Unlocking the Word Hoard:

The potential of Literacy Learning in the social

reintegration of Ex Offenders, Disabled People and

those discharged from the Armed Forces.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and that any material that has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University has been acknowledged.

Signature: …………………………………

ABSTRACT

Unlocking the Word Hoard: The potential of Literacy Learning in the social reintegration of Ex Offenders, Disabled People and those discharged from the Armed Forces.

My research has been underpinned by the unifying concepts of power, education and language, identity and individual agency; and how these intersect, link with and impact on the experiences of ex offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces. These concepts help to explain the contradiction and ambivalence, which attach to the theory and practice of social exclusion and social inclusion.

The assumptions underlying my research are that the groups included in my study can be isolated and excluded from full membership of society by social and political forces which are beyond their control; that they have individual agency to overcome the effects of social exclusion; and that literacy and other forms of learning have a potentially transformational role in their social reintegration. Those who have offended are especially at risk of experiencing the most oppressive aspects of social exclusion through unemployment, related to their criminal histories and lack of access to literacy learning and vocational training. Their efforts to be reintegrated by these means do not follow a linear progression and can be subject to delay, interruption and disappointment, which can reinforce their social exclusion.

The linked vulnerabilities of ex-offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces to crises including unemployment, homelessness and suicide are explored through a review of available studies. The literature review reveals significant gaps in existing research in terms of lack of opportunity for ex-offenders and the other groups to describe the impact of social exclusion and their access to the power of literacy learning as a means of social reintegration. It also identifies the dearth of existing research into the common experience of the three groups included in my study, as well as a lack of acknowledgement of their own individual agency and any facility they might have to network, develop survival strategies and create alternative support structures for themselves.

The allusion in the title of this thesis to the Anglo Saxon epic poem 'Beowulf' speaks to the power of personal narration. Drawing on the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Methodology has enabled participants to make their voices heard, in contrast to alternative forms of rhetoric, which might lead to dysfunctional behaviour. It has been my privilege as a researcher to translate their oral narratives into a written account of their versions of their lives. These narratives have the potential to link self understanding with social structures, including access to training and employment, and to lead to reintegration as fuller members of society.

I have explored the double edged nature of literacy. Language and imagery can be tools of individual agency for my participants' personal development and social integration but moral assumptions and narratives are employed as rhetorical tools for marginalisation and the privileging of particular ideological preferences, which can be experienced as further subtle means of exclusion. However, participants' narratives have challenged and broadened my original assumptions on the nature and impact of exclusion on those included in my study; the transition experiences which can be formative for individuals, including the points between development of a disability, release from prison or discharge from the Armed Forces, and access to learning; the nature of the learning, which can play a part in restoring and resolving identity; and the ways in which reflexivity and instrumentality can be developed in support of individual agency.

Listening to participants' narratives, characterised by use of metaphor as an alternative form of language and self-expression, has highlighted the ways in which participants in my research have defied the application to themselves of a binary approach to the concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion. In their engagement in Foucault's (1980: 102) 'contested interactions' with power structures, they have echoed the values and tenets of critical literacy theory and critical pedagogy in a wider context of learning than I had envisaged, leading to reintegration as fuller members of society, on their own terms, for themselves and for fellow people with disabilities, ex offenders and ex Armed Forces colleagues.

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I am especially grateful to the participants in my research for their willingness to become involved in this research and for their generosity in recounting some of the most sensitive aspects of their lives. I hope I have done justice to them in this thesis.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my mother, Eileen Mary Peat, in gratitude for her sharing of her love of reading and learning with me; and for all the many sacrifices she made to ensure that I had the educational and other opportunities she had been denied.

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH FOCUS, MOTIVATION AND PERSPECTIVES

My research focus has been on critical literacy, its values and practices as a means of personal transformation, viewing through this lens of the experiences of five participants, who were ex offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces.

Freire (1972) based his form of critical pedagogy on his belief that literacy learners need to see their individual agency for change rather than have it imposed on them. For Freire (1998) critical educational practice was not a specific methodology to be applied blindly but one that emerges when teachers can practice teaching from a critical perspective and have the time to reflect on their pedagogy. Vasquez, Janks and Comber (2019: 302) have observed that this encouraged a view of critical literacy as 'a way of being, living, learning and teaching across the curriculum and not just an orientation to teaching literacy.' Drawing on Biographical Narrative Interpretive Methodology (BNIM), I have identified the potential impact of critical literacy in its focus (Coffey 1999: 1) on 'the relationships between language, power social practice and access to social goods and services' and on participants' rediscovery of identity, individual agency and capability. In the next chapter, I explore the theme of critical literacy in the context of literacy discourses, relating critical literacy and critical pedagogy to my experience as an Adult Literacy Tutor in Adult Community Learning.

My interest in this research and its key theme was stimulated by my first Degree in English and Sociology, opening up the study of Anglo Saxon poetry, art and archaeology alongside social policy, criminology and industrial sociology. This was followed by professional experience as a senior manager in the Probation Service, as Principal of a Residential College for Adults with Disabilities and as National Education and Training Manager for a disability organisation. Following 'retirement' I studied for the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) and taught Adult Literacy in Adult Community Learning. This involved teaching literacy to ex-offenders on Community Punishment Orders; learners with mental ill health and learning difficulties; families on the Sure Start programme and school support staff. All the organisations I have worked in

have believed in the individual capacity for change and development, with appropriate intervention and support.

Currently, my role of Lay Member/Community Representative in the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group for this County has led to an understanding of the intersection between poverty, lack of educational opportunity and health inequalities. In this role, I have also worked with NHS England Head of Armed Forces' Transitions on health, education, employment and other reintegration issues for local ex-servicemen and women. These opportunities and my previous research experience as part of studies for the PGCE have provided insights and perspectives, which inspire me and are relevant to this research.

In residential training for disabled adults, in particular, I recognised that a large proportion of those, who were on the government funded vocational rehabilitation programme, including ex-servicemen, had a background of offending and experience of the criminal justice system, including imprisonment. Typically, long periods of unemployment following these experiences had impacted on mental health and had led to the development of a disability, social isolation and reduced confidence or a further deterioration in pre-existing disabilities.

This professional background has led to an awareness that efforts to be reintegrated through adult literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation following such experiences do not follow a linear progression. Too frequently, such efforts are frustrated by delay, interruption and disappointment and are characterised by the reinforcement of social exclusion. I have developed the view that earlier intervention in the form of medical or psychological support, education or vocational training at the transition points they experience is critical in forestalling a sense of social dislocation and the cycle of disadvantage, exclusion and further disadvantage. Earlier intervention could have prevented a decline in health, prolonged periods of unemployment, offending and imprisonment. Common social and educational factors among them were fertile areas for research and the search to remedy this situation has defined my position on these issues.

The inclusion of people with disabilities, those discharged from the Armed Forces and ex offenders in this research might appear incongruous and indeed

potentially insulting of those who have no criminal record. Although each group reflects a particular population and represents the experiences of a distinct category, I have observed in the course of my work in these areas that there are issues in common among all three groups. These issues have influenced my choice of area to research. The obligation on me as a researcher is to forge 'dialogic sympathies' (Clough, 2002: 71). Each of these groups experiences critical transition points: the sudden occurrence or gradual onset of a physical or mental disability; conviction for an offence, a sentence of imprisonment or release from prison; or discharge from the Armed Forces.

There are similarities in the issues of clash of identities, which can affect those coming to terms with the impact of a disability or those sentenced to periods of imprisonment followed by learning to adjust to life in the community. However, this issue is given insufficient weight in educational research concerning the groups I have studied. The picture is made even more complex by the 'permeable membranes' between the groups being studied, leading to the interweaving of multiple identities: for example, the transition from the Armed Forces to prison to disability. These make it difficult for individuals to extricate themselves from the impact of the associated, sometimes negative stereotypes. Most crucially in the context of my research, they also pose an additional problem for service providers trying to identify most appropriate funding responsibility and the timing of the required interventions is therefore compromised. Schneider (2004: 268) observed that stereotypes of the same group may change from one situation to another: 'all people belong to multiple social categories and groups and in a given situation one set of stereotypes may rule over others.' Crocker *et al.* (1998: 289) linked stereotyping to the concept of stigma. They defined stigma as 'fundamentally a threat to the self.' Schneider (2004: 475) went on to observe that a perception of personal responsibility for a condition such as a criminal record is likely to make the stigma more acute.

I recognised that each of the groups included in this study has an 'inhibited voice' (Clough, 2002: 71). The search to remedy this defines my position on these issues. The quest for a voice which will persuade the reader, challenge interests, privileges and prejudices and create a 'deep unease' is an essential

14

feature of this research and a key means of giving voice to these groups, recognising the power relationship, which is implicit in my interaction with them.

I have been guided in the shaping of this research by the philosophy and practice of Freire, who drew on Teilhard de Chardin's understanding of humanisation, Freire cited this in translation as: 'a state when human beings make themselves capable of revealing their active reality, knowing it and understanding what they know' (de Chardin, 1959, cited in Freire, 1985: 158). Freire (1985) referred to this state as the 'highest function of thinking: a heuristic (pertaining to knowledge) process.'

The biographical narrative approach, which I have adopted in this research, builds on participants' ability to conceptualise and communicate effectively. I also recognise from ethnographic research undertaken by Wilson and Killingley (2004: 3) at a local centre for the rehabilitation of young offenders, that ex offenders can be conscious of feeling 'disappeared' from society, when aspiring to be 'acknowledged and respected members of society in which they might one day be able to make something of their lives.' However, neither of these perspectives is necessarily symptomatic of exclusion – rather they could demonstrate a resourcefulness and level of perceptiveness which enables them to survive and to function, albeit in ways which might be regarded as dysfunctional by the wider society. Although this receives mention in the existing body of research, my current research has foregrounded and emphasised the value of such forms of individual agency and capability.

My previous research, while undertaking the Post Graduate Certificate of Education, awarded in 2009, was into the impact of literacy on the self-esteem of a group of ex-offenders on the Home Office Unpaid Work Scheme (formerly Community Service). This encouraged my growing awareness of the role of the researcher in influencing policy development and also led to study for the Master's in Educational Research. I was influenced by the identification of Emil Durkheim (1897/1951) of the classic behaviours of anomie as a state where confused, unclear or absent norms could lead to deviant and delinquent behaviour; and by Merton (1967/1994), who analysed the social pressures on individuals and the differential access to structures such as schools or

employment opportunities through which cultural values can be properly and legally realised.

Durkheim and Merton helped me to identify that most of the ex offenders, who attended these literacy sessions, which were imposed as part of the Court Order, had received little formal education or had experienced disrupted education. They might have had learning difficulties and a short attention span or be 'slow learners', requiring detailed coaching. All the participants had experienced and continued to experience some form of dissociation from the world around them through fragmented education and family situations, drink and depression, which had led them into criminal activity of various kinds. From this study, it appeared that literacy learning was intrinsic to participants' sense of progression from the rhetoric of crime to more socially acceptable means of self-expression. This research provided a powerful account of the learners' lives up to the point of this study, their views on the value of learning as part of the Community Punishment Order and how this meshed with their aspirations for the future. For some learners, rather than being a vague feeling of wellbeing, increased confidence and self-esteem as a result of learning had a very specific bearing in their search for personal stability and the achievement of their aspirations.

This demonstrated to me that, in the role of tutor, it was necessary to work with and harness a spectrum of views and experiences and to channel any existing levels of confidence through their ability to conceptualise and communicate effectively.

Wilson and Killingley's study (2004: 3) also led to a recognition on my part that the majority of young learners in their study had difficulty with their education through being categorised as 'special needs' pupils' at their secondary schools or failure to complete their secondary education through an exclusion order, or persistent truanting or withdrawal from school. They identified the need for the potential of literacy learning for social reintegration. I have decided to build on my earlier teaching experience and research, broadening this research to include adults with disabilities and those discharged from the Armed Forces in order to widen the focus to the impact of literacy learning and vocational

rehabilitation and to identify how these could become more effective in social reintegration.

1.2 THE PURPOSE, FOCUS AND INSPIRATION FOR MY RESEARCH

(a) The Purpose of my Research

My objective has been to investigate the role of educational programmes, especially critical literacy education, and other forms of training, including vocational rehabilitation, for those excluded from literacy and other forms of education. It has included disabled adults and those discharged from the Armed Forces as well as ex offenders, reflecting the understanding I developed in residential training that some disabled adults, including ex- servicemen and women undergoing such training would have had a previous experience of the criminal justice system.

Building on my earlier research, I have also broadened the focus to the impact of wider forms of learning and vocational rehabilitation and how these could become more effective in social reintegration. I have intended this to reflect the experiences of people with disabilities and ex-servicemen and women and my own experience of the value of vocational training of people with disabilities.

I recognise that, although the five participants in my research have demonstrated a wide range of disabilities and experiences of exclusion, these are by no means representative of the full spectrum of such experiences. However, I intend that my research should provide a basis for further research into the issues covered.

(b) The Cycle of Exclusion and Disadvantage

The dissociation of ex-offenders, from society can place them within a cycle of exclusion and disadvantage created by offending, also experienced by those discharged from the Armed Forces. As cited in the literature review, a number of studies (Binks and Cambridge, 2018; Mellotte *et al.,* 2017; Murphy and Busuttil*,* 2017) have drawn attention to the loss of identity, disillusionment, detachment and despair resulting from difficult transitions into civilian life by ex-servicemen and women, including experience of combat stress and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the barriers to seeking support. This can have severe individual consequences, including the risk of suicide (Kapur *et al.*,

2009). Imprisonment is a common experience (H.M. Prison and Probation Service, 2019; Treadwell, 2010).

Barriers to literacy are representative of the shared vulnerabilities between ex offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces. For example, the overlap between them becomes apparent in research carried out by the Social Exclusion Unit, launched in 1997 by the newly elected Labour Government, (later abolished in 2010 and absorbed into the Office for Civil Society), which was concerned initially (Levitas, 2003) with the contribution to crime of truancy and school exclusions and with reducing the numbers of rough sleepers. Other research by the Centre for Social Justice, (2009) and the Howard League for Penal Reform, (2011) indicated the shared experience of social exclusion and the lack of literacy and disability, including mental ill health, among the groups I have studied.

(c) Reflection on Policy Developments during the Period Covered by My Research

Government policies on issues affecting the participants in this research are explored in the literature review chapter. Here, I reflect on the shifts in attitudes and the resultant policy implementation during the period spanning my original research in 2009 into the impact of literacy learning on ex-offenders and the submission of this thesis. This period spans the previous Labour administration, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government and the previous and current Conservative Governments. The approach of previous Labour administrations (1997 to 2010) to people with disabilities was based on the presumption that most disabled people could work, provided that they had support and training. In the residential training for disabled adults programme, this was achieved by a range vocational training, enabling people with disabilities to achieve their full potential through the acquisition of a range of skills leading to sustained employment, self-employment or the employment of others. The transition from lengthy periods of unemployment was supported through a combination of Government financial inducements and the ever present threat of withholding State Benefits. Under the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010 to 2014) and the present Conservative administration and following the introduction of the austerity

programme, described as 'the most urgent issue facing Britain' (Garside, 2015:1), a presumption of the ability of disabled people to work has been implemented in a more oppressive culture. This has included the roll out of Universal Credit and the introduction of individual reviews of Personal Independence Payments to disabled people. There has also been an assessment programme on the ability of people with disabilities to work, often administered by those who had little or no medical understanding, followed by minimal on the job training, thus creating a potential cycle of disadvantage in the jobs' market.

The previous Labour administration's criminal justice policy was based on (Garside, 2005: 1) a 'consensual, small "c" conservative notion of 'community and social order: "respect" to use the terminology'. Garside describes the development of a view of those who had broken the law as 'deviants', engaging in 'anti-social behaviour.' This was balanced by an emphasis on rehabilitation and the reintroduction of some educational programmes, which had been cut by the previous Conservative administration. The increasing marketisation of prisons under Labour led into the Coalition and Conservative administrations' policies (Garside, 2015:1), which have demonstrated a hardening of approach, exemplified through the increase in the prison population, a reduction in access to rehabilitation and education in prison and reduced supervision in the community. In 2019, the newly appointed Home Secretary expressed her intention of making criminals 'literally feel terror' at the thought of breaking the law as a means of restoring public confidence in law and order (Langford, 2019), resonating with and reversing Foucault's reference (1980: 130) to 'the studiously cultivated fear of criminals in society.'

The approach to veterans should be seen in the context of the Ministry of Defence Armed Forces' Covenant introduced by the Labour Government in 2007 and enacted by the Coalition administration in 2011. This Covenant has been maintained and developed under the Coalition and Conservative administrations in the context of support for education and family wellbeing, health, including mental ill health, accommodation and employment. However, this must be viewed in the context of austerity cuts, which have affected veterans' access to public services; and the continuing issues faced by them. These include the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder on their transitions

into the community, the proportion of veterans in the prison system and the rates of suicide among veterans in prison and in the community.

In summary, I have had to reject any thoughts I might have had that the issues identified would be dealt with at policy level during the period covered by this study. The reverse is true: this period has been characterised by the move to a harder edged, more punitive approach which bears down on the groups represented in this study, as I make clear in the rest of this thesis.

(d) Reflections on the Drivers for This Research

In the course of professional life, especially in the context of Probation and residential training, I have become aware of the potentially negative impact of State documentation and systems on those included in this study, especially those relating to training and Benefits. These systems, which are often based on threatening, punitive and pejorative forms of expression, can reflect the 'strivers and shirkers' narrative, which I expand on in the review of literature, imposing seemingly unsurmountable barriers to the achievement of training and employment for the participants in my study.

Reflecting on the relevance of their experiences with official documentation, in particular, has involved reversing the 'mirror of moving shadows' to unify 'the hermeneutic revelation of the phenomenon being studied and (Doane, 2003:18) the reflexive uncovering of the self.' This approach, with all the possibilities it presents for fugitive and dual interpretations, has involved reflecting on my own experiences of managing systems of official documentation within the organisations in which I have worked. With all its imperfections and possibilities of narcissism, this approach has the potential to be a powerful and revealing aspect of this research. As referred to previously in the introduction, in the particular context of participant experience of documents, I reflect that a driving motivation in this research might be the wish to compensate for the limitations experienced in handling the rigidity of bureaucratic systems in previous professional roles. Detailed work in Probation and in residential training on a one to one basis and the emphasis in residential training on detailed systems of assessment for vocational training provided additional levels of understanding of the issues, which are critical for the working relationships with the disabled people, ex-offenders and those discharged from the Armed Forces. Despite

these opportunities, official definitions and terms used in recording systems, court reports and systems of accountability for Government funding might have constrained my views of the issues faced by the groups in this study.

I also recognise that choice of biographical narrative interpretive methodology might provide an opportunity to uncover more about their experiences through this research than I have learned in previous roles. A specific example of the possible effect of broader constraints in previous roles is that, in residential training for disabled adults, I recognised from my background in Probation that a large proportion of disabled people in vocational training had a background of criminal convictions and imprisonment and had experienced lengthy delays in making the transition into residential vocational training. A successful funding application for a Court based pilot was made to the Home Office, who were at that time responsible for Criminal Justice funding. These funds were intended to operate in partnership between the charity and the Probation Service. This innovative approach was intended to assess defendants with disabilities, including mental ill health, prior to their Court appearance and to support possible recommendations to the Court, potentially diverting them into residential vocational training as part of a Probation Order. This was intended to avoid the impact of imprisonment and consequent lengthy delays in accessing training following release from prison. However, it is open to speculation whether this approach proved to be at variance with the objects of the charity, which were focussed on people with disabilities. It is possible that a major factor in the rejection of the funding for the pilot by the charity's trustees was their reluctance officially to acknowledge the link between disability and offending behaviour and the fear of reduced reputation in the eyes of the public on whom they depended for fundraising. This suggestion of contamination or taint by association raised a number of issues connected with the stereotyping of ex-offenders and the general lack of perception of the overlapping needs of the groups I have studied.

The wish to explore their common experiences has represented a significant driver in this research. However, I have reflected on the ethics of linking my previous experience with my research in this way and I have concluded that the potential value of the insight thus gained outweighs the potential for such self-indulgence.

1.3 THE AIM OF MY RESEARCH, UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim in undertaking this research has been to draw attention to participant experiences of social exclusion, including exclusion from learning and to influence policy on and delivery of educational provision for ex-offenders and the other groups included in this study.

The assumptions underlying this research are that the groups included in the study can be isolated by exclusionary social and political forces, which can render them powerless, and by their lack of social capital; that they have individual agency to overcome these effects of social exclusion; and that literacy and other forms of learning can be instrumental in their social reintegration. This is recognised by Freire (1972: 25) who advocated 'making oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed' from which will come 'their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation.'

My research objectives were to identify:

•   The social and educational factors in common among learners who are ex-offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces, who, having been excluded from the transformational potential of literacy education, experience the social dislocation which can lead to the cycle of exclusion, loss of identity, social isolation and disadvantage.

•   The relevance of individual agency in overcoming the cycle of exclusion.

•   The features of educational programmes which are the most effective in (a) forestalling the cycle of disadvantage experienced by the groups identified above and (b) supporting their social integration and transition from negative forms of self-expression, including the rhetoric of crime, to sustain changes in outlook and behaviour and more positive means of making their voices heard.

In the discussion and conclusion chapters of this thesis, I have described how these research objectives have been modified in the light of participants' descriptions of their experiences of social exclusion and the individual impact of different forms of learning, including critical literacy learning. In particular, the reference to 'more positive means of making their voices heard' has achieved a new significance through their expression of views to educational policy makers,

as recommended by fellow researchers during a presentation of research objectives, questions and assumptions. I elaborate on participants' views in the conclusion chapter.

I have formulated specific research questions, which have been refined in the light of the literature review and appear at its conclusion.

1.4 DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF DISABILITY AND LITERACY; AND THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The following definitions have been applied in the course of my research. Each of these is subject to various interpretations, which are also described here. These definitions and interpretations have provided a context for my dealings with research participants, which are outlined here as a basis for further exploration in this thesis.

(a) Definitions and Interpretations of Disability

The United Nations definition of disability states that:

> The term 'disability' summarises a great number of different functional limitations occurring in any population in any country of the world. People may be disabled by physical, intellectual or sensory impairment or illness. Such impairments conditions or illnesses may be permanent or transitory in nature.

> (United Nations, 2018)

This definition is consistent with the social model of disability (Oliver, 1980; Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976), which, according to the United Nations (2018), 'recognises the necessity to address both individual needs (such as rehabilitation and technical aids) and the shortcomings of society (Various obstacles for participation)'. The U.N. acknowledged that there is a 'great deal that society can do to reduce, and ultimately remove, some of these disabling barriers; and that this task is the responsibility of society', rather than of the individual person with a disability. I acknowledge that the social model of disability is a contested concept. Corker (1998) drew attention to its inherently dichotomous underlying assumptions as between individual/society/ impairment/disability and argued for a dialogic relation between impairment and disability, within a broader approach of critical

disability studies. This, she argued, would be more effective in revealing the issues by disabled people and their agency in overcoming them.

Recognising these limitations, I apply the definition derived from the social model of disability, within the critical disability research framework. Minich (2016: 1) referred to the relevance of critical disability studies, which involves an avoidance of objectifying disability and a methodology 'in order to recommit the field to its origins in social justice work.'

In this thesis, I have also explored the relevance of critical literacy and critical research in challenging and resisting the social views and practices surrounding disability, which have the potential to marginalise and dehumanise particular groups. A review of empirical research into the particular forms of disability affecting participants in my study forms part of the literature review.

(b) Definitions and Interpretations of Literacy

In defining literacy, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) referred to differing views of literacy, ranging from the functional ('literacy as a simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills' and 'using these skills in ways that contribute to socio-economic development') to its potential for 'developing the capacity for social awareness and critical reflection as a basis for personal and social change.'

Freire (1970) contrasted his view on the transformative potential of acquiring literacy with the functional view of literacy. Freire and Macedo (1987: 56) defined critical literacy, which drives my research, as 'a creative act that involves the critical comprehension of reality.' Perry (2012: 62) stated that such an approach to literacy:

> forces consideration that individuals, who might be considered 'illiterate' in certain contexts may, in fact, be able to effectively read, write and otherwise meaningfully engage with texts in other contexts.

I recognise that the forms of expression used by the participants in my study, are based on their meaningful engagement with the world around them. Throughout my thesis, critical literacy provides me with a lens through which to view this engagement.

1.5 REFLEXIVITY AND MY RESEARCH

Extracting the full potential of reflexivity has been central to this research in all stages of planning and implementation and in my dealings with participants. This has involved the exercise of constant scrutiny and revisiting of motivation, actions, roles, the construction of questions and the types of interpretations that emerge. This process has helped to shape the research processes and vice versa; the interpretation and construction of research findings and how prior understandings, assumptions and values impact on all these elements of research (Clayton, 2013). It has helped to clarify the purpose of this research and to identify what it might realistically achieve in relation to ex-offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces. Hammersley and Gomm (1997) were clear that being reflexive has the potential to remind researchers that they cannot engage in research alone but rather their research needs the voices of their participants to truly gain an understanding of the study site. This is linked with the observation by Hegel (1977) that oppressed groups see the nature of the world and have insights that are not available to their oppressors (Hegel, 1977, cited in Hammersley and Gomm, 1977: 6).

I have elaborated on my understanding and application of reflexivity in the methodology, discussion and conclusion chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 2. CRITICAL LITERACY: EMPOWERMENT, EMANCIPATION AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

(a) The Context of Critical Literacy

In the introduction to this thesis, I have referred to the framing of my research according to the concept, values and practices of critical literacy, deriving from critical theory and its emphasis on social justice.

Foucault (2000: 326) stated that:

> There exists an international citizenship that has its rights and duties, which obliges one to speak out against every abuse of power, whoever the author, whoever the victim.

In this context, DeLeon and Ross (2011:1) referred to the need for educators to pursue 'an agenda dedicated to the creation of a citizenship education that struggles against and disrupts inequalities and oppression.' Shor (1999: 2) described this as: 'questioning power relations and identities in a world not yet finished or just or humane' and 'challenging the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self and social development.' Ross and Vinon (2011: 158) noted that the 'dangerous citizenship' expressed through critical pedagogy resides in its capacity to encourage students and educators 'to interrogate and uncover their own well intentioned complicity in the conditions within which various cultural texts and practices appear' and (2011: 161) at it:

> embodies three fundamental, conjoined and crucial generalities: political participation, critical awareness and intentional action.

These were expressive of a link with Freire's 'conscienization' on which his form of critical literacy was based, enabling a range of interested stakeholders to see (2011: 162) 'how things are, that things can be different and how things might be.' Key to Freire's approach (1976: 110) is the concept of praxis which describes classroom practice, involving learners through active reflection on the world, and reflective action in order to transform it. Praxis involves 'gaining critical distance from the matter being discussed', linked with participants' frame of reference. This includes informal learning to enable learners to conceive of different learning situations in their life as forms of praxis. The development of critical literacy skills among students involves their participation in conversations about injustices (Coffey1999: 4) and about the privileging of certain groups

above others. Mayo (2010:67) observed that through the process of praxis and authentic dialogue, learners develop understanding of their reality in a more critical light. Thus Geuss (1981:2) observed that critical theories of education 'attempt to provide enlightenment and emancipation for the people that hold them.' Freire (1972) advocated critical literacy as a means of exposing students to the biases and hidden agendas within texts. Luke (2014: 27) emphasised that critical literacy involves developmental engagement with major texts and with discourses and modes of information. Texts are never neutral and the critical literacy approach attends to the ideological and hegemonic function of texts, augmenting this with technical resources for analysing how texts work, including how specific grammatical constructions attempt to manipulate the reader. Thus critical literacy offers a means of studying the relationship of language and power. Knoblauch and Brannen (1993: 23) described this as 'practical knowledge of how to use language for advocacy, social critique and social transformation.'

Central to this is praxis, or human activity consisting of action, defined by Freire (1993:125) as 'transformation of the world.' Freire worked with a collective notion of human agency through literacy practice, aware that (Freebody and Freiberg, 2011: 440) 'managing texts is always potentially both problematic and liberating and always reflects the role of politicized cultural existence.' Freebody and Freiberg (1999) described it as essentially a pedagogy of inclusion. Furthermore, Lankshear and McLaren, (1993: xix) defined the scope of critical literacy pedagogy to provide opportunities for learners to become 'border crossers', surmounting culturally imposed barriers through encouragement to understand and be involved in the politics of daily life. Drawing on Freire's interview with Macedo, Bartlett (2005: 346) observed that educators must develop radical pedagogical structures that provide students with the opportunity to use their own reality as a basis of literacy and draw on their experiences. They emphasised that, for Freire, students are not blank slates: they are the source of their own knowledge.

Beck (2005: 393) has observed that critical literacy applies the tenets of critical social theory in the context of education. Degener (2001: 33) identified the link between critical theory and critical literacy:

> Critical theory in literacy (also known as critical literacy) looks at how one's identity is inscribed by literacy practices.

Degener (2001) referred to the belief among critical theorists that becoming literate involves not just learning to read and write but also learning how to use literacy to examine one's position in life in terms of socioeconomic status, work, gender, educational background and race. Within a critical literacy framework there are many kinds of literacy and 'an individual needs many to fulfil their roles in society.'

Perry (2012) referred to identity as a theoretical construct, ultimately tied to critical literacy. Hagood (2002: 250-251) observed:

> What is central to critical literacy that focusses on identity is the influence of the text and specifically of identities in texts on the reader. The text, imbued with societal and cultural structures of race, class and gender, marks the site of the struggle for power, knowledge and representation and that a theoretical focus on identity is crucial not to control the identities that students produce, construct, form or enact but to avoid controlling identities.

Macrine, MacLaren and Hill (2010:2) described this as:

> a practical approach to teaching, learning and research that emphasises teaching through critical dialogue and a dialectical analysis of everyday experience.

Sibbett and Au (2018) referred to critical literacy as placing increased demands on teachers to engage with learners on this level by:

> developing an understanding of unjust and unequal social relations, a commitment to disrupting them and a commitment to courageous and pragmatic activism for social justice.

Indeed, Freire, in a dialogue with Shor (Shor and Freire: 1987:33) wrote about the teacher student and student teacher, a situation in which 'both have to be learners, both have to be cognitive subjects in spite of their being different' and in which 'both are with a role as critical agents in the act of knowing.' Freire (1981: 62) was interested in the development of a pedagogy based on a shared approach by students and teachers 'to develop critically conscious understanding of their relationship with the world.'

Freire (1970: 486) described this model of education as the antithesis of the 'banking' concept of education: 'which 'turns students into containers' to be filled

by the teacher who is bestowing a gift. Conscienization (1970: 486) creates a process in which the people assume the role of subject in the precarious adventure of transforming the creating the world and 'Dialogue becomes the means by which Objects are transformed into Subjects, the Oppressed into the Liberated.' Freire wrote (1982: 64) that Dialogue involves critical thinking, which he defined as:

> Thinking, which perceives reality as a process and transformation rather than as a static entity – thinking which does not separate itself from action but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of risks involved.

Pahl and Roswell (2006: 129) observed that critical literacy pays attention to the voices of those who are less frequently heard. It drives and pervades this thesis, including my choice of methodology, approach to data analysis and the conclusions I draw from participant voices.

(b) Critical Literacy in Practice

I now describe my commitment to the practices of critical pedagogy as a literacy tutor in adult community learning involved engaging with adult learners on issues of social justice based on their reading (Coffey1999: 1) 'in a reflective manner' and on issues affecting their own dealings with officials.

Duckworth and Smith (2018: 531) speak of such work being 'driven by dialogue with and between learners and their teachers about their world, barriers and interests.' This approach to learning has involved group discussions, the separating of fact from opinion, examining use of words and style of writing and how visual material is used to influence the reader. Analysis of texts, including poetry, on subjects such as war, enables the learners (Coffey, 1999: 3) to look at them from other points of view and to recreate texts from the standpoint of a marginalised group in order to analyse the power relations and social inequities promoted by the texts.

Echeverria and Hannam (2017: 3) referred to the teaching environment thus created as 'a community of philosophical enquiry' and described that, in such communities, the teacher is a facilitator or mediator of the activity and it is the students themselves ... that construct knowledge socially.' In such a learning environment, 'the teacher needs to be pedagogically strong and philosophically

self effacing, recognising that there is no place for indoctrination.' This had the potential to open up discussions on the themes of power and influence in the media, linking these with the purposes of using forms of expression.

Worthman (2008: 443) described this as a process which 'reversed the panoptic ... and which turned the gaze back on existing power structures, valuing the learner experience for the experiential positioning it offered to learners'. Recognising (Luke 2014: 29) that:

> how educators shape and deploy the atitudes and philosophies of critical literacy is utterly contingent upon students' and teachers' everyday relations of power, their lives problems and struggles',

I outline examples of my critical literacy practice with adult community education learners.

One demonstration of the power of a critical literacy approach to literacy learning arose from the regular examination of fact and opinion in news texts in my community adult literacy class. Following a number of these sessions, a learner, who had attended a neighbourhood meeting on issues of local crime, had prepared for it by looking up the rules and conventions for running such meetings. During the public meeting, she had publicly challenged the way in which it was being chaired by a local official, who, in her opinion, was not giving full opportunity for local people to express their views. She fed back to the class that reading news articles and discussing them had spurred her interest in doing some background preparation for the meeting and had galvanised her to have the courage to speak out publicly.

A second example concerned an individual experience of oppressive bureaucracy by a learner in an adult literacy group set up for people with mental ill health. The learner showed me a letter from an official in the Department for Work and Pensions, stating that, if he did not attend these sessions, his Benefit payments would be at risk. This had greatly upset the learner and helped to explain his ambivalence towards his learning. I referred this matter to the course organisers and the learner received an apology from the Government department. This challenge to bureaucratic power on his behalf greatly enhanced his commitment to learning and assisted with his understanding of wider issues of social justice affecting others in subsequent sessions.

The third instance involved a discussion with a group of adult learners on whether have prisoners should have the vote, focussing on a press report of a Parliamentary Question to David Cameron, the then Prime Minister, in the light of a European Court ruling on this matter. As cited in the literature review. David Cameron had said that the idea 'turned his stomach.' Following group discussion, at the commencement of which the majority of learners agreed with the Prime Minister's point of view, each learner drew up a short presentation, based on an account of the opposing views on this subject and then presented their own conclusions. It was striking that, having been exposed to argument and counter argument more than half of the group then advocated that prisoners should be able to vote as a means of maintaining their membership of society and assisting in their social reintegration following their eventual release.

Other examples arise from the study of poetry. Drawing on First World War poetry enabled learners to understand the depth of experience of those involved in the conflict and the ambiguities around the subject of fighting honourably for one's country, combined with the notion of the balance of the country's debt to them. This led into a discussion of the treatment of those injured in war and of war widows following the conflict, involving learners in identification with their struggles and a clear understanding of the injustices involved. They were then able to enter into a discussion on the treatment of veterans after more recent conflicts.

These opportunities to compare and evaluate their own and others' interpretation of text were key means of what Freebody and Freiberg (2011: 448) described as helping learners:

> to see societies as products of interpretive traditions so that they can build up the means to exert their individual and collective agency.

I address this process, also described as emancipation and empowerment, in the next section of this chapter.

(c) Empowerment, Emancipation and the role of Critical Literacy in Revaluing Identity

Empowerment achieves a particular meaning in the context of emancipation focus on literacy based on an understanding that learning is a means to challenge existing power structures. Worthman (2008: 443) referred to a continuum from empowerment to emancipation and observed that that the predominant discourse in adult education is empowerment. In this context, he referred to the linking by Edwards and Usher of the discourses of competence and liberal humanism to evoke 'the means of economic survival and the individual's ability to take control of the means of that survival' (Edwards and Usher, 1994, cited in Worthman, 2008:444). Thompson (2000) contrasted this with emancipatory learning, the purpose of which is 'to develop understanding and knowledge of the nature and root of causes of unsatisfactory circumstances in order to develop real strategies to change them.'

In a study of adult education and ESOL in North Eastern and Western USA classrooms, Worthman (2008: 443) compared the empowerment and emancipatory approaches to literacy learning by focussing on 'liberation literacy' which positions learners 'to adopt a critical stance and to critique the discourses they encountered.' This resonates with the view of critical literacy expressed by Janks (2010: 12) which involves:

> analysis that seeks to uncover the social interests at work, to ascertain what is at stake in textual and social practices. Who benefits? Who is disadvantaged?

Inglis (1997: 3) referred to 'the difference between being empowered within an authoritative existing social system and struggling for freedom by changing the system.' Wildemeersh and Olesen (2012: 97) called this an 'awakening' and 'a means of connecting with the notion of responsibility for self-development.' In the context of adult education, they referred (2012: 101) to the need to:

> create spaces where education and learning are again connected to societal issues under the inspiration of old and new values such as democracy, social justice, sustainability, freedom, responsibility, equality and solidarity.

However, Freire (1998) warned against a simplistic view of education as a means either of reproducing the dominant ideology of power or merely an

32

instrument for unmasking the ideology. He underlined the necessity for those who are oppressed to break free from a state in which they are the 'hosts' of the oppressor and to contribute to the pedagogy of their liberation. This required 'a transformation of the reality in which we see ourselves.' Freire (1981: 62) was interested in the development of a pedagogy based on a shared approach by students and teachers 'to develop critically conscious understanding of their relationship with the world.' Schugurensky (1998: 9) recognised that Freire exemplified this vision of empowerment in his work by 'talking about reason and knowledge, and about love and hope, bringing together understanding and sensitivity'; and that, by crossing disciplinary boundaries between adult education and community organisation for social change, he encouraged 'a much needed dialogue among fields of enquiry.'

In a statement which resonates with his rejection of a binary view of dominators and the dominated, Foucault (1986) referred to the 'Enlightenment' as raising the need for self analysis, which is key to how we are constituted as subjects of our own knowledge and as moral subjects of our own actions. Mayo (1999: 5) also cited Thompson, for whom education 'either functions as an instrument to facilitate integration of the generations into the logic of the present system or it becomes the practice of freedom by which men and women deal creatively and critically with reality' in which education is either 'domesticating or liberating.' Giddens (1981) referred to the potential of institutions both to dominate and emancipate.

Pansardi (2012:1) spoke of a false distinction between 'power over' and 'power to' and stated her view that these 'describe the same category of social facts,' representing two analytically distinguishable aspects of a single and unified concept of social power. This should point to the possibilities, ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the concepts of identity, individual agency and empowerment. In the literature review, I have demonstrated that language and literacy are areas in which active and subtle forms of oppression have long operated to reinforce social exclusion.

Paradoxically, they also provide a context for the achievement of individual and collective empowerment and restoration of sense of personal identity, which supports individual agency and reflexivity. Rustin (2000: 33) defined agency as

'the process of self-construction and self-recognition', linked with reflexivity, which he defines as 'the possibility to understand and choose the circumstances of one's life.' Foucault (1983) saw this in terms of a personal act of courage as a free being, leading to a release from the an immature status. Thus possibilities of reclamation exist within the concept of power.

This applies in the educational context, in which institutions can be a context for limited literacy and learning curriculums and funding, but also for transformative action and hence empowerment, individual agency and restoration of sense of identity.

The possibilities offered by literacy learning are set out by a number of theorists in individual and nuanced approaches to literacy earning. Each of these has expressed the value of literacy in support of individual agency and the reclaiming of identity. Bauman (2003: 25) referred to the need for a new understanding 'of how culture works as a form of public pedagogy, how pedagogy works as a moral and political practice, how agency is organized through pedagogical relations' and 'how hope can be reclaimed in dark times.' Janks (1980: 136) cited the linking of critical literacy: 'reading and rewriting the word and the world' - to human agency and the power to effect social transformation'; and Ward (2009: 238) reinforced the view that literacy learning provides scope for 'revaluing of identity based on social recognition and new or renewed confidence.'

Holland and Skinner (2008: 849) argued that 'literacy events and practices should be analysed for their centrality to the formation of new identities, for their inclusionary/exclusionary effects and for their power to evoke liberatory worlds.' Morrell (2003: 313) recognised the role of literacy educators as 'political agents, capable of developing skills, which enable academic transformation and social change.' Pahl and Roswell (2006: 12) referred to those who advocate 'educational interactions that they hope will contribute to a 'transformative literary pedagogy.' These approaches find their full and empowering expression through critical pedagogy, as advocated by Freire, providing a practical response to contemporary educational challenges by offering a 'pedagogy of hope or possibility' and taking forward the 'mission to institute educational and social change.' Freire (1985: 193) referred to this as a 'new

mode of discourse for liberation.' In his view, there is a specific moment in time when 'in the relationship of the dominator and the dominated, something snaps.' He described these moments as 'breaking points' which are also 'moments of culture' (1985: 192). According to Freire (1985: 192) in the context of 'the contradiction of the dominant and the dominated there is a cultural and class conflict. He stated (1998: 46) that:

> respect for cultural identity is absolutely fundamental and connected directly to the challenge of assuming who we are, which is what a purely technical, objective and grammatical vision of education cannot do or be.

Freire (1972: 6) viewed education as an intervention based on respect for learners' own resourcefulness and 'a means of enabling people to reflect on themselves, their responsibilities and their role leading to increased capacity for choice.' Freire (2005: xix) described the process of liberation when people 'reclaim their language and the power of envisagement' and 'the imagination of a different world brought into being.' In a challenge to discourses of power 'naming the world becomes the model for changing the world.' He spoke (1985: 192) of:

> sparking a different and forbidden speech of discovering that this speech is valid and (though forbidden) beautiful (even though some say that it is ugly)

and he described the process (1985: 193) by which the dominated culture discovers the strategies employed by the dominant culture and is able to develop their own strategies for fighting oppression. Thus a culture is created by 'ex-dominated people for the benefit of a permanent liberation.'

Giroux (2001) linked the mission to combat neoliberal hegemony with the contesting of a hegemonic discourse of discrimination, which propagates the creation of programmes aimed at providing a flexible and adaptable workforce. He referred to the need for action and resistance to defining civic education in order to move towards agency, self representation and an effective democracy. However, he warned that, in the context of social and economic policies of neoliberalism and shifting power structures, there was the need for vigilance in rethinking democracy, ethics, and political agency in an increasingly globalized world

Zapotocna (2012: 92) referred to critical literacy as a tool of critical thinking and a means to active, independent citizenship. Janks (2010: 138) also defined power in the context of critical literacy, a form of critical pedagogy, as an attempt to understand how discourse works to underpin or perpetuate or contest the structure of power relations in society. In this context, she referred to the contribution which critical writing and rewriting can contribute to identity and social transformation, identifying the crucial interdependence of the theoretical concepts which underpin this critical literacy: domination or power, access, diversity and design/redesign. Janks (2010: 138) invoked Foucault's statement (1981: 53) that 'discourse is the power which is to be seized' in the context of producing us 'as particular kinds of human subjects and to speak through us.' In the view of Knutson (2009: iv), this involves challenging dominant discourses and 'interrogating the inequitable, cultural positioning of speakers and readers within discourses.' In the data analysis, discussion and conclusion chapters of this thesis, I have explored these themes, identifying ways in which issues of power impact on the participants in this research.

 The effectiveness of Freire's philosophy in ameliorating the impact of these issues on individuals was demonstrated by O'Looney (2010), who noted the importance of literacy competency and reflectiveness in promoting educational resilience, furnishing those included in his study with 'the reflectiveness, resolve, and confidence they needed to mitigate risk and achieve academic success.' There was an additional dimension in Freire's (1970) call for political clarity, which, in his view includes refusal to take part in the intentional dissembling of reality and, by implication, the will to create their own reality.

Echoing Bourdieu (1990), Gee (2004: 116) expressed it thus:

> Reading and writing cannot be separated from speaking listening and interacting on the one hand or using language to think about the world on the other

Ward (2009: 238) argued that what characterises transformative remedies such as critical literacy programmes is that they 'address the underlying causes of the exclusionary processes rather than simply seeking to ameliorate their impact.' I would also argue that literacy programmes should offer participants in this study the opportunity to play a central role in their own transformation,

especially if they have the scope for revaluing of identity, based on appreciation of individual agency, social recognition and new or renewed confidence.

(d) Individual Agency, Capability and the Transformational Power of Critical Literacy Learning

In this section, I review available research on how critical literacy learning can support individual agency and combat coercive and negative factors.

In Foucault's concept of individualisation (1982: 781):

> everyday life categorises the individual's identity, marks him out by his own individuality imposes a law of truth upon him which he must recognise and which others must recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects.

For those who have been included in my study, these coercive social procedures can also involve lack of access to education including exclusion from school, rigorous military discipline and structures, imprisonment and the oppressive experiences of homelessness and other forms of social deprivation covered in this literature review.

The literature on the forms of social exclusion experienced by ex-offenders and the other groups included in this study might lead to the conclusion that they are victims of their circumstances. However, this would be to deny the power of individual agency defined by Rustin (2000: 33) as 'the process of self-construction and self-recognition', linked with reflexivity, which he defines as 'the possibility to understand and choose the circumstances of one's life.'

Paulo Freire (1970) described an adult educator's role as that of facilitating critical reflection and focus on traditional and oppressive social norms through education. For Freire, it followed that those excluded from educational opportunity, including individual ex-offenders and other participants in my study, may play a forceful and central role in their own transformation.

Gramsci (1971) viewed democracy as the dialectical movement between individual agency and structural location. It may be argued that those whom I have interviewed might have experienced and, in some cases, overcome this constant tension at individual level through praxis, which has involved reflection on their world through transformational learning. Hubbard (2000: 1) noted that

agency is sometimes mischaracterised as action in spite of social structures.' For example, Berger (2008: 328), in his case study of 'Melvin's' adjustment to disability, noted that 'by prior experiences he was able to transpose to his new circumstances.' Berger concluded that such agency is intertwined and enabled by social structures, including the support Melvin received from family and friends, his previous exposure to youths with disabilities, and his religious upbringing as well as quality rehabilitative treatment. I address the challenge this poses to me as a researcher in the discussion and conclusion chapters of this thesis.

Foucault (1971: 46) alerted us to the subtle workings of power in the educational context:

> Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them

The educational hegemony 'emphasises getting people to learn and love their place.' Gramsci's (1971) chilling view of hegemony was as an educational phenomenon, which conceded just enough to keep opponents quiescent, while remaining more or less intact.

Also, as a potential corrective to these forms of oppression, Brookfield (2005: 10) referred to the activist desire of critical pedagogy ('the contemporary educational application of critical theory') to 'fight repression, injustice, and bigotry and create more compassionate world' and to contest hegemony individually and collectively. This provides a particular link between the concept and experience of agency and my research. Ward (2009: 238), as previously quoted, recognised that literacy learning provides scope for 'revaluing of identity based on social recognition and new or renewed confidence.' In the case of ex-offenders, this has a special relevance and poignancy. My earlier research (Peat, 2009) into the impact of literacy learning on ex-offenders' self-esteem, revealed the high incidence of exclusion from school and fractured attendance due to family strain and breakdown.

However, through the lens of critical literacy, I recognise that the concept of agency, which is a key focus in my research, is complex and varied and that it has inherent limitations. Bourdieu (1988: 783) observed that 'the habitus

generates but does not determine social action and that, in crisis, the habitus can cease to serve. Bourdieu refers to these as the situations in which 'we can negotiate social change by strategising change in our nexus of practice.' Scollon (1997) drew attention to the limitations of agency and that it is potentially a problematic concept when seeking to address the efficacy of individual action in relation to the future. Thus the concept of agency can be inadequate in, for example, explaining individual differences in aspiration, including why, in educational transitions, some may aspire to post secondary education and some do not. In this context, Keung and Ho (2019) invoked Sen's 'capability approach', which built on the concept of agency, to address individual differences in aspiration.

Sen defined capability (1993: 30) as 'a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being; (it) represents the active combinations of things a person is able to do or be.' Linked with this is a state of reasonable reflection on what they value for themselves and others. This, in Sen's view, is critical for positive social change and is 'instrumental for collective action and democratic participation' and thus the capability perspective 'emphasises the need for transparent valuation and scrutiny of individual advantages and adversities.'

Walker and Unterhalter (2007: 4) referred to the link established by the capability approach to agency and critical literacy, through the method it provides to develop a sense of responsibility towards people, to evaluate real educational advantage and attainment and to define disadvantage, marginalisation and exclusion. Thus people are understood to be active participants in development rather than passive spectators. Walker and Unterhalter (2007: 5) drew attention to the affinity between Sen and Freire and other critical theorists, who promoted praxis in support of the potential of critical theory and critical literacy.

The links between critical literacy, agency and capability resonate with my experience of critical literacy in practice, described in Section 2(b) of this thesis; and with observations in the literature review, data analysis, discussion and conclusion chapters of this thesis, where I develop the themes of habitus, agency, capability and identity in the light of participants' narratives.

(e) Chapter Conclusions

Freire (1972: 7), warned educators, including literacy teachers, against becoming (1994: 265): 'benevolent counsellors driven to restore happiness through "the word". This has created a moral issue for my research because it has alerted me to the need to question whether literacy programmes, especially in their emphasis on developing skills, qualifications and employment, are forms of prescribed inclusivity or whether they exclude individuals from the wider social context in which the sources of social exclusion, individual agency and transformative solutions may be identified. It has also provided an imperative for this research to identify the means of reconnecting them in the fullest sense. Ward (2009: 238) argued that what characterises transformative remedies such as critical literacy programmes is that they 'address the underlying causes of the exclusionary processes rather than simply seeking to ameliorate their impact.' I would also argue, as revealed through this research, that critical literacy programmes are potentially transformative, especially if they have the scope for revaluing of identity, based on appreciation of individual agency and capability, social recognition and new or renewed confidence to support social justice for others.

Chapter 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this literature review, I present the theoretical and policy knowledge base, which has informed this research. I also relate the social and educational context of the participants in this study to the existing evidence based body of qualitative and quantitative research. I critically examine the robustness and coherence of such research, the opportunity it affords for the self expression of those who have been included in my research and I draw on this to determine whether it reflects participants' experiences, shared vulnerabilities and forms of expression. The theoretical context developed for my research in relation to these issues also helps to identify the gaps in the knowledge of these matters with a view to addressing them in my research questions, design and methodology.

This literature review has revealed some of the contradictory and inconsistent interpretations, which the concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion evoke. Its primary focus is on particular forms of dislocation determined by lack of access to employment and literacy learning and how access to such learning can represent a means of reintegrating these groups into membership of society. This has included reference to some of the existing studies of the groups of participants involved in this research. The process of reviewing the literature has involved locating relevant U.K. and international research, texts and journal articles, Government reports; and policy documents on matters relating to the educational and vocational provision for those included in my study. Some of this research was conducted in the United States, Australia, Canada and Europe, where welfare and social policy structures differ from those in the United Kingdom. I have drawn on these studies because they embody similar values and contradictions, including the attitudes to social exclusion and inclusion, offending behaviour, rehabilitation and risk to the wider society. This literature review has also underpinned the choice of the research paradigm, the ontology, epistemology and methodology which I have used, as detailed in the methodology chapter and it has helped to identify what this research could realistically achieve in relation to those studied: ex-offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces.

First of all, I have described the unifying concepts, which contribute to the conceptual framework for my research. These include power, education and language, identity and individual agency - concepts, which have helped to explain the contradiction and ambivalence which attach to the theory and practice of social exclusion and social inclusion. The participants' linked vulnerabilities and crises including unemployment, homelessness and suicide have also been explored through a review of available studies with a primary focus on how power structures, especially those linked with social and educational capital, impose particular forms of dislocation through lack of access to employment and literacy learning. Having reviewed the literature on the ways in which social exclusion impacts on the participants in my research and policy responses to social exclusion, I have then identified the discourses surrounding the history of literacy. This involved exploring how access to literacy learning can represent a means of empowerment, emancipation and reintegration of participants into membership of society, drawing on individual agency; and the ways in which this research will contribute to these discourses and policies. The literature review culminates in research questions and an introduction to the rationale for the choice of methodology.

3.2 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

(a) Discourses of Power

An understanding of power and how it is secured, maintained, withheld and imposed is key to my research: in particular, the ways in which the discourses of power, language, social capital and literacy intersect and impact on the individuals, who have participated in this study, and on their sense of identity.

The literature review has included the power discourses of Marx and Weber. Marx (1844/2009) defined power in terms of economics and the consequent class structure in the relationship between the owners of the means of production (the bourgeoisie) and those who work for them (the proletariat). In his view, this is characterised by 'the potentiality of mutual swindling and mutual plundering' - a situation in which (Marx, 1844/2009): 'each tries to establish over the other an alien power, so as thereby to find satisfaction of his own selfish need.'

Weber defined power in society more widely by reference to the social classes, status groups and parties, which are manifestations of the distribution of power in society (Weber,1921: 53, cited in Gerth and Mills, 1946:180):

> the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.

and he broadened this:

> In general, we understand by 'power' the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the same action.

However, Weber distinguished between power as authority and power as coercion. For Weber, authority is the legitimate use of power by which individuals accept and act upon orders that are given to them because they believe that to do so is right. Coercion, which forces people into action, often by the threat of violence, is always regarded as illegitimate.

Further, within his definition of power as authority, Weber distinguished between traditional authority, which rests 'on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under rule' and charismatic authority, which rests 'on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and of the normative pattern' (Weber, 1922, cited in Roth and Willig,1978: 215). Weber linked this legal rational authority, which rests on lawful appointment of those in authority, with his concept of domination, which he defined as obedience willingly given and command accepted 'as a 'valid' norm.' His versions of power appear to rest on the assumption that power operates with the context of social relationships. I have recognised the possibility that social relationships might be inimical to those participants in my study, who are likely to be socially excluded and, in some instances, personally isolated but that this does not preclude the use of their individual agency in overcoming power structures. I have explored these concepts in the course of my thesis and refer to them again in the discussion chapter.

Lukes (1974: 1) was also concerned with 'power as domination' which, in his view, can occur through coercive means 'but also through unconscious mechanisms.' This links with Foucault (1980: 39) for whom power relations

were all-pervasive in society. In his view, we have we have no choice but to internalise them. He stated (1980: 142) that power:

> reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes, and everyday lives. Furthermore, it is co-extensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network.

Foucault (1982: 208) identified three types of objectification: the dividing practices of 'techniques of domination' which are applied to those who are 'marginal' in society; subjectification by which a human being turns themselves into a subject; and scientific classification by which the disciplines of life, labour and language are structured into disciplines. He juxtaposed these techniques of domination with the different types of struggle: against forms of domination, forms of exploitation or against 'that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission).' In the context of criminal behaviour, Giroux (2001: 78) referred to the culture of punishment and its policies of containment and brutalization as becoming:

> more valued to the dominant social order than any consideration of what it means for a society to expand and strengthen the mechanisms and freedoms central to sustaining a substantive democracy.

For Giroux (2001: 78), literacy education serves as yet another means by which the knowledge, values, taste, and language of the dominant class or group are confirmed or privileged, while the cultural identities of subordinate groups are devalued and invalidated, helping to 'reproduce' the inequalities of society at large.

Foucault's theory of power (1977) described how it elucidated modern institutions from prisons to armies and schools that had a 'carceral' structure' i.e. it involved characteristics typical of forms of imprisonment both within society and in the 'otherness' of imprisonment. This resonates with Goffman (1961: 2), who observed that, although prisons share an outward appearance with hospitals, colleges and leisure centres, they are based on a cultural expectation that behind 'benign facades, prisoners will nonetheless feel sequestered from society and removed from stable social arrangements.' Thus prisons embody a total institution involving assaults to sense of self (Jewkes

and Reisdorf, 2016). Such assaults include confinement and restricted access to communication, personal interaction and social networking and the procedures of bureaucratisation, which strip individuals of their previous roles. Goffman (1961:2) described how the individual comes into a total institution with a conception of himself and is then stripped of the support provided by the home world, followed by a 'series of abasements, degradations, profanations of self.' A further insight was provided by Collins, who drew attention to aspects of prison life, described as 'shades of the prison house' being manifest in everyday life in the outside world, albeit without the 'instances of repression, hostility and anomie on a more regular basis and with greater immediacy', which characterise life in prison (Collins, 1995, cited in Erikson, 2001: 352).

Gramsci (1971) juxtaposed school as a positive educative function and the courts as a repressive educative function as the two most important State activities. This has a particular resonance for ex-offenders, for whom the second State function might have dominated and obscured the first, if indeed it ever featured positively in their earlier experience. For ex-offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces, the impact of these coercive social procedures and total institutions can involve lack of access to education including exclusion from school, rigorous military discipline and structures and imprisonment, It can also include the oppressive experiences of homelessness, employment, and its lack, and domestic abuse as well as other forms of social deprivation, which can lead to crime and consequent further exclusion. An imbalance of power can operate in a domestic context, in extreme cases turning the home into a place of restriction and imprisonment. Studies by Weitzman (2018) and the World Health Organisation (Abramsky *et al.* 2011) explored Intimate Personal Violence (IPV) and the association with lack of educational opportunity. They drew on data from ten countries. This literature on the use of intimate personal violence (IPV) to enable one partner to maintain power over the other makes a clear link with the protective role of access to women's education, particularly secondary education for those who experience intimate personal violence. It also referred to the important role of education of both boys and girls in violence prevention

Relevant to this and other forms of disempowerment experienced by participants in my study is Cicourel's recognition of literacy as a locus of

'regulation and control' and documents as a means of processing and labelling individuals prior to confirming them 'merely' as delinquents (Cicourel,1976, cited in Jupp and Norris, 1993). This reductive view of individuals may be said to apply to a range of bureaucratic requirements in all the processes of the Criminal Justice and Benefits' systems, in the barriers to employment experienced by people with disabilities and in the Armed Forces. I have explored this in the course of my research in relation to ex-offenders and others who experience (Foucault, 1977: 189) the 'ceremony of objectification' in which 'individuals are situated in a 'network of writing' and administrative documentation which 'engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them.'

These observations have particular poignancy and relevance in the context of literacy learning by the participants in my study, for whom the very power relationship represented in Foucault's 'mass of documents' can be challenged and the previous denial of access to literacy learning can be turned around through individual agency, and the practices of critical pedagogy. This provides the potential for negotiations even within the same context of power relationships represented by documents and oppressive administrative processes and I explore these ambiguities further in the remainder of this literature review, especially in the context of agency and empowerment.

Talmy referred to a conception of a society 'stratified and marked by inequality, with differential structural access to material and symbolic resources, opportunity, mobility and education' (Talmy, 2010, cited in Troudl,, 2015: 5). Critical theorists including Foucault, Freire, Bourdieu and Giroux provided insights into how power and domination operate especially in the transmission of language and literacy and the impact this has on the participants in my research. These writings addressed how such concepts impact on empowerment and identity, also identifying the challenge and resistance to domination and the potential for empowerment represented by critical pedagogy and critical literacy. Such insights, which offer a means of developing individual agency and identity, have been a key foundation in the development of a conceptual framework in support of my research.

Pansardi (2012: 1) identified a common feature of the most influential analyses of the concept of domination: their reliance on a normative criterion which is the detrimental effect of domination on those subject to it. However, in the development of this conceptual framework, I have explored the limitations of this view of power and emphasise its inherent 'transformative capacity', which Giddens (1991) set out as the ability of individuals to make a difference through 'social actions' which might run counter to the vested interests of others. Foucault (1980: 102) stated the view that 'power is a form of action/interaction which is negotiated in an interaction and is therefore never fixed or stable' and 'can be contested in every moment and in every interaction.'

Thus the concept of power is riven by contradiction and paradox, as revealed in my outline of the discourses on power, principally those of Marx, Weber and Foucault. As described by Lachmann (1971:141), these revolve around the concepts of authority and domination, adopting varied perspectives on institutions, which can at the same time be instruments of human action and constraints upon that action. These institutions can mediate the relationship between those who are perceived as having power and those who are 'subject' to it. There is: 'a thread which ties the complex edifice of institutional order in its political form to the simple unit act of the individual actor.' The participants in my research have embodied these contradictions and paradoxes, which are inherent in the concept of power and my research has focussed on whether they have demonstrated their choices to act as free agents and to challenge the imposition of power structures, including those operating within school, prison and the Army.

(b) Power, Language and Education

Collins drew attention to a key issue in relation to power and domination as they concern the participants in my study: 'why the contradictions of late capitalism including the everyday oppressions and accompanying widespread sense of alienation, are still sustainable' (Collins, 2007, cited in Troudl, 2015: 89). Foucault (1980: 42) rejected a binary view of the dominators and the dominated and thus alerted us to the need to understand the subtle and insidious workings of domination, which have a particular bearing in the context of education and language. This has focussed my attention on the extent to which 'the

47

dominated' adapt to and collude in patterns of domination. Wollstonecraft (1992: 97) expressed the view that prejudice 'clouds' people's ability to reason and skews debate in favour of the dominant powers, thereby becoming 'dead-weights on the community', entrenching patterns of subjection' Such an approach raises the possibility of various forms of adaptation to domination, ranging from passive compliance to resigned acceptance of blame. It resonates with the reference by Freire (1998: 78) to the 'connivance' of the oppressed in a dehumanising social and political order, which inculcates in the oppressed 'a sense of blame and culpability about their situation of oppression.' This has highlighted an area for investigation in my study in terms of participants' identification with and internalisation of the rhetoric, which surrounds them, balanced by their challenge and resistance to the binary concepts of social exclusion and inclusion.

Following his 1991 Inquiry into adult literacy and numeracy in England, Moser referred to a prevalent view that 'these people have very limited lives…they can't lead a normal life like you and me' (Moser, 1991, cited in Tett and MacLachlan, 2008: 659). Tett and MacLachlan added that they are also viewed as people whose deficiencies have a direct and adverse impact on the national good and who therefore pose a problem for the literate 'others.' They cited as an example a front page article in an American banking journal, which proclaimed that the high level of illiteracy was 'the Achilles heel of our continued prosperity.'

In my research, I have explored this tendency to vilify, exclude and marginalise the participants in my study both from the perspective of their views on literacy and in terms of their use of language in their narratives on their experiences.

(c) Habitus, Social, Educational and Cultural Capital

Having explored the concept of habitus in the earlier chapter on critical literacy, empowerment and emancipation in order to set out the context for my research, which is driven by the concept and practices of critical literacy, I now return to the theory of habitus as expounded by Bourdieu and others. I place it in the context of discourses of power and social, cultural, educational capital and agency.

Bourdieu (1990: 108) described the concept of habitus thus:

> when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself as a fish in water, it does not feel the weight of water and takes the world about itself for granted.

Bourdieu (1990: 91) observed that one's habitus is the product of one's individual history but also of the whole collective history of family and class. He also stated (1998: 25) that:

> the habitus is this kind of practical sense of what is to be done in a given situation - what is called in sport a 'feel' for the game, that is, the art of anticipating the future of the game, which is inscribed in the present state of play.

For Burke (2015: 8), habitus was a set of durable dispositions, built upon limitations. It was formed through experiences related to our material conditions from sources like the family peer group and educational system influencing levels of strategic action or practical mastery. Bourdieu and Thompson (1992) stated that it operates mostly at sub or beyond conscious-levels and transformation of habitus largely occurs via beyond-conscious responses to new 'fields' rather than deliberate attempts at change. Holt, Bowlby and Lea (2013: 7) described how the values and mores of young people's social networks reproduce particular forms of habitus which can become embodied into their individual identities and senses of themselves. Tomanovic (2004: 356) referred to the orientation of habitus as the only possible one, at least in childhood, to family to home and family and the internalisation of family habitus. When the family is oriented to public and institutional spaces, time is more organised and social networks are more diversified.

In this context and invoking Bourdieu, Apple referred to the relevance of the match between the historically grounded habitus, which he described as: (Bourdieu 1990: 108 cited in Apple, 2001: 415):

> an instrument of mediation by means of which individuals perceive and construct their own social world and 'internalise objective possibility as subjective expectation.

and the habitus expected in schools. Apple linked this with the material resources possessed by more affluent parents, enabling those who have converted their economic and social capital into cultural capital to navigate and 'work the system' through sets of informal cultural rules in the interests of their

children. This includes 'unseen capital' such as 'comfort in social encounters with educational officials.' Although this approach to habitus was applied in the context of negotiating marketised forms of education, my research focusses on those who have experienced traditional educational models, which are nonetheless characterised by what Apple (2001: 413) described as 'relations of inequality.'

Fairclough (1989: 3) stated:

> Nobody who has an interest in modern society, and certainly nobody who has an interest in relationships of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language. That, to some degree or other, means everyone and raises the issue whether literacy is the preserve of those who have assured social capital?

This resonates with Marx, who stated that class ownership and control of both the material and mental means of production, led 'generally speaking' to the subjection of those who lack the means of mental production (Marx, 1845, cited in Collins, 2004: 67).

Also for Bourdieu, 'the concept of cultural capital is analogous to capital in the economic sense' (Bourdieu, 1985, cited in Fairclough 1989: 57) and 'is as essential as real property resources were once considered to be' (Bourdieu, 1973, cited in Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 1982: 4). This concept was developed by Bourdieu to describe 'linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture.' Bourdieu (1977: 494) defined social capital as:

> the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Key to this is rationality, 'which exists only in papers, masking reality rooted in personal relationships and informal practices.' It is this 'pretence reality' which Bourdieu advised 'one can never doubt too much' (Bourdieu, 1973, cited in Gumperz, 1990: 7). This links with Weber's observation of a form of 'stylization of life, which 'either originates in status groups or is at least conserved by them' (2009: 191). Linked with the monopolising of educational institutions by the dominant social classes, this further confirmed their monopoly of the dominant

culture. Orwell (1957: 85) parodied this by contrasting a powerful but intellectually impoverished elite with the 'powerless', who nevertheless possess cultural understanding and insight:

> In an England ruled by people whose chief asset was their stupidity, to be 'clever' was to be suspect. If you had the kind of brain that could understand the poems of T.S. Eliot or the theories of Karl Marx, the higher-ups would see to it that you were kept out of any important job.

Apple (2012: viii) referred to the re-framing of the question '**what** knowledge is of most worth?' as '**whose** knowledge is of most worth?' in order to reflect dominant groups' understanding of the world.

Lodge's 'access paradox' (Lodge, 1997, cited in Janks, 2004: 33) identified that domination without access excludes students from the language or the language variety that would afford them the most linguistic capital, thereby limiting their life chances. Bourdieu referred to a process of inculcation (Bourdieu,1977, cited in Thompson, 1984: 42):

> a gradual, implicit imperceptible process of inculcation, which condemns those dispossessed of official language on formal occasions on which they do not speak but are spoken to.

These forms of dispossession apply to ex-offenders, who can be marginalised in the bureaucratic and language processes of the criminal justice system and in the demands of oppressive bureaucratic systems, which bear down on them following from release from prison. They also apply to disabled people whose voice can be denied in for example, the processes of assessment for entitlement to Benefit payments or in the withdrawal of Benefits; and to veterans who can experience 'unique challenges including involvement with the criminal justice system, mental health problems and substance misuse' in the course of transition to civilian life (Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015: 384). As cited above in the context of habitus, other forms of dispossession can also apply to disadvantaged groups in mainstream education (Apple, 2001) including, in its most egregious form, exclusion from school.

(d) Dominant Discourses

Fairclough (1989: 62) summed up the unequal distribution of cultural capital 'in one word: 'literacy': a prism through which other forms of exclusion and deprivation may be viewed. He cited the unequal distribution of and constraints

on access to literacy including lack of access to 'prestigious discourse such as specialist vocabularies and jargons.' For Fairclough (1989: 22), language use was 'conceived of as socially determined.' In his view, 'the whole social order of discourse is put together and held together as a hidden effect of power' and a 'powerful mechanism for sustaining power' (1989: 74). Costelloe and Warner (2003: 1) defined a discourse in the following terms:

> an historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, beliefs, habits and practices that construct the way people think, talk about and respond to everyday life. It produces positions that people automatically take up because they assume them to be natural or normal.

Foucault (1981: 64) observed that 'any education is a political way of maintaining and modifying the appropriation of discourses and the powers which they carry.' Chiming with Costelloe and Warner's definition, Foucault (1972: 227) spoke of the educational hegemony, which 'emphasises getting people to learn and love their place'. Hoggart drew on Spencer to contrast working class resilience with their experience of an implacable education system (Spencer, 1848, cited in Hoggart, 1959: 247):

> The establishment of systems of education, whatever their matter may be, are fundamentally vicious in their manner. They encourage submissive receptivity instead of independent activity.

Illich (1971:19), using language, which mirrored the contrasts he presented, referred to the divisive potential of schooling: 'neither learning nor justice is promoted by schooling by which 'learning and the assignment of social roles are melted', leading to inevitable 'polarisation of society.' Thus the concept of education and of access to language itself can be tainted by its potentially limiting and oppressive aspect. In societies where 'market pressures work to undermine social structures and public spaces', Giroux (2001) lamented that this discourse allows no room for the knowledge, skills and values needed by young people, substituting a pedagogy, based on a model of control which is in line with the values driving the market economy. He spoke of particular groups such as youth being removed from public language of justice, reciprocity and compassion. This process, in turn, leads to public language being voided of public considerations.

In this context, Fairclough (1989: 51) drew particular attention to the power of media discourse which he defines as 'mediated power between existing power holders and the mass of the population.' He was clear that the media operate 'as a means for the expression ... of power of the dominant class and bloc.' Bourdieu referred to the emergence in the social order of a "new kind of moral Darwinism, which, with the cult of the 'winner', establishes the struggle of all against all and cynicism as the norm of all practices' (Bourdieu, 1999, cited in Giroux, 2001: 72). He focussed on the media for particular criticism in this context in their promotion of:

> a growing political apathy and cynicism by providing a steady stream of daily representations and spectacles in which abuse becomes the primary vehicle for registering human interaction.

In addition to complex issues of identity, the public discourse, in particular in the media, is dominated by stereotypes of each of the groups I have studied. One example of such stereotyping is of those discharged from the Armed Forces, seen as 'heroes', reminiscent of Kipling's 'Tommy', who are nevertheless dispensable in peacetime (Kipling, 1941:172):

> For it's Tommy this and Tommy that an' 'Chuck him out the brute!'
>
> But it's 'saviour of 'is country' when the guns begin to shoot.

(e) Educational Hegemony

The hegemonic theory of education was described by Houghton (2010: 1), who identified four literacy discourses: 'literacy as skills', 'literacy as an experiential process', 'literacy as a social practice', and 'literacy as a critical transformation process.' There is a clear indication through research findings, as described in Chapter 3.7 of this literature review that the literacy as skills discourse, based on a functional understanding of the nature of literacy, now dominates, having been imposed by policy-makers. Such a view is embedded in the power structures of educational institutions and reflected in the terms, objectives and methodology of much of current research into literacy.

Gramsci's (1971: 666) chilling concept of hegemony was that of 'an educational phenomenon': one which is 'powerful, adaptable and gives just enough away to opponents to keep them quiescent while remaining more or less intact'

Gumperz (1990: 4) referred to this bureaucratic control as 'part of the uniform meritocratic criteria of evaluation to control access to scarce resources.'

Street (2009: 138) linked the hegemonic interpretation of literacy with the autonomous model of literacy, based on an 'academic and schooled literacy of dominant Western elites.' In his view, this is characterised by the view of literacy as a neutral technique which can be applied across all social and cultural contexts with the potential to create a 'new world order.' At individual level, similar changes are said to follow: difficulties with reading and writing are pathologised by reference to social and individual 'failing standards.'

Fairclough's theory of the deficit discourse surrounding literacy linked it to 'the neoliberal order of discourse, which 'reconfigures the concept of citizens' rights to education and welfare into a relationship of mutual obligation within the logic of global capitalism', placing the blame for lack of literacy and the responsibility for acquiring literacy on the individual learner (Fairclough, 2003, cited in Hamilton and Pitt, 2011: 362). Postman (1970: 244) was uncompromising in his view of the ways in which power is mediated through literacy and he was strongly of the opinion that there is 'not one thing that is done for, with or against a student in a school that is not rooted in a political bias, ideology or notion.' This has a particular relevance to the teaching of reading in which there is a 'definite political position on how people should behave and what they ought to value.'

In the next section of this literature review, I explore the impact of these exercises of power, mediated through education and literacy, on the sense of identity of the participants in my research study.

3.3 IDENTITY THEORY

The body of literature in the area of identity theory has provided an important context for my research and has contributed to an understanding of the interactions between self and society, influencing and challenging the planning of my research in a variety of ways, including the provision of a context for my choice of methodology. Identity theory influences and expands my understanding of key concepts underlying my own research, the power of individual agency, transitions, and the identities of both participant and

54

researcher. It has also led me to review the interview questions, which I use with participants in my study.

Tajfel first proposed social identity theory, which assumes that we show all kinds of group behaviour such as solidarity within low status or 'out groups' and discrimination against 'out groups' as part of social identity processes with the aim of achieving positive self-esteem and self-enhancement (Tajfel,1978, cited in Trepte, 2006: 256).

Tajfel (1978: 63) defined social identity as:

> that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from the knowledge of membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.

Building on the work of Tajfel, John Turner's core insight, (Turner, 1982, cited in Haslam, Reicher and Reynolds, 2012: 201) was that there is a 'crucial pivot between the individual and the social' and that understanding of the individual in the group requires understanding 'the group in the individual'.' Turner expressed a belief in the permeability of group boundaries, particularly among low status groups, which enable them to try to dissociate themselves from the 'in group' through strategies of individual mobility. Investment in speaking and listening skills and the valuing of different forms of literacy, including those based on the oral tradition, within literacy teaching and qualifications (Janks, 2010: 3) are key to this. However, these strategies cannot be pursued if group boundaries are understood to be impermeable and social relations insecure and 'in such situations, members of low-status groups are more likely to engage in social competition with out-groups with a view to achieving social change' (Haslam, Reicher and Reynolds, 2012: 201). It was also acknowledged that the same processes can enable advantaged groups to maintain the status quo.

Identity theory, grounded in sociology, explores individuals' role related identities. One has an identity, an 'internalized positional designation' (Stryker, 1980: 60) for each of the different positions or role relationships the person holds in society. Stryker acknowledged that this idea is rooted in James' (1890/1950) notion that there are as many different selves as there are different positions that one holds in society and thus different groups, who respond to the self. This is where identity enters into the overall self. The overall self is

55

organized into multiple parts (identities), each of which is tied to aspects of the social structure.

A sociological approach to self and identity begins with the assumption that the 'self reflects society' (Stryker, 1980: 2). The focus is on understanding how the psychological field within the individual is socially structured and that 'the process of reflexivity constitutes the core of selfhood.' The self impacts on society through individual actions, 'creating groups, organizations, networks, and institutions' (Burke and Stets, 2009: 7). Reciprocally, society influences the self through its shared language and meanings that enable a person to take the role of the other, engage in social interaction and reflect upon oneself as an object. I have explored the relevance of this to my participants, in the discussion chapter of this thesis. One of the strong messages emerging from participants is their capacity for developing individual forms of literateness. Speaking and listening skills are key to this, especially in the context of use of the prison setting, where they are essential to the retention of a sense of identity, use of 'voice' and to preparation for employment following release. Social identity theory and identity theory were acknowledged by Stryker and Burke (2000: 284) to be two 'different yet strongly related' strands, each of which:

> provides a context for the other: the relation of social structures to identities influences the process of self-verification, while the process of self-verification creates and sustains social structures.

Turner defined this reciprocity as self-definition leading to social influence and social belief systems, which shape our thoughts, views, the things we care about and our actions (Turner,1982, cited in Haslam, Reicher and Reynolds, 2012).

The two theories were also brought together by Burke and Stets (2009) as a single theory under the original name of social identity theory. Their reasoning was that there is more overlap than difference between the two theories in their understanding of the self, many of which are differences in emphasis and degree. Indeed, they argued that the unification of these two theories is advisable in order to both avoid redundancies in theorizing about the self and to provide a uniform approach to the multifaceted nature of identities in terms of their bases, their processes, and their outcomes.

It is helpful to view identity theory (Burke and Stets, 2009:2) as an 'amalgam', spanning social and behavioural sciences in recent years, 'cutting across disciplines from psychiatry and psychology to political science and sociology'. There is a consistent focus adopted by the range of disciplinary perspectives from psychological and sociological to therapeutic: the importance of individual rationalisation of identity through self-reflexivity; and the power of constructing individual narratives, which support coherence and consistency of identity.

Identity theory provides a helpful context and perspective on the apparently differing and complex interpretations of identity, reflecting the individual tensions and contradictions, which these approaches seek to explain. It also mirrors and serves as a metaphor for the complexities faced and overcome by the participants in my research study, which I explore in the next section.

(a) Identity, Transitions and Personal Narratives

In Foucauldian terms, the power struggle is symbolised and enacted by the bearing down of the state on individuals and ignoring a sense of individual identity (Foucault, 1982: 208):

> Finally, all these present struggles revolve around the question: who are we? They are a refusal of these abstractions, of economic and ideological state violence, which ignore who we are individually, and also a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is.

This fits with Foucault's (1982: 781) concept of social objectification and categorization which:

> categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth upon him, which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him

Foucault (1977: 256) defined prisons, which are within the experience of some of the participants in my research, as 'that darkest region in the apparatus of justice', which he characterised by a number of tactics (2015: 8) including: 'exclusion in the sense of forcing or driving out, organising a redemption, imposing compensation, marking or scarring and confirming.' Also, by reference to penal policy, Garland (2001: 13) stated that:

> Forms of public shaming and humiliation which for decades have been regarded as obsolete and excessively demeaning are valued by their

political proponents today precisely because of their excessively demeaning character.

Giroux (2009: 14) identified that young people:

> increasingly fall prey to the dictates of a youth punishment and control complex that manages every aspect of their lives and increasingly governs their behaviour through the modalities of surveillance and criminalization.

Bauman referred to the insecurities, which bear down on individuals: the insecurity of employment and the insecurity of access to public provision, including education, which are inimical to the making of citizenship (Bauman, 2003, cited in Mullard, 2002). Bauman's identity theory speaks of identity 'becoming ever more problematic' in the context of developments which are contributing to a sense of uncertainty and fragmentation (Bauman, 2003, cited in Buckingham, 2008: 1). These include globalisation, the decline of the welfare state, increasing social mobility, greater flexibility in employment and insecurity in personal relationships.

For the participants in my research, it is helpful to be aware that identity, like power and domination, is complex in its operation. The development of a strong ego identity, along with the proper integration into a stable society and culture, can lead to a stronger sense of identity in general. Aviram and Rosenfeld stated that: 'a deficiency in either of these factors may increase the chance of an identity crisis or confusion' (Aviram and Rosenfeld, 2002, cited in Cote and Levine, 2002: 22). They applied social identity theory in group therapy for adults with 'mild mental retardation' [sic] to test whether attempts by members of a stigmatised group can maintain their self-esteem by viewing their social group positively. They concluded that it may be possible to enhance self-esteem by broadening one's awareness of collective identity. Field (2009: 17) stressed that, in the context of youth transitions, 'success strategies may require a multiple combination of family bonds, a collective continuation of old looser ties and the creation of new networks of more heterogeneous loose ties.' Thus the development of a strong ego identity along with the proper integration into a stable society and culture, lead to a stronger sense of identity in general. Furthermore, being able to positively view other individuals who are co-members of one's own stigmatized group can also have positive consequences for self-esteem.

The issues, which participants in my study might have encountered in the course of critical transitions and events, are highlighted and made more acute by inherent changes in identity. Foucault (1982: 790) noted that there are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. He observed that 'both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.' An area for exploration in my research study was the complex and constraining interweaving of multiple identities which can be experienced by participants: for example, the transition from civilian life into and discharge from the Armed Forces, a sentence of imprisonment and release into the community, and following the development of a disability. These might make it even more difficult for individuals to extricate themselves from the impact of the associated, sometimes negative stereotypes and also from the constraints of personally constructed narratives, which can be the consequence of such transitions

Stryker's understanding was that role enactment is the source of identities and that this is highlighted and made more acute for individuals by inherent changes in identity (Stryker, 2003, cited in Cote and Levine, 2002: 36). Cote and Levine also referred to Erikson's concept of continuity especially 'the type of continuity which pertains to a person's relationships with others that maintain the stability of personal; and social identities' (Erikson, 1968, cited in Cote and Levine, 2002:16). Crawford (2009: 9) posed the question: 'individuals have multiple identities in order to fit in with a society but what happens if an individual's multiple identities clash when trying to change between two disparate societies?' Stryker (2003) drew attention to the three components of identity: self, language and interaction (Stryker, 2003, cited in Crawford, 2009).

In Giddens' theoretical approach to the changing nature of identity in what he termed 'late modern' societies, he argued that 'many of the beliefs and customary practices that used to define identities in traditional societies (such as those of organized religion) are now less and less influential.' In this 'post traditional' society, people have to make a whole range of choices about 'their life destinations and relationships' (Giddens, 1991, cited in Buckingham, 2008: 9).

Giddens (1991) suggested that modern individuals have to be constantly self-reflexive, making decisions about what they should do and who they should be and he noted that the self becomes a kind of project that individuals have to work on in order to sustain a coherent and consistent identity. There is a consistent focus adopted by the range of disciplinary perspectives from psychological and sociological to therapeutic: the importance of individual rationalisation of identity through self-reflexivity; and the power of constructing individual narratives, which support coherence and consistency of identity.

Gramsci broadened this in terms of democracy being, essentially, an accommodation between individual agency and structural location (Gramsci, 1971, cited in Fischman and McLaren, 2005). In this context, Freire (1970: 7) referred to 'the need to develop a flexible and critical spirit to cope with individual and social transition.' In Section 3.5 (c) of this review of literature, I link this objective with the development of individual agency and capability through critical pedagogy in adult education.

In summary, power is an elusive concept, adopting diffuse and amorphous forms, including discourses of power, which impact on the participants in my study. Paradoxically, however, the medium of discourse also contains the scope for action and resistance by the dominated against the dominators. This includes resistance against the limitations imposed by the State and against personally imposed narratives and loss of identity, which can occur through exclusion from literacy and education, imprisonment, definitions of delinquency, and the stereotypes imposed in terms of disability and military service. These limitations and narratives can be challenged and overcome through the central role of participants in their own transformation and through critical pedagogy, which can uncover and redress issues of power, ideology and inequality.

(b) Research into the Participant Experiences, which Impact on Identity

A study by Binks and Cambridge (2017: 125) investigated the transition experiences of British military veterans leaving the military and settling into civilian society and researched the effect of this transition on the formation and maintenance of the individual's identity. They identified problematic transitions leading to a sense of loss of identity with both the military and the wider society, as well as feelings of disconnection and loss, made more acute for individuals

with 'a more salient military identity.' In a similar vein, Murphy and Busuttil (2017) focussed on the significant minority of ex-servicemen and women who leave the Military with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They highlighted the relevance of growing up in areas of social deprivation or difficult childhood experiences as factors contributing to difficulties in those veterans leaving the service with mental health difficulties, including PTSD.In the particular context of transitions by veterans, Albertson, Irving and Best (2015: 384) advocated a social capital approach to the transitional issues they face, recognising the relevance of such an approach, which involves drawing on the 'comradeship and mutual resilience that underpin military life.' They described this as providing:

> the restorative benefits of the reconnection of the individual into social networks with reciprocal obligations and engagement in meaningful activities.

The issues encountered in the course of the critical transitions they experience are key to sense of identity.

3.4 SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

(a) Theories of Social Exclusion and Social Inclusion

In this section, I outline definitions and interpretations of social exclusion, which can provide a hinterland for ex-offenders and the other groups, who have been included in my study in terms of employment and participation. I then address social inclusion, in terms of the processes by which Governments in particular seek to reintegrate those who are socially excluded and the inadequacies of these responses to such needs. These influence my research into: 'the multiplicity of ways at people may be denied full participation in society and the full rights of citizenship.'

Undertaking a literature search into the theory and definitions of social exclusion and inclusion is akin to entering a world of 'doublethink' and 'newspeak' worthy of Orwell in which inclusion and exclusion can have a symbiotic relationship, each closely resembling or even substituting for the other on occasion. In part, this may be attributed to the issue identified by Daly and Silver (2008: 557): that 'social inclusion is located in a theoretical context of social integration and institutions of social membership, whereas social exclusion draws upon a

discourse of social problems.' Thus social exclusion and inclusion are analytically distinct, if not emanating from different paradigms. This leads to a paradox: Government attempts towards social inclusion tend to operate within the context of social exclusion as a matter of individual fault and the individual as the agent responsible for their own progress (Harman, 1997, cited in Young, 2002: 457) but, nonetheless, within Government delineated terms of what constitutes inclusion.

The World Bank definition, in the context of the EU8 Social Inclusion Study (2008), linked exclusion with an implication of an act with an agent or agents: 'we may be concerned just with a person's situation, but also the extent to which he or she is responsible.' Ignoring individual agency, refusing to recognise its wider social and collective nature, and subverting or interpreting it in narrow terms can contribute to very social exclusion, which they are attempting to eradicate. I provide a commentary on the particular impact, which limited government interpretations of individual agency impose on ex-offenders and the others included in my study. I also emphasise that the forms taken by individual agency can defy the attempts to define and circumscribe it. As Silver (2007: 1) noted, social exclusion and social inclusion are not antonyms and may be concepts between which individuals can move on a regular basis within their experience.

(b) Policy Interpretations of Social Exclusion

In this section, I argue that policy interpretations of social exclusion reflect national, cultural and historical contexts. These are more than nuances of interpretation: they are expressive of important distinctions in social perspectives, which influence government expenditure priorities and policies and implementation. The theory, definitions of and the posited solutions to social exclusion are riven by illogicality and inconsistent interpretation.

 These inconsistencies are especially oppressive for ex-offenders and help to explain some of the particular subtleties of social exclusion experienced by them and by the other participants included in my study. Burchardt, LeGrand and Piachaud (2002:30) provided a succinct definition of social exclusion, which focussed on participation:

62

> An individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in the key activities of the society in which he or she lives.

Silver (1994: 531) identified three paradigms of social exclusion as they apply to the groups in my study: a cultural and moral breakdown of the social bond (the solidarity paradigm which is a French Republican concept); social exclusion based on discrimination (the specialisation paradigm); and the third paradigm, which sees exclusion as a consequence of the formation of group monopolies.

Silver and Miller (2003: 5) noted that the term social exclusion, as conceived of by Europeans, is a 'relational process of declining participation, solidarity, and access' rather than a distributional outcome in terms of poverty. The latter is viewed by Europeans as an 'Anglo-Saxon' idea', which is thought to patronise or denigrate equal citizens. Silver and Miller (2003) described how British experts on the European Poverty programme tried to balance the French emphasis on social and cultural exclusion with the material deprivation arguments i.e. that exclusion can arise from poverty or lack of access to basic needs. This chimes with the concept of hindered access to 'full participation in the customary life of society' (Townsend, 1979: 32). The outcome was that the European Union (2010) recast social exclusion as a hindrance to the social rights of citizens to a basic standard of living and 'as barriers to participation to major social and educational opportunities', which it identified as being passed from one generation to the next. The EU promoted social inclusion in terms of employment, providing an appropriate level of social protection and developing measures to combat exclusion and to reduce poverty. The Labour Government's Social Exclusion Unit (2004) defined social exclusion as being 'about more than income poverty' and identified it as a shorthand term, covering a constellation of linked and mutually reinforcing problems, including unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown. Levitas (2003) summarised the three types of discourse surrounding social exclusion:

> To oversimplify: the three discourses differ in what the poor/excluded are seen to lack: In the Redistributive Discourse (RED), they have no money; in the Social Integration Discourse (SID) they have no (paid) work; in the Moral Underclass Discourse (MUD) they have no morals. By the late 1990s, the dominant discourse had shifted decisively towards SID.

However, social exclusion can also adopt fluid forms. Silver (2007:1) pointed to the lack of formal exclusion thresholds to be crossed, such as exist for poverty, preferring to see it as situating people in a 'multidimensional continuum', moving towards inclusion or towards 'comprehensive, cumulative social rupture.' Ogden was critical of the use of the term social exclusion as 'an umbrella concept for which there is limited theoretical understanding' (Ogden, 1997, cited in Sen, 2000: 3). He asserted that the 'conceptual contribution that social exclusion can make and the constructive role that it can play' as opposed to its use 'merely as language or rhetoric' needs to be recognised (Ogden, 1997, cited in Sen, 2000: 6). Sen (2000: 4) also referred to Adam Smith's definition of poverty as 'not being able to appear in public without shame' and denotes this as a 'broadly Aristotelian approach' arguing that exclusion from social relations can 'constitutionally be part of capability deprivation as well as instrumentally a cause of diverse capability failures leading to other deprivations' (2000: 5). Sen summarised this by reference to Smith: 'the inability to do things that one has reason to want to do' (Smith, 1776, cited in Sen, 2000: 6). Recognising the mercurial and individual nature of and responses to social exclusion has formed a central element of my study. I explore the implications of these discourses in the following sections of this literature review.

(c) Policy Interpretations of Social Inclusion

In order to achieve a fuller understanding of the nature of social exclusion, it is helpful to consider what might constitute social inclusion and to review the approaches to means of achieving it. Felder (2019: 217) distinguished between two spheres in which social inclusion operates: an interpersonal sphere in which familial and friendship types of belonging are key; and the societal sphere in which people can be viewed as 'others' in a generalised, abstract sense. In other words, she argued, emotions are not involved in the context of the societal sphere. For Honneth there were three forms of recognition: love including intersubjective love, which contributes to self-confidence by means of 'relating positively to oneself'; respect through recognition as 'members of a polity' with 'an enforceable claim to certain rights'; and solidarity or social esteem (Honneth, 1995, cited in Felder, 2018: 61). Simpson and Price (2010: 181) referred to social inclusion in terms of full membership of society and access to rights of citizenship and full participation. Silver and Miller (2003: 13) reminded

us that, while Europeans usually call the opposite of exclusion, 'insertion' or 'solidarity,' the preferred framework is one of citizenship, nationality, or cohesion, providing, at least in theory, the possibility of access, participation, and 'voice' for all members of a society. Cohesion is an important context to adopt in relation to social inclusion because it expresses society's responsibilities and raises awareness of the 'common emotional experience' of exclusion, rejection and humiliation. These forms of understanding of social inclusion are in sharp contrast to the views on social inclusion of Peter Mandelson, former Labour Cabinet Minister, which he expressed when the Social Exclusion Unit was launched in 1997 (Mandelson, 1997, cited in Skeggs, 2004:11):

> The problem confronting Britain reproduces the 'threat to the nation' as an empirical reality. We are the long term Benefit claimants, the working class poor living through another period of cultural contempt. We are losers, no hopers, low life scroungers. We are perverse in our failure to succeed, dragging our feet over social change, wanting old jobs back.

Also, Young (2002) cited Harriet Harman, then Member of the Labour Cabinet, in a speech delivered at the opening of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics, 1997, in which she referred to unemployed young men missing the sense of order which work brings and their entrapment in dependency. It is arguable that the attempt by Mandelson, to identify with those who are excluded, albeit couched in ironic terms, was insulting and disingenuous in its use of the first person plural when, in fact, it constructed a sense of 'losers *et al.'* being external to normal society – in antithesis to Honneth's concept of social inclusion as solidarity or social esteem by which 'achievements and abilities are recognised as social constitutive by the society in question' (Honneth, 1995, cited in Felder 2018: 62).

Harriet Harman's reference to a parallel world was also reminiscent of the reference by Faulkner (2000: 79). A former Home Office senior Civil Servant, he referred to the 'deserving majority and undeserving minority' taking us back to the deprivation concept of 'less eligibility', which drove the Poor Act, 1834. This division was also described by Galbraith (1992: 411) as between the 'middle class and underclass.' Even the title of the Social Exclusion Unit set up by the Labour Government in 2002, later abolished in 2010 and absorbed into the Office for Civil Society, might have been said to emphasise and reinforce

65

exclusion rather than inclusion. This introduces a sense of pathology and even of potential infection of the wider society consistent with the notion of moral hazard introduced in Levitas's Moral Underclass Discourse (2003).

Frost and Phillips (2011: 145) illustrated the way in which political comment can shape public discourses, quoting comments by Prime Minister David Cameron. Describing rioters in U.K. cities in 2011 as 'thugs and delinquents' (Cameron, 2011, cited in Frost and Phillips, 2011), he argued that:

> It is essential for those in power in Britain that the riots now sweeping the country can have no cause beyond feral wickedness. This is nothing but "criminality, pure and simple".

Attempts to impute a moral value to the construct of cultural identity are characteristic of a judgmental and intrusive evaluation of the behaviour of some groups including the reference by Skeggs (2004:11) to Mandelson's 'losers, no hopers and low life scroungers.' By implication, such moral value is mobile, shifting and potentially creative for those who are viewed as adaptable to the values of the modern State. Faulkner (2000: 80) described how this makes some people 'constitutive outsiders' by 'disregarding the influences of situations and circumstances.' Skeggs (2004: 35) observed that, in shifting away from talk of equality and inequality, judgmental evaluation of behaviour sets up a 'false picture of homogeneity' for the rest of society. Levitas (2003: 13) noted that such a view of behaviour permits a benign view of society to co-exist with the 'manifest reality of poverty and deprivation by discursively placing these outside society itself.' According to Young (2002: 457) this creates 'a world of civility and tranquillity over and against that of crime and mayhem.'

Levitas, (2003:13) argued that this view of social inclusion is exemplified by the World Bank, who juxtapose exclusion with inclusion: 'a process which ensures that those at risk of social exclusion gain opportunities to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life' and provides access to their 'fundamental rights.' Social exclusion seeks to confirm marginalized individuals and groups as active rather than passive, having a role in their own 'inclusion' and, by implication, in their own exclusion. The corollary of such an approach is highlighted by McDermott and Varenne (1995: 329), who noted New Labour's challenge to the notion of social class and its replacement in policy language by 'notions of social inclusion and exclusion and disadvantaged groups.' These

interpretations of social exclusion are significant because they provide the context for policy responses, which will be explored in the following section.

Cohesion is an important context to adopt in relation to social inclusion because it expresses society's responsibilities and raises awareness of the 'common emotional experience' of exclusion, rejection and humiliation. However Lister (1998: 5) expressed the complexities and ambivalences surrounding citizenship, which she described as a 'slippery and contested concept' with 'inclusionary and exclusionary sides within both a national and international context.' These views influence my research into the 'the multiplicity of ways in which people may be denied full participation in society, and the full rights of citizenship.' Attempts towards social inclusion tend to operate within Government delineated terms of what constitutes inclusion. Such complexities are especially marked in the impact of policy development and implementation on ex-offenders, people with disabilities and those discharged from the Armed Forces.

This relates especially to attempts to reintegrate them into the labour market and out of poverty. Ledwith (2007) noted the tendency of those seeking to ameliorate rather than transform the position of the socially excluded by concentrating on the symptoms of injustice. Such a tendency perpetuates the status quo in which individuals, who do not comply, can develop a more acute sense of exclusion.

Sen's view of the multidimensional nature of the concepts of inclusion and exclusion involved more than the concepts of poverty and inequality. Drawing on this view assists in identifying the link between inclusion, the individual's stock of social capital and social cohesion (Sen, 1985, cited in Oxoby, 2009: 3) and the potential for development of an 'inclusionary economy' (Sen, 1985, cited in Oxoby, 2009: 8). Simpson and Price (2010: 181) referred to social inclusion in terms of full membership of society and 'access to rights of citizenship and full participation.' However, this approach is far from the response to social exclusion favoured by successive U.K. Governments since the 1990s, who have launched programmes for 'prescribed inclusivity.' Levitas (1996: 5) noted that 'terms such as social cohesion and solidarity abound, and that social exclusion is contrasted not with inclusion but with integration,

67

construed as integration into the labour market.' In its implied reworking of exclusion as lack of participation and associated enforced engagement by formal enrolment in educational courses or participation in paid employment (Sealey, 2010), such an interpretation of integration can further entrench inequality, poverty and social dislocation.

Mayo (1999: 5) spoke of participation being 'appropriated in the neoliberal context', as witnessed by the setting up of the Social Exclusion Unit, as previously referred to in this literature review. In this context, it is as well to remember Levitas's observation (2003: 13) that: '"social policy" as traditionally conceived is far too limited a vehicle for delivering social inclusion.' Byrne (2001:115) highlighted an inherent danger: that U.K. Government anti exclusion policies 'lack macro political engagement with the process of transition from industrial to post industrial capitalism with its attendant low wage economy and insecurity of employment', which can leave excluded groups even more vulnerable.

Thus in terms of U.K. Government policy, the opposite of social exclusion is not seen as inclusion but 'integration through paid work.' Taysum and Gunter (2008: 537) referred to the tendency towards Government investment in human and intellectual capital, based on 'the equation of social inclusion with labour market participation.' This potentially subverts the reasonable expectation that individuals should not be 'passive recipients of material assistance' (Silver and Miller, 2003: 10) to one in which inclusion becomes 'the responsibility of the excluded individual', thus imposing another burden on them. Such an approach can lead to 'the endless rejection of the working class to intense and repetitive work' (Weil, 1937, cited in Silva, 2005). Galbraith's 'wry' comment (Galbraith, 2001, cited in Young, 2002: 457) is salutary:

> The use of 'work' by the 'contented classes' to describe their highly paid, creative and self-fulfilling activities in the same breath as the low paid, oppressive chores of the working poor is a fraud of the first order.

and he spoke of '"adding insult to injury" by promoting the notion of work as a redeeming act, a liberation of the self and a role model to one's children, as our New Labour politicians and their Democratic cousins would maintain.'

A disingenuous view of the benefits of employment was subsequently replaced by the harsher and more deliberately polarising tone of the Coalition Government discourse on unemployment as set out in George Osborne's Speech to the 2012 Conservative Conference as Chancellor (Osborne, 2012, cited in Hall and O'Shea, 2013: 328):

> Where is the fairness we ask for the shift worker leaving home in the dark early hours of the morning, who looks up at the closed blinds of their next door neighbour sleeping off a life on Benefits?

This rhetoric was drawn on by Theresa May in her first speech as Prime Minister (2016), when she stated her intended support for the 'just about managing' working families, driving a distinction between them and the other families in receipt of Benefits. Thus 'the poor as social assistance recipients are excluded as a means of reinforcing work ethics among the majority' (Silver 2007:1). The introduction of Universal Credit by the Conservative Government in 2010 is a case in point. Intended by the Government to support the development of a work ethic among those in receipt of State Benefits, it fell short, both in the implementation and in the experience of Benefit recipients. Millar and Bennett (2017: 170) summarised this in terms of:

> the gap between the assumptions underlying the design of Universal Credit on the one hand and the research evidence about life on a low income, and in low-waged and often insecure employment, on the other.

The 'strivers and shirkers' rhetoric (Patrick, 2014: 24), translated into policy documents and implementation, draws on and promotes language and imagery, which are powerful in feeding the public imagination and (Scrase and Ockwell, 2010: 2225) 'may help to construct society's assumptions, values and beliefs' Jensen and Tyler (2015: 1) referred to these assumptions as 'anti-welfare common-sense' and refer to the 'critical lens' adopted towards the Welfare State, reimagining it as 'fostering toxic forms of welfare dependency among citizens' and considered to have a stagnating effect on economic growth (2015: 3). Hall referred to this common-sense knowledge, inculcated by neoliberal ideologies, as 'central to hegemonic power' (Hall, 1978, cited in Jensen and Tyler 2015: 5).

The possible divide between forms of rhetoric affecting research participants and the reality of their existence drives this research. Jensen and Tyler (2015:

12) referred to the paradox involved in the potential of language and imagery for participants' personal development and social integration on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the use of 'moral narratives' as rhetorical tools for marginalisation and the privileging of particular ideological preferences. This has underpinned my conceptual model and goes to the heart of my research because it represents the types of paradox experienced by the participants in relation to literacy and learning and other policies for inclusion. Literacy and language can be tools of individual agency but, all too often, these inclusion policies and other moral assumptions and policies to combat social exclusion can be experienced as further subtle means of exclusion.

Ledwith's concept of the misappropriation of the language of empowerment and liberation (Ledwith, 1990, cited in Mayo, 1993) drew attention to the offloading of social responsibilities to individuals at a time of stringent budgets. Byrne (2001: 118) was equally uncompromising about what he refers to as 'uncritical use of social inclusion' which, in his view blinds us to 'use, abuse and distribution of power' and smothers anger.

Faulkner (2000: 79) embraced ideas of community responsibility, a belief that individuals have the capacity and will to change and which emphasises guidance, help and encouragement rather than abuse and humiliation; and putting things right for the future rather than 'allocating blame and awarding punishment.' As stated by Brookfield (2005: 224) such views, based on critical theory, are 'grounded in a desire to fight oppression and injustice and to create a more compassionate world' and I link this critical paradigm to my research in the methodology chapter. These values were further expressed by Daly and Silver (2008), who identified the concept of social capital, which addresses itself to the benefits to be gained by cooperation and participation. Coleman's concept of social capital (Coleman, 1988, cited in Daly and Silver, 2008: 543) as 'a collective attribute that inheres in those aspects of social life that enable people to co-operate' was developed partly to counterbalance human capital theory, which emphasises skills, which are limited to being marketable in the service economy. Ward (1996: 6) stated that those who espouse the values of social capital are fundamental in their opposition to the idea that social class is based on 'a difference in intellectual capacity as something pre-ordained and inherently inevitable.' My research is based on these values, which include the

concept put forward by Brookfield (2005: 54) in terms of 'liberation of individual creativity from the dominant ideology.' I have done so because these values have the potential to transform the notion of individual agency by supporting them to develop forms of self-expression and participation in the broadest sense.

(d) Research into the Impact of Government Policies in this Area

Patrick (2014: 26) drew attention to the (mis)match between the government rhetoric of benefit as a 'lifestyle choice' and lived realities; and her research in this context focussed on the impact of the forms, which operate through the Benefits' System. Frost and Phillips (2011: 145) pointed out that 'most of the expenditure cuts of successive Governments since the 1980's have impacted on the marginalised and excluded, especially in the inner cities.' The Trussell Trust Report on end of year statistics for 2018/19 indicated that the number of food parcels they had given out in Food Banks had risen by 19 per cent during the year and that the main reason for this rise was 'Benefits not covering living costs.' Frost and Phillips (2011: 145) interpreted these expenditure cuts as a feature of neo liberalism, defined by Harvey (2005: 2) as:

> a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade.

This also applies to the consequent policies on welfare reform, including Disability Benefits' reform, deemed by the U.N Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) to have 'gravely or systematically... violated the rights of disabled people' under the 'guise of austerity.' The changes to Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) and the Limited Capacity for Work component of Universal Credit, both of which are subject to stringent medical assessments to verify claimants' disability, have also highlighted the position of disabled people in the climate of austerity cuts. In January, 2018, the High Court ruled that changes in PIPs were 'in breach of their human rights' and were 'unfair to people with mental health conditions.' Particular criticism was levelled at 'failure to give primacy to evidence from the person's GP and other health experts.' This was followed a Cross Party Early Day Motion, tabled in Parliament on 13th June, 2018, which referred to problems with unqualified

assessors and a lack of medical knowledge and stated that this system 'places a huge burden onto those with serious and often life limiting illnesses.' Consequent reforms to Personal Independence Payments by the Conservative Government in early 2019 are yet to be evaluated.

In the context of concern about the link between welfare reforms and declining mental health of Benefit claimants, and following Parliamentary intervention in 2019, the National Audit Office (NAO) investigated the information held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on deaths by suicide of Benefit claimants. The NAO Briefing (2020) drew attention to the 69 suicide related deaths among claimants, which the DWP had investigated since 2014/15. The National Audit Office concluded (2020: 10) that: 'it is highly unlikely that the cases the Department has investigated represents the number of cases it could have investigated in the past six years' and that it needed to take a more proactive role in this context.'

Daly (2012: 273) referred to the European Union's adoption in June, 2010 of Europe 2020, A Strategy for Smart and Sustainable Growth with its 2020 target for lifting 20 million people (of the estimated 120 million at risk) out of poverty or social exclusion. Poverty reduction was 'one of its headline initiatives' (2012: 275) and individual Member States were required to set national poverty targets to contribute to the overall target. It was estimated that, in 2017, there were 4.4 million fewer people living at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe compared with 'pre crisis levels' in 2008. However, the extent of the problem of poverty in the United Kingdom was revealed by the Social Metrics Commission (2018:18), whose report referred to 14 million people in the U.K. living in poverty of whom 4 million were 50 per cent below the poverty line. The Commission based their findings on a definition of poverty, which ranged across all material resources, inescapable family costs and housing. These findings were reinforced by the report of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Barnard, 2018), which referred to an 'unravelling' of earlier progress in combatting poverty. Alston (2018: 2) provided an important context in his United Nations' Special Rapporteur's, Report on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights in the United Kingdom. He referred to the austerity cuts implemented since 2010, which have fallen disproportionately on those least able to bear them:

> Great misery has been inflicted unnecessarily, especially on the working poor, on single mothers struggling against mighty odds, on people with disabilities, who are already marginalized, on millions of children are being locked into a cycle of poverty from which most will have great difficulty escaping.

This was viewed by Alston (2018: 3) in the context of:

> a punitive, mean spirited and often callous approach ... elevating the goal of enforcing blind compliance over a genuine concern to improve the well-being of those at the lowest levels of British society.

(e) Social Exclusion and its Impact on Ex Offenders

Atkinson (1998: 1) spoke of those who are socially excluded as being 'pushed to the edge of society and 'distanced from job income and training opportunities.' Weber's identification of social exclusion was as a form of social closure (Weber, 1921, cited in Murphy, 1984: 548):

> a process of subordination in which one group secures its advantages by closing off the opportunities of another group beneath it that it defines as inferior and ineligible.

This described the exclusion of ex-offenders from participation and employment and also fitted the definition of social exclusion by Room (2000: 407):

> multi dimensional disadvantage, which is of such duration and reinforced by such material and cultural degradation of the collective resources on which they can draw, that their links with the wider society are ruptured catastrophically.

and Smith and Stewart (2002: 96) referred to their 'exclusion from the full range of social good including education, employment, accommodation', which are acutely experienced by who have been in prison defined as 'the most definitive form of social exclusion which the law allows.'

This potentially locates social exclusion as an individual issue and links it with notions of deficit i.e shortcomings in the individual. Such a view of individual, cultural deficiencies can lead to a dichotomised representation of society by glossing inequalities within the included mainstream and placing the blame for exclusion on the cultural deficiencies of the excluded (Davidson, 2012). The concepts of blame and deficiency are especially acute for ex-offenders. Within the 'moral underclass discourse' (Levitas, 2013:1) the 'dangerous classes' have no morals and the popular discourse tends to focus on consequences of social exclusion for social order. In particular, this focus is on groups such as

73

potentially criminal young men, who are seen as 'failures', unable to or unwilling to conform despite the social and economic changes which have caused or contributed to their increasing exclusion and isolation. Pertinent to ex-offenders' experience is Simmel's social distance perspective cited by Silver (2007: 1) in which excluded groups are 'marginal, not socially isolated.' Thus 'permanent strangers' are created without consideration of consequences for the insiders' internal world. An illustration of rhetoric employed to emphasise the 'otherness' of offenders is provided by a quote from former Prime Minister David Cameron (2010). In response to the legal challenge by a prisoner, based on the ruling by European Court of Human Rights 2004 that the UK ban on sentenced prisoner voting was illegal, he stated during Prime Minister's Questions:

> It makes me physically ill even to contemplate having to give the vote to anyone who is in prison. Frankly, when people commit a crime and go to prison, they should lose their rights, including the right to vote.

This ideology is both insidious and potentially alienating, especially of ex-offenders and the other groups who have been included in this study and it contributes to the particular levels of the risk of social exclusion, which they experience, as the research outlined in the next section of this literature review illustrates.

3.5 REVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH RELATING TO PARTICIPANTS IN MY STUDY

In this section of the literature review, I identify what drives and informs existing research studies in this area of study. I illustrate how research provenance, the definitions and interpretations of literacy and the intended audience impact on the form and methodology of research studies, including this research. Thus I identify and assess the implications of existing literacy and sociological studies in order to identify the gaps and shortcomings in existing research and to clarify and justify the research design and methodological thinking.

In particular, I describe how these research studies relate to the participants in my study. Their identification has spanned ex offender and Armed Forces and, among these, disabilities ranged from childhood brain injury to a disability following a road traffic accident, mental ill health, post traumatic stress disorder,

dyslexia and a congenital speech impediment. The personal impact of these disabilities on participants has been central to my research in terms of their experience of social exclusion and access to learning.

(a) Disability Research and the Relevance of Critical Disability Research

Meekoscha and Shuttleworth (2009: 47) refer to critical disability studies as 'the requirement of linking theory with praxis in the struggle for an autonomous and participatory society.' Viewing participants' experiences of disability through the lens of critical disability study illuminates and verifies the issues raised by participants on their experience of the impact of their disabilities. These include the effects of mental ill health in adolescence and its long term personal and social impact; issues surrounding education and employment, experienced by Paul: the longer term impact of brain injury in childhood experienced by Jo; and the educational effects of speech and language difficulties in early childhood experienced by Pam.

The study by Esch et al. (2014) of mental disorder and educational attainment involved a systematic review of electronic databases from January 1990 to June 2014 and found strong association between mental health and education 'in both directions.' They identified a downward spiral caused by the interaction of psychological symptoms and negative school experiences, leading to early school leaving and   limited educational and vocational opportunities. This, in turn led to increased vulnerability for mental disorder. This echoed research by Greden (2001) who found that, although it was of vital importance to treat early onset major depression, 40 to 80 per cent of those experiencing mental ill health in adolescence did not seek treatment and suffered "devastating consequences". Wickrama *et al.* (2008: 8) identified that early transitional events are predicted to include risk of adolescent mental ill health, linked with changing roles in adolescence and issues within the family, leading to weak bonds with school.

Research by Jonsson *et al.(2011)* studied a community sample of 382 participants and followed them up after 15 years with structured dialogic interviews. The follow up participation rate was 64.5 per cent. They found that those with long term depression had a poor outcome and were more likely to report anxiety disorders and suicide attempts, thus confirming that longstanding

depression in adolescence was a powerful predictor of continued mental health problems in adulthood. These research studies echo Paul's experience of the deterioration in his relationship with his teachers, his refusal to seek help, his succession of menial jobs and his attempted suicide some 15 years after leaving Further Education.

Research into the effects on learning of speech defects by Taylor and Aiken (1997) involved a research study sample of 3,532 children from early school to primary education. Their research provided clear evidence that children with speech impairment in early school years did not perform as well as 'un impaired' children two years later, similar in order of magnitude to the effects of family socio- economic factors. The study also reinforced the importance of parent reports of speech and language impairment by parents and of early invention and support from specialist teachers. Interviews with Pam revealed that, although her parents had tried to communicate with her first school on her speech difficulties and the impact this was having on her learning, the communication was ineffective and Pam experienced bullying by her peers for much of her time at school. Research into the long term impact of physical bullying and victimisation on young children in such circumstances (O'Brennan and Furlong, 2010) make clear the longer term self esteem and relationship difficulties which bullying can create, as emphasised in Pam's account of her experiences in later life. Pam related her inability to read to her speech impediment and judgements made about her capacity to learn. In this context, Kliewer, Biklen and Kasa-Hendrickson (2006: 165) refer to the denial of literate citizenship for people perceived to have intellectual disabilities as 'cultural denial of competence', consigning them to an existence 'outside the circles of educational privilege.' Furthermore, this can link to 'trials demanding that they meet criteria of demonstrating the validity of their literacy credentials', echoing the tests imposed on Pam to prove that she could be a fit mother. Kliewer, Biklen and Kasa-Hendrickson note (2006: 172) that connectedness between the individual and the wider society 'often begins with the family who presume (and consequently see) human value where society and professions connected with the disability community cannot.'

Viewing the disabilities experienced by participants in the context of the social model of disability, which I have explored in the introduction to this thesis points

to the relevance of critical literacy and critical disability research as a means of critical engagement with learners on issues surrounding the 'disability problem', including the issues they themselves have faced and enabling them to challenge binary distinctions between disabled and non disabled people. The critical framework seeks and promotes a form of empowerment which expresses (Kliewer, Biklen and Kasa-Hendrickson, 2006: 170) 'resistance to to marginalising and dehumanising particular groups', making it powerful and potentially liberating to those with personal experience of such issues.

(b) Prisoner Education and Research

The Council of Europe (2020) have adopted a policy on prisoner education, drawing on earlier sets of recommendations dated 1990 and 2006. These state the fundamental right to education of the citizen or member of society in prison, bearing in mind the social economic and cultural context and 'realising that a high proportion of prisoners have had very little successful educational experience and therefore now have many educational needs.' The aim (Hughes 2009) was to develop the whole person in their social, economic and cultural context,

However, a number of studies (Czerniawski (2016); Hughes (2009) have pointed to the disjuncture between the stated intentions and experience of learning in prisons. Costelloe and Warner, (2014: 175) traced this to the distinct perceptions of those in prison: 'one sees merely an "offender" while the other recognises "the whole person"' the latter opening up possibilities for a more comprehensive and transformative experience for prisoners, linked with the tenets of critical literacy as explored in the introduction to this thesis. Costelloe (2014) advocated that civic competency should be one more form of 'literacy', which prisoners needed to master in order to lessen their marginalisation. In her view, this was best taught within the paradigm of transformative learning.

Behan (2014) undertook a study in Irish prisons involving semi structured interviews with 50 prisoners in one institution in Dublin. Interviewees identified a range of primary purposes for participation, ranging from acquisition of knowledge and a skill and alleviation of boredom to pursuing a second chance of learning or to continue lifelong learning. Behan (2014: 22) noted that six interviewees saw education predominantly as a space for 'critical thinking and

personal transformation' with some seeking pre prison individuality and development of a new identity. Behan (2014: 25) also noted that the group seeking personal transformation were 'developing their human and social capital', beginning with critical reflection and he acknowledged (2014: 26) that such a range of motivations and the 'complex dynamic' in prison education made for difficulties in creating a learning environment and retaining their sense of agency.

Hughes (2009) undertook narrative research involving 76 learners in prison, who were distance learning from within the prison, examining the role that prison education and peer mentoring can play in helping prisoners to adopt new identities and self perceptions. Following completion of a short answer questionnaire, 47 of the original cohort participated in semi structured interviews on how they perceived changes in sense of self. Evidence emerged from these interviews of the potentially transformative role of prison education in creating a sense of empowerment, new positive student identity and the reassessment of personal attributes. A reframing of previous poor experiences of learning enabled students 'to move forward in a positive and self empowered way.' (2009: 94). A report undertaken by GHK Consulting for the European Commission (2014) reported less than 25 per cent prisoner participation in the U.K. and observed that prisoners were more likely to participate if they were young, serving long sentences or based in a large prison, motivated by learning a new skill. Personal motivating factors included finding a second chance in education or in the hope of personal or political transformation. The report made a direct connection between education and training for prisoners and reduction of the social cost of crime; and supporting prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration into society. It recommended (2014: 5):

> increasing cooperation inside the prisons between difference actors and between prisons and local communities in order to ensure that education and training is supported and can continue post release.

Conclusions drawn by Behan (2014) and by Hughes (2009) illustrate the impact of the gap between the European standards and the reality of learning practice in prisons. This echoes Paul's experience of the problems associated with learning in prison and the comments made by Paul and Jo in the course of my

research about the need for prisoner education, which was more focussed on the needs of prisoners being discharged into the community.

Thus the goal of prison education should be empowerment and liberation rather than 'the domestication of prisoners' (Freire, 1985, cited in Erikson, 2001: 343). Without this approach, 'prisoners remain trapped within the vision of others' (Davidson, 1995, cited in Erikson 2001: 343), including the official definitions of literacy.

(c) Adult Education Research and Critical Literacy

In the introduction to this thesis, I referred to some examples of my application of critical pedagogy within Adult Community Education. I now place this teaching approach in the context of research into adult education.

Zarifis (2019: 225) stated:

> There is only one meaningful mission for adult education....and that is to empower learners towards making meaning of the world and their condition and to emancipate them from all that oppresses them.

Critical pedagogists believe that adult education programmes should reflect a critical pedagogy 'providing serviced that culturally relevant, participant driven and socially empowering.' Degener (2001: 1) observed that this involves showing students how to use their skills 'to transform their lives and the society in which they live' rather than the non critical programmes which 'place a primacy on skills acquisition.'

Behan's observation (2014:28) is that adult education is 'more than just the accumulation of knowledge of acquisition; it seeks to locate learning in a wider context' supported the view of Brookfield (1985) who set U.K. adult education in the context of the development of personhood or furthering the understanding of critical principles and operations intrinsic to a set of skills. Critical thinking was not a rarefied academic process but an activity embedded in the context of adults' everyday lives. Brookfield summarised this as a model of liberation, which subscribes to a model of society 'in which communities are rent by conflict, divisions based on class, economics or political power' and in which education is a 'weapon in a fight for a more egalitarian society', drawing on the work of Paolo Freire as a 'philosophical manifesto' and a 'pedagogical agenda.'

Fueyo (1988: 107) contrasted literacy education modelled on a technical conception of literacy with a conception of literacy as critical literacy in which students 'construct meanings for themselves and effect change in their lives.'

Research by Duckworth and Smith (2018) drew on a longitudinal research project by the University and College Union based on a methodological approach with roots in critical pedagogy and underpinned by a sense of research as social practice. Interviews were framed informally to encourage a sense of equality among participants. The study explored critical teaching and learning in literacy education and Duckworth and Smith (2018: 533) found that literacy classes were the first step in a transformative journey. This involved personalised understanding of social inequality and the learner's 'structural positioning within this and the ability to challenge and subvert dominant discourses and existing hierarchies.' Furthermore, the transformative potential extended beyond the individual into the family and community. The research drew attention to the vital role of teachers in opening up a space for critical reflection and dialogue and enabling learners to rearticulate the relationship between their education and their futures.

Based on this research, Duckworth and Smith (2018) argued that U.K. educational reform too often drew on a version of literacy driven by international surveys of literacy based on competency assessment rather than a vision of literacy as a 'catalyst for hope' opening up transformative potential to learners and their families. Drawing on observations by Bloch, they emphasised the link between hope, engaged through critical pedagogy, and agency, which can 'bring about change in the world inhabited by the individual' (Bloch.1986: 443, cited in Duckworth and Smith, 2019: 531).

Janks (2013) applied an interdependent framework for critical literacy education to illustrative case studies which all related to critical literacy education. One of these studies was of Mexican students in Arizona. Janks (2013: 230) observed that critical pedagogies are designed to expose and address inequalities, in which 'language works to serve the interests of some at the expense of others.' American Mexican studies had been ruled illegal by the State's Attorney General. Janks (2013: 230) speculated that this was because it was deemed to be 'a threat to conservative America.' Books used on the programme, including

Paolo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' had been confiscated. However, the programme had a wide range of differently positioned texts on the Internet including newspaper reports, videos and legal documents, which students could draw on to analyse the material critically, thus connecting learners them with their local context. They could discuss which positions they supported and why; and they could research their own curricula to establish privileged and excluded knowledges. They could investigate what makes a text subversive by studying the confiscated texts and then then work out what action to take. Janks (2013) linked this with the Freirean approach of reading the word and the world in order to change it. She concluded that this involved students in illustrating how power works in educational contexts by dividing who gains access to opportunity and who is excluded.

These studies reinforce the power of critical literacy and critical pedagogy and emphasise the importance of imaginative use of texts and material to to engage adult learners in examining power structures and injustices in the world around them. Janks (2013: 228) noted that a significant element of this responsibility involves teachers in helping learners to understand the implacability and dedication of those power structures in perpetuating their own interests, balancing this with hope and a recognition of the value of learners' personal, cultural and locally situated knowledge base and values and to provide hope. This involved (2013:226) 'seeking to address stigmatised and spoilt learning identities through learners' agency and empowerment.' This form of critical literacy driven by dialogue with and between teachers and learners linked to the self and rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being.

(d) Shared Vulnerabilities among the Groups included in my Research

In a number of research studies on aspects of social exclusion, the emphasis tends to be on individual vulnerability rather than structural social pressures which might have contributed to the issues being experienced. The Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit report 'Preventing Reoffending' (2002: 38) referred to 'prisoners released to chaotic lifestyles without proper follow up support' and to 50 discharged prisoners a year committing suicide. It is also clear that the

existing body of research tends not to relate the experiences of ex-offenders to people with disabilities or those discharged from the Armed Forces.

An indicator of shared vulnerability among the groups included in this study is to be found in the research undertaken by Johnson, Jones and Rugg (2008) for the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, into homeless ex-service personnel in London, which concluded that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) 'can prevent ex-service personnel from finding suitable employment or living unsupported.' This was echoed by the Howard League for Penal Reform report entitled 'Leaving Forces' Life: The Issue of Transition' (2011), which concluded that there is an 'over-apportionment of post service dysfunction to military service.' The Ministry of Defence Armed Forces' Covenant, introduced by the Government in 2011, was based on the recognition that those who have served or continue to serve in the Armed Forces and that their families should not face disadvantage compared with other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. However, there are clearly problems experienced by ex-Military personnel, especially in the course of transition from the Armed Forces into civilian life, as referred to in Section 3.3 of this literature review. Some of the offences they commit at such times are so serious that they result in periods of imprisonment. The percentage of Armed Forces veterans in prison was highlighted in studies by the National Association of Probation Officers (2009) which indicated that 8.5 per cent of the prison population had an Armed Forces record and that 2,000 were under the supervision of the Probation Service.

MacManus and Wood (2017: 63) in the context of a prison population of 85,000, warned of the difficulty in estimating the number of veterans in prison. They cited the Howard League for Penal Reform (2011), who estimated that the proportion of veterans in prison could be as high as 17 per cent, based on a Ministry of Defence survey of prisoners in one wing at Dartmoor Prison. In 2014, the risk of suicide in prison had been identified as being twelve times higher than in the general population (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2016). In 2018, there was a total of 325 deaths in custody, including veterans - an overall increase of 10 per cent compared with the previous year (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

A longitudinal study undertaken by Kapur *et al.* (2009) found that, of the 233,083 who had been discharged from the Armed Forces between 1996 and 2005, 224 had committed suicide with a particular risk among those aged 24 years and younger, in comparison with the same age group in the wider population. The authors concluded that the increased suicide risk may reflect the difficulties related to transitioning to civilian life, exposure to adverse experiences while in the military or a pre-military vulnerability; and that this might help to explain the link between short length of service and a higher risk of suicide. In Section 3.4(d) of this literature review, I have referred to the particular vulnerability to suicide of people with disabilities in the context of welfare reforms. Written evidence on the impact of these reforms, submitted by Participation and the Practice of Rights in Northern Ireland in March, 2018, referred to the exacerbation of 'people's physical and mental health conditions to a point of despair, which has driven people to take their own lives.'

A crucial feature of my research, especially in the data analysis chapter, is the identification of these shared vulnerabilities among the groups included in this study.

3.6 RESEARCH INTO WIDER SOCIAL FACTORS AFFECTING STUDY PARTICIPANTS

(a) Crime and Social Exclusion

Focussing on studies into various forms of social exclusion, including unemployment, homelessness and lack of literacy, I identify that the vulnerabilities of ex-offenders intersect with those of people with disabilities and those discharged from the Armed Forces. This sets the scene for a review of studies of ex-offenders' experience of various forms of social exclusion and the particular gaps in existing research which this reveals. In this section of the literature review, I first of all address some of the available literature on the limitations of general research in the area of crime and social exclusion and the policies by which governments attempt to overcome it. People with disabilities, ex-offenders and those discharged from the Armed Forces can have their own voices 'drowned out' in the public discourse. Stereotypes are frequently used as shorthand in the understanding of their needs or to replace supposedly inadequate powers of articulation. However, each group reflects a particular

population within the terms defined by Clough (2002: 71) and they represent the experiences of a distinct category. The obligation on me as researcher is both to mediate and translate and forge 'dialogic empathies'; and the search for a voice which will persuade the reader, challenge interests, privileges and prejudices and create a 'deep unease' is an essential feature of this research.

An example of research giving a voice to ex-offenders is the study by Wilson and Killingley (2005), previously referred to in the introduction to this thesis and the literature review. Their methodology combined qualitative and quantitative methods and engaged the trainees in some deep consideration of the direction of their lives in a setting which enabled them to take an objective view of themselves. This ethnographic research gave particular attention to what the trainees themselves said was happening to them and it contained powerful direct quotes in order 'to give trainees a voice.' There is evidence of reflexivity, one feature of which is 'helping participants to think critically' (Tierney, 2000: 103). This was also exemplified in Erikson's (2001) research into the teaching of sociology to prisoners as a means of using reflexivity and developing critical consciousness. Creating a dialogue between prisoners and sociology students, she invoked the practice and philosophy of Paolo Freire, that 'knowledge is a social process that demands the transforming action of human beings on the world' (Freire, 1985, cited in Erikson, 2001: 344)   Erikson recognised (2001: 352) that 'voice' and the 'inside views' of prisoners on crime and prison are an important subject of sociological investigation.

Bottoms *et al.* argued that, instead of seeing desistance from crime as the complete cessation of criminal activity, we should also be interested in significant periods of desistance in an offender's history (Bottoms *et al.,* 2004, cited in Wilson and Killingley, 2005). The attitude scales use by Wilson and Killingley revealed significant progress by the third week of the study especially in response to the statement: 'My life is in complete disorder.'

Unfortunately, the quality, sturdiness and strength of the Wilson and Killingley research and the insights of Erikson's study are not typical of the majority of research on this subject. Many of the limitations of research in this area are expressive of the dichotomy between material and discursive views of social exclusion. Ward (2009: 238) suggested that 'in simple terms … the focus on

material definitions of exclusion obscures its discursive origins and tends to "'individualise" the problem', whereas those who take a discursive approach to social exclusion 'have focussed on representations, the role of language and discourse in order to understand the outcomes' i.e. a broader social and educational context. Ward therefore advocated a combined material and discursive approach to the issue of social exclusion. Pierson (2001: 7) noted that such a complementarity of approach would encourage a view of social exclusion as a process rather than a condition, locating it within a context of structural disadvantage, marginalisation, social justice and equality and primarily as a consequence of poverty and low income rather than 'a matter of blame.'

Darcy (2007: 347) noted the prevalence of the positivist approach in materially defined research and 'its limited insights into the impact of policies on individuals', tending to identify separate elements of social exclusion such as poverty, unemployment and homelessness. Daly and Silver (2008) warned that such approaches prioritise measurement of exclusion factors to monitor progress towards policy targets and to identify successful policies. Examples include the social indicators research and social reporting by, for example the European Union (2020), the United Nations (2019) and the World Bank (2008). The focus in such systems is on particular domains or special population groups, including ex-offenders, with only scant attention to the wider social context (Berger- Schmitt and Jankowitsch, 1999). I would argue that this represents a failure to provide a bridge between the material and discursive understandings of social exclusion. As clarified by Daly and Silver (2008: 551), such systems draw attention away from the identity of the excluders' powerful groups, which are enabled to build up resources at the expense of those who are excluded.

Foucault (1980: 102) referred to the instruments developed for the formulation and accumulation of knowledge through investigation and research as ideologically inspired 'apparatuses of control allowing power further to evolve.' He likened this research approach to the monitoring of power through surveillance (1980:104) and it is exemplified by studies into issues of social exclusion undertaken by organisations responsible for delivering Government funded programmes. He was particularly scathing about the concept of the

struggle around prisons and penal system 'developed in solitary.' Foucault (1980: 130) referred to the 'lyrical little chant' performed by social workers and ex-prisoners around the criminal as 'innocent victim, pure rebel and young wolf.'

(b) Unemployment and Homelessness

Research into the particular issues faced by unemployed ex-offenders demonstrates the formidable barriers to employment faced by them, including legal limitations and those specific to their skills, education, and training.

Alheit's concept of unemployment, especially among the young (Alheit, 1994, cited in Chirisa and Muchini, 2011: 1) was as 'a form of deprivation which robs them of the benefits of work' and represents 'a dark era' in their personal and social development.' This is an even more acute experience for ex-offenders. Brown (2011: 333) introduced his study of ex-offenders' reintegration processes and the vocational implications of having a criminal record by stating that 'within three years of their release, almost two thirds of ex-offenders return to prison.' Rhodes (2008: 1) noted that 'finding stable employment is widely recognised as playing a central role in desistance' from further crime.

In their 1997 report on offender employment, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) pointed to the realism of ex-offenders about their employment prospects in a changing labour market with its diminishing number of unskilled jobs and in competition with those who do not have a criminal record. This survey showed that, prior to joining NACRO programmes, 36 per cent of offenders had been unemployed for twelve months and 33 per cent for eighteen months. A more recent NACRO Youth Employment report (2015) referred to the 75 per cent of young offenders, reoffending within a year of release from custody. The Ministry of Justice report on Offenders and Employment (2013) pointed to the significantly reduced likelihood of reoffending by those in 'P45 employment.' However, a 2017 report by the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) took as its context the fact that six of ten employers reject applicants with a criminal record, creating a hostile environment for those being released from custody and contributing to the cycle of release from custody followed by unemployment, reoffending and further imprisonment. Fletcher argued that many prisoners appear to be 'caught in a

revolving door of criminality' (Fletcher, 2008, cited in Pandeli and O'Regan, 2019: 12).

Research studies undertaken in the United States and in Australia have recognised that a criminal history represents a significant barrier to finding and keeping employment by ex-offenders, especially those being released from prison. Visher, Winterfield and Coggeshall, (2006) studied existing employment practices and the schemes, which set out to break the link between criminal history, difficulty in finding and keeping employment and recidivism. They did not find evidence to support the link between those programmes and avoidance of recidivism. This is a controversial area and Pryor's proposal risked overlooking the potential value of communication with employers on the issues of individual offending, giving them an opportunity to engage positively with the offender, to be involved in the community 'ownership' of issues of deviance and to be active participants in the managing of risk to society. One example of a positive approach to the employment of ex-offenders is provided by Timpson's Retailers in the U.K., ten per cent of whose workforce have been recruited directly from prison. Timpson's Chief Executive (Pandeli and O'Regan 2019: 9) stated:

> They...simply want to do a normal day's work for a normal day's pay and go home and not have the chaos of a criminal life.

An interesting aspect to emerge was that, in this employment climate, some members of the existing Timpson's workforce, including senior managers, felt able to be open about their own previous criminal records, thus challenging the presumed "otherness" of criminal behaviour.

Bouffard, Mackenzie and Hickman (2000:1) noted that 'of all of the predictors of offender recidivism, the employment/education domain is…. probably the most prosaic' and proposed that predictors such as social class of origin, personal distress and personality (e.g. psychopathy) should receive greater attention and emphasis in the debates about criminal behaviours. They cited the research, referred to earlier in this section, by Visher, Winterfield and Coggeshall (2006) indicating that offenders' themselves consider that securing employment is important to maintaining a crime free existence upon release further note.

Exploration of the link between offenders and unemployment is dominated and to some extent obscured by research, including meta- analysis, which tends to emphasise the link between crime and unemployment rather than paying regard to the situation and mental state of the individual offenders and the impact of unemployment on them (Bouffard, Mackenzie and Hickman, 2000). I regard this as more than a subtle distinction: it reflects an overriding concern with wider risk factors for society arising from criminal behaviour and springs from the view that offenders are emblems of all that needs to be expelled by society in order to restore its equilibrium. This view is embodied in the tendency to focus on the single issue of unemployment rather than on the possible myriad social exclusion factors experienced by ex-offenders and the other groups included in this study. This has the potential to marginalise, circumscribe and further exclude them both as groups and as individuals. There is little in the way of research examining the impact on individuals of multiple social exclusion factors, which I have addressed in my research.

There is a paucity of research which engages the views of the ex-offenders themselves on their exclusion from the labour market and on how the existing arrangements for linking them to employment might be improved in support of their own agency and capability. Such an approach to research gives little attention to the resourcefulness of those who are excluded or 'oppressed' (Freire,1972) in creating their 'own 'culture and support systems. Rhodes (2008: 2) noted that 'it is not employment alone, but the interaction between employment and events such as family formation that both encourage and enable ex-offenders to desist from crime' and that this 'reasserts the role of individual agency in the decision of ex-offenders to seek more legitimate lifestyles.' Existing research has tended not to acknowledge that ex-offenders (and the other groups included in this study) can draw on these existing support systems by interacting on an equal basis to build on and increase their own capacities. I have identified these and other deficiencies in existing research by reference to specific research studies.

Research studies undertaken over a span of thirty years in the United States into unemployment of ex-offenders illustrated an evolution towards a more positive approach to the capabilities and potential of ex-offenders in their search for employment and employability. Berk, Lenihan and Rossi (1980: 768)

studied those released from the prisons, who were assigned either to one of four treatment conditions or to one of two control groups, with differing levels of unemployment Benefits to determine if such variations in resources 'have important behavioural consequences.' The researchers noted grim employment prospects with few prisoners having 'attractive work histories', having spent very large proportions of their adult lives in prison. Correspondingly, they have neither marketable skills nor contacts that would facilitate the job search process. The limitations of this research are best expressed by the absence of job placement or counselling offered to the ex-offenders, whose job prospects are seen as strictly limited. It is, therefore, not surprising to read the self-fulfilling conclusion that variables such as education, reading ability and prior experience are probably of little relevance to screening people to 'wash cars, pick lettuces, sweep floors and carry heavy boxes.' There was also no attempt to include the views of ex-offenders on the programme in which they were participating.

Lichtenberger (2006) studied those benefiting from Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) form of training, including comprehensive pre employment preparation, job-retention planning, and post-release case management for individuals assessed as facing the greatest barriers to successfully gaining and keeping employment. Lichtenberger's research has potential value to those who seek to manage the transition of ex-offenders to employment. However, his exclusion of ex-offenders with disabilities from the benefits of OWDS on the basis that disability would make access to employment more difficult is telling and demonstrates a tacit acknowledgement that criminal history compounded by disability significantly influences access to sustained employment.

3.7 RESEARCH INTO LITERACY AND THE IMPACT OF EXCLUSION FROM LITERACY

(a) Mixed Methods Research

Luke (2003: 132) referred to the paradox which confronts him as a researcher and a bureaucrat, who seeks to influence literacy policy. Although the literacy policy making process appears to be scientific, requiring positivist forms of research to influence policy makers, in his experience the reality is that:

the making of literacy policy is hermeneutic, interpretive, discourse constructive, case based and highly contextual.

In his view, this requires a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing on a range of sources and kinds of data from sociological to demographic, social geographic, economic and linguistic.

This is reinforced by Mertens (2007), who referred to the association between the critical transformative paradigm and mixed methods strategies and the strength of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in order to challenge power and privilege and to achieve individual and wider social change.

An example of research combining qualitative and quantitative methods is Tett and Maclachlan's study of adult learning (2008), which explored the interconnections between literacies learning, self-confidence, learner identity and social capital. This involved interviews with 613 learners in Scottish Further Education, community settings, with private providers and in workplaces. There were additional interviews with 64 per cent of the original sample one year later and interview feedback was supplemented by quantitative data which was coded and analysed. Open qualitative feedback was codified and examined under thematic headings and quotations were extracted. The researchers reported on the changes in social capital and self-confidence experienced by learners between the two phases and explored the complex connections between engagement in learning and the development of self-confidence, an increasingly positive identity as a learner, and enhanced social capital.

Research undertaken by the Business, Innovation and Skills' Department (BIS) (2011) into Armed Forces Literacy and Numeracy Skills involved interviews with 22 to 29 recruits for each of the three Armed Forces and quantitative research in the form of questionnaires among Army recruits at the start of training, during and after specialist training and during the first appointment in Service. Line manager and education staff testimonies were also used. The focus was on literacy which was found to be of direct relevance to professional identity, operational effectiveness and career progression.

However, the study did not draw on the wider social context of individual recruits or serving personnel. It is arguable that the failure of this literacy research to place Army recruits in a wider social context is limiting. For

example, it did not address recruits' previous experience of social exclusion and anomie which might have prompted them to seek sense of identity through enlisting in the Armed Forces. This might also have had an impact on their settlement into the community on completion of their service.

(b) What Works Research

In this section, I explore research undertaken with the aim of establishing 'what works' or 'what works best' for any perceived need. Implicit in this kind of research is an assumption that there is a common understanding of what is meant when something is said to 'work', arising from the stated the need for research which was more policy and practice relevant; and the imperative for Government Ministers and policymakers to take more notice of research. The development of 'What Works' research in the field of educational research began in the late 1990's. What Works research approaches were intended to instil scientific rigour into research, including areas of literacy, crime prevention and crime, which are of particular relevance to my research. Hammersley (2005: 320) traced this from the 1998 Tooley Report, published by the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), which had concluded that 'a substantial proportion of the published articles in educational research journals suffered from serious methodological defects.' Also in 1998, the DfEE Hillage Report raised questions about the quality and, especially, about the usefulness of educational research. Hammersley (2005:320) referred to this as 'a seemingly virtuous circle' in which research produces conclusions which can be made the basis for policies, whether at national level, at institutional level, or on the ground; and which then lead to desirable outcomes because they are research-based. Barton (2001) summarised one of the aims of empirical investigations of literacy was to show the range and social patterning of literacy practices.

Raynor (1994:72) summarised the view of What Works of some educational professionals as 'an obsession with input measurement' rather than a recognition of the quality of learning outcomes. This comment has particular relevance to meta-analysis, which re-analyses data found in original research reports and arrives at a common measure for all the studies (Whitehead and Lab,1989) and is favoured as a method within What Works methods of

91

research. This approach has involved a noticeable alignment between What Works literacy research and functional interpretations of literacy. Burnett, pointing to the then National Curriculum in England, referred to the prevailing view, which underpins much current research and represents literacy as a fixed set of skills and literacy learning as a purely psycho-cognitive process, reflecting an autonomous model (Burnett, 2019). UNESCO (2005) noted that this focus on literacy as a simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills tends to be linked with their use in ways, which contribute to socio-economic development. One example is that changes to the Adult Literacy curriculum have tended to reduce the emphasis on speaking and listening skills. This potentially constrains learners' opportunity to develop critical analytical skills, for example by differentiating between fact and opinion in press publications. It also directly impacts directly on the groups included in this study, risking a reduction in their opportunities to develop forms of self-expression. A serious flaw in What Works research, to which I have drawn attention in the methodology chapter and which I have addressed in this research, (Barry, 2000) is the lack of opportunity for some ex- offenders to express an opinion on their experience of the most effective forms of social work. Such limitations have influenced and informed my choice of research methodology, which I develop in the methodology chapter.

For example, this utilitarian view of literacy drove the research undertaken by the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) in the 1990's and in 2000, which drew on an:

> asset based Framework, which measures what people can do and – conceptualises proficiency along a continuum that denotes how well adults use information to function in society and the economy.

These surveys linked 'literacy proficiency and an individual's employability.' Kirsch (2001) provided a counterbalance for this view, casting the surveys in a broader context and referring to the IALSS as a means of presenting information from large scale surveys to assist policy makers in the decision making process.

However, in their concentration on groups of learners rather than individual educational progress, such meta-analyses involve serious limitations. Lipsey (1992: 132) cautioned that meta-analysis must be applied with great care and vigorously scrutinised from multiple perspectives if it is to yield valid results. In

the view of Lipsey (1992:120) these limitations 'bring it well short of the potential inherent in the technique', which he connected with a lack of subtlety in the methods.

In his view, the emphasis in meta-analysis on statistical significance is a 'major shortcoming', in particular the tendency of meta analyses to be:

> confined to estimating mean effect size with little attention to probing variations in treatment, respondents and outcomes that would better reveal the circumstances of more and less effective implementations.

The size of study facilitated by meta-analysis is demonstrated by research undertaken by Jeynes (2012) into parent involvement in learning to read. This involved meta-analysis of 51 studies, "examining the relationship between various kinds of parental involvement programmes and the academic achievement of pre-kindergarten 12th grade school children. The study recognised (2012: 732) that meta-analysis was restricted to analysing the existing body of literature and that "the social scientist is restricted to addressing the same research questions addressed in the aggregated studies". However, the study found that parental involvement was generally associated with higher scholastic results and formed a sound basis for backing by teachers of what parents were doing at home.

Graham and Perin (2007) focussed on writing instruction for adolescent students involving a meta-analysis of writing intervention literature drawing on 123 documented experimental and quasi-experimental studies. They calculated an average weighted effect size for interventions, ranging from grammar instruction to goal setting and peer assistance as means of supporting the development of strong writing skills needed to help adolescents to gain the benefits of literacy against an advanced technological social background.

Thorn (2009) reported on the International Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Surveys in the OECD Region, which had drawn on a functional definition of literacy (2009: 7): 'using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential.' In 2012, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) undertook the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) in Literacy and reported in the following year. The

Programme built on earlier studies of literacy in the 1990's in order to 'facilitate an appropriate assessment of the broad range of literacy skills required for the 21st century'' linking literacy skills and employment. Literacy skills were seen as 'an important determinant of the life chances of individuals and of social and economic wellbeing at the level of nations.' This study drew on a definition of literacy emphasising the 'ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts' and involved 'a continuum of learning, enabling individuals to achieve their goals and to develop their knowledge and potential to participate fully in their community and in the wider society.' The definition did not, however, involve writing skills. Lack of literacy skills thus defined were connected with low wages and poor health and 'highly literate adults' were more likely to experience positive social and economic benefits. This involved a series of international comparative studies to provide participating countries with information about the literacy and numeracy skills of 166,000 adults aged 16 to 65 in 24 countries. These studies examined the relationship between literacy skills and the economic and social characteristics of nations.

Quasi experimental research involves identifying a comparison group through matching methods where it is not possible randomly to select a control group and can take place before project or following project implementation. Such studies have tended to be used when, for example, 'ethical constraints prevent withholding effective treatment from needy people' and retrospective data studies in the context of literacy research are a form of quasi experimental research favoured by Government Department to demonstrate the effectiveness of Government funded programmes. In recounting his experience as a senior Civil Servant in the Home Office, Faulkner (2014) referred to the natural attraction of Governments to basing policy on evidence but he observed the attendant risks to authority and credibility.

Examples of quasi experimental literacy research include those by Brown, Pressley and Van Meter (1996) on transactional strategies with slow-achieving second-grade readers; and by Graham and Perin (2007) on strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools. A quasi experimental observational study was undertaken by Melhuish *et al. (*2008) on the effect on three year olds of Sure Start programmes, which were 'offering integrated services that will improve outcomes for young children and reduce

inequalities between the most disadvantaged and the rest' through Children's Centres. The study found that children growing up in these areas had better social development, with more positive social behaviour and greater independence than those in non Sure Start areas. In Sure Start areas, risk of negative parenting was less than in non Sure Start areas and parents provided a more stimulating home-learning environment. Even though the effect sizes were small to moderate, they were sufficiently large to be of policy significance in view of the fact that they applied on a population-wide basis, and were relevant to narrowing the gap in development between deprived children and the rest of the population. Programmes were deemed to be moving in the right direction.

A study by Pressley, Graham and Harris (2010) focussed on the state of educational intervention research as viewed through the lens of literacy intervention. Fagan and Iglesias (1999: 243) studied the effects on 'fathers, father figures, and their head start among children of father involvement programmes.' These studies produced findings, which suggested a positive association between high level participation in such interventions, including increased father involvement. Children in the high participation group showed higher mathematics readiness change scores and children in the low participation comparison group showing significant increases in behaviour problems. There is an inherent practical difficulty in this type of research, acknowledged by Hollin (2008: 95): that 'the greater the number of variables to be matched, the more difficult it is to find exact matches for the purposes of this type of research.' Both the quasi experimental and meta analytical studies cited might be a flimsy basis for new introduction of programmes or to reconfigure existing programmes. The effect size is modest, making it difficult to draw general conclusions from the studies (Lipsey 1992:132). In their study of Sure Start programmes, Melhuish *et al.* (2008) expressed frustration with the quasi experimental study design they had adopted. In their view, a randomised controlled trial would have been the strongest evaluation strategy 'but government decisions precluded this possibility.' They observed that the study design they had adopted was 'the most robust possible but study design alone should not decide the credibility of evidence about public-health interventions.'

The form, methodology and content of such studies might be said to replicate and reflect Cicourel's recognition of literacy a locus of regulation and control, as already cited (Cicourel,1976, cited in Jupp and Norris, 1993). Other studies were more attuned to the personal impact and wider social context of illiteracy, including one by Jama and Dugdale for the National Literacy Trust (2012), which revealed that one in six people in the UK struggled with literacy. They pointed to the link between low reading age, impaired attainment at GCSE level and poor levels of full time employment at the age of thirty. More recently the National Literacy Trust (2018) estimated that it remained the case that one in six, or 7.1 million adults in the U.K. have 'very poor literacy skills.'

These are also depressingly consistent features of the adult prison population and among young offenders and Army recruits. In 2015, A report by Kendall and Hopkins (2015) on the Shannon Trust's 'Turning Pages' reading programme in prisons reported that 50 per cent of prisoners in the UK were functionally illiterate. Half of the 85,000 people then incarcerated had a reading age of 11 or lower, with 20 per cent falling well short of that mark. Many prisoners were, in the words of the Shannon Trust, 'completely illiterate.' Overlaps between offending, disability and Army recruits in terms of poor literacy are clear in the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit Report (2002), which identified the incidence of disability among prisoners (46 per cent) and mental ill health (78 per cent) of all prisoners. In 2013, the House of Commons Defence Select Committee Report on the Education of Service Personnel estimated that 39 per cent of Army recruits had the reading age of an 11 year old or lower.

The 'proven correlation between illiteracy, innumeracy and offending' is reinforced by Natale (2010), who found that 52 per cent of male offenders and 71 per cent of female offenders had no qualifications. Just under half (49 per cent) of prisoners were excluded from school, more than one in three have a reading level below Level 1 and 75 per cent in Level 1 writing. Only one in five prisoners were able to complete a job application form. The link with unemployment was stark: 69 per cent of those in prison were unemployed at the time of imprisonment and around two thirds of those who do have a job lose it whilst in custody and 76 per cent of prisoners did not have paid employment to go to after release and half of all prisoners did not have the skills required by

96 per cent of jobs. Employment was said by the researchers to reduce re-offending by between a third and a half.

However, in its attempt to clarify issues which have impacted on lack of literacy, research into offenders and literacy can also unintentionally separate and stigmatise young people with dyslexia and language and communication needs as potential offenders. The Bercow Report (2008) emphasised the importance of early identification and intervention to maximise each child's chance of overcoming communication needs in order to avoid: 'multiple risks' ranging from lower educational attainment to behavioural problems, emotional and psychological difficulties, poorer employment prospects, challenges to mental health and, 'in some cases, a descent into criminality.'

Research by Svensson, Lundberg and Jacobson (2003: 667) into 70 inmates from 5 juvenile institutions in Sweden, cast doubt on dyslexia as a determining factor of delinquent behaviour. They noted a background from infancy onwards of severe social and emotional problems which interfered with positive experience of literacy and literate culture. This, in turn, makes their socialisation more difficult and 'increased their risk of permanently occupying a marginalized position in society with long term unemployment and minimal participation in the democratic process.' The concept of unfavourable experience of literacy and literate culture has been linked with several changes of teachers, periods of absenteeism and truancy. Jovanic (2011) also identified sub optimal conditions including poor linguistic stimulation, and lack of emotional and cognitive support as risk factors for later conduct problems. Research by Gilbert *et al.* (2018) explored the link between literacy and life expectancy in England through health and socioeconomic factors, and the National Literacy Trust (2018) underscored the importance of health and socioeconomic factors as vital transmission mechanisms between literacy and life expectancy. They showed through their analysis that inequalities in the nation's life expectancy and literacy levels are deep-rooted in local communities. The report found that children born into communities with the most serious literacy challenges have some of the lowest life expectancies in England, leading to the recommendation that local solutions were needed to address the challenges and reduce these inequalities.

3.8 LITERACY: THE GIFT OF EMPOWERMENT, EMANCIPATION AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

In my development of the conceptual model (Section 3.2), I have referred to the amorphous concept of power. Literacy provides a form, an embodiment, which serves to articulate the impact of power structures and exclusion on those who are the focus of this research. I have traced the significance of this through an exploration of discourses of literacy in an historical context, followed by outline of policy approaches to literacy and an exploration of the potentially transformative combination of critical literacy, individual agency and capability.

(a) Discourses on the History of Literacy

E. P. Thompson (1991) referred to the almost mythical significance attributed to literacy in the eighteenth century and Cook-Gumperz, (2006: 35) referred to the view of literacy at that time as an 'essentially pluralistic conception' as part of a multiplicity of skills for the exchange of ideas through written words. They outlined the subsequent changes to a more stratified view of literacy in which schooled literacy was differentiated from everyday uses of literacy. Lack of this 'schooled literacy', is a metaphor for wider forms of deprivation and one which has wider contemporary ramifications for the individuals concerned.

Graff (1981) referred to the breadth of responses to perceived problems of literacy and illiteracy as a reflection of the value accorded to the subject and reflecting contemporary crises – economic political and cultural. Brockmeier and Olson referred to literacy as providing a perspective, an 'episteme' that organises much of the current work in the human and social sciences. (Brockmeier and Olson, 2009, cited in Olson and Torrance, 2009: 5)

Such a level of interest also reflects an idealised view of literacy, which sees it as 'the route to social and democratic development' and the 'final milestone on the road to Utopia' with 'an undoubted and unquestioned value for achieving fulfilling, productive, expanding and participating lives of freedom' (Olson and Torrance: xvii).

Levi Strauss adopted a sceptical view of the power of literacy (Levi Strauss, 1961, cited in Olson: 9):

Literacy is not the royal route to liberation but also is as often a means of enslavement.

Indeed, Clanchy referred to reading and writing of a standardised national language as the means by which 'the ideology of the dominant group' is enforced, especially by the expectation that everyone has to 'measure up to the standard of literacy required by the State and graded accordingly' (Clanchy,1979, cited in Olson and Torrance: xiv).

The Organisation for Education and Development (1980) stated that literacy was 'coined as an antithesis to illiteracy' in 1883 (OECD, 1980, cited in Janks, 2010: 2) and, in this context, Janks also observed that most languages contain no word for the concept of literacy. However, Clanchy (1981:16) cited the Roman origin of the distinction between the *literatus* and the *illiteratus*, the educational and class distinction between clergy and laity in medieval England. Thomas (2009: 358), referring to the ancient Greeks in her review of the origins of Western literacy, observed:

> We may guess that the elite kept at least one step ahead in the educational attainments that maintained their cultural and political superiority.

As Street noted (1995: 335) a review of the history of literacy tends to support the view that the binary approach is not confined to classical antiquity or medieval views of the world. Goody, 'the primary spokesperson for the great divide' referred to drawing distinctions between 'the oral and the literate, the traditional and the civilised, the primitive and modern, the underdeveloped and developed, and between spoken and written language' (Goody,1977, cited in Brockmeier, and Olson, 2009: 11).Turin (2013: 174) identified the ever greater focus on universal basic literacy, especially as promoted by international organisations working in human development and education, as the principal driver behind the decline of oral culture.

However, Hajnal challenged this distinction (Hajnal, 1932, cited in Clanchy, 2012: introduction, para. 19):

> Are we willing to contract at any price spoken and written language as agents of civilisation, considering the first as an obstacle to its progress and the second as its active promoter?

Other distinctions in the context of literacy include those between passive literacy which Cressy (1980) defined as reading without knowledge of writing, and active literacy in which both writing and reading are mastered. Cressy also drew attention to a distinction between the functional uses of literacy, which dominate current policy on literacy learning and pedagogy, and the aesthetic and spiritual approach to literacy. An aesthetic stance on literacy was defined by Many et al. (1995: 166) as one in which 'the reader's attention is on the lived through experience of the story and the experiences, thoughts, feelings, images and association are evoked.' Graff (1981: 2) referred to the 'the dogma of progressive thought: that universal literacy is no less than the final milestone on the road to Utopia', based on the eighteenth century Enlightenment view. Disch contrasted this with the twentieth century, utilitarian view of literacy as a means of spreading practical information (Disch, 1973, cited in Graf, 1981). Street (1984) referred to another division of opinion: whether literacy is taught or learned naturally.

Strauss recognised that the medieval distinction between clergy and laity in relation to their facility with literacy arose more from the function of the offices to which a formal education gave admission than the education itself (Strauss, 1981). Brockmeier and Olson (2009: 11) noted that such attitudes to literacy originate in 'class and privilege' and that they act as a 'guarantee of the epitome of Western civilisation and civilisation itself.' This reminds us of the ways in which definitions of what constitutes literacy, its lack and the various forms of literary pedagogy and learning have been captured and retained by those who hold the reins of power. It is possible to link these historical contemporary distinctions with the concept of habitus, which I have outlined earlier in this literature review.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1991, cited in Janks, 2010: 200) explained 'our unconscious way of being that embodies beliefs, values and ways of doing' with literacy coming to be seen as (Janks, 2010: 3): the 'mark of a liberally educated person', with connotations of the 'civilised, cultured, genteel, lying just beneath the surface' as early as in the sixteenth century

It is helpful to read Clanchy's analysis of the nature of literacy (1979, cited in Olson and Torrance 2009: xiv) that it 'remained as much a preserve of an elite

of literati in 1900 as it had been in 1200.' He also noted that, prior to the 'age of record', most educated people did not write and that medieval writing was mediated to the 'non literate' by reading aloud and or by the preference, even among the educated, for listening to a statement rather than examining it in script. Olson (1994: 4) noted that the supposed superiority of writing to speech is based on the view that speech is 'loose and unruly.' and that writing is coming to be seen to provide (1994: 8) a 'model for speech itself.'

Clanchy (1981:19) noted that prejudice in favour of literacy tends to see writing as an indicator of progress; and the view within modern society that those who cannot write are as a 'potentially subversive minority.' He warned of the danger of applying such assumptions about the conduct and meaning of literacy in our world to earlier cultures (1981: 7). However, Olson (1994: 8) drew attention to the fundamental dependence of writing on speech and that 'all human languages have a rich lexical and grammatical structure capable, at least potentially, of expressing the full range of meanings.' Thomas has reminded us that, in the ancient world, so many activities relied on oral presentation that 'illiterates were not excluded to the extent they are today (Thomas, 2009, cited in Olson and Torrance, 2009: 358). In the ancient world, much could be achieved without the written word.' She described the reliance of 'illiterates' in ancient Egypt on a network of literate relatives, raising an intriguing parallel with Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus and Apple's (2001: 415) observations on its practical application in the context of parents' ability to 'work the system' in their communication with schools as referred to earlier in this literature review.

Janks (2010: 3) drew attention to the need to progress beyond a binary approach to literacy and to recognise that each form of literacy produces skills, which are specific to that particular literacy. Strauss (1981: 96) noted that, in the German Reformation, the distinction between literate and oral cultures 'interpenetrated so deeply and at so many points that neither could have flourished independently.' This interdependence also occurred in the English Reformation, when translations of the Bible by Wycliffe and Tyndale enabled lay people to read and understand Scripture and, in the intervening centuries, the educational hegemonic bonds have gradually been loosened for pragmatic reasons through a process, which Thomas (2009: 358) described as a gradual 'democratisation' of knowledge and 'loss of hegemony' following the eighteenth

century Enlightenment. Brockliss and Sheldon (2012: 1) made it clear that this was for more than purely altruistic reasons and that Governments considered 'the material as well spiritual benefits from educating the poor.'

In her outline of the democratisation of knowledge, Thomas (2009: 359) described:

> the reliance of civil society on literacy… facilitating communication, aiding the storage and retrieval of information, broadening intellectual horizons and helping to fashion collective identities that eased social cohesion.

This process led to standardisation of spelling and grammar in the nineteenth century, which were also seen as means of reinforcing a sense of national identity. Graff viewed literacy and schooling as 'important to occupational and economic progress', and as a process of 'training in being trained' in industrialised nations' (Graff, 1981, cited in Long, 1993: 198).

Through these slow processes, a form of social 'compact' was formed: with the elite retaining a form of literacy, which involved extemporising and composing poetry, speaking, declaiming and public oratory (Thomas, 1992: 359). Germane to the issue of policy development on literacy was Clanchy's reference (2012: chapter 10, para. 1) to:

> literate techniques, which are so necessary to modern western society and education in them is so fundamental part of the modern individual's experience that it is difficult to avoid assuming that literacy is an essential mark of civilisation.

He referred to literacy as the 'shibboleth of modern societies', through individual demonstration of acceptance of and success in 'the industrialised schooling process.'

Clanchy (2012, introduction, para.18) summarised this:

> It indexes an individual's' integration into society, it is a measure of the successful child, the standard for an employable adult.

I would argue that this constraining perspective lies at the heart of issues of policy development on literacy with serious ramifications for those who do not demonstrate 'schooled' literacy, including some of the participants in this research.

(b) Policies on Literacy Learning

Keefe and Copeland (2011: 98) referred to the 'routine denial of opportunities for literacy instruction' and to a definition of literacy which leads to positive denial of opportunities for literacy instruction:

> The definition of literacy used by educators, policy makers, researchers, individuals with disabilities and their families must be one that will presume ability and therefore lead to higher expectations, increased access, and more inclusive educational opportunities for all people.

One of the practical applications of a hegemonic theory of education is described by Houghton (2010), whose four literacy discourses, previously referred to this literature review, were presented as a number of individual case studies. The findings clearly indicated that the literacy as skills discourse, based on a functional understanding of the nature of literacy, now dominates, having been imposed by policy-makers and embedded in the power structures of educational institutions. However, Olson (1994: 11) stated the need for functional literacy to be interpreted in the context of the activities of the individual and in terms of 'functional for what?' or 'functional for whom?' rather than as a universal commodity.

Government policies on literacy can also reinforce power structures through their definitions of what constitutes literacy and their prescriptions for literacy learning and pedagogy. Mayo (2003) in his concept of the hegemonic discourse in adult education depicted a search to convert educational goods into 'consumption' and a will to recast learners as consumers of 'educational goods.' Tett and Maclachlan (2008:666) referred to the structures and power relationships which operate within current Adult Literacy and Numeracy learning programmes. They also noted (2008: 659) the inbuilt tendency of such programmes to define learners as 'useless' and to be characterised by the dominance of a discourse of vulnerability and protectionism. Those who do not demonstrate "schooled" literacy as embodied in the National Literacy Tests, might be seen as a threat to society. The pervasive emphasis is on learner deficits, rather than strengths, defining them as (2008: 659): 'unable, stupid; lacking in the dignities given to the privileged.' Freire observed that this can lead to an interpretation and use of education by the 'social action apparatus' in which the oppressed become welfare recipients 'in need of the 'cure' of literacy'

(Freire, 1994, cited in Roberts, 2000:106) and of forms of integration, when they are not marginal to society but have always been inside.

Freire was clear that 'the illiterate' is oppressed within the social structure and that 'illiteracy' reflects or manifests but is not the cause of wider structural inequalities (Freire, 1994, cited in Roberts, 2000: 107). Fergusson, (2004: 292) defined poor literacy as 'exogenous forms of exclusion which prevents participation in social and cultural networks.' Fairclough's theory of the deficit discourse surrounding literacy (Fairclough, 2003, cited in Hamilton and Pitt, 2011: 362) linked it to 'the neoliberal order of discourse, which reconfigures the concept of citizens' rights to education and welfare into a relationship of mutual obligation within the logic of global capitalism', placing the blame for lack of literacy and the responsibility for acquiring literacy on the individual learner.

The Centre for Social Justice (2014: 20) made it clear that the provision of such learning might be limited and ineffective for some ex-offenders. They quoted a persistent offender who sets out the problem and the potential solution with some lucidity:

> Community work is an easy way out I did crime for four years and am still on community service so why should I stop? The work is easy and I meet other guys there who are in the same situation. Nothing comes out of the work we do only more crime – I would like to get settled in a flat and help with my education but we never get advice on that.

The reinforcement of the links between punishment and literacy learning has been established by the contemporary 'specified activity' of literacy learning within Community Punishment Orders, replacing Community Service Orders. Whatever the rehabilitative intention, the link between punishment and literacy learning makes for an uneasy association but, in my experience of teaching such groups, it is one which can be beneficial for individual ex-offenders in the acquisition of new skills and the raising of self esteem.

A focus for this study is whether and if so how participants experience and, in some cases, overcome these constant tensions at individual level. This has provided a particular link between the concept and experience of agency and the findings of this research.

3.9 A REFLECTION ON THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND ITS LINK WITH THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My research methodology has been is influenced and driven by the need to challenge and reassert the emphasis in much of the existing research, which has been on individual deficit rather than on the impact on them of social structures. The body of existing research also makes little attempt to focus on the sharing of vulnerabilities by the groups I have studied and there is a lack of emphasis on the strengths and strategies developed by individuals to overcome personal crisis.

This has led to a review the research questions in the light of the literature review:

1. Which particular social and educational experiences have affected participants' access to adult literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation programmes?

2. What, in the participants' experience are (a) the key episodes in which lack of access to literacy learning and dissociation occurred and (b) the transition points to literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation? (Transition points include the passage between discharge from the Armed Forces and commencement of literacy learning or vocational rehabilitation; or between development of a disability or release from prison and the commencement of such programmes.).

3. What are the features of effective learning and vocational rehabilitation programmes in preventing the cycle of disadvantage?

I concluded that these research questions needed to be supplemented during research interviews by questions drawing out information, which could be expressed by individual participants in their own language and on their own terms. This process was crucial to my reflection on the impact on research participants of social structures and on the critical importance of their use of their personal agency. Thus my questions have drawn on the ability of personal narrative, as Ricouer has recognised, to 'bridge the gap between personal experience and social structure' (Ricouer, 1980, cited in Townsend and Weiner, 2011: 6). In similar vein, Rhodes (2008) and Townsend and Wiener (2011)

stated the link between the ways in which narratives point to the role of self-understanding and individual agency, in the search for more legitimate lifestyles and management of the process of living. Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf (2005: 3) also linked such attempts to account for individual agency with evidence 'rooted in autobiography, eye witness statements or personal narrative.' These approaches have informed my choice of my research methodology, which I have addressed in the methodology chapter.

Chapter 4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter, I describe my choice of methodology for exploring the research questions, the underlying philosophical assumptions and the surrounding quality, validity and ethical issues.

This research focusses on five participants whose experience encompasses offending, disability and service in the Armed Forces. In the introduction chapter, I have acknowledged both the breadth of experience of these participants and the inherent limitations of a small sample size.

Critical literacy intersects with and gives expression to the critical transformative paradigm underpinning my research; and to the critical theoretical approach to epistemology as a shared search for knowledge. It also links inextricably with the life story research methodology, which is situated in the thought, language, reflexivity, aspirations and conditions of participants. My choice of the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Methodology was intended to enable participants to provide their own account of their life histories, drawing on their own accounts of their lives to reflect on their own reality.

I intended that, through these accounts, they would reflect on and regain their sense of identity, their agency and their capability - concepts which are further explored in the discussion and conclusion chapters. This is consistent with Freire's view, of critical pedagogy, as cited in the critical literacy chapter, as an opportunity for students to draw on their own reality. I am also aware that Freire's view of dialogical education had much to do with the concept of 'voice and mutual enquiry' as identified by Degener (2001: 4), encouraging a shared process of reflection between researcher and participant. Thus all aspects of the research methodology and the relationship between researcher and participants mirror and give expression to the interchangeable roles of teacher and learner.

My choice of methodology has also reflected the need to balance and recast the emphasis in much of the existing research in the area of social exclusion, which emphasises individual deficit rather than the impact of social structures on those who are its subjects. For example, existing research on ex-offenders and

unemployment is characterised by positivist, quantitative research methods, which tend to avoid a focus on individuals and emphasise single issues rather than myriad excluding factors. This has the potential to heighten their sense of marginalisation. The choice and form of these methodologies symbolises a deeper limitation: their failure to avoid focussing on the views of individual ex-offenders on the situations they have experienced. In the literature review, I have drawn on examples of such research studies in the context of unemployment (Berk, Lenihan and Rossi,1980; Bouffard, Mackenzie and Hickman, 2000; Lichtenberger, 2006), which demonstrated a lack of focus on the impact of employment programmes on individual ex-offenders. Meta-analysis exploring the link between crime and unemployment also emphasised these factors without regard to the situation of individual ex-offenders or the impact of employment on them. Similar issues arise in relation to studies on ex-servicemen and women and people with disabilities.

Much of the existing body of research on social exclusion also made little attempt to focus on the sharing of vulnerabilities by the groups I have studied and there is a lack of emphasis on the strengths and strategies developed by individuals to overcome personal crisis.

4.2 THE CONTEXT FOR MY CHOICE OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND RATIONALE

(a) My Choice of the Critical Research Paradigm

In this section of the chapter on methodology, I clarify the choice of the research paradigm described by Denzin and Lincoln (1998: 26) as:

> the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological premises.

Torres and van Heertum (2012) referred to the breadth of critical theory, transcending class alone to include:

> a more diverse set of oppressions including the interrelationship between class, gender race nationality and other lines of difference.

The link between my focus on critical literacy and critical theory was expressed by Freire (1972:10), for whom critical pedagogy involved 'application of critical theory' to 'fight repression, injustice, and bigotry and create more compassionate world' and to contest hegemony, individually and collectively.

The choice of an interpretive methodology has reflected the central, driving purpose of this research: to enable each of the participants in my study to use their own authentic voices to narrate the experiences, which have impacted on them and to enable me to interpret the subtlety and the frequently opaque quality of their narratives.

In part, my inclination towards the critical research paradigm and life story research has derived from the limitations of positivist approaches and What Works research in offering an adequate framework for conducting research. These researchers fail to engage and give voice to participants, to seek their views and still less to use the vernacular and ex offenders' own means of expression.

Eisner's version of qualitative approaches to educational studies based on an 'aesthetic versus a scientific or propositional form of knowing in human inquiry paradigm being mediated by the metaphor of experience' (Eisner, 1981, cited in Guba and Lincoln, 1994) focussed attention on lived events and what people make of them, drawing on their thoughts and feelings about their social and aesthetic experiences. Hammersley argued that 'interpretivists investigate independent, knowledgeable, actor constructed phenomena' (Hammmersley,1992, cited in Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 105). This linked with the observation by Merrill and West (2009) that 'narratives are qualified and partial truth shaped by the workings of language power and the interaction between the researcher and the researched.' Derrida identified a potential elusiveness of interpretation (Derrida, 1972, cited in Denzin, 1998: 3):

> There is no clear window into the inner life of the person, for any window is always filtered through the glaze of language, signs and the process of signification.

Denzin (1989: 43) also expressed these shared dilemmas for the researcher and participant in the following terms:

> A story that is told is never the story that is heard.All that people tell are self-stories pouring out the inner self to oneself.

I have addressed the dilemmas, complexities and inherent contradictions arising from participants' narratives on their life histories in Section 4.4(c) of this chapter 'Biographical Narrative Interpretive Methodology in Practice.'

Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011:118) spoke of paradigmatic controversies being especially marked in the divergences of understanding and practice between interpretive and critical research. They cited 'the call to action', coming partly as a response to the 'non utilisation of evaluation findings.' Carr and Kemmis criticised interpretive research as relatively passive and argued for activist research 'that extends beyond the epistemologies of traditional research to include human subjectivities' (Carr and Kemmis,1986,cited in Oldfather *et al.,*1999: 292). In terms of my approach to interpretivism, I note Burrell and Morgan's concept of the lack of 'critical purchase' of much interpretive research (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, cited in Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 105). They depicted the image of the social inquirer, who adopts the view of the disinterested theorist or disinterested observer and argue for activist research that extends beyond the politics that they call the 'society of regulation', as opposed to the 'society of radical change.' This set the scene for the choice of the critical transformative paradigm, which is elaborated in the following section of this chapter.

Guba and Lincoln (1994: 105) summarised positivism as: investigating 'how things really are' and 'how things really work' by means of 'verified facts established as facts or laws.' The knowledge of the way things are is conceptualised in the form of 'time and context free generalisations.' Its epistemology is based on the independence of both investigator and investigated and the whole approach is based on the investigator's capability of studying the object without influencing or being influenced by it. Values are prevented from influencing outcomes 'if procedures are correctly followed.'

Kincheloe and McLaren (1998: 273) observed that critical researchers readily point out the limitations of empirical research and they emphasised that the data derived from any study cannot be treated as 'simple irrefutable facts.' They drew attention to critical researchers' emphatic assertion that the meaning of an experience or an observation 'is not self-evident.'

Hammersley (2004:145) referred to positivism's claim to minimise or even eliminate research bias. Hammersley and Scarth (1993) made a laconic observation in relation to evidence based practice/What Works research: in their title: 'Beware of Wise Men Bearing Gifts', they alerted me to the need to

exercise a degree of scepticism about this form of research (1993: 489).They
argued (1993: 491) that:

> the notion of research based practice…. assumes too grand a role for
> research in relation to policy making and practice.

In the context of educational research Biesta (2010: 491) declared it to *be a*
flawed approach, stating that:

> In terms of epistemology there is a knowledge deficit; in terms of
> ontology an effectiveness or efficacy deficit and in the practice domain -
> an application deficit.

McGuire and Priestley made efforts to instil scientific rigour into methods of
crime prevention and crime, noting that offenders rarely have an opportunity to
express their views on their experience of the most effective forms of social
work (McGuire and Priestley, 1995, cited in Barry, 2000: 575). I have also
recognised, as previously cited in the introduction and literature review chapters
of this thesis, that ex-offenders (Wilson and Killingley 2005: 3) can be conscious
of feeling 'disappeared' from society, while aspiring to be acknowledged and
respected members of society in which they might one day be able to make
something of their lives

(b) The Critical Transformative Paradigm and its Relevance to My Research

Comstock (1982) viewed the critical method as based on dialogue rather than
observation or manipulation of participants and he spoke of the refusal of critical
social science to accept current social practices as the final context of
validation, regarding this as a form of denial of possibilities. According to
Hammersley (1992: 23), a realist 'sets out to provide knowledge about the world
and to describe the social realm as it is beyond all presumptions and
prejudices.' This makes critical research 'a challenge to the maintenance of
distorting ideas by the powerful and other agents.' More importantly, it is based
on the tenet that 'all men and women are potentially active agents in the
construction of their social world and their personal lives.' This chimes with
Egbo (2005: 267), who recognised the relevance of critical realism as a
'framework for researchers engaged in empirical work that is aimed at
transforming undesirable social realities.' She also acknowledged that 'critical
realism recognizes the importance of agency in research and sees social

transformation as an essential outcome of research in the human sciences.' This reinforces that the critical transformative paradigm is at the heart of the tensions between the concepts of power and individual agency. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 27) referred to the associated epistemological assumptions that 'what counts as worthwhile knowledge is determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge.' They were clear (2007: 26) that social behaviour is the outcome of: particular illegitimate, dominatory and repressive factors: illegitimate in the sense that they do not operate in general interest - one person's or group's freedom and power bought at the price of another's freedom and power. This has imposed a responsibility on me to recognise the inherent power imbalance between research participants and myself as a researcher and the need to adapt this research in recognition of this imbalance, especially in the context of my choice of research questions and the research interviews. Hammersley (1995: 126) noted that critical research is directed towards 'the achievement of progressive social change' this often being conceptualised in emancipatory terms.' He referred to the 'collaboration' of researchers with the oppressed in order to transform their situations. However, Hammersley also noted the 'highly contested' nature of such concepts as equality of opportunity, justice and oppression and, in the context of the critical transformative paradigm. I would have to add that 'transformation' is an equally ambiguous and controversial concept. The driving motivation for this research has been my wish to facilitate the reintegration into society of ex-offenders, former Servicemen and Women and people with disabilities. While this research has focussed on individual participants, the aspects of group identity adopted by participants and invoked by me as researcher have emerged from the research interviews. Geuss detailed the ontological assumptions of the critical paradigm: that social reality is defined from persons in society, sometimes from a 'distorted meaning perspective', which assumes 'that the particular interest of a subgroup is the general interest of the group as a whole' (Geuss,1981, cited in Mezirow, 1990: 10). This made it essential that I maintained a balance between the focus on themselves and their individual stories and their identification of themselves as soldier, ex-offender and person with a disability. I have also needed to recognise that they might have adopted a sense of identity, spanning these groups.

I have reflected on the choice of the critical transformative paradigm, its more 'activist' nature and the reasons why the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying this paradigm make it relevant and essential to this research (Altheide and Johnson, 1994: 485), centring on the ontological assumption that individuals have agency. I have been committed to giving visibility and voice to ex-offenders and to other participants in my study while retaining the authenticity of their individual experiences.

(c) Reflexivity and Agency as a Context for My Choice of Methodology

The process of developing a conceptual framework in support of this research has been informed by critical theorists, who provide insights into how power and domination operate especially in the transmission of language and literacy and the way these concepts impact on individual empowerment and identity. Critical pedagogy and critical literacy provide means of challenge and resistance to domination and provide the potential for empowerment through individual agency and identity. Bourdieu (1990: 15-16) referred to the potential of reflexivity to free intellectuals from 'their illusions - and first of all from the illusion that they do not have any, especially about themselves.' He also referred to academics' 'misplaced beliefs in illusory freedoms.' My preferred interpretation of the paradigm has been one which recognises and supports individual agency rather than the passive role implied in the use of the binary terms 'oppressed' and 'emancipated.' Calhoun put forward a definition of agency: 'the ability of actors to operate independently of the determining constraints of social structure' (Calhoun, 2002, cited in Tedder and Biesta, 2006: 5). Emirbayer and Mische went further in seeing agency as 'the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations' (Emirbayer and Mische,1998, cited in Biesta and Tedder, 2006: 971); and Berger (2008: 309) defined agency as involving 'the capacity to exert control and to some extent even transform the social relations in which one is enmeshed.'

The 'reflexive thesis' put forward by Smith (2003: 176) established the link between reflexivity and agency, based on Mead's (1934) view of 'the person as a socially constructed but reflexive and therefore potentially agentic being.' For Archer, reflexivity emerges from human biological makeup and our relationship

113

with the world. Thus 'it is the way in which human agency engages with social structures and has mediatory role between human agency and the social.' (Archer, 2007, cited in Farrrugia, 2013: 283). Gergen (1980: 39) echoed this in his reference to 'critical confrontation of any internal tendency, habit, association or feeling' and his affirmation of the possibility of undergoing 'internally generated transformation.'

In her research into the part played by lifelong learning in the rehabilitation of offenders in the Canadian correctional system, Flynn (2012: 1) linked reflexivity with individual agency. In her view, this lends credence 'to a critical realist perspective that structural and cultural forces condition, yet do not determine what participants actually do.' This has led me to examine the processes by which I have constructed this social reality, defined by May (1999) as 'endogenous reflexivity' and whether it is based on false assumptions about participants. In particular, do they feel excluded from society and disadvantaged or has 'internally generated transformation' led them to construct alternative means of identity and belonging?'

Peter Worsley (1997) pointed out that communities have their own ontological structures of great subtlety and sophistication and that these 'knowledges' are often not sufficiently appreciated. The researcher runs the risk of imposing ontological structures arbitrarily from their own already dominant culture. Worsley's observation prompted me to question whether I was imposing an ontological structure, for example, by assuming that learning and vocational training are 'solutions' to individual circumstances, whereas they might be viewed as constraints by participants, who have created a range of other solutions for themselves through their own agency. The semi-structured interviews, which were essentially interactive in style, provided the opportunity for participants to range across their experiences, enabling them to digress and encouraging me 'to reflect (and respect) participants' ways of organising meaning in their lives' (De Vault 1999, cited in Riessman 2000: 3). I took the view that this approach would ensure that I would, as far as possible, 'give up power and follow participants down their associative trails.'

Foucault, (1980), argued that the task of the researcher was to lift the barriers which prevent people from speaking for themselves. In the context of

imprisonment, for criminal actions, Foucault (1977: 14) stated that, for example, 'prisons are in towns but no-one sees them', and that 'making visible what no-one had previously seen may be the effect of using a magnifying glass.' He acknowledged that this process can mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer of material 'which … had not been recognised as having any moral, aesthetic, political or historical value.'

While I cannot make such claims for my research, I have offered a commitment to giving visibility and voice to ex-offenders and to other participants in this study while retaining the authenticity of their narrated experience. In the course of this research, I have had to address the issue of whether such visibility merely serves to highlight the sense of 'otherness' which might be experienced by participants in my study and whether my research risks over-emphasising or even heightening their sense of dissociation and social dislocation. However, there is evidence of levels of resilience, robustness and buoyancy among all the participants, which forms a significant part of the data analysis chapter.

(d) Critical Literacy and My Epistemology

Apple (2001: 415) speaks of the imperative in critical literacy teaching to include conflicts and social justice issues in society in order to avoid masking the real world and transmitting a 'faulty episteme' to learners. I recognise that participants' criticality and reflexivity is an important dimension in this research. These and their personal experiences have created fertile ground for development of their views of social justice and educational opportunity both for themselves and for others.

Indeed, I am conscious that, just as the roles of teacher and learner are intertwined in critical literacy learning processes, shared identities with my research participants (Shor and Freire 1987: 33) 'as critical agents in the act of knowing' are also mirrored by involvement in a shared search for knowledge through the research interviews and acts of interpretation. This is also borne out in the discussion and conclusion chapters of this thesis.

I now set my choice of epistemology in the context of my chosen research paradigm, for which a key determinant was the type of knowledge I intended to identify and how I could ensure that it would be 'valid knowledge' (Hammersley,

2008), especially for those providers and policy makers I wished to influence. I sought to uncover the experiences and perceptions of ex-offenders, people with disabilities and those discharged from the Armed Forces in order to cast their social exclusion and inclusion in a renewed perspective. Crucially, these included their accounts of the experience of social exclusion and attempts at social inclusion, including opportunities for literacy and vocational learning and the key transition points to those facilities. My intention as a researcher was to 'expose the social relations of inequity and injustice', which can be concealed, by drawing attention to the common experiences and shared vulnerabilities of the three groups of participants in this study.

I have placed this research in the context of Giroux's concept of 'joining the struggle to bring about another world', linking the emancipatory tradition with social theorising (Giroux, 1981, cited in Mayo 2009: 259) and acknowledging that this critical research in the emancipatory tradition has been driven by 'ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions' (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998: 265). Critical research provokes 'vibrantly polarised reactions' because it 'still produces undeniably dangerous knowledge - the kind of information and insight that upsets institutions and threatens to overturn sovereign regimes of truth' (Kincheloe and McLaren 2011: 286). It was essential for me to acknowledge that the 'way I shape the production and interpretation of knowledge' was influenced by my ways of seeing, the social location of my personal and professional history and the power inherent in former work roles. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 27) referred to the epistemological assumptions that 'what counts as worthwhile knowledge is determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge.' At the outset of the research interviews, I also acknowledged the possibility that my assumptions might change upon detailed analysis of the research findings.

I recognised that my role as a researcher, who is carrying 'epistemological and political baggage' (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2011: 265), imposed particular rigours on the epistemology I had adopted. This 'baggage' stemmed from experience of working with ex-offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces, when I had formed the perception that, in addition to experience of interrupted education, there could be denial in adult life of timely

116

access to educational opportunity and the undermining of its scope for social reconnection. Based on observations during my professional life, I held the view that this denial of opportunity could be particularly acute at stages of transition, including development of a disability, discharge from prison and return to civilian life following service in the Armed Forces. In the context of my previous professional responsibilities, I had observed that a possible loss of identity experienced in the course of these transitions could affect an already tenuous hold on a sense of social belonging with consequent effects on physical and mental health.

Reflexivity required that I consider the rationale for my decision to undertake such research, whether it constitutes (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 27) 'worthwhile knowledge' and how much this is determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge.' Shanahan and Neuman (1997: 209) adopted the position that 'research is one of our most useful tools for constructing knowledge' and that literacy research can make a difference, especially if it addresses important issues, is strongly driven by theory and is rhetorically powerful.

Andreotti (2014: 16) took this to a different level by reference to self reflexivity, which involves drawing attention to 'the complex constitution of objectives... the independence of knowledge and power and what is the sub conscious or unconscious in our relationship with the world.' This involves challenging the concept that meaning is objective and self evident, recognising that (2014: 16) 'our capacity to describe what we think is limited to what can be said, what is appropriate and intelligible both to ourselves and others' and that 'the languages we adopt have specific criteria for what is known and can be known.' These factors impact on my understanding and choice of epistemology for this research and on my interpretive framework.

Bhaskar referred to critical realism as 'transcending surface appearances' with the scope to 'reveal enduring social structures that ratify special interests and the status quo in society' (Bhaskar, 1986, cited in Egbo, 2001:268). Taking this further, Egbo (2005: 2790) concluded that 'critical realism challenges researchers to ask uncomfortable questions about taken for granted assumptions ......with the goal of increasing the life chances of those whom the

inquiry is about.' Carr and Kemmis summarised the goal of critical action educational research (Carr and Kemmis,1986, cited in Hammersley, 2004: 169):

> to restructure professional practice and thereby to transform the educational system and society at large not simply to produce knowledge that is relevant to educational issues.

The interactions among these different types of knowledge have influenced the positioning of my research and the choice of methodology, which has the potential to encompass all these knowledge layers.

Hammersley pointed out that the role educational research should play in relation to policy and practice 'is influenced by judgements on whether academic educational research should be integral to practice or ought to be judged as a value in its own right' (Hammersley, 2007, cited in Cherney *et al.,* 2012: 2). I have been seeking to influence educational and bureaucratic practice and policy, drawing on my perceptions and assumptions to uncover the experiences of ex-offenders, people with disabilities and those discharged from the Armed Forces and to enable participants in my research to cast their social exclusion and inclusion in a renewed perspective. Crucially, these included their accounts of the experience of social exclusion and attempts at social inclusion, including opportunities for literacy and vocational learning at the key transition points in their experiences.

Moore observed that self-reflexiveness requires the researcher to think about 'whose knowledge; what sort of knowledge; what constitutes the social?' (Moore, 1996, cited in Coffey,1999: 1). Altheide and Johnson drew attention to the 'partial, provisional and perspectival nature of knowledge claims' (Altheide and Johnson, 1994, cited in Mauthner and Doucet, 2013: 413). There is increased awareness that 'how knowledge is acquired, organized, and interpreted is relevant to what the claims are.' Guba and Lincoln (1994: 105) observed: 'facts are only facts within some theoretical framework' and Mauthner and Doucet (2013: 413) argued that 'research, which relies on the interpretation of subject accounts can only make sense with a high degree of reflexivity and awareness about the epistemological, theoretical and ontological conceptions of subjects and subjectivities that bear on our research practices.' They argued the need for epistemological accountability, making these conceptions as transparent as possible for the readers of our research accounts.

White (1997) referred to the concept of epistemological reflexivity, observing that, rather than relying on or clinging to naive realist epistemologies to judge social science interventions, critical analysis should be applied to research presuppositions. In the discussion chapter of this thesis, I have set out a reflexive, critical analysis of the impact of my findings on my research aims and assumptions. Malterud (2001) outlined the implications of applying reflexivity in this context: engagement with the limitations imposed by research questions on what can be found; how far the research study design has constructed the data and the findings; whether the research questions could be investigated differently from the literature review onwards; and to what extent this would give rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Willig (2001: 10) extended this thinking to critical language awareness and the need to understand that the same phenomenon can be described in different ways, giving rise to different understandings and constructions.

In the course of the literature review, I have highlighted that many of the limitations of research in this area, including the tendency to blame individuals for a social deficit without seeking their individual views, were expressive of the dichotomy between material and discursive views of social exclusion. Ward (2009: 238) suggested that 'in simple terms the focus on material definitions of exclusion obscures its discursive origins and tends to 'individualise' the problem', whereas those who take a discursive approach to social exclusion 'have focussed on representations, including the role of language and discourse in order to understand the outcomes' i.e. a perspective on a broader social and educational context, which I have sought through my approach to the research.

The focus of this research has been on individual life stories and I intended to take a discursive approach to their exclusion and to shift the emphasis away from individualising problems. There was an inherent danger that, in interpreting their compelling narratives, I might intrude and expose issues which are deeply personal and might further emphasise their vulnerability. I was also aware from the literature review of the potential for an imbalance of power between the researcher and participant (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). This required a scrupulous approach and led me to re-evaluate research questions in order to ensure that the literature review not only challenged me to fill gaps in the

existing body of research but also to apply the insights thus gained to my own research.

My investigation has centred on participants' particular learning and educational experiences and how these have affected their access to adult literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation programmes. The focus has been on the key episodes in which lack of access to literacy learning and dissociation occurred and the transition points to literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation. This approach had the potential to assume a linear form of progression in the participants' experience, which might not have reflected their experiences or might, inadvertently, have offered them a simplistic set of explanations for their exclusion from learning. This required me to adapt interview questions to the full breadth of their individual experiences and I decided to invite participants in their first interviews to start their accounts where they liked and to describe all the events which had been important to them in their lives so far. The impact of family and significant life events on them and their learning emerged as key themes in addition to the key episodes and transitions, which I had envisaged. This enabled a focus in the second interviews on the events, which they had highlighted as being important to them and then to link with their views on their most positive and most negative experiences of learning experiences and why they defined them in these ways. In the third interviews, I asked the participants to tell me about their best and worst experiences of learning. I also asked them what they would say to a policy maker about their learning experiences, thus enabling them to express their potential to influence an improvement in educational and literacy learning provision for others.

My research was based on an epistemological assumption, described by Rustin (2000: 42) that personal narrative is 'how we come to know what reality is' and is characterised by the 'the capturing of the particularity of lives.' However, I recognised that reflexivity presented particular challenges for the knowledge to be revealed by the choice of the biographical narrative interviewing methodology. Weedon posed the challenge: 'are subjects sources of self-reflective accounts or rather 'data to be accounted for ?' (Weedon, 1987, cited in Mauthner and Doucet, 2003: 413). In the context of language and texts in the constitution of social reality, Lawson referred to the impact of the postmodern turn in social thought' by which relations between the knower and

120

the known are recast (Lawson,1986, cited in May, 1999). Within the postmodern turn of thought, these are no longer to be transcended or confronted through reflexivity as issues in the path towards better understanding, 'but celebrated as an inevitability and defining of the limits of what can be known.'

This prompted me to a realistic re-evaluation of the research questions to ensure that the choice of questions was pragmatic and well informed, based on professional experience, accepting and even celebrating the limitations of what can be known. I appraised the epistemological assumptions about 'what counts as worthwhile knowledge, determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, *2007*: 27) and, in terms of the presuppositions underlying the research questions, whether I was imposing my interpretation of the significance of 'transitions' upon participants. I also needed to be clear whether these transitions were a bureaucratic invention having little or no significance to participants, especially in comparison to other transitions in their lives. Other challenges confronting me in these terms included whether the questions included in the biographical narrative interviewing structure served as a metaphor or as a reminder for the participants' negative experience of education, the criminal justice system or disability. There was also the issue whether lives could be 'segmented' in the way suggested by my interviews and, if so, whether this was likely to lead to better understanding of individual experience.

While I responded to some of these issues in the adaptation of the interview questions, they have required continuous critical reflection throughout this research; and a preparedness to review the assumptions underlying the questions and use of language, in order to ensure integrity of process and outcome. This has made for a complex background to my epistemological assumptions, relating to the conceptual framework for this research. I have been explicit about the ways in which participants are subject to coercive structures, which impact on them especially in terms of restricted opportunities for literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation. I have also pointed to ways in which such blocks can be challenged and turned around through individual agency, empowerment and the practices of critical pedagogy and the

negotiations, which are possible even within the same context of power relationships.

There are multiple perspectives on knowledge, which I have explored in the course of this research: the knowledge I wish to generate (Bannen 2018: 18), closely related to my understanding of the nature and purpose of literacy knowledge and practice; the types of literacy knowledge studied in existing literacy research; exploration of participants' knowledge of their experiences of literacy access and learning and its conversion into public knowledge; and recognition of the importance of self-knowledge as a researcher.

The crucial questions posed by Willis and Harris (2000: 77) focussed on 'what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge is of most value?' Research questions were designed to be a means to participant and researcher self-knowledge and insight and the transfer of participant voices into public knowledge. It has been central to my research objective to seek to uncover knowledge on a number of levels, both personal and public. In seeking knowledge about participants and their experiences of literacy learning, my objective has been to add depth to the analyses through research questions and the interview questions, enabling participants to give unfettered expression to their experiences of inclusion and exclusion from literacy learning.

(e) The implications of Critical Literacy and Emancipatory Literacy for my Epistemology

Linking with Bourdieu's concept of habitus or the 'accepted knowledge culture or linguistic practice by the dominant social group serving to reproduce the values of that group', Willis and Harris (2000: 75) emphasised that issues of class and power should not be overlooked in the context of literacy research. They drew attention (2000: 77) to:

> the important role which epistemology has played in the intersection of politics and reading. It serves as an explanation for how elite powerful groups with a shared interest to maintain their status have worked together to determine how literacy should be conceptualised, defined, taught and assessed.

Willis and Harris (2000:77) called for alternative inclusive epistemologies to address the hegemonic traditions of the past and to prepare new literacy research traditions for the future. This will involve resisting the 'ideological

domination and conformity that has plagued literacy research and practice' and replacing these with new traditions, which must be 'equitable and inclusive.' I take as the starting point in this critical emancipatory research the practical problems which are imposed on participants and a recognition (Comstock, 1982) that they might have understandings which might have been distorted by their social conditions.

Having already addressed the 'ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions', which underpin my research (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2011: 265), I confirm that Willis and Harris (2000) alerted me to the link between my research and epistemology in its broadest sense: the way literacy is understood as a form of knowledge, the epistemology underlying literacy research (Rex *et al.,* 2010: 94) 'whose and which literacies count?' and the choice of ontology and methodology which flow from those understandings. This links with their summary of an epistemological approach to understanding literacy as 'a phenomenon, an approach to understanding and representing it as well as a methodology ('or logic of inquiry') for answering a wide variety of literacy related questions.'

Bishop (2014) observed that different definitions of literacy are more than semantic: they create a heavily contested area, a political battleground. They represent distinctive philosophies and ideologies, which drive and are reflected in the epistemological assumptions adopted. In the introduction chapter of this thesis and in the context of my choice of definitions of literacy, I drew attention to the differing views on its nature, ranging from the functional (UNESCO 2005) to its potential (Freire, 1974) for 'developing the capacity for social awareness and critical reflection as a basis for personal and social change.'

Freire's emancipatory literacy encourages learners to think critically about their lives and the conditions of state and society. He viewed human agency as 'frail, especially among those with little power but it happens daily and mundanely' (Freire, 1970, cited in Maddox, 2007: 260). Freire (1970) envisaged literacy as a political act, involving individuals not only in asserting their right to read but also in recreating their relationship with society.

Holland juxtaposed self-objectification and self-direction (Holland *et al.,* 1998, cited in Maddox, 2007: 260):

humans' capacity for self-objectification - and through self-objectification and through objectification for self-direction – plays both into their domination by social relations of power and their possibilities for partial liberation from those forces.

Participants in my research have demonstrated their capacity to handle this paradox skilfully and successfully through their self-direction and manipulation of their circumstances, whether as a prisoner taking full advantages of learning programmes in prison, a bullied member of the Armed Forces fighting back against his aggressors, as a Union representative or as a Headteacher contesting monolithic educational structures. Their narratives have provided examples of their achievement of 'partial liberation' for themselves and for others in similar situations.

Hammersley (2004: 147) referred to the emancipatory nature of knowledge within critical research and its dynamic as the 'emancipatory interplay between action and reflection', creating possibilities for 'the re-examination of taken for granted constraints.' In the context of literacy research, this has the potential to engage participants as 'active creators of knowledge' rather than as 'passive receivers of knowledge.'

It was clear that that this transactional nature of my inquiry required a methodology which involves dialogue between me as researcher and participants to 'discover and excavate those forms of historical and subjugated knowledge that point to experiences of suffering, conflict and collective struggle' (Giroux, 1988, cited in Denzin and Lincoln,1998: 206). In the next section of this chapter I reflect on the implications of the choice of research paradigm and epistemology for my choice of methodology.

(f) The Implications of the Critical Emancipatory Paradigm and Epistemology for My Choice of Methodology

Having chosen the critical paradigm and epistemology, it was clear that these imposed a particular framework of disciplines which needed to find expression in my choice of methodology. Guba and Lincoln (1994) summarised the features of the many forms of the critical paradigm in terms of an ontology based on critical realism, an epistemology, which is transactional and a method which is dialogic and dialectical. This involves me understanding that socio-economic political cultural and gender factors affecting participants and me as

researcher are 'real'; and that, as a researcher adopting a transactional epistemology, I have linked in interactive ways with participants in order (Denzin and Lincoln 1998:207) to make the findings 'value mediated.'

Griffiths (1998) located critical research in the context of education and social justice, relating educational aims, dilemmas, tensions and hopes to social divisions and power differentials. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994: 138) noted that critical researchers generally work from the premise that certain groups are privileged, that 'the privileged oppress others' and that oppression is 'especially forceful when social and economic subordinates accept their unequal status.' Thus in the context of literacy research, the critical research stance addresses a broad range of societal, political, and economic barriers to literacy. Morrell (2003: 3) went on to place critical literacy research in the tradition of critical pedagogy, as expounded by Paolo Freire and proponents of pedagogical theory, who have rejected 'the dehumanising conditions promoted by a bankrupt metaphor of education.'

Freire and Macedo spoke of the empowerment of literacy learners through critical pedagogy as a means of 'resisting, contesting and transforming subjugation' through reading and writing about their experiences of subservience (Freire and Macedo, 1987, cited in Moore and Readance, 1998:12).

Giroux's stated commitment was to 'dignify Freire's pedagogy, forged in a kind of struggle to link education with justice' (Giroux, 1981, cited in Mayo, 2009: 259). Further, Tawney (1931/1965) set out his vision for 'cultivating energies now depressed and neglected' as a means of 'stimulating and not hampering the production of wealth.' I have placed this critical research in the context of social justice, as propounded by Rawls (1975: 94) in his emphasis on commitment by citizens to recognise each other as 'free and equal moral persons' as a basis for 'cooperative arrangements that benefit disadvantaged members of society.' This has involved me in enabling them to 'understand, judge and use' those findings. In the following sections of this chapter, I identify the rigours which such reflexivity imposes on me as a researcher.

4.3 INTRODUCTION TO BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE INTERPRETIVE METHODOLOGY (BNIM)

My choice of this methodology was influenced and driven by my commitment and practical experience of the values and practices of critical pedagogy and critical literacy. In the critical literacy chapter, I have explained that these values and practices are inextricably linked as means of challenge and resistance to domination and the potential for empowerment through individual agency, capability and identity. Not only through participants' learning but also by means of this methodology, critical literacy and critical pedagogy have provided opportunities for participants (Morrell, 2003:3) 'critically to understand their lives and how to engage actively with the world' and, as stated by Anderson and Irvine (1993): 82) to be 'part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations'.

As set out in the introduction chapter, my background has included involvement in the vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities, including those discharged from the Armed Forces. I have advised a national disability organisation on means of linking people with disabilities with academic and vocational training and have taught adult literacy to a wide variety of adult groups. Engagements with these learners in a professional capacity have provided me with some understanding (Finlay 2003: 108) of the potential of the 'process of making oneself more transparent.' Reflexivity as a researcher has encouraged me to apply insights gained in a professional context to enrich my engagement with research participants, for example, I have been open to the potential skills of participants to adapt to adverse circumstances and to draw on their individual agency to overcome such situations with few, if any, of the social and educational advantages, which I have experienced.

In this section I first of all outline the life story approach and describe how my chosen method, drawing on the biographical narrative interpretive approach, has echoed the critical transformative paradigm's ontological and epistemological assumptions. I clarify that these are expressive of the key concept of this research: that the agency of the individual learner is central to the transformative process embodied by literacy and other forms of learning and

that failures in the system leading of referral and access to learning should be revealed and rectified. I also acknowledge some of the potential weaknesses of the biographical narrative inquiry approach.

 Wengraf (2004: 2) noted that:

> an increasing proportion of the studies using BNIM deal with 'applied' issues, exploring how professionals do or don't intervene effectively with people in 'difficult situations' and how policy and practice should be developed accordingly.

In terms of the potential of this research to influence service providers and policy makers, this methodology had a particular value because it was intended to enable participants in my study to express their views on ways in which the education and vocational training systems have supported or failed them.

Rustin (2000: 46) stated the ontological assumption of biographical research methods: that 'individuals have agency; that biographies make society.' He pointed out that such an assumption is 'deeply encoded in Western literature with its repeated demonstrations that individuals interact with the world as agents, citing central characters from Austen, Le Carre and Euripides as examples of 'potent images of agency.' Relating agency directly to biographical research, Biesta and Tedder (2006: 6) stated:

> The biographical approach …. makes it possible to gain an understanding of the role of narrative life stories – in understanding relationships between learning and agency.

Rustin (2000: 46) was clear that the epistemological assumption underlying the biographical approach is that personal narrative is 'how we come to know what reality is' and is characterised (2000: 42) by the 'the capturing of the particularity of lives.' Riemann (2003: 6) also referred to the power of extempore narrative to uncover domains of social reality which one could not grasp in standardised interviewing.' Jupp and Norris (1993: 46) were clear that the critical paradigm brings a distinctiveness to analysis of texts as data and that key questions can be examined via documents and texts including those questions with 'emphasis on power and control in the relation between social groupings and how one group can exercise control over another.'

Thus my approach has been situated in the thought, language, aspirations and conditions of participants and is expressed through their own account of their

life histories. Apitzsch and Inowlovki (2000: 64) referred to the 'fertility of this theoretical and methodological approach' by reference to some of the empirical research contexts and projects, the majority of them focussing on those who are excluded from mainstream society and experience. The capacity for biographical research to 'transcend the conventional disciplinary boundaries between 'sociologists, anthropologists, historians, linguists and social scientists working in the field of education studies and those involved in social work' to which Apitzsch and Inowlocki (2000) drew attention has a particular relevance to this research. This is because the breadth of disciplines spanned by the biographical analysis has the potential to overcome the demarcations between policies of different Government policies and funding regimes in any engagement I undertake with them on my research findings.

Apitsch (1997: 59) referred to the widespread interest in this method among social scientists in the Soviet Union and the Baltic states in social work, medical and health sciences, and migration research 'in their attempt to reconstruct how people make sense of social changes in the past decade 'and how they work to prevent their lives from falling apart.'

I have also been mindful of the guiding principle developed by Riemann (2003) that doing biographical research is not about technical matters in the narrow sense but about ways of understanding the 'other.' Riemann (2003: 5) cited research undertaken by Christa Hoffmann-Riem on the biographical experiences of women migrants in Germany, which revealed the perspectives of those who are 'marginalised in the political discourse' and whose 'essential strangeness is affirmed in the mainstream social science literature.' Such an observation would be equally applicable to those 'others' I have studied: ex-offenders, disabled people and those discharged from the Armed Forces.

This is of particular relevance in the use of the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Methodology (BNIM). I recognised that, in this partnered reflexive process, the participants and I were undertaking parallel journeys, especially in the context of this research into transformative learning in which reflection is a 'significant component' (Taylor, 1997, cited in Laitinen, 2002: 14). I took particular note of the observation by Mezirow (1997: 9) that: 'transformative

learning is rooted in the way human beings communicate and is a common learning experience.'

In the next section, I explore the implications of reflexivity for my chosen methodology.

4.4 REFLEXIVITY AND THE BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE INTERPRETIVE METHOD

(a) Introduction

In this section I summarise my personal position and experience in relation to this research topic, the definition of reflexivity which I have adopted and the potential for depth and colour which it has lent to my research, while recognising that there are inherent flaws in this form of research which are the mirror image of the issues arising from What Works research. Rather than potentially 'distancing' research from ex-offenders and practitioners, it can lead to a loss of objectivity and over identification with ex-offenders.

However, reflexivity enables dialogical self-reflection in terms of self as practitioner and self as researcher. This has imposed a duty on me to achieve a balance in being an engaged listener, who could receive their narratives with emotional intelligence. It was also essential to be a dispassionate interpreter and raconteur and, uncomfortably, one who could not find solutions for issues arising from those narratives. In the later sections of this methodology chapter, I have described the conduct of interviews and my occasional verbal responses to participants' narratives. This approach was not planned but it developed naturally as the interviews progressed, making the process more interactive. Reflecting on this deviation from the strictly defined methodology in the course of the interviews, I explained this to myself in terms of conveying a possible lack of empathy with the depth of feeling being expressed if I had listened in disengaged silence.

Indeed, definitions of reflexivity, which emphasise the self-awareness inherent in reflexivity, have the greatest resonance for this research. Hall (1996: 26) defined reflexivity in research as 'recognition of and working with the notion that the researcher is constitutive both of the data and the final research product.' Gough (2003: 22) presented reflexivity as 'multi-faceted' and endorses use of

reflexivities in order to 'signify current plurality, flexibility and conflict', to move away from the notion that it can be captured once and for all and to avoid the apparent impoverishment of 'dwelling only on one level' (Gough 2003: 24) in one's research. Mezirow (1998: 186) distinguished between reflection, which 'does not necessarily imply making an assessment of what is being reflected upon' and critical reflection, which can lead to 'changes in meaning structures' and even 'perspective transformation.' Clayton (2013) referred to research reflexivity as 'ongoing self-awareness and scrutiny by researchers of several elements of an inquiry.' Mead has defined reflexivity as 'the turning back of the experience of the individual upon her or himself' (Mead, 1934, cited in Tsekeris, 2013: 72) and Delamont referred to it as 'a social scientific variety of self-consciousness' (Delamont, 1991: 8). Finlay (2003: ix) referred to reflexivity as conditional upon critical self-reflection on 'ways in which the researchers' social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impact on the research.' Based on 'the etymological root to bend back upon oneself', it demands 'acknowledgement of how researchers '(co)construct their research findings.'

I would add that this co-construction involves participants and myself as a researcher. Thus 'reflexivity reveals, occurs through, and aids negotiation of tensions between the various elements of a project' (2003: ix). Self-revelation is a key dimension of reflexivity in this research. According to Ruby (1977: 4) this involves:

> sufficient self awareness to know what aspects of self are necessary to reveal so that the audience is able to understand both the process employed and the resultant product and to know that the revelation is purposive, intentional and not merely narcissistic or accidentally revealing.

Mauthner and Doucet (2013: 424) argued that 'the more researchers can be self-conscious about and articulate their role in research processes and products, the more readers can engage in symbolic dialogues with the author(s) and the more their confidence in the work will increase.' Johnson (2009: 455) advocated a 'balance and integration of multiple standpoints.' By describing the 'general, normological knowledge domain and the contextual knowledge domains' such as life histories, my research can draw on multiple sources of evidence and can provide (2009: 449) 'multiple thoughtful perspectives' which will 'merge insights from different perspectives.'

Roos and Roos (1997) stated the importance of contextual understanding, if there is to be social merit and Bertaux (1990: 168) expressed the need for balance in order that:

> Behind the solo of the human voice music we can hear the music of society and culture.

In terms of the effect of process on interpretation and vice versa, a particular demand on my reflexivity as a researcher was in 'digging deeply' into the participants' narratives (Fish, Stifter and Belsky, 1991), reflecting on issues of emotionality in research; and the dialogical nature of the research process with researcher and participant being enlisted as co-researchers' in an engagement, which is equal (Smith 2003), recognising the critical importance of the participants' reflexivity (Flynn, 2012). Such forms of critical reflection tend towards a view of the 'fusion of horizons between researcher and participant' which have been fundamental to the relationship established with the participants in my research.

(b) Constructions of Self and Performance

Participants' biographical narratives were characterised by expressions of their individual agency, which had operated in extreme circumstances and had enabled individual forms of adaptation and transformation. These were, typically, described in dispassionate and objective terms during the interviews.

I was influenced to seek forms of interpretation, which look behind the meanings of the forms of expression adopted in their narratives, recognising that I was a link between participants and a wider audience and had a responsibility to represent their achievements fully. Central to this research has been an understanding of the importance for the participants of individual rationalisation of identity through self-reflexivity; and the power of constructing individual narratives, which support coherence and consistency of identity.

Goffman (1982: 23) viewed the construction of self as a series of presentations or performances to others and that the self is determined by the ways in which we arrange these performances. He regarded social interaction as a performance influenced by cultural environment, concerning the other people, constructed to provide appropriate impressions. In this way, the individual develops identity by interacting with others, through presenting desirable

impressions according to the social expectations in a particular sociocultural context. Buckingham (2008) distinguished between Goffman's front-stage and back-stage behaviour, the latter being more honest, with on stage impressions being contradicted and teams of performers disagreeing with each other. In their outline of 'the social psychology of self-hood', Davies and Harre (1990: 46) placed this as 'the classical dramaturgical model' with its focus on "role" as the determining basis of action.' They related this to autobiography which 'assigns parts and characters in the episodes described, both to themselves and to other people.' In their view, this is 'no different from a fairy tale or other work of narrative fiction.'

For Gergen (1971: 3), self-conception and a sense of identity are 'far more crucial to mental well-being than any other concept in the Freudian tradition.' In his view, it plays a vital role in the individual, private emotional life as well as being an important factor in understanding human social behaviour in relationship with others. He highlighted a paradox: that to be 'maximally adaptive' in a complex social environment is to be 'maximally vulnerable' to the experience of self-alienation (1971:90). Thus each new relationship requires a unique form of adaptation.

Bauman recognised that identity is 'becoming ever more problematic' in the context of developments, which are contributing to a sense of uncertainty and fragmentation (Bauman, 1996, cited in Buckingham, 2008:1). These developments include globalisation, the decline of the welfare state, increasing social mobility, greater flexibility in employment and insecurity in personal relationships. In this 'post traditional' society, people have to make a whole range of choices about 'their life destinations and relationships.' As a researcher, I acknowledge that I have also played a collusive part in this process by 'rewriting' participants' lives based on the meanings, which they ascribed to themselves.

(c) Biographical Narrative Interpretive Research Methodology in Practice

Biographical research embodies varied practical and conceptual approaches in what Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf (2005: 19) described as researchers' 'struggle for the best interpretation of their material.' Schutze identified 'open narrative form of interviewing' and the procedure for analysing narrative texts in

this historical context as the 'central interpretive research appropriate in biographical analysis' (Schutze, 2007, cited in Apitzsch and Siouti, 2007: 2). Riemann (2003: 1) referred to its potential as a 'holistic attempt to discover and to document how radical social changes have been experienced and understood by members of contemporary societies' through life histories. Schutze was convinced that the link between interviewees' utterances and their reality of action remained obscure in conventional social research.

Riemann (2003: 10) stated that the form of analysis which Schutze developed enabled him to recognise participants' commentaries on 'calming oneself despite ominous signs that things were getting worse' and 'extended sequences of arguing with oneself' which can be signs of the operation of individual agency. The revelatory potential of these analyses and the degree of empathy they can engender has made this research method especially well suited to my own research and to getting below the surface of what interviewees have told me. Participants have had the opportunity to voice their internal struggles and, in some cases, to describe their attempts to resolve external social pressures through their own determination.

In his interpretation and application of this methodology, Shutze explored means of research communication which were as 'simple and pure as possible' by paying more systematic attention to the formal features of narrative and by merging different interpretive traditions. Riemann (2003: 10) clarified that Schutze was not only interested in what people had to tell but also how they told their stories. People were asked to tell their life history as such as a means of organising extempore narratives and it 'became obvious very quickly that asking 'ordinary people' to narrate their life history 'worked.' Bamberg (2006: 69) emphasised that the establishment of a 'sufficient trust' relationship between researcher and participant before and during interviews was key to Schutze's approach. The formulation of a 'generative question' to elicit extempore narrative of complex events of relevance to the participant was also essential.

For example, Schutze's study of Hulya, a migrant worker (Schutze, 2003, cited in Riemann, 2003:1) revealed both the 'migrant worker's trajectory of exploitation and self-alienation' and 'her processes of learning and metamorphosis into …a highly individualized and emancipated woman.'In the

context of my research, this meant that participants' accounts of their life events in terms of social exclusion, experience of crime, imprisonment, injury or onset of disability should be analysed to uncover the essence of these events, how they impacted on them individually and how participants themselves make sense of and transform personal crisis.

Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf (2005) and Bamberg (2006: 70) described how Wengraf (2004) expanded previous approaches, including Schutze's, into what he calls the 'Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method' (BNIM) to serve the function of dealing with life-histories, with lived situations, tackling these ' by the same interview elicitation technique and subsequent interpretive procedures.' Chamberlayne (2005) noted that Wengraf favoured analysing primarily narrative interviews and a 'carefully constructed single narrative question', asking for a life story. I discuss the relevance of this approach to my research in Section 4.6 of this chapter on conduct of the interviews.

(d) BNIM and Identity Theory

The link between identity theory and my chosen methodology is expressed in Ricoeur's theories of narrative identity and narratives as a central form of self-interpretation (Ricouer, 1984, cited in Laitinen, 2002: 1). Thus self-identity is a 'matter of culturally and socially mediated self-definitions, which are practically relevant for one's orientation in life.' Laitinen (2002:1) described how Ricouer sees narrative identity as mediating between two extremes:

> harmony and dissonance, lived and told, innovation and sedimentation, fact and fiction, what is and what ought to be, voluntary and involuntary, exalted cogito and shattered cogito, the author and the reader.

For Taylor and Ricouer, narratives have a role in 'practical reasoning and conflict-solving in general' (Taylor and Ricouer, 1997, cited in Laitinen, 2002: 14). Laitinen summarised these understandings of narrative identity (Taylor and Ricouer, 1997, cited in Laitinen, 2002: 16):

> Our life is not just a continuum of separate events, but rather our past and future always structure our present experiences and action. We typically care about our lives as wholes, and it is narratives which make this possible.

This has contributed to my understanding of the need to reconcile and to make sense of the extremes of experience. It has also encouraged me to revisit the

research questions to ensure that they support and encourage these principles of narrative identity.

4.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

(a) Introduction

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to the imbalance in the power relationship between researcher and participant, which is inherent in all research and is likely to be especially acute in the context of biographical narrative research and critical transformative research. Riemann (2003: 6) warned about setting up 'asymmetrical situations' which are typical of the hierarchical relationships with which interviewees are all too familiar' Hunter (2010: 45) was also aware that 'when dropouts speak no-one listens' and how this might lead her to translate their words into more acceptable forms of narrative, due to her 'whiteness, middle classness and education.' Hunter (2010) summarised the ethical issues involved in this form of research: free consent, protection of participants from harm and respect for their dignity and welfare, non-coercion, participants right to withdraw from the research process and the protection of participants' anonymity and privacy.

The issue of control over the narrative raises the question of which is more important: historical truth or trust in the human relationship (Towsend and Weiner (2011). In the context of student autobiographies, Clandin and Connelly pointed to the nature of ethics as a dynamic ongoing interaction between people and a matter of knowing through relationships in which constantly shifting knowledge of oneself and the interviewees is a feature (Clandin and Connelly, 1988, cited in Townsend and Weiner, 2011). As a researcher, it has been essential for me open to continual self-questioning of the ethicality of the research I have carried out, which Townsend and Weiner (2011: 321) deemed to be 'the most ethical position of all.'

It has also been essential to build up an atmosphere of respect for the welfare of interviewees when undertaking initial interviews with them. This involved seeking their consent prior to embarking on biographical interviews, by providing guarantees of their anonymity and confidentiality within the terms of the Data Protection Act (1998) and by emphasising their right to withdraw at any stage of the process. A copy of the Consent Form, which was signed by all the

participants, is attached (Appendix 3). For two of the participants, this involved me in describing the contents of the Consent Form in simplified language at the outset of the first interviews.

This research was carried out according to the procedures of the Ethics Committee of the University of Exeter, in adherence to the British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines (2011) and in compliance with relevant legislation, including the Mental Capacity Act (2005); the Mental Health Act (1983); the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Data Protection Act (2018) and the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Ethical issues relating to this research include: informed and free consent, protection of participants from harm and respect for their dignity and welfare, non coercion, participants' right to withdraw from the research process and the protection of participants' anonymity and privacy (Hunter, 2010).

Foucault (2003: 43) warned social scientists of the dangers of 'further subjugation' of research subjects:

> We should not therefore be asking subjects how why and by what right they can agree to being subjugated but showing how actual relations of subjugation manufacture subjects

Townsend and Weiner (2011) also referred to the relative degrees of researcher and participant control over the narrative and the pitfalls of social stereotyping, while Josselson (1996: xii) noted that 'our participants may regard us as trying to be objective when, in fact, we purport to do no such thing'' and that 'it is still our interpretive framework that structures understanding.' Developing a trusting relationship is critical to the narrative process (Riemann 2003) and endorsed by the British Sociological Society (2002: 2), who stated that 'research relationships should be characterised, wherever possible, by trust and integrity.'

My application to the University of Exeter for Ethical Approval was framed in these terms, focussing on the practical issues which might arise. A copy of the University of Exeter Certificate of Ethical Approval is attached (APPENDIX 1). In view of my previous experience in the Probation Service and in residential training, I was also aware of the sometimes chaotic and unpredictable lifestyles, which could be a feature of the individuals included in this study and which

might affect their sustained participation for its duration. This made it essential to respond immediately to their willingness to participate in the study and underlined the importance of an interview schedule, which ensured that a minimum elapse of time between interviews. The Schedule of Interviews is attached (APPENDIX 6)

(b) Assessment for Possible Harm to Participants

In terms of assessment for possible harm, I recognised that the telling and re-telling of events and making sense of experiences, which might have caused participants pain, could cause distress for them and might heighten their sense of dissociation and social dislocation. I therefore established a selection and screening process in consultation with the referral agencies. Two participants were drawn from programmes run or commissioned by Dorset, Devon and Cornwall Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). Other potential gatekeeper organisations included those assisting with the resettlement of ex Armed Forces personnel into civilian life and those delivering Government funded employment programmes. All those referred were aged 18 years and above. Potential referrals were screened by the gatekeeper organisations in order to identify characteristics which would make them suitable for inclusion in my research. These included a criminal history, long term unemployment (12 months or more), homelessness previous service in the Armed Forces, experience of alcohol or drug addiction, a physical disability, mental ill health (with the exception of those who had experienced an episode within the previous month or those with recent/current contact with the mental health team; or who were on Section 17 leave under the Mental Health Act, 1983). I undertook to refer back to those agencies on issues of vulnerability which might arise in the course of interviews with participants e.g. signs of agitation or feeling unwell. I also undertook to liaise with those agencies if the sequence of interviews appeared to be precipitating mental ill health issues.

The referral agencies identified as being suitable those with the necessary knowledge and experience and with the capability, within the terms of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) to answer the questions, the capability to reflect and articulate, having the time available and readiness to participate in the study. A feature of this screening process was that I was not made aware of the previous

history of any participant, including possible criminal history nor did I receive individualised or aggregated data from the gatekeeper organisations. All potential referrals were contacted by the Devon and Cornwall Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and the other referral agencies, who forwarded to them an introductory letter to potential participants (APPENDIX 2). This set out the background of the research and emphasised their right to withdraw at any stage of the process. My sole contact with participants was during the interviews with them.

Thus Paul and Jo were referred to me, having indicated their interest in participating in my research at the end of the peer mentoring training event. They both had a disability, including mental ill health and offending behaviour, within the stated criteria. A similar screening process took place in an organisation supporting in the resettlement into the community of ex-servicemen and in a training organisation preparing unemployed people for employment. I then met Don, a former Paratrooper, who had experienced PTSD; and Pam, who had a learning disability and had never been in employment, was introduced to me by a Government funded employment programme. I approached Mark direct, knowing from my previous contact with him as his literacy tutor that he was dyslexic and had a physical disability.

I had emphasised to the referral agencies my understanding of and empathy for the potential vulnerability of participants in my research in recounting painful experiences and described in detail the means I would adopt in order to ensure that they were not damaged by the interviews. This made demands on my reflexivity as a researcher and made it essential for me to be aware of the need for frequent breaks in the interviews. If necessary, I would suspend the interview at any time if participants were showing signs of distress and resume at a later date.

However, in the majority of instances, a break or a shift to a slower pace of interview normally sufficed. Above all, I recognised it was essential to create a safe atmosphere for interviews, building up respect for the welfare of participants at my first interview with them. This was addressed by seeking their consent prior to embarking on the first biographical interview, by providing reassurance to participants, by guaranteeing that all they told me would be

confidential and that I would ensure their anonymity within the terms of the Data Protection Act (1998) and the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). Data has been transferred to and stored for the duration of the project on the University's U drive.

(c) Personal safety of Participants and Researcher

Work in Probation had involved responsibility for advising on the personal safety of Probation staff. In residential training, where there was extensive experience of avoiding potentially isolating and vulnerable situations and responding to potential volatility in personal interactions, I had also initiated staff training by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. This had provided experience of the practical arrangements, which were essential to maintain the personal safety of the participants and researcher in potentially emotive situations. For example, I was aware of the need to undertake interviews in rooms overlooked by staff or within easy access of assistance if this were needed. I was also experienced in setting up interview rooms in ways, which would enable me to leave the room quickly if I felt that my personal safety were being compromised and in order to protect participants from consequences of behaviour, which might have created difficulties for them. In the event, no such situations arose.

The first two sets of interviews were with ex-offenders referred by the Devon and Dorset Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). Prior to identification of potential participants, I had attended a course run by the CRC to provide ex-offenders with an insight into the purposes and methods of peer mentoring of other ex-offenders being discharged from prison. This was attended by seven ex-offenders and I was given the opportunity within the training programme to talk about the background to this research and to distribute copies of the letter and consent forms to potential participants. After the course, it was confirmed to me by the Manager that two of those attending had volunteered to be interviewed as part of my research and their CRC Supervising Officer screened them against the criteria outlined in Section 4.5 of this chapter. I was then invited to contact them and to set up interviews, which took place in the neutral setting of a building used as a base by local charitable organisations.

In the first meetings with them, I provided each interviewee with a document providing a background to the idea of the respondent life story and how it fitted

with this research and to obtain their consent for participation in the research process (APPENDIX 3). This enabled me to begin to build Schutze's 'sufficient trust relationship between the interviewer and interviewee', as already cited, and to help the participants to 'guarantee a spontaneous telling' of their story and 'not engage in accounting or other face-saving strategies' (Bamberg, 2006: 9).

(d) Ethical Issues arising from the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Approach to Research

There are potential weaknesses in the biographical approach, which have involved me as a researcher in ethical issues, to which I have been sensitive at each stage of my research. Flick (2006: 180) warned that a problem linked with the narrative interview is 'the sheer mass of unstructured texts produces problems in interpreting.' This restricts the number of cases which can be reconstructed and compared in terms of detailed textual analyses.

Gergen and Gergen drew attention to many challenges facing the narrative inquiry researcher, including the possibility of co-construction by researcher and participant, whether research findings from life histories can be regarded as valid and whether or not the researcher can legitimately represent the participant (Gergen and Gergen, 2003, cited in Hunter, 2005). There are also questions about whether the narratives told by participants represent memory reconstruction or facts. Ochberg (1996:97) advocated 'a way of listening to the stories people tell that systematically refuses to take them at their own word.' However, she also acknowledged that the stories told by people are a means of reclaiming 'some measure' of agency. Glenn and Ratcliffe (2011: 23) emphasising the value of silence and listening as rhetorical arts, posed the questions: 'who speaks, who remains silent, who listens and what can listeners do?' This imposed a responsibility to adopt a balanced approach to listening and interpretation, to be emotionally distant and empathic and critical towards the interviewee. Baron (2019) referred to the 'filtering' of knowledge by which we identify what claims make sense .and how' but which 'functions by recourse to our own self-understanding.' Also, Arendt referred to the problems surrounding the treatment of facts in the social and political worlds as if they were the equivalent the type of knowledge produced in the natural sciences

(Arendt, 1970: 6-7, cited in Baron, 2019:175). She added, however, that 'using facts to advocate political change is meaningless if they cannot be located in a narrative in which these facts make sense.' I do not underestimate the impact such challenges and potential methodological weaknesses have had on this research. While the ethical arrangements established by the University of Exeter guaranteed the privacy of the participants in this research, I was, on occasions, conscious of the need to avoid venturing into a quasi 'therapeutic' role in the course of the interviews and in the process of analysing and interpreting participant narratives.

I have endeavoured to overcome these ethical issues through my collaborative style of working with referral agencies and participants, empathy and emotional intelligence in analysis and my integrity as a researcher. I have understood the potential of inflicting further damage on already marginalised people if I colluded in the construction of false or idealised narratives.

4.6 CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEWS

(a) Introduction

I have been mindful of Wrigley's (2002) critique of Wengraf's (2001) description of the biographical narrative interpretive method that it is: 'as much about learning by doing as merely reading the literature and quite right too.' It was inevitable, therefore, that I explored and learned more about the method as this research has progressed, drawing on Schutze's insights into action schemes, trajectories of suffering and biographical schemes, by which the person attempts to shape their life. I combined these with Wengraf's emphasis on the distinction between lived life and the told story for both the narrator and the listener, which has also been applied by Rosenthal (2006) and Rosenthal and Fischer Rosenthal (2004: 259). I decided to conduct three interviews with each of the interviewees, wherever possible, within three weeks thus facilitating (Rosenthal and Fischer Rosenthal: 262) the 'temporal sequence of the biographical experiences' and 'the reconstruction of meaning'. This was informed by the methodology described by Wengraf (2001) and my design decisions on the construction of the interviews were informed by the interviews with the first participant, Paul, as a basis for interviews with the other

participants. All the interviews took place over a fifteen month period spanning the third and fourth years of my part time research,

Following the structure for interviews outlined by Wengraf (2004: 30), described in detail in the following section of this thesis, it was my intention in the first interviews, to allow the main narrative to unfold, without interruption, providing only non-verbal and non-committal responses, and not intervening in any way until the story ended. In the second interviews, I would then ask questions about the interviewee's biography on topics or themes already discussed by the respondent in their narrative. As far as possible, I would relate the material from this interview to the first research question, which related to the 'particular social and educational experiences which affected individuals' access to literacy learning and vocational rehabilitations programmes.' In the context of this research, this would be likely to include issues such as prior learning, poverty, unemployment, disability, learning difficulties, mental ill health, drug and alcohol dependency, experience of the criminal justice system. In the third interviews, I would invite the participants to reflect on their best and worst experiences of learning.

In the following review of my three interviews with the first participant, Paul, I describe how these values and intentions became modified as I adapted to the reality of the interview situation and reflected critically on what he had told me.

(b) Interviews with the First Participant

At the beginning of the first interview with Paul, I provided a background to the idea of asking for the respondent life story and obtained his signed consent for participation in the research process. Drawing on Wengraf's methodology (2004: 30), I then asked the following 'generative question to elicit an extempore narrative', also described by Spradley (1979: 86) as a 'grand tour' question:

> Can you please tell me your life story, All the experiences and the events which were important for you, up to now, Start wherever you like Please take the time you need. I'll listen first, I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes in case I have any further questions for after you've finished telling me about it all.

I allowed the main narrative to unfold, without interruption, providing only non-verbal and non-committal responses and not intervening in any way until the story ended. I then asked questions about his interviewee's biography but only

on topics or themes already discussed by him in his. Thus I explored points flashed up in the narrative and filled in noticeable gaps (Riemann, 2003). I then drew on the transcription of the interview and listened to the recording. I understood from Paul's response to my question, in which he appeared to draw a sharp breath, that the detail included required a degree of participant concentration, for which I had not fully allowed. However, his responses elicited a great deal of information, most of it in terms of a sequence of events, I became conscious of his, not unreasonably, 'testing the ground' with me. The full significance of this process became clear in the second interview, when he shared information of a highly personal and emotional nature.

Second interview

I asked Paul the following question:

> Please tell me more about the events and experiences you outlined to me in our earlier meeting.

Having examined the transcript of the first interview in some detail, I adopted a semi-structured interview approach for the second interview, asking questions about topics or themes already highlighted by him in his narrative. Wengraf described semi-structured interviews (2001: 5) as 'high preparation, high risk, high gain and high analysis operations' for which there should be a number of interview questions prepared but designed to be sufficiently open that the subsequent questions of the interviewer cannot be planned in advance but must be improvised in a careful theorized way.' The second interview involved a semi- structured interview format, framed around non narrative questions i.e. those arising from the first interview in what was said or not said but to which I wanted answers (Wengraf, 2004). Following Wengraf's advice, this approach enabled me in the first part of the second interview to ask narrative questions (identifying particular events).

This applied especially to the references in the second Research Question (Section 3.9) to the key episodes in which dissociation had occurred. For Paul, this related to the transition points or passage he had experienced between leaving Further Education and gaining employment and recommencement of literacy learning. The questions related to the length of time which elapsed before the commencement of the literacy programme in order to identify Paul's

experience of whether and how these key transition points were managed by the statutory and voluntary sector organisations and how effective these arrangements had been.

I noted that Paul had settled into descriptions of a more emotional and personal nature in the second interview, delivered in a dispassionate manner. This marked a noticeable change in Paul's demeanour and this modified approach to my questions since the first interview might have indicated that he had planned to tell more in the second interview about the core emotional events in his life, building on his earlier, more factual account.

The transcript of Paul's second interview is attached (APPENDIX 5).

Third Interview

This interview was also semi-structured and framed around the main question:

> Can you tell me more about your experiences of learning and training, including literacy learning from school until now? What were your best and worst experiences of learning and why were they the best and the worst?

This question and the open questions were related to research question 3: to identify the positive impact of assessment, teaching, work placement and employment on individual learner progress according to a range of hard and soft indicators. For example, hard indicators included qualifications, employment patterns and soft indicators included 'distance travelled' by Paul in terms of increased confidence and the individual progress he himself identified.

At the end of the third interview, I asked Paul what he would say if he had the opportunity to speak to an educational policy maker. This was a spontaneous reaction on my part to the events he had described.

(c) Critical Reflection on the Interviews with the First Participant

The experience of the first set of interviews challenged and refined the theoretical concept of reflexivity, which I have outlined in Section 4.4 of this chapter. I returned to Mezirow's (1990) definition of the three aspects of critical reflection: on the content; on the process or whether there is good enough evidence to make a fair judgement; and on the premise of the problem which Mezirow also calls 'critical reflection of assumptions.' Experience of interviews

144

with the first participant led me back to Lather's observation on 'a sincere attempt to deconstruct my own work and the motives behind it' and monitoring of myself as a researcher in 'the process of determining the research problem and theoretical framework and of creating the research design' (Lather, 1991a and 1992, cited in Hamdan, 2009).

In particular, my reflection on the first interview with Paul was influenced by the nature of his narrative: his 'lengthy accounts' (Riessman 2000:1) in response to interview questions and the nature of the material he had shared. I recognised that, at that stage, it was essential to recognise the potential effect on my objectivity as a researcher of events described by participants, which might have resonances of similar family and personal experiences in my own life. I resolved to focus on the need to be confident that the conceptual framework, research questions and interview questions were robust enough, enabling me to 'investigate the meaning behind participants' narratives of their lives' in order to retain my objectivity as a researcher. I acknowledged (Goffman 1959: 13) that 'many crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interaction or lie concealed within it' and that rather than responding to participant narratives purely as a task of intellectual organisation, it was necessary to respond to these with appropriate intuition and a correct level of emotionality. In terms of the impact this might have had on my claims to objectivity as a researcher, I needed to recognise the possibility that Paul and other participants would construct their lives as dramas in which they were the central player in order consciously or unconsciously to influence my interpretation of their narratives. In particular, I needed to re-evaluate (Riessmann 2000: 4) whether the research questions and interview questions would lead me to find the crucial links in participant narratives and were supportive of an appropriate interpretation and a professional research response to the profundity of the issues raised by Paul about his disruptive life events. Polkinghorne (1995:5) drew attention to the 'role of narrative in definition of self and personal identity' echoing Goffman's notion of 'life as theatre' and his view that 'social life is a staged drama in which individuals come to be seen as a rhetorical device' (Lanham, 1993). Of particular reference to interpretation of participant narratives are Goffman's (1959: 4) recognition of the 'tensions between authenticity and covertness, between appearance and reality' and the tendency to 'active self-presentation'

as 'a dramatic effect' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000: 106). Goffman (1959:78) spanned the therapeutic approach of 'anticipatory socialisation' in his reference to the psychodrama. He referred to this as a therapeutic technique used with psychiatric patients to facilitate switches in enacted roles. This involves switching from the parts that significant others played to them in the past to being 'the persons others were' to them.

Goffman (1959: 15) referred to it being in the individual's interest:

> to control the conduct of others , especially in their responsive treatment of him ...... by expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan.

I reflected on Schutze's thinking that, by a more systematic focus on 'the how', one could achieve a deeper understanding of 'the why' and that his form of analysis enabled him to focus on biographical 'trajectories' which are (Riemann and Schutze, 1991: 59) 'biographical processes of long term suffering and cumulative disorder' also related to 'anomic life situations', including homelessness and unemployment. Paul's narrative had included his family circumstances, his fragile mental health, his attempted suicide and imprisonment. It had been organised and dispassionate in its delivery, in contrast to the confusion and chaos of the events he described. Paul's skill was in constructing a 'self' as a protagonist in a drama, in which he observed himself playing a number of roles: as a survivor of suicide attempts and a 'ghost in the flesh' with a fractured sense of identity and as a writer who was inspired by his life 'falling apart.' This prompted me to reflect on whether he was deluded or a skilled manipulator.

These dilemmas were made more acute when, deviating from the protocol set up with the referral agency (Section 4.5 of this chapter). I made further searches into the nature of Paul's offence and discovered that it was more serious than he had described to me, casting doubt on the veracity of his narrative as a whole and planting questions in my mind on whether I could regard his and other participants' narratives as in any sense 'truthful.' I was mindful of Flick's warning (2006: 334) that (researchers) can 'exaggerate the quality of reality as narratives as data', that the influence of presentation on

what is recounted is underestimated and the possible inference from the narrative to factual events in life histories is overestimated.

This led into a complex debate with myself on whether 'truth' can emerge from biographical narratives. Kermode recognised that, like poets, those recounting their life stories 'need fictive concords with on goings and ends, such as give meaning to their lives' and he speaks of the human need to impose 'a sense of beginning, middle and end on life' (Kermode, 1967:7, cited in Kearney, 2006: 478). Carr (1986) echoed this in his 'continuity thesis' that narration is not a distortion of reality but an amplification of it, 'confirming rather than falsifying life's features' and that narration 'serves to unite many of our actions into some kind of plot.' This was related to plans, explanations, stories and dramas which involve explaining ourselves to others and convincing ourselves (Kearney, 2006: 479). Goddard (1996: 145) identified that through the operation of metaphor 'we fictionalise ourselves as we talk.' I reflected on whether my research was robust enough to 'contain' and to give full weight to these contradictions.

I also reflected that, while the research questions focussed on specific transitions (to disability, from prison and from the Armed Forces into civilian life), they did not give sufficient weight to the impact of 'disruptive life events' in the family (Riessmann 2001: 4), as described by Paul. Moreover, the focus in the conceptual model and research questions on the concepts of dissociation and social exclusion, did not take account of the degree of emotionality, cloaked in his objective form of delivery, with which Paul had voiced his story. I reflected that the potential for these revelatory, additional dimensions to this research had emerged from the semi-structured nature of the interviews, which had also been more interactive than I had planned and that I should consider drawing on these additional revelatory dimensions for my research as the interviews with other participants progressed. On a more basic level, I also determined to simplify the first interview question to avoid overwhelming the participants at the outset of the process.

I concluded that my research questions needed to be supplemented by information which could be elicited from individual participants in their own terms. As previously cited in the methodology chapter, my approach to

147

interviews with Paul had given scope for him to draw on the ability of personal narrative, as recognised by Ricouer to 'bridge the gap between personal experience and social structure' (Ricouer, 1980, cited in Townsend and Weiner, 2011: 6).I therefore conducted interviews with the other participants on this basis.

In the next section, I describe the process of documenting and editing the interview data, based on the interview recordings and field notes taken during and following all the interviews with the participants.

4.7 THE PROCESS OF TRANSCRIBING AND ANALYSING THE DATA

I now describe the inspiration and process for my interpretation and analysis of the data from the interviews with participants. Bude (2004: 323) referred to the vital importance for the social investigator, who collects data in the form of an open interview, to develop 'significance out of contingency.' Peshkin's view (2000: 8) was that this process involves the application of both imagination and logic, which entails 'perceiving importance, order and form ... that relates to the argument, story and narrative that is continually undergoing creation.' In the particular context of life history material, Scott and Bhaskar (2015) acknowledged that the interpreted account is only one of the many interpretations that could have been made, describing the process involved as one of description, interpretation and theorising. In the context of biographical analysis, this involves a tension between letting the data speak for itself and building more abstracted categories. Wengraf's (2000:144) text analysis methodology involved a panel of researchers to analyse the data from the biographical interviews and to combat defence and anxiety which are features of the researcher's position 'right through data analysis and into writing up and publication.' Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf (2005: 20) noted that the use of panels or group workshops for collective analysis of data 'poses important questions for research resourcing and organisation' and, indeed, I have not had access to panels or group workshops for analysis of the material collected from the biographic narrative interviews because it potentially created a logistical difficulty for my research. Armstrong (2014: 211 regarded the reflexive voices of interpretative panels as a vital dimension of a three dimensional form of reflexivity, consisting of critical self reflection, intersubjective reflection and

mutual collaboration to provide a 'deeper understanding of the individual lived experience.' However, I decided to adopt other means of analysis to identify the 'internal conversation' (Archer 2003, cited in Turk, Mrozowicki and Domecka, 2013: 14), 'which acts as a causal mechanism mediating between social structures and human agency' and 'the internal conversations at play during the episodes they narrate.'

In the so-called reconstruction of the life history, in connection with the analysis and interpretation of the biographical data, I have explored the biographical meaning of past experience. Flick (2006: 331) stated the goal of analysing narrative data as being more about disclosing 'the social constructions inherent in life histories and less to reconstruct factual processes.' Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal (2004) referred to analysing the narrative interview in order to understand the difference between self-presentation of the life story and the life history lived and experienced by the interviewee. In their view it could be discovered in a highly controlled hermeneutic process, hermeneutics being defined by Hazzard (2005: 127) as 'a science of interpretation and philosophy of understanding.

My adaptation of this methodology has helped me to identify participants' use of individual agency and capability, their restored sense of identity to overcome the cycle of disadvantage; and the relevance of critical literacy learning to their achievements. It has also enabled me 'to move beyond what actually happened to explore how people make sense of what happened' (Schutze, cited in Apitzsch and Inowlock, 2000: 64). Apitzsh and Inlowki placed the process developed by Schutze into the context of 'abductive logic' which Ezzy (2002: 14) likens to a 'creative leap of the mind where people all of a sudden understand how a particular event fits into a broader picture or explanation.' Apitzsch and Inolowki (2000: 65) noted that abductive logic 'takes account of the capacities of individual actors … to create solutions through practical actions' and this has fitted with my research objective of identifying the relevance of individual agency in overcoming the cycle of exclusion. However, I note that Pierce (1960:113) warns that such acts of insight can be 'extremely fallible.'

At the outset of this process I recognised that the analysis and interpretation of transcripts reflects the personal and social stances, which I have taken up in relation to learning in the context of critical pedagogy and to life; and to McCormack's reference (2000: 284) to the 'underlying assumptions, presuppositions and the wider social discourses' to which I belong. I understood that if I were to enable the interview text to 'create the world, giving the world its situated meaningfulness' for the participants (Denzin 2001: 25), it was important to observe Bruce's standard for transcriptions (Bruce,1992:145) cited in O'Connell and Kowal, 1995: 96). This identified that: 'a transcription system should be easy to write, easy to learn and easy to search.' Every interview was transcribed, observing conventions including pauses and breaks in the participants' narrative, stress or emphasis and overlapping speech. At the conclusion of this part of the process, I experienced a sense of the 'text as continuing to live in me', challenging my interpretive capacity and clarifying that interpretation is a continuing process, which is not subject to conformity with particular methods.

I then conducted my analysis of data in three phases:

Phase 1

At the initial stage of exploring means of data analysis, I had a sense of being 'drowned in a sea of interview transcripts' (Riessman, 1993, cited in McCormack (2000:282) and became immersed in listening to the interview recordings to identify the narrative processes used by the participants, paying attention to the language of the text and trying to identify the 'moments when the unexpected is happening' (McCormack, 2000: 284). Active listening to recordings enabled me to relate tone of voice, intonation and spoken delivery to my memory of participants' gestures and body language, in the awareness of Ochberg's observation (1996) that, by listening from an interpretive point of view, we can notice both the power and the limits of the narratives. This led me to recall Paul's nervous laughter, which was particularly marked when describing the events, which had the greatest impact on him, Jo's constant rapping on the table to emphasise his points, Don's harsh tone of voice, Pam's audible sighs and Mark's tendency to repeat crucial words within sentences.

These helped to enhance my understanding of language as a social process, especially in its construction of individual identity and social relationships including those between the participants and myself as researcher (Fairclough, 1992, cited in McCormack, 2000: 286). Thus I built up a picture of the emotional context of the interviews for the participants.

Phase 2

I then decided to draw on qualitative software NVIVO, having been introduced to its potential as a tool for helping to organise my thinking in the course of the Master's Degree in Educational Research. I read and re-read all the transcripts, initially setting up simple nodes or categories such as 'school', 'education' and 'family' and progressing to categories in the participant accounts which resonated with my research objectives and conceptual model. These included 'power' 'exclusion', 'resonances with Foucault and Cicourel' and 'reflection.' I also identified instances of individual agency (APPENDIX 4). I then annotated the margins of the interview transcripts, using terms including 'agency', 'education', 'employment' and 'prison learning', again identifying common themes among the participants. I manually listed all the responses to the headings and used these lists to try, systematically, to identify the essence of what was being said. The process of making the text the 'central building block' (Scott and Bhaskar, 2015: 4) and 'immersing' myself in the data (Merrill and West, 2009: 5) reminded me of cutting the first turf in an archaeological excavation in anticipation of potentially significant discoveries lying beneath the surface. The numbers of references to the specific terms illuminated the principal concerns of participants such as 'prisoner education' for those who had experience of the criminal justice system. Emphasis on the link between power and education reflected all the participants' experiences of the education system, as did references to the participants' experiences of ceremonies of objectification through literacy (Foucault, 1980). The paucity of references to on the job training was marked. The theme of 'exclusion from learning' did not feature for those who had been educated to Further and Higher Education level but was a marked feature for those who had experienced exclusion from education at an earlier stage. The number of references to individual agency was striking. Although the volume of responses under the different headings was a pointer to the main areas for qualitative analysis, the quantification of

responses was an inadequate representation of individual experiences, especially when I could still 'hear' the tone of voice and the emotional effect of each of these themes on them. I was aware that coding of material 'risked losing some of the individual significance of the experience and its biographical poignancy' (Merrill and West, 2009:10). This awareness of hidden material shaped the approaches and methods, which characterised my analysis of the interview data. I regarded NVIVO coding as essentially a mechanistic process, which might have had the potential to circumscribe the individual accounts. Riessman (2001: 1) noted participant resistance to fragmenting their lived experience into thematic categories, which she described as 'our attempts to control meaning' with the potential for 'dehumanizing' and 'dominating' the research process.

I was also aware of Ochberg's observation (1996) that, in converting their experiences, in a way which has been told, from one kind of account into another we have not reached 'the bottom of things.' This led me into the third phase of my analysis of the data.

Phase 3

I returned to the text of the interview transcripts with a growing awareness that the rich material they might yield offered the potential to convey the depth of personal impact of the participants' experience. I began an exploration of the metaphors used by the participants by underlining them all on the typed transcripts. Cameron *et a*l. (2009: 65) observed that 'what is said both reflects and affects thinking.' They emphasise the potential of metaphor as 'uniquely suited to use as a delicate research instrument for investigating the web of meaning without removing it from the discourse in which it was constructed' (2009: 33). Swan (2002: 454) invoked Freud's reference to unconscious thought being capable of being brought to awareness by the process of interpretation and this echoes the observation by Jones (2002: 350), who referred to the possibility that the speaker may be 'unconscious of a meaning that is there.' This informed my exploration of intended and unintended meanings, driven by participants' thoughts and feelings and my responses to the images they used. These often vivid forms of expression provided evidence of the link between literacy and the oppressive operation of power, which had

152

impacted on them and which, on occasions, they expressed covertly through an alternative form of language.

This proved to be an illuminating process, revealing the recurring images used by all the participants. This form of analysis enabled me to group the metaphors into categories including metaphors of the sea, carapace metaphors, transitory metaphors. I then used these categories to reflect on the depth of what the participants might be trying to convey to me and to reflect on how they enabled me to access and construct meanings beyond the words used in their narratives.

Thus I have situated my thematic analysis in the context of participants' metaphors rather than adopting a narrow focus on what Bude (2004: 325) refers to as 'a narrative form, which follows an historical sequence.' In the data analysis chapter which follows, I describe the findings, accessed through the transcripts, the 'unspoken subtexts' (Ochberg, 1996) which they contain, the link between the sequence of events described in their biographical narratives and themes including habitus, identity, agency and capability' in order more fully to convey the significance, depth and impact of the experiences shared with me.

Chapter 5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As a teacher of adult literacy, I have encouraged learners towards a critical approach in the classroom and to texts. The main elements of such an approach were identified by Lewison et al. (2002) in their four dimensional model: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focussing on socio political issues, taking action and promoting social justice. As noted by Vasquez, Janks and Comber (2019: 308) this involves 'recognising from a critical literacy perspective, the world is seen as a socially constructed text that can be read.' I have mirrored elements of this approach in my analysis of participants' narrative interviews and have decided to focus initially on the hidden meanings in participant statements, identifying their intended meaning through their use of metaphor. I have also undertaken a thematic analysis, linking participants' use of metaphor with thematic findings. In the discussion and conclusion chapters of this thesis I have linked these analytical processes with a focus on key themes, including habitus, agency, identity and capability.

(a) Case Analyses

To begin this analysis of data from the interviews, I have drawn on my contact with participants as a context for the development of individual case analyses. I have then undertaken detailed analysis of the data, drawing on participants' use of imagery and the detailed experiences they described in the course of the interviews, relating these to the conceptual model. I have used pseudonyms throughout.

Paul

I first met Paul, a man in his early thirties, during a peer mentoring course, organised by the Community Rehabilitation Company for ex-offenders, who had volunteered to support ex- prisoners following their release. During discussions during this event, I had observed that Paul was highly articulate, expressing the breadth of his understanding of the concept and purpose of peer mentoring. Following my opportunity to speak about this research during the final session, Paul approached me, expressing interest in being part of this research.

Paul had been released from prison some six months before our interviews. He described how he had done well at school in a range of subjects up to GCSE level and, according to his account, had excelled in literacy learning and shown some promise in his writing. However, he had become disenchanted by the attitude of some of his teachers and, at the age of 17, had withdrawn from Further Education in order to put a roof over his and his father's head, his father having experienced a mental breakdown.

He had then taken a series of what he described as 'rubbish jobs'' in the hotel trade and, having had a mental breakdown following a break up in his relationship with his partner, he committed an offence. Following an unsuccessful suicide attempt, he went on trial and received a sentence of imprisonment. In prison, he had rediscovered learning and had taken all the courses available to him, including developing his literacy and learning and peer mentoring of other prisoners. Following release, he had been involved in more peer mentoring training and wished to apply this in support of those being released from prison.

Paul demonstrated a high level of intelligence, speaking in a detached way, consistent with his description of himself as 'society adjacent like.' He delivered descriptions of searing and dramatic events with objectivity and in a measured voice. However, a nervous laugh sometimes punctuated his responses and this became more pronounced as he described the events which were of greatest significance to him. His fractured sense of self was expressed through his descriptions of his newly adopted identity. Paul's mental ill health was a factor he himself identified, acknowledging that his unwillingness to seek help for his mental condition had been a contributory factor in the major ruptures in his life, including his decision to leave Further Education early and his fractured employment history. The complexity which Paul presented in my analysis is demonstrated by the disparity between the degree of empathy he demonstrated towards other prisoners and his analysis of his own situation. I was particularly struck by his limited insight into the impact of his behaviour on others, particularly in relation to his offending behaviour and the consequences, which might have followed if he had not been interrupted during commission of the crime for which he was convicted.

Jo

I first met Jo, a retired Headteacher in his mid sixties, during the same peer mentoring course attended by Paul. An ex-offender himself, he had been less emotionally forthcoming than Paul during these sessions but had demonstrated a similar degree of commitment in response to ex-prisoners. He had approached me at the end of the course, expressing interest in being part of this research.

During his interviews, Jo described his own experience of learning following a severe brain injury as a child. He had trained as a teacher and been the Headteacher of a primary school in a deprived area of East London for many years. He described how this had influenced his view of the potential impact of education on those who were socially excluded. His accounts of contact with Local and Central Government Departments were dominated by his descriptions of his battles with authority. In his late fifties, insomnia and exhaustion and the renewed impact of his childhood brain injury had necessitated his early retirement. He had then developed and recovered from cancer and had committed an offence for which he had received a Suspended Sentence. He was continuing his passion for the power of learning by undertaking peer mentoring and supporting those being released from prison whom he saw as severely disadvantaged especially if they lacked literacy skills.

Jo sat hunched over the table through the interviews and emphasised the points he made by frequently rapping the table, especially when he expounded his views on education and his commitment to the education of children in a deprived part of East London. The force by which he emphasised his points was in contrast to his otherwise courteous approach and might have demonstrated the anger and underlying tensions manifested in his descriptions of his dealings as Headteacher with those in authority. As with Paul, Jo's lack of insight into the impact of his criminal behaviour was in contrast to his commitment to the practical support of ex-prisoners, drawing on his experience of the effects of a lack of educational opportunity among the children he had taught. It is open to question whether he understood that his previous status had been a factor in his own avoidance of a sentence of imprisonment.

Don, aged 60, a veteran of the Parachute Regiment, who had served in Northern Ireland, had been referred by a veterans' organisation. In my first meeting with him, I noted his apparent need to demonstrate his superiority in the meeting by staring fixedly at me and constantly interrupting.

He described his mixed experience of education within the family and at school, his expulsion from school, his Service career, which included his account of his experience of learning by gaining Army qualifications and his unsettled employment history. He was currently seeking help towards engineering training from Service Charities, having experienced a mental breakdown, which he attributed to post traumatic stress disorder developed as a result of his Army experiences and was also related to his depression following the death of his mother. His descriptions of the rehabilitation he had experienced through a rehabilitative programme for veterans were positive and he was looking forward to developing qualifications and continuing work for several years in a healthier frame of mind.

Don sat throughout the interviews with legs outstretched. In contrast to his confident and relaxed pose, he was agitated and sometimes used a sharp tone of voice. During the interviews, we frequently talked over one another. His comments revealed his constant questioning of authority, which, I speculated, might have helped to explain his difficulty in maintaining his Service career and fitting into sustained employment.

Mark

My early contact with Mark, a man in his mid fifties, was as his tutor some eight years earlier on an Adult Community Learning literacy course, attended mainly by learners in their twenties and thirties. I recalled that he had established rapport with other learners and with me and had worked hard but I understood that he might have tried to mask his reading difficulty through his use of humour. During the interviews for this research, his descriptions of his learning at school were dominated by his expression of his feelings of inadequacy and his experience of being largely ignored by teachers. I contrasted this with my earlier experience of him in the Adult Community Learning context and the ways in which he had asserted his presence in the group.

He had excelled in running and judo and thought that these had contributed to helping him to overcome the worst effects of a serious road accident in which he had nearly lost a leg, causing a long term disability. Despite this disability, he took pride in the fact that he had refused to accept a life on Benefits following his accident, asserting his wish for education to help him to learn to read. He had worked hard, owned his own home and was proud that he did not owe anything to anyone. He spoke passionately about his work as a Union Representative and his ability to support other employees. However, he was very much aware that his lack of literacy had been a barrier to better forms of employment.

At the age of 50, his dyslexia had been diagnosed but this had coincided with cessation of Adult Education funding for his continued learning. However the 'diagnosis' of dyslexia had helped him to overcome his feelings of personal inadequacy about his inability to read and write and he continued to hope that he could resume this learning. He demonstrated a high degree of insight into the need to manage his anger and had entered himself for an anger management course. Mark spoke passionately and coherently, gesticulating to emphasise his points, especially when he spoke about his experience of education, employment and his work as a Trade Union Representative.

Pam

Pam, a woman in her forties, had been referred by a tutor on a literacy learning programme. Pam did not attend the first meeting, arranged by her tutor but, in later meetings with her, I began to understand that she had lacked the confidence for such a meeting, even accompanied by her tutor. When I met her some weeks later, Pam presented as nervous and apprehensive. Despite this, I sensed a strength, resilience and inner confidence, which was borne out by her account of the challenges and events she had experienced. In her early years, these had included a speech impediment as a child, which had not been rectified until she was over five years old, and this disability had affected her learning during the vital early stages of her education. She attributed her inability to read and write to her difficulties in communication with teachers and to bullying at school, though she had demonstrated flashes of agency in, for example, asking a teacher to give her more difficult work to complete. She also

described the ways in which her lack of literacy had made it difficult to function independently. This had made her vulnerable to exploitation in a series of abusive and violent relationships with men, who, in her words, had taken advantage of her lack of literacy. Pam referred to events, which had sad resonances: her 'fight' with the authorities immediately following the birth of her children to prove that she was a fit mother, and a later decision to leave her violent husband even though this had involved also leaving her children.

Pam described how she had recently begun to gain confidence though learning to read and write, including a reference to the fact that she had been able to attend the second interview with me on her own. She was looking forward to developing these skills, which were already enabling her to go out alone and to mix with other people after years of being a virtual prisoner in her own home. She was hoping to find employment in the future, following surgery to deal with her overweight.

Pam spoke slowly, articulately and passionately about her experiences of education and domestic violence and audibly sighed during the interview, especially when describing the way she had been treated in her relationships. She was still throughout the interviews apart from occasional use of hand gestures.

Although the majority of participants were interviewed on three occasions, I interviewed Pam twice, recognising that she had covered all the areas in the research questions and the demands which this process was making on her.

5.2 METAPHOR AND MEANING

My commitment to the teaching of critical literacy provides a model and an inspiration for the analysis of the imagery used by participants in this research in order more fully to interpret and understand the meaning they were conveying. In this research study, participants seized the opportunity to narrate their lives in their own words. More specifically in the context of this data analysis, they drew on acquired linguistic skills and imagery acquired from their literary heritage to express themselves.

Cameron *et al.* (2009: 65) emphasised the potential of metaphor as 'uniquely suited to use as a delicate research instrument for investigating the web of

159

meaning without removing it from the discourse in which it was constructed.' (2009: 33). Swan (2002: 454) invoked Freud's reference to unconscious thought being capable of being brought to awareness by the process of interpretation and this echoes the observation by Jones (2002: 350), who referred to the possibility that the speaker may be 'unconscious of a meaning that is there.' This has informed my exploration of intended and unintended meanings, driven by participants' thoughts and feelings and my responses to the images they used. These forms of expression provided evidence of the link between literacy and the oppressive operation of power, which had impacted on them. On occasions, they expressed these in ways, which enabled me to construct meanings beyond the words they used in their narratives

(a) Dissociation, Alienation and Exclusion

Images drawn on by participants frequently reflected a sense of dissociation, alienation and exclusion, ranging from images of turbulence to unsurmountable barriers and lines, to brokenness and exclusion from the perceived hierarchical structure of education and learning.

(i) Metaphors of the Sea

By evoking the powerful element of the sea, participants voiced traumatic and potentially dissociative experiences in a covert way. Sea images ranged from Paul's reference to 'jumping ship' to describe his early departure from Further Education to his description of severing links with learning organisation, to Jo's description of being 'adrift somewhere down the end of the class' in relation to school experience' and feeling 'all at sea' following retirement. Paul's perilous home situation was summarised as being 'on the brink of eviction', compelling a participant to end his Further Education. Extreme behaviour by an abusive partner was described by Pam as 'going overboard.'

Learning and rehabilitation experiences were described as 'a complete sea change' and 'getting on swimmingly', invoked the power of another element to make change and achievement possible. The unconscious depiction of these images may be interpreted as that of being swept by elements and tidal forces beyond one's control on a shoreline of existence rather than being controlling agents of their own lives.

160

(ii) Metaphors of Delineation, Demarcation and Alienation

Metaphors associated with forms of demarcation included Paul's description of being on 'the wrong side of the law' and the need of his fellow prisoners 'to communicate with someone who is not on the other side of the desk.' These were expressive of his own sense of unreality: 'in terms of reality I don't know where the line was drawn.'

 A hierarchical educational structure was depicted by Jo as being divided from parents by 'the school gates.' Lack of literacy was described by Mark as 'the worstest thing' and the sense of despair it had led to was described in terms of a sense of irrevocable exclusion. He thought that 'if I could read, maybe I could read these books for hours on end but I'll never get that chance now because it's too late.' This poignant observation expressed a particular sense of banishment from 'pleasures of emotional stimulation, empathy and inter-subjectivity' and from the 'companionship' afforded by reading (Duncan,2010: 6) not to mention the control and confidence such access might offer. It makes the generous opening of his 'word hoard' all the more moving.

Negative experiences of education were described by Mark in terms of the sense of alienation they provoked, sitting in class 'like an idiot most of the time.' Don spoke of support for learning in a separate class as being 'part of the numpties', 'in the corner' and in 'dunces' school' and he depicted the school as 'Dotheboys' Hall' with all its connotations of bleakness and oppression. Dyslexia was described by Mark as 'a massive handicap.'

For Paul, lines also represented a time continuum and evolving experience of life in the community following release from prison. He referred to 'someone like me who is further down the line.' He had experienced contact with the mental health based courses from the perspectives of service user and peer mentor and observed that, 'having been on both sides of the line, it naturally interests me', suggesting that the line between the two situations could be permeated if there were support and training into a role.

Images used by participants also portrayed a sense of embattlement with participants and their families depicted as outsiders fighting unsurmountable odds. Pam described her parents' intervention on her behalf to find the right

school for her as 'a fight and a half to get me out of that school to go to the special school' and she also described her own 'fight' to keep her baby because her inability to read was seen as a threat to her child. Paul described his experience of managing staff as 'leading my little team of warriors around', suggesting a hostile, embattled work environment.

These images evoked general sense of exclusion from society and its goods and benefits, including education. In the following section, the metaphors used to evoke times of transition have illustrated the particular traumas associated with these times of crisis.

(b) Ruptures in Identity

Imagery used by participants shed a light on the feelings evoked by the times of crisis. The picture which emerged was one of confused sense of identity as well as resigned acceptance of the impact of inevitable external forces.

 The personal impact of times of transition were often expressed by participants in terms of a sudden rupture and a sense of an abrupt cutting of ties with a former existence.

Paul saw the finality of his transition from College to employment: 'once I had crossed the line, that was it.' Following Paul's experience of confused identity, he had adopted a new identity which, in his view, gave him the momentum to move from education to employment. He reasoned that moving 'backwards' would mean retaining his previous identity as a student, which he wanted to avoid. In his own words, 'that was more or less where the line was drawn.'

Paul likened his experience of repeated and dramatic discontinuity in a volatile and restless relationship to the turbulence of 'rinse and repeat' actions and Jo described his painful experience of retirement in terms of a self-imposed form of exile:

> I had made up my mind that once I had walked out of the school door I would not be walking into a school again. Full stop.

Don's 'ceremony' of initiation into the Army, related to an identity imposed by other members of the regiment: 'because they thought you didn't have your wings properly. You were a crow.' The consequences of the attack he

162

experienced were described in terms which evoked a destructive assault on the core of his being: 'they beat the living daylights out of you.'

Don described his attempts to assert a past identity, 'I was very much a lone wolf' and 'a funny little creature really', indicating a detached view of an earlier self and perhaps expressive of a stronger sense of identity in retrospect than in the present.

Experiences of transition were also expressed in images of falling, shifting levels and colliding with a solid object. Committing an offence was described by Jo as 'falling from grace.' Metaphors described a sense of powerlessness in the face of events. Jo likened his experience of retirement to 'a downward spiral' and 'hitting a brick wall.' 'Going downhill' was Don's description of his experience of bereavement. These images reflected a sense of being borne along by events beyond one's control.

Paul's experiences of taking up employment in a hotel after leaving full time education or being sentenced to a period of imprisonment were transitions to places which, in themselves, were transitory. His references to the hotel as 'a microcosm of life' and to prison as 'a world in miniature' and to 'living in a world without consequences' might have indicated alienation and a false sense perspective as painful transitions took place. It might also have denoted resourcefulness in creating a new world around one, following rejection by the outside world.

(c) Metaphors of Fragility

Participants used a range of metaphors, which were indicative of a sense of alienation and separation from other people. In particular, there were images evoking an altered state of being for Paul, who referred to a composite type of identity with an 'alter ego' he had created, and becoming 'confused whether he was real or I was real.'

Paul's emotions following a decision to leave Further Education were depicted from a withdrawn viewpoint:

> The worst side of it was that you became detached from reality, you became totally detached from all the learning experiences you had in the past.

163

expressing a sense of vulnerability to hurt, which could only be resolved by severance from the past. Paul's feelings of exile, detachment and adjacency were also evident: 'I'm respectful of other people because for me they're still kind of alien.'

Experience of imprisonment was viewed by Jo as one where the prisoner 'ceases to be a human being'; and Paul observed that, following release from prison, there was an acceptance of identity as defined in official documentation. This was reminiscent of Foucault's reference (1980), to individuals being trapped in a network of documentation, 'people only know you by what's on those sheets of paper.' Paul referred to experiences in which: '"Me" has always been a rather abstract idea' and to a sense of hovering between two worlds in a state of unresolved identity:

> I still think of myself as being dead. I'm sort of what's left of a person. A ghost in the flesh.

Breaking, brokenness and fragmentation featured strongly, indicating a tendency to brittleness which led for Paul, to fracture in response to external pressure and events:

> At the end of school and early days of employment, it just broke. Basically, I completely broke.

and he referred to an undefined and abstract external force, which creates experience of fracture: 'I've been pushed to breaking point.'

(d) Carapace Metaphors

Images of exterior layers and shells are indicative of the protective, impenetrable barriers some of which participants had constructed for themselves in order to secure privacy, space and protection in response to negative experiences. Participants offered some acknowledgement of the difficulty involved in breaking the protective layers which they had accreted, as reflected in Paul's observation:

> If you are so closed in your own shell, then it {advice and help} bounces off it and doesn't penetrate.

These images include Paul's description of himself as having been 'a hardened, grizzled fifteen year old' and Don's concept of 'crawling back into me shell' following a first attempted contact with a veterans' organisation and 'retreating

164

into myself.' There was also his reference to the process of being 'winkled out of my bedroom' following an emotional crisis.

In the next section I explore the ways in which participants' insights adopt a transformative aspect, based on an understanding of the power of literacy and of their own individual agency.

5.3 LITERACY AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

(a) Metaphors on the power of lexis and learning to support individual agency

Negative and potentially destructive experiences, including those of education and learning, were balanced by a determination to progress and to move forward.

For one who described himself as having been ' proper little thespian', a transitory place such as a prison not only necessitated adoption of a new identity by Paul but also opened up possibilities for assuming elements of an identity in a parallel environment with its roots in the past. The spaces created by and for individuals during transitions, including the building of an outer protective shell, provided a malleability and adaptability, for example enabling Paul to: 'reset ideas of who I was and what I was and being able to start again based on your sort of achievements academically and not anything else.' He recognised that: 'I'm sort of what's left of a person.'

Don described his search is for a newly emergent identity:

> I'm going to have to recreate myself because I've fallen to pieces and now I've going to have to put myself to back together again.

There is a sense in which, for all the participants, this involved picking up the shards of an earlier identity to recreate a new sense of wholeness and a new existence. For example, Don drew on his realisation that he had skills which he could salvage from the past: 'I think I'm going to fall back on what I am naturally, which is making things.'

Having undergone a form of therapy in response to his post traumatic stress, Don referred to the need to: 'detach yourself from the emotions surrounding various events is what it really always boils down .....' He described the process

165

in agentic terms, which included reference to dealing decisively and aggressively with loss in order to win a peaceful resolution: 'I kicked around my mother's death.' Reflecting on the therapeutic process, Don observed:

> you have broken the emotional attachment away from things that happened in the past and all the emotion around it has dropped away.

This affirmed Don's sense of identity and his restored sense of humanity: 'I feel like a proper human being again now.'

Mark's refusal to submit to a bad experience of learning was expressed in terms of survival from attack, not letting it 'shoot him down.' Pam expressed frustration about her individual agency being denied: 'If someone had helped me in school I would have jumped at it.'

Mark, who had dyslexia, recognised 'the source of great pleasure, entertainment and information' (reading) from which he had been excluded and that it would have helped him to be 'crammed with information.' Respect for the utility of literacy, the power of words and other forms of training to support efforts towards individual agency was poignantly expressed by Mark as a means of escape even if this had not been in his direct experience:

> It (literacy) gives people a way out of a bad situation into a much better situation.

Demonstrating the sense of value and economic potential placed on a social commodity, i.e. education, to which he has no access, he expressed learning in terms of a calculation: 'education and learning equals opportunity and a chance to improve meself.'

Pam, who spoke about her pride in having learned to read four words, voiced her determination to express herself: 'I'll get the words out in a minute' and the personal impact of access to literacy learning later in life was described by Mark as making 'the world a better place.'

Unconscious or deliberate expressions of the value of words were accompanied by images which referred to the power of literacy to transform individual experience of incarceration and resettlement into the community following release from prison or discharge from the Army. Don stated: ''words, I keep them. They are like little pets to me.'

This gave a sense of control over, familiarity and comfort in dealing with literacy tools. Some of the images were used in the form of conscious or unconscious adaptation and subversion of embellishments, which might be regarded as the province of more experienced speakers and writers. In ways which give expression to the value they place on literacy and which belie the division of English between language and literature (Goddard,1996: 5), participants drew on the canon of literature and learning, ranging from Shakespeare to Bunyan, Dickens and the Bible to express their views of the events, which had affected them. For example, the power of literacy and communication as a corrective to violent and aggressive actions and a means of restoring fractured experiences was expressed by Paul: 'There have been times when I have picked up a pen when I could easily have picked up a gun.' This left it open to interpretation that he drew on 'the pen is mightier than the sword' to affirm the value of channelling his aggressive and suicidal tendencies into other forms of expression.

Writing was also seen by Paul as a constructive response to self-destructive experience in the course of a 'pilgrimage':

> In terms of my journey in my life and attempted death I've always called myself a writer. Writing – that's my default setting.

and:

> You make up some good stories when your life's falling apart.

Turning the concept of disappeared identity on its head, Paul commented on his feelings, following release from prison:

> Disappearing for a few months and then coming out ... it's the ultimate fresh start really

This evoked a feeling of regeneration from the darkness of attempted suicide and imprisonment.

These individual accounts of life experiences presented pictures of shared humanity and, as such, were fractured, inconsistent and sometimes incoherent. The repeated choice of some of the same metaphors to describe different experiences might appear contradictory, but they shed an interesting light on the complexity and duality of participants' experiences. Exploration of the metaphors used by participants to explain, embellish and enliven their accounts

has provided me with a further perspective on how they had created a form of coherence in their narration of their lives through their chosen means of expression (Mishler 1995: 87). This exploratory process also identified the key themes, which they had chosen to recount with such emotional force: the impact of social exclusion and exclusion from literacy, their fragile sense of identity, especially in times of transition and their recognition of the power of literacy.

In the next stage of my analysis, I have built on participants' more covert metaphorical allusions, making links with their biographical narrative accounts of the events, which have impacted on them and a thematic analytical approach, including the themes of habitus, identity, agency and capability. I decided upon this approach rather than attempting to impose a narrative structure because this thematic analysis drew on participants' own words and use of imagery. This approach provided a better representation of their non-linear, sometimes complex and interwoven narration of the events, which were of significance to them, leading, through their own reflexivity, to a restored sense of identity and agency.

5.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES

(a) The Impact of Social Exclusion

Participants' accounts of their lives were suffused with a sense of objectivity and insights about events on which they adopted an analytical outsider's perspective, reflecting the nature of the stories they narrated about forms of exclusion. Their narratives have provided evidence of 'multi dimensional disadvantage of substantial duration' (Room, 2000), previously referred to in the literature review.

Also in the literature review I stated my intention to research 'the deliberate acts of social domination' (Silver 2007: 1), the multiplicity of ways that people may be denied full participation in society and 'the full rights of citizenship' (Ward, 2009: 237). Lister (1998:5) referred to the experience of citizenship to as a force for exclusion to those who are on the margins of society 'created by poverty, social divisions or the power of the nation.' An understanding of how power is secured, maintained and withheld was key to analysis of participants' narratives of their life. Each individual expressed the impact on themselves and others of

the all pervasive and coercive nature of power relations in society (Foucault, 1980: 142) and (Janks, 2010: 34) their consequent marginalization and restriction of life chances through lack of access to literacy learning.

I have referred in the literature review to ex-offenders as my primary interest group, whose experiences of social exclusion can overlap and intersect with those of the other participants in my research study, including those with learning difficulties, mental ill health, drug and alcohol addiction and unemployment. Participants in this research have affirmed this focus through their narratives, especially in their perspectives on literacy and learning provided by Paul and Jo, both ex-offenders. Their individual experiences of education and learning ranged from an appreciation of its potential to disenchantment with the educational system and individual rediscovery of its potential for themselves and others. I have analysed their accounts of these events later in this chapter of my thesis.

I have stated in the literature review that ex-offender views were rarely sought and that there was little recognition in existing research studies of their individual agency. The additional dimension emerging from these interviews was that the sensitivity, which they had developed as a result of their own experiences had enabled them to make acute observations on the limited and inconsistent educational provision in prison and for ex-prisoners. These observations, in turn, illuminated the theme and experience of wider social exclusion and have provided a focus for me on issues, including lack of access to educational provision, for the other participants in my research.

Paul and Jo spoke eloquently and forcefully about the impact of imprisonment as the ultimate form of social exclusion and on the impact of the further exclusion from literacy on prisoners and ex-prisoners. Paul's direct experience of imprisonment had given him an awareness of the issues faced by prisoners during their terms of imprisonment. He referred to the 'outrageous' volume of paper in prison, which, in his view, inevitably upset those in the prison population, who had literacy problems. This continued beyond release from prison:

> You come out and there's ... you know there's still paperwork and you do all those forms and you know the amount of paperwork people do in their lives is actually unbelievable.

Paul also described the lack of funding and intermittent access to literacy learning programmes in prison due to lack of staffing, which could disrupt the continuity of learning provision, for example reducing a course of six lessons to two when the prison was in lockdown. He described his role as a peer mentor of prisoners, as a means of ensuring some cover and continuity for the tutor in 'a less structured way.' He claimed that this had defused potential frustration and anger among his fellow prisoners, who had become accustomed to being thwarted by authority structures:

> Because you know a lot of the guys get quite ...... and you know it's something they are enjoying – the way it's paced lets you see your progress and then suddenly there is the message that 'no we are not interested in providing you with that' then they throw up their hands and that's it.

With his background as a Headteacher, Jo, who had been sentenced to a community order and was training as a peer mentor of ex prisoners, had a particular perspective on the sense of disorientation and the practical issues faced by ex-prisoners, who were caught up in frustrating bureaucratic cycles. He placed this into a wider context of society's failed attempts at reform and described the frustrations experienced by ex-prisoners in, for example, successfully obtaining credit or experiencing punitive rates of car insurance, thus reducing their chances of employment:

> So many obstacles society seems to place in the pathway of people who have experienced some trauma in life or some acute problem or some difficulty and as much as society wants reform it doesn't facilitate reform in any way shape or form.

These insights provided a lens from prison as a 'world in miniature', one of the carceral structures from which to view the myriad forms of educational and social exclusion experienced by them and by the other participants in my study. I have developed this theme in the discussion chapter of this thesis. The caprice and implacability of official systems, including those which deliver education and learning, formed part of the direct experience of the other research participants. Don, Mark and Pam made reference to a range of events which had led to a negative experience of education or a sudden and painful

rupture from learning, often beyond their control. They expressed the impenetrability of the education system and the consequent sense of vulnerability, failure and exposure to ridicule - not dissimilar to the experiences of prisoners so eloquently expressed by Paul and Jo.

Don described his experience of failing the Eleven Plus, a failure which he attributed to his lack of maths ability, despite his love of and aptitude for literacy up to his entry into secondary school. He had found this an alien environment for learning and expressed his frustration with the lack of opportunity to build on his interest in learning:

> Because my secondary school that was a dreadful position with the bloody all that you know its bloody uh uh its really, really. I hadn't realised at the time it really put me right off cos I liked learning and the 11 plus was absolutely no good for me um cos I failed it because of my Maths but I don't see why maths should be the only criteria.

His failure in the 11 plus remained a source of anger and he made a heartfelt plea about the lack of opportunity to restore his access to learning later in life. In his view, this would be justified because the State had spent little on his education to date.

At the end of his secondary education, Don was, by his own account, clearly dissociating himself from school and was missing lessons. The repudiation by the school of his complaint against by a teacher and his expulsion were traumatic experiences which continued to anger him:

> Things came to a head a bit because one of the masters was a very nice man but he was a raving pederast. He really was. He used to send me notes trying to get me to read to him. And it was horrible. I was fifteen. Because I was getting upset about it because it had come out and .... er they expelled me .... because it was a lot easier Dreadful wasn't it?

Mark also referred to a negative experience of education due to undiagnosed dyslexia forcing him to 'hide at the back of the class' and to adopt a covert existence in order to mask his inability to read:

> you would ...... um copy from people and um do anything to .... to sort of make it easy if you know what I mean you …. you never volunteer you never asked if you could stand up and read you couldn't and that's why you sat at the back because of the fact is ... you knew you had a problem.

He spoke of the school's lack of interest in him:

> You know I left early and they didn't even bother to say to me oh you've got to sit your exams. They didn't so I didn't really sit any exams you know.

Pam, who had a speech defect which affected her communication and learning, described her experience of being 'dragged' by her parents to her first school, their frustration about being unable to communicate with the teachers about her lack of progress and the bullying she had experienced. She recalled the frustration of being unable to learn' even do the simplest ABC's' and that this had 'made me in tears.' Pam described the reaction of her first school to her lack of progress and to her parents' interventions on her behalf:

> They ... they just didn't take any notice you're lazy you can do it but I just couldn't do it anyway They just ... in the end my dad had to go up to see 'em and he didn't get any sense out of them because he didn't think it was right me just coming home with just pictures no work and they said she can't do it she won't do it ... Anyway I still sat in the corner for weeks right up to I was about nine.

and she described the 'fight and a half' her parents had to move her to a special school. In effect, the failure of the education system to understand and communicate with her or her parents mirrored her own speech difficulties:

> Dad was trying to explain to them I can't do it and I was tongue tied at an early age and that put me all back but trying to get through to them they didn't accept that really to be honest ....mm.... all they said was she should be able to do it.

The juxtaposition of 'I can't' with 'they didn't' was expressive of frustration and a seemingly unbridgeable divide in understanding between a monolithic education system and the family as well as the school's unwillingness to hear and act on what was being said. I explore this in greater detail under Section 5.6 of this chapter.

Pam's experience of a special school was equally unsatisfactory because of her speech impediment:

> that was supposed to be heavily reading and writing whatever but still behind because of my ... I think because of my tongue tied I couldn't catch up if you know what I mean.

Like Don, Paul described his early experience of school and learning in positive terms:

Young life. I did enjoy school – obviously it's quite – a large part of what you do when you're younger in day to day life. Yes. That was always my thing early on.. So yes. I mean that was good. School was pretty good fun. I always had my head in a book.

However, he expresses a growing sense of disenchantment with the lack of commitment displayed by teachers as he approached GCSE's. At this stage, he was still 'academically minded' but:

It became obvious that certain of the teachers - their attitude was pants really. They didn't really care and it sort of made me ... think ... like we have been putting in effort for all those years you know most of your young life and assumed that effort is matched on the other and you sort of think like if you guys don't care why should we? I lost interest in some ways.

He described his early break with Further Education part way through A/S Level courses in terms of 'dropping out' to be the breadwinner in practical response to health and economic pressures on the family. He outlined how this has led to a series of menial jobs', which had, however, enabled him to pay the bills and prevented them both from being evicted. He rationalised his choice in terms, which expressed his sense of independence and agency:

You know. I mean I was quite fortunate that I've always you know been quite academic naturally. You know, school was good while it lasted but you know that ... that chapter was kind of closed.

These accounts of the different forms of exclusion and self-exclusion experienced by participants exhibit a common feature: the feeling of separation and exile whether in physical form in prison or as a sense of alienation and unfulfilled promise. In the next section of this chapter, I explore the participants' expressions of the wider forms of exclusion, which they have experienced as a direct result of exclusion from literacy learning.

(b) Wider forms of Social Exclusion

As 'constitutive outsiders' (Faulkner 2000), as cited in the literature review, Pam and Mark articulated a sense of exclusion from social goods, including employment opportunities and a sense of vulnerability to exploitation following their experiences of feeling excluded from education and learning. Mark had insight into the impact of his educational experiences and his dyslexia on his opportunities throughout his life:

> I think because of the fact is ... is like with everything because of the fact is I wasn't doing very well in school it affected ..... a knock on effect with it all really.

and he expressed a sense of loss in terms of the foreclosing of opportunities throughout his life:

> So that's the trouble with not reading and writing you get the jobs what people don't want to do like cleaning ... all that sort of stuff where if you had the help you might be able to achieve for better jobs.

Pam also made similar reflections on her lack of literacy, which had excluded her from employment and financial security and had made her vulnerable to exploitative relationships:

> I think because you're a bit slow 'cos you can't read and write very good and ... and I think they just play on it or take advantage of it all the time...

This also resonated with Paul's experience of work following his break away from education in the hotel industry, where he lacked promotional opportunity in roles which capable of being taken away or undermined depending on a whim. He demonstrated detachment as he reflected on the impermanence and transience of his jobs, the inherent lack of achievement and identity and the pressures he had experienced:

> You can quickly get tired and pushed to your limit and basically I have always been able to be dropped into any situation ... you know hit the ground running. I used to explain to them on a particularly hard day or when things were getting particularly dodgy, it makes no difference to me and I could stay here for another year or I could leave tomorrow.

5.5 PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE OF LITERACY AS A LOCUS OF REGULATION AND CONTROL

As referred to earlier, Paul spoke of the volume of administrative documentation required of prisoners within the prison system, echoing Foucault's (1980) reference to ceremonies of objectification. Paul described the sense of helplessness experienced by prisoners in this situation:

> I was not stunned but dismayed by the amount of paperwork... I mean most of it is sign your signature a hundred million times but you think for someone that's challenged in that way, as soon as a big bulk of paperwork turns up you know that's....they don't necessarily know what the hell is going on...

Don's reference to the Army's retention of his qualification certificates and to barriers to his application for documentary proof of qualifications and record of Army Service echoed Cicourel's (1976) recognition of literacy as 'a locus of 'regulation and control' as previously cited in the literature review:

> I had nothing but a Certificate of Discharge. My mother wrote to them about my Army engineering qualifications a copy of the letter I actually have. They wrote back to her saying that I haven't got any..... Made me look like a right Charlie and then you look through my records and they are all there.

For Pam, her inability to read signs or directions had created a situation in which her freedom was restricted to an area close to her home, where she was, effectively, imprisoned:

> To go to a different place like go on a train to oh I don't know Torquay or even Plymouth or something like that I wouldn't have a clue um well the train would say you were at Plymouth anyway but when you're actually there I wouldn't know how to get to the town cos you couldn't read the signs.

Official documents had also been an area in which she had needed help, creating a position of dependency and potential control by her ex-husband and other members of her family. However, she had recently recognised that she did not need to ignore official documents, as she had done in the past, in order to avoid these forms of control, but that she could seek help from other sources including the Citizens' Advice Bureau. She regarded this as a sign of her liberation:

> Now I goes down to Citizens' Advice when I can't fill them in... but now cos I couldn't do it, if you know what I mean, I'm sort of comfortable by looking at letters or and I knows I can't read all of the letters but the ones I can I will pass on to somebody that will do it.

Thus loss of control is too limiting concept to apply without nuance, based on individual participants' insights into their experiences and on the forms of expression they used in their accounts of events, which were important to them. In the next section of this chapter, I have explored the means by which participants struggle against and contest the forms of domination and submission which impact on them.

5.6 CONTESTED INTERACTIONS WITH POWER

In the participant narratives there were many examples of individuals contested interactions with power (Foucault, 1980:102), as previously referred to in the literature review; and a tacit recognition that power was negotiable and never fixed or stable.

Paul referred to incompleteness of prison learning courses and lack of continuity in learning provision following release from prison:

> ... and then the support fizzles once you come out so that's a bit unfortunate. The thing you notice immediately you .come out is ... the Shannon Trust doesn't exist on the outside. So one guy smuggled all his books and materials and stuff out with him and came to see me and said: 'Can we carry on with this?'

This exchange between Paul and his fellow prisoner is an example of a 'contested interaction' with the power structure imposed by the prison, drawing on informal networks in the community. Although there had been a positive outcome for this ex prisoner, Paul noted the irony that he had been 'forced' into breaking prison rules 'in a kind of insane way' in order to keep his books for continued study in the community.

He also advocated continuity of learning with the support of mentors in the community as a practical means of preventing further offending:

> If you could tell guys ....take your book with you.' Then it's already something ....focussing on something once you get out. Having nothing to do and no direction trips a lot of people up.

These and other examples described by participants indicated their willingness to stand up to authority structures on their own and others' behalf. For example, Pam's lack of access to literacy learning had led to the risk of having her children being taken into care at birth and she had been subjected to number of tests to ensure her capability:

> I knew ... I knew afterwards that's what it was for - to make sure you knew how to do the bottles, change her, bath her, even take her clothes off make sure she got clean clothes you know looking after a baby properly but if I couldn't have done that social services would have took her off me.

and she expressed her frustration that a link was made between her lack of aptitude for reading and her ability to look after her children. Although she

accepted that her lack of access to literacy learning was a 'disability' she expressed her understanding of the difference between the two sets of skills:

> I had social services on my back for them because of my schooling and reading and writing they didn't think I could look after them but I could. They still calls it as a disability in a way. It is in a sense because I ... I know struggled but ... it's different ... that ... sort of doing than doing the book work.

She described the battle with those in authority in the following terms: 'That was a fight that was ... which I won ... yes.'

Mark described his effective work as a Union Representative, working on behalf of colleagues and challenging the employer's failure to follow the correct procedures. In his references to his Union work, Mark had become noticeably more articulate, demonstrating a clear understanding of the legal framework within which he had operate:

> Case law says if you want it stopped you must put up a notification from this day forward this stops. You just can't go picking on people. There was so many holes in the thing.

Jo referred to his struggle as a Headteacher on behalf of the children in his school. He described his decision to stay in the school in a deprived area against the wishes of the Governors of his school:

> I just suddenly thought no sod it they're not getting rid of me that easy so I withdrew from the interview. I decided to stay where I was.

and he expanded on the reasons for this decision, referring later in the interviews to his belief that, over a long period of time, he could 'make a difference for them.'

A complex pattern emerges from this analysis of participants' accounts of their experiences of social exclusion, ranging from subtle to oppressive forms, to descriptions of self-exclusion and mixed experiences of dialogue with authority structures or lack of communication with those in authority. These resonate with Felder's (2019: 217) 'two spheres' of the operation of social inclusion and illustrate the tensions and friction between the interpersonal and the societal, the latter with its tendency to view people in an 'generalised, abstract sense.' I explore the collision of these two worlds and the impact on individuals, as it emerges from participants' accounts in the discussion chapter.

5.7 TRANSITIONS

(a) Participants' Accounts of Their Transitions

In their accounts of their lives, each of the participants described formative events which punctuated their narratives. These ranged from family crises to interrupted education, imprisonment, loss of employment and retirement. Each of these involved some loss but such experiences, though momentous in themselves, were often narrated in somewhat understated and slightly ironic terms. These were in contrast to the major upheavals they had experienced but, in their very detachment from events, have the effect of throwing their experiences into sharp relief.

Paul referred to his family life as 'fairly colourful' and his parents' divorce as 'probably the most peaceable agreement anyone has ever reached.' However, the later repercussions of the family breakdown had included his decision to leave full time learning at the age of seventeen when, by his own account, he had to become the breadwinner to support his father and to avoid eviction for them both. There had followed a 'split between school life and real life' and a series of 'rubbish jobs', a 'retreat into myself' and a decision to adopt a different identity.

Jo's early life was impacted by his serious brain injury. He described his return to school after a long absence and, as previously noted:

> finding myself adrift someway down the end of the class. This was something 'that did have a profound effect on me but it was a stimulant in many ways.

He also stoically dismissed the effects of his injuries:

> I still get double vision in my left eye but it's never affected me so it's a small price to pay for an event such as that.

The sudden death of his father during the early days of his teacher training was described as 'again not a very good start to my College life.' His career progression is described in a linear way, outlining a series of promotions.

Don's father, who had suffered from tuberculosis, spent time in a sanatorium during Don's childhood. He recalled his childhood being 'a bit unhappy.' He had failed his Eleven Plus and the family had then moved to 'a funny

178

backwoods place' where the secondary school was 'a horrible place.' He had then moved to another 'another really good' school from which he was later expelled, as already described. He had dropped out of an apprenticeship:

> God knows why but I did. If I had been my father I would never have allowed that. Or my mother ...

His subsequent Army service had been cut short by another serious illness experienced by his father and his decision to help his mother to look after him:

> Poor old mum because she had spent years being shouted at by dad because he couldn't handle it at all.

He had later worked in the Middle East and the U.K., where his latest job 'went down the tubes' and he had then been 'conned' out of his redundancy money.

Mark's transition from school to employment had been marked by the indifference of his teachers to his employment prospects because 'I was classed as thick' but he was proud of having worked for most of his life and of his achievements, which had included gaining his judo belts, excelling at running and passing his driving test:

> That was a lovely feeling that I'd achieved something. I suppose cos people feel like when they're at school learning their exams you know what I mean.

He had worked first of all as a pot man, then as a catering assistant and a porter in a hospital, leaving this job as the result of a road accident:

> I thought I would be crippled and everything like that I thought you know the way I damaged me they said I nearly lost my leg I thought as I get older I would really, really, really struggle but because I've worked to not struggle you know by keeping meself going and not all that lying down feeling sorry for yourself or anything like that I've actually pushed myself and that's ... that's what you need something to push you.

For two years, he 'was not doing much' and found little help or support for his lack of literacy:

> I went you know into the disability place and I said to them I want to learn ... you know... I think it was a year or so you know what I mean I can't remember exactly and I said you're not doing nothing with me can I have some help and I went to (name of company) to try and help with me reading and writing and that was on computers and all that sort of stuff and you ... and you were getting through it but you weren't really learning.

179

He had started work in a care home but had been dismissed following a drink driving conviction, eventually finding employment as a caretaker in a school, where he was working when I interviewed him.

Pam described her painful and frustrating experiences of being unable to speak in her first five years, the treatment for her speech defect and her subsequent unsatisfactory experience of education in emotional but objective terms:

> At the age of 5, no ... age of well nought to five, I was tongue tied so I couldn't speak couldn't read or write then um then I went on to (name of school) mm it's quite a good school and they just put me in the corner made me do pictures because I couldn't keep up with the other class.

Following intervention by her parents, she attended a special school but her learning did not progress. Her pregnancy at the age of 17 had led to her moving away from her parents' home. A second relationship and marriage were 'disastrous ... mm beatings' and she 'ended up having two more children.' A succession of abusive relationships with men followed.

Although participants' chronological and linear account of earlier transitions in their lives were, typically, detached and dispassionate, their descriptions of their most recent transitions were noticeably more vivid and emotional and were characterised by acute observations on these and their earlier experiences. From these forms of 'summation' they were able to discern patterns of behaviour throughout their narratives, perceiving links and unifying concepts. Such insights and forms of illumination, which they applied retrospectively, also provided me with a means of analysing and understanding the effects of earlier transitions on them and evaluating the unifying themes which had dominated their lives.

Paul, Jo and Don described the events surrounding their most recent transitions with intensity of expression. For Paul, this encompassed the events surrounding his offence, imprisonment, his rediscovery of learning and his release from prison. Don's latest transition had involved his rehabilitation on a veterans' therapeutic programme and Jo described traumatic events following his retirement. Pam's literacy learning, combined with an abusive relationship with a fellow learner on the course and Mark's realisation that his learning issues had been defined as dyslexia had led them both to reflect on, understand and come to terms with their earlier experiences. In Pam's case, she

recognised a pattern of falling into abusive relationships, which she now began to feel strong enough to avoid.

I have already referred to Paul's observations of his fellow prisoners, their lack of access to education before prison and in prison. This had led him to re-evaluate his educational opportunities and to resolve to use them in support of others:

> I was able to offer something mm you know with my sort of education.
> So that was good.

This might have helped him to develop a form of insight into the impact on himself and others of his decision to sever himself from full time education. Earlier in his narrative, he attributed his decision to leave full time education, in part, to his disenchantment with his teachers' lack of commitment, He now recognised that 'I took less convincing than I should to cut all ties with that world' and that his inability to communicate his feelings and problems had played a key part in his current circumstances. He was able to recognise that there had been 'faults on both sides' that he had not really been looking for help and had made the decision on his own. He thought that this had, eventually, led to him breaking the law:

> I mean everyone was trying but I was too far gone into my own shell
> really to hear what they were saying. There was enough pride left in me
> to refuse to admit until the last moment that I was suffering from
> depression and you know up to and beyond..... it took a long time to
> admit that is what was wrong.

And he 'went from winning to losing fairly quickly.' He described a form of personal resolution:

> So even though the way I went about it wasn't the best, you know, now
> I'm more comfortable doing it than in the outside world. That means I
> might not have regained that love of learning if I hadn't taken that path.

It was clear from Don's narrative that the veterans' programme had provided a form of resolution for both his family and Army experiences. This rehabilitative programme had been designed to help veterans to understand and come to terms with combat and other experiences, which contributed to his sense of dislocation and alienation. It was possible to interpret Don's account of the transitions in his earlier life as setting up a continuous theme and an interweaving of the tensions and conflicts arising from his family life into

different work settings. His father's illness, which had hung over the family was also directly linked with Don's early departure and severance from the Army - a setting which might also be interpreted as replicating family tensions and conflicts. He pointed to his father's unsuccessful involvement in teaching him maths as something that might be linked in with his lack of mathematical ability and his failure in the education system: 'Yeah it was my dad.'

His mother's death, which had been a particular source of trauma, had led to his inclusion in the veterans' rehabilitative programme. He described tools and techniques he was taught to use on the programme, involving detachment from 'the emotions surrounding various events':

> What it really always boils down to so that you can take fears or anger and the most important one is guilt... you can go back and identify what those things were in the past and then sort out how you feel about them. I went back to my childhood. Back to my dad and I did some work around my dad to start with ... And then I went to my mother's death ... which was a big one for me. And that was really good. The most powerful of the lot. And that is why they called it last ... and I didn't feel that I needed to be frightened of anybody and I still don't.

 as well as dealing with the traumas he experienced while serving in the Army:

> I don't feel that way any more. I was extremely scared ... And I don't sort of jump for cover or anything. Or wake up at night shouting my face off or anything. So,Yeah. Pretty good really. Life's pretty perky. Laughs. It's a fabulous place.

Jo reflected on his experience of retirement, which had been marked by illness and a conviction for an offence, leading to a Suspended Sentence. These experiences had encouraged him to re-evaluate his earlier experiences and this had afforded him some understanding of the burden of responsibility he had carried as a Headteacher and his impact on the lives of others.

> It was a difficult time in my life retirement, um cancer, no sleep um I got a bit obsessed by it all um and I wasn't thinking very clearly and I was ultimately ... I was pleased that I had retired when I had because I wouldn't have wanted to have started making bad decisions that were going to affect other people's lives.

He also expressed a fuller understanding of the impact of his childhood brain injury and his father's death on the rest of his life:

> My sleep pattern was disturbed and I don't think I've ever fully recovered from that as my sleep has always been um pretty poor um since I was

nine ....I don't think it impacted on my learning as much as it did on my on my health um I think looking back now with the benefit of hindsight um I think the whole situation and outcome had a more profound effect on me than I thought at the time.

Mark and Pam made different retrospective reflections on their experiences, based on their access to literacy learning. Mark had in recent years received a diagnosis of his dyslexia, which had coincided with a reduction in the funding of Adult Community Learning and a cessation of his learning:

It's ... it's incredible and ... and that's what I was grateful for - the fact that I've finally knew what was wrong. I knew ... I knew I couldn't read and write properly but to actually know that it's not your fault there's people out there what are dyslexia [sic] - clever people and you know …

Although he was disappointed that he had no current opportunity for learning, 'putting a word on what was wrong with me' had led him to a realisation that people with dyslexia 'had made it in life' and made possible an identification with successful people who were dyslexic. He recognised that he could work with his hands, possessed common sense and, as already mentioned, he took particular pride in his skills as a Union representative.

Pam's recent discovery of literacy learning through a work related programme had led her to a position where she was:

.... getting very confident ....I know I can do it. Before I used to back off and don't try. Full stop.

Pam described her exploitation by a violent member of the course and her fear that he would seek her out on his release from prison. This unfortunate juxtaposition between her progress in learning and a repeat of earlier patterns of abuse prompted her to reflect on her recurrent experiences of abusive relationships with men and to make a direct link between her vulnerability and her lack of literacy. She expressed her newly acquired insights in this way:

You just don't know when someone starts being friendly with you like me husbands ....they start being friendly with you because they take advantage of you because you can't do the work, I think ... I just can't seem to get on with blokes that mmm I think it (not being able to read and write) affects everything ... I think ... your work, your money, getting relationships...

and she spoke of a determination not repeat the pattern of abusive behaviour:

> I know it's too late now, the damage is done but I won't have any man telling me what to do and put me down as that's what's been happening.

She also recognised that although her inability to read and write had restricted her life in other ways she was now becoming more independent. She contrasted her previous and current approaches to challenges: 'I expect I could now but I couldn't back then.'

Participant narratives have challenged my original assumption that the major transitions experienced by participants would be those of developing a disability, being discharged from the Armed Forces or arising from the commission of offences. In the course of interviewing participants and analysing their responses, it is clear that it is possible to identify a wide range of transitions, which are of significance to them, including family events, employment progression and disappointments and retirement.

It also becomes apparent that participants demonstrate a facility in using the transitions which they have experienced most recently to reflect on the personal significance and impact of their accumulated experiences. This was consistent with the agency involved in developing a coherent story of self during times of change (Birkett, 2011), which had enabled them to find strategies for transcending the potentially negative consequences of such events, especially on their sense of identity. I explore these in the next section.

5.8 PARTICIPANTS' NARRATIVE APPROACHES TO IDENTITY

(a) Introduction

An exploration of the participants' description of their life events revealed their experience of the part played by family, education and employment in the development and reinforcement of their sense of identity. It also indicated the interweaving of these settings in participants' narrative accounts and their understanding of identity issues.

(b) Family and Identity

In Section 5.7 of this chapter on Transitions, I have referred to the effects of turbulence within the family on Paul and Don, especially its impact on their education. However, Paul and Pam also described the parental role

undertaken to manage transitions between the family as a context of identity formation and communication with outside agencies and schools.

Paul spoke about his difficulties with one 'troublesome teacher' and the successful intervention by his mother and grandmother:

> (They) sort of heard about his antics and mm sort of had a word, as it were and that was fine after that.

Pam described her parents' efforts to communicate on her behalf with monolithic official structures, including health authorities, to facilitate speech therapy for her. They had clearly been committed to practising her speech with her:

> If it wasn't for me dad knowing .. we knew there was something wrong and me mum ... but they didn't dream ... It was that they took me to speech therapy ...I could remember me dad and mum trying to say the words and it wasn't actually correct what I was saying and they were correcting me to say it properly yeah that's all I can remember at that age.

She told how her father had visited the school to find out why she was doing 'just pictures' and not learning to read and write. These apparently fruitless attempts to communicate with the school had effectively rendered the whole family inarticulate: 'He tried to tell 'em that I couldn't do it. It was impossible.'

Paul spoke of his learning to read 'at a stupidly early age.' Don described his experience of learning in the family through his mother teaching him to read: 'I flew, I flew with that.'

Family transmission of cultural interests is clear from Don's account. He described his introduction to music and opera, initially on a stereo at home:

> And ... and he really loved Tchaikovsky did Dad and mm the 1812 Overture booming out and all that sort of stuff and ... and now I've got a bit of love of Wagner...

and later in family visits to the theatre:

> my Great Uncle Jo had a box and he used to take us to the theatre and um we went to see the Russian ballet when it came and all that and that was wonderful and the music got me. The ballet didn't really.

(c) Education and Identity

Paul, Don and Jo referred to positive educational experiences which reinforced their sense of identity, often expressed in terms of a relationship with one teacher. Paul described a teacher helping them to achieve an identity as a writer and not 'smother' his love of writing:

> I used to sort of run through what I was supposed to be doing so I could get back to writing what I wanted to write. Mmm and that sort of continued through middle school and then to high school as well. I was always ... PAUSE ... they were sort of aware that I was working on my own little project.

Don described an art teacher who had impressed him:

> Our art master was a lovely man whom I later did pottery and ceramics with. It was a nice school and I got on well with him. A great bloke. I always thought of him as being like Don Quixote.

and a music teacher who had effected a link between school and the love of music, also encouraged by his father:

> Looking back there were some things uh when I went to school we had a thing called musical appreciation ... with our English Teacher who was a lovely lady....and uh we played records and then we'd sort of had discussions about it.

However, other school experiences were less positive and impacted negatively on their developing sense of identity, including Don's unwanted attentions from a teacher and his expulsion for smoking. I have already referred to Paul's sense of disenchantment about his teachers' lack of commitment to him and his fellow learners. Mark referred to his sense of failure at school and his dissociation from other children:

> You went to a like ... a like ... a separate bit of the classroom where they would have a group and they would sort of help ...help you with … with things.

Paul described his sense of separation from everyone at school and at College, not knowing 'how to integrate':

> I'm not exactly sure when it happened' – I mean sort of 14 or 15 ish I sort of broke a bit confidence wise and just became a really, really awkward teen but yes I sort of just sort of retreated into myself quite a lot.

Although he understood that he could have achieved more through employment if his dyslexia had been recognised and worked on earlier, Mark saw his work

as defining him. As already mentioned, work had been one of the principal means of achievement in his life and one which had given him a source of identity through his Union work in which he was 'feared' by employers because of his well informed support for his colleagues. Other formative experiences crucial to his sense of identity included his sporting achievements in running and judo, as already mentioned.

Jo's identity had clearly been formed and reinforced through school: his early academic success, his 'very happy years' at school and his career in teaching, which combined to create a sound basis for his identity. His identity as a Headteacher was linked with his strong sense of social justice and his identification with the children for whom he was responsible. However, he described his appointment as a Headteacher:

> .... against the wishes of the Inspectorate, incidentally, who didn't want me at all but you know it didn't worry me at all because mm it was my first interview for a Headship.

This had created tensions for him and his early experience as a Head was of 'absolute carnage.' This was in the context of resistance to change by the school authorities when he had tried to challenge bad practice and what he saw as the failure to respond to the needs of the children. His strong sense of social justice and his fight in the interests of the children created a number of difficulties but his identity and sense of purpose were never in doubt:

> I just remember thinking well if they want a fight they've got one because the children at that school really deserved better than what they were getting.

However, this strong sense of identity bound up with his Headteacher role was undermined by his retirement, when he experienced a number of crises and found it hard to adjust to another life. I describe the impact of this in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

(d) Employment and Identity

Having decided that the identity, built up in school as a writer, was in the past, and that it 'was not what I was any more' Paul moved through a series of menial jobs on which he reflects:

> Part of me hated it but then sometimes even now I look back on it fondly and think it was a mission. It was a battle.

In this ambivalence there was a recognition that his work played a part in the development of his identity. However, there were also references to the personally destructive nature of his work in 'just job jobs' with no possibility of promotion and the contribution 'of 'eleven years just vegetating and surviving' to his mental deterioration and his eventual breakdown: 'That was my situation. Most of the time I was alright with it.'

His reconstruction of himself in the early days of employment had followed his breakdown and his lack of hold on reality. He had by then separated his new self from the past sources of his identity, including education:

> The new person, the Blue, was not a student because that is more of less where the line was drawn ... Like I say, it's melodramatic but life is like that sometimes and for me it was important to separate everything came before.

It was clearly important to him that the uniting of the self and the alter ego would lead to the acceptance by his friends and family of his newly created identity as 'Blue' (described by him as a reference to a blank computer screen). Reverting to a work setting which linked, however tenuously, with his family background was also important to him in deciding on his next job:

> There have always been shops in my family and that customer service thing I have done a lot of but when you are doing it for a good cause it made a bit more sense.

Don's brutal initiation into the Army as a new recruit could be interpreted as an attempt by other Paratroopers to break down his identity and to make him conform to a new set of values but his instinct was to assert himself and to fight back:

> Before I knew it I was unconscious - getting pummelled and I decided to do something about that so Ted got paid back in his own coin.

In his employment in landscape gardening project management and he took pride in being able to learn new skills ('Trial and error and use makes master'). He was proud of being 'judged by your works' and of being able to communicate his knowledge to others, including the senior engineer in his Company:

He said: 'How did how the hell did you work that out just like that?'

And I said: 'I know it's going to work cos it will cos it can't not work.'

However, being 'highly' valued could not prevent his redundancy:

> The firm went squit and that was the end of that. That was my job for
> life. I was going to stay there.

As with Jo, his severance from work and the death of his mother precipitated a crisis and a destructive period of Don's life: 'and then I went downhill really.'

Mark experienced a loss of his sense of identity following his accident, the development of his disability and his redundancy and he referred himself to anger management training as a means of dealing with his feelings. He summarised his experiences in terms of the apparent lack of support for learning and finding alternative employment at that time. However, he was able to retain his sense of identity through the types of work he was qualified to do:

> I'm not frightened of hard work ... People always speak highly of me with
> my work they always say 'you're a good hard worker.' Well it's ... I've
> always done it because I've had to do it where I suppose someone
> whose brighter and intelligent they use their brains and they you know
> they've got a desk job or something like that you know...

Pam had never worked, apart from a brief period of work experience, which she had enjoyed but which had not led to a job. This had isolated her and might have have compounded her vulnerability to domestic violence.

(e) Resolutions of Identity

Participants' experiences of identity formation and development had led, for a time, to a fragile sense of identity, which was expressed in perceptive, articulate and moving ways by the participants, who described the tortuous process of continued identity formation and adjustment. However, exploration of the paradoxes surrounding experiences of transition revealed that participants' sense of themselves had been transformed through their resilience and their ability to reflect on the significance of their experiences.

Having already experienced threats to his identity and his existence before his offence and sentence of imprisonment, Paul was able to discern that he occupied a world in miniature in prison. He draws on that revelation and on his rediscovery of learning to find a renewed sense of identity and purpose:

189

I am sort of beginning to be defined somehow ...laughs. So that's good.

He reflected on his educational advantages and used his prison experience of literacy learning and peer mentoring to develop these skills to the benefit of ex-prisoners following their release.

Combined with his sense of social justice in the course of his role of Headteacher, Jo's experience of offending and his peer mentoring training while on a Community Order had led him to an objective understanding of the issues faced by prisoners, including difficulties with literacy. The difficulties he had experienced in adjusting to retirement had given him a renewed sense of purpose to help ex-prisoners on an individual basis:

> I think that if if you feel strongly enough about something mm and you feel that you can in some very small way make a difference even its to only one person then you should go ahead and do it.

Pam's literacy learning was giving her a sense of her identity which had never been achieved through her home life, education or employment. She expressed a new form of contentment and her ambition for the future was:

> ....to go to the library and learn more ...even learn more and like learn more before you die. So you carry on learning all your life and get better and better and better.

Don recognised that he had worked though the previous difficulties connected with his family, his Army service and the death of his mother to achieve a form of peace and resolution, enabling him to look forward to developing his skills and to find employment. In spite of his 'dreadful' experience of initiation into the Army, he had reverted to his identity as Soldier (I'm a soldier, you say it you do it') to reinforce his reliability and he emphasised his ability to make things with his hands in order to find future employment.

Mark knew that he had common sense and was a hard worker. His ownership of his home and the fact that he did not owe money to anyone symbolised his success. He reflected on the way his experiences had affected him:

> All these sorts of things have made me a better person if you know what I mean I've ...you know you can always be a better person.

Participants' mixed experience of identity formation and reinforcement in the settings of the family, educational institutions and employment had created a

190

period of confusion for each of them but all the participants had an experience of a space in which other transitional events had taken place. These had enabled them to reflect on their own and others' experiences, to express their determination to survive and to redefine an identity for themselves. In the next section of this chapter, I take this theme forward and explore it in terms of Individual agency and how this links with the power of literacy and other forms of learning for participants in my study.

5.9 INDIVIDUAL AGENCY AND THE POWER OF CRITICAL LITERACY

(a) Introduction

I have already made reference to one of the paradoxes surrounding experiences of transition: that participants' sense of themselves has been transformed through their resilience, linking with Giddens' view of the individual as a 'source of independent power' (Giddens, 1976, cited in Barnes, 2000: 30). Through the medium of critical literacy, this power can extend to making a difference: transforming the structures and constraints, from which the external constraints derived, for themselves and for others who are similarly excluded.

(b) Overcoming Academic Adversity and Academic Resilience

Bandura (2001: 1) defined agency as 'the capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life' and as 'the essence of humanness and in the context of social cognitive theory he identifies collective agency as a key means of 'overcoming academic adversity.' Taking this theme forward, Martin (2013: 488) related academic agency to 'the capacity to overcome setbacks, challenges and difficulties that are part of everyday academic life', developing this into a distinction with academic buoyancy, which is 'more relevant to low level negative outcomes such as anxiety and failure avoidance' and academic resilience, which is defined as 'the capacity to overcome acute and/or chronic adversity that is seen as a major threat to a student's educational achievement.' I describe the relevance of these concepts to the participants in the following paragraphs.

(c) Participants' Academic Buoyancy

Participants in this research described instances of their academic buoyancy in terms of their responses to low level negative outcomes. In some instances,

these represent experiences of more acute academic adversity which have become the norm for them and have encouraged a buoyant response.

Receiving little help for his reading and writing at school clearly became the norm for Mark but he described a form of buoyancy which he developed, enabling him to pursue wider extra curricular opportunities, including running and judo:

> As young kid I was also a very good runner. I'd run 20 miles in less than 3 hours ....I'd run everywhere I'd never walk down the road I'd run down the road you know I was a fit young lad and yes that was one of my first experiences but like I said I'd done like judo and all thing like that sort of stuff...... and all that sort of stuff and ... and I done like I'd got a yellow and orange belt or whatever the belts and that so I have achieved over the years and I think you do learn to achieve ...

He was also aware that his lack of academic ability did not preclude him from work:

> I knew I couldn't read and write very good but knew I could always work cos I worked from a young age 14/15 on the farms and different things.

Don's observations about the transfer to a new school illustrated his acuteness of observation and buoyancy. In retaliation for the Principal's lack of welcome to him, Don ridiculed him for continuing to wear his academic gown following the re-designation of his school from a grammar to a secondary modern school and for the tone of voice he adopted. In doing so, he might be said to be drawing a parallel between their respective inadequacies in adjusting to a changed situation.

Paul recounted his reactions to the classroom behaviour of his fellow learners at school:

> You know, when the other kids were sort of getting bored and going off and wandering off and throwing things, I was getting bored and either reading or scribbling ... you know, writing away.

The picture which emerged from Paul's account is one of detachment from his surroundings during which he 'discovered and articulated a new level of understanding about his own thinking' and the social context he was in (Flower, 2012: 341), thus demonstrating his individual agency through his writing. This sequence of events from isolation to a literacy act echoed and prefigured his

later experience of drawing on his identity as a literate person to adapt to his life in prison and beyond.

(d) Participants' Academic Resilience

Academic resilience as identified by Martin (2013) was a fluid concept for these participants. For most, it was not related to a response of 'self-handicapping or disengagement' and it was not always time bound: sometimes the response was related to the immediate situation but it was also demonstrated in their descriptions of later events as their accounts of their lives developed, providing continuity, consistency and authenticity to their biographical accounts. The direct link they established in their narratives between the need for resilience and their persistence in finding literacy and other forms of learning was striking. I develop this theme by reference to individual participants' accounts.

All participants described acute or chronic adversity in relation to their educational experience, ranging from failure at the Eleven Plus and expulsion from school (Don) to undiagnosed dyslexia (Mark) speech problems which impeded her learning (Pam) being at 'loggerheads all the time' with a particular teacher and perceived lack of commitment of teachers (Paul). Jo described his experience following his return to school after his accident at the age of nine as being 'totally detached from all of the learning experience you've had in the past.' He recalled his return to school following his childhood accident:

> Coming back after a long absence and finding myself adrift somewhere down the end of the class something that had a profound effect on me but was also a stimulant in many ways because all my mates were right at the other end of the classroom again and therefore I had the motivation to try to get myself back in sync.

He also described how he was 'relegated to observing and being observed' in sports' activities at this time. These experiences had given him an enhanced understanding of children's negative views of their own abilities and the impact on their learning of 'different factors which are not their fault.' Therefore, he recognised the importance of encouraging and supporting academic resilience for the children in the schools where he was later Headteacher.

Mark's resilience was demonstrated in his persistence in accessing learning when he was made redundant and by his attendance at Adult Community Learning literacy courses for four years. He recognised that his earlier learning

experiences had been damaging and enrolled himself on an anger management course, where he confronted the roots of his aggression:

> That was, like I say, was life experiencing to go over what had happened in me life. It was it was an awful thing to mm have to do you know I mean I was in floods of tears some of the things you know ...... so you know I hope it has made me a better person but you know even with that I could have done with more help. Another one where, you know ... all down to money again.

Pam described her commitment to literacy learning, based on her perception of the difference it was making to her self-confidence; and Don had persisted in his search for suitable vocational training to make up for his earlier expulsion from education and to formalise the knowledge he had built up in a number of different companies in the U.K. and abroad. Paul's resilience was related in part to the self-disengagement identified by Martin (2013). He attributed his decision to leave Further Education to a mixture of internal and external factors:

> At some point ... I don't know ... maybe it was just young life does that to you but it basically sort of crippled my confidence quite lot so I started the course and it was awesome and then sort of half way through I just couldn't... couldn't do it....I don't know I just had no confidence at all and I managed to just sort of struggle through that .. I think that's it and as I say I made it to half way through the term and had to bail out.

These experiences of academic challenge and adversity might have had the effect of undermining participants' sense of identity. Hitlin and Elder (2007: 180) drew attention to identity agency, which they define as the ability to 'build on internalised identity commitments' on order to motivate commitments, to draw on their own experiences and to act in line with claimed identities.

Paul and Jo each exemplified this form of agency, drawing on their own experiences, including those of learning (Paul and Jo) and imprisonment (Paul) in order to focus on the needs of fellow prisoners and those discharged from prison. In the section on academic buoyancy, I have previously referred to the empathy, which Jo developed as a result of his experiences of returning to school following his childhood accident. The resilience he had demonstrated as a child gave him an additional perspective on the needs of the children in his East London school and he later described his efforts on their behalf in numerous battles with national and local government educational officials.

Jo's retirement and his court appearance were both factors which appear to have had the potential to undermine his sense of status and identity, revolving around his role as Headteacher. However, having received a Community form of Court disposal, Jo was driven to a recognition of the support he could provide to those who had been 'incarcerated in some building somewhere or the other' - a fate which he had managed to avoid, possibly because of his previous status.

Although there is clearly a distinction between being in prison and being a Headteacher for 35 years, his empathy with ex-offenders extended to making interesting observations about being institutionalised and making poor decisions, possibly reflecting on his own offending at a time when his judgement was clouded by illness and the difficulty of adjusting to retirement. He acknowledged that this was a very bad time of his life when there was 'lack of self-knowledge and understanding' and 'there was no ... there was no self-learning taking place' and he commented on prisoners being released:

> Have they learned sufficient to be able to adequately cope with the new life style that they are about to experience which if they've been incarcerated for a long period of time this maybe 10 years down the line? And, when one considers how quickly the world is changing have they learnt sufficiently of what to expect and...and I would suggest that isn't the case at the moment.

Paul's re-creation and recovery of his identity had given him understanding, empathy and the ability to identify with the experiences of his fellow prisoners. Despite his earlier decision to leave Further Education, he acknowledged that his previous academic success and his love of writing made him well placed to support his fellow prisoners' learning and literacy needs and the peer mentoring for which he had received training in prison:

> And every course they were running I was basically a mentor and then it's good to see immediate gratification. Occasionally I could see yes I'm doing something ... I know exactly who I'm helping. That's good.

This was based on clearly expressed understanding that education was crucial to his and their sense of identity:-

> Education in general is you know. a big deal. It helps or can help everyone to define themselves.

and Paul expressed his empathy for ex-prisoners returning to the community and needing peer mentoring on release, based on his own experience of a

'sense of disconnect' and needing to find a sense of purpose on his own return to the community. He empathised with:

> the need for people to communicate with someone who is not at the other side of the desk because otherwise you know you have it up to your ... as high as you can take it I'm thinking well this is something that's missing.. this is something that would be really good...but then on the outside you're thinking well what can I do with it now?'

He described the mechanisms which some prisoners use to avoid revealing their lack of access to literacy learning, thus 'slipping through the gaps' in the education system in prison. In his view, this made it more likely that they would reoffend following release:

> Some people still manage to get other people to fill in their paperwork ... You emerge in the real world and you can't necessarily get away with that. Then sometimes the easy option is to just get yourself back in.

Paul also recounted that, in his discussion with his Probation Offender Manager following his release from prison, 'it sounded as if she was suggesting that I was lacking something rather than looking at it as improvement and progression.'. He had resisted this deficit view of his potential and, at the time of our meeting, was training as a peer mentor and planning to undertake a teacher training qualification for those who were new to teaching or desiring to start as associate teachers.

Mark had built on his sense of identity as someone who 'could always work' to support other workers in his Trade Union role. Although he was unable to read and write well, he had found help with reading the necessary documentation. By his own account, his dyslexia had not prevented him from being an effective Trade Union Steward:

> It earned me a bit of respect out of it from the firm and from ...... you know certain people you know ...

Above all, he could apply his own experience of being excluded from learning to support others who were facing potential dismissal from employment:

> In my own life what I've learnt.... and it does make me a deadly union chap because the fact is 90 per cent of the time I know what I'm talking about because of the fact is I I've personally experienced it.

Pam made a direct link between her recent literacy learning and her new found confidence, enabling her to act independently. Finding employment remained

an objective for her and one which she saw as achievable now that she was developing literacy skills and a new confidence and identity. These offered her an alternative to being 'sat at home watching the TV with the little dog' and making the world 'a better place' for her:

> It's made me happy and I can I can read stuff now I can do a lot more than I have ever done in my life really mm I don't ..... I'm getting more independent um even to come like here I used to have.... have somebody come. For instance, to come here I would have had someone coming with me.'

This new found agency also enabled her to ask for help, for example, in finding directions without feeling self-conscious:

> I know it doesn't matter what they think. You try to help yourself and to get on with it ... do things you should be doing.

As previously cited in the context of metaphor, Don had sufficient insight to recognise, that:

> At the end of the day well I'm going to have to recreate myself really because I've fallen to pieces and now I've got to put myself back together again.

He applied his sense of identity to his own future training and development, drawing on 'the pieces' of his life in the form of making things, learning on the job and his understanding that 'use makes master' to persist in his search for a suitable course and for funding.

5.10 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

I began this data analysis chapter by exploring participants' use of metaphor as a means of understanding the essence of what they wished to convey to me. In the context of cultural psychology, which is 'premised on the search for meaning' and on a so called intentional conception of 'constituted worlds', Schweder (1984:2) noted that 'no sociocultural environment exists or has identity independent of the way human beings seize meaning and resources from it' while 'every human being has his or her subjectivity and mental life altered' through this interaction and the seizing of meanings. Gerrig (2018: 1) sought to understand the 'repertoire of cognitive processes that give substance to a variety of worlds', including those which are 'deeply memorable or make only a fleeting impression.'

This links to the reference by Skinner, Rodriguez and Bailey (1999) to ways in which individuals understand themselves in relation to these culturally defined worlds by which their life stories and use of imagery are coloured. In the context of Geertz's cultivation of 'figured worlds' and 'webs of meaning', Holland *et al.* (1998: 53) referred to 'as if' worlds as contrived interpretations or imaginations, which mediate behaviour and inform participants' outlooks. This is essential to my understanding of the meaning of the worlds created by the research participants. By their accounts, they have inhabited a number of figured worlds, including schools, an hotel, a prison, the army and a violent, imprisoning home. In the discussion chapter which follows, I explore the ways in which these figured worlds, brought into focus through use of metaphor, articulate with the concepts generated through the thematic approaches to data analysis. This has pointed to the wider significance emerging from participants' use of imagery and from the stories they have constructed about themselves.

Chapter 6. DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research, as set out in the introductory section of this thesis, was to identify the particular social and educational experiences, which have affected participants' access to adult literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation programmes; and the key transition points in which lack of access to literacy learning and dissociation occurred. It has also focussed on the features of effective learning and vocational rehabilitation in preventing the cycle of disadvantage. Research questions were framed accordingly and are set out in the methodology chapter. In the critical literacy chapter, I described the potential and the limitations of the concepts of habitus, agency and identity. I now return to the theme of critical literacy as it relates to participants' responses,

6.2 CRITICAL LITERACY, HABITUS, AGENCY AND IDENTITY

(a) Critical Literacy and Habitus

In the data analysis chapter, I referred to the observation by Vasquez, Janks and Comber (2019:308) that the world could be seen from a critical literacy perspective as 'a socially constructed text.'

I introduce this discussion of findings from socially constructed interview texts, by reference to participants' habitus, agency and identity, viewing my research through the perspectives opened up by critical literacy, which is essentially a pedagogy of inclusion.

It has been illuminating to explore the relevance of habitus in the context of parents' and relatives' communication with education and the expectations these have engendered in my participants. Bourdieu (1972/77: 78) described such family experiences being internalised at an early age, moulding aspirations and expectations 'our subjective expectations of objective possibilities.' Holt Bowlby and Lea (2013: 9) extend Reay's (2004) analysis to include friends and all family members, stating that emotional relationships underpin the acquisition of social and cultural capital and the development of habitus. Holt, Bowlby and Lea (2013: 20) also emphasise that families are pivotal in encouraging or discouraging interactions and involvement in social activities. Fleetwood (2016:

180), drawing on Bourdieu's habitus, observes that the habitus generates but does not determine social action, citing Bourdieu's (1990:57) 'regulated improvisation' or the means by which social inequality shapes the narrative that promotes inequality.

Of particular relevance is the role of mothers in developing an ability to communicate with school authorities on their children's behalf and supporting educational aspirations. Reay (2004) emphasises the emotional aspects of social relationships, particularly the nurturing, emotional work of women in families, stating that those mothers, who can regulate their own emotions, who have a positive experience of school and who can avoid reproducing middle class pressures for success are able to generate most effective emotional capital.

Don described his mother's encouragement of his reading, in contrast to his father's attempts to teach him maths, which he described as harsh. However, he also queried why his parents, especially his mother, had allowed him to give up his apprenticeship. I have already referred to Paul's mother and grandmother and their effective communication with a teacher on his behalf, thus demonstrating their practical support for and investment in his learning. Jo's family were supportive of his ambitions when he decided to undertake teacher training, consistent with their support for his education throughout his school days following his brain injury. There is also a link with the importance of family cultural capital, as witnessed by Don's memories of his early exposure to classical music, theatre and ballet. In a broader sense, Paul linked his decision to work in fundraising with his family's work ethic. As already described, in their best efforts to break through a barrier in communication with her first school, Pam's family were unsuccessful. However, their communication with health services on her access to speech therapy had a more positive set of outcomes.

Luke (2018:10) draws attention to the power of critical literacy to provide:

> models which are predicated on the assumption that particular approaches to reading and writing can generate both individual (for example, identity, affiliation and agency) and collective effect (for example, participation in larger social movements.

(b) Individual Agency and the Power of Critical Literacy

The participants' ability to use their most recent experiences to discern and illuminate patterns of behaviour runs throughout their narratives. The facility to reflect on the significance of their experiences links with the behaviourist approach to agency expounded by Hitlin and Elder (2007: 176). Key to this is recognition that 'people live in the present and their interpretation of the past and future are shaped by the present.' This has a particular resonance with the complex biographical narratives, which the participants have constructed, providing a context for analysis of the ways they have dealt with and come to terms with their educational experiences. This is relevant to their focus on critical literacy and other forms of learning as means of overcoming the issues they have faced.

(i) Existential Agency

Hitlin and Elder (2007: 176) referred to the characteristics of an existential form of agency as a 'pre reflective capacity to defy social dictates as a fundamental exercise of free will 'can involve making decisions even though they involve severe consequences' (Bandura. 2001, cited in Hitlin and Elder, 2007: 176).

Examples of participants' existential agency include Paul's decision to adopt a different identity, followed by his decision to leave full time education. Acknowledging that this had not been in his own best interests, he explained that it had been taken in one of a number of situations in his life in which he did not seek advice or help for his 'mental state.' He had then committed the offence which led to his imprisonment. His account of his use of his individual agency raises some complex issues about his capacity for decision making and its impact on his mental state and self-awareness.

> I pled Guilty so I did take responsibility for my actions but I never used my mental state as an excuse but it is a reason because ... You know like normally I am adjusted enough to not act in the way that offends society overmuch or breaks any rules but it was only because of the extreme mental state I was in.

Jo's offence was committed, by his own account, during a traumatic period when his judgment was impaired, following retirement from a senior position. The 'severe consequences' (Hitlin and Elder, 2007: 176) of these displays of

existential agency were imprisonment for Paul and a Suspended Sentence for Jo.

Don also exhibited this form of agency when, as I have already described, he reported a teacher for inappropriate behaviour towards him. He alleged that the consequences for him involved his expulsion from school. He described a connection between his action and the school's decision to expel him for smoking 'because it was easier' for the school authorities to take this action rather than to pursue his complaint. He also described his decision to give up his apprenticeship:

> I got an apprenticeship for a little while and then I dropped out of that. God knows why but I did.

and he justified his decision to fight back after his brutal initiation by a fellow Paratrooper, regardless of the consequences:

> There was no other possible option but to do that.

Mark's decision to drink and drive led to a conviction, loss of his Driving Licence and his employment for which he took full responsibility:

> I knew I'd broke the law so it's allright having foresight and all that and I'm not ...that's not the bit of me life ... I'm not proud of...

Participants' reflections on their use of existential agency demonstrated a degree of insight into the ways in which this form of agency has operated for them. Mark accepted responsibility for his actions and there was evidence of Paul and Jo making reparations for offending behaviour, for example through literacy support and peer mentoring, based on their own experience of the transformative potential of critical literacy learning. However, if an essential element of individual agency is the taking of responsibility for the consequences of individual actions. Paul and Jo, in particular, demonstrated a lack of personal awareness of their inability to make a link between their criminal actions and the impact these have had on others. In addition, for Paul, prison might be said to have offered a 'false liberation', a utopia of learning in which previous offences were sanitised not only by him but also by prison authorities as a means of containing crimes.

(ii) Pragmatic Agency

Participants in my researchers demonstrated pragmatic agency, which Hitlin and Elder (2007: 177) described as 'cliff edge' situations or 'circumstances which sometimes require heightened attentional concentration on one's immediate surroundings in certain situations.' Mead refers to 'knife's edge situations' and their potential impact on the individual's ability to process social stimuli and not simply react passively (Mead, 1032, cited in Hitlin and Elder, 2007: 177). A cliff edge or knife's edge situation arose for Paul when his father's illness prevented him from working:

> We were on the brink of eviction so I had to basically be the breadwinner ... laughs ... which was fine in a way but obviously not the norm and I did lose out. It was a bit of a hit to his pride for me to be doing that but you know I had no option.

As already described, Pam had to prove to authorities that she was a fit mother. She clearly understood that her inability to read and write were unrelated to her ability to fulfil her role as mother and was able to demonstrate that she could feed and look after her children before she was allowed to leave left hospital with them. This process was repeated after the birth of each of her children. She viewed her passing of this test as a victory over those who doubted her ability to be a mother. Her decision to continue with her literacy learning programme was another demonstration of pragmatic agency. Although other course members' motivation declined, she had persisted in her attendance, based on her understanding that her literacy learning was a key factor in her increasing confidence.

Hitlin and Elder (2007) also related pragmatic agency to the types of activities, which are chosen when habits break down. Hewitt (1989) referred to the importance of being guided by inner logic in such situations. When Mark was made redundant from his job, he was able to compare his experience of 'doing nothing' at school to the current situation of being unemployed. This prompted him to be assertive in his search for help with his reading and writing and, as already described, to resist any attempt to be overlooked because of his disability:

> I knew I struggled at school cos I was doing nothing and they were letting me do nothing. I went into the um Job Centre and they said: 'Oh you are

registered disabled.' I said: 'is there anything you can do, you know courses or anything I could go on?' because ... you know ... I struggled with me reading and all that sort of thing.

Participants' accounts of the choices they have made in such situations revealed a sense of identity and of self and a capacity for reflective, intuitive agency, which was also key to the other forms of agency emerging from their personal stories.

(c) Agency, Identity and Critical Literacy

Lu (1999: 189) referred to a 'literate self' in the interest of social justice with goals (1999:173) including ending oppression rather than empowering a particular form of self; grappling with one's privilege as well as one's experience of exclusion; approaching more respectfully and responsibly those histories and experiences which appear different from what one calls one's own; and affirming a yearning for individual agency, which she calls 'critical affirmation.' However, she noted that:

> At the heart of critical affirmation is the tension between individual agency and collective affirmation.

The participants in my research have demonstrated that individual agency and collective affirmation are not mutually exclusive and in the conclusion chapter, I have made reference to ways in which they have demonstrated their eagerness to use their voice in support of others. They have spoken of the need for literacy and other forms of adult education, especially for those who had not learned to read and write earlier in life. I acknowledge that these might have been veiled references to their own needs but, in these affirmations of their agency, identity and instrumentality, they have demonstrated their reflexivity and breadth of insight which speaks to the values of Lu's 'literate self' and their commitment on behalf of those they perceived as being excluded from literacy learning.

Freebody and Freiberg (2011: 440) observed that:

> It is in the pedagogies in which they participate that students have most at stake in terms of their identities

Degener (2001: 1) referred to the inscribing of one's identity by literacy practices and Street (2003: 77-78) referred to the link between literacy and the self being 'rooted in conceptions of knowledge identity and being.'

Moje and Luke (2009: 433) observed that identities mediate and are mediated by texts that individuals read, write and talk about and focus on identity:

> is crucial not to control the identities that students produce, construct, form or enact but to avoid controlling identities.

In terms of identity and in the context of the centrality of the texts, Hagood (2002: 248) referred to the formation of conceptions of the self through the critical reading of texts. Hagood (2002:250) also referred to the scope for multiple identities to play out in one instructional mileu and (2002: 249) the identity producing mechanisms of written and spoken language. Thus according to Hagood (2002: 250) there is 'a shifting person who changes according to context, discourse and material practices of critical literacy' and a 'multiplicity of personhood' producing different identities. This is borne out by the wide experiences of habitus among the participants and their development of forms of cultural capital beyond the family setting, including in workplaces such as hotels, charities, hospitals and schools, in prison, organisations supervising ex offenders and in a Trade Union.

Bourdieu (1977) stressed the generative and creative aspects of habitus and action. Echoing Bourdieu, Foucault (1988) referred to technologies of the self, seeing the socialisation of individuals occurring in a given place at a given time through institutions (including families and communities) and their programmes. Akram and Hogan (2015: 616) describe this as the process through which individuals deploy meanings and symbolism, derived from and through the habitus. This is borne out in the experiences recounted by my participants, including those arising from (2015: 620) major 'contestations with identity when the '"taken for granted" (formed within the habitus) cannot be sustained.' Durkheim (1984) describes this as an 'anomic moment' when a divergence arises between the way they 'see the world then, versus now' and for Giddens (1991:3) the only solution is to be found in a reflexive process in which the self has to be remade through individual agency. This enables one (Akram and Hogan: 622) to 'carve out a space to act' and, through 'surveillance of the self',

(2015: 624) 'to ensure that they retain a space within existing modes of social relations by asserting their social identity.'

Paul's experience in the school and college and in prison cultures evidenced such a process. At school and college, he had moved from being a successful student to a disengaged student. His strong sense of identity as a prisoner enabled him to use his reflexivity and his agency to negotiate with prison authorities and to develop his own sense of achievement in the prison setting, creating alternative learning arrangements for himself during prison lockdowns and negotiating his own access to learning in the prison setting. These activities involved him in employing a subtle combination of compliance and resistance. In the process and through his own rediscovery of his love of literacy learning, he had regained an identity as successful student following a break of some fifteen years from education. Jo was committed to improving the opportunities for children attending his East London school, which involved him in combatting what he perceived as the limited view of their potential and taking specific actions, including replacement of school books and different approaches to the welfare and teaching of the children. This use of his agency also involved him in a re-evaluation of his role as Headteacher and development of his self identification, fighting on behalf of the children in his school. Following his conviction and community sentence, he drew on his previous identity to form a commitment to the literacy and other resettlement issues faced by ex prisoners.

Mark moved from being a marginalised pupil and a student striving against the odds to learn literacy to an adult with diagnosed dyslexia, identifying with successful people who had experienced similar issues. His experiences of being marginalised at school led him to challenge the official advice he received following a serious road accident to remain on Benefits and to seek adult community literacy learning. His critical literacy learning and experiences of managed operative roles in schools and a hospital enabled him to adopt an effective role and identity as a union representative who was 'feared' by employers. Don had turned around his experiences of an oppressive Army structure and bullying from fellow soldiers to define his identity as being that of a soldier. He projected himself as a competent reader and an adult in need of investment in his lifelong learning. Pam's experiences of the testing of her

ability as a mother, the violence and isolation her home and the abuse from a fellow learner on her literacy course had made her recognise that her inability to read had made her vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This had encouraged her resolve to continue her learning and to develop her literacy skills in order to be empowered and to progress from vulnerability to a greater sense of control.

In the following sections of this chapter, I place participants' responses to my research questions in the context of the literature review, citing relevant references throughout.

6.3. METAPHOR AND MEANING

Participant interviews attest to the value of biographical, narrative interpretive interviews as a research method. These interviews were designed to focus on what Denzin (2011: 32) described as 'those life experiences that radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their life project', particularly in the 'turning point experiences' and in the 'ruptures in the structure of everyday life.' In that sense, this research methodology has mirrored and given expression to critical literacy in which (Luke, 2013: 142): 'learners become teachers of their understandings and experiences and teachers become learners of these same contexts.'

Orwell (1957: 12) referred to the value of breaking down 'at any rate momentarily, the solitude in which the human being lives' through accessing their 'recognizable experiences.' Sartre saw personal biography as a form of research with an 'existential thrust: the potential for illuminating moments of crisis', setting it apart from other research approaches that examine the 'more mundane features of everyday life' (Sartre, 1943/1956, cited in Denzin, 2011: 34).

In the data analysis chapter, I explored participants' use of metaphor during their interviews with language drawn from their literary heritage. In the following section, I explore views of metaphor, which have influenced my approach to analysing data from their interviews.

6.4. VIEWS OF METAPHOR

Citing Quintilian, Derrida refers to the strongest motive for metaphor (Derrida, 1967, cited in Donoghue, 2014: 182):

> Metaphor is both a gift which Nature herself confers on us, and which is therefore used even by uneducated persons and unconsciously, and at the same time so attractive and elegant that it shines by its own light however splendid its context.
>
> So long as it is correctly employed, it cannot be vulgar or mean or unpleasing. It also adds to the resources of language by exchanges or borrowings to supply its deficiencies, and (hardest task of all). It ensures that nothing goes without a name.

Far from being vulgar, mean or unpleasing, the metaphors and allusions drawn on by the participants in my study gave a clear demonstration of their familiarity with a wide range of imagery as a 'powerful aesthetic resource' (Fogelin, 2011: 75).

The Greek term metaphora literally means 'transfer.' Lakoff and Johnson (1999: x) defined metaphor as 'a cognitive tool that enables the transfer of meaning between dissimilar domains.' Fairclough (1989: 119) defined metaphor as 'a means of representing one aspect of experience in terms of another' and that 'stereotypically, this is associated with poetry and literary discourse.'

Lakoff and Johnson summarised it thus: 'metaphor allows us to conceptualise familiar things in unfamiliar ways and unfamiliar things in familiar ways' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, cited in Borbely, 1998: 923); and Cameron *et al.* (2009) reflected that, in the context of cognitive theory, metaphor is considered to be located in thought and feeling processes rather than in language.

In the view of Fogelin (2011: 75), on one level 'metaphors 'convey a great deal of information in a compact form' and 'can call attention to likenesses which might go unnoticed.' Modell (2003: 561) referred to metaphor as 'truly the currency of the mind.' He drew attention to the dominant role it plays in 'the organising or categorizing of emotional memory,' and that it functions 'unconsciously as a pattern detector' and as a means of unconsciously transferring an 'old relationship into the here and now.'

Descartes described metaphor as 'the hidden hand that shapes conscious thought' (Descartes, 1628/1968, cited in Swan, 2002: 454). Cameron *et al.* (2009: vii) also referred to their use as 'indirect or powerful ways of explaining

feelings and emotions' and as a tool that researchers may use 'to reveal more about how people think and feel.'

Sfard (1998: 4) went further:

> Metaphors are the most primitive, most elusive and yet amazingly informative subjects of analysis. They often cross the borders between the spontaneous and the scientific, between the intuitive and the formal.

observing (1994: 5) that 'different metaphors may lead to different ways of thinking.' Further, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) warned against the likelihood of being able to identify any objective or absolute truth through linguistics and meaning. The possibility of what Wittgenstein (2001: x) described as 'fuzziness in categorization' provided by participants' use of metaphor has opened up avenues for me as a researcher. Holland (2009: 14) referred to a level of analysis which 'problematises the narrative through exploring the unconscious projections, introjections and transferences at play, paying attention to words, images and metaphors.' Such an approach has a particular resonance in the context of biographical narrative, which has the potential to get close to the reality of people's lives; and in which metaphor has the potential to fill in the gaps created by play of memory and possible fault lines between narrating and narrated 'selves.' This has not only driven my interpretation of participants' use of metaphor but it has also informed my broader approach to participant narratives, as I have explored in this discussion chapter.

6.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Research Question 1 focussed on the particular social and educational experiences, which have affected participants' access to adult literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation programmes.

Participants' accounts of their lives were suffused with a sense of objectivity and insight about events on which they adopted an analytical outsider's perspective. These reflected the nature of the stories they narrated about forms of exclusion. Their narratives have provided evidence of the 'multidimensional disadvantage of substantial duration' (Room, 2000) previously highlighted in the literature review.

Also in the literature review, I stated my intention to research 'the deliberate acts of social domination' (Silver 2007:1); the multiplicity of ways that people

may be denied full participation in society and 'the full rights of citizenship' (Ward, 2009: 237); and Bauman's series of insecurities which are 'inimical to the making of citizenship' (Bauman, 1998, cited in Mullard, 2002). An understanding of how power is secured, maintained and withheld has been key to my analysis of participants' narratives of their life. Each individual expressed the impact on themselves and others of the all pervasive and coercive nature of power relations in society (Foucault, 1980); and the consequent marginalisation and restriction of life chances through lack of access to literacy learning (Janks, 2010: 34). I have also viewed these experiences through the perspective of their individual agency and their strong sense of identity.

Throughout this thesis, I have referred to ex-offenders as the primary interest group, whose experiences of social exclusion can overlap and intersect with those of the other groups included in this study, including those with learning difficulties, mental ill health, drug and alcohol addiction and who are unemployed. Participants in this research have affirmed this focus through their narratives, especially in the perspectives on literacy and learning provided by Paul and Jo, both ex offenders. Their individual experiences of education and learning ranged from an appreciation of its potential to disenchantment with the educational system and individual rediscovery of its potential. I have analysed their accounts of these events in the data analysis chapter of this thesis.

I also stated previously that ex-offender views were rarely sought and that there was little recognition in existing research studies of their individual agency. The additional dimension emerging from these interviews was that the sensitivity, which they had developed as a result of their own experiences, enabled them to make acute observations on the limited and inconsistent educational provision in prison. For ex prisoners, these have, in turn, illuminated the theme and experience of wider social exclusion. They have also provided a focus on issues, including lack of access to educational provision, for the other participants in my research.

A complex pattern has emerged from this analysis of participants' accounts of their experiences of social exclusion, ranging from subtle to oppressive forms, to descriptions of self-exclusion and mixed experiences of dialogue with authority structures or lack of communication with those in authority. These

experiences resonate with Felder's (2019: 217) 'two spheres' of the operation of social inclusion, as previously cited in the data analysis chapter, and illustrate the tensions and friction between the interpersonal and the societal, the latter with its tendency to view people in an 'generalised, abstract sense.'

Drawing on the imagery used by participants, it has been possible to interpret the impact of social exclusion on them. In the literature review, I drew on references by Scrase and Ockwell (2010) and Patrick (2014) to the use of rhetoric and official language in political speeches and policy documents to denigrate, vilify and further marginalise those who are socially excluded. From this form of data analysis and drawing on the imagery used by participants, it is possible to identify that they have internalised and may be said to project this negative rhetoric, reflecting, through their use of metaphor society's view of those who are excluded.

The participants' world view thus depicted was characterised by feelings of isolation and dissociation when describing socially and educationally excluding events, which included marginalisation and exclusion from school, self-exclusion from Further Education and from an apprenticeship and lack of access to education due to disability. For example, the maritime metaphors used by participants drew on the image of a perilous, unpredictable and unsettled existence including images which evoke the benign, turbulent, subsuming and threatening nature of the sea. Metaphors expressive of a sense of separation included those associated with lines and barriers. These cut across their and others' access to and success in education, mental health services and created problems with accessing advice and help following release from prison. Exclusion from literacy was expressed in terms of disability: 'crippled confidence'; 'learning to live (with dyslexia) like you do with any disability'; 'the biggest disability' and 'the biggest Achilles' heel anyone can have.' Mark likened his previously undiagnosed dyslexia to knowing that an engine is faulty but not knowing why, also drawing parallels with his own physical disability.

In developing his concept of cultural capital, Bourdieu (2011) recognised that it provided a theoretical hypothesis, making it possible to relate unequal scholastic achievement to the distribution of cultural capital between the cases

and class factions rather than as 'an effect of natural aptitudes.' As argued by Freire, access to critical literacy represents a lens through which other forms of social exclusion experienced by ex-offenders and others may be viewed, mediated and transformed (Freire, 1970, cited in Mezirow, 1990: 16). Viewing participants' narratives through this prism helped to inform the impact on them of the effects of social exclusion, power, identity and agency, as revealed in their responses to my first interview question. This applied especially in relation to the social and educational experiences which have affected their access to adult literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation programmes.

It has also been illuminating to explore the transitions they have experienced: in particular, the impact of learning on their capacity to 'fit' into changes of circumstances, to access different forms of learning and training and on their perception of which learning programmes are most effective in preventing the cycle of disadvantage. Their disengaged perspective on the consequences for them as individuals, including the particular form of social ostracism following a period of imprisonment, evidenced a downward trajectory in which mental ill health and loss of confidence were likely to have impacted on their capacity to deal with the consequences of such events. It is arguable that participants' accounts of these deprivations are the more powerful for the objectivity with which they described their experience, for being cloaked in metaphor and for conveying 'unreality' as a form of reality for them.

Paul's sense of marginalisation was demonstrated in his description of himself as 'society adjacent' and his reference to a 'sense of disconnect' in prison. This detachment was also characterised by their observations of the forms of social exclusion experienced by prisoners. This was the case for Paul and Jo, for both of whom education, and critical literacy learning in particular, was characterised by a positive sense of achievement. They had both developed a practical understanding of the issues faced by prisoners and by ex-prisoners. Ex offenders themselves, they emphasised the impact of exclusion on prisoners following release. Paul based his observations on his personal experience of imprisonment. He referred to the pressure on ex-prisoners to read and fill in application forms and to write CV's; and the benefit of prisoners being able to read and write their own letters. He saw this as preferable to them 'slipping through the gaps' educationally in prison, thus creating the easy option of

'getting themselves back in' i.e. further periods of imprisonment. Jo, a retired Head teacher, empathised with ex-prisoners, having himself been given a community form of disposal. He spoke of his temporary exclusion from household insurance, following his conviction and he drew on this experience to comment on the types of exclusion faced by ex-prisoners, whose poor literacy skills were likely to make them ill equipped to respond to bureaucratic demands on them, including access to Benefits, housing, education and employment.

Such observations might also be viewed as hidden and vicarious forms of expression of their own sense of rejection following their 'fall from grace.' As cited in the literature review, these experiences echoed those of a group inhabiting the margin of mainstream society and 'excluded, in general, from the full range of social goods' (Smith and Stewart, 2002: 96). This was also reinforced by the cycle of reoffending and further incarceration linked with exclusion from employment (Ministry of Justice Report on the Impact of Employment of Re-offending, 2013; NACRO Youth Employment Report, 2015). An important social context was provided by the Statement of the United Nations' Special Rapporteur (Alston 2018) and by the Social Metrics' Commission (2018). These reports, previously cited in the literature review, have revealed the extent of the problem of poverty in the United Kingdom and the impact of austerity cuts implemented since 2011 on those who, like my participants, are least equipped to bear them.

These experiences might, in large part, be attributed to paradoxical and perverse Government social policy interpretations of social exclusion and social inclusion as referred to in the literature review (Daly and Silver, 2008: 557). The tendency in such policies, to focus on individual fault and the individual as the agent responsible for their own progress is also reminiscent of Faulkner's (2000) 'deserving majority and undeserving minority' and can further reinforce the 'constitutive outsider' label applied to those who feel excluded. This, in turn, could lead to a more acute sense of marginalisation and was especially marked in, for example, attempts to reintegrate them into the labour market and out of poverty. The reality of employment, as experienced by Paul, Mark and Don had been a series of insecure and menial jobs. In the literature review, I referred to Galbraith's reflections on 'oppressive chores of the working poor', which bore poor comparison to the 'highly paid, creative and self-fulfilling activities

accessed by the 'contented classes' (Galbraith, 1992, cited in Young, 2002: 457). Examples included Mark's repeated attempts to access literacy learning following loss of employment later in his life and Pam's lifelong exclusion from employment following an unsuccessful work experience on leaving school. These had engendered a scepticism and despair about the failure of official employment programmes to respond to their learning needs.

Don described such programmes as 'useless' and 'toothless' and he maintained a sceptical attitude towards them. Mark had a clear understanding about the opportunities he had missed because of his dyslexia, the impact this had had on his life and the type of employment he might have accessed, if learning had been available to him. He had reflected on this, especially when he became unemployed. Paul described witnessing the apparent mutual exclusivity of work and learning in prison due to delays in educational assessment in contrast to the ready availability of mundane paid work for prisoners. He observed that, once prisoners had opted for employment, they were, effectively, excluded from opportunities for education, which were timed to take place during working hours within the prison.

The experience of social exclusion thus described by participants resonated with Sen's observation by reference to Gore: 'the inability to do things that one has reason to want to do' (Gore, 1993, cited in Sen, 2000: 6), as previously cited in the literature review. This approach to social exclusion has particular bearing for the participants in my research. For them, literacy and other forms of learning, described by Bourdieu (1979: 81) as 'instruments of communication and knowledge', have shaded into a form of symbolic capital and an 'instrument of domination.'

However, in these and other unpromising circumstances, participants demonstrated a capacity to draw on their individual agency as means of gaining their own forms of social inclusion on their own terms, based in no small part on their unwillingness to be passive participants in official educational and employment programmes, if they regarded these as 'useless.' I have explored their use of individual agency in the section on Critical Literacy, Habitus, Agency and Identity in the introduction to this chapter.

(a) Power, Literacy and Individual Agency

It was clear from participants' comments that lack of or intermittent access to literacy learning served as a proxy issue for other forms of social exclusion and the consequent forms of deprivation, encompassing the restriction of wider opportunities to access and share in social goods, such as mobility, education and employment. Participants may be said partly to have been defined by literacy, its lack and the opportunities and challenges it had presented in negotiating the operation of power. In their responses to my broad first interview question about their experiences to date, they witnessed to the subtle and insidious ways in which domination operates in the context of education and language and how power, language, social capital and literacy intersect and bear down on individuals in transgressive ways, as argued by Foucault (1980: 42). A lack of linguistic and cultural capital and the language access paradox identified by Lodge, as previously cited in the literature review, can lead to the limiting of life chances (Lodge, 1997, cited in Janks, 2004: 33). This required a high degree of agency and sense of identity, which they were able to demonstrate, due in no small part to the critical consciousness they had developed in the course of critical literacy learning.

In the literature review, I drew attention to the power discourses of Marx and Weber and the work of critical theorists including Foucault, Freire, Bourdieu and Giroux. Power can be an elusive concept, riven by inherent contradictions, ranging from subjection and domination by those in power (Lachmann 1971: 141) to Foucault's (1980) view of power as an unstable, negotiable and contestable commodity. The same might be said of literacy in terms of its shifting nature and function both as an instrument of dominating power and as a focus of individual agency. The participants in my research demonstrated that power and literacy are malleable concepts, which echo one another in their experience and that participants can determine which aspect of power and literacy they chose to apply in a particular situation in support of their agency. The shifting relationship between the power and literacy made for complexity but, in their accounts of events in their lives so far, participants demonstrated that they were adept at struggling against the exercise of power by exploiting, inhabiting and negotiating the overlaps and the gaps between these concepts to their own advantage. They drew on their individual agency and restored sense

of identity to overcome its impact for themselves and others. This had particular relevance to their facility to negotiate the gap between the reality of power and the story they tell about themselves in order to project their sense of identity. I have described elsewhere in this chapter Paul's ability to turn the difficulties he faced in the prison education system into some positive experiences of learning for all the prisoners affected by intermittent provision of learning by the prison. Following release from prison, he observed that the training he was being offered was based on the view that there was a deficit in him rather than expressive of his view of its potential as a means of improvement and progression. Jo's decision to remain as Head teacher in a school in a deprived area was also an example of participants' dogged determination, by their own accounts, to overcome oppressive structures for themselves and others.

Among participants' accounts of their experiences of literacy and learning in the context of the operation of power structures was a stark example of the exercise of institutional forms of power: Paul's description of prison 'lockdown', when teaching staff could not enter the prison. Thus the abusive and threatening behaviour of a few prisoners led to the 'punishment' of all prisoners by the withholding of access to literacy and other forms of learning. He also described how prisoners were not allowed to take their study materials with them into the community to continue their learning when a course had not been completed due to lack of access to learning in the prison. On a more positive but no less capricious note, Paul also described how he accessed a course in prison through the 'wheeling and dealing' on his behalf by the prison authorities. The retrenchment in learning provision in prison replicated similar lack of opportunity in community provision of learning following a decade of almost continuous cuts amounting to 45 per cent in real terms during the period 2009-2018 (Belfield, Sibieta, and Farquharson, 2018), which had a direct impact on Mark by denying him access to further learning. Therefore, participants described their experience in terms of an implacable education system, both in prison and in the community, which is unyielding and unvarying in its response to individual circumstances.

As previously referred to in the literature review, Foucault (1980) identified he use of literacy as one means by which people are captured and fixed, processed and labelled. This was evoked by Paul, who described his

observation of the sense of disempowerment, overload and despair created by the volume of documents, which prisoners are expected to complete and which summarise their lives. Mark made frequent reference to his inability to complete official forms, which was a constant reminder of his reading difficulties; and Pam had to request the help of her father and her husbands in reading official and other documents, reinforcing their power over her - a power which was exercised when she signed a document at the insistence of her husband, placing her in long term debt. As cited in the data analysis chapter, Don experienced difficulty in obtaining a copy of his Army training and qualification records when 'they just didn't look. They looked under the wrong heading I suppose or something ...'

Examples of individual responses against the background of these forms of repudiation included Mark, who cited his running and judo as means of experiencing success. Don took pride in his ability to absorb detail of complex mathematics to solve an engineering problem and to confirm this to his manager. He summarised this process as 'use makes master.' Pam recounted rigorous testing of her parenting skills in order to retain custody of her babies, based on the authorities' concern about her learning difficulties especially her inability to read and write, which they considered more highly than her parenting skills. She was triumphant about her successful challenge to power, based on her recognition of the distinction between the ability to read and write and being able to demonstrate that she could be a good mother.

Participants also demonstrated the use of their individual agency by drawing on their speaking and listening and other skills and by adopting an ease of register acquired to compensate for poor or non-existent reading and writing. Mark. emphasised the fact that he felt severely disadvantaged by his inability to complete official forms, but he was able to function as an effective and, according to his own account, a 'feared' Union official by learning the required vernacular and the terms commonly used through his speaking and listening skills. Thus he was able to support colleagues in their disputes with their employer. The articulacy with which he described the detail of this work demonstrated a level of motivation and competency to learn and to express some of the complexities involved in case law. This was in marked contrast to his previous experience of learning. Paul developed his own literacy learning in

prison and supported prisoners in prison and following release. As previously cited in the data analysis chapter, he also described subverting the system by helping an ex-prisoner, who had smuggled his literacy book out of prison to complete the course, thus further illustrating his practical application of critical literacy theory.

(b) Carceral Structures

Of particular interest in the accounts of ex-offenders were the issues facing them following release into the community. Viewing other participants' experiences and the issues they face through the lens provided by ex-offenders illuminates the carceral structures, previously referred to in the literature review (Foucault, 1977; Goffman, 1961) and the 'total institutions' (Sparks and Bottoms, 1996; Jewkes and Reisdorf, 2016), which they had experienced. These resonate with the experiences of ex-servicemen and women and people with disabilities, at school or College, in the Army and the workplace or even at home within a family. Indeed, in the course of their accounts of the most significant events in their lives so far, research participants have identified that the family can be the context for a contested, fractious and disruptive set of responses to learning both within the family and in communication with schools, possibly influenced by parents' and other family members' own educational journeys.

The link between the family and schools could provide a source of friction as the two worlds collide and the families' communications with schools on behalf of their children was reported by participants as having both positive and negative outcomes. This reflects the issues surrounding parents' ease and confidence in social encounters with educational officials and the lack of informal knowledge and skill to 'work the system', as cited in the literature review (Apple, 2001: 415) in contrast to 'relations of inequality' experienced, for the most part, by the participants in my study. These unequal relations foreshadowed and potentially determined participants' later ambivalences as well as their responses to the transitions they had experienced and the complexities they had faced in relation to all learning, including literacy learning. However, families' communication with schools on behalf of their children was reported by some participants as having positive outcomes in line with Apple's observation that less affluent

parents are not 'skill-less' in such communication (2001: 415). Paul spoke of the success of his mother's and grandmother's intervention in an issue with his teacher in the early stages of his education; and Pam described how her father was instrumental in finding speech therapy for her and recounted the successful battle of her parents to find a place for her in a special school. This also links with the observation by Berger (2008), cited in the literature review, that agency can be intertwined and enabled by social structures, including help from the family and family habitus. Pam, Paul and Don spoke of encounters between their parents and educational institutions in which the absence of the informal knowledge and facility identified by Apple, as cited in the literature review, had led to a source of friction. Fault lines in such communication were cited as factors in exclusion from learning: Pam's speech impediment and the attempts by her parents to intervene with her first school on her behalf were marked by a failure of communication which mirrored, replicated and exacerbated the issues created by her own speech difficulties.

Both Paul and Don experienced tensions between the family obligations presented by parental illness and their ambivalent relationship with external carceral structures in their early adulthood, namely college and the Army, leading to severance in educational opportunity and of career advancement and training in the Army. Jo observed that his father's sudden death had a greater effect on his teacher training and later experiences than he had understood at the time. Don held his parents partly responsible for 'allowing' him to leave his apprenticeship.

The participants' own communication with educational institutions was also a source of frustration. As referred to in the data analysis chapter, Don's complaint about the inappropriate behaviour of a teacher towards him led to his expulsion from school for smoking. Mark wished to continue in Adult Community Education but was told that there was no funding available.

Jo's perspective on the children in the first school to which he was appointed as Headteacher was that that poor and dated facilities, including books, and low expectations were responsible for entrapment of children in poverty and low levels of achievement. As previously set out in the literature review, the link between lack of literacy and offending was made clear by Hewitt-Main (2012) in

a report on pioneering teaching and mentoring at Chelmsford Prison. The statistics for those in Chelmsford Prison demonstrated that 53 per cent of prisoners were diagnosed as having dyslexia. This was interpreted in the context of a 'move through low self-esteem, poor behaviour and school exclusion culminating in offending and imprisonment.'

Pam's limited education and her lack of literacy had contributed to her subjection to violence and abuse. She expressed a sense of being imprisoned at home because she could not read directions, street signs or destinations on buses or trains. Thus she was trapped in the intersection between lack of literacy, economic dependency and domestic violence and abuse. The literature on the use of intimate personal violence (IPV) to enable one partner to maintain power over the other makes a clear link with the protective role of access to women's education, particularly secondary education (Weitzman, 2018). As previously cited in the literature review, a World Health Organisation study conducted by Abramsky *et al.* (2011*)* drew on data from ten countries, also referred to the important role of education of both boys and girls in violence prevention.

There was a paradoxical element in Paul's fit into the prison educational system. He grasped the opportunity to compensate for his sudden and potentially self-destructive rupture from education through his perverse use of agency and recovery of his identity as a   successful student, demonstrating that the imposition of carceral structures in the wider society can be turned on its head within a monolithic and oppressive prison system through individual rehabilitation. He then drew on peer education, peer mentoring training and practice in prison with their positive impact on the mental health of prisoners, as affirmed by a Leeds Beckett University study (South *et al.,* 2016). Paul reinforced his peer mentoring training with similar training in the community, adopting the role of 'wise friend' to prisoners on release, as advocated by the Parliamentary All Party Penal Affairs' Committee on Mentoring Offenders (2013), helping them to set up a package of support relevant to their individual needs. As argued by Hanham and Tracey (2017: 116), young male offenders place a value prior to release on a mentor who can be 'guide, confidant and watchdog' and upon release, on mentors who are 'reliable, build confidence and assist with educational and occupational opportunities.' I have referred earlier

to Paul's skill in providing such support to his fellow prisoners in literacy learning and to an ex-prisoner for completion of his learning programme. These were remarkable examples of the operation of individual agency in all its variety and complexity, which I explore in the following sections of this discussion.

6.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: TRANSITIONS, IDENTITY AND AGENCY

Research question 2 relates to the participants' experiences in the form of:

(a) key episodes in which lack of access to literacy learning and dissociation occurred; and

(b) transition points to literacy learning and vocational rehabilitation.

The metaphors used by participants to express their experience at transition points indicate a level of sophistication in their use of literacy, as well as insight and the facility to describe the dehumanising impact of such events. The complex and highly individual nature of the transitions experienced by the research participants have challenged my original assumptions on the major transitions they have experienced. A key element of dialogical reflection between me as practitioner and as researcher was the issue of whether my understanding and definition of 'critical transition points' in the lives of participants was dominated by essentially bureaucratic definitions, rather than focussing on experiences which might have greater significance for the participants. Was I attempting to 'sanitise' or even 'normalise' their experience by concentrating on external events rather than even more painful family and personal experiences?

My research objectives referred to the length and significance of passage between discharge from the Armed Forces and commencement of literacy learning or vocational rehabilitation; or between development of a disability or release from prison and the commencement of such programmes. However, it is also important to understand that the transitions, which had been experienced, ranged from dramatic discontinuity to a sequence and accumulation of events. Rather than literacy learning and vocational training programmes being denied to participants at defined and specific transition points, the lack or the availability of learning provided a continuous thread in their experience. While all the participants recounted their experiences of

221

dramatic events, incremental change experienced by participants could be as formative as the specified reconnection points to learning, which I had originally envisaged. Rather than being unable to extricate themselves from negative stereotypes and personally constructed narratives during transitions, they have engaged in self-reflexivity through the power of biographical narratives in which they 'explain themselves' to themselves, as argued by Giddens (2009: 290). Vaughan (2007: 390) spoke of this in terms of 'an internal moral conversation', fashioning 'a narrative identity, which acknowledges yet disclaims past actions and commits them to an ideal future self.' The reality expressed by participants is that they have drawn on their individual agency to reject or engage in learning at different points in their experience and have not been passive in relation to the availability or denial of learning opportunities as I had defined. According to their versions of their lives, their individual agency has helped them to overcome the complexities and challenges in the transitions which they themselves have often instigated and experienced and enabled them to achieve coherence and consistency in their projection of their own chosen identity.

Metaphors indicating the fragile and fissile nature of identity revealed an uncertain sense of reality throughout these interviews. The emerging picture might be said to be one of a confused sense of identity. It is clear that participants' mixed experience of identity formation and reinforcement in the settings of the family, educational institutions and employment had created a period of confusion for each of them but all the participants had an experience of a space in which they perceived that other more formative and positive transitional events have taken place. In the data analysis chapter, I made reference to participants' dissociated accounts of their earlier experiences in contrast to their acute reflections through the prism of their most recent transitions. These enabled them to reflect on their own and others' experiences, to express their determination to survive and to redefine an identity for themselves. This is consistent with (Birkett 2011: 1) 'narrative approaches to identity, which focus on reflexive processes and the agency involved in telling a story of self during times of change.'

 A transitory place such as a prison not only necessitated adoption of a new identity but also opened up possibilities for assuming elements of an identity with its roots in the past. This malleability and adaptability involved picking up

the shards of an earlier identity to recreate a new sense of wholeness and a new existence. The spaces created by and for individuals during transitions, including the building of an outer protective shell, provided a means of adjustment and renewal and the capability of 'shaping myself back into that [the real world] again.'

This accords with the recognition by Hitlin and Elder (2007), as cited in the data analysis chapter, that Mead's concept of reflexivity, as being constitutive of the self, is 'one of the best conceptual tools for engaging agency' (Mead, 1932, cited in Hitlin and Elder, 2007: 173). These insights and forms of illumination, applied retrospectively, have provided them with a means of understanding the effects of earlier transitions on them and evaluating the themes which have dominated their lives. It provides an affirmation of the importance of multiple combination and continuation of family bonds as well as more heterogeneous ties and new networks (Field, 2009: 17), as referred to in the literature review. An exploration of the participants' description of their life events has revealed their experience of the part played by family, education and employment in the development and reinforcement of their sense of identity. It also indicated the interweaving of these settings in participants' narrative accounts and their understanding of identity issues.

Strong 'familial types of belonging' (Felder, 2019: 218), had created a sense of personal responsibility following family 'disruptions' (Riessmann 2000: 4), as cited in the literature review. These included a parent's illness, creating and impacting on transitions for Paul, Don and Jo with 'profound' effects on their mental state and were clearer to them in retrospect than at the time. Pam spoke of strong family bonds, followed by a sense of isolation from the time she left school, leading her into early pregnancy and a series of disastrous relationships with men Paul told how he had struggled to make new networks but, for others, these points of disjuncture also created new ties, including College friends for Jo and links formed by Mark though his sporting and Trade Union activities.

Examination of the key episodes in which lack of access to literacy learning and dissociation occurred reveals that Individual agency is drawn on by participants in seemingly perverse ways in order to achieve their own chosen

223

identity through their individual agency, overcoming the complexities and challenges in the transitions they have instigated and experienced. As previously cited in the data analysis chapter, self directed actions, can involve making decisions which might involve severe consequences (Bandura,1997, cited in Hitlin and Elder, 2007: 177). A number of participant descriptions of such experiences reflect Freire's view (1972: 192), referred to in the literature review, that there are specific moments in time described as 'breaking points', which are also 'moments of culture', when something snaps in the relationship of the dominator and the dominated. Such watershed moments for participants have included Pam's exploitation by a violent member of her recent literacy course, causing her to fear that he would seek her out on his release from prison. This unfortunate juxtaposition between her progress in learning and a repeat of earlier patterns of abuse prompted her to reflect on her experiences of abusive relationships with men and to make a direct link between her vulnerability and her lack of access to literacy learning. She vowed that she would not be dominated by a man again and was seeking to develop her literacy. Paul's breaking points included his decision, to which reference has already been made in the data analysis chapter, to leave Further Education. Jo described his decision to stay in a school where he could make a difference to the children rather than taking a promotion and moving on, as his employers would have preferred.

Participants' accounts attest to the relevance of factors including social exclusion, habitus and cultural capital to the 'fit' and the sense of identity they can achieve in the course of the transitions they experience, especially from secondary to further education and to employment on leaving school or college. Amaury (2004) linked the concept of fitting in at a particular college to student persistence and referred to studies, which have identified habitus and cultural capital as well as psychosocial factors associated with a student's fit at a particular institution. Colley, James and Diment (2003: 492) underlined the importance of 'vocational habitus' as a means of achieving the education to work transition with a 'sense of how to be.' and the 'right way to behave in the workplace.' This also links with Giddens' (1991: 244) 'reflexive project of the self', by which 'self-identity is constituted by the reflexive self-ordering of self-narrative', with its particular relevance to the lifelong learning process.

It would be possible to interpret Paul's inability to fit into College or the workplace and his reluctance to seek help in resuming his education as a lack of 'vocational habitus.' However, Paul described using a difficult transition to effect a change of identity. As previously stated, he adopted a third identity shortly after his decision to leave Further Education in order to resolve the confusion in his mind between himself and an alter ego he had created. According to his narrative, his subsequent sudden break from employment reinforced this pattern of drawing on his agency to maintain his personal integrity either by taking family responsibility or by separating himself from an employment which he considered unethical and damaging to him personally. His ability to 'fit' into the prison regime through learning and to adapt to life in the community following release by supporting other ex-prisoners were also clearly expressed in his account of these events.

Other problematic transitions can include those experienced by ex-servicemen and women leaving the Military, leading to sense of loss of identity with both the military and the wider society, as well as feelings of disconnection and loss. As previously cited in the literature review, this is made more acute for individuals with 'a more salient military identity' (Binks and Cambridge, 2017: 125). This helped to explain Don's need, already cited in the data analysis chapter, to reinforce his sense of identity by obtaining certificates verifying his Army qualifications. Arguably, this was in order to provide a bridge between his military and his civilian experiences and identities. I have drawn attention in the literature review to arguments put forward by Binks and Cambridge (2018: 125) that growing up in areas of social deprivation or difficult childhood experiences are relevant contributory factors in difficulties experienced by those veterans leaving the service with mental health difficulties including PTSD (Murphy and Busuttil, 2017), also cited in the literature review. These can also influence issues including engagement in 'help seeking behaviours.' This accorded with Don's experience of lengthy delay in seeking support for his mental ill health following his Discharge from the Army. Eventually, he was helped by a programme of veterans' rehabilitation years after his Army service had ended. Through his contact with fellow learners on the programme, this was made even more effective by his drawing on the relevance of a social capital approach

described as 'the comradeship and mutual resilience that underpin military life' (Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015: 384).

6.7 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: THE FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION IN PREVENTING THE CYCLE OF DISADVANTAGE

In the course of the semi-structured interviews with participants, I asked them to describe their best and worst experiences of learning and, in the context of literacy learning, these were mirror images of one another. Metaphors previously used to express alienation, exclusion, defeat, diminution and loss of identity were also used in the context of progress and momentum towards recovery and restored identity.

Critical literacy learning provided both a focus for the recounting of positive and negative experiences of learning and also proved to be a medium for viewing and interpreting their individual journeys towards other forms of learning and vocational rehabilitation. Paul's love of literacy learning was encouraged by a teacher, who allowed him to write during her classes but was later undermined by what he perceived as teachers' lack of commitment to him and other learners. Mark's worst experience of learning was at school, where he hid in the class to hide his inability to read but his best experience was of literacy classes in Adult Community Learning, leading to a diagnosis of his dyslexia. Pam described her experience of being ignored in the first school she attended and of being given pictures to colour rather than being taught to read, counterbalanced by her recent positive literacy learning experience. Interestingly, having described his management training for the role of Headteacher as his best experience of learning, Jo made a broader interpretation of his worst experience of learning. In this context, he described his failure to learn 'what was happening to me' when faced with his transition to retirement, possibly reflecting the 'mirror image' between his learning at the beginning and end of his career.

The common thread between these participant responses is their reflections on their uses of individual agency and the broader links they have established with collective agency as a key means of 'overcoming academic adversity', as argued by Bandura (2001) and previously cited in the data analysis chapter.

Participants described their respect for the utility of literacy, the power of words and other forms of training to support efforts towards individual agency. Academic resilience which was identified by Martin (2013) and cited in the data analysis chapter is a fluid concept for these participants. For most it is not related to a response of 'self-handicapping or disengagement' and it is not always time bound: sometimes the response is related to the immediate situation but it is also demonstrated in their descriptions of later events as their accounts of their lives develop, providing continuity, consistency and authenticity to their biographical accounts.

At the outset of my research, I had assumed that the timely and responsive provision of learning at critical transition points would be a dominant factor in preventing and interrupting the cycle of disadvantage. However, participant responses led me to reflect that a number of features transcend the timing of learning provision. It was possible to infer that learning, which met their evolving sense of their individual needs, was of greatest relevance to participants, enabling them to develop their reflexivity and instrumentality on their own terms in support of their individual agency and at a particular time of their choosing. The direct link they established in their narratives between the need for resilience and their persistence in finding literacy and other forms of learning is striking. I acknowledge that the types of learning which played a part in restoring and resolving identity were broader than my research aims and questions would indicate. Peer mentoring training for Paul and Jo, teacher training (Paul), a rehabilitative programme for ex-servicemen (Don), an anger management course (Mark), teacher training and education management courses (Jo) and literacy learning as part of a return to work programme (Pam) were forms of training and development, which matched their requirements at a given time and which, for some, sprang out of critical pedagogy.

Participants in my research tended to describe instances of their academic buoyancy in terms of their responses to low level negative outcomes. In some instances, these represent experiences of more acute academic adversity, which have become the norm for them and have encouraged a buoyant, collective response. Reflecting back on his earlier experiences of learning from the perspective of his imprisonment involved Paul in recognising his previous academic success, and the duties and responsibilities this imposed on him to

227

help fellow prisoners. This resonated with the observation by O'Looney (2010), previously cited in the data analysis chapter, on 'the importance of literacy competency and reflectiveness in promoting educational resilience.' Such insights for himself and on behalf of other prisoners had led him to understand the impact on him and others of his decision to sever his links with full time education. This had enabled him to develop an empathy with the experiences of his fellow prisoners whose educational opportunities had been more limited than his own and he had felt an obligation to be a voice for them through peer mentoring training in prison and in the community following his release. Jo a former head teacher on a Suspended Sentence Supervision Order, who had been focussed on providing educational opportunities to socially disadvantaged children throughout his working life, had also undertaken training, enabling him to work with those being released from prison. This represented a practical interpretation of the social identity theory put forward by Tajfel, as referred to in the literature review, (Tajfel, 1978, cited in Trepte, 2006: 256) in which the 'out group' of prisoners and ex-offenders demonstrate cohesion and solidarity as a means of achieving positive self-esteem and self-enhancement. It is arguable that the increase in Mark's confidence following the diagnosis of his dyslexia, which he interpreted as an affirmation that he was not 'thick', and his resolution of personal issues through anger management training were catalysts in the development of his new identity as a Union representative in support of other employees in his workplace, again reinforcing their group solidarity.

Don's journey towards the most relevant form of learning for him had been a tortuous one through expulsion from school, Army Service and Early Discharge, employment, redundancy and grief. This had led him to a programme for ex-servicemen in which he had confronted these issues one by one, including his fear of a fellow course member, evoking memories of his bullying during his Army service. In his words, this course had given him 'a load of tools that you can pick out of a box and work on yourself.' For the participants in my study, this form of critical pedagogy had been adapted to their individual circumstances. As previously cited in the literature review, this had enabled them (Freire, 1981: 62) 'to develop a critically conscious understanding of their relationship with the world' and to participate in the pedagogy of their liberation and the liberation of others.

In their emphasis on forms of learning, which are seen by the participants as relevant and tailored to their individual experience of education, their own needs and the needs of fellow learners and employees, participants echo the values and tenets of critical pedagogy, casting these into a context of wider learning. As previously cited in the literature review, Freire (1972: 10) based his form of critical pedagogy on his belief that literacy learners need to see their individual agency for change rather than have it imposed on them. For him, it involved 'application of literacy learning critical theory' to 'fight repression, injustice, and bigotry and create a more compassionate world.' This relates to the connection, which critical pedagogy creates 'between the political and the personal, the public and the private.' It also provides responses to contemporary educational challenges by offering a 'pedagogy of hope or possibility' and taking forward the 'mission to institute educational and social change' both for themselves and for fellow learners, contesting hegemony individually and collectively. This chimes with Shor's reference (1999: 1) to 'rethinking our lives' and challenging the status quo 'in an effort to find alternative paths for self and social development.'

I have referred in the literature review to Freire's description of a culture is created by 'ex-dominated people for the benefit of a permanent liberation.' (1985: 193). This has a particular poignancy in the context of imprisonment, and an example of 'contested interactions' with the power structure imposed by the prison system are Paul's work with fellow prisoners on literacy learning when the literacy tutor was unable to enter the prison during 'lockdown' and the support for his fellow prisoner following release from prison. Jo was able to apply his experience of contested interactions with Government Departments as a Headteacher to develop an understanding of the issues faced by ex-prisoners following release and to take steps to support them. Mark had become angry and developed a sense of personal injustice as a result of his educational experiences and used this to support his fellow employees in their dealings with their employers. Don's engagement in the programme for veterans had been made more effective by his observation of its positive impact on the mental state of his of colleagues on the programme. These creations of their own 'culture and support systems' (Freire, 1972), previously cited in the literature review, have provided an eloquent example of the potential of critical

literacy to release participants from the impact of negative rhetoric through self-expression and development.

6.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

At the outset of this discussion chapter, I emphasised the importance of metaphor as an interpretive tool. Orwell's view (1957: 151) that ready-made metaphorical phrases 'even think your thoughts for you' and 'perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself' has alerted me to the wider interpretive possibilities beyond meaning in participant narratives, which might not be immediately discernible to the participant or the researcher. This and other revelations, which have emerged in the course of my data analysis and from this discussion chapter, form the basis of my conclusions on this research and they are set out in the next chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

At the outset of my research, I was aware that being a reflexive researcher is a potentially complex, challenging and even painful process. In the introduction to this thesis I referred to Clayton's (2013) underlining of the importance and relevance of reflexivity in relation to the choice of methodology, the construction of research questions, the types of interpretations that emerge, and how prior understandings, assumptions and values impact on all these elements of research. I have needed to reflect on the ways in which my interior world can impact, consciously or unconsciously and, in ways I cannot define, on participants' views and accounts of their experiences and on how this will be reflected back on me as researcher. These reflections have involved the exercise of constant scrutiny and revisiting of motivation, actions, roles, and have shaped the research processes and vice versa. I am clear that reflexivity has given me direct experience of its potential to enrich educational research. Through this research, I have recognised that reflexivity is the antithesis of being the 'objective social scientist, maintaining a safe distance between herself and research participants' (MacLure, 2011: 998). Reflexivity has challenged my ability to understand lived experience and to move beyond either breaking down or detachment from suffering.

Indeed, another metaphor has dominated my understanding of this research: the three types of 'gossamer wall' referred to by Doucet (2008: 73), which are constantly shimmering, shifting and elusive. This metaphor ranges from the relations with our many selves coming back to haunt us when we are physically and emotionally involved in our reflexive research and knowing; the shifting epistemological dimensions in the course of relationships between researcher and participant; and the third gossamer wall is the one between myself as researcher and the audience for this research. I acknowledge that there is a continuum of reflexivity with the potential to go far beyond 'benign introspection' (Woolgar 1988: 22), involving 'loose injunctions to think about what we are doing' to 'constitutive reflexivity, also involving a back and forth process' between image and reality (Kelly, 1999: 1).

I also acknowledge that it might be more useful to think in terms of degrees of reflexivity, with some influences being easier to identify and articulate at the time, while others may take time, distance and detachment from the research (Mauthner and Doucet 2013). This has required me to be open to the continuation of reflexivity following the 'completion' of my research. In summary, reflexivity has provided a means of testing of my integrity, acuity and mettle as a researcher and of my humanity in responding to the lived experiences of participants. Reflexivity has involved me as involved me in examination of my own input into the research process and in being prepared to assess the impact of that involvement on the research (Hamdan, 2009). Above all, I have experienced the need (Smith, 2003: 108) to understand 'my thoughts and limits, first as a human being and second as a researcher.'

7.2 REFLECTIONS ON MY METHODOLOGY, CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

(a) Methodology

The use of BNIM has been based on an understanding of participants' interpretive capacities as they undertake their own reflexive journey and the 'making sense' of their experiences. I have become conscious of the centrality of reflexivity to the 'human project as people reflect on themselves, their activities and what is happening around them' (Smith, 2003: 176). I have a clearer understanding of the reflexive organising by participants of their experience to generate personal coherence, identity, a meaning to their life history and a communicable, socially viable lifeworld perspective for guiding their actions. There is a realisation that there is 'no easy story to tell, nor for the reader to hear, but a whirling of voices, figures, and histories' (Chaudray, 2000, cited in Hamdan, 2009: 400). The possibility remained that, given my professional background,I might feel a sense of responsibility for finding solutions for individuals arising from their narratives. However, the reality was that I needed to enter into those experiences not as one who can 'do' but who simply 'is' part of the process.

In the course of this research I have called on my professional experience of relating to people, who experience the impact of great external and interior changes. In terms of testing out the conception of the 'relational self', especially

when listening to others, it has not been possible (Doane (2003: 95) to 'turn away to separate myself from what was happening'. This has involved meeting the personal challenges of 'reflexivity as presence, referred to as a form of hermeneutic reflection and 'a mode of consciousness involving in-active action' (Weil, 1937, cited in Doane, 2003: 99). Thus the research context has tested out my ability to engage with the participants' experiences and their stories of pain and suffering in a setting in which I could only listen and do little or nothing practical to assist them. The question arose, therefore, whether I could be willing 'to be in the abyss, to honour and live the difficulty that is there' (Doane, 2001: 98).

This was a particularly acute experience when listening to accounts by participants, including Paul's recounting of his attempted suicide, Jo's references to a childhood accident, his illness and offending behaviour following retirement and Pam's experiences of domestic violence.

(b) Conceptual Model

I reflect on the binary nature and stark distinctions which can be a feature of elements of the conceptual model, including power, social exclusion and inclusion, and the distinction drawn between literacy as rhetoric and as a facet of individual agency and capability. In the literature review, I referred to Foucault's (1980) rejection of the binary view of the dominators and the dominated and this has been borne out by the participants in this research, who have challenged my understanding of these concepts.

Although my analysis of participants' use of metaphor has made it clear that that they have a heartfelt and emotional sense of having been excluded, their experiences resonate with the observation of Oxoby (2009: 5) that 'the effects and manifestation of exclusion may be highly nuanced.' Criteria set out by Atkinson underline the important role for individual beliefs and perceptions, such as dissatisfaction and self-esteem in the determination of their experiences of inclusion and exclusion (Atkinson, 1998, cited in Oxoby, 2009: 5). As cited in the literature review, Silver (2007: 1) notes that social exclusion and social inclusion are not antonyms and may be concepts between which individuals can move on a regular basis within their experience. In their narratives, participants have defied a binary interpretation of social exclusion and social inclusion, as

233

well as a stark interpretation of the ways in which power and the use of rhetoric has operated in their lives, especially in the direct impact of the increasingly oppressive Government policies on criminal justice, disability and veteran issues described in the introduction chapter of this thesis. However, participants have also indicated how they have transcended these through the use of their individual agency, capability and instrumentality. Their awareness of lack of 'fit' in a broad sense did not preclude them from an understanding of their own versions of 'fit', achieved in the course of a range of transitions through their 'sense of how to be' (Colley, James and Diment, 2003: 492). They have demonstrated self-belief and an unexpected facility for finding a new sense of identity by fitting into new situations, formed on the basis of the values of critical literacy. This has inspired and informed the part they have played in supporting others through involvement in learning, peer mentoring or representation through Union activities. It has also found expression in their response to the interview question on what they would say to a policy maker in terms of their sense of social justice and access to opportunity for others.

(c) Research Assumptions

Dialogical reflection has involved me in examination of my own input into the research process and in being prepared to assess the impact of that involvement on the research. A crucial aspect of my reflection has been on the impact and relevance of personal and professional experience on the assumptions underlying this research. The original research assumption relating to the detachment, isolation and exclusion from full membership of society of research participants have, to some extent, been verified by participants' responses. Against a complex background of interpretations of social exclusion and social exclusion, it has been helpful to focus on definitions of social exclusion which emphasise the sense of 'otherness' experienced by participants and on society's view of them in this light. However, participant responses to the interview questions have challenged my research assumptions in the ways I have outlined in the discussion chapter. As I conclude this research, I reflect on the basis of these assumptions about transitions, timing of the availability of learning and the types of learning which were likely to be the most effective from the point of view of the participants.

As already mentioned in the discussion chapter, a key issue has been whether my understanding and definition of 'critical transition points' in the lives of the participants was dominated by bureaucratic definitions, for example discharge from prison, or from the Armed Forces or the development of a disability, rather than experiences, which might have greater significance for them. In the discussion chapter, I have described how the wide range of transitions, which had been experienced, ranged from dramatic discontinuity to a sequence and accumulation of events. While all the participants recounted their experiences of dramatic events, incremental change experienced by them could be as formative as the specified reconnection points to learning, which I had originally envisaged.

My own relatively privileged experiences, including those associated with learning, were in contrast to those of most of the participants. I reflect that this might have been perceived by them from the outset, as the result of my self-identification as a research student and teacher. I became conscious that all the participants might have conveyed the full nature of their experiences of transition in order to 'educate' me about the realities they had encountered, the impact those had had on them as individuals and the ways in which they had overcome them. I recognise that this challenge might also have operated on a different level: the need for participants to reassert the potential imbalance of power inherent in the research relationship by challenging my implicit assumptions, as set out in the information to research participants (Appendix 3) and to ensure that I became aware of the gulf between my assumptions and their stated perception of the reality of their experiences. A particular question has arisen: had I been placing too much emphasis on bureaucratic learning and training solutions for individuals when these might be viewed as constraints by participants, who had created other solutions for themselves through their own agency? In any event, the types of learning which have played a part in restoring and resolving identity were broader than the research aims and questions would indicate, and they matched the participants' requirements at a given time.

I have also reflected on possible entrapment in official systems of documentation in the course of my professional life, official definitions and terms used in recording systems, court reports and systems of accountability for

Government funding might have circumscribed my views of the issues they were encountering. This might echo previous references in the literature review and data analysis chapter of Cicourel's recognition of the potential of documents to be a 'vital means by which individuals are processed, labelled and subsequently confirmed merely as delinquents' (Cicourel,1976, cited in Jupp and Norris, 1993: 43). In this context, it is also interesting to note that the information for research participants, setting out the background to this research and my request for their authority to proceed with interviews, had the potential to affect the balance of power between us.

7.3 PARTICIPANT VOICE

(a) Participant to Policy Maker

At the end of the interviews, I asked participants a question on what they would say to an educational policy maker, based on their own experience of learning. This was intended to be a means of establishing reciprocity between researcher and participant (Eriksen, 2001) with the potential to encourage their own reflexivity and (Tierney and Sallee, 2008: 679) 'learning to analyse their lives and their positions within society from a new perspective.' I also intended that it would facilitate the transfer of participant voices into public knowledge.

All participants reflected on the need for continuing adult education, especially for those who had not learned to read and write earlier in life. As previously cited in the discussion chapter, Mark spoke of this in terms of his 'suffering' about being excluded from all that reading could have given him.

Pam spoke of 'jumping' at the opportunity for learning, if it had been offered to her earlier in life, while Don made a heartfelt plea for investment in replacing the education he had lost:

> Why is it if one finds in later life your education hasn't been up to snuff because the State hasn't spent very much on my education I don't think um isn't there a few quid for sorting me out a bit now and of course there isn't. So it's very frustrating and you have to rely on charity and all kinds of things.

My question also evoked responses, which were sometimes veiled in references to the educational needs of others. Paul and Jo pointed to the need for individual learning assessment to take place earlier in prison sentences in

order to avoid the potential clash between learning and work commitments in prison and to create a direct link between learning and improved employment prospects on release. Participants also emphasised the importance of involving mentors in the community to continue literacy learning, to provide general support and to assist in written and face to face communication with statutory agencies on release.

Through these reflections and vicarious means of expression, they have reaffirmed their agency, capability and instrumentality, expressing a reflexivity of their own and a breadth of view on the needs of other learners, especially Don, Mark and Pam, who had themselves experienced few educational and training opportunities.

As expressed by Jo, this had the objective of ensuring that ex offenders:

> are learning different modes of behaviour, different modes of reaction, different ways of thinking so that ultimately there is a change in the way the person thinks about things and hence the opportunity for that person's life to become more satisfying, more productive, more useful.

The overall context is that of the forms of social exclusion they experience, resonating with Smith's definition of social exclusion as being 'prevented from doing the things one has reason to want to do' (Smith, 1776, cited in Sen 2000: 6), previously cited in the literature review and in the discussion chapter. This has broad relevance to all the participants in my study, with particular poignancy in the context of the forms of domestic imprisonment and abuse experienced by Pam, also linking with Mark's *cri de coeur* about his feelings of deprivation arising from his inability to read a book, Don's heartfelt rhetorical question about the lack of funding for vocational training to compensate for the perceived lack of investment in his basic education and Paul's reference to 'rubbish jobs.' And no one can doubt the challenges faced by the children in Jo's school in a deprived part of East London or his commitment to supporting them.

All participants demonstrated that they were driven by their personal commitment to social justice. Through the force with which they expressed their views to policy makers, they demonstrated the ability to look beyond their own experiences of exclusion in order to influence change. This illustrates that their own success in overcoming the challenges they had faced, rather than supporting an argument they had not needed assistance through Government

policy or expenditure, had broadened their sense of empathy and identification with those in similar situations, giving them the courage to speak on others' behalf. This is also indicative of the loss of their potential contribution to society, which had yet to be fully realised.

(b) Practice Implications

Observations by Paul and Jo on the educational needs of ex-offenders drawn into the prison system echoed those of prisoners participating in Natale's research (2010), previously cited in the literature review, almost half of whom recognised that employment and skills deficits were the most important to their learning plans in prison and, by implication, their future without re-offending. Freire underlined the importance of examination of the culture within which literacy educators are working and emphasised that a literacy initiative will never be successful unless it recognises 'the nature of everyday life – and the structures which in (large) part determine the limits and constraints of everyday activities - for participants in the programme' (Freire, 1976, cited in Roberts, 2000: 107).

This has particular relevance in the context of prison learning in which peer mentors have a vital role, well developed in some prison settings, as recognised by H.M. Inspectorate of Prisons (2016) in their paper on peer support in prison. They noted, however, (2016: 16) that 'many prisons have ineffective systems for identifying prisoners, who have learning difficulties.' The picture drawn by the participants in my research through their acute critical observations is of a dysfunctional system of education in prison, where assessment of prisoner learning needs is subject to frequent delay and can lead to the imposition of a binary choice between learning and work opportunities within the prison, often to the detriment of learning opportunities. This can then be followed by the undermining of the opportunity for learning in prison in the context of (Watts, 2010: 7) the 'highly unpredictable nature of prison life and chronic overcrowding' and by a lack of continuity and support following release from prison. This was interpreted as demonstrating the vital need for early assessment and development of a learning plan for each prisoner and that this should be balanced with work opportunities within the prison. It is striking that this echoes a priority of the Report on the Education of Prisoners by the All Party

Parliamentary Penal Affairs Group (2016), who recognised the vital importance of education, skills and training being at the heart of prison life; and that it was important to embed basic literacy and numeracy within workshops taking place within the prison rather than being in a classroom where they have experienced failure in their lives. If the prison is in lockdown, it is important that consideration be given, where appropriate, to formalising mentor involvement in the delivery of appropriate aspects of literacy learning on behalf of the literacy tutor in 'communities of learning' created by prisoners for other prisoners.

Referring to his own and others' experiences as ex-offenders on release from prison, Paul spoke for continued implementation of learning plans following release with the support of community mentors, including ex-offenders trained in mentoring. He advocated that this should follow on from mentoring within prison and be focussed on the practical requirements of the use of literacy, especially in finding accommodation and employment. His views could be summarised as a means (Erikson, 2001: 344) of 'posing problems about codified existential situations in order to help students to arrive at a more critical view of their reality', by 'using classroom practices that promote empowerment' and providing continuity within the community:

> there are a lot of educated, articulate people in the criminal system for one reason and another and they you know they can offer that as a ... as a service. A lot of people have worked on the mentoring scheme inside to various degrees. It is a shame to not utilise that.

I have been mindful of the observation by Apple (2001: 457) that 'literacy can be oppressive or liberating depending on context, content and application', referring in this thesis to the double edged nature of literacy. It has the scope for promoting resilience and self-renewal (Dewey, 1938/1963, cited in Covington, 1992: 4) as well as the capacity for dispossession, marginalisation and further exclusion through the use of rhetoric, such as that used by some politicians and commentators to depict those in receipt of State Benefits.

Among women experiencing domestic abuse, a lack of literacy presents particular dependency issues, heightening the possibilities for further abuse. This is also manifested in the inability to read documents, leading to opportunities for exploitation; or to read directions and signs, effectively preventing travel beyond the home, representing a form of virtual imprisonment.

However, one of the strong messages emerging is participant capacity for developing individual forms of literateness, in which speaking and listening skills play a key part. Participants' experiences provide an account of the complexities and disadvantages experienced by individual literacy learners. Sophisticated forms of oral literacy, such as that exhibited by Mark in his ability to grasp and convey complex material for his Union activities, represent his approach to 'reading the word and the world' (Freire and Macedo, 1987). His particular use of oral literacy links him to an earlier oral tradition in which such skills were valued, demonstrating his agency and critical adeptness in overcoming the disadvantages imposed on him by the discourses of deficit and the emphasis on functional literacy in the education system. In the literature review, I referred to Thomas's concept of the reliance of illiterate people in the ancient world on a 'network of literate relatives' (Thomas, 2009, cited in Olson and Torrance, 2009: 358). This resonates with Pam seeking the help of her parents in reading official documents. Such instances point to the need for an understanding of a balance between oral and written cultures, encouraging a less binary and more nuanced approach to the nature of literacy in the context of literacy teaching and qualifications.

Cherney *et al.* (2012: 9) noted a potential for 'dissonance between the evidence produced by educational researchers and its transfer and uptake within policy and practitioner contexts', requiring academics to demonstrate the impact of their research, engaging policymakers in learning about research, considering its relevance to their goals and making and implementing policies based on research findings. In drawing on the views expressed by the participants in my research – arguably, the most effective exponents of these views - it is open to me to engage a wider audience to encourage a recognition of the issues participants face and to convey their observations on the policy and practice areas, which require attention.

7.4 THE ORIGINALITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MY RESEARCH AND ITS BASIS FOR POSSIBE FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the small sample of participants in my research, the wealth of material emerging from these interviews provides a basis of my claims for its originality. First, my research spans three groups, each of which has been traditionally studied in isolation. In addition, those included in my study have spanned more than one of these group identities. In particular, the span between offending and disability is notably within the experience of three of the participants and the link between ex Armed Forces identification and disability is a marked feature for one participant. This has provided insights into the experiences of my participants from different policy perspectives; and an additional dimension to the need for research and policy work across the traditional Government departmental divides rather than being based on the single focus, which typifies much of the existing research on the groups included in my research.

The essential originality of my study lies in its focus on the importance of adult education both in the community and in the prison setting; and on the potential of critical literacy learning. This has broadened the participants' understanding and insight into the transformative impact of literacy on their own lives and the lives of others. Personal accounts by participants of their experiences of social exclusion have involved them in demonstrating their agency and the 'capability to aspire' for others as well as themselves through the development of their sense of identity in prison, workplace and other settings. This has the potential to correct the deficit view, which characterises much of the existing research into the groups included in my study.

I cannot make extravagant claims about the potential of this research for changes in policy and practice. However, participants have taken the opportunity to voice their views on their own experiences of the deficiencies of educational and training systems. They have used these to reflect on the needs of others in similar situations and to offer practical solutions including support for other employees through Trade Union work and the creation of a community of learning in prison during lockdowns.They have put forward ideas

on practical means of improvement, including greater investment in peer mentoring in prison and the community. This has made it possible for me to draw the attention of policy makers to the needs expressed by the participants rather than purely being based on my own conclusions as a researcher.

With all its limitations in terms of the lack of a full spectrum of participant experience, the depth of participant responses in my research provides opportunities and sound foundations for further research study. A particular area for further research and policy development is that of prisoner education, addressing the issues of early educational skills' assessment within the prison system; and access to comprehensive and transformational learning opportunities as a means of social reintegration following release.

7.5 SUMMARY

I have reflected throughout this thesis on the motivation, drivers and assumptions underlying this research. Had I perceived these more clearly at the outset, the research framework, assumptions and questions would have been different in ways, which I have attempted to describe in this thesis.The fact that I can make the following observations is wholly attributable to the research participants, who have opened their views of their worlds to me without reservation.

Throughout this research, participants have grasped the opportunity to recount their lives in their own language using their own imagery. The participants in my study have drawn on their reflexivity, agency and instrumentality to develop a coherent story of self during times of change and to express their aspirations for themselves and others. These and the forms of critical pedagogy, which they have exemplified and which are set out in the discussion chapter, make their responses all the more poignant. Through powerful and vivid accounts of their experiences, they have provided a depth and colour which have challenged my previous versions of their existence, bearing out the observation by Samuel Johnson: 'Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth.'

APPENDIX 1: CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Amory Building

Rennes Drive

Exeter UK EX4 4RJ

www.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences

Academic Unit: Graduate School of Education

Title of Project: "Unlocking the Word Hoard": A Proposal to Undertake Research into the potential of Literacy Learning in the social reintegration of Ex-Offenders, Disabled People and those discharged from the Armed Forces

Research Team Member(s): Margaret Peat

Project Contact Point: mep205@exeter.ac.uk

This project has been approved for the period

From: 14th January 2016 To: 31st October 2017

Ethics Committee approval reference: 201516-011

Signature: Date: 13/01/2016

(Matt Lobley, Chair, SSIS College Ethics Committee)

APPENDIX 2: LETTER TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS VIA REFERRAL AGENCIES

Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter January, 2016

I am a researcher, based at the University of Exeter and NAME .... of .... ORGANISATION tells me that you might be willing to be part of some research I am doing. I would like to find out about your experiences of learning, especially literacy learning and training throughout your life.

I am interested in hearing about the most important things that have happened to you, whether learning has helped you and how easy or hard it was to find that learning at a time which was right for you.

I want to use what you tell me to build up a picture of the sort of issues people face when they are trying to get through the difficult times and how learning, especially literacy learning, can help. I want to be able to help to improve things for you and for other people, who are going through similar experiences in finding learning at the most helpful time for them.

With your agreement, I would like to meet with you three times for about 30 to 40 minutes each time on NAME OF ORGANISATION premises.I shall record what you tell me and it will all be confidential. If you would like to stop the interviews at any point, I can do this and if you would like to withdraw from the research at any stage you will be free to do so. I might use some of your words in my thesis but no one will be able to find out that they come from you.

Towards the end of my research, I would like to make it possible for you to have feedback from me on my findings from what you tell me. I will discuss with you the most helpful form of feedback for you. By sharing your story, I hope that it might be possible for you to have some influence on what happens to others who are going through similar experiences.

I hope you will take part in this research.

Yours sincerely, Margaret Peat

APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION SHEET AND PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project

Unlocking the Word Hoard: Research into the potential of Literacy Learning in the reintegration of Ex Offenders, Disabled People and those discharged from the Armed Forces.

Details of Project

I would like to find out about your experiences of learning, especially literacy learning and vocational training, throughout your life. I am interested in hearing about the most important things that have happened to you, whether learning has helped you in the difficult times and how easy or hard it was to find that learning at a time which was right for you.

I am a researcher, based at the University of Exeter. I want to use what you tell me to build up a picture of the sort of issues people face when they are trying to get through the difficult times and how learning, especially literacy learning, can help. I want to be able to help to improve things for you and for other people, who are going through similar experiences in finding learning at the most helpful time for them.

With your agreement, I would like to meet with you three times for about 30 to 40 minutes each time. I shall record what you tell me and it will all be confidential. I might use some of your words in my thesis but no one will be able to find out that they come from you.

If you would like to stop the interviews at any point, I can do this and if you would like to withdraw from the research at any stage you will be free to do so. By sharing your story, I hope that it might be possible for you to have some influence on what happens to others who are going through similar experiences.

I hope you will take part in this research.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Peat

Contact Details

For further information about the research /interview data (amend as appropriate), please contact:

Name: Margaret Peat

Postal address: Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, St Luke's, Heavitree Road, Exeter Telephone: 00 44 (0)1392 434633.

Email: mep205@exeter.ac.uk

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Doctor Susan Jones: Susan.M.Jones@exeter.ac.uk

Confidentiality

Interview tapes and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by the law).

Your data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998.

Towards the end of my research, I would like to make it possible for you to have feedback from me on my findings from what you tell me. I will discuss with you the most helpful form of feedback for you.

Data Protection Notice

I shall keep a hard copy of your of consent forms and the transcripts of my interviews with you in a locked filing cabinet.

Audio recordings will be downloaded as soon as possible after interviews and deleted immediately.

Electronic data will be stored on the University U-drive for up to 24 months from the end of my study, when it will be deleted.

The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection

legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office.

YOUR PERSONAL DATA WILL BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE AND WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED TO ANY UNAUTHORISED THIRD PARTIES. THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH WILL BE PUBLISHED IN ANONYMISED FORM.

Anonymity

Interview data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name.

Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

•   I do not have to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage;

•   I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me;

•   any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;

•   If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher participating in this project in an anonymised form;

•   all information I give will be treated as confidential;

•   the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

.......................………………..
        ....………………..………

(Signature of participant)   (Date)

……………………………………………………

     …………………………………………….………

(Printed name of participant)   (Email address of participant if they have requested to view a copy of the interview transcript)

...............................………………..

     ....………………..

(Signature of researcher)   (Printed name of researcher)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher. Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

February, 2016

APPENDIX 4: NVIVO ANALYSIS

HEADING	Paul	Jo	Don	Mark	Pam
Family	4	2	5	2	6
School	9	16	5	9	7
Education	7	2	3	-	4
Literacy and other learning	17	5	4	29	6
Exclusion from learning	-	-	2	7	18
Prisoners Education	20	4	-	-	-
Work and Learning	2	-	-	-	-
Employment	7	6	-	7	-
Transitions	26	22	24	7	9
Individual Agency	6	2	3	33	6
Power and education	5	4	2	2	1
Foucault and Ceremonies of Objectification	3	-	3	5	1
Peer Mentoring	3	3	-	-	-
Reflection	33	19	9	24	11
Union Work	-	-	-	4	-
Policy views	6	1	6	3	1

APPENDIX 5 INTERVIEW

Second Interview with Paul' 3rd March, 2016

MARGARET You have talked about your mixed experience of learning and what I'd like to touch on with you today is the events and experiences that you outlined in our earlier meeting in those terms i.e. those mixed experiences. You describe yourself as academically minded and that was up until high school and then you closed that chapter and you crossed the line to what you call real life.

PAUL Yes

MARGARET I wonder if you could tell me what sort of help or advice you had at that point?

PAUL At the turning point?

MARGARET Yes

PAUL Well .. laughs ... very little I suppose. Laughs - I don't know it's hard to tell because I wasn't really searching for any. I mean – laughs – I suppose you know the College did do what they could to try and keep me. Mm..... but I sort of realised that it was necessary to get a job and that would take up you know all of my time mm.... laughs and yes I don't know i..it's difficult to judge because I wasn't really looking for help and advice. I was sort of ....I made the decision on my own. Even now yes .... I'm better than I was but mm unfortunately what led to me ending up on the wrong side of the law was believing that I could do it on myself and not really asking for help. And that's ... . of something that came into my head the other day as well. If I can .... is it o.k, to sidetrack?

MARGARET Of course. Wherever **...**

PAUL mmm.... Laughs .. .. you see, inside.... in prison the information you're given is presented to you sort of from the start. You have an induction process .... and you're told these are the options that are available to you mmm...and I sort of mentioned before ...it is easy to slip through the gaps if you find yourself in a job instead of employment That is isn't really successfully chased up. But

250

then you find yourself out ... again ... in the big wide world and you're not really entirely sure what's available to you. I mean now I am better equipped to ask you know if I had a particular area I needed help in I'd ask Laura or whoever for... for some advice or assistance ...... but mm if literacy is something you struggle with then you're not necessarily going to want to highlight that So you're not going to be asking the right questions that will give you the answer you might need to hear. So that's another way you can sort of continue to slip below the radar and .... yes ....so it is sort of related. I mean at the high school time I wasn't asking for any help so it's difficult to judge how much was on offer.... I was approached a couple of times afterwards once I had been working for a little while mm ...., I don't remember who the agency were. It was sort of one of these Career South West kind of places that sort of helps young people into employment or you know further education, They sort of you know reminded me that it was an option mm to return to education but for me in my head it wasn't .. because I had definitely made the definite switch in just my whole way of thinking and you know I felt .... I was ....because I was fairly maladjusted laughs ...As a student when I started College .... you know I've always been a bit a loner but that was when it was at its most extreme and I didn't really know how to socialise or how to... how to fit in with people and I think ... I can't remember I think it was further down the line I imagined everyone else would still be of that age, You know it didn't occur to me that people would not be the same age as me but either way I didn't really know how to integrate. Because it is a sort of social thing as well.

MARGARET And yet you said that in your schooldays you were doing a lot of activities.

PAUL Yes I mean early on, I'm not exactly sure when it happened – I mean sort of 14 or 15 ish I sort of broke a bit confidence wise and just became a really, really awkward teen but yes I sort of just sort of retreated into myself quite a lot.

MP Going back to that contact, you had from Careers, was that in the form of a letter?

PAUL They phoned me. I must have signed up with them when I was looking for a job and fortunately I did find a job very quickly. That is what needed to happen. I think it was just part of their follow process. They still had a number

251

for me and sort of a little while down the line, they just phoned me to say what was happening. Which .... yes in that they did all they could for me really.

MARGARET Just the one phone call?

PAUL It might...... I don't exactly...I can I can definitely remember one specifically because I might have been at work. I don't know. It might have been a couple but basically I had made my decision. They tried to convince me and let me know that it was still an option to continue learning but it wasn't for me. I just .... that part of me didn't exist ... or so I thought,

MARGARET Right. And then you talked about closing that chapter of school life and moving into real life. You said at one point that you 'crossed the line .....'

PAUL Yes.

MARGARET And at some stage your confidence one certain was 'crippled'?

PAUL Yes. I don't I don't think I can sort of recall one certain event or one certain period of time ...but mid teen onwards.... to the present - 'question mark'? Yes I'm better now than then but I was very quiet and I was very much a lone wolf. I was not too bothered with that. You know it occasionally used to worry me but most of the time I was allright with it. I used to think of myself as 'society adjacent' like. I know people were there if they ever interested me and occasion people were sufficiently exciting, interesting or you know damaged maybe ...., damaged enough to interest me. You know that wasn't mean In a snobby way but generally like with any subject I'll read what I want to read ....what interests me and it takes a lot of convincing to touch anything else and it's the same with people

MARGARET Did anyone pick that up at school?

PAUL What's that?

MARGARET That you were perhaps a little less sociable than you had been?

PAUL I don't know. I mean it was not an issue when I was very young but then in my mid teens well then everyone is a mess in varying degrees at that age so I think they just put it down to that. I think most people assumed it was

252

something .. that it would be something I would grow out of and I didn't really. I just sort of ... But then I never thought of it as a failing. Like I was aware that I was less socially inclined but I was never sort of never felt lonely or isolated that was .... I chose that sort of thing so .....

MARGARET Do you thinking that links to the writing you do? You said the teacher said you had the makings of a great writer and the handwriting of a doctor.

PAUL Yes possibly. There was a joke, a stage whisper 'don't tell anyone but it's actually about me.' There was a lot of that. I was writing about my experiences. Thinly veiled ... laughs and that always continued to the point where .... I had a sort of a long suffering protagonist that was called James. There was a lot of that James in me and there was obviously a lot of me in him and this does basically answer the question as well of why I became known as 'Blue.'

I had something of a breakdown and basically I completely broke and I decided to reset myself in a big way. I thought if I take away from me all the parts that were James and parts that were Rob basically what I was left with was a blue screen - you know when you have no input you have blue screen - and I relaunched myself as that. I also dyed my hair bright electric blue. People became comfortable – friends and family - because they he knew it was an important thing for me in redesign and relaunch and then when you meet new ..... I became introduced as Blue.

MARGARET When was this – after school or College?

PAUL End days of school and early days of employment. It just broke. Laughs I don't know. Everything just reached a head. Largely because of a female. They can be damaging to your mental health. Laughs. Yes. That was it. I decided I was not that person any more. It was a real .... I know it sounds strange. It sounds strange and I lived it and it still sounds strange to me. There was so much of me in the James character that I really became confused whether he was real or whether I was real. I didn't know where the line was.

MARGARET Is that while you were working or before that?

253

PAUL mmm I sort of became more aware of it yes at that turning point really I mean that probably played a large part in it. I have never really thought of it in that way but the reason I couldn't go backwards was that the new person, the Blue, was not a student because that is more of less where the line was drawn .

MARGARET So that is the crossing the line bit?

PAUL Yes. Like I say it's melodramatic but life is like that sometimes and for me it was important to separate everything that came before .. . with you know the programme.

MARGARET Thank you. So then you said ... just going back to the college bit you said you got halfway through the term and then you bailed out. Was that here in Exeter?

PAUL Yes.

MARGARET And at that stage you said you didn't get a lot of intervention because you had made your decision and that was it.

PAUL Yes There again it is difficult to judge because I wasn't asking for help so it's difficult to know how much help was on offer. I mean the College did sort of chase me up and say what is going on it there. They did ask the dreaded question: 'there anything we can do to help?' But of course in a certain state of mind, no, there is not anything in the world anyone can do to help because that's how you deal with things. I don't know I have never been good at asking for help so...

MARGARET Right. So you then went into work for eleven and a half years 6 in one job and 5 and a half in another. What made you switch from one to another job?

PAUL Well basically I mean neither job was particularly fulfilling It was real menial hotel work and any length of time in a place like that.... you can quickly get tired and pushed to your limit and basically I have always been able to be dropped into any situation ... you know hit the ground running. I used to explain to them on a particularly hard day or when things were getting particularly dodgy it makes no difference to me and I could stay here for another year or I could leave tomorrow and one day they put that to the test. It was a

254

particularly bad night and one of the mini management said the famous line ' If you don't like it you can go home' so I asked him to repeat himself and... then I did I took him at his word and that is always how I have looked at things... you know There is no point in staying in a situation that is untenable .... that is messing with your head because that place really was and so I thought no I'm done And it's essentially the same with the next place I moved into. That was in the seasonal thing ... so that was healthier in terms of the year has a start and an end and you have the sort of winter period to mess around. One year I went to Thailand during the winter period and then when I came back I did sort of one year but even from the beginning of that year everyone knew I wasn't going to be there the year afterwards and it was all very peaceable. It those one of things you know there's always people they can call into those jobs .... there were no issues there really and I was finished with it you know

MARGARET So there again you drew the line

PAUL Yes

MARGARET And you moved on and what happened at that point?

PAUL At that point? I decided I had had enough of that particular way of life so I actually ended up in home fundraisers – a charity. To me it just ... there have always been shops in my family and that customer service thing I have done a lot of but when you are doing it for a good cause it t made a bit more sense rather than working for some big chain you know it just felt to me to be doing something good. Which worked in theory. Unfortunately the boss man there was – he was ... not ideal for his position. The way the place was run... he made it unbearable. It made it turn from a job I loved into something unbearable basically by just not rotating the sites. We would get a list of sites and it's fairly simple you work your way through and once you get to the bottom you move back to the top. He was just exploiting the same sites again and again and you ... you would turn up one week wearing a T shirt for one charity and you know you convinced a number of people that that site was a win and then you come back the next week in a different T shirt and you know you people obviously take offence at that. Laughs Because you ..... It got to the point where you were really pestering people rather than just rotating the sites sensibly so it was making it ....Quite often I used to be top of the office you

255

know I was team leader ...., I was leading my little team of warriors around. It was quite competitive and then when you are aware that you are not doing what you should be doing score wise because the sites are not being allocated correctly it is frustrating you know and I said I didn't come here to be average I came to be good because I'm good at this job so again they had a couple of weeks off that Christmas and at the staff drinks do – which, even attending that was a big step for me.... I made it clear that 'don't bother phoning me in the new year' and I was finished with that as well. Laughs

MARGARET And then what happened?

PAUL And then well there we go...... It was while I was working there actually. You see it was a job and it was also significant in that it was there that I met my then fiancée. That built quite quickly.... Yes. We were taking life seriously and all of that and then that fell apart actually laughs actually because of the work environment that I was in... mmm laughs. It's difficult to explain it because the sort of people you work with are young student-y kind of people with a certain lifestyle and mm it's not necessarily conducive to a healthy relationship .... so yes I screwed up and yes paid the price for that. That basically .. it was something that we couldn't get over between the two of us so that led to the relationship falling apart that led to me basically having a prolonged breakdown and doing something stupid and ending up inside.... So it went from winning to losing fairly quickly. Laughs....

MARGARET I see. What happened? .... You said you broke down. What sort of help and support did you have at that point?

PAUL Well ... again laughs I .... none mostly because I didn't ask for it. I mean everyone was trying but I was too far gone into my own shell really to hear what they were saying. I had a table strewn with numbers and leaflets and it is a difficult thing because my family has got of a legacy of mental illness and I know it might sound petty but there was enough pride left in me to refuse to admit until the last moment that I was suffering from depression and you know up to and beyond ..... it took a long time to admit that is what was wrong. Because in my head you know it was a perfectly logical reaction to what had happened to me but for anyone who had known you could basically chart a period of 10 years when I had basically been suffering from depression and

....and you know they had been giving hints of increasingly less subtlety and sort of saying you know 'you need to talk to someone' but if you are so closed in your own shell then it bounces off it doesn't penetrate. You can hear what they are saying and you know there are people who know and care about you but it doesn't penetrate. And it is easy now – I am far enough away from it to look back and say 'yes that is what I was doing.' I was shutting people out but in the moment I don't know what the solution is.

MARGARET And so what happened after that?

PAUL Well that is when I basically .... I made a couple of suicide attempts during the sort of Court process Then it became obvious that I was going to serve a custodial sentence At that point I had sort of reached an agreement with myself that I had died even though the attempt was unsuccessful. I was assimilating that enough had died of me on that day and I was still - again it will all sound a bit strange but I basically I use the personal pronoun ... out of habit because I still think of myself as being dead. I am sort of .... I'm what's left of a person. You know, I'm a ghost in the flesh. I'm still you know definitely not that person. So it's kind of easy for me to ort of think in an abstract way. I'm still – even now – I'm more or less fully functional, you know, I can walk and talk but I'm still not sure of my state, you know. Laughs. It's mm well is some ways dying or nearly dying and you know disappearing for a few months inside and coming back out, it's a good way to have the ultimate fresh start. You know ..... and I think that .... that's .... you know that's ... I always try and find the positive and how I look at it is a good clean start. Ah yeah that I don't know what that means in terms of who I am or what's left of that person .... PAUSE

MARGARET So what sort of help did you get at that point?

PAUL Well you see at that point I had no ... to ask for help and at that point it was very clear that mental health wise - laughs - there are some serious gaps in terms of what help is on offer. Mm.... mostly, as with everything else, the money has dried up and it's not political and it's not sexy and it's not something that they're really putting that much effort into in terms of you know what's needed. I mean if it's ... they have obviously a way of pacifying me which is like an emergency situation mm ... If you're out to commit suicide they're interested. If you've made a couple of attempts and if you use the right words.

I mean this is the problem with counselling in general that from a very early age kids learn how to say the right phrases which if someone asks you 'are you planning to take your life?' you are not going to say 'yes.' Laughs. You say 'no' so that box gets ticked and you are far less of a priority and I was still, you know, however many years later, three years later, mm they never got back to me really so it made me think like maybe it's fortunate that I didn't ask for help when I needed it .... you know when it was a real emergency they would have probably dropped the ball anyway. Laughs

MARGARET And what happened next?

PAUL You mean in prison or out?

MARGARET Would you feel comfortable telling me how it was you were sent to prison?

PAUL Well not really .... Laughs. It's not really ....

MARGARET Not necessarily the offence but the kind of circumstances?

PAUL The circumstances? Yes well I was .... yes I mean.... I pled Guilty so I did take responsibility for my actions but I never used my mental state as an excuse but it is a reason because..... You know like normally I am adjusted enough to not act in the way that offends society overmuch or breaks any rules but it was only because of the extreme mental state I was in. I mean the incident occurred on my way to one of my suicide attempts. So I was checked out you know and if you are living ... if you are living in a world without consequences which I was at that point .... mm ... then part of me thinks .... I could have done a lot worse. I could have gone on a killing spree I could have robbed a bank because you know people do all sorts of crazy things on their last day on earth .... laughs .... and that's how I was looking at things .... mmm ... yes.

MARGARET And you say that you didn't use that in mitigation in any way but did you have a defence lawyer when you appeared in Court?

PAUL I ....I well in theory laughs He I mean .... it's difficult because .... I wanted it to be a matter of record that I was severely messed up because of the situation that I was in but as soon as you.... as soon as you plead Guilty, you

plead Guilty in the .... in the Prosecution's worst case, which means that everything you did you did knowingly and willingly which ... you know that isn't necessarily correct ..... you know I was, I was as I say I was living in a world without consequences. You know looking back now you're made to think about actions having consequences It's easy now to see ... that you know I'd never normally act in a way to ruin someone's day or you know to offend people more than necessary but at that point I didn't care ... mmm but it was trying to make it clear that it doesn't reflect my normal view. Yes normally I'm very respectful of people because for me they're still kind of alien and separate. I generally leave them alone .... laughs ..... and that's fine. So it was tricky because there's no such thing as Guilty–ish. You can't plead Guilty–ish

MARGARET So then you described to me your prison experience especially in relation to the learning and the peer mentoring that you did.

PAUL Yes

MARGARET And you used that to help others

PAUL Yes

MARGARET Then you came out of prison. At that point I'm not very clear what help you had.

PAUL Well this is our mutual acquaintance Laura. I mean she is a sort of contact for a lot of people who have just come out and we were in a sort holding pattern with her asking 'what can I do for you?' and me bouncing back the same question: 'I don't know what can you do because I really didn't know laughs what direction to take/ Like I said I'm now much better at asking than I would have been so. If the correct question is asked and obviously she can give you all the information you can handle but I literally didn't know and it was only when she discussed what I had been up to inside that I mentioned I had done the peer mentoring course and I'd like to put it to some use that she mentioned, you know, that such courses existed on the outside as well and that eventually it was sort of going to be something that was re-forming to be of use to people

MARGARET Was that while you were in prison?

PAUL Just after

259

MARGARET Just after - right. May I ask how long ago that was?

PAUL It was pause ... August. Last Year. Laughs

MARGARET So during the last few months peer mentoring has been your focus?

PAUL Yes. And I do like the idea of ... I mentioned it seemed an obvious gap in the system. Sort of there's peer mentoring inside and peer mentoring for society as a whole you know is divided up and being taken care of by various organisations but for someone who's just come out mm what you're met with is someone the other side of the desk and for a lot of people their defences go up and you know they are not able or willing to ask for the help that they necessarily need ... so to be able to speak to a peer that knows the situation.. you know ... to be a go-between really is going to be very useful......

MARGARET And how do you see your future from now?

PAUL Well basically lapping up as many courses as I can at the moment... any interesting looking courses coming up and just sort of trying to get myself lodged in the system. I mean I know ... Laura's aware ... I've sort of been pestering her ... pestering her to remind them that I'm on the scene and you know available to be made use of. You know ... I don't mind the idea of being a resource. Laughs

MARGARET Right so now you want to lap up as much learning as you can

PAUL Yes

MARGARET What would you like to study?

PAUL Well there's the next level peer mentoring course and the ET course coming up.

MARGARET Can you clarify that?

PAUL It used to be PTLLS .... sort of an adult education training.

MARGARET Right

PAUL So that kind of all fits into it. There are quite a few mental health based courses as having been on both sides of the line, it naturally interests me ... mm it's all sort of transferable, which is good...

MARGARET And do you see that leading into further training?

PAUL Hopefully. I mean obviously it is a necessary evil to get an actual job and I'd rather be doing something meaningful than not ...laughs but yes I mean I know to begin with certainly it's likely to be a voluntary position but I've been made to believe that there are positions becoming available so ... fingers crossed as they say.

MARGARET That's excellent. So this six months period since you came out of prison you've been studying and peer mentoring and over this last few weeks you want to get into PTLLS. Yes that's excellent.

 PAUL It's taken about six months.

MARGARET How does that timescale seem to you?

PAUL Well I mean really the holding pattern continued up to or most of ... until the new year really which is when the courses started so it was ... it's difficult to judge because when you first come out you know accommodation's a bit funny, depending on where you end up so I was I in Plymouth for a couple of months before I came back to Exeter, which is where I wanted to be because it's near to my people basically and it's.. Exeter's grown on me a bit so this is fine. So there was ... I'm kind of limited to how much we could do while I was still in Plymouth ... mm ... as soon as I got here I sort of .. I was ... until recently I was a bit resistant of ... because my Offender Manager in Probation she's got a real thing about Education, Training and Employment (ETE) trying to get people training and employment. In my head – I'm sorry if it sounds snobbish – I'm not made that way. I always thought of it as remedial sort of .... helping people who had an issue... which is fine you know I've played my part in that but in terms of ....it sounded as if she was suggesting that I was lacking something rather than looking at it as improvement and progression. As soon as I looked on what courses were on offer, I realised that it was in a different direction ... yes ... so I guess it was just a misconception that was stuck in my head.

261

MARGARET Now you're looking for something that is pitched correctly for you

PAUL Yes

MARGARET And you're gifted and able and articulate and then the question is what kind of openings are there what kind of support is there what kind of access is there for you?

PAUL Yes. Well this is it. I mean I've seen ... everywhere you look there are a lot of leaflets offering courses, helping people to improve people's literacy and numeracy. Mm you never see something offering the other side of things as in someone you know able to help deliver that and it just seems a bit one sided because there's yes I don't know what the statistics say but t then there are a lot of educated, articulate people in the criminal system for one reason and another and they you know they can offer that as a ... as a service. A lot of people have worked on the mentoring scheme inside to various degrees. It is a shame to not utilise that.

MARGARET. Do you see ET leading you into teaching or into the avenue you want to go into?

PAUL Well hopefully, I mean ... it sort of seems like it fits laughs.. because you know if for whatever reason the tutors couldn't make it on to the wings, I used to often deliver the classes so it's something I've done but I'd like to have something more substantial ... an actual qualification rather than PSA, laughs I mean any qualification is good. It shows that you're doing something...

MARGARET You've been doing a great deal.

PAUL I've tried. While I was inside I think I was mentally better than I had been for about a decade and I think it's because I basically reset ideas of who I was and what I was and being able to start again... mm... based on your sort of achievements academically and not anything else ... on paper I looked quite good because it was A's and B's and you know all the life mess that came after that wasn't really relevant so it was quite good because you were able to start again in that way.

MARGARET Yes. You said it was like starting College again.

PAUL Yes ... Yes ... that's exactly what it felt like because you had a little sort of induction through the education department when you determined what your sort of level of learning was. Yes it was basically like starting College again ... Maybe that was it maybe it was continuing journey I started half a lifetime ago........ laughs maybe that's what I should have been doing the whole time

MARGARET And in terms of recovering your identity since then?

PAUL Yes. I mean it has been useful because you know once you enter a new situation like that that is so drastically different to what you've known in life, mm you know people only know you by what's on these sheets of paper and it's good - it's the ultimate clean start really because I've got some fairly alright grades and I was able to make use of that and that became ....that helped define my role. You know, it's only confusing when you're back in the real world again but you know I've actually been able to sort of ..... shape myself back into that again so that's a win I suppose......

MARGARET Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Paul	28th February, 2016
	3rd March, 2016
	10th March, 2016
Jo	7th March, 2016
	15th March, 2016
	24th March, 2016
Don	2nd August, 2016
	9th August, 2016
	21st August, 2016
Mark	31st July, 2016
	7th August, 2016
	21st August, 2016
Pam	27th March, 2017
	10th April, 2017

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