

Understanding Student Experience of H.E: Reconsidering the Role of Habitus and Doxa in Students' Biographies and Constructions of Learning

Paul Morgan, School of Education, University of Nottingham, UK.

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Abstract

This paper details initial findings of a doctoral study investigating the sociocultural and learning experiences of two, of six female undergraduate students, in two dissimilar universities in Nottingham, UK. Embedded within the context of the British Labour government's Widening Participation Policy (DfES 2003) initiatives, this research provides some interesting commentaries of student learning, in the first year of university, in relation to Pierre Bourdieu's notions of 'habitus', and 'doxa'. Principally, this research presents an alternative way of understanding student's *first-year experience* of higher education (H.E), in light of the changing nature of H.E in Britain, and thus discusses the impact of habitus, and doxa on these two students' first year experience. This research employs the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1977; 1990; 1994), and Stephan Ball (1986), in relation to concepts of 'cultural capital' and 'linguistic misunderstanding', and 'social capital' and learning, respectively, for the purpose of broadening the discussion about student learning in the first of year of university experience. In this respect, this framework afforded me the opportunity 1) of making sense of the data sets, and 2) to critically examine social and cultural reproduction of education, and/or learning as transformation issues. In sum, this paper argues at two *interrelated* levels. Firstly, that we might think in terms of a sociocultural approach as constituting a critical, as well as, an alternative way of understanding the first-year university experience, particularly in light of the changing nature of H.E, in Britain. By doing so we might be able to account more appropriately the notion of *diversity and learning* within different H.E. contexts. Secondly, in relation to existing policies regarding widening access and participation in H.E, and student retention, that we might begin to think in terms of there being firmly in place, existing mechanisms of masculine domination (Bourdieu 2001) which render research around issues of gender and social class problematic. Good policy, and good practice needs therefore to take into account, at base, what I call, a critical feminist perspective of diverse students' qualitatively different sociocultural, and learning experiences.

Introduction

I strongly believe we do not need to wait until 2010 to understand that policies surrounding widening participation (e.g., DfES 2003) in H.E contexts are unsuitable from an epistemological perspective, and thus from a framework for better understanding ‘diversity and learning’ in H.E contexts, in the UK, in that, there is a mismatch between intended policy aims and objectives, and actual outcomes and quality of experience in the first year of H.E (Forsyth and Furlong 2003; Haggis and Pouget 2002). Already, from a French perspective, similar policies have raised doubts about its utility in French H.E contexts (Galland and Oberti 2000). For instance, Galland and Oberti (2000) report that, while the *relative* democratisation of access to H.E *has* permitted students from other social classes to continue their studies after secondary education, the consequence has been the creation of new problems for H.E in France. Reports of higher educational change policies suggest that, in the end, universities have to:

make financial, organisational and pedagogical adaptation to mass schooling (Galland and Oberti 2000, p. 105).

Moreover, the authors highlight that students, (see also, Mann 2001), are experiencing new forms of academic and personal related problems. For example:

in adapting to such demands of university work as autonomy and initiative (Galland and Oberti 2000, p. 105.).

Evidence from current research (Mann 2001; Haggis and Pouget 2002; Haggis 2003; 2004) also shows that issues relating to social class and gender *remain* problematic. This paper attempts then to show how concepts such as Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus* and *doxa* might assist us in further understanding the student identity formation, in the first year of university, and thus their relation to social class and gender construction. For instance, how students adapt to ‘such demands of university work as autonomy and initiative’ (Oberti and Galland 2000, p. 105) rests on important issues relating to class, gender, and ethnicity, more generally (see Archer et al. 2003). For the purpose of this paper, I will consider class and gender, in relation to issues raised from the

debate surrounding widening participation policy (DfES 2003), and their possible impact upon H.E learning. This paper therefore sets out to achieve two things. Firstly, to present to the reader an alternative way of understanding student experience of H.E. In this paper, I take two students as my qualitative focus. For example, Lisa is the first in her family to participate in H.E. I believe, Lisa's experience of H.E is thus relative to the on-going debate surrounding widening access and participation (DfES 2003). Linda, in contrast, dropped out of university in her first semester of the first year of H.E. Linda's case is significant, in that, very little qualitative research exists in the U.K looking at the nature and processes of 'student drop-out'. Secondly, in taking a sociocultural perspective, this paper seeks to understand more critically, the link between students' dispositions to learning, and how they make sense of this learning, in relation to their first year of university, taking significant account of class and gender issues.

Setting the Scene

The problems highlighted by Galland and Oberti (2000) seem, however, not to have made an impact in Britain, in any visible way. The fact that Britain is perhaps unaware that such research evidence exists, even, that it exists within the UK (e.g., Haggis and Pouget 2002; Haggis 2003; 2004), might be understood better if we read Rorty (1999), who points out that:

when people on the political right talk about education, they immediately start talking about truth. Typically, they enumerate what they take to be familiar and self-evident truths and regret that these are no longer being inculcated in the young. When people on the political left talk about education, they talk first about freedom. The left typically views the old familiar truths cherished by the right as a crust of convention that needs to be broken through, vestiges of old-fashioned modes of thought from which the new generation should be freed (p.114).

Clearly, there appears to be a preoccupation with ideology, rather than any reference to the students themselves, or their quality of experience. Durkhiem reminds us, however, that this is because the older generation generally reproduce what they

believe should to be imparted to the young, each successive generation. However, as this paper will argue, masculine domination theory might better account for this reproduction of practices – what feminists writers (Ramazanoglu 1992; Gelsthorpe 1992; Hyde and Jaffe 1998) refer to as an *androcentric* way of seeing the world. For instance then, the Prime Minister's 50 per cent goal of increasing student participation (age range 18 – 30) by 2010, implies that the H.E system will have to continue expanding at an increasing pace in order to achieve this target (NATFHE 2000). According to Mary Warnock, moral philosopher, and former headteacher, however, undergraduates and school-leavers are being short-changed by a system that fails to nurture intellectual excellence (2006). Warnock warns that:

The concept of learning, the acquisition of knowledge and the exercise of creative imagination within the constraints of evidence and reason has been almost fatally devalued (2006, p. 19).

Warnock (2006) also views the government's claim that 50 per cent of the population should go to university, as impractical, claiming that there is a:

mismatch within educational policy between desire to make education the means by which pupils may be enabled to earn their living in a way that uses their abilities and contributes to the country's economy and the desire to turn more of them than ever before into graduates (p. 19).

Furthermore, it is important to note that, a clear link between drop-out rates and the number of students coming into H.E from non-traditional H.E backgrounds has been identified (NATFHE 2000). To this end, the universities with the 'highest drop-out rates are not only those with the greatest numbers of such students, they are also those with the lowest teaching incomes per student and the highest staff student ratios' (NATFHE 2000, pp. 13-14). Similarly, Newstead (1999) has indicated that, the introduction of 'semesterisation and modulisation' of H.E would pose new problems for H.E institutions, in the UK, and that it would be the lecturer-student relationship that would be most affected by these changes. However, in 1997, the Dearing Report stated:

We recommend to the Government and the Funding Bodies that, when allocating funds for the expansion of higher education, they give priority to those institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation, and have in place a participation strategy, a mechanism for monitoring progress, and a provision for review by the governing body of achievement (Dearing 1997, p. 14).

Now, in 2006, with four years remaining, I believe that assumptions about ‘autonomy and initiative’ in relation to ‘student learning’ in the first year of study, implies that students need to possess prior knowledge and understanding of H.E aims and objectives (Williamson and Coffield 1997), and that this is relational to students’ social class background (Bourdieu 1977; Cervini 2002), and thus, students’ possession of sufficient cultural, linguistic, and economic capital (Bourdieu 1977; Cervini 2002). For example, Cervini (2002) argues that:

The cultural capital of great social value (*dominant*) will most probably appear among the nuclei of the highest socio-economic level (family background), at the same time, schools tend to value precisely that capital (p. 7).

For Smith (1991) then, discussions about diversity go to the heart of quality education. By paying attention to these issues, Smith suggests that, ‘we have an opportunity to improve teaching, learning, and H.E’s role in society of the future’ (p. 129). However, it is critical to note that:

Cultural capital therefore plays an *intermediate role* between the student’s ‘social origin’ (family background) and his learning (Cervini 2002, p. 7, emphasis added).

However, extensive work *has* been carried out by Archer et al. (2003), focusing on topics such as ‘the costs of participation and the propensity to participate’ (p. 73) in H.E, raising important questions about issues of gender, ethnicity and class, particularly for those students ‘who are currently involved in widening participation projects and initiatives’ (p. 73.). For example, the ways in which working-class young

people construct going to university and being a student, and the ways in which they position ‘students as Other’, and themselves as ‘people who could not be students’ (Archer et al., 2003) might be understood from a social psychological perspective of individual human behaviour (Bufton 2003). According to Bufton (2003), phenomenological psychology has typically avoided the introduction of such concepts as ‘social class’. However, her study showed that by ‘revealing the lifeworld of university students’, class was found to be ‘necessary to capture the range of modes of alienation and disjunction experienced’ (p. 207). Incidentally, the notion of ‘alienation’ is also discussed in Mann’s (2001) study (see below). In sum, Bufton (2003) concludes that 1: the lifeworld of students in Britain is still predominantly a preserve of the privileged, and 2: students coming from ‘relatively economically disadvantaged homes’ experience the ‘natural and the cultural in the lived body’, whereby:

Social class is shown to bring together students’ accounts of their multi-faceted sense that ‘University is not for the likes of us’ (Bufton 2003, p. 207).

Bufton (2003), reflecting Bourdieu (1977), concludes that students’ descriptions encompassed within them, ‘issues of identity, sociality, and spatio-temporal dislocation’ (Bufton 2003, p. 207). Similarly, Archer et al. (2003) have noted:

1. it can hypothesised that working-class young people lack information about H.E opportunities.
2. working-class students may not feel that higher education has sufficient value to be worth the effort and time.
3. working-class young people may lack the necessary normal entry qualifications, and thus feel that they are unable to apply (p. 93).

A critical factor, in relation to point 1 above implies that, ‘parental experience and knowledge of H.E are greater among the middle-class population’ (Archer et al. 2003, p. 93). Importantly, these parents are aware of the nature of H.E, and ‘**how to prepare for and apply to H.E**’ (ibid. emphasis added). In relation to point 2, ‘more immediate entry into the labour market’ becomes the opportunity cost, when considering the

‘risk’ of ‘three years of loss of earnings’ (Archer et al. 2003, p. 93). Finally, in relation to point 3, Archer et al. (2003) argue that:

There is a an apparent correlation between A-level success and social class, and relatively poor working-class A-level results would therefore seem to be a contributory factor in the low take-up of H.E. Also linked to this are questions of self-confidence and a belief in one’s ability to succeed in the academic environment (p. 93).

Archer et al.’s (2003) findings clearly resonate with Bufton’s (2003) notions of identity, sociality, and spatio-temporal dislocation’ (p. 207) therefore. For Hutchings (2003), however, what is of critical importance is the fact that this highlights the ‘linguistic complexity of post-compulsory education’ (p. 100). She writes:

Having family members and friends who have experienced (or are currently in) H.E is a form of **cultural capital** that many working-class young people may lack (Hutchings 2003, p. 101, emphasis added).

Going to university is therefore seen as ‘a natural and expected activity for many middle-class young people (Allatt 1993). Another importance source of reference is Bourdieu’s reading of ‘cultural and linguistic capital’, whereby each class has its own cultural background, knowledge, dispositions, and tastes that are transmitted through the family (Bourdieu 1984). It becomes clear then that Archer et al.’s (2003) suppositions that ‘middle-class applicants are likely to find the financial arrangements more straightforward than working-class applicants’ (p. 105), are significant reflections upon which to base an appropriate ‘epistemological’ understanding of current students’ experience in H.E. Referring to the cultural discourses of H.E and students, Archer et al. (2003) argue that, many working-class young people do lack information, and that the information that they have is ‘constructed in ways that relate to their cultural background and gendered identities’ (p. 116).

Habitus and Cultural Capital

In setting the scene, it is important to note that, if working-class young people lack knowledge and understanding of the aims and purposes of H.E study (e.g., Williamson and Coffield 1997), then in relation to their *habitus* and *habitus formation* (Bullock-Schramm et al. 2003), Archer (2003) observations may serve as pivotal to the discussion. Archer (2003) argues that the:

risks, costs and benefits of participation are not equal for all social groups. The balance between the potential benefits as weighed against the risks and costs of participation are differently structured across social class ('race' and gender), with the *result being that working-class students face greater risks of failure and more uncertain rewards* (Archer 2003, p. 119, emphasis added).

Archer (2003) reminds us, however, that the 'official rhetoric has also presented widened university participation as economically beneficial for the working-class groups' (p. 121). She argues that 'notions of mobility were associated with leaving disparaged, deficit class identities and achieving an idealised *middle-class* lifestyle' (p. 126). However, these were not unproblematic discourses. Reay et al. (2001), similarly, point out that, working-class students' sense of place may carry negative psychic consequences because they are bound up with feelings of deficit. To understand this phenomenon, in particular, in relation to the notion of 'student retention' in H.E (Archer et al. 2003) we need to consider the notion of 'habitus', I believe. For instance, Archer (2003) argues that her findings suggest that 'young and mature working-class students (who often come through clearing and may be less prepared due to no family history of H.E participation) may (though not necessarily) be at greater risk of non-completion' (p. 131).

The Importance of Habitus

For Bourdieu (1977), the family plays an important, and critical role in the habitus [formation] of the student. For instance, in relation to the '*habitus*' and education, Bourdieu (1977, p. 87) argues:

The habitus acquired in the family underlines the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message), and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences (e.g., the reception and assimilation of the message of the culture industry or work experience) and so on, restructuring to restructuring.

Following Bourdieu's thinking, this would imply that students have received and assimilated a particular 'pedagogic message' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), based on the habitus acquired in the family, before actually entering H.E For Bourdieu then, this begins early on during the processes of socialisation (Bourdieu 1977), and particularly *habitus* reconfiguration 'within the new *field*' (James 2000).

However, Jenkins' (1992) critique of Bourdieu's position, namely, Bourdieu's recognition of the 'distinction between conscious thought and the unconscious mind', is that this is not made explicit. For Jenkins, it makes more sense to suggest that 'conscious and unconscious mental processes lie at opposite ends of a continuum' (p. 178). Jenkins further argues that, if the area between is the 'domain of habit', then it is of 'great sociological importance' (ibid.), and as yet, has been little considered by sociologists. Jenkins's rationale is that this may be where much [socialisation and early childhood learning put down their strongest roots]. Furthermore, Jenkins extends Bourdieu's argument, by suggesting that 'it is also likely to be the source of the potency of processes of institutionalisation' (Jenkins 1992, p. 179).

It follows, that student's educational and social backgrounds are therefore important factors when considering the quality of their H.E experiences. Yet, what they bring to the learning environment is, in essence, their previous experiences, as well as current understanding (Biggs 1978). Biggs (1978), for instance, characterises this as the 'presage' stage of the student learning process. However, I believe that Biggs' model is limited, at this stage of the learning and development, as it does not consider important sociocultural aspects of the student's life world. In other words, I am arguing that the student's habitus is not accounted for within the learning process of

Biggs' model, that is, the presage stage of student learning process. Furthermore, McInnis and James (1995) have pointed out that:

...universities assumed that first year students had completed a good general education at school, and that they were therefore ready for specialised study. A second assumption was that the students came from families and social environments which equipped them with the *cultural capital* to fit comfortably into the lifestyle and expectations of the university. Third, students were considered to be joining a community of scholars – *literally rubbing shoulders with their teachers* – and in addition to acquiring skills and knowledge, were *taking on the values and habits of mind of academics* (cited in McInnis 2001, p. 108, emphasis added).

However, it is important to note that teaching and student experience must not be seen as separate entities, but 'as dimensions of a particular *field* (James 2000). Here, James is concerned with an interpretation which stresses possible degrees and types of relatedness and interdependence of the teaching and student experience (James 2000). This, I would argue, is a significant point of departure, and one that can not be overlooked if we are to better understand the experiences of, for instance, current students entering H.E institutions.

Reflecting Bourdieu then, Bulow-Schramm et al. (2003) argue that:

the habitus is the mediator between social structure, the social conditions on the one hand and the acting of the individual on the other. The habitus is expressed in lifestyle, actions, thinking and patterns of behaviour and *seems to be a second nature: it works nearly unconsciously* (p. 1, emphasis added).

In conclusion, the habitus, being linked implicitly with *actions, thinking and patterns of behaviour*, operating 'nearly unconsciously', resonates strongly with my reading of the notion of **doxa** (Bourdieu 1966; 1999; Lane 2000), Prosser and Trigwell's ideas

about 'immediate response' (1999) in first year study, and McInnis and James' ideas about first year students' 'cultural capital', and their initial university experiences.

Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital

Cultural capital is, primarily, a relational concept and exists in conjunction with other forms of capital. As such, it cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of capital (e.g. social capital) (Reay 2000). Generally, together they constitute advantage and disadvantage in society. However, social capital 'is generated through social processes between the family and wider society and is made up of social networks' (Reay 2000, p. 569). Bourdieu thus envisages a process in which one form of capital can be transformed into another (Bourdieu 1986). For instance, cultural capital can easily be translated into social capital. However, Bourdieu concentrates his attention on the middle- and upper classes [of French society] in relation to his analysis of these different types of capital. For instance, in Bourdieu (1986) thinking, individuals can be adjacent to each other in social space yet have very different ratios of economic to cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Furthermore, Bourdieu suggests that 'classes' invest their cultural capital, primarily, in academic settings (Bourdieu 1977). And because the upper (and to a lesser extent) the middle classes have the means of investing their cultural capital in the optimum educational setting, their investments are extremely profitable (Reay 2000). Thus, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), in their earlier studies, have suggested that educational establishments can be viewed as mechanisms for generating social profit. However, Reay (1998a) warns that cultural capital is not just about the relationship of different social groupings to the educational system. Equally, it concerns the centrality of the family to any understanding of cultural reproduction. Similarly, Bourdieu and Boltanski (1981) argue that 'the educational system depends less directly on the demands of the production system than on the demands of reproducing the family group (p. 142-3). In sum, cultural capital is principally transmitted through the family, and it is therefore from the family that children derive modes of thinking, types of dispositions, sets of meaning and quality of style (Reay 2000, p. 570).

The embodied state

Cultural capital can, however, exist in three forms: embodied state; objectified state; and institutionalised state (Bourdieu 1997). For the purpose of this paper, I consider two of these forms, namely, the embodied and institutionalised states. To summarise:

- the embodied state: in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body
- the institutionalised state: a form of objectification which must be set apart because it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (Bourdieu 1997, p. 47).

The embodied state signifies a process whereby incorporated within it, is the ‘accumulation of cultural capital’, implying a labour of ‘inculcation’ and ‘assimilation’ (Bourdieu 1997, p. 48). More importantly, the process of inculcation and assimilation costs time, which must be invested personally by the investor. Thus, the work of acquisition is work on oneself (or self-improvement) (Bourdieu 1997), and requires over all an investment of time (see also Reay 2000). For Bourdieu then, this entails a degree of ‘privation, renunciation, and sacrifice’ on the part of the investor (Bourdieu 1997, p. 48). However, it is important to note that, the most powerful principle of the symbolic efficacy of cultural capital lies in the logic of its transmission (Bourdieu 1997). Bourdieu argues that:

On the one hand, the process of appropriating objectified cultural capital and the time necessary for it to take place mainly depend on the cultural capital embodied in the whole family...On the other hand, the initial accumulation of cultural capital, the precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful cultural capital, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital: in this case, the accumulation period covers the whole period of socialisation (p. 49).

Bourdieu therefore makes the critical point that differences in the cultural capital possessed by the family imply differences, first, at the age at which the **work of**

transmission and accumulation begins (Bourdieu 1997). In other words, the length of time a family can provide freely from economic necessity is, in essence, ‘the precondition for the initial accumulation’ (p. 50).

The institutionalised state

The institutionalised state considers the objectification of cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications (Bourdieu 1997). Bourdieu argues that:

With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment in time (1997, p. 50-51).

To this end, institutionalised recognition of cultural capital ensures the agent’s ability to exchange her or his academic qualification ‘by substituting one for another in succession’ (Bourdieu 1997, p. 51). However, as stated above, cultural capital cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of capital. As such, transforming cultural capital into economic capital implies guaranteeing ‘the monetary value of a given academic capital’ (p. 51). Bourdieu further argues that high academic qualifications traditionally tend to buy good jobs with good salaries (Bourdieu 1997; Grenfell and James 1998). However, it is important to note that, over time, ‘qualification inflation’ results from the tendency of ‘a given level of certification’ to no longer guarantee the same prestigious job, in cases where, for instance ‘players in the market acquire more capital’ (Grenfell and James 1998, p. 21).

Bourdieu’s notion of linguistic misunderstanding

In the academic field, the use of language is one of the most significant modes of ‘struggle’ (Jenkins 2002). Bourdieu (1988, p. 11), for instance, argues that,

the university field is, like any other, the locus of a struggle to determine the conditions and criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy...the different sets of individuals (more or less

constituted into groups) who are defined by these different criteria have a vested interest in them.

Moreover, Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) argue that, an unacceptably high loss of information occurs in the way teaching is currently conducted in [French] universities, at least in faculties of arts. Albeit, much of this decline in the quality of teaching 'owes a great deal to enormous physical and resource problems' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1994, p. 3). Bourdieu and Passeron's (1994) inferences, I believe, *are* in line with claims expressed about H.E. institutions, for example, in Britain (e.g., Newstead 1999).

The nature and role of language and linguistic misunderstanding in the educational process is central in Bourdieu et al.'s (1994) reading. So, while it is the fact that education depends essentially on language, it follows that knowledge and skills, are taught largely through a process of linguistic exchange (Bourdieu et al.'s 1994). Importantly, for Bourdieu et al. (1994), and it could be posed, for a British H.E context, a series of questions remain problematic. For instance:

- (1) how much of the language used by teachers and lecturers is actually understood by students?
- (2) to what extent does the social background of students affect their capacity to understand the language used in the classroom or the lecture hall?
- (3) why do students and teachers over-estimate the success of the educational process and under-estimate the degree of misunderstanding involved?

These questions pre-occupying Bourdieu et al. (1994), serve as their quest to attempt to understand the role of language and linguistic misunderstanding in the teaching context within H.E contexts. Furthermore, a focus on the extent to which university students actually understand the academic discourse they hear in lectures, or in the classroom, as well as the factors that influence the ways in which, for instance, students' essays as assessed, is of major issue for these authors. To this end, Bourdieu et al. (1994) are interested in the extent to which the mastery and the

misunderstanding of academic discourse depend on the social background of the individuals concerned.

It is therefore amidst this background of concern that Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) consider there to be an ambiguous relationship existing between teachers and students towards the notion of linguistic misunderstanding. But more importantly, the act of linguistic misunderstanding, *actually*, contributes to its own perpetuation, implicating thus, both teachers and students alike. However, with the rapid increase in the numbers of students gaining access to H.E, this has meant that a decreasing proportion of students have owned 'privileged social backgrounds' (Deer 2003, p. 197).

The Role, Function, and Importance of Doxa

According to Lane (2000), 'doxa', or the 'doxic relation' to the world, is at the heart of Bourdieu's understanding of the **workings of the habitus**. According to Lane, the doxa is:

that pre-reflexive, pre-predicative orientation towards the future...an implicit or 'practical' sense of what can and cannot be reasonably achieved, of what does and does not fall within a particular historically and culturally determined horizons of possibilities (2000, p. 194, emphasis added).

Doxa, in my view, is critical then, in the context of the issues raised above, particularly in relation to notions of 'emotional intelligence', and emotional awareness (Mayer and Salovey 1997), and thus *may* have implications for students making the transition, for instance, from school to university. For instance, moments of crisis, Bourdieu argues, are those during which agents' investment in the 'apparent self-evidence of the doxa is subjected to 'a break' (Lane 2000, p. 195). As such, Lane argues:

The 'doxic relation' to the social world is what gives actions their sense of purpose and meaning, that naturalises and legitimises the

social roles adopted by different classes, age-groups and genders (ibid., emphasis added).

I would contend also, that Bourdieu's reference to 'doxa', while not explicit, is clearly evident in his early thinking. As such, this, in my view, reinforces the importance of 'doxa' (Bourdieu 1999; Lane 2000) as a significant and important concept. Again, for Bourdieu:

The essential point is probably that the patterns which have become second nature are generally apprehended only through a *reflexive turning-back* – which is always difficult – over the operation already carried out; it follows that *they may govern and regulate mental processes without being consciously apprehended and controlled* (Bourdieu 1966, p.165, emphasis added).

It could be argued then, that 'doxa' (Bourdieu 1966; 1999; Lane 2000) performs an important role in the appropriation of the academic discourse of the university, being interrelated with emotion. This is particularly important if it we are to assume that students are entering into environments of which they have no previous experience. In this manner, it could be argued that, students' '**doxa**', or '**doxic relation**' to the **world**, will be challenged on their initial experience. In other words, students' habituses may well be transfigured/ transformed, which may, in turn, have implications for the way students construct their student identities in the first year of study.

Understanding the link between first year students' dispositions to learning, and how they make sense of the actual first year experience

According to Haggis (2003), there is a mismatch between the purposes of literacy activity as defined by the academic community, the purposes of literacy for students as defined by the institution, and the purposes of literacy for students as defined by the students themselves. Haggis (2003) concludes that there needs to be more attention given to the 'restricted nature of this particular approach' to the study of HE learning, and the way in which its construction of the 'learner' avoids 'any real engagement with the complexities of location and context' (p. 101). In critiquing the

pedagogical literature of H. E – in relation to ideas surrounding ‘deep’ and ‘surface’ approaches to learning, and, in an attempt at finding an alternative approach to understanding student learning in H.E contexts – Haggis (2003) argues, HE is going to have to find new ways of conceptualising its core values and activities in order to accommodate the diverse range of learners pursuing HE. For example, in the quest to understand what a model of teaching and learning that represented the students’ perspective, rather than that of the academics, might look like, By exploring problems associated with the assumed relationships between ‘conceptions of learning’, ‘perceptions of the learning environment’, ‘approaches to learning’, and ‘learning outcomes’, Haggis (2003) concludes, ‘whilst the model may be successful in creating a generalised description of the elite goals and values of academic culture, it says surprisingly little about the majority of students in a mass system’ (p. 89). Concerned about the nature of the ‘failure’ or ‘low-quality learning’ end of the spectrum, Haggis infers that the ‘surface’ dimensions, for instance, require finer more elaborate analyses of the nature of students’ learning.

I believe, a more elaborate and detailed analysis of first year students’ university experiences can only assist us further in understanding better the nature of the relationship between their *conceptions of learning, approaches to learning, and academic outcomes*, for example, by further highlighting the nature of underlying power relations (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) occurring in students’ learning, in relation to wider sociocultural factors. In this respect, the habitus of such students, and their consequent ‘habitus growth’ (Bullow-Shramm et al. 2001) needs to be of primary educational inquiry. To this end, I set out to develop a framework which incorporates both, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron’s (1977) theory of cultural reproduction, and Stephen Ball’s (1986) theory of ‘learning as socialisation’ of the group (see fig. 1, below), for the purpose of examining the nature and processes of two students’ learning experiences, in their first year of study, and thus, for the purpose of considering the notion of habitus and, further, doxa, as tools in which to understand the qualitatively different ways first year students experience H.E., in different learning contexts, in relation to social class and gender issues.

My rationale for employing this approach relates to my desire to extend some of the work carried out previously by others (e.g., Mann 2001; Haggis and Pouget 2002). It

is also my wish to reconcile the limitations presented by Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) theory of cultural reproduction – which speaks primarily at students who inhibit cultural capital from within the family – by applying Ball's (1986) notion of student learning occurring outside of the family environment, instead, in the classroom situation. This, for Ball (1986), is the way in which some students acquire, what could be considered, cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997) necessary to enter H.E, i.e., A-level qualifications (however, findings of this study show that, accumulating cultural capital, in the case of A-level Psychology, is, for example, 'requisite' for studying Psychology at degree level). In this way, Ball's theory makes room for, and takes account of, students who are the primary focus of the Government's widening participation policies (DfES 2003).

Methodology

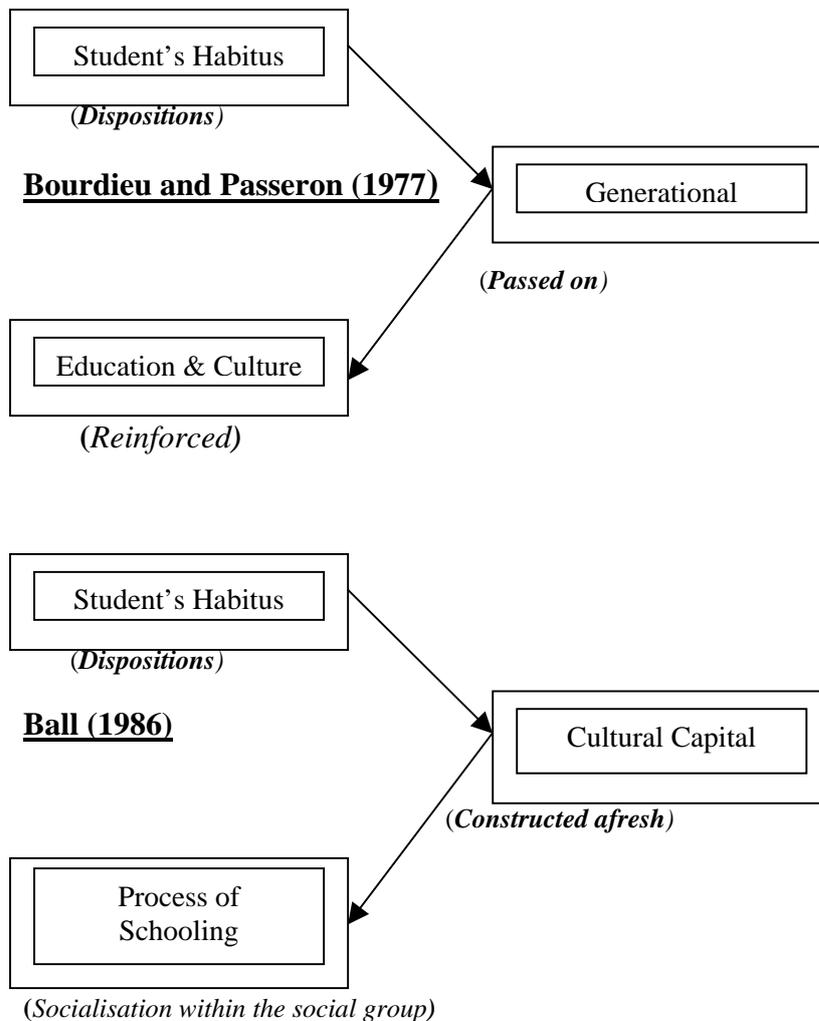
This research utilises a qualitative research methodology, employing a longitudinal case study design, for the purpose of gathering detailed and in-depth information on student learning in different H.E contexts. In this manner, empirical data was collected in the form of: qualitative questionnaires; semi-structured interviews, observational student shadowing, reflexive diaries; and documentations of student coursework feedback. However, this paper sets out to discuss just 2 of the six undergraduate students (see below). Also, due the in-depth and detailed nature of this research, only their semi-structured interview data will be considered here.

Outline of the research

This research focuses primarily on first-year undergraduate students' experiences of HE. Initially, qualitative (open-ended) questionnaires were administered to two groups of first-year undergraduate students in the last month of their first semester, to identify issues relating to academic and social aspects of HE, and thus narrow down the investigative research focus. In total, 108 students from two different subjects disciplines (level 1 Social Cultural Studies and level 1 Psychology) across two institutions (a pre- and post-92 university in the Midlands, UK respectively) took part in qualitative questionnaire survey. Six of these students were interviewed in the following year.

Figure 1: Power Relations – Issues of Social and Cultural

Reproduction and Construction



Findings and Discussion

In this paper, I have chosen to utilise, as examples, 2 (Lisa, and Linda) of the 6 undergraduate student participants (see figure 2) for the purpose of discussion around the concepts of *habitus*, and *doxa*. As stated above, this research presents an alternative way of understanding student experience of higher education (H.E), in light of the changing nature of H.E in Britain. I consider thus, the impact of habitus, and doxa on student experience of H.E, from a British context.

Figure 2: Profile of Students in the research

Name	Age (Dec 2002)	University	Route into H.E
Lisa	19	Nottingham Trent	Traditional/ C2000
Linda	19	University of Nottingham	Traditional/ C2000

N.B. 'Traditional' refers to Traditional A-Levels (i.e., old A-level curriculum). 'C2000' refers to Curriculum 2000 (i.e., new A-level curriculum). Also, it is important to note that Nottingham Trent University is a **Post-1992** H.E institution, in contrast to the University of Nottingham which characterises a **Pre-1992** H.E institution.

Meaning Experience and Identity in the First Year of H.E

How students make sense of their experiences is critical, I believe, if we are to gain a better understanding of their total experience of H.E. As such, it is important to understand how such processes occur. Haggis (2004) echoes this, arguing, there is a need for a 'wider range of approaches' to thinking about 'learning in higher education' (p. 335). In this respect, students' life worlds, their academic study, and their relationship with the university (Bulow-Schramm et al. 2003) require that it be understood in the context of their 'habitus formation', or 'growing' of the habitus. For Bulow-Schramm et al. (2003) *habitus* is expressed:

...in lifestyle, actions, thinking and *patterns of behaviour and seems to be a second nature*: it works nearly unconsciously (p. 1, emphasis added).

However, for the purpose of this paper, and my quest to understand the 'processes' as they occur (importantly, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) view this in terms of *underlying power relations*), I am reminded of Wacquant's (1998) position on the 'habitus'. For Wacquant, it is:

the meeting of disposition and position, the correspondence (or disjunction) between mental structures and social structures, to generate practice (p. 222).

Lisa's Experience of the First Year of H.E.

Lisa is the eldest of four children. She has two brothers and one sister, and during term holidays lives at home with her mother and father. Lisa is the first in her family to participate in H.E., and studies BSc Psychology, at the Nottingham Trent University. Lisa's accumulated '*cultural capital*' (Bourdieu 1997) amounted to three A-Level passes, at grades ABC, respectively. Lisa wants to continue studying, in order to become a Clinical Psychologist.

Lisa's Cultural Capital

In the initial part of the interview Lisa spoke about requiring grades 'ABB', in order to enter her first choice university (see below). However, having gained, instead, grades 'ABC', this was no longer objectively possible. Following Bourdieu's thinking, if A-levels, as Stuart (2002) attests, *are the chief indicator for assessing merit*, Lisa had not 'accrued' sufficient cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997), in this *form* of accreditation, to enable her successful entry into her first choice university. In Lisa's own words, 'they didn't let me in'.

The emphasis on 'they' and 'let', is, I believe significant, because it can be interpreted as Lisa being 'consciously' aware of the *power relations* which exists between herself (as agent) and her first-choice university (as structure). Issues of power relations Jenkins (2002) argues, which exists, for instance, between an arbitrary group of individuals, with respect to them retaining power [habitus and doxa, of the university, or social and cultural practices, in Bulow- Schramm et al.'s 2003) terms] in deciding her future educational choices. Again, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that it is important to understand the power relations which are *concealed*, through the legitimacy of imposed value judgements. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) have also argued that the university space, 'so rigorously imposes its laws on practices' (p. 131). This, they believe, exists because it 'symbolically' expresses the 'law of the university institution' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p. 131). Importantly then, the institution is viewed as generating a symbolic space more real than real space, particularly if it is a university which has remained self-identical in all other respects (Bourdieu and Passeuron 1990).

In relation to the notion of accruing of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1997), (in the form of A-level grades), and thus, in the context of ‘first year university study’, in particular, the initial stages of H.E study, it is important to note that Lisa spoke of doing Psychology at A-Level. However, she interprets this learning experience as ‘not so deep’, in relation to perceived levels of standards of requirements of study at H.E. It can be interpreted, thus, as, is referred to in Bourdieu’s (1997) understanding of one’s accrument of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997), that Lisa was able to make effective use of her ‘time and effort’ spent accruing the prerequisite knowledge, in relation to the subject material of Psychology [embodied state, of a *form* of cultural capital], in order that she would be able to continue studying Psychology at H.E level. As a consequence of sufficient prerequisite knowledge, she was able to understand, in terms of its linguistic understanding (Bourdieu and Passeron 1994), the knowledge and understanding of the preliminary lectures, in this case, Cognitive Psychology, and thereby ‘decode’ the ‘pedagogic message’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p. 99) embedded within its transmission.

For instance, Haggis and Pouget (2002) also consider notions of developing ‘confidence’ and ‘self-esteem’, arguing that these characteristics of the ‘pedagogic experience’ are important factors in the consideration of assisting students in diverse student groups (p. 331). The ‘self confidence’ Lisa gained then, by accruing of the correct form of cultural capital, i.e., in the development of prerequisite knowledge, can be interpreted in the following extract:

*I [knew] the sort of area that it was going to be talking about. I [knew] ¹that it was going to be like thinking about **'thought'** and things like that. I had a basic background about it. So I found that that was quite **helpful** (October 2003).*

Importantly, the *issue* of ‘prerequisite knowledge’ and therefore, an understanding of the module material/ tools, appear, at the initial stages of H.E study, to be a significant issue for Lisa, taken in the manner, for example, of Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1990) concept of ‘pedagogic message’. For instance, Mitchell (1994) has also noted

¹ In this thesis, I utilise the colours ‘sky blue’, and ‘navy blue’, to denote the notions of *doxa*, and *metaphor*.

characteristics in *kinds of principles and shifts in phases of learning a particular subject area* (English), in the upper-sixth level of secondary school and first year of H.E. Following this line of thinking, it might be convenient to consider, equally, a contrasting situation. For example, a **lack** of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1997) appears equally important, that is, as a deciding factor, in relation to students’ possession of sufficient prerequisite knowledge of the subject being studied at degree level. In this instance, it can be inferred, of Lisa’s classmate [as a contrasting scenario] that not having the necessary prerequisite knowledge distinguishes students into groups of what can be termed, ‘*haves*’ and ‘*have nots*’:

*There were about six of us in the group and a [few of us] **had done A-Level Psychology**, and there was one girl who hadn't (October 2003).*

Of course, it is not possible, here, to validate why Lisa's classmate may have lacked the necessary cultural capital/ ‘prerequisite knowledge’, that was required, however, it raises an interesting question, at this juncture, in relation to lecturers' expectations of students' prior knowledge and understanding (Bourdieu and Passeron 1994) of the particular subject matter. For instance, Lisa describes the impact she perceives this to have had on her classmate:

Classmate [said] in the first few weeks, how she felt that she didn't feel as able as we were. We were talking about our coursework that we'd done before. And because she hadn't done that, she found it a little bit harder (October 2003).

It is possible, I believe, to gain some insights in the relationship, and possible significant and underlying processes (social, and/ or cultural) that may or may not be occurring at the level of students’ ‘prior knowledge and understanding’, or their misunderstanding of it (cf. Williamson and Coffield 1997), in Lisa’s classmate’s case, regarding then, one's possession, or lack of possession of ‘appropriate’/ sufficient prerequisite knowledge, and its resultant function, as a form of ‘*cultural capital*’ (Bourdieu 1997), particularly in relation to first year degree level study. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as Lisa making sense of her own understanding of the subject

matter, in the context of her classmates' *apparent* lack of cultural capital (that is, in this instance, the Research component element which is a requirement of the A-Level Psychology syllabus):

*Because **like** the Lab Studies that we write are exactly the same format as our **coursework was at A-Level**. So [classmate] was like a little bit behind (October 2003).*

It can be interpreted that Lisa, and her classmate, make sense, in the understanding of Bourdieu (1979), in relation, that is, to their '**subjective expectations of their objective possibilities**' (p. 53) in the 'discipline' area of Psychology, in their first year of study:

*She [classmate] felt that was a **disadvantage at the beginning of the year** (October 2003).*

Interestingly, Lisa also spoke of her perceived satisfaction of Lab Studies, in relation to notions of 'peer learning' theory (Boud et al. 2001), in the following way:

*I quite enjoyed Lab Studies because we were like doing things in a **group** (October 2003).*

The issue of 'group work', or working in a group context, is referred on several occasions during the interview situation (see below). It can be understood, following this line of reflection, as Lisa's learning experience having been affected, in some way by this method of teaching and learning (see also below), in relation, that is, to what Demetriou et al. (2000) understand as 'continuities in learning' (Demetriou et al. 2000, p. 425; Booth 1997).

For instance, during the interview, Lisa spoke about regularly delivering presentations, and conducting group projects, at A-level. It can be understood as Lisa's 'habitus' being therefore, socially constructed, in relation to these prior experiences. Importantly, the teaching method of 'making' students give

presentations, can be interpreted as being a critical issue for Lisa in relation to her sense making/ understanding of how she learns, and how that *actually* affects her own understanding of the way, or ways, in which she develops, as a learner:

*[Schoolteacher] would **make** us do presentations together, like every lesson we'd all have to go into little **groups** and do presentations (October 2003).*

The '*habitus*' (or dispositions, behaviours), which Lisa has brought with her to the university space, in terms of her previous experiences of learning [the school space], can be understood as having had some impact on her first year of study. For instance, when discussing issues relating to her projected learning situation, i.e., in relation to the nature that would her second year study, in relation to the issue of conducting projects, and being involved in future group work, Lisa appears to perceive this as a shortcoming of the second year degree programme:

*I mean I have done absolutely no work [presentations]. The only work we've done in **groups** is Lab Studies, but I haven't done one single presentation, and it's all lecture notes, and [go off and do some reading] (October 2003).*

It can be understood as Lisa having made sense of her own 'commitment to learning' (Demetriou et al 2000) in the context of '*the giving*' of presentations, and more important, within the *socially* constructed context of 'peer group learning' (Reybold 1997). For instance, Reybold (1997) has made claims that 'learning and development' do not occur in a mental vacuum. Instead, cognition must be realised as not mutually exclusive of one's epistemological belief, and, as such, it is therefore 'structured' by one's 'socio-cultural milieu' (p. 1). For Reybold (1997) it follows that, one's epistemological development is a construction of the knowledge one has available. As such, this process is further problematised because it is 'susceptible to influences of context' (Reybold 1997, p. 1).

In this manner, Lisa's epistemological development, or how she makes sense of the world around her, juxtaposed with her *acquired* awareness of how best she learns, and how she knows or feels this, within the new 'social field' (Bulow-Schramm et al. 2003), has to be the result of a construction of the knowledge and understanding she has available, based therefore, on her prior experiences, or what Biggs' (1987) refers to as the 'presage' stage of learning in H.E. contexts. In light of the above, it can be interpreted as Lisa having developed a her preferred *style* of learning (Fromm 1982; Biggs 1987):

*In a way I'd like it to be a bit more like **hands on**, a bit more **everyone getting involved together** and **doing it together** (October 2003).*

Lisa's Linguistic Understanding/ Misunderstanding

I have presented, above, some examples/ interpretations, and some possible understanding of the factors influencing Lisa's preferred learning style in H.E. However, it is also important to understand how Lisa makes sense of the Psychology degree, itself, (i.e., her conception of learning the subject discipline) in her first year of study. For instance, Booth (1997) has reported of the importance of students' preparedness and confidence for studying at degree level, having studied the same subject at A-Level. Booth (1997) found that students encountered difficulties making the transition from school History to university History.

About the Degree: The BSc Psychology degree (at the Nottingham Trent University) comprises of four compulsory modules, in the first year of study. These being: Biological Psychology; Cognitive Psychology; Social Psychology; and Lab Studies. All four courses modules are viewed as constituting part of a whole. In discussing the nature and contents of the degree programme, Lisa talked of perceived difficulties, in relation to the Biological Psychology module:

***But then there were things like Biological Psychology, which I really really struggled with...it was really hard** (October 2003).*

Lisa's understanding of this perceived difficulty of the Biological Psychology module, is reflected in Booth's (1997) understanding, that, by Lisa lacking the preparation and confidence to study the subject at university, and this, in turn, can be interpreted as Lisa's subjective expectation of her objective possibility (Jenkins 1992) of doing well in this particular module:

*I only just scrapped that one. I got 37 per cent, but **they let me through** (October 2003).*

What is important to note, according to Bourdieu et al (1994) is the nature and action of the underlying power relations operating at the level of the 'examination', within H.E. contexts, and these authors have argued that 'marks are used to express judgements which are at once *total, categorical and subtle*' (p. 47, my emphasis). In this respect, their claim that what this does is actually separate or divide 'candidates into broad groups' (Bourdieu et al 1994, p. 47) is convincing. However, in Lisa's case, it can also be extended, and thus interpreted as her perceiving shortcomings of the actual methods of teaching:

and the [lecturer] wasn't the most helpful lecturer either (October 2003).

Again, Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) have commented, extensively, on students' expectation of the their lecturers, and the role they feel they (the lecturers/transmitters) should perform, albeit, from a French context. It can, I believe, be socio-analytically applied in a British context. For instance, in Lisa's words:

*P.B (Lab Studies), he's a really good lecturer. And my Social Psychology teacher **last** year, she's a really good lecturer (October 2003).*

This can be further interpreted that Lisa is describing what Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) have confirmed is, students' expectations of the *role* of their lecturers. In Lisa's case, she is clear about what she feels the role of the lecturer should be:

She was really lively and [you could tell] that she really enjoyed the subject and [what] she was talking about (October 2003).

To note the recurring theme of the lecturer-student relationship, commentators have, for instance, identified some of the problems resulting from the Britain's changing nature of H.E provision, and how this has impacted on current students entering H.E contexts (e.g., Newstead 1999; Scott and Guppy 1997). For example, in Lisa's own words:

*...we don't have much **contact time** with the actual teachers, we're not really that close to them (October 2003).*

Lisa's reference to 'that close to them' can also be interpreted as Lisa describing her own 'objective position' (Jenkins 2002), within the context of lecturer-student relations, for instance. Again, Smith and Webster (1997) has observed that, the changes occurring at H.E level have had impact on the amount of time students are able to spend with their lecturers. A consequence of these changes, Smith and Webster (1997) argue, is that 'with this goes a *decline in the intimacy between students and their teachers* which has been for many a defining feature of higher education in the past' (p. 100).

In the context of Lisa's expectation of her own 'learning and development' (Reybold 1997), in her second year of study, she talks about this in relation to requiring 'better grades'. This, she associates with the notion that the second year marks count towards the final degree classification. However, this can also be interpreted as a shared, or group phenomenon:

we're all talking about it (October 2003).

However, the 'pedagogic message' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), or code, being expressed by Lisa can be interpreted as a mis-reading, mis-understanding, following Bourdieu and Passeron's (1994) reading of linguistic misunderstanding, in the context of her perceived understanding of the requirements of the second year of H.E. study:

*H.M [Lecturer] said to us that if we got 65% on something **last year [Year 1]**, handing the same quality piece of work this year [Year 2], you won't get 65% for it. And that kind of **shocked us** a little bit, and we were like 'oh no' (laughs) (October 2003).*

Significantly, this can be understood in terms of Lisa constructing meaning of what she perceives to be the level of difficulty in the second year of H.E study. Bourdieu and Passeron's (1994) ideas about 'linguistic misunderstanding' resonate strongly, in the above passage, and to this end, can be further identified as one of the questions Bourdieu et al. (1994) have argued, still persist. For instance, how much of the language used by *lecturers* is actually understood by students?

Continuing the theme of linguistic misunderstanding (Bourdieu and Passeron 1994), it can be interpreted as Lisa having established her own sense of the requirements of the first year of study, then:

I felt like last year [year 1], because it doesn't count for anything, that I just wanted to get through it (October 2003).

Furthermore, it can be interpreted as Lisa making sense of the aims and purpose of first year study (Williamson and Coffield 1997), in relation to, not only the notion of linguistic misunderstanding (Bourdieu and Passeron 1994), as raised above, but also, in relation to notions of social capital theory (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988):

I felt that last year I should pay more attention to my social life and getting to know people and stuff like that (October 2003).

Lisa's Relationship to the University

In the context of Lisa adjusting to H.E, Paxton (2001), for instance, has been concerned about the way in which students, from different communities and cultural practices, begin the process of 'appropriating the discourses and culture of the university'. In Lisa's case, being the first in her family to participate, it can be

interpreted that she begins this 'process' of appropriation of the discourse and culture of the university, mainly in terms of being a complete 'outsider':

...because it was so daunting, like first starting here, the library being so massive and not even knowing where things are were. You get all these user names and passwords given to you like in the first week and you don't know where the hell to use them, or what the hell to use them for (October 2003).

This can be understood, in terms of the 'law of the university institution' being 'symbolically' expressed (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p. 131), generating what could be understood, alternatively, as a 'symbolic space more real than real space' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), via, what appears, the medium of 'user names and passwords'.

Lisa's relationship to the university, as the above seeks to show, has been re-viewed, within the context of a social and cultural constructivist lens, taking into account, also, the notion of 'habitus formation' (Bulow-Schramm et al. 2003), and re-viewed in relation to some of the issues raised by Haggis and Pouget's (2002) study; involving students, who were the first in their families to participate in H.E. Particularly, Lisa's case demonstrates the notion that the accumulation of cultural capital, in the form of A-level qualifications, can be acquired via social capital theory, as Ball (1986) has suggested, and as such, problematises the notion of *cultural capital* being accrued solely via cultural and social reproduction, in the family.

Linda's Experience of the First Semester of H.E.

Linda At the time of attending The University of Nottingham – her second choice university – Linda was one year older than her peers. This was on account of her having studied one extra year at A-Level, for the purpose of applying to Cambridge University. In all, Linda studied six A-Levels, completing A-Level Biology and A-Level History in one year. Linda eventually won a place at Cambridge University. However, she declined the offer, and instead, chose to attend the University of Nottingham. Linda spent one semester, in total, and decided not to return to university after the Christmas holiday.

N.B *By contacting the personal electronic mail address, disclosed on Linda's qualitative questionnaire, administered at the beginning of the first semester, of the first year [December 2002], I managed to track Linda. In this way her account is not only reflexive, in nature, it is also critical, of her reasons for leaving the university. As such, Linda's case study is the first of its nature, given the conditions of the changing nature of H.E, in tandem with her having experienced both the old A-level curriculum, and the implementation process of Curriculum 2000.*

Linda's Reasons for Withdrawal from H.E

The terminology used to describe students who withdraw from H.E study, is either, student 'attrition' (Tinto 1982), or student 'drop out' (Jordan 2001). Clearly, this is an opportunity to focus on pertinent questions posed by Jacobs and Dodd (2003). For example, they ask a critical question, 'Does burnout produce feelings of social isolation and perceptions of inadequate social support or does social support directly moderate burnout?' (p. 300). Another question, felt vital for future investigation, was to find ways to 'better understand the relation between **personality and burnout**' (Jacobs and Dodd 2003, p. 300, emphasis added).

In this way, this is an opportunity to examine the underlying processes, and 'underlying power relations' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) that may, or may not be occurring at the level of Linda's own personality/ identity construction, in relation to her social experience of *burnout*, and how then, she makes sense of the brief period of H.E experience. For instance, Jacobs and Dodd (2003) talk about the nature and process of burnout in terms of the relationship of 'personality, social support, and workload to burnout' (p. 300). The research and analysis that they have advocated is vital (Jacobs and Dodd 2003) and may allow us insights into the phenomenon more closely, albeit, at the limitation of one case study report.

Furthermore, regarding matters of reliability and validity, my concern with Linda's case study, is to draw attention to possible sociocultural factors, which may, or may not have influenced her decision to withdraw from H.E. Moreover, Jacobs and Dodd (2003) have emphasised that future researchers need 'not only replicate' their findings, but also extend them to 'other measures of personality' (Jacobs and Dodd

2003, p. 300). I think then, that this case study, of one student, is one way to better understand the nature of student attrition/ dropout.

For example, it can be interpreted as Linda having fallen into the category of students who process the experience of attrition as [actual decisions versus intentions] to drop out (Pritchard and Wilson (2003):

*'I came home and I was talking to a lot of people that had gone to university, saying they were really really enjoying it, coping really well, you know. Looking forward to doing the exams, and I just thought I can't go back. I just can't. [I'd have this sick feeling in the bottom of my stomach every time I thought about going back]. And I thought I can't spend every holiday [dreading] going back to university. It should be something that enriches your life, and that you enjoy. And that you can expand, grow and learn, and I just was hating it, so **I thought I'm not prepared to spend three years doing that** (November 2003).*

Similarly, Egan (1986) argues that 'intentionality' implies a sense of direction in life, and an ability to take control of one's future, make decisions, set goals, and plan towards these goals. To this end, people who are more intentional experience less stress and greater satisfaction in life:

*I needed to get away from everybody telling me what I should and shouldn't do. Like I had [all these people **throwing** advice at me], like 'ah well, transfer your course, and do this, and do that...But I was totally burnt out. I needed to take some time out. I needed to **get away** (November 2003).*

Interestingly, Linda *does* talk in terms of having been burnt out (Jacobs and Dodd 2003). However, it can be interpreted as Linda having received some emotional support, what Reay (2000) has referred to as 'emotional capital' theory, in relation

‘social capital’ (Jenkins 1992) of her mother, and a form of social support (Jacobs and Dodd 2003):

'I talked to my mum about it, and she said 'Linda, you're not stupid, you'll be fine. You should stick it out. You've worked really really hard to get there, so don't mess it up now' (November 2003).

However, it could be argued here, of Reay's (2000) reading that the mother's support in the education of the child is not straightforward. One can infer of 'don't mess up now', as a form of symbolic domination or violence (Bourdieu 2001) via the use of language, and the power relation between the parent and the child, for example.

Again, in relation to factors of workload (Jacobs and Dodd 2003), here, it is appropriate to take account of Linda's post-16 learning experience, and its possible influence/ significance upon her final decision (Jacobs and Dodd 2003) to withdrawal from H.E study. For example, as stated above, Linda studied six A-levels, in sum. The main intention was, as can be inferred of Linda's 'high achieving' (Brooks 2003) habitus, to attend one of the top universities in the UK. However, this can be interpreted as Linda having come to understand issues of 'underlying power relations' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), and social injustice:

*After going to the interview and [working my backside off for so long to impress these people], that I thought were the most amazing intellectual sort of geniuses ever, I came out thinking '**they're actually all a big bunch of pretentious idiots**'. [I hated it, hated it with a passion]...the pompous, pompous opinions. I had some people say to me 'oh, so uhm you'll be getting in then because you're from a state school. [They need to boost the numbers don't they?] (November 2003).*

In a study carried out by Maslach and Jackson (1981), for example, the development of negative and cynical attitudes, which then create callous views of others, is one of dimensions which they advocate is a syndrome of 'burnout':

And they were like, 'so what grades are you predicted', and I was just like, 'why, what grades are you predicted?', 'well I don't think that's relevant really, daddy came here, granddad came here, so I don't think I'll have any problems (November 2003).

It appears that the importance attached to attending a 'high status' (Brooks 2003) university, and, the fact that, as Walkerdine et al. (2001) have argued, 'middle-class children get the message from birth that not only are they able and clever, but also that their destiny is to go to university and become professionals' (p. 162) is further expressed by Linda:

I just couldn't handle it. I just thought I can't spend four years with people like that]. I'm going to be driving myself insane with the complete social injustice of it all, and it irritated me. And I just thought I'm going to be so distracted from my work. I'm not going to be able to concentrate, cause all the time I'm going to be fighting off these people that are so up their own backsides. And I just thought 'no, I'm not doing this, sorry.

Again, as mentioned above, this can also be understood in terms of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 2001), of which language, and social status can be said to be the primary forces.

Linda's Feelings of Social Isolation

In attempting to 'better understand the relation' between Linda's personality and 'burnout', it has been suggested that 'feelings of isolation and perceptions of inadequate social support' might be produced by burnout (Jacobs and Dodd 2003, p. 300):

[There's me and my sister], and my sister's not very academic, and I am. And I have always been pushed, really pushed. Maybe not so much like physically, like 'You will do this', but [they were expecting me to], and I've always felt the weight of that expectation (November 2003).

While Pritchard and Wilson (2003) have talked in terms of attrition being linked with emotional and social factors, Ball et al. (2000) give a further analysis of ‘underlying power relations’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). For instance, it can be interpreted as Linda having had a vision of her own future constructed for her, much in line with Ball et al.’s (2000, p. 144) observation that very often, parents seek to ‘interpret the world’ for their children and attempt to instil an attitude or disposition:

When I turned Oxbridge down my dad wouldn't talk to me for six weeks. He was so angry. He was livid...[My mum was more accepting]. She [knew] I wasn't very happy and then sort of said 'that's fine (November 2003).

However, Bourdieu (2001) appears to problematise Ball et al.’s (2000) notion of parental interpretation, by suggesting that:

If women, subjected to a labour of socialisation which tends to diminish and deny them, learn the negative virtues of self-denial, resignation and silence, men are also prisoners, and insidiously victims, of the dominant representation (Bourdieu 2001, p. 49, emphasis added).

Again, this needs to be viewed in relation to issues of ‘masculine domination’ and the effects of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu 2001). For instance, ‘as a prime example of this paradoxical submission’ Bourdieu (2001) writes:

...symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition [more precisely, misrecognition], recognition, or even feeling (p. 1-2).

Linda’s Emotional Intelligence

Not willing to casually accept views and attitudes that she had previously taken for granted, Linda, instead sought ‘symbolic relevance’ (Lawy 2003) and ‘connectivity’

(Young 2000) between purposes and activities in different areas of her life. For example, this came in the form of self-realisation once the decision had been finally made to withdraw from H.E study. It can be interpreted that, Linda drew upon her experience, for instance, of travelling to Australia as a way of challenging her own, and her family's view about her ability to be a responsible and independent person (Lawy 2003):

The last six months [in particular] has just changed my life completely. Changed the way I view things, [changed the sense of responsibility I suppose that I had about myself]. Whereas before, I was very much expected...I was doing things for other people, and [wasn't doing it for me] (November 2003).

The degree of emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey 1997) displayed in Linda's recognition and management of her own emotions, i.e., spending a period of time away in Australia, highlights an important issue of coping and dealing with emotionally difficult situations (Matthews et al. 2002). For instance, Matthews et al. (2002) argue that people evaluate the expectancy of success and may attempt to withdraw mentally or behaviourally from the situation. Importantly, however, emotions are seen as signalling how the feedback system is functioning (p. 270, emphasis added).

However, Linda's displays a form of emotional intelligence that could be understood when we consider that the notion 'relationship with ourselves' (Honneth 1995; 1997), is not a solitary thing, but rather, an intersubjective process where we view ourselves, manifest by the view of others (Honneth 1995; 1997).

Again, this is important regarding the three vital components of 'identity formation' (Wynne and Ryan 1985), which are, 'self-confidence', self-respect' and self-esteem'. Furthermore, self-confidence 'takes place in relations between children and their parents' (Wynne and Ryan 1985; Reay 2000), for example:

[Well my mum has said I was unbelievably unrecognisable]. She said that I use to walk around, and I'd look at the floor, and I don't now.

*She said 'you look outward'; She said 'you appreciate things a lot more'. And I do appreciate things a lot more...It's **changed me in so many ways**. I've become very much more sure of myself. And also [I've noticed] that I've become very much like 'let's leave the past in the past, sort of thing. And live for now' (November 2003).*

Linda appears to talk then in terms of a 'transforming of self' or, 'developing as a person' (Light and Cox 1997). However, a further transformational change, that is, 'transformation' as going 'beyond the cognitive' (Light and Cox 1997), can be understood to have taken place, with regard to the degree she has chosen to study:

I'm planning on doing English and Drama, if they'll accept me. English was my primary subject before I started doing Communication Studies. I got an 'A' in it, so I did really quite well. I love it. I love reading, I love reading plays. I loved texts, everything' (November 2003).

In relation to Linda's 'pedagogic experience' (Haggis and Pouget 2002), and the 'alienation' (Mann 2001; Haggis and Pouget 2002), *experienced*, with the process and subject of study, *itself*, Jacobs and Dodd (2003) have addressed this challenging aspect of Rickinson's (1998) summation of Linda's first year experience/ reality. However, Jacobs and Dodd (2003) have argued that, some students might actually experience dropping a course as failure, contributing to a signification of *reduced personal accomplishment*.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought out to represent an alternative way of understanding the first year university experience. This paper focuses on the first year experience of two female undergraduate students, in dissimilar H.E contexts. Here, I have taken two types of educational inquiry as foci, respectively: *widening participation*, and *student retention*. In an effort then to develop, and broaden the discussion around student's 'alienation and engagement' (Mann 2001) processes in the first year of university experience, I have adopted a sociocultural perspective of students' first year experience. In my attempt to unpick some of the social, cultural and institutional

processes by which underlying power relations occur in the home, school, and university environments, I have utilised Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, and *doxa*. These concepts have been examined within a wider theoretical framework incorporating both Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) theory of social and cultural reproduction, and Ball's (1986) theory of learning by socialisation of the group.

What appears clear from the findings is Millard's (1997) observation that, 'what the habitus creates, in effect is an unexamined practical way of proceeding within any repeated social routine' (p. 44). In this manner, it is critical to start from the position expressed by Bourdieu's reading, of the mechanisms of masculine domination (Bourdieu 2001), in that, 'one has to ask what are the *historical* mechanisms responsible for the *relative dehistoricisation* and *eternalisation* of the structure of the sexual division and the corresponding principles of division' (pp. vii-viii, original emphasis). Bourdieu (2001) argues that, posing the question in those terms 'marks an advance in the order of knowledge which can be the basis of a decisive advance in the order of action' (p. viii). We see, for instance, in Lisa's case, that it is more appropriate to consider her subjective position as 'influenced by...class and gender' (Tett 2000, p. 183), while in Linda's case, her subjective position is influenced by gender. The problematic here, is that 'we have embodied the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu 2001, p. 5). What is more paradoxical is the idea that even if we try to understand masculine domination, we are 'likely to resort to modes of thought that are the product of domination' (Bourdieu 2001, p. 5), what Bourdieu has referred to as the 'paradox of doxa' (2001, p. 1).

I believe that this presents us with a fundamental problem in relation to researching social issues. For instance, Bourdieu (2001) argues that 'the social reality that produces domination often confirms the representations that domination invokes in order to justify itself' (p. 32). Thus:

The androcentric view is thus continuously legitimated by the very practices that it determines (Bourdieu 2001, p. 32).

Bourdieu further argues that:

As a consequence, the androcentric representation of biological reproduction and social reproduction is invested with the objectivity of *a common sense, a practical, doxic consensus* on the sense of practices (p. 33, emphasis added).

It is important to note therefore that ‘women themselves apprehend all reality, and particularly the power relations in which they are held, through schemes of thought that are the product of embodiment of those power relations’ (Bourdieu 2001, pp. 33-34). With this in view, Bourdieu concludes that:

Only political action that *really takes account of all the effects of domination* that are exerted through the objective complicity between the structures embodied in both women and men and the structures of the major institutions through which not only the masculine order but the *whole social order is enacted and reproduced* (starting with the state...and the educational system, responsible for the effective reproduction of all the principles of vision and division, and itself organised around analogous oppositions) (p. 117, italics added).

What Bourdieu has, in fact done, I believe, is let the proverbial ‘cat out of the bag’, and he has now forced us to face up to the fact that things are not what they seem. That we have been forced to view the world not as it truly is. This is striking, but at the same time not new. For example, Gilman (1911) discusses this at some length, suggesting that women would bring a different set of norms or values to the workplace and to government: ‘the maintenance of peace, health, order, and morality; the care and nourishment of children’ (p. 222). But wouldn’t this also have implications for social science research? Granted nothing much need change in the natural sciences, for example, regarding the reaction of metals, or even chemicals, however, for the social sciences it has all to do with human *emotions*, and as Bourdieu (2001) and feminist writers (Ramazanoglu 1992) have pointed out, ‘the feminist belief in the inseparability of reason and emotion’ (Ramazanoglu 1992, p. 208) is of paramount importance. Bourdieu has a solution, however. He writes:

Our only hope of breaking out of that circle lies in finding a *practical strategy* for objectifying the subject of scientific objectification (2001, p. 5).

It sounds to me, that Bourdieu is alluding to a feminist methodology, as a solution to counter the grip of masculine domination. That is, a form of practical feminism. In my view, political urgency forces us then, to consider, critically, a practical feminist perspective, as a basis for any methodology involving the research of people. In this way we are killing the proverbial ‘two birds with one stone’, here. Firstly, we guarantee that the participant/s, in the study, has/have her/his/their subjective position/s taken into full account. Secondly, from an epistemological position, it guarantees that the starting point of any discussion includes the practical knowledge of masculine domination theory and its practices. In other words, ‘the calling into question of the self-evident’ (Bourdieu 2001, p. 88) is the first law, so to speak. In that way, analysis, examination, and interpretation processes take into account the need for a position of neutral grounding. For Bourdieu (2001), this type of socioanalysis means, doing away with ‘arbitrary divisions’ (p.9), and with the notion that the ‘socially constructed division between the sexes’ (ibid.) is ‘natural...or self-evident’ (ibid.). Bourdieu is optimistic, however, in that:

The major change has doubtless been that masculine domination no longer imposes itself with the transparency of something taken for granted. Thanks, in particular, to the immense critical effort of the feminist movement, which, at least in some regions of the social space, has managed to break the circle of generalised mutual reinforcement (Bourdieu 2001, p. 88).

Similarly, Ramazanoglu (1992) argues that, feminist methodologies need to remain open to criticism and debate, however, on such issues of ‘gender’, (and I would argue, ‘social class’), it is important that they do not get reduced to ‘extraneous’ (Ramazanoglu 1992, p. 211) variables ‘within a male appropriation of knowledge’ (ibid.). For Ramazanoglu (1992), this must be resisted, so as not to have a disempowering effect upon women. For example, in the paper, findings confirm Tett’s (2000) observations that, ‘problems and practices which are regarded as

legitimate' (p. 183) required that Lisa's and Linda's, via the medium of semi-structured interviewing techniques, were able to think 'reflexively about the social construction of their experiences of education' in 'new ways' (Tett 2000, p. 183). Allowing them, in other words, to understand their own diversity of learning. For example, Mann (2001) has argued that:

the experience of alienation is viewed as *inevitable* given the current wider *sociocultural context and ideology*, and as likely to arise for any member of society, including...*students* (p. 8, emphasis added).

Returning then, to the Governments' aims for the future of H.E (DfES, 2003), including widening access and participation (DfES, 2003), of which this paper is embedded, it appears, like Warnock (2006), that what is *really* at stake, is the 'intrinsic pursuit of knowledge, understanding or justice through such an education (Mann 2001, p. 9). Mann (2001) argues further that, the greater focus on 'performativity and functionality...on efficiency and effective at the expense of complexity and ambiguity' (p. 9) implies that the student is now 'estranged from the possibility of a meaningful personal purpose in engaging in higher education' (ibid.).

Importantly, while this study may not lend itself to suggesting broad policy recommendations, a few simple, though pertinent pointers do emerge as likely to make a difference for research into student experience of H.E, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with an importance given to the first year experience (see below). For example, if we consider the Government's White Paper (DfES, 2003) statement that:

one in four working class young people who achieve eight good GCSE passes do not end up in higher education. The work which schools, colleges and universities are doing – and which the Government is supporting through its *Aimhigher* campaign – is encouraging more students to apply to university. The reintroduction of grants for poorer students will also encourage more students to apply (p. 2, original emphasis).

It is important to avoid any smokescreen of rhetoric, for example, around the issue of working-class students' academic ability and their non-aspiration to 'end up' in H.E. Again, the language could be accused of lending itself to the mechanisms of masculine domination (Bourdieu 2001), and if we not aware of the subtle usage of this form of language, it could be argued that going to university is self-evident. This is the image the Government perhaps is attempting to paint. Again, perhaps this is the case for some students from middle-class backgrounds (Cervini 2002). A better understanding of working-class identity informs us that the relationship between academic ability and aspiration to participate in H.E in not straightforward. For instance, Cervini (2002) is convinced that having family members and friends who have experienced, or are currently in H.E, is a form of cultural capital. I have argued above, of the embodied, and institutionalised nature of cultural capital. Furthermore, many working-class young people lack this form of capital. This is critical point to consider in the discourse around widening access and participation. Good policy and good practice can not move forward without an acknowledgement of this basic fact.

Diversity and learning in H.E, therefore requires an acknowledgement that the 'playing field' (McNay 1999) upon which students from 'poor' working-class backgrounds participate, or even, aspire to participate, is fundamentally uneven. To this end, we have an epistemological problem on our hands. And, it is for this reason that, I believe we do not need to wait until 2010 to understand that the fundamental argument upon which widening access and participation policy is based, is, in fact, flawed. Evidence shows that there is a mismatch between intended policy aims and objectives, and actual outcomes and quality of experience in the first year of H.E (Haggis 2004). To this end, this paper has sought to extend the work of Mann (2001), Haggis (2003; 2004), and Haggis and Pouget (2002), by concentrating on the underlying power relations occurring at three important levels: the family, the school, and the university. The pertinent pointers emerging as likely to make a difference for research into student experience of H.E, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with particular reference to the first year experience, point toward two important reflections:

Firstly, that we might think in terms of a sociocultural approach as constituting a critical, as well as, an alternative way of understanding the first-year university

experience, particularly in light of the changing nature of H.E, in Britain. By doing so we might be able to account more appropriately the notion of *diversity and learning* within different H.E. contexts.

Secondly, in relation to existing policies regarding widening access and participation in H.E, and student retention, that we might be able to think in terms of there being firmly in place, existing mechanisms of masculine domination (Bourdieu 2001) which render research concerning gender and social class issues fundamentally problematic. Good policy and good practice needs therefore to take into account, at base, what I call, a critical feminist perspective of diverse students' qualitatively different sociocultural, and learning experiences.

It is in this vein that policy makers, lecturers, teachers and educators, need to make explicit reference to the importance, and the relations of social class and gender (this could also be said of ethnicity, for example, see Archer et al. 2003) social and cultural construction factors that may possibly impact upon the overall quality experience, and, also, potential experience, of each student wishing to participate in H.E. We need also to take account of the knowledge currently available to us, which informs us, at base, that working-class young people take more of a risk in participating in H.E (Archer et al. 2003). For instance, this paper finds that *cultural capital* is problematic as a concept, in that, it can also be acquired in the form of social capital theory and practice (peer-group learning). Another emerging point I consider to be pertinent, is the base knowledge that 'a family environment that is adequate for the tasks of scholastic learning' (Cervini 2002, p. 15), permits:

surpassing the material obstacles (in the broad sense) that represent general restrictions for children's learning, including both the family's and the child's available time' (Cervini 2002, p. 15).

Bourdieu reminds us that, 'agencies such as the school or the state' are also sites 'where principles of domination' (2001, p. 4) occur, and that it is here where they 'are developed and imposed' (ibid.). To this end, the discourse surrounding widening access and participation, concerning issues of *equality* and *quality* of student experience of H.E, and in particular, of students who will be the first in their

families to participate, is, finally, political rhetoric, in its conception, having no real philosophical underpinning which might account for the diverse make-up of students, already on an unequal par. And therefore, flawed, on the grounds that it is claiming to offer, particularly then, to the working-class student, that which it can not actually offer. This might explain why some working-class young people's habituses (e.g., Archer et al 2003) might not be *geared*, or galvanised toward academic study and thus, a H.E career. Moreover, as I have argued, above, the Government's position, that by participating in H.E, working-class groups will be able to benefit more, economically (cf. Archer 2003) is not at all straightforward. Archer's (2003) discussion that students' notions of *mobility* corresponded with aspirations to leave 'disparaged, deficit class identities and achieving an idealised *middle-class* lifestyle' (p. 126) is also significant, in that, it resonates with Bourdieu's (2001) notion of 'symbolic violence'. Why then, do we need to wait until 2010 to realise Rorty's (1999) observations that politics has tendered to always be solely preoccupied with ideology, than with the actual quality of the student subjective experiences? It might be more advantageous to consider that a 'vast open field of action' has been 'opened up', not just for 'feminist struggles, which are thus called upon to take a distinctive and decisive place within political struggles against *all* forms of domination' (Bourdieu 2001, p. 1, original emphasis), but, also, for all involved in social scientific research. Only then can we begin to arrest the historical process of masculine domination, and its forms of mechanisms of reproduction. For example, McNay (1999) argues that:

by ignoring certain deeply embedded aspects, some theories of reflexive change reproduce the *disembodied* and *disembedded* subject of masculine thought (p. 95, original emphasis).

To this end, we are reminded that, within this current political climate:

Bourdieu's paradox...is hardly even addressed, never minded answered, as neither side seems particularly interested in the problem of *low level of linguistic capital of the working class*, the inequality which this perpetuates, and *the role the education system should play in resolving this* (Moran 2004, p. 27, emphasis added).

Moreover, Moran (2004) argues that, Blair's dilemma is that:

Given the amenability of the compensatory education approach to this oppressive conservative agenda, and the power of the liberal ideology of choice to mask the total *lack* of choice in a system organised around structural deficits of linguistic capital, it seems that the approach which looks for resistance to these powerful discourses is the only viable route to achieving equality (ibid., original emphasis).

Moran's (2004) ideas, I believe, resonate deeply with the problem that this paper has attempted to address, namely, assessing the 'egalitarian potential and practical workability of Blair's education policies as they are connected to the issue of linguistic capital' (p. 11). If the issue of gender is to be further included in the debate, then it must be noted of the argument that, male and female undergraduates adopt different gendered writing styles (Francis et al. 2003). Applying analysis of discourse to the explanations of academics concerning their attempts at gender identification, Francis, Read, and Melling (2003) argue that, 'the narratives position male and female students in stereotypical ways, with implications for their power positions' (p. 357).

Finally, from both, a theoretical, and methodological standpoint, this paper has sought to focus on the nature and processes behind the sociocultural and learning experiences of two female undergraduate students, in dissimilar learning contexts, and dissimilar background educational/ familial experiences. I have sought out to achieve this by adopting Bourdieu's notions of *habitus* and *doxa*. I am arguing thus, that both *habitus* and *doxa* (or the fact of the paradox of *doxa*) need to be understood at a deeper level, and as a single entity, in order to be able to identify the real processes of student identity formation, in the first year of university experience. This is echoed by Zeuner (2003), who has adopted the concepts of *habitus* and *doxa* to focus on the processes behind the inclusion and exclusion of young people in Denmark. Zeuner (2003) argues that, in relation to teaching methods, *doxa* governs 'concordance and the unspoken awareness of suitable behaviour' (p. 1), and that 'nothing has to be explicit; you know what is right' (ibid.). The problem for Weuner (2003), however, is that:

When teacher and pupil are carrying the same habitus, the agreement will be complete. When they do not, however, they will be unable to reach an adequate understanding. Consequently, according to their dispositions, young people relate in different ways to the culture of the school (p.1).

Zeuner (2003) concludes that, 'the question is whether we can explain the phenomenon' that 'there are some young persons who break away from the tendency of reproduction' (p. 4). I believe then, that Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *doxa can* assist us in arriving at an appropriate explanation, and also, taken that both concepts are not mutually exclusive of each other, might lead us to a greater and more meaningful understanding of the first year experience of H.E, at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

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Address for correspondence: 4 Rue Henri Chenaux, Marseille, 13008, France.

Tel: 0033(0) 628820536

Email: morgan.paul@yahoo.fr

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