists and all the rest of it now I went to Christ's for an interview and forgot to turn up to one of them which shows you what I was like and I didn't get in there and then I, I didn't like school and I left without actually having a university to go to and got a job in Wilkinson Rydell in Birmingham, didn't like that either but in the mean time applied to Kings and Bristol and Edinburgh I think and went down for an interview and Kings offered me a place but then again in context it was the second rank not the top rank, I was glad I had gone there because one of the things I didn't like I think about Solihull was its and I have been back once or twice since is all the flummery and mummery of public school we weren't called prefects they were benchers and we wore tassels and all this kind of thing I got no time for it and didn't really like that so probably I would really have liked Cambridge either for the same reason, I was very happy at Kings after I got over my initial home sickness because again I had it quite badly but once I got over that I preferred the kind of lower end of it the lack of ceremony and so on but yes it was, the first thing the Prof said when we had us all together ladies and gentlemen half of you are boys, men, half of you are ladies, women, the women are much better than the men because there aren't enough places at Oxford and Cambridge for the women so they come here and you are make weight or words to that effect so we have got to have a compliment of men as well so there you are

I: you have talked about home sickness a few times but it sounds like home was a place like where mother was comforter but dad promoted this sibling rivalry, so why where you home sick?

P: I don't know, it doesn't make sense I know but it is probably I don't know on the other hand it's like this life is not necessarily logical, you often get two things opposite cohering don't you and there's nothing I loved more in the world than sitting down in the back room with my mother on one side and my father on the other and I thought that was bliss, dad was also very funny, he was very, he could be tremendously, he was a sick man by the time I was growing up but he could for all his sternness I mean there were time when he was fabulously funny and you know you laughed until you ached so there was that side of it as well

I: so did you miss that, what would have been a family atmosphere as such?

P: yes I missed it terribly, which is why I was so unhappy at school when I boarded and then again at university the first year really, then I went back thinking the second year I have just got to make this work, I can't just go on like this as they say so I did enjoy I sort of threw myself into it and I did enjoy it

I: but you were the baby I suppose of the ..

P: yes I was the baby and if I was a mistake I think, certainly where my mother was concerned I think she would have over compensated and I have always seen myself as being a mothers boy rather than you know when I look back I was a mommy's boy not that she was a spoiling sort of a person but I would think that she, that I probably clung to her I would think I don't know

I: because despite her best efforts this home sickness it makes you wonder whether she had prepared you to put you out in the world.

P: oh I see I don't know

I: on who's at the end of the day you where her baby and you had lost a brother

P: not that I was ever there he had died before I was born but from her point of view I would think yes, funnily enough I read a piece in the Times not long ago I think last week about somebody whose boy had died about the age of, I don't know if you had read that

I: no

P: and they went straight out and had another one and they said you never get over the loss and the replacement was particularly cherished now, I don't think I was a replacement, I don't think you would have a baby in 1941 frankly I just don't but there is an existence at home I have a photograph of my aunt Roses wedding in 1940 and my father grinning all over his face with his arms around women and I think September 1940 – June 1941 so I think it's probably that so I think I was probably the, guilt would come into it as well wouldn't it

I: but without being able to talk to you mom we are not going to be able to know are we?

P: you'll never know, all I know is that about oh twenty odd years ago now and I forget there was a law suit about one of my uncles houses, you won't be interested in the details, but anyway it meant that my aunt Rose who was the youngest of my father's family came over to see me one day with her husband and as she walked through the door she said, the first thing she said to us was it was such a shock to us when you were born and that was a, I had never questioned it before and I looked at her and said oh perhaps I shouldn't have said that and I looked and so I started to think about it then about third children

I: interesting

P: it's the way life works isn't it

I: so from university because it sounds to me that you have spent a lot of time in different parts of the country

P: well I have moved around in a fairly restricted area but yes I have I suppose London university and Nottingham university then I went to Kettering for the grant school I was an English teacher there and by then I think this business of lagging that I have been talking about had finished and I had finally worked out what it was all for at 23 can't say I was actually quick on the uptake and I think it's also partly because of my mother who obviously was dead by then my brother was useless really, so it was either me or no body and so finally I took responsibility and I set myself some targets and some principles which was that I would be a success and that I would achieve head of department that, and one thing that I can do is answer other people's needs I can't work for myself very much as I say I can't be bothered I'll go without, so I felt that I was probably in the right general area and that I would be in relative terms a success so that's what I set out to do and I worked hard and did all the things that you do and did reasonably well, so Kettering and then went to, I had made a mistake because it was an all boys school and so getting out of that was difficult and so I went to a high school which was a, Coventry high just outside Coventry in Warwickshire which was a secondary modern with a sixth form and they were looking for somebody young to give them a kick up the backside so I went and did three years A level teaching and so on and then I went, they then took away the sixth form so I thought I can't do that I need to keep the sixth form so I went to Tamworth woodhouse high school which was another mistake actually, I should have really gone to something different I think like a deputy headship or something but I didn't anyway so I went to, didn't like any of that hated that school for sixteen years, fifteen years, why did you say ?

I: no

P: I said why

I: I was wondering why

P: I loved the grammar school, I loved Ash Green the secondary modern, didn't even want to be offered the job, but I was offered it and it was the top scale and as I said to my wife at the time, you don't turn those down do you, but I would have preferred not to have been offered it and I took it and was there for fifteen years but there wasn't a single day that I actually wanted to go in, but I stuck at it well you know if you work hard it will, and then I got a job at (name omitted) on a bit of a scam because it was one of those things where it was ring fenced so it had to be from inside and a member of staff had to be lost from somewhere and my deputy was able to take my head of English job so that's how it worked so that's how I finished up at as head (name omitted) of sixth form which I enjoyed for a time anyway I quite enjoyed that so averagely, my actual final designation was assistant head teacher for one year it didn't mean anything but they changed the gradings then from senior teacher to assistant head teacher, I looked at the contract and said right don't want to do this for very long

I: so then you retired

P: then I retired and started, started living really I think probably, so I started doing things that I wanted to do rather than things I felt I ought to do for somebody who is very lazy and an over inflated sense of duty I think or it may be an early grounding by my father in particular came back but I was always often doing things I didn't want to do because I felt it was the right thing or the logical or the necessary thing to do oh I will go off and say won't bother so when I retired and I retired at the first opportunity I got they did ask me if I would stay on a bit longer but I said no, no, no once I got, once it actually became possible to say it this time next year I won't be here, then it was gone then I wasn't going to stay on so well after that is when the reading actually started again so I was able to read things I wanted to read, pursue things like history and so on things that I haven't done anything about before so I didn't do anything for about a year and then I did getting on for about three years at the hospital radio in, (name omitted) which was ok it meant that I could only be there, I couldn't be anyway on a Saturday except Stafford radio which I found a bit of a nuisance really and they wanted me to learn the desk as they call it, to do all that and I would have done but it would have meant that I could have been called upon at any time to fill in and I really didn't want that so I stuck with it for nearly three years and it was I found it depressing a bit I have to say going around the wards and looking at what could be me in five years so I found that I am a bit morbid in that way so it probably wasn't the right thing anyway I did it for nearly three years and then (name omitted) was sitting at home doing nothing very much and I thought you know you really had ought to do something and then I read out this advert about this thing called the U3A and so I phoned and talked to (name omitted) and it became apparent there wasn't a U3A just the hope of one and after a bit he said would I be chairman and I said well ok then I will do it for, I had in mind doing it for six months just to start it off and of course discovered but I felt that the U3A would be an extremely good thing I didn't personally need it very much but I felt that it would be very good for people in (name omitted), which of course it is so that's how I got involved in that for again about three years, three years seems about it for me

I: how old were you when you retired then

P: 60

I: because you have handed over the chairmanship now haven't you?

P: to (name omitted)

I: but you have had a in essence a very successful period in office, for want of a better word, because you went from no members to about 550

P: yes I gather there are over 700 now so I understand, yes it was quite enjoyable really, you honestly didn't know if it was going to work or not, not the foggiest notion and I used to say well if we get 100 fair enough you know, but of course once it, once word starts to get out and we worked hard on all aspects of it I suppose so yes it is very successful I think, which I am quite pleased about

I: I should hope so. Now do you get to go to all the classes that you want to go to?

P: I don't get to go to many in fact the only one at the moment I go to is my own discussion group which is once a month, I am looking for something else

I: are you?

P: and I don't know quite what yet as you know, well perhaps you don't know I am very interested in politics

I: yes I do know

P: and of course this politics class only lasts for six months of the year and the rest of the year we are all of us sort of you know, cold turkeying I guess and I have wondered whether to get involved in some way, not with any of the main parties, but with some kind of protest group I don't know quite what that's as far as I have got or I wouldn't mind working with young people again but I, mainly because I would like to be involved in the future rather than the past the thing with the U3A is of course we are all imminently dying or ill and so a lot of the again a bit like the hospital thing you know how oh so and so has had a heart attack and I am not all that happy about that, that's purely selfish of me so I could be quite interested in some kind of knowing that this would these are the future rather than at best the present rather than anything else I mean it's a lot I'm not decrying the U3A its wonderful but at the moment as they say in acting circles I am resting and have been resting for a year and I don't know quite what I am going to do I will do something, I think go on the internet perhaps

I: I was going to say would you come back to some sort of a more formal course, would you come back to University and read politics or is it the engagement that you want?

P: its, umh, it would cost me a lot of money wouldn't it?

I: it would yes

P: umh so probably not, it's more the I feel very strongly about certain things and I feel I ought to be doing something about them rather than just sitting there and, and saying you know tut tuting, and throwing things at the tele and so on

I: if it didn't cost you any money would you come back?

P: oh yes, if it didn't cost me money I know they are very expensive now even my politics I think it's going to cost me a £120 I know that's not a huge amount but it's still a fair bit. The other thing I had wondered about was only because it's something I am absolutely hopeless at is sketching because I always used to get one out of twenty for art and he used to say to me that was a charity mark (L) I was hopeless I mean genuinely useless and I thought it would be quite nice like now for instance to be able to sketch you as I was, so that's another thought that is drifting around while reasonable healthy, touch wood, do it while you can a bit of a

butterfly perhaps but I am always interested in doing different things, new beginnings

I: do you know why you are interested, do you know what interests you in doing different things

P: new starts you mean or

I: well why would you want to engage and do different things as opposed to sit at home and do nothing?

P: yes

I: in terms of you have a choice don't you?

P: I do have a choice

I: do you want the fan on?

P: why do I look a bit pink do I?

I: no, if you are hot we can put the fan on, are you nervous?

P: oh yes ever so and

I: you are doing very well

P: it's not nervous of that its umh I think I am probably excited, probably thats why I am a bit hectic

I: well there is a lot of information there

P: yes there is – what did you say sorry

I: choices

P: you see when I was working it was always tramlines, I had to read, what I had to read for the courses and so on and I used to look out of the window and say there is another world out there you know and I am not engaging with and cant umh and certainly toward the end of my career it was all I could do to keep going you know so tired all I could do was all I could do to keep you are too young for that, you will find out, your day will come and you will go home and have a glass of wine and think thank God and recuperate for tomorrow when so I'd got a degree of energy left and as I say I was always curious as a child I was always wanted to know what things were and why they were so now I can do it, I can do anything I want, almost, and that was why I did politics I have always wanted to do politics so my wife said why don't you do it then and I thought well I suppose I could really, so I did. The U3A was a aberration really because I didn't particularly want to do it but I felt it was ever so important that somebody should do it and it happened to be me so that was you know so I mean I would like to be able to paint but there was no

chance of that so I am interested in art in a very amateur way a bit about sketching but I, I suppose I am an idealist so the way politics are at the moment and with the possibility of citizen activity which wasn't there before the internet the then I feel that I might be able to do something but I don't know yet but I have to decide by September I thought and I love, I remember saying years ago when I was leaving my job in Kettering for the second job, talking to a friend of mine at the time and he said something about you don't know what you will be doing its that wonderful you know I don't know where I will be or who it will be and what and then it's all exciting for a time and until the novelty wears off and the you think what else can I do

I: yes but that for you seem to be what suits you and you enjoy that you do seem to have a sense of knowing yourself when we met for the very first time which was about eighteen months ago now, long time ago, you spoke when you were setting up the U3A again then you didn't necessarily want to do it but you said you felt a sense of almost civic duty almost something that you had to do for the benefit of other people so there is for me, there is a bit of, there is almost this dissonance within you , there is the things that you feel you have to do but then there is the you that there is lots of things that you want to do because you enjoy them

P: my son said to me once he said your trouble is that you make your decisions to logically uhm and I thought about that for a while and for an uneducated youth who left school at 14, he truanted, it's quite an intelligent thing to say and I thought about it and I look back and think you know he's right I do tend to look at a thing and see the rationality is that even though I don't want to necessarily want to do it so thats why I did the U3A, but I don't know what I am going to do

I: but you know that whatever you do it will be exciting and almost there is a sense of anticipation about what you can do

P: yes, in a sense once its tied down it has lost some of its charm after a certain time once you know that it is gain to be that rather than any of the others in one sense the mystery has gone you know

I: because you are free to choose now aren't you

P: yes I can do what I like but I want to keep on doing as I can, I remember saying to my wife, because the woman I worked with at the hospital radio she said she wanted to give it ten years well I said to my wife if all I have done in my retirement is only do that I shall feel I have wasted it so in fact also slightly ignobly the U3A was a way out of, I mean I could simply say I'm sorry I have got this other thing, rather than I am sorry I don't want to do it any more so party about twenty percent was a reasonably honourably way out of the hospital radio

I: and so the next project is lined up before

P: that's right as it happens I mean I was looking for something else I hadn't got anything in mind but particularly and as I say I am not involved with any one at the moment apart from my discussion group so I can do what I like really

I: do you still go with the walking group?

P: no that's stopped, well partly my wife has yoga on a Wednesday afternoon so it makes it almost, not impossible but slightly difficult and actually I don't particularly like walking around (name omitted) I prefer to go a bit further away so, so I said ah I won't bother. I go to the gym 3 times a week so that's no so bad

I: so you are very busy

P: not really, no I don't think I am no I mean there is always something to do which isn't quite the same thing with only once a month U3A and not walking going to the gym three times a week obviously takes up time and reading, newspapers, I don't count that as being busy but you know I have sacrificed my morning newspaper for you today because

I: thank you

P: that's all right, it's all right it will still be waiting for me when I get back so I always read through all the politics and everything else in The Times before I almost do anything else so that as my wife says it takes up a lot of time its half the morning gone and then it's another coffee and then perhaps it's the gym so yes and my wife likes shopping so I spend a lot of time learning on rails you know full of clothes watching her scoot around M&S or somewhere so I am occupied but I wouldn't have thought I was very busy at the moment

I: if we could offer you a University Education that was free in a subject that you wanted like your politics would you come back and take that up then?

P: probably would yes it depends a bit on, because I am also a bit addicted to complete freedom so I would have to watch out that I, I could feel, I could do it but yes I mean. Counselling is another thing which I have sometimes wondered about you know, interpersonal relationships and helping people that way that's another thing I have wondered about perhaps I might try a course on that. I was quite interested when we had our course with you that time and one or two things in that I was quite struck with, by, with

I: but you are all always prepared to engage which is what is fascinating isn't it, for me there appears to be a willingness and a desire to be engaged whatever that may mean for you

P: yes, umh course I have been thinking about you over the last few days and one of the things I am very bad at social chit chat, I can't do it you know I can't sort of sit down with somebody, well I don't drink any more, but in a pub and just natter it's not a thing I can do you know may be this is, I shouldn't say it, but women seem to be better at it than men but I don't know whether this is true but I suppose I look at my wife and anyone she meets she will sit and have a little chat and I am sitting there thinking umm so I do have trouble just sort of in that relaxed sort of a way nattering so it's possible that part of which to be involved in a more sort of a structured way is to give me something to talk about I suppose

I: but I don't see you in that way at all

P: uh well it is structured, I mean I have a brief don't I to talk about myself so and the specific aspects so I am doing that and I am enjoying it

I: but we have met out and talked about other things

P: yes I suppose that's, that's my perception of me certainly that I am find it relatively difficult and I don't say relatively I mean it's not a big problem but I always quite glad to terminate I think right well let's get out while there is still a conversation going so there is that side to it

I: but then when equally you spend all day with people there are times when I think I would rather be reading my book and I don't think there is anything wrong with actually knowing yourself. Nobody speaks to anybody in our house before about 9am because actually we don't do conversation for the sake of conversation

P: that's very sensible, very healthy

I: and I know that in my head there is only so much room for so much stuff so I don't fill it with all sorts of things that to me are of no particular significance so you know I think it's about people are, we are all different as individuals and it's about having that respect for the other person and that is way that you are or maybe so I never see you in that way at all

P: so on cruises for example the dinners, the dinner table is my big problem because I have to chat to people and eat I mean multi tasking is a bit tough I have trouble eating and speaking at the same time I tend to read at the table and put the paper up

I: and why not

P: we are all a can of worms earn we

I: do you want to leave it there for today

P: yes why not

Participant two interview two

I: thank you for coming today and it's just to think about or to work through some of these interview questions that we have got now today I have revisited your transcript from previously so it was quite interesting

P: gibberish

I: it's not

P: I have never seen such gibberish

I: it's not

P: I have got one thing to say about it actually one matter arising

I: yes ok do

P: and that was my father's attitude towards education and women if you remember

I: yes

P: you asked me would he have supported and I said I thought he probably would have I remembered afterwards that in fact he did because my aunt Rose the youngest daughter told me that he had insisted that she worked hard that she had to get herself into a good school and get a good education and that was he was the oldest brother but he was doing that presumably in 1920 or something like that so yes he was very insistent on that

I: ok and you were quite adamant that that was as a result of his upbringing in the slums, he saw education as a way out didn't he?

P: yes he did

I: so to set you on the road to

P: it was the most important; they all thought the same I think, my impression anyway

I: you think

P: is that a lot of I suppose men I am not sure about women, I couldn't tell you

I: yes difficult

P: but certainly a lot of fathers were very insistent about education and the opportunities it gave because I realised it I looked it up afterwards he must have left school at 12

I: oh really

P: I said 14 but I think the leaving age wasn't raised until I think after the 1st world war

I: was it

P: I think, you might want to check that

I: well that's pre the 1944 education act isn't it

P: yes and then it went up to 15 in 1944 with I think a view to it going up to 16 but it didn't until 1973 I think

I: didn't it

P: because you could leave at 15 when I was teaching in my second school so it has been a slow process

I: it has hasn't it

P: so he was 12 and I found on the internet that he was a grocers errand boy in 1911 when he was 14

I: oh really

P: umm because the 1911 census is available and cause I have been doing a bit of research into my family history and he was a grocers errand boy age 14 yes (p) I bet he hated that (L)

I: you obviously know him well

P: oh well, in a way yes

I: umm well that's fascinating because you do wonder about the gender issues we did wonder, well I did wonder if you had been a girl would he have supported you equally or pushed you quite as hard

P: he would have done definitely, he was still disparaging of women

I: ok

P: or patronising I mean my mother was, it's not fair to say the butt of but was there were a lot of jokes about women and how they behaved and bless them and all that sort of thing which I still have actually you know it's part of me as well I find it very easy to slip into that I had to unlearn that

I: that's understandable though if that's been the culture in which you have grown with your father then that is understandable isn't it so yes very interesting though I do think I have to say. Is there anything else from your transcript that you wanted to as matters arising?

P: no that was the one thing that I wanted to put straight

I: good, thank you [p] two phases to this interview really looking at the here and now and perhaps looking back and looking forward a bit which for me is how I have conceptualised working with the data that I have so far that's kind of where I am thinking about things and what's been particularly poignant in some of the transcripts is umm there is an absence of how you might describe this phase in your life course

P: umm

I: and it's your thoughts about how you would describe from any perspective this phase in your life course

P: well because I have done my homework this morning and I have written down release umm because it is a release from and we are very fortunate in being able to do this because of the wealth of the country and longer lives but it is release from the constrictions of everyday life up until the time of retirement

I: ok

P: I think that's the main thing and umm the other thing for me at any rate and it must be for others too and I don't think its morbid is a reflection on your life and

how did I get to be here rather than somewhere else and you know was it all worth did I what mistakes did I make could I have done things better you know that kind of historical reflection umm and I realise one of the things you realise is that you are so busy normally in your working life

I: ok

P: that you never really think at all about whether you are doing this right or whether that was the right decision to take or what effect you are having on other people I suppose so it's only since I retired that I have thought more about what I have been and what I have done

I: ok

P: cause it's like a biography isn't it

I: yes

P: you wait until they are dead and then you (L) you can't do the life until they are dead and I am sort of coming towards the latter end and so that's one of the things that I have been not deliberately doing I just can't help it

I: ok, yes

P: you know thinking about I did that thing and I really shouldn't have and I would have done it differently it's too late now but err so a lot of things like that and a reassessment of my teaching career which I don't think was as good as I thought it was at the time I don't think looking back I was as good a teacher as I thought I was at the time although I wasn't bad you know so there's this kind of re-evaluation going on and of course this release from so many and we are lucky to be able to do it of course a release from so many inhibitions on you as a person in order to marry and have a house and keep you job and all those things we all know them and yet you are not aware of it too much when you are doing it because you have to do it but when you have finished it it's as if like umm I don't know a brass that has been tied down and you take the ties away it springs back into the position it should have been in the first place so that's the sort of, so that's where I am at the moment

I: so are you, if I was to put this into other terms would we be thinking about constrained by social norms or social expectations throughout the life course

P: yes I think you know I think probably most people probably are but certainly I have always been aware of what people's expectations of me I mean in teaching in particular kids have needs and they turn to you to supply them umm so and then you think oh there is an example of this actually I was thinking of this morning because I ended up as you know as assistant head teacher but as a leader of people and children and on my first head of department job when I was 29 umm the school didn't have a place for books and the department didn't have a book store and I said to the head you know we haven't a book store we need a book store and he smiled and said and my predecessor (name omitted) was still in the school but he had been shunted sideways and he said oh (name omitted) always wanted this, he always wanted a and there was that sort of smile on his face and I

realised that (name omitted) because he was the messenger the message hadn't got through umm and when I said it I got it because I was the new boy

I: yes

P: and I thought well that means I drew from that the lesson that to be sure that people respect you umm and your judgement if you are going to get things done for your department so that kind of these things close in on you I think or me and made you a bit more cautious and a bit more aware and also a bit more sort of internal damage, damage isn't quite the right word, dense you know

I: ok (p) now that's interesting actually because for me that's a bit of a paradox because you have described to date what would be socially expected of you then you have reached this point and you are doing lots of things that over your life course that would not be seen to be socially acceptable or wouldn't be the social norm in terms of ageing would they. It's only more recently that we acknowledge that you know this part of the life course should be fulfilling and this should be a point of great enjoyment really for want of a better word so there is a bit of a paradox there between these expectations that you have gone through the life course and where you find yourself now and this point of release so is it a point of release really from all of those constraints

P: umm I think it is I mean people have no expectations' of me any more oh well privately my wife or my son other people but they are social umm but the actual the sort of the grinding the job thing is no longer there so it is a wonderful time

I: so is it the lack of the job thing

P: umm

I: the lack of the job pressure that makes it a wonderful time

P: umm I think umm see one of the mistakes I made you probably make is your job choice and I always thought that being a teacher, no I didn't always think this but I came to the view that teaching was a good thing

I: yes

P: and in many ways it was I mean if I see an audience I can't help myself you know umm but on the other hand what I really love is looking things up you know going away into a library or somewhere and ferreting through I actually adore it and I would probably have been better going down that sort of thing where there aren't the sort of personal strains put on you than the one I actually took

I: so does this point now in the life course give you the opportunity to do some of those things

P: yes you see because I mean I have been looking at the question and we have been going out of order I suppose it doesn't really matter

I: it doesn't matter because if we cover something else it just means we won't revisit it later so please go in any particular order

P: one of the things we talked about was what I was going to do next last time and I talked about painting or drawing I haven't done that in the end but I have done I have joined a class on art, literature and history (a name mentioned) do you know her?

I: yes, yes

P: it's her class on a Friday umm and I have found that great fun I didn't really want to go back to English Literature I thought maybe I have already done enough of that but anyway there wasn't anything else really so I thought oh and I did enjoy it because there are people there who have never done English literature highly intelligent but who haven't done English literature so a completely different view point and there were things going there that I couldn't resist you know there was a poem of Auden's that nobody understood and I thought I a going to (I) and I spent about a week on it its only a it was the first unrhymed sonnet in English literature or said to be anyway and nobody quite understood it an luckily my eldest stepdaughter came up and she has got a mind like a buzz saw you know so I said what do you think of this and she couldn't leave it alone either and we came up with what we thought was a perfectly reasonable interpretation of what was going on and I thoroughly enjoyed that I really did and so that is time to do that now I mean I must have spent a fortnight on it its only 14 lines

I: oh, ok

P: but (I) never the less you know the internet is a great boon for you of course so that well I have forgotten what the question was but anyway that's the kind of thing that I have thoroughly enjoy doing something else I have done which is a spin off form the politics class have you come across (name omitted) well

I: no

P: well he used to run the umm (name omitted) college in (place omitted) and he don't know but he is still active and he is involved in the (name omitted) Trust

I: oh yes

P: which it aims to foster education through discussion and err but to cut a very long story short I volunteered to start a discussion circle umm which you can go to anyone can go to its not for U3A people and they its quite hard in that there's quite a vast data base now and when you have a discussion you have access to notes which makes sure that you pursue you don't just go off at a tangent that you drive it all forward and learn at the same time so that's once a month in the (name omitted) and that's quite its only just started so we will have not quite got it right yet but anyway its err something else

I: well that's good because last time we met you said this was interesting I felt, you said (quote from previous transcript) you were looking for something else but you weren't sure what you were looking for so clearly because the other thing is clearly you weren't going to rush into anything else you wanted to make sure that what you did was right so you have obviously found several things

P: yes I have got two things and it's great fun and it happens I was able to start the discussion circle with people from the literature arts and music and from the politics so I mean it has actually those people from there too so

I: and have you enjoyed that

I have yes

I: and that will carry on now

P: I hope so not necessarily you know the idea is it's all very there's no money changes hands umm nobody is in charge of it it's all very, very different it's called democratic discussion circle, open democratic discussion circle which makes if you put the circle as an o that makes (name omitted) a sodo so (l) which is what I put on the calendar

I: good for you, umm something popped into my head then

P: sorry

I: no that's ok; if you do this outside therefore then of the U3A does that give you more or less freedom

P: more yes I don't do anything with the U3A now at all I am still a member but that's as far as it goes and that you know the four hours a week of politics and art literature and two hours a month it's not huge but it takes up a bit of time and you have got to prepare for the discussion and you have got to do the reading for the other thing so it's you know it's quite busy

I: so that mental stimulation

P: it's absolutely vital I think

I: ok

P: absolutely I couldn't, I was thinking about that to this morning when I was looking at and I thought that you know, without you might as well be a vegetable and I can't understand if they do how people can not pursue that sort of thing when they get the chance I mean when you work, that another thing when you're working if you are doing something which is not geared to work in a sense you are wasting your time you know if you are reading stuff that you know how it is don't you

I: I do know

P: and you think I could be doing this and so it's another reason why it's a wonderful release but I am not saying oh I can use this in a lesson although on the other hand I think I like to tell somebody about this it's you know

I: oh ok, but there is that opportunity to share that is that sharing and discussion important then

P: yes I think so structured with a theme to it not just idle chit chat is what I like

I: that makes sense ok, I will have to look at my questions now it doesn't matter we can just go we can flit about with theses just to make sure so would you say if we had to pick one word to sum up this phase in your life course it would be as a release

P: that was the first word that came into my mind and you can sort of add to it I think that was that's it yes

I: and would I be wrong in reaching a conclusion that it's a release because of all the kind of constraints to date from the job perspective so there is always lots of competing interests in terms of time and you are never truly free to pursue

P: yes umm the trouble with the brain is that or mine anyway is that I can be sitting at home but actually I am still at work I can be asleep and I am still at work I can't some people can put that barrier down and I couldn't do it so it meant in effect that I and always of course like a lot of people I only looked at the bad things and I'd be thinking about say the way a member of my department had looked at me and umm and worried about I could see that there might be a problem there you know all that kind of thing so all that has gone and it's a fabulous thing

I: so therefore then how important is retirement to actually finish and say in terms of paid employment or career

P: its umm I wish I had retired earlier (I) I know you can't umm and maybe you shouldn't retire too young anyway probably you wouldn't have the resources to I mean you know you hear people who cannot find anything to do and who are bored and I haven't ever been bored in retirement I'm lucky in that respect so yes I mean I walked away without a second glance and haven't missed work for a micro second really

I: and yet you didn't plan your retirement per se did you

P: no

I: you didn't leave work and identify this list of learning or this list of involvement that has occurred hasn't it post retirement

P: yes my own thing I would say don't do that don't plan a retirement because it's the serendipitous nature of retirement that gives you that chance to run in directions that you had never even thought of so I think it would be a bad idea actually to plan it except perhaps in the broadest possible terms so no I had no plans at all that was the wonderful thing about you know (L) it yes you know teaching as well but most jobs the deadlines you know you have to be there to teach that class you have to have this report done by etc absolutely is a is a I don't know I can't think of the right word now but it's like an incubus and I go into decline when I have got to be say at the hairdressers for say 0930 uh I have got a deadline don't like it you know it brings back the bad old days so I think that's what it's a tremendous release that is I think you will feel the same at the time

I: oh I am sure I will if only it was tomorrow yes I think work does bring its blessings but it does bring yes deadlines are

P: an absolute killer aren't they

I: yes I think so yes and like you I know I want to be free to read all the stuff I don't get chance to read now and grow things in the garden I would like to grow you know so many competing interests I think throughout this you are quite right the pressure to have a job to have a career to have the children to provide for the children to ensure that their schooling goes in the right direction it's just quite phenomenal really

P: and yet we are better off than a lot of and that's the other thing it's no good complaining and in my case my job would have been far better I would have thought than down the mines or you know although I don't think you know I wasn't enjoying it sometimes and I felt sorry for myself the fact is I would have felt a lot sorrier for myself in a lot of other jobs

I: but then had you been in a lot of other jobs we may not have been having this conversation because life expectance would have been much shorter

P: yes I would have been gone by now

I: so you know in many ways having the a career and job that you've had has enabled you perhaps to enjoy this part of the life course

P: yes I mean money is important I wouldn't say we are not wealthy but there is enough for my modest requirements so that's a worry removed

I: ok yes I think money is important

P: money and health as long as you have got your health its true and there's this wonderful I don't care what anyone says the NHS is wonderful

I: yes I would agree

P: I spent a lot of money through there you know with various treatments and investigations in the last year or two so it's very important yes

I: if we had to try and describe your involvement in learning how would you describe it

P: yes I was wondering how that not quite sure entirely sure what your question means you mean active passive or

I: whatever you know comes into you head you know is it something that's just organic in its evolution you know what ever comes to mind is it absolutely necessary as a function do you feel that you wouldn't be happy without it you know the need for this stimulus

P: yes it's a joyous I think is probably the word I would pick which is odd because you have talked is it later on you talk about you know earlier experiences of learning umm but it is just a sheer joy to be able to learn things that I didn't know err but I love umm BBC 4 it has got a wonderful history programmes and such like it gives me enormous sheer pleasure it's not a question of it being work or something I feel I ought to do I just cannot resist it so learning is in one form or another I might just be reading a news paper

I: absolutely

P: but never the less its is central to my pleasure in life I think I wish I could remember it all but my memory of course is not as it was its really frustrating that is

I: one head can only contain so much information I am sure

P: yes

I: I think this is a bit about what has just come to mind is a bit about exploding the myth about what is learning there's an issue for me in terms of people's expectations of what is learning and learning has got to be something that is formal, organised that umm you know that you come to an institution to do something that is done to you so I think there a bit about for me exploding how we would define what is learning and through which routes learning can occur

P: yes I think it involves the whole person umm I like having education done to me I quite like going in and there's a bloke up there or a woman who knows what they are talking about and I just listen to it its wonderful but I also like once I know something getting involved in discussion or going away and finding it out so its err quite a rounded thing I think err I was going on about something else then gone sorry you carry on and I'll come back to it

I: so bringing you back to the active passive you like both don't you

P: yes I do umm there's nothing better than listening to somebody who knows what they are talking about giving you the benefit of their learning experience or their wisdom it's a wonderful thing and there's nothing better than being in a small group having a discussion and learning from each other I mean it's no good having a discussion where you are simply trying to impose your views umm you know something a bit more democratic than that

I: I mean I was certainly enlightened at the discussion group the one I came to probably 2 years or more umm just the nature of the different viewpoints in that room and it wasn't just that clearly people felt free and safe to express what was some certainly we couldn't have had that degree of open debate in these four walls umm but honesty the degree of honesty and the depth of feeling that was coming through in that group you probably may not remember but it was about the fireman that had donated his sperm

P: oh yes that's right

I: and in terms of whose responsibility and then he was being pursued by the CSA and this woman had fallen into financial difficulties but the freedom of and I sat there thinking is this because people are of an age that they feel that they can say without any fear of is it cultural I have bought up in a world where particularly in education where you have to be so politically correct but actually I learnt so much because it's ok to have a viewpoint this is my personal viewpoint it might not be one I could have professionally but it's my personal viewpoint

P: well there you are you see you are just saying what I have been saying that you, that you the person is being inhibited by your professional you know I couldn't say that because it wouldn't be PC and I no longer have that umm I still worry a little bit about PC but in other words I might not say something thinking it that's the

other awful thing but half of my teaching life I was thinking one thing up there and saying something else (I) there's a lot of that going on I suppose that imposes its own strains I suppose umm

I: you're right and there is that personal professional conflict I feel that

P: yes you just have to become the person they want you to be otherwise do something else its that's another thing that would bother me or did bother me was is it above all else to thine own self be true etc so if I was true to myself when I was a teacher and also as a minor boss what damage would I have done to those around me if I had done that so I think you have to look and think this is what's expected and I'll have to do it or not take the money it's a Faustian pact but I don't think there is any so that it's kind of thing that brings a realises and of course it's being political we got a lot worse as time went on with government interference was terrible so although I didn't vote Cameron I do agree with freeing I voted lib dem I got what I wanted a hung parliament I met the local Labour politician you know in the high street umm and did I tell you I joined a thing call power 2010

I: you mentioned you were going to join

P: yes well I did and I you have this facility on the computer to send an e mail which was concocted by power 2010 to all your MP's so I did and only the lib dem replied the others didn't umm and I met the local Labour politician and he gave me this thing and he said can I count on your vote and I said certainly not because voting lib dem most of my life and what I want is hung parliament this is my time and it was what comes out of it what I wanted was a reformed voting system and that was the only way I could see it coming about so I'm happy about it

I: umm now (p) you are not engaged with learning with the U3A but you are engaged with learning so I think this is a nice question so what motivates you to do this you have mentioned lots of issues that might motivate you but if you had to sum that up what motivates you to go out and learn

P: umm (p) I think it's just a love of learning I think I can't I mean you could put other things into it like you are meeting other people or but that's not actually my main motive at all umm it's just a chance to learn something new even if I forget it the next day err because it's an adventure err learning is an adventure for me and it's an adventure that has no reason because it's no good to me this I am not going to use it this stuff that I have learnt really I can't earn money with it and when I die it will vanish so it is pure self indulgence its very nice to be self indulgent (I)

I: does that relate back to what you have said previously about constraints so now you are free to just completely indulge yourself in a way that suits you

P: yes, yes you look at something and say oh I could do that and you do and its wonderful well for other people they would be going to football matches or whatever but for me it's that so

I: so the social aspects of that does it feature at all how important is it to be with other people

P: oh well I ought to be with other people because I get withdrawn into myself if I don't but as I had said before I do find chit chat quite difficult and I mean for

instance this literature thing that I have been going to they had a party a lunch party about couple of weeks ago and I thought I will have to go to that but I really don't want to go umm because I know I will find it really hard work but I did go it was ok but I was you know I was glad when I could get away and I did what everybody does I waited and waited and waited until a few people had gone before I went so it wouldn't look too bad but for all that I mean it was quite a pleasant so no I don't go for that its different when you are sitting in the class and you say have you done the homework and all that that's different but sort of open ended chit chat I find difficult so I don't do it for that

I: ok I think that I am a person that outside of work can be very antisocial because I spend all day communicating with people and so some chatter I go to the baths and take my daughter swimming on a weekend and I think why can't they all just be quiet and read a book you have got all these parents with all this absolutely inane chatter and I think it serves no purpose

P: wouldn't silence be better

I: yes

P: yes I find the same I am amazed that people talk and talk and talk and I have decided it's because they talk about themselves umm and what they had for breakfast and what they watched on TV last night and what she said to him err when I take the view that nobody I mean this is different because I mean you appear to be interested in what I have to say but that's unusual and I certainly wouldn't tell other people what I did yesterday err so it is amazing yes when I used to live on my own five years between marriages it was wonderful you know four bed roomed house and I had no problems at all close the door whole weekends no demands it was fabulous I mean I daren't say it even my wife being away for a few days is lovely I totter round and I talk to myself and I'll do this now and I think yes its great

I: yes

P: so it is I think people I find people are strange other people can't live without other people funny they need to be always a friend of mine from schooldays who can't bear to be alone for a single evening and I don't understand that at all he won't, he won't stay at home if his wife is out at Pilates or something he doesn't want to be at home on his own

I: strange and yet there is so much to do

P: so much to do

I: yes I'd agree I find people, people can be I can't do the inane chatter for the sake of chatter it stresses me out actually and I think oh get me out of here I just not where I want to be so you are not alone in that I think I'd just rather read my book and you are can't actually read when all the people around you are giving it this because it's interesting because lots of people say that for them the social aspects are so very important

P: yes well they are important I think umm as I said to you a few minutes ago if I am on my own I start to get withdrawn quite quickly and I find it difficult to say how

much is that in a shop you know it start to so it is important to get out but however that aside I am more of a solitary I think other people aren't

I: is there anything else that you would say would motivate you

P: for learning

I: for learning

P: umm (p) not really I mean I'm I do have a respect for learning which is obviously directly come from my father and intern from the respect that learning has in the late 19 hundreds or earlier than that or certainly at the time of his childhood so I suppose there is a kind of semi snobbery about saying I do I don't watch Everton I go you know I do something more worthwhile I fear there is a little bit of that in there although not a major motivator its absolutely not

I: but I'd agree reading a good book better than a football match any day

P: you see I Terry Lee, Sir Terry there was a profile of him in the times this morning and I think he's a formidable man isn't he I listened to him on the radio and read some of his articles and they asked him you know what was his past times Everton football club nothing else and I thought gosh I mean he is a very wise intelligent and yet he has no interests outside of his work apparently apart from football which to me football is, is generally just a game it's not very important at all

I: no not in the grand scheme of things

P: no it isn't

I: it's not going to save the world is it

P: not

I: at all (p) so if you looked at the latter part so looking back and looking forward if you reflected on all the learning that you have undertaken over the life course how does this compare with what you do now

P: umm well it's the old saying that youth is wasted on the young I think umm I get so much more out of learning now than I did when I was young I mean I enjoyed bits of it and but these days I am more willing on the other hand the only thing which I didn't really quite understand at first blush I say oh the fault of the thing that just stupid now a days I think there is something wrong with you somewhere you need to have a look at that so I mean I will grapple with things that I don't understand that I would simply have dismissed as being nothing to do with me before err so I take it in a way I take it more seriously I suppose although it's no us to me in terms of money or career or anything like that umm whereas before I just did it because everyone did and that was really and enjoyed bits of it along the way now a days I do it because I love doing it so it's a totally different, totally different thing and I think if there is any point to it I suppose it must enrich me as a person and my life becomes even less liable to be boring something else that I have done which I started no long afterwards was an interest in birds and I got a feeding station and all this I don't know anything about them I have read some

books on them but that was something I again I can always look out of the window and there is always something and the more you know or at least the more you are aware of the less chance there is of you ever being bored I can't think of a single moment in retirement when I have been bored not even sitting on the bus I mean I like watching people umm so on a bus I am watching all these people and looking at what they are doing and yes so I never get bored

I: yes ok because your you were very heavily pushed weren't you by your father umm and obviously you passed your eleven plus and you successfully gained your scholarship and but did you really know what all that was about

P: no hadn't a clue umm I'm its one of the things I was saying re-evaluating your life and looking back one of the things that shocked me shocks me rather was that I was really going through life with blinkers on

I: ok

P: umm all manner of things you know that I think of now and I think well why didn't I question who that person was or why I was doing that and was there would it be a good idea if I never just didn't err I think maybe some people do they understand what education is for or at least for them they understand what it's for but I, I just went drifted along in a sense living in the present not looking to the future at all and this went right on through school through university until I reached that point when you say oh what are you going to do and I thought something useful and it was teaching umm that I picked on but umm it wasn't umm well I think I said in the notes before it wasn't until I was about 23 that I sort of had a look and said well what are you doing you know and so all of it in a way is terribly wasted you know that very expensive education wasted on me because I didn't extract enough from it and that's a terrible shame if I could go back now oh my goodness I am not saying that I would earn any more money I don't think moneys all that important umm but I would perhaps have lead a different life

I: but is this is this, the very paternalistic influence do you feel was you were so driven by your father that you didn't particularly have the freedom of choice

P: I didn't have any freedom of choice umm in regards to the school I went to that was entirely his choice err I also looking at my notes I mentioned that I was put down a year

I: yes you were

P: and he made sure I was put up again

I: yes he was clearly annoyed about that wasn't he

P: yes and I wasn't allowed the grammar school of my choice and I can remember round about 1954- 53 whenever must have been 54 I think asking if he minded if I didn't do modern languages because I thought it would be English and I was surprised when he said no he didn't mind there you are that gives you some idea of the control that that uneducated man because he was basically uneducated although he educated himself that's the sort of grip that he had

I: ok did you realise that at the time

P: no

I: no

P: and of course what can I tell really did you watch that thing on fatherhood I am not digressing

I: no I didn't no

P: when a couple of wide eyed researchers said that actually fathers are much more touchie feely than we give them credit for back in the late 1800's and early 1900's and I watched this and I thought what a load of rubbish it just isn't true my father for one but never the less you would have known if he was an oddity wouldn't you

I: yes

P: I can't go any further than that but I am not particularly aware of fathers who were all that different he was antisocial and difficult and other fathers were more jolly but never the less you knew from talking to your friends that you had to do exactly as you were told that your father would decide and there wasn't any real freedom of choice that I can recall I may be wrong but that's my impression so I think there is nothing unusual about that I don't think maybe the extent the degree of it but the actual fact of it so yes he dominated everything so in a way when he died it was a release for me although obviously I was terribly upset at the time and but I suppose looking back I think what would have happened I am sure what would have happened there would have been cataclysmic rows between us

I: would there

P: yes I am sure once I had begun to find my feet as a older teenager it just started I remember just in the last month or two before he died and I found myself losing my temper with him I didn't I don't think I said anything hadn't got that far but I thought what a load of rubbish that is it was about music and err I said how much I liked the sword of the apprentice (in audible word) which I had heard on that wonderful Walt Disney thing and err I wanted because you know buying a record you couldn't do it really and he turned on me and said you just want it for the rhythm just like that rock and roll and I thought you, you know and I didn't as I say he died about a month later so never the less I realised and he also accused me of going off with girls when I was talking with my friend (name omitted) in the bike shed and he wouldn't believe me and again I was furious with him so I can say that it, it would not have lasted he, he was cause my brother had rows with him when he was older err or when sorry when my brother was older than I was err when he died haven't said that right but anyway when he was in his 20's

I: I know what you mean

P: umm and dad assumed that cause he had no insurance of any kind not national insurance or anything

I: no he wouldn't have had then

P: didn't pay any taxes err so he was living in the twilight world really and err he had assumed that my brother would take care of us you know that it would pass down to him to take care of my mother and me you know really are you serious so he was ruling from the grave really

I: gosh right ok

P: of course it didn't happen needless to say

I: yes

P: but err nor should it

I: no oh no so when that little voice was in your head saying you need to get a job that useful whose voice was that

P: now that's a question I have never thought of (I) never thought of I haven't done my preparation have I

I: you don't necessarily have to answer it think about it, think about it you can e mail me but if you know he was such a powerful influence clearly he was without a doubt and umm so you know when you were truly free to then choose a career how difficult is it to free yourself of those constraints psychologically those constraints of that very paternalistic influence I mean I don't need an answer today but I don't need an answer but, but you know

P: it's a hell of a question Catherine Whitehall you know she's a wonderful columnist back in the 60's and 50's she wrote about I thought she was right about voices in your head and they are there long after the owner of those voices have died are they are still talking to you and she mentioned aunts and uncles as well as parents and there is no doubt at all that is true err and I in my teaching career hoped and with my son I only see him once every four weeks I hoped that my voice would sound in their heads sometimes and would be a voice of some at least some wisdom so err you know with all the uncertainties of that statement umm so yes my father's grim visage and voice is there but I don't think it was in that circumstance I'll have to think again about that but

I: ok

P: I don't think because I never talked about the jobs with him at all in fact I guess knowing him he'd have wanted me to go in the civil service like my brother I am pretty sure and I'd have said no because my brother had done it and I would not have done I would not have I'd had enough following my brother I would not have done my brother umm so there would be have been a major bust up there as well so I don't know where that bit of British ness comes from you know I am so worthwhile that I can only do a worthwhile job I have no idea I will e mail you with an answer or not an answer

I: it doesn't matter either way but it's just umm

P: its important thought isn't it

I: it is important

P influences on people

I: and umm just something I have come across in my reading that's had a profound influence on me is the notion of the invisible patriarch

P: yes

I: in a book called umm Landscape for a Good Woman and she's talking about the influence of the father even though the father has long since gone and it was quite a profound moment really when it hit and I thought might no longer be in my life but what a profound influence really I feel he's had you know umm I think for your father has been such a strong character

P: yes

I: and umm it's a very reflexive question any way isn't it I don't necessarily need an answer

P: I can't hear his voice telling me to do something worthwhile I can hear his voice telling me to be honest and do a work hard I don't know whether I told you this one but when I was with my brother walking to the theatre in Stratford and he gave me some comment and I said my father used to say that and he said yes he did and it was about working hard what he said was work hard and the rewards will come now we both know that is not true work hard and you may get no reward what so ever umm and you have to network and do all those other things if you want to get on and I said well what a this is ridiculous a man who left school at 12 with no experience telling me what to do and I said that's a rotten piece of advice I wish I had never listened to it and there must be others but I have they are so much a part of me you have probably never disentangle them

I: powerful influences though I think umm have those previous influences about learning and partly you have mentioned some of this influenced what you, you would choose to I will use the word learn or what you would engage with now because you've done you have said now for the first time you have managed to marry up the arts with the discussion group with the English which is err two of your three passions I know English is something that has been with you forever and probably something you said earlier you didn't want to revisit umm but yet you have now

P: I have yes I couldn't see anything else that attracted me so it was with a certain degree of sense of defeat (I) that I enrolled on (name omitted) course but when I got there it was such a great pleasure that I thought oh ! it you know it doesn't matter the same thing happened you know I was an you will have to excise that from the record (addressed accordingly all names omitted)

I: I will

P: the same thing happened to this friend of mine at school he's the only friend I have got from school oh well he's my oldest there's a big gap but I knew him when he was 11 and he's a retired teacher as well and he came round for a meal on Sunday with his wife and he got out of the car and he had got what was unmistakably a text book and I said are you bringing work here and he said I am ever so sorry but and err it was he has got a Spanish student although he has

retired he still dose quite a lot of things and he's coaching her for her OU degree in English lit and Spanish I think err and he studied Spanish in his retirement because he wanted to get another language and err he got this comparison of two passages and I hadn't done that for so long and it was an Enduring Love you know McKewan and one of Keats his letter to Fanny Brawn and I looked at it and it was only paragraphs of the material and I hadn't really got the chance to go at it properly because he wanted a quick answer and away and I looked at it and I thought oh this is fun (I) looking at it I have been thinking about that ever since about the difference in the passages and what they yield oh yes I thought oh I could do this yes **so old habits die hard**

I: but it's fun now but wouldn't necessarily have been fun if you had been approached to do that in school

P: not necessarily because of course as a teacher you have to have answers and you have your deadline so there's no chance of it going mulling and thinking oh I will just go and check that out so yes it was just fun I got a slightly odd idea of fun I think but it was fun

I: No I would be absolutely fascinated I have to say because as you say you have got no time constraints now

P: that's the great thing

I: and it doesn't matter if it's right wrong or indifferent really

P: I can always change my mind later

I: now this sentence made me laugh it didn't make me laugh that snot the right word to say this sentence I found interesting you said 'education is wasted on the young I think I am convinced of this if I am anything like typical I love learning umm I love to learn but I wasn't particularly enjoying it when I was at school' so you didn't particularly enjoy it when you were at school and university was ok

P: ok, yes

I: umm but you have continued now at this point in your life course to learn

P: **yes I suppose so what's the lesson you derive from that that it doesn't necessarily follow that enjoyment of learning at an early age sorry I'll reverse that that not enjoying school at an early age will prevent you from learning later**

I: ok do you need certain skills though

P: yes, yes you do yes

I: such as

P: umm well I feel that the critical ability that you get you get it from other subjects but obviously what you get English literature the analysis of passages listening to words looking at arguments are the core I think and there's so much in life which is open to that kind of what they used to call the trained mind and now call transferable skills but it's the same sort of thing the ability to analyse err and I think everybody should have that umm critical thinking whatever you want to call it

everyone should have it and not swallow the rubbish they are given half the time so I think that's probably the most important thing yes that came from my education I guess

I: did that definitely come from your education or did it come from elsewhere

P: err I think it comes yes it comes from education umm it might have come anyway I suppose but in my case certainly particularly at university umm where you learned at a much higher level I didn't have a wonderful degree but a much higher level of analysis and I can remember thinking when I finally got down to work in my third year how fit my brain was and it's never been as fit since to be honest but it was and that word to be honest I notice is one of my trigger things anyway I must stop it

I: no don't

P: there's that wonderful umm is it in Pygmalion when you have read Pygmalion and there's when Eliza Doolittle umm is pretending to be somebody else and err Higgins says and its sure if anyone says the fact is they are lying and I always think when I say to be honest I am probably being dishonest it's like Mrs Thatcher saying the national health service is safe with us and you my God is it that bad

I: absolutely

P: so I forgot what I was saying now I am terrible for going off on a tangent

I: no that's fine I am interested in the skills the acquisition of the skills that you need

P: yes I think practical criticism I think it's a wonderful exercise as is précis not summary but précis umm and I know it not open to everybody to be able to do that umm I think at different levels it could be it should be adopted by everybody err you need it in a democratic society anyway and particularly in a society where we are open to so many as you know all sorts of influences are coming at us you need to be on the I think so that for me is the main thing I mean I suppose my interests my interests my curiosity remain un dimmed and that education hasn't destroyed that and I think it might have done I suppose but it didn't else I think

I: yes and that's

P: that's something you have to watch out for umm I mean some of it is so mind numbing dead learning and it has to be I don't think there is anyway round it I can understand that with some people it just kills it which is a terrible shame

I: it is I think now is there anything else on your list

P: no

I: is there anything else you wanted to say

P: err oh you have got this question have your experiences to date what and how you choose to learn and how umm the only thing I would say is there whereas when I was younger I would try to get by on a wing and a prayer like today I prepare so that I get the most out of it you know I do make sure that I am prepared

for whatever it is that I am going into so I have read the books and I have thought about them or I have looked at the paper and wondered about this that and the other the politics or I have prepared for this

I: is that with the luxury of time

P: yes I think it is I think a lot of it is that or

I: or is that about greater interest

P: greater interest a sense of err I don't know getting the most out of it not wasting what you are doing I mean when you are younger you waste endless things don't you time energy brain power all sorts and when you get older you think I am not going to waste this how long have I got you know I don't know err an example of this is I am a member of (name omitted) I hardly ever go but they have now changed new opportunities for (name omitted) members err which comes down to £165 for a year until you are about 70 or £800 for 6 years and I thought 6 years am I going to be around in 6 years 75 am I going to be able to go I don't know so I am a bit (in audible) you think I haven't got the time to mess around with so you do want to make sure that every minute pretty much is oh full of something it may mean doing nothing but it's still full I think err as I say at the end there's nothing to it at the end there's no end product to this which I think is one of the delights because I think education should be I'm I was going to say indifferent impartial there shouldn't be axes to grind there shouldn't be err jobs to fill we'll do those anyway you know if you have got a good basic education you'll know what to do you don't need to be trained for err it so err yes these should be disinterest there's the word I was looking for should be disinterested err and once government intervenes and money comes into it, it no longer is

I: is there a payback then for you in your health in any way

P: (p) I don't know umm I have had a few issues since I last saw you nothing it's not a secret but in gastro and all I have had endoscopy and gastroscopes and I am on pills that (l) so physically the national health service is doing a great job err and I go to the gym so that's that part and I suppose the mind memory apart err is reasonably fit although I don't do it for that reason I think the thing really is to retain an interest in what's going on around you I think and gorging at the telly aint the answer it really isn't umm and I can imagine being dead and pretty quickly so that's not good is it

I: I think

P: I am in reasonably good health I mean I keep being told what do you expect for your age you know I am 69, 69 a couple of weeks ago err and I suppose the answer is well that's what you do expect you know cause I say to them sometimes well why have I got this and they say it's your age

I: that shouldn't necessarily be an answer should it

P: no I suppose not but you know I err the umm lesions or whatever they are the abrasions in my stomach and so on and it's just age and they can control them so if I stop taking the pills I notice

I: oh ok well as long as it all keeps you going

P: it keeps me going yes maintenance the fabric has got to be maintained it just takes me a lot more effort these days luckily I am retired so I have got the time to do it

I: which brings me to the next point really I like this you said then 'I retired and I started living really'

P: yes I think that's right I think a basis and this might not be true for everybody a basis for living is being yourself and until you have found that I don't think you can really make a start at living life properly because it means you will try to be and do things that actually aren't you and you'll be even if you don't know it unhappy probably not very good at it and can also lead to I suppose on the other side of that a kind of defeatist I am hopeless at that I'm not going to bother or that's the sort of person I am and I am not sure I approve of that cause I think you should always be saying that's the sort of person I am but I am going to make sure it doesn't hurt you err so there has to be a degree of control and discipline and so on but never the less to say to yourself this is what makes me happy this is who I am I don't care if you think I am an idiot because I like going to classes I do and that's the end of it and I like looking at the birds and don't like you know watching any of those things like all those talent shows haven't seen any of them and I don't care if people say I'm not interested sorry err so same with the football I was rooting for an England defeat really because they are such a bunch of cissies

I: so was I couldn't wait for it to be over

P: oh it interests me especially the analysis afterwards what's going on but I looked at then and yet people deceive themselves and happiness depends on the results and that's a dreadful thing

I: dreadful it is

P: so I, I am not terribly tied to anything like that err so long as I can be who I have turned out to be that is fine so long as it does not hurt other people it's a pretty feeble philosophy but that's about it I think there's nothing in the hereafter so you know I wish there was I think(I) not even sure of that you know I am not sure I might fail again in the after life

I: you haven't failed in this life have you?

P: well I don't know its I always think of myself as being a very moderate, ordinary, average, middle of the road person you know I am not particularly good at things I am not particularly bad at them I not nothing in particular just ok you know I put it if I had a (laughter) I was there is a wonderful song called poor old horse he must die and of course going to funerals is one of the things I do these days right I said to my wife I said when I die I want the cheapest possible funeral it's in my will but I want you to play this record and she wouldn't it's a really mournful thing 'poor old horse he must die' (in song) and his wind has gone and his legs have gone and I said that would be absolutely ideal for me and she won't do it but

I: that's a shame

P: it is a shame cause I think it would be a laugh

I: but it's your wish

P: yes and also that wonderful umm cause I think we have exaggerated ideas of ourselves and that wonderful Michael Henshard will I don't know whether you have read it in the Mayor of Casterbridge fabulous I it, it, it demands that all memory of him be erased completely no gravestone, no funeral service, no anything everything goes and I am in favour of that actually except on one of these discussion groups somebody said I would like I have arranged it was to have a tree planted and I said oh that's a good idea and oak tree somewhere because it will do its bit for the flowers and I thought yes I haven't done anything about it yet but I will have to change my will but I think you know I said to my wife that's your job to find the best oak tree and the best spot and plant it so otherwise poor old horse he must die and become glue (l)

I: you do make me smile

P: when you are as old as me you can't take many things seriously it's not possible (l) and when you are retired no it's just you know (l)

I: umm what was I gonna say know is there anything else you feel you might want to add to what we have said today

P: I don't think so I think now I would just be repeating I think

I: ok that's fine

P: I will think about the voices in my head

I: ok do

P: Joan of Arc had those to all course she was mad though wasn't she

I: was she mad

P: well they say she wasn't but you know I don't think people do realise that we do have do they not I mean they are playing out little Socratic dialogues in their head

I: all the time

P: err it's, it's quite amazing and sometimes I reply I speak out loud If you are on your own

I: well they are there aren't they?

P: yes they are

I: and for you your fathers influence was so powerful

P: and I wish I think I said this before but I wish that he'd died later or that I had been born earlier so that I could have made a judgement on him as an adult so that I could have assessed how valuable his influence was and where it was good and where it was bad and I haven't been able to do that he's just this towering figure that I dimly think is probably mistaken in all sorts of ways and had many

faults again I am only dimly aware cause it's nearly its err 53 years since he died err and I have no means of and I think it's an important part of growing up isn't it that you come to the point where you look at your parents and actually what you see is a pair of ageing adults that it and I have never reached that stage so I have never grown up really in that sense and I can't I can't there's no way of escaping it which has made me unwilling in some ways to influence people too much although I was professionally I will as a teacher I would certainly say what I thought they should do but on a personal level I am most unwilling to tell people do this do that do the other because how do I know what's the best so I always preface it by saying well what I would do is this and you may not do that sometimes my step my younger step daughter phones me up and says what do you think about and I think well if I were in your position I would do this err but it might be different for you cause I think a lot of damage is done by people asserting opinions a lot of damage and you can't assess it

I: no you can't

P: its part of you, you know you can't actually detach your self

I: no you can't undo it

P: and look at it because you don't know which part of bits are

I: it's there it's in you and that's that you can only learn to live with it I think and manage it

P: yes as best you can

I: strategically manage it sort of day by day and recognise I think I know personally for me recognise when that's having a negative influence as opposed to a positive influence and deal with that

P: yes mine I guess my father is mostly negative my mother I do you want to go on with this?

I: carry on yes do

P: err I found myself by chance in (place omitted) I say by chance because we had gone away for a few days in (place omitted) and it was a rainy day and we went to the tourist information and they said oh well why don't you go to (place omitted) its only and I said oh my mother was born in (place omitted) and I went and I found the three places where she had lived and I didn't know she had lived in three places and I found out and I didn't know any of this my grandfather job was oil lamp merchant and I got to thinking quite a lot about her and she played the violin, she played the piano and I looked at these houses which were only small terrace thing you know how did they, they moved to Birmingham and he was then a foreman of an oil depot so he may have had some money perhaps I don't mean a lot but enough for respectability genteel respectability and I thought there was this woman who was really rather talented err I perhaps haven't given her her due in my influence I am balancing out you have been saying my father and that's absolutely right but I think looking back at my mother's steadfast loving personality and tolerance and kindness have been very important and her voice is actually more evident now than it used to be and I find myself she was very tolerant and I

find I do I think take after her in some ways err and I actually got to the stage now so all that long ago when I decided that I was probably more my mother than my father and that the difficulties of my own psyche were trying to be my father's son rather than being my mother's son and I think this is I haven't really gone into any depth but I think that's probably true and I find myself echoing some of her phrases now err so I think the quieter, softer, gentler kindness has gone unnoticed in my mind

I: she was clearly a very talented lady and clearly she still clearly had a profound influence on you, you wouldn't have gone to university had it not been for your mothers support

P: err she said no on one of the rare occasions

I: absolutely

P: when she ever said no err and she was right of coarse but err I was taken aback you know I thought oh I can do what I want you know but you won't so I mean she couldn't stop me actually I suppose

I: no she couldn't

P: I couldn't, I couldn't defy such a defined instruction

I: and equally she worked to support you through all of that

P: yes she did I am sure it killed her I mean heavy work in the kitchens at the age of 60

I: well 63-66 it was when she finished

P: I mean it's hell isn't it really so err but she never gave it away I saw her once walking home I used not long before she died and it was quite a walk from the station and I was standing in the front widow and I looked at her coming up the road and I though God she looks tired and she saw me looking and she immediately perked up and sort of but I realised that she was much more tired than she would admit used to dye her hair to pass for 10 years younger hard in those days

I: very hard so yes I think on balance she was there wasn't she

P: she was so I think probably I'd have to reassess my father's influence because after all he was dead from when I was just turned 16 so my mother died when I was 22 so 6 quite formative years he wasn't there at all she was so I think its left its mark more than I, I think there's a manhood thing as well you know I'm a man take after my father not my mother and it was about 10 years ago perhaps a bit more when I thought it its time that you owned up to the fact that you are more of a mothers boy than a fathers boy which is something else you do when you are older but I don't care if you think I am a big sissy I don't care

I: in today's world that wouldn't matter anyway I think that's contextual

P: yes

I: it's of its time

P: yes you had to be a man

I: again it relates to what you said at the beginning for me it's around social norms what are the social expectations for you what was going to be the social expectations for your father to drive you, what was your mothers place in the home its all of its time

P: yes absolutely and its all archaeological now almost I know when I was looking in my mothers the house she was born in as it turns out I didn't know at the time I thought this is the first time a (name omitted) has looked at this house for probably 110 years and I am the son of that little girl which is a huge span isn't it 2 centuries 21st into the 19th 1897

I: phenomenal

P: it's quite an awesome thought that was and of course I was thinking what would she have made of me now, don't know

I: I'm sure she'd love you

P: oh yes

I: as she clearly did

P: yes that's something else I have learned from her unconditional love it has to be unconditional

I: I am sure she would be immensely proud of you

P: I have no idea

I: and that's sad

P: yes I suppose it is

I: I am sure she would be, shall we leave it there for today

P: yes