# Emergent Educational Practice in Community Settings

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# Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Helena Evans, who died in April 2018, and my father, John William Evans, who died in April 2008. My greatest teachers; both taught me to value education and nurtured my love of literature and history. I also dedicate this thesis to John Eric Evans, who died in July 2017, a dear brother whose kindness and humour always raised my spirits.

All would be too modest to accept this dedication; all would be proud that I completed my doctoral journey.

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# Abstract

My study examines the processes and practices of community teaching, delivered by a social enterprise, between 2017 and 2020, in Wythenshawe, a Manchester suburb. I investigated the nature of my work as a community educator. Learners and tutors involved in my practice participated in my study. The thesis aimed to search out the entanglements, discourses and practices that underpin and construct understandings about teaching, learning and relations with others. I also investigated whether these practices differed sufficiently from those of established teaching to be considered emergent. Although there have been many studies of community education, there is little research on small community enterprises operating in the liminal spaces between, education, arts, and community. To contextualise my research, I drew upon Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) and refinements to his theory, particularly *knowledgeability* (2014), Figured Worlds (Holland, 2001), (Gee, 2010), and Affect Theory notably Sarah Ahmed's (2014) work on emotion. I drew upon studies I considered relevant to my lived experience. These included Alison Gilchrist (2019) on networking, Sarah Banks (2018) on co-production and co-inquiry and the series of contemporary community research books in the *Connected Communities series*, notably (Jones and Perry, 2019) and (Campbell and Pahl, 2018). The study evidenced many aspects of my teaching sufficiently divergent from established models to suggest emergent practice. The study implies that at a time of austerity, the approaches to education I describe may provide a model of practice for other educators within a new paradigm of community teaching.

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# Awakening

*Our words are powerful*

*You can use them to love yourself and others or*

*You can take the S and put it in front of the word and*

It turns into a sword to slay yourself and others

*It all comes down to a choice*

*When I started high school*

*I was labelled 'slow learner.'*

*So, I was put in a lower class*

*The label was attached to the 'thick', 'stupid' and' dumb.'*

*The real answer was I was using my power of thought at my own speed*

*To understand what I was learning*

*Questioning analysing it instead of being like*

*A photocopy machine in a classroom*

*Copy, copy, copy*

*With no thoughts of my own.*

*I wanted to*

*Understand the ins and outs of what I was learning*

*Like English, why is there silent letters in words?*

*Why do you spell phone with a p?*

*I just couldn't understand it*

*And with that, I couldn't do it*

*Both my sisters were OK with it*

*That's when the doubt in myself began*

*I thought to myself I will only be able to do manual jobs*

*This doubt would show up*

*In all my challenges in life.*

Figure 1. Extract from. ‘Awakening’, a poem by Lilly, Writing Well attendee.

# CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## Introduction

I am doing this study because I wanted to find out more about the processes and practices of community education. As a community educator, I needed to uncover what those practices were.

My thesis is concerned with the practice of doing community education from the viewpoint of a community educator. Learners and tutors involved in my practice participated in my study. It aims to search out the entanglements, discourses and practices that underpin and construct understandings about teaching, learning and relations with others.

Curiosity and a need to make sense of my new teaching environment drove my study. In 2016 I began running educational initiatives in my community. Before then, I had taught solely in established educational environments, and my study provided an opportunity to explore this new world of practice. I was intrigued by several features I had not encountered in established education. For instance, one course, 'Writing Well', continued after its official end with learners organising and continuing their learning under its banner. Another feature was the excessive networking and civic work I undertook to procure teaching opportunities and the irregular working hours spent in cafes, libraries and church halls with diverse groups and individuals that generated learning opportunities. Teaching in a new environment brought insecurity and uncertainty, and the study attempted to address both. I wanted to know how this new practice might define my professional identity and explain to others what I did and why I did it. Additionally, I wanted to know how my initiatives developed (emerged) into a practice, the features that defined it, and were others involved in similar ventures. I wanted to know why participants attended my courses and if they considered me a teacher. These curiosities and needs drove my research.

Because this was new research in a teaching environment new to me, my initial questions were tentative and general. My work was recursive and complex, involving stopping, rethinking, re-planning, changing, and starting over again. Question

formulation involved considering the nature of my work and my role as a community educator. Later, I studied literature relating to the recurrent themes that arose from my interviews and my journal entries.

Reflection was a critical tool of study throughout. Reflection drove my re-examination of the data, led me to further consideration of literature, and then more reflection. Between 2017 and 2019, through this gradual and cyclical process, recurrent themes emerged.

I bring to this research my lived experience of teaching in community contexts. Those who participated helped produce knowledge through co-production using approaches detailed by Banks and Hart (2018). As a method, I did not apply or develop theory prematurely because the research sought to generate theory constructed from data, interpreted, framed, and retold by myself.

**Background and Context**

My practice is situated within adult community education, an area of learning with a long history. The object of much research, contemporary writers, including Jane Mace (2003), Rebecca O'Rourke (2007) and Mary Hamilton (2000), detail its depth and variety.

There are various models of community education, and most seek to educate adults. These models have distinct ideologies regarding the nature of men and women and the sort of society that would best develop their capabilities to the full (Radical community education – infed.org, n.d.).

Adult education in England has changed drastically since the 1970s and 1980s. Once a vibrant field of practice and sufficiently financed through Government support, the last 30 years has seen its decline through funding cuts and shifting educational priorities. The WEA (Workers Educational Association) typifies this change. The leading provider of working-class education in the 1930s, it championed liberal and left-leaning causes and sought practical solutions to unemployment (Armstrong, 1988), but successive cuts to its budget have limited its scope (Radical community education – infed.org, n.d.). Adult education exists in a landscape of flux and uncertainty, yet this could be

considered dynamic and emergent. The provision of education through community projects and activities is emblematic of this change and development. This study details such initiatives.

Although studies of community education are many, there is little description of the lived teacher experience. I hope, therefore, to give a first-hand account of an aspect of community education. Following the demise of large, centralised organisations, I document the growth of small green shoots of adult learning in the community. The model I examine is sufficiently different from earlier models to be considered new – it is emergent. My study describes this emergent model and paradigm shift.

My thesis documents development in adult education. Educationally, communities are beginning to do things for themselves, and local social enterprises often drive these initiatives. Prima facie, this development is part of David Cameron's 'Big Society' and neo-liberal ideology, but I suggest the community-led initiatives I document have much older precedents. These older models of community-centred educational movements often lacked a unifying ideology but all involved individuals mobilising to resist authority and regulation imposed by bodies outside the community. They are best exemplified in the spate of school strikes by pupils and parents across Britain before the First World War, the most famous being at Burston, Norfolk, the longest strike in British history (1914-1939), (Bostridge, 2014).

At Burston, the issue centred on who had the power to appoint and dismiss teachers. The Parish Council dismissed two popular teachers (husband and wife), and the pupils' parents sought their reinstatement. When the Parish Council and the Norfolk Education Authority refused to reinstate them, the parents set up an alternative school. They hired the two teachers, raised funds to pay their salaries and the majority of pupils attended. This alternative school grew and thrived while the official school withered and eventually lay empty.

Other strikes occurred at Bedworth in Exhall and the surrounding villages in North East Warwickshire; at Harringay in North London; and Herefordshire. Local issues were the impetus for these strikes (Bostridge, 2014).

However, I do not wish to represent my community practice as a resistance to authority or a challenge to established practice. I use the example above to demonstrate that historically, communities have often figured out solutions to address their unique needs, especially ones they perceived inflexible central or regional systems would not address. In this historical context, my practice may sit with earlier community models of self-determination, and my study of emergence might be one of *re-emergence*.

However, I did not base my practice on any educational model or ideology. When I started teaching in my community, my focus was on establishing my practice and securing funding. I had little understanding of my endeavour's social, political, and historical context and its position within a broader tradition of community teaching.

Aspects of my practice fit existing models in part. Concerning its typology, it shares with other models aspects of their community organisation, community action, cultural action, and social action. Regarding the spectrum of models, my practice sits between a liberal individualistic approach and a collective approach to teaching.

However, my research does not seek to create dichotomies between other forms of community education or between established education like schools, colleges, and universities. I refer to these practices only to offer comparisons with my own. Instead, I focus on the emergent and divergent characteristics of my teaching. I suggest my practice is emergent and divergent because the circumstances giving rise to my community teaching were unique, and I am documenting my lived teacher experience.

Equally, aspects of my practice differ from community education models and teaching in schools and colleges. For example, many pre-existing models involve an organising body setting up the practice, then directing a tutor as a community resource to a particular area, including out-reach tutors. My practice does not.

Political ideology drives other models. Many target working-class learners, but my learners are from all backgrounds. Because my courses promote discussion and dialogue (as a pedagogical tool) and seek to promote personal development and confidence building, it shares some features of a cultural action model (Freire, 1972). Like the cultural action model, it encourages learners to reflect on the major themes of their lives (Radical community education – infed.org, n.d.). We (my tutors and I) also

encourage introspection, promote a sense of 'we' and build trust and community within groups.

Yet, there is a difference. For example,  trust and community building were unexpected outcomes of my teaching practice and never planned. Secondly, the ultimate aim of my teaching is not to encourage my learners to embark on community or social action. In comparison, my ambitions are small-scale and aimed at individual development rather than social change. I encourage my learners to be critical thinkers and discerning consumers of media. I encourage them to become active members of the community by joining clubs and volunteering to improve their mental wellbeing rather than to engineer societal change.

For the same reason, my community teaching does not sit easily in the social action model. Although my practice shares its emphasis on confidence-building and boosting learners' self-image, it is not a precursor to them undertaking hard and sustained educational study.

Many community models looked to educate workers while many of my learners are retired and cannot work through ill health or situation (the unpaid carers of family members). My teaching tends to lie with those movements that saw education primarily to improve the quality of life of an individual while encouraging them to contribute as a responsible citizen to society (Telford, 1995).

### My Teaching Practice

My practice is within a 'notion' of a community that is partly geographic and an attachment to place (Savage, 2008); this is Wythenshawe, South Manchester. But it is also the 'materialisation of a common endeavour' (Pahl and Pool, 2018:8) referencing (Williams, 1958), and this includes the Writing Well course I deliver. This course operates within a community of practice (Wenger 1998) that incorporates post-course socialising between former learners (and tutors), a legacy I term 'stickiness'. Another feature of this community of practice is excessive reliance on networking to secure teaching opportunities.

In 2017 I founded a social enterprise to deliver educative activities in Wythenshawe. When I started, I knew no community educators to ask for guidance. Because I had only taught in schools and colleges, I had little knowledge of community education or its practitioners. Although I did some civic work in the community and belonged to the local history group, I did not belong to any networks, nor was I considered a community educator. My educator role developed over time as my connectedness with local networks grew.

My entry into community education was an unexpected change. As Storr (2020) comments, unexpected change makes us curious and curious is how we should feel in the opening movements of a compelling story. Curiosity has driven this research. I hoped that my research might, in a small way, generate knowledge and add to the current understanding of community education.

## What I Mean by Emergence and Divergence

### Emergence

In this study, the word 'emergence' refers to a process that becomes a practice. That is, a process that begins as a loose collection of decisions and actions, with general aims and objectives and over time develops into a practice that is corporeal - substantive. Included in the process are the varied social interactions in my community I engage with, and which develop, intentionally or unintentionally, over time to form a new educational practice or practise. Networking (see page 134) and civic work (see page 46) are examples of these social interactions.

Emergence offers me a conceptual resource for thinking about the many different aspects of my practice as a unity and motivates and directs my thinking in this study. For example, emergence asks whether my practice merely mimics established educational norms or contains enough variation and divergence to make it a singular form of educative practice.

### Divergence

In this study, the word 'divergence' refers to practice and practises different from those I experienced or observed when teaching in school, college, and university. It was

experiencing or observing these differences in community teaching, which prompted this study. In this study, I employ divergence as an indicator of emergent practice: if my community teaching diverges significantly from teaching in school, college, and university, it may indicate an emergent practice.

Divergence directs me to seek indicators, emblems, and representations of emergence. By this, I mean unique symbols, processes and practices that will help reify my practice and define my educator role. Prima facie, some aspects of my practice appear divergent; for example, the excessive need to network to secure teaching opportunities and courses that resist definition by conventional notions (See the Analysis Chapter and Discussion Chapter).

Emergence and divergence also represent the intersection of my previous lived life experiences in established education and my present community teaching. Although I conclude that my community teaching diverges significantly enough to indicate an emergent practice, being an interpretative study, my explanations and conclusions are tentative.

For a study on emergence where emergence was also my research tool (see above), I drew on theories that reflected my lived-teacher experience. For example, concerning my trajectory into my practice and entry into local networks, I found Wenger's (1998) model of communities of practice and concept of legitimate peripheral participation helpful (please see below and also the Literature Review).

The search to define my practice and educator identity informed my choice of interviewees. I sought individuals engaged in similar community practice as me to share and compare our experiences. (For details of my interviewees, please see below and also the Discussion Chapter).

As my study does not seek to draw dichotomies between practices enacted in established educational settings and practices in the community, and favour one, it draws comparisons only to examine practices that are different enough to be considered emergent. Nor do I believe communities Edenic and networking uncomplicated. For example, much networking involves navigating community politics, avoiding squabbles with the groups who fiercely patrol their fiefdoms, with perceived

copyright of all community initiatives. There are hierarchies, and we minnow organisations continuously strive for the patronage of the community's mega-organisations. Success in securing their support can invoke the resentment of other groups who fire off accusations of favouritism or fixing. Perhaps, these accusations contain a kernel of truth. Because the human factor plays its part in face-to-face networking and the movers and shakers are more likely to connect emotionally with, and favour, personable people.

**Welcome to Wythenshawe**

To understand my practice and my learners, an understanding of Wythenshawe and its demographic is necessary. I live and practice in Wythenshawe. I grew up on one of its estates (Woodhouse Park), and the Forum Library, where I teach, is three hundred yards from the council house where I lived. Spanning nearly 11 square miles, Wythenshawe was once one of the largest council estates in Europe (Deakin, 1989), yet to make sense of the area in terms of its housing stock is reductive and often problematic (see below). For geographic and historical reasons (see below), there is a sense of separateness from the rest of Manchester. A sense of a community or communities distinct from the other suburbs pervades. As the Manchester City Council report of 2015 observes:

> Wythenshawe is a distinctive district, separated from the rest of Manchester by motorways and green spaces. The sense of separateness, or distinctiveness, is most often a source of pride for residents, although sometimes they can feel overlooked in terms of service delivery and access to services in general.

The area holds a large number of potential learners. The latest figures record its population at 77,688.00 Intelligence Hub (Manchester Statistics, (Mid-Year Estimates 2018), or 110,000, including those who commute to work there. It has a larger population than the cities of Salisbury and Winchester combined and the Greater Manchester town of Bury (2011 census).

Wythenshawe wards have a higher proportion of older people than other South Manchester wards (Locality Report, Manchester Locality Joint Strategic Needs

Assessment South, 2015). Of those who live in Wythenshawe, 16% are over 50 – the demographic I mainly teach.

This sense of separateness is a product of its history. Wythenshawe can be considered a socio-political aspiration fashioned on the liberal and socialist ideology of the early twentieth century. Historically, the area was a scattering of hamlets and three North Cheshire townships south of the River Mersey. In 1931, following a bitter struggle with Cheshire County Council, by Act of Parliament, Manchester Corporation acquired this land and commenced building a garden suburb of unprecedented scale (Pearce et al., 2019), (Hardy, 2005). Unlike other garden cities like Letchworth, its initiator was a political body driven to clear city centre slums and relocate its tenants to safe and affordable homes in a healthy environment. They built their new suburb with the best intentions, based on practicality and social-political aspirations, which a century later remain an elusive reality (Hardy, 2005). This sense of separateness gives my learners a point of reference they share and is an important social bonding feature of my teaching. I discuss this in subsequent chapters.

Despite hosting a major international airport and sharing borders with affluent Didsbury, Heald Green, Styal, Trafford, Gatley and Cheadle, by all indicators, Wythenshawe is a socially deprived area (Manchester Locality, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, South, 2015).

This deprivation includes 35% of children in poverty – defined as families living on less than the median household income (End Child Poverty Coalition, 2019). Three official food banks operate in the area (Wythenshawe Foodbank, 2020), while faith organisations and community groups dole extra rations. These figures include some of my learners and their families. The Manchester City Council Population Health Plan (2018-2027) co-produced with the NHS records that there are 3.5 times as many premature deaths (deaths under the age of 75) in Wythenshawe compared with the least deprived parts of the city. Preventative health strategies for the area, particularly wellbeing, form an essential element of my practice.

Consequently, charities and local government agencies operate across its area. Manchester City Council's 'Welcome to Wythenshawe', a directory of local services, is

104 pages long. Agencies are indexed A-Z from Age Concern Sharston to Wythenshawe Regeneration Team. I network with some of these organisations to secure teaching opportunities.

My course, Writing Well, delivers education but is also a provider of preventative health as part of broader NHS social prescription strategies. The latest Manchester City Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2020 reveals that a high proportion of Wythenshawe households comprise people needing high levels of health support. The report highlights the need to provide ways to help these households manage their health to prevent them from becoming high users of acute healthcare services in the future. The report states that need is highest in Woodhouse Park, where around 85% of households are likely to require intensive support with their health needs. Woodhouse Park is my old neighbourhood and where I mainly teach.

However, statistics do not document the contradictions, nuances, and erratic pulse of the area, which 'outsiders' often miss. To understand my learners and 'where they are coming from,' it is essential to delve beneath the figures. Wythenshawe was once the second-largest social housing estate in Europe (Abbit, 2018), but it is not a grey concrete sprawl. The Locality Report (2015) states the *'area is remarkably green in comparison with the rest of Manchester, including 27 woods and 13 parks'* (JSNA South Manchester, 2015:online) and its largest park, Wythenshawe Park, is the second-largest in Manchester. This greenery is aesthetically pleasing but deceptive because it confounds typical notions of what poverty and deprivation look like, and both may go undetected.

There are many ways to represent a community; culture is one. As Campbell and Pahl (2018) remark, 'making sense of communities involves making sense of culture' (p. 18). Acknowledging that 'culture is ordinary' (Williams, 1958:5-6) is to acknowledge the complexity of representing the common meanings, experiences, contacts and discoveries that make every community and its people *extraordinary* and unique. To demonstrate Williams's observation, Wythenshawe Park and its 400-year-old hall is public space and part of the community's fabric and narratives. The park and hall are repositories of shared memories and individual associations: picnics, courtships, exercise, dog-walking and play. In March 2016, an arson attack destroyed part of the

hall. How the community reacted to the destruction revealed the powerful role associations play in community-making.

The morning after the fire, I visited the hall to document the destruction for the Wythenshawe History Group archive. There I witnessed pockets of people of all ages, standing by the safety fencing, weeping. It was a phenomenon repeated throughout the week culminating the following Saturday when an estimated crowd of four thousand people gathered outside the hall to hear the constituency's MP and Manchester's Mayor promise its restoration. Paul Selby from Friends of Wythenshawe Hall summed up the close relationship between place, history, culture, community-making, and community-maintenance. In an interview, he said: "It's not just us who have suffered, it's the much wider community.' (BBC News, 2017:online). A suffering shared. In one sense, Wythenshawe can be considered a remembered place where people hold knowledge and experience (Pahl and Crompton, 2018:17). Concerning my teaching, locations like the park and hall are points of reference my learners recognise and share. These commonalities develop and strengthen bonds between them and aid social learning (see Findings Chapter).

Although designated a 'deprived area' with connotations of economic sparsity and material want, the term is problematic. As an objective economic metric, the description is accurate but narrow. Drawing on residents' perceptions and community knowledge, the term 'deprived area' widens to include deprivation of culture. I mean 'culture' in the narrower sense of 'popular' and 'elitist' art. Through high transport costs and admission prices to Manchester and its satellite towns, there are few opportunities for many to access exemplar art. The area lost its cinemas in the 1970s and its professional theatre in the 1990s. Feedback from my funding questionnaires reveals demand for access to a broader selection of the arts, including training to create and training to appreciate. My learners frequently express this desire on their behalf and for others, but the demand remains unmet.

From a teaching and research perspective, this is critical because artistic production - poetry, song, image and story is a valid form of knowledge production (Campbell and Pahl, 2018). Culture is also one way people make sense of their lives and communities

(Williams, 1958). Associating community with culture has important implications regarding who gets to tell the story and how the story is told (see Findings chapter).

Concerning dominant narratives, the media often represent Wythenshawe as a large working-class housing estate, rife with social issues, including benefit scrounging and youth crime (see below). Wikipedia's description of Wythenshawe as 'at one time, the largest council estate in Europe' and 'massive housing estate' repeats Deakin's (1989) description cited above. It is found on other sites, and other media repeat the phrase. Referencing the type of housing is a shibboleth that distinguishes and defines its residents from other areas. 'Born on a council estate' is often a journalistic trope - the 'rags to riches' narrative connoting individual, social and material improvement achieved only by leaving the area. 'Council estate' is shorthand for the class and economic composition of the community. As Hanley (2007) remarks, 'you only have to say the word 'estates' for someone to infer a vast amount of meaning from it. It's a bruise in the form of a word' (p. 20). Hanley is not carrying a chip on her shoulder. Despite being made in 2007, her astute comment remains relevant to areas like Wythenshawe. Blanket descriptions like 'housing estate' is reductive, missing the nuance of the area and the diversity of its communities within.

Figure 2. Collage of Wythenshawe landmarks.

One representation of Wythenshawe. My social enterprise created this collage for use on the mugs and greeting cards we sell to raise funds. The image represents the community as a material and geographic entity, and the buildings demonstrate the history and variety of properties in the area, including Baguley Hall and Wythenshawe Hall. All serve as common points of reference. The 'I heart Wythenshawe' bee represents the area's affiliation with Manchester, although a suburb for only 89 years. As a cultural artefact, it implicitly challenges dominant narratives and blanket terms like 'housing estate'.

By permission Together One CIC.

Figure 3. Community in a mug.

This mug (and a greeting card version) depicts Northenden's landmarks. Although part of modern Wythenshawe, Northenden, until 1931, was a separate township under its own governance. The need for two different representations of the area reflects the diversity blanket descriptions miss. Both mugs and greeting cards sell well.

By Permission Together One CIC.

It is a misnomer that Wythenshawe's housing stock is overwhelmingly social housing, and the population predominately 'working class'. My learner cohort is not wholly working-class and includes retired artisans and professionals. The area has a considerable amount of private housing and middle-class families because the planners of the 1930s built them alongside social housing so that white-collar and blue-collar families might integrate rather than the area become a proletarian enclave (Deakin, 1989) (Shercliff, 1974). The township of Northenden, referenced in the Domesday Book, always had considerable private housing stock and professionals living there (Pearce et al., 2019).

Wythenshawe has many of the characteristics of a dormitory town. The new Metrolink Airport line has attracted commuting professionals, and private landlords prosper renting properties to airlines and their flight staff. Over the last decade, pockets of gated insulae have risen across the area, communities within communities, often inward-looking than community facing. In the 1980s, the number of private property owners increased when many council tenants bought their homes under the Conservative Government's right to buy scheme. I remember the deep divisions this caused between neighbours, the envy it kindled and the resentment it fostered. I remember the deep guilt felt by many who bought their homes, believing they had 'sold out' their principles. It caused division, busted the myth of working-class solidarity and dented community cohesion. Despite the dent, since 1964, by a sizeable majority, the Ward has returned a Labour Party MP.

Yet, I suggest, owning one's own home does not equate with social mobility - you still occupy the same space with the same slim opportunities as before. The responsibility for social housing now rests with associations working in partnership with Manchester City Council – organisations and bodies I network with to create teaching opportunities. Like the Enclosure Acts of the seventeenth century, the Right to Buy scheme is rich material for the folk songs of the future. It adds to the community narrative my learners gather around to bond and socialise - an essential aspect of my teaching. In Wythenshawe, the haves and have-nots can easily lead parallel lives and never meet. Courses like mine maintain communal public space and create opportunities for people of all backgrounds to meet and interact.

The airport and its new business enterprise zone, Airport City, the NHS and local government are significant employers in the area. There are three industrial estates, but statutory minimum wages and zero-hour contracts render employment figures opaque. Many of my learners work zero-hour 'gigs'. Also, as Jones (2019) comments on Perry's case study of Ordsall in Salford, the presence of major affluent industries in an area does not necessarily return a benefit for the proximate communities (Jones and Perry, 2019). Many of my learners work these gigs and hold down two or three jobs. Ruth, a tutor I interviewed, undertakes zero-hour contract work to supplement her income from community teaching.

The media often represent Wythenshawe negatively, and this affects my learners' feelings of self-worth. Two instances stand out. The reporting of David Cameron's visit in 2007 where a 17-year-old 'hoodie' made a gun-symbol gesture with his hand at him. The incident made the national news, and a spate of crime-themed articles followed as media outlets dispatched roving reporters to Wythenshawe to interview young 'gangsters'. The second instance involved a segment of Michael Portillo's documentary for Channel 5, *Our Housing Crisis - Who's to Blame?* The 2018 documentary purported to chart the history of social housing but selected the most salacious sound-bites, including residents' claims that the area sees 'a shooting a week' and 'To be beaten to death on the way to buy a pint of milk from the shops would be quite commonplace.' (Abbit, 2018). The filmmakers also featured a couple claiming housing benefits who lived in a three-bedroom house with their six children. With its selective interviews, the

documentary enraged many long-standing Wythenshawe residents who rejected this representation (Abbit, 2018). These representations failed to recognise the 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1961:42) - those common and mutual understandings people in the community live within. Yet, it is often difficult to distinguish the trope from the truth. Wythenshawe's reputation as an area rife with anti-social behaviour and petty crime sticks, and for my learners, this perception is accurate.

From a teaching perspective, negative portrayals of their community exacerbate my learners' feelings of low self-worth. In lessons, during discussions, the topic arises regularly. Some learners buy into the image while others resist. One learner confessed to feeling too embarrassed to tell others she lives in Wythenshawe. In sympathetic response, a learner wrote a poem, 'Why I Love Wythenshawe', yet to refute a myth acknowledges its potency.

As a tutor to learners with low self-esteem, I am mindful of how the area gets represented. I am aware that my learners are attached to Wythenshawe as a place despite the negative press it receives. It is their home, and many have not lived anywhere else. It is an experience Lindsey Hanley (2007) recalls in her study of estates. She states the word estate might be a 'bruise' of a word and may register 'shame, disgust, and fear', but it can also engender 'fierce pride' (p. 22). My learners recount and share happy memories of Wythenshawe and write affectionately about it. In my research, I considered how my learners' perceptions of themselves and their community might produce an emotional pull and be a powerful bonding agent (Ahmed, 2014). This emotional bonding might indicate divergent practice.

Nor are the learners who describe themselves working class, monolithic. Until the 1970s, the area may have been predominantly white, but even then, it included people of different cultures and traditions. In the 1970s, my neighbours and school friends were Jamaican, Polish, Czech, German, Irish, Maltese, and 'first-generation' British. This diversity has continued and increased. In the last fifteen years, refugees and asylum seekers have made Wythenshawe their home. Miriam, a learner on my course whom I interviewed, holds asylum seeker status. Workers from EU countries have moved into the area, and health professionals from the Indian subcontinent recruited to bolster NHS services and Wythenshawe's substantial hospital. My learner cohort

reflects this. Many of my learners are of different cultures, and Wythenshawe is a common point of reference they share and through which they bond.

Therefore, my learners are as diverse and complex as the area. There is no typical Wythenshawe learner. Many of my learners are over fifty years of age, but the youngest has been twenty-one. Many still work, and some are the full-time carers of ill relatives while ill themselves. Some still grapple with the grief of bereavements that occurred decades ago, while some are dealing with the rawness of recent loss. Others have experienced sustained mental and physical abuse but do not consider themselves victims. Many lack confidence. All like writing, and three have since published their work. All seek strategies to cope with what shadows their lives. My learners have varying emotional and mental health issues, while some endure physical ill-health too. Their needs are particular and complex. And yet, the course I created has proven a catalyst for bonding these diverse individuals. This bonding was an unexpected outcome – a side-product. In my thesis, I offer explanations of how and why this occurred.

**Writing Well – The Course I Deliver**

Writing Well delivers guidance on wellbeing (thus promoting preventative health) while teaching writing skills (its cultural element). The course is ten sessions long, is funded by the NHS and seeks to address mental health issues through creative activities (reading, writing and discussion). I co-teach it and deliver the writing content. The other tutor provides advice on coping strategies, including meditation, mindfulness, savouring, and gratitude practices. Each session begins and ends with a short meditation. Health professionals refer learners, or they can self-refer.

The writing and wellbeing aspects of the course interweave. This interweaving complicates the course's identity, but its wellbeing strand makes my course viable because it brings NHS funding. I discuss this in subsequent chapters. Although Writing Well is the focus of this study, to provide further insights and examples of my practice, I refer to the other educative courses and community initiatives I delivered between 2017 and 2020.

**About Me**

Before I started my community practice, my teaching career from 2004 to 2014 was typical. I practised in established teaching settings and had no experience of community teaching. I began teaching at a comprehensive school with sixth form provision, then at an inner-city high school. Next, I lectured at a college of Further Education (FE), where I taught various subjects to school leavers and adults. At the time of leaving FE, I spent half my hours delivering continuing professional development to colleagues. From 2009 I undertook some Associate Lecturer work for Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU).

This relationship developed in 2014 when I picked up 'gig' work on its teacher training programme. The prospective teachers I interviewed for the PGCE programme became the focus of the first two years of my doctoral studies. I researched interviewer and interviewee preconceptions of teaching, the interview process with Lacanian analysis as my tool of enquiry. With no prospect of securing long term work and a significant reduction in my hours, I sought to put my teaching experience to use elsewhere. When my interview work ended, I had to find another area of my professional practice to research. My new teaching environment provided this opportunity.

Now I am the principal facilitator of my endeavours and run my practice through two companies – Now Forever Heritage CIC and Together One CIC. I am responsible for securing funding, designing courses, and engaging a diverse range of learners. I secured funding for Writing Well and then, with my co-tutor, planned its delivery.

Most of the courses my co-tutors and I run are in Wythenshawe. Networking is a significant aspect of my practice as it creates opportunities to teach. Co-production within and without networking is also a vital aspect of my teaching because it creates opportunities to generate knowledge and understanding (Banks and Hart, 2018). I examine networking and co-production in the Literature Review and the Analysis and Discussion Chapters.

My practice is situated within a broader world of adult learning and continuing education. Many of my learners have mental health issues which in turn locates aspects of my practice within health initiatives as a provider of wellbeing guidance. Because

the courses I deliver include literature, art, history and heritage, my teaching role might be considered that of a community cultural intermediary (Jones and Perry, 2019). This role is small scale. I am not one of the 'new cultural intermediaries' (Bourdieu, 1984: 365-371) Nixon and Du Gay (2002) - a judge of culture and taste working in an institution and influencing cultural trends. Instead, I am someone working at a community level, often alone, to deliver innovative cultural-themed initiatives (Jones and Perry, 2019). In the Discussion Chapter, I examine the role of cultural intermediaries as an aspect of my practice and teacher identity.

Concerning my educator identity, I am an educator within my community. Still, I perceive I am not a 'Community Educator' because this brings connotations of belonging to established educational practices whose purpose is to deliver education, training, and qualifications. This distinction is necessary because I perceive my practice contains sufficient features to distinguish it from established educational practice.

**Established Education**

For my study, established education means methods of teaching and learning in schools and school-like environments, including further and higher education. Because I teach mainly older learners, I focus on adult education.

When I began my research, I perceived my practice was divergent but was unsure why. This feeling of 'otherworldliness' was perceptible enough for me to feel an outsider (when 'gigging' back at the university) and yet an insider (aligned to the norms of established settings) when teaching in the community.

Whether my positionality is more than perception, and my practice genuinely grounded in a developing world, I considered worthy of examination. My research on the practises and processes around my courses and stories of engagement is also an attempt to reify my community practice. Reification here meant turning my practice 'into an object' (Wenger, 2010:1). It involved gathering the abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, social transactions, and concepts of my lived teaching experience. Once gathered, I examined them as a whole to determine whether my participation in and around these amounted to emergent teaching practice. I discuss reification and Wenger's (2010) use of the term later in the study. Accordingly, to determine

emergence, I examined divergent practice – that is, aspects of my practice that differed significantly from mainstream education - the schools and the college, and the university where I taught (see page 8).

In my thesis, I suggest my community practice is different (divergent) enough from established educational settings to consider it emergent. In the latter setting, I delivered education within frameworks my employers prescribed with limited opportunity for autonomy or agency. A feature of my current practice is my self-reliance. And, while I enjoy the agency this brings, I am aware that I lack the financial security and legislative protection established education affords. For instance, any issues arising from my practice/practise, are my responsibility to address. Also, the uncertain and irregular nature of my work often generates insecurity.

Other features that indicate divergent practice include the excessive amount of networking I have to do to secure teaching opportunities and the level of socialising with learners within and outside lessons. There is also a difficulty defining Writing Well's course-end because learners stick around, using its name as a banner to continue engaging with it.

I sought to explore how other educators engaged in a similar practice perceive their identity in this setting so I could draw comparisons with my own. In my study, I detail how practice in community settings interconnects with established educational practice in schools, colleges, and universities.

I hoped my study might offer insights to educators who are considering teaching in their community. The research may be niche and narrow, but when I set up, I could not find this practical guidance. In 2017, the search engine enquiry (I used Google Chrome), 'how to set up a teaching practice in my own community' and other permutations returned nothing specific or helpful. Nor did it in 2020 when, using Chrome, Microsoft Edge and Firefox, I searched again.

Had I someone to advise me when starting up, they might have directed me to TAG, the Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work (http://www.tagpalycw.org/) or arvac. Arvac (https://arvac.org.uk/resources/) offer a community research toolkit with discussions on the process of community education.

However, in a general online search, these sites do not appear. To find them would require the guidance of someone who knew of them. When I accessed the TAG site in August 2020, it was waiting for an update, and I could not access its resources. In 2017 this would have been unhelpful. In 2017 with no job or financial security, I needed advice on setting up practice quickly. Also, at the time, I did not need a community research toolkit because I had no community practice to research.

It took a chance meeting with a community liaison from Manchester Libraries to kickstart my practice. She was visiting the Wythenshawe History Group to discuss funding for some equipment they sought. I asked her advice on suitable funders for a history-related educational project I wanted to run. She gave me a list of potential funders, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund. I applied through my social enterprise and received funding to run a community project researching and commemorating the community of Northenden during the First World War. The project launched my community practice and provided significant opportunities to network.

Regarding this study, although I did not apply theory prematurely, I always intended to seek literature that might explain or help me reflect on my lived teaching experience. To date, few studies have examined my educator role and the lived experience of educators in a similar position to mine. However, there is plenty of research on community practice which proved helpful, and I reference these in my Literature Review and Findings and Analysis chapters.

Notably, Alison Gilchrist's (2019) research helped me reflect on the networking aspects of my practice. Sara Ahmed's (2014) work offered insights on socialising as a pedagogical tool and the emotional attachments that develop between learners and tutors on my course. Sarah Banks's research (2018) offered insights on co-production and co-inquiry. The series of books *Connected Communities*, notably those by Jones and Perry (2019) and Campbell and Pahl (2018), which document community initiatives, provided additional insights on co-production and co-inquiry. All these texts resonated with my research and enabled me to make comparisons with my practice.

Biesta (2011) and Wenger (1999) provided useful insights on community learning and social learning. However, their insights concerned established practice and not

emergent ones. Many of their discussions on education and the community teacher role dealt in abstracts; for example, Biesta often frames his discussions on teaching in terms of democracy, equality, and pluralism. While this offered a useful political perspective on my practice, it did not reflect my lived teaching experience or help me reify it.

Also, I do not suggest altruism or a noble passion to teach the disadvantaged drove me to community education. It did not happen that way. I fell into community teaching, and my motivation was a need to earn. I knew little of community education or its history. My study was a perfect opportunity to start filling the gap in my knowledge. My emotional investment in community education grew after working with my learners and appreciating its importance to them and its potential to change their lives for the better. They inspired me, and my commitment grew.

Because I was unable to find literature that met my particular teaching circumstances, that is: starting my community teaching practice from scratch and delivering education in my community through a Community Interest Company; this might indicate emergent or divergent practice. I thought this merited further investigation.

### Delivering Education Through a Community Interest Company

Another potential indicator of emergent practice is how I deliver learning. In 2017 I set up Now Forever Heritage CIC to deliver education. Because sustained work is never guaranteed, and I lack the legal protection afforded a teacher at school, it was prudent to teach through a regulated body and take out professional indemnity insurance.

A community interest company sits under the umbrella of voluntary and charitable organisations (VCOs). To function, such organisations rely heavily on private or public grants and seek the means to generate funding too. For this reason, networking is vital to my practice.

My community interest companies, Now Forever Heritage and Together One, occupy the 'third sector' – the space between private for-profit enterprise and the public sector. Social enterprises take many forms and operate for diverse purposes. They include co-operatives, community businesses, credit unions, charities, and housing

associations. Some address particular social issues, such as the 'Big Issue' to support the homeless or ecological or social movements, like fair-trade or green enterprises (Roy et al., 2013). I network with many social enterprises to secure opportunities to teach, yet, despite 17,000 community interest companies on public record in 2018 (Regulator of Community Interest Companies:8), there is limited literature examining how they operate to deliver education in the community they are based.

Although, for tax purposes, my community interest companies are considered businesses, they have as their primary purpose a social mission. My companies do not enrich shareholders and owners (Department of Trade and Industry, 2002). For example, the profits my companies generate are considered *surpluses* and reinvested in the community. When I was choosing the type of company to form, the fact that other community interest companies were driving local projects influenced my choice. Also, funders would fund them because they are recognised as social enterprises, primarily established for ethical purposes (but see literature review).

Despite prima facie, their laudable purpose, social enterprises attract much criticism. Some writers argue they venture into areas that should not concern them, for example, the provision of services traditionally the province of the Government or Local Authorities.

In my practice, I find that community interest communities are ill-defined and misunderstood by many community operators, even by their founders. Being relatively recent organisations means their company identity remains a work in progress. Their opaque identity has often impeded my ability to teach in the community. I examine this in the Analysis and Discussion Chapters. This examination is relevant to this study because delivering education through a community interest company may indicate emergent and divergent practice.

The Interviewees

I already knew the participants and had observed the tutors teach. I provide a list of interview dates and subjects discussed in Appendix One.

Ruth

Ruth is a trained counsellor and teaches the wellbeing element of some of the courses I run. With fourteen years' experience in community and public sector work, Ruth wants to 'teach more community' but finds securing funding of any quantity and duration difficult. To supplement her teaching, Ruth works in a call centre on a zero-hour contract. Her employers give her 24 hours' notice that there is work and deduct toilet breaks from her pay. When I interviewed her, she was completing a part-time master's degree at the University of Derby and starting a community interest company that would offer guidance on menopause. Ruth was able to provide another perspective on my practice and allow me to compare the accounts of her substantial networking experience with my own.

Clare

Clare is an art tutor who works part-time at a sixth form. When I interviewed her, she had been teaching art classes for my community interest company for four months. Her learners were elderly residents at a block of apartments in Wythenshawe, and this was her first experience of teaching in the community. Clare was able to share her perceptions of her new role and discuss whether it differed from established teaching.

Miriam

Miriam holds asylum seeker status and attended my Writing Well course. In Iran, she was a teacher and was able to provide a learner and educator perspective on my teacher identity and practice. Additionally, because Miriam was also attending established adult education classes, she was able to compare my course with the established courses. Also, Miriam was the only interviewee who lived in Wythenshawe. Having moved there in December 2017, I thought Miriam might provide insights into our community I might miss through over-familiarity. For example, she noticed subtle differences between areas like Northenden and the rest of the suburb and commented

on the anti-social behaviour she had witnessed. She valued Writing Well because it gave her opportunities to socialise and learn more about her adopted country. I found her insights helpful when considering socialising as a pedagogical tool in the context of divergent practice.

### Chapter One Summary

In my study on emergence, I look to aspects of my teaching, which I consider divergent enough from established education to indicate an emergent practice. These divergences are detailed in subsequent chapters and include these features:

- The excessive networking involved to secure teaching opportunities
- A community interest company (CIC) used to deliver education
- Socialising and co-production as a pedagogical tool
- Different values ascribed to learner and course success
- The multifaceted nature of the course and corresponding tutor identity – what I refer to as shapeshifting
- The tutor's self-reliance and corresponding insecurity and uncertainty.

In the next chapter, I draw on several bodies of literature to position my research in a historical, social, and political context.

# CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

Here I discuss the reading I undertook. Initially, I despaired at my failure to make connections between the data I collated and the reading I was undertaking (see Chapter Three). However, 2016-2018 was a productive period of data gathering. Contextualising my study and teaching practice involved researching Wythenshawe's demographic, its history and how the area is represented. This reading informed the Welcome to Wythenshawe section of the Introduction. I researched Community Interest Companies and the debate concerning their suitability to 'deliver' education in communities. These readings informed Part One of this Chapter. Part Two examines where my teaching practice and this study is located: the contested spaces in Adult Education and lifelong learning. When recurrent themes eventually emerged through a process of cyclical reflective analysis (see Chapter Three), I began to draw upon ideas and theories that resonated with these themes and my lived teacher experience. I refer to these ideas and theories in Parts Three and Four. All four parts contextualise my practice.

**Part One** focuses on how a community interest company can be a vehicle to drive educative community initiatives within the contested space of Adult Education and lifelong learning (see Part 2, page 33). The use of such companies may indicate emergent practice. I also highlight how a community interest company's purpose is often misperceived and examine why they attract criticism. This examination is necessary because my company forms part of my teacher identity, and other community organisations often define my educator role in relation to it.

**Part Two** concerns lifelong learning and the adult learners I teach. There I discuss current trends and themes in lifelong learning to provide context to my practice. For details on my learners, please see Introduction.

In **Part Three,** I discuss three recurrent themes which emerged from the analysis and re-analysis of my data. These three characteristics may indicate new practice and are:

- Shapeshifting and my educator identity

- Stickiness and course legacy
- Boundaries and networking

In **Part Four**, I explain how drawing on Communities of Practice Theory (Wenger, 1998) led me to refine my examination of the three characteristics I examined in Part Three. The theory helped me examine my tutor identity and trajectory into emergent practice. It led me to investigate who or what in my practice carries out the function of an old-timer, and ascribes tutors the competence to teach in their community.

In examining these three characteristics, I also draw upon Alison Gilchrist's (2019) studies on networking and Sara Ahmed's (2014) observations of emotional attachment. The work of Wenger, Gilchrist and Ahmed are examined in greater detail in the Analysis of Findings Chapter.

**Part One: Delivering Education Through a Community Interest Company**

In 2017 I set up a type of social enterprise called a community interest company to deliver education in my community. Although I write 'my community interest company', it is not 'mine' because a) in law, it is an independent legal entity, b) it is governed by a board of directors. I sometimes use 'our' to acknowledge its provenance.

Although part of New Labour's economic and social policy of 2002, they rose to prominence during the financial crisis of 2008. Amid public spending cuts, community interest companies and other social enterprises became central to the Coalition Government's support of the Big Society by providing services local authorities could no longer provide.

Their role divides opinion. Spear (2009) views social enterprises as the business-like part of the third sector, and Roy et al. (2013) call them an alternative mechanism to established state-funded services. However, others argue they encroach on and colonise existing public services and are a 'Trojan horse for privatisation' (Bull and Ridley-Duff, 2018:3 ), citing (Murdock, 2007). Spear et al. (2009) provide an example of this privatisation: Leisure Trusts, a social enterprise that runs former local authority sports centres. Dean (2013) is concerned that volunteers might replace existing jobs vital to low-paid unskilled workers.

This debate was pertinent to my research because, in Wythenshawe, many people undertake low skilled, low paid jobs. Dean's comment aligned with my observation of a prevailing mindset by some organisations in my area that community 'work' should be undertaken by volunteers (including me) without payment (see Discussion chapter).

Pearce (2006) highlights how balancing competing values is difficult. She argues that social enterprises need to integrate both social and business goals in their planning. However, Spear (2009) remarks that planning may raise difficult trade-offs between goals: too high an emphasis on social goals may neglect critical financial aspects and threaten the enterprise's survival (Spear, 2009:258). These writers made me aware of the relatively little remuneration tutors are willing to take so that educational initiatives can run in the community, often prioritising broader social values over personal gain.

Concerning community practice, other writers recognise a social enterprise's ability to deliver local work and local thinking (Roy et al., 2013) and undertake cooperative and responsible social entrepreneurship (Bull and Duff, 2018:16). Walsham et al. (2007) recognise their value as 'pathfinders' that trial and trail initiatives and then share the outcomes across the sector. Concerning community interest companies, Ashton (2007) is positive and believes they are 'the best way for communities to rediscover their heritage of self-sufficiency' (p. 28), while Chew acknowledges their strength in 'unifying commercial opportunities and social purpose' (Chew, 2010:213). Concerning community cohesion, Putnam (1998) identifies their ability to generate social capital - the networks of civil society that support cooperative action among citizens and their institutions.

I found Walsham's pathfinder's analogy useful when considering my company's potential to deliver educational initiatives that develop into a sustained practice and Ashton's comments helped me consider my teacher agency. Putnam's comments made me consider if my course created bridging social capital, and I considered his insights alongside Wenger's (1998) work on learning as a social practice. Socialising is a prominent feature of my practice, and Wenger's later work (2010) provided a way to view my company as a social structure that enabled learners and tutors to participate in dynamic meaning-making. Socialising to facilitate meaning-making and co-produce knowledge is examined in the Findings and Analysis Chapters.

**Uncertain Purpose**

Although the Government established community interest companies eighteen years ago, the papers and reports I read suggest that their purpose remains ill-defined. Outwardly, there appears a high demand to start them. The Community Interest Companies Annual Report, 2017-2018, notes their rising popularity with 4,495 applications for incorporation with 36% of CICs under three years old (2017-2018:7). Yet in 2017/18, 1,631 were dissolved, representing 11% on the public register. These had never traded or filed documents. This high dissolution rate led me to consider whether the people establishing them are uncertain of these companies' core purpose. Concerning my teacher identity and networking, these figures led me to consider how other organisations may perceive my companies and my role. I often find community organisations do not understand the purpose of my social enterprise or my role running it (see Discussion Chapter).

Concerning my teacher identity, the report led me to consider the limitations of my perceived educator agency within the context of financial regulation. To illustrate, my company is regulated and accountable like any other company: it must file accounts and pay corporation tax. Nor can I convert it to a purely commercial enterprise. Moreover, my company contains an 'asset lock', and should it cease operating, I must transfer its assets to a similar social enterprise of the directors' choosing. Also, the report made me aware that a company director is one more aspect of my educator identity.

The report provided an example of a community interest company successfully working within education, and this helped me draw comparisons with my practice. 'Enabling Enterprise' delivers teamwork and practical communication skills to students. Eighty-six thousand have accessed the programmes it provides to schools. By comparison, I do not offer education in established settings, and our learners are adults. The report reconfirmed my findings that there was little research on emergent small-scale community interest companies delivering education to their communities in which their founder lives.

Some writers raise concerns relating wholly to community interest companies. One concerns their purpose and independence. Chew (2010), assessing community interest companies as part of a business strategy, saw their advantages to charities who were able to set them up as a wholly-owned subsidiary. The community interest company gift-aided its profits 'back to the parent charity for favourable tax benefits' (2010:613). Chew predicted conflicts of interests arising between the parent and its community interest company because the latter was established to be self-sufficient and achieve 'sustainability, entrepreneurship and independence' (p. 614). Its profits were intended for its use and not for its parent company. She notes the tensions inherent in marrying social and commercial goals in the pursuit of a charitable mission because corporate culture may be at odds with social and community values. This research suggests that community interest companies can be exploited and used cynically to generate additional income for charities. It also challenged my preconceived notion that community interest companies were considered ethical ventures (see Introduction). I perceived Chew's findings somewhat tarnished their reputation.

Chew's research had limited data sets to examine and, being conducted only five years after community interest companies were established, was unable to demonstrate these potential harms through longitudinal analysis. However, the study marks the potential for conflicts of interest to arise in the drive for social improvement while seeking to maximise profits to achieve these goals. Chew's study helped me reflect on my motivations for establishing my company. In turn, it helped me formulate interview questions on what motivates tutors to teach in the community and whether we shared similar values. It also led me to appraise my course's role in the community and ask whether it infringed any existing practice, for example, work done by the Adult Education Service.

### Summary of Part One

My review suggests that community interest companies lack a clear identity and are often misunderstood by their founders and by others. This may be because, being

neither a charity nor a commercial business, their overriding purpose appears unclear and contradictory. Whether altruism or profit should drive their initiatives divides opinion. They can be catalysts for community-autonomy and self-sufficiently but may also harm the local economy by supplanting low-paid, unskilled jobs in the communities they seek to serve.

**Part Two: Adult Education and Lifelong Learning**

My lived experience of teaching is located in adult education and lifelong learning and involves delivering lessons mainly to older learners, many with an underlying mental health condition. By 'older learner', I use the World Health Organisation's definition, accepted by the Government Office for Science - people 50 years and over. Between 2017 and 2020, from 118 attendees on the Writing Well course, 80% of attendees were 50+ years of age, and 15% over 70+. As part of my literature selection, I, therefore, consulted literature that provided a background to aspects of lifelong learning which involved older learners. This helped me determine whether aspects of my work with older learners was different enough from established practice to be considered new or divergent. I consulted reports that provided a background to lifelong learning and could provide recent figures on the number of older learners in established education, full-time or part-time. I also sought writers who would offer political and social insights on the nature of lifelong learning and its importance to individuals and society generally.

My study is located within the field of Adult Education defined in UNESCO's *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (2016) as 'Education specifically targeting… adults… to improve their technical or professional qualifications… develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education… acquire knowledge, skills and competences… or refresh or update their knowledge (p. 7). However, there is no universally accepted definition, and while distinct, adult education is often synonymous with lifelong learning (see later).

Regarding its allocation and financing, Adult Education is a contested space. By contested space, I mean it is a problematic area of education that generates passionate debate and where a failure to find solutions will adversely affect significant numbers of older adult learners. The contested nature of adult education requires us to consider

fundamental issues, some ethical: privileges and responsibilities, some legal - rights and duties. For instance, it asks us to consider who should be the beneficiaries of adult education and whether, when allocating resources, some socio-economic groups should be favoured over others. It asks who should fund Adult Education: is it the responsibility of the Government, employers, or the individual.

These questions are pertinent at a time of continuing financial austerity and prevailing uncertainty. Austerity encourages a rethink in the provision of, for this study, community adult education and consider innovative solutions (see page 176). The rethink asks who is best suited to provide education in a community - social enterprises embedded in its fabric, the local college or university or an amalgam of all. Should such provision be coordinated and, if so, by whom? Who gets to set the adult education agenda, and what outcomes signify success? Should success be judged (and funding allocated) on economic, social, or self-developmental outcomes, and should economic outcomes be privileged above the others (see below)? There are no neat solutions.

On the wider canvas of lifelong learning, financing, allocation, and agenda-setting are similarly contested; for instance, lifelong learning provision is not reaching all sections of society, including older learners, and where provision is offered, it often does not accommodate the learner's lifestyle and needs (see below). Although lifelong learning is often conflated with Adult Education, there are contested areas specific to it and highlighted in Chernoff and Hurtig's (2019) study (see page 38).

In the remaining part of this section on Adult Education, I provide background and context. In turn, in the section that follows on page 37, I discuss issues affecting lifelong learning.

Relevant to my study is the Centenary Commission's (2019) recognition of a new paradigm of adult education: 'we need to learn from new forms of adult education emerging today, often outside formal institutions.' (p. 30). One strand of my study explores how new forms (my practice) emerge and operate within this new paradigm of community adult education and contested space.

The Centenary Commission Report on Adult Education (Holford, 2019) examines its development and contested space. Part report, part campaign, it references the

influential 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction Report that advanced the visionary principles that adult education was a 'permanent national necessity' and should be 'universal and lifelong'. The 2019 report argues these aspirations fall short. For instance, adult education's purpose is contested. Despite the 1919 Report's assertion that the demand for adult education originates in peoples' desire for adequate opportunities for self-expression and the cultivation of personal interests, notions of 'learning for learning's sake' have been demoted and economic outcomes prioritised (Biesta, 2012).

While acknowledging that there was never a golden age of provision, the 2019 report argues that the three decades following the end of the Second World War saw its growth: dedicated university departments, increased local authority initiatives, the expansion of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), investment in Adult Education Centres and more community and volunteer group involvement. However, following the 2008-9 financial crisis and global recession, funding and infrastructure have been 'cut to the bone' (2019: 7). From 2008, successive Governments cut funding, reprioritised outcomes (economic skills-based learning taking precedence), reallocated resources to learners under 25 years of age and marginalised older learners (see later). There is now an imbalance in resourcing, target setting, and reduced diversity in the courses adults can access so that many do not reflect the context of adult learners' lives and needs. The inquiry into *Adult Skills and Lifelong Learning* (ASALL) 2020 concludes, 'inadequate access to lifelong learning is one of the great social injustices of our time' (accessed online) with participation in adult education at its lowest level in 23 years and funding between 2008–9 and 2018–19 reduced 45%. It found 49% of adults from the lowest socioeconomic group had received no training since leaving school and predicted a shortfall of four million highly skilled workers by 2024.

The demise of NIACE (National Institute of Continuing and Adult Education) illustrates this change. A membership organisation and advocate for the adult and community learning sector, NIACE sought to influence Government policy and increase opportunities for adults to engage in learning. It advanced creative thinking and influential initiatives, including an annual Adult Learners' Week (Field, 2015). It initiated training and research, established independent inquiries, and shared its findings in publications like *Learning Through Life* (2009). By 2011, increasingly dependent on

public contracts through shrinking funding, NIACE recalibrated its relationship from a critical friend of the Government to a de facto partner organisation, promoting skills, training, and education for younger adults. Austerity led NIACE to shed staff, cease publishing and in 2016 merge with the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI) to form the Learning and Work Institute. Bowl (2019) comments that the merger signalled the move away from membership-driven campaigning and advocacy for adult education toward narrow, government-sponsored learning for work agenda. Field (2015) is concerned the loss of a coordinating organisation, lobbying, and advocating at a national level, engaging with providers, and supporting teachers and trainers, will impair long-term strategy development at a critical time of change, innovation and development, which includes adult apprenticeships, personal learning accounts and MOOCs (see later).

Within the Continuing Education movement, financial retrenchment led universities, colleges, local Government, and the WEA to reduce adult education provision (see later). The Centenary Commission reports that between 2009/10 – 2017/18, the number of part-time entrants into higher education fell by 49%, with a 32% decline in participation in community learning between 2008–9 and 2018–19 (2019:7). Funding cuts fall at a time of rising need driven by increased life expectancy, later retirement, changing work practice, the necessity to retrain, and significant numbers of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills. Despite nine million working-age adults in England having low literacy or numeracy skills, or both, and six million adults unqualified to level 2 (equivalent to GCSE level), those seeking support receive little (ASALL, 2020). Present provision is uncoordinated, piecemeal and varies regionally. Emblematic of the decline in coordinated provision is the Skills for Life programme, a national strategy to improve adult literacy and numeracy. Between 2001 and 2014, 14 million participated, and 8 million qualifications were achieved (2019:17). However, reduced and reallocated funding led to its decline. In seeking quick-fix, cheaper solutions, the Government gradually shifted funding from those with the fewest skills to those with the shortest journey to qualification - the significant number of adults who could achieve a Level 2 qualification (GCSE). Consequently, adults with pronounced learning needs that required more time and funding to redress were marginalised. Likewise with social

prescription initiatives, despite extensive research recognising adult learning's benefits for health and wellbeing, including life expectancy disease prevention (UNESCO, 2016) and in countering loneliness and isolation, when resources are allocated, older adults (often those who would benefit most) often lose out to other groups (see later).

And, despite the symbiotic relationship between formal and informal learning with libraries, art galleries, and museums complementing adult education provision, closures and funding cuts threaten to reduce the community's public learning spaces further. Adult education is vital for civic society, community cohesion and democracy to flourish, yet dwindling numbers of adult learners and limited public space threaten this (see later).

### Defining Lifelong Learning

Although distinct, the concept of lifelong learning is often conflated with Adult Education. Biesta considers lifelong learning 'an elusive concept' (2011:62), and Aspin and Chapman (2001) argue that searching for a definition is a 'vain quest' (2001:4). A Foresight report, *Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning* (The Government Office for Science, 2018), emphasises its broad nature, which 'encompasses anything from everyday activities, such as reading a newspaper, to... studying for a degree' (2018: 4).

To address the term's 'slipperiness' (Biesta, 2006:5), some writers examine lifelong learning's *purpose* rather than what it is. Aspin and Chapman (2001) adopt a pragmatic approach and examine its functions and features. Refining earlier research by Bagnall (1990), they suggest lifelong learning has three general purposes:

- lifelong learning for economic progress and development
- lifelong learning for personal development and fulfilment
- lifelong learning for social inclusiveness and democratic understanding and activity (Aspin and Chapman, 2001:39 – 40).

Biesta (2006), critiquing Aspin and Chapman's research, stresses the 'dynamic interplay' between these three purposes and proposes a 'triangle of lifelong learning' (Biesta, 2006:5). He terms these 'economic' 'personal' and 'democratic'. Many writers are concerned that these purposes receive unequal resourcing, and economic purpose

receives preference (Jephcote, 2017), (Biesta, 2012). Biesta terms economic prioritisation as 'learning for earning' (2005:172) and, in his later work, argues governments demote equally worthy attributes, including confidence-building and inclusion (Biesta, 2012), (Cook and Smith, 2004).

**Lifelong Learning is a Contested Space**

(Koyama et al., 2019), in their ethnographic studies of teaching in the USA, frame lifelong learning as a contested space. Although it shares similar contested issues with Adult Education, for instance, financing and resource allocation (see page 34), there are disputed areas specific to it. For instance, in their study, Chernoff and Hurtig (2019) note that lifelong learning is a cultural activity that occurs across multiple terrains, not all of which being normatively recognised as educative spaces. Affirming the validity of these spaces as sites of educative practice is the contested element. Rowland (2020) states 'contested spaces' refers to the social, political and educational agendas that often go 'unexamined in educative spaces and… perpetuate a certain type of education' (p. 1).

Chernoff and Hurtig's 2019 study helped me reflect on whether my practice delivers learning outside normatively recognised space. Rowland's (2020) observation prompted me to re-examine my data and consider the agendas we assume and do not question until they become orthodoxies of practice. Koyama et al.'s (2019) study and Rowland's (2020) insights coupled with Clare Hemmings's (2012) affective dissonance approach (see Methodology Chapter) helped me examine aspects of my practice that challenged general assumptions about lifelong learning. This included the assumption that courses have a specific end-date and the tutor-learner relationship generally ends on course completion. Writing Well challenges this assumption (see Findings Chapter). A consideration of contested space helped me examine new practice and consider how we define and make space for emergent models of lifelong learning in a twenty-first-century landscape.

In addition to the writers cited in the last paragraph, Biesta (2012) and Jephcote's (2017) discussion of lifelong learning's purposes provided a solid foundation for considering the purpose of my teaching. Until 2017 I had no teaching relationship with

lifelong learning apart from my own - this doctorate. The writers' observations resonated with aspects of the Writing Well course. Learners generally attend it for personal development, including confidence-building and to address loneliness through socialising (see Discussion Chapter). The review made me consider what teaching outcomes other community teachers might prioritise in their teaching and what outcomes our learners seek. This reflection helped me formulate interview questions.

Here I provide context to my study by examining the lifelong learning agenda and current issues.

**Lifelong Learning and Under-Represented Older Learners**

Several recent studies highlight the vital role lifelong learning will play in the next 30 years. The Foresight report, *Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning* (The Government Office for Science, 2018), provided an extensive literature review concerning lifelong learning. It also provided projections of current trends up to 2050.

The report concludes that those in older age groups are less likely to take part in learning than those in younger age groups. It finds that despite overwhelming evidence that engagement in education is good for health and wellbeing, older people are under-represented (2018:27). The review highlighted a range of barriers preventing older-learner participation, such as cost, time constraints and negative stereotyping.

Likewise, Scales and Kelly (2012) argue it is vital that older people develop the habit of lifelong learning because stimulating the brain throughout life may ward off such conditions as Alzheimer's. Another extensive survey by Foresight, *Future of an Ageing Population* (The Government Office for Science, 2019), flags the potential health benefits of education for older learners. The report offers pragmatic reasons why governments should increase expenditure on lifelong learning. By equating economic wealth with community health, the report suggests active, healthy, and well-informed older adults are less likely to place demands on family and community resources and services (p. 7). Such preventative health care includes educating and 'nudging' people to use wellbeing techniques. Encouraging 'good' habits, including healthy diet, is believed to save the public purse billions: 'as the population ages, people can remain healthy and productive′ Foresight (The Government Office for Science, 2019:4).

However, cuts to lifelong learning provision make this aspiration hard to achieve (see below). This discussion on preventative health and the social prescription was useful for my research because Writing Well is funded by the NHS. This well-resourced and extensive series of recent studies helped me reflect on the purpose of my practice and led to further research.

**Economic Factors Influencing Lifelong Learning**

Many studies detail how globalisation and a need to compete internationally is driving the lifelong learning agenda and the Government's plan to upskill the workforce. Before the 2008-2009 financial crisis, global economic change had already caused traditional jobs in manufacturing to disappear or migrate abroad. As knowledge-based industries emerged, services and products-related work (usually unskilled or low-paid) replaced traditional jobs. Stanton (2017) argues that post-Brexit, Britain's workforce needs to compete effectively with its European neighbours, but there is a skills gap and a workforce not 'fit for purpose' (Conference Paper, Universities UK, 2017:online). Powell (2015) predicts that skills gap shortages will cost the UK £10bn per year. Biesta (2011) notes how changing job roles impacts education. He states people now change jobs more often and need "more frequent renewal of knowledge and skills" (p. 13), yet cuts to lifelong learning education budgets hamper this (Jephcote, 2017) - see below. These comments resonated with my study, as many of my learners or their families are in precarious employment. Ruth, a tutor I interviewed, also works zero-hour contracts (see Discussion Chapter).

Yet, despite the need for investment, since 2009, funding in adult education has fallen by 47% (The Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2019). The Social Mobility Commission (2019) reported that governments and employers had reduced investment in adult skills with resulting low levels of social mobility (p. 7). Although the Commission's report uses 2017 data sets and focuses on adult learners 25-64, it found the Government provided only 7% of funding for adult skills, with employers and students funding the shortfall. The report concluded that the need for learners to self-fund disadvantaged those from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds.

The present Commons Education Select Committee inquiry into adult learning and lifelong learning highlighted the fall in individuals undertaking community learning from around 650,000 in 2011/12 to around 500,000 in 2017/18. Its Chair voiced concerns that 'Those who might benefit most from adult learning and training – low-skilled people in low-income work or the unemployed – are by far the least likely to be doing it.' (Camden, 2019:online).

Interestingly one of the Select Committee's written submissions is 'To what extent is the range, balance and quality of formal and informal adult skills and lifelong learning education (ASALL) adequate?' As my practice delivers informal adult skills, the present discussion helped me assess where my practice sits in the national debate.

Concerning established education, Jephcote (2017) describes how funding cuts have driven change in Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). He states that since 2010 the budgets of established education providers have fallen; for example, the FE budget fell by 14% in real terms (p. 6). These cuts created fierce competition between HE and FE, traditional partners in the provision of lifelong learning. A 'turf war' developed between the sectors in the delivery of undergraduate provision with FE recruiting students directly, rather than through franchised provision from universities. Older learners appear to be collateral damage from the cuts, with both sectors experiencing a decline in their numbers. In HE, the number of part-time older undergraduate students has fallen by 58% since 2010 (Universities UK, 2016), with mature learners favouring Further Education over Higher Education (HESA UK, 2016).

Further Education, a key provider of adult education, was affected most, with reduced retraining courses, including computing and adult GCSE classes. Foresight (2018) argues that older people are the losers of these re-allocated resources and funding cuts. Some education experts demand the Government overturn its 2011 austerity measures and invest more in community-based education to improve the 'lives, wellbeing and productivity… for those one in five adults with poor basic skills' (Pember, 2019:online).

Stanton (2017) highlights the social importance of lifelong learning in providing social mobility and community cohesion. She states universities are firmly positioned to drive

this agenda and work within the communities near universities. Campbell (2018), discussing co-production as a methodology, argues that universities must collaborate meaningfully with communities and, while not a new concept, it may become a re-emerging trend and Banks and Hart (2018) provide examples of co-production used as an integral element in community development. However, Stanton (2017) is not explicit whether universities would target older learners in the community. Also, Stanton's assertion that universities are firmly positioned to deliver this agenda invites scrutiny, mainly if, by her admission, they are viewed elitist and not community facing.

I found this discussion significant as the older learners I teach arguably would not feature in FE or HE recruitment or any agenda to upskill. They are likelier to access learning through health initiatives funded by the NHS and community support networks. These studies prompted me to consider whether I teach learners who would not otherwise access education, and this led me to re-examine the data.

These cuts come at a time when an increasing number of older people will need to rethink retirement, upskill and reskill. Foresight (2018) predicts that by 2030, the number of people in England aged 60 and over will increase by 50%, and the number aged 85 and over will double (p 6). Economically, this means older people will need to return to work or extend their working lives because of shortfalls between their pensions and the cost of living.

Yet financial support is not the only barrier to older-learner participation. Pollard et al. (2008) found that 84% of older people said they were not interested or unlikely to take an HE course. Aldridge and Tuckett (2010) suggest an adult's socio-economic position and the extent and type of their previous education are key predictors of whether individuals will participate in learning later in their lives.

I found these studies significant as all came on the cusp of the austerity measures in education, and one would suppose that these cuts caused higher demotivation among older learners. Later studies support this. For example, Findsen and Formosa (2012) found that those from higher social classes are much more likely to engage in formal and non-formal/informal learning. Time pressure, particularly for those with caring responsibilities, has been identified as a significant constraint on lifelong learning

(McNair, 2012). Interwoven with motivation is that those with low skills (usually low-income earners) often lack confidence and require support to engage in learning (Weedon and Tett, 2013). These insights were relevant to my research as many of my learners are on low-income, retired, on small pensions or lack confidence (please see Introduction Chapter).

Institutional barriers can also discourage people from participating in learning. These barriers include inflexible course schedules, campus accessibility, complex enrolment procedures, and lack of information about programmes for older learners (Hyde and Phillipson, 2015).

Biesta (2006) champions a learner-centred approach. He argues that learners will be motivated to learn throughout life if they hold an investment in that learning. This investment includes persuading people that there is benefit in investing their time and providing incentives to learn. Rothes et al. (2017) suggest that adult learners who feel they have some choice in their studies were better motivated than those who did not. Their study recommends a learning environment where learners have choices – more educational paths and options. Also, that government and employers recognise learners' pre-existing experiences and knowledge as a resource capable of sharing.

As a provider of lifelong learning, I found the Foresight (2018) study with its long-term predictions and the debate on provision relevant when considering whether my courses afforded older learners an alternative route back to education. Rothes et al.'s (2017) insights on learner motivation led me to re-examine my interviews for answers to why learners access my courses. If the course offered something that motivated them to return to learning more than established courses did, it could indicate new practice.

My practice involves face-to-face adult community education. As part of my upskilling, I had undertaken short MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). MOOCs offer a broad range of courses, including creative writing, wellbeing, and specific subjects like children's literature. Because most of these courses are free, I had suggested my learners might want to access these as a means of supplementing their lessons or continuing their studies when the course ended. There was no take-up. I thought this curious.

I considered why, given the substantial online resources available, my learners did not use these and preferred to socialise as a means to continue their educational development (see the Findings chapter). As socialising was a theme that emerged from my study, I considered what it offered that self-directed study did not, particularly as these courses are free and can be accessed on a smartphone which most of my learners possess. To place online learning in context, I selected several studies of learner-study trends, within the last eight years, including self-directed online study. I refer to these below.

Yuan and Powell (2013), in their study of MOOCs and their implications for new course provision in higher education, highlight the possibilities offered by MOOCs to target learners who cannot afford traditional educational provision. Most of my learners fit this category. The researchers concluded that learners would find new technology liberating.

Yet other writers, drawing attention to high drop-out rates, were less certain. Regarding my learners' indifference to this form of learning, Cho and Heron's (2015) study found self-regulated distance learning incurs high dropout rates. Early dropout rates are also high for MOOCs: up to 80% more frequent than face-to-face teaching (Grau-Valldosera et al., 2019).

Concerning MOOCs, Diver and Martinez (2015) suggest high dropout rates reflect trial and error by the learner since the cost of signing up is meagre. They found other factors influencing adult dropout include work and family obligations. A courses' informality is an attraction but a reason for drop-out because some institutions have lax or non-existent completion deadlines, allowing students to start and stop their studies (Rau-Valldosera et al., 2019).

These studies suggest that self-directed online study brings challenges regarding learner motivation and course completion. Online courses offer flexibility for learners based on their lifestyles and commitments, but the high dropout rates suggest people prefer 'actual' over virtual contact with tutors and peers. High dropout levels may indicate that learners seek a social dimension (interaction) in their studies, and a lack of such opportunity may demotivate older learners. While some learners may prefer

self-study at one's own pace or in cyber-communities, the studies suggest many learners prefer traditional settings.

However, Gilchrist (2018) highlights the benefits of virtual communities. She argues that vulnerable and marginalised people often benefit from them and notes their advantages to the disabled. 'Traditional' offline community, she observes, is not without tension or conflict. Although Gilchrist's observation is general, it reminded me that virtual and actual engagement has benefits and drawbacks.

All of the studies on MOOCs and online study I refer to above made no distinction between older and younger learner drop-out rates and focused on adults below 50. However, their highlighting of facetime, structure and routine as important components of learner preference aided my research when considering what else my course offers learners apart from opportunities to learn. These studies helped me consider social learning as a significant learning tool in my practice. I was able to make connections with these studies and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) research on social learning. This led me to return to my data and re-consider the social aspect of my course. In turn, I provided opportunities in my interviews for respondents to discuss the social aspect of their teaching and learning.

**Tutors as Lifelong Learners**

Although much of the literature I reviewed provides a theoretical and ideological framing of lifelong learner identity, I found little research on the necessity for a practitioner in my teaching situation to be a lifelong learner. Part of my lifelong learning involves upskilling and acquiring the necessary tools to deliver teaching in a new practice. Regarding my need to acquire new knowledge and skills, I found useful Wenger's (1999) insights on artefacts and legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). It led me to identify a gap in the research I could explore, this being who or what constitutes 'old-timer' in a new practice. I examine this in my Analysis Chapter and my Discussion Chapter.

### Summary of Part Two

My review indicates that adult education and lifelong learning are contested spaces regarding allocation and financing. What constitutes lifelong learning in terms of teaching practice and venue is also contested, including who gets to set its agenda. Educational provision of lifelong learning is not reaching all sections of society, including older learners. It seems the reasons driving adults back to learning are varied, with many returning through necessity than through choice. Also, while technology offers innovative ways to study, there are high drop-out rates which suggest learners prefer 'traditional' face-to-face study. Further and Higher Education institutions are starting to engage and re-engage with the communities in their vicinity, but whether older adults will benefit is uncertain. Much will depend on whether they are a demographic targeted for support and funding.

### Part Three: Recurrent Characteristics of my Practice

Part Three details three recurrent characteristics of my practice that emerged from the social hermeneutic analysis of data sources (see Chapter Three), these being:

- Shapeshifting
- Boundary spanning and networking
- Socialising (stickiness) and course legacy

### Shapeshifting

Shapeshifting is ingrained in my practice. By shapeshifting, I mean the many identities I assume to carry out my educator practice. All are components of my teacher identity.

Shapeshifting involves the need to quickly acquire a raft of skills above and beyond those taught on INSET days. In a sense, the performance of these skills forms part of my practitioner identity: me, the networker, the bid-writer, the manager, the tutor, the teacher, the volunteer, the entrepreneur, the first aider. These skills are necessary to build an educational practice from scratch. While established settings typically have dedicated departments staffed by specialists performing these roles, I am a team of one.

### Boundary Spanning and Networking

To secure teaching opportunities, I have to operate across various interconnecting networks, formal and informal. In turn, I shapeshift to coordinate with and accommodate the purpose of each. Networking affords me opportunities to teach, and the networking identities I assume form a component of my educator identity.

Networking and conducting pro bono civic work takes up a substantial amount of my time. Networking and actively engaging with my community include attending 'What's on South' meetings hosted by NHS health professionals and BW3 events for local businesses. Civic engagement includes volunteering to help at events like the Wythenshawe Games, litter-picking activities and chairing Civic Society meetings. Pro bono work includes editing, printing, and delivering the Age Friendly Northenden newsletter, and my social enterprise underwrites its printing costs.

To navigate these networks, I assume different roles and personas, what I term 'shapeshifting' (see above). In the morning, I might be a volunteer member of the Wythenshawe History Group welcoming a party of school children who are visiting the library to research local history; a tutor in the afternoon and the evening, a guest speaker delivering a presentation on the origins of modern Wythenshawe. Shapeshifting involves spanning boundaries and engaging with different networks and their particular hierarchy, agenda, and power dynamic. Shapeshifting is acquiring the necessary passports that afford entry to networks and maintaining these connections. It is a phenomenon better described than defined.

### A Description of a Typical Networking Day

Below, I describe a typical day plucked from my Google Calendar for December 2019. I provide this to demonstrate how I spend and allocate my time and the typical work I undertake to facilitate opportunities to deliver education.

December 2019. 6.15 am - 8 am: Project planning and admin. After the school run, I'm home at 9.15 am to prepare for meetings. 10.30 am – 11.30 am: Meeting with one of the social enterprise's directors (an artist) and the activities officer of a residential home to discuss delivering art classes, then drop by the Buzz Manchester Christmas Wellbeing party 11.45 am – 12.45 pm. Here I network with health

professionals and with potential service users. I distribute flyers for the community cinema and Writing Well; I swap contact details with the organisers of Grand Day Out, an initiative run in Wythenshawe which many older people attend – their demographic a target audience for our activities. By 1.30 pm, I am in Harpurhey, a co-tutor, delivering Writing Well; by 5.15 pm, once home, I check the latest monitoring and assessment forms collected at Writing Well. These inform our planning and will provide feedback to our NHS funders. Then family time until 6.45 pm when I prepare for a meeting of Northenden Civic Society in the local church rooms (7.30 pm). I expect a high attendance because leading the agenda is the future of The Tatton Arms, a derelict pub developers want to convert into apartments – the Council refused planning permission because the planners want to build on the greenbelt. In the community, the building's future is an emotive issue; the architect and developer are attending to discuss their revised plans. I expect friction; there is. After the meeting ends and the dust settles, at 9 pm, I stay to network with the local councillors and officers of other community groups. Returning home around 10 pm, I check my email for a reply from a potential funder for wellbeing walks. No email. By the end of the day, I have worn many personas and crossed and crisscrossed several boundaries.

There is variation in my working day, and much of my work links directly to my practice, for example, designing schemes of work, lesson planning, creating teaching resources and teaching. There is no boundary between weekdays and weekends – all are working days. A palimpsest of the daily transactions, of selves separate from my practice: husband, father, friend, doctoral student provide a further layering of identities. The shapeshifting I refer to is specific to my practice – the selves I need to be to teach. There are days spent working from home, with little human contact, feeling isolated from the world, and networking may, therefore, address my emotional need for company – to connect. In the description of my work and workday, there is no intention to virtue signal. Everyone has their busy; this is mine.

I also present the schedule because:

1. A large amount of unpaid civic work and networking necessary to generate educative practice in community settings may indicate emergent practice.

2. Directly or indirectly, every activity I listed above have the potential to create teaching opportunities. Community engagement is an investment in my teaching practice because it can generate educational opportunities.

Regarding 2., for example, volunteering at library events and chairing the history group that use their facilities, led to Writing Well securing library classrooms free of charge. Through networking, a local estate agent funded an art competition the social enterprise developed called 'Village by the River'. The competition involved re-imagining Northenden and promoting its heritage and geographic features, notably its river. The idea for the competition grew from an Institute of Place Management report (June, 2018) *Vital and Viable Northenden,* which recommended that to increase footfall, Northenden should 'capitalise more on its greenspace and riverside location' (p. 29) and consider 'rebranding' itself. I aimed the competition at art students attending Manchester City College, Northenden Campus, in their final year of a BA Degree, a course accredited by Manchester Metropolitan University. In their brief, entrants could represent the village in their preferred medium, and the competition complemented a course unit that required the students to design an artefact with commercial potential. The winners would receive prize money, and my social enterprise would promote their budding art careers. To help their research, I delivered a presentation on the area's history and took the students on a guided tour of Northenden.

The panel of judges included the estate agent, a community development officer, a Northenden councillor, and a director of my social enterprise, herself an artist. The winner's tutor later informed me that the competition helped the student gain high marks in the course unit and contributed to an overall First in her degree. The competition was educative, I received no pay, but the initiative forged links with the college; generated social capital; built strong bonds; raised my profile and facilitated funding for my other projects. Also, the competition winner now volunteers for my social enterprise and uses our social media to promote our work. In turn, the social enterprise commissions her work. She designed a new logo for Together-One and logos for other projects. See Figure 2.

Figure 4. Logo.

One representation of my practice and a means of establishing my social enterprise's identity. A former project participant designed the Together One logo, and the social enterprise commissioned her work. By permission of Together One CIC.

The Village by the River project demonstrates that established and new educational models can work successfully together. It also demonstrates that small social enterprises can provide the impetus, take the initiative, and approach Higher Education with ideas for collaborative projects.

Local networking resulted in a housing trust, funding our community cinema and film club (educative), and granting us the use of their property at no cost. The guided walks, which are educative, receive the community development officer's support. She ensures the routes are safe and access friendly that any litter is cleared two days before the walk. The money we raise from the cinema and the walks help fund future projects in the community.

These examples, I suggest, demonstrate the vital link between networking and delivering education in community settings. They demonstrate how networking generates goodwill and opportunities to teach. Networking opens doors to the movers and shakers in the community: councillors, Council officers, the large trusts responsible for housing, health and education, and local businesses with a philanthropic leaning. There is also the immediate network of directors and volunteers who support my educational activities.

**The Difficulty with Shapeshifting**

However, I suggest defining shapeshifting solely by its functions and outcomes is too neat a description and unnuanced. Shapeshifting, as the term implies, is dynamic and fluent, resisting definition, shunning the corporeal. As an educator adrift in this flux, it leaves me always scrambling for a fixing post on which I can nail my teacher identity. For me, having an ill-defined educator identity often leads to uncertainty and anxiety (please see Findings and Analysis of Data Chapters). The study involved me searching

for some dominant symbol representative of my practice and teacher role. Something capable of corralling these multiple, shifting facets into a practice.

In contrast, in the established educational settings I left, my educator identity was substantial, scaffolded by symbols that provided signposts and roadmaps to navigate my practice. For example, teaching tropes, archetypes, and vignettes serve to suggest a semblance of that profession – a workable representation: apple for the teacher, classroom, whiteboard, playground, staffroom gossip, detention, school holidays, OFSTED. Viewed in terms of discursive literacy, an understanding of the rhetorical fabric from which institutions are built creates the material from which these institutions can be parodied in popular culture. For example, in popular culture, high schools, community colleges and universities are the subjects of parody. At present, there appears no parody of my educative practice, which is someone 'setting up shop' in a community and teaching. I believe this absence significant because it may suggest there is little knowledge of my educative practice to create the fabric for parody. Conversely, it could indicate 'there's nothing to see here, so move on'. Yet my practice is perhaps pre-parody - emergent.

### A Summary of Shapeshifting, Networking and Boundary-Crossing

Networking, civic engagement and unpaid work are necessary to initiate and maintain my teaching practice. To network, it is necessary to assume many roles and acquire many skills, including those of administrator, project developer, manager, bid-writer and recruiter. Compared with established educational settings, my educator identity is indefinite and my practice indistinct. Shapeshifting and boundary-crossing may indicate emergent practice and lend definition to my educator identity and teaching practice. Emergence offers me a conceptual resource for thinking about the many different aspects of my practice as a unity (see page 8).

Another potential indicator of emergent practice concerns socialising and course legacy.

### Socialising (Stickiness) and course legacy

A re-examination of the interview data made me aware of an unexpected course legacy: that after a course finishes, many former participants 'stick around' maintaining contact with each other and with their tutors. Opportunities for former learners to

socialise and keep learning arise. I call this legacy aspect of my teaching 'course stickiness' and reference Sara Ahmed's (2014) concept of emotional attachment. I believe this feature worthy of research because it may indicate emergent practice.

To demonstrate: at the end of Writing Well Course Two, we started a WhatsApp group at the learners' request. People use it daily, sharing information on writing, posting their work and offering emotional support to those going through bad patches in their lives. Since then, participants from Courses One, Three and Four have joined. At the end of Course Three, 80% of Course Two learners and 60% of the Course One learners attended the final lesson. They listened to the Course Three learners read their work and celebrated their achievement in finishing the course. Please see the Analysis and Findings Chapter.

This post-course participation represents one more network and one more facet of my practice. Maintaining it requires much goodwill from participants and tutors. The tutors post on WhatsApp and regularly attend the café morning meetings the group organizes.

The legacy aspect of Writing Well includes learners continuing to participate in educative activities. Since the course ended, six have read their work on local radio; three have published books, and one is in the process of publishing. In January 2019, the social enterprise organised 'Words are Wands', an event held at Wythenshawe Forum Library to raise awareness of creative writing as a means of improving mental wellbeing. The highlight of the evening was past and present participants of Writing Well reading their work to an audience of eighty. In preparation for the event, they attended rehearsals, and on the night, helped arrange the seating, served refreshments, and staffed the door.

This social interaction and the networks arising from educational practice in the community may be considered distinct from established worlds, where a course's end is apparent, demarcated typically by its learners moving on. In this respect, a course delivered in established settings appears more transactional - more about participants gaining skills and qualifications. There, tutor and learner relationships tend not to continue beyond the course or develop into a social relationship. Although our courses have clearly defined end dates (the final session), they have a longer shelf-life.

Course stickiness has implications for tutor and participant identity, especially the growing familiarity that develops between both. These post-curricular activities initiate further boundary-crossing and shapeshifting to recalibrate my relationship with former course participants. These post-course attachments challenge my pre-existing notions of maintaining professional distance and safeguarding my personal life - my private self.

### A Summary of Socialising (Stickiness) and Course Legacy

Course stickiness challenges traditional notions of the tutor–participant relationship. It has implications for course identity and legacy because it is difficult to pinpoint precisely when a course or an educational activity has ended. Opportunities for collaborative learning and to co-produce knowledge arise from an extended tutor-learner relationship. Course stickiness may indicate emergent practice and lend definition to my educator identity and teaching practice.

## Part Four: A Review of Literature Pertinent to Researching Three Characteristics of My Practice

As recurrent themes eventually emerged through a process of cyclical reflective analysis (see Chapter Three), I began to draw upon ideas and theories that resonated with the three characteristics I discussed in Part Three:

- Shapeshifting
- Boundary spanning and networking
- Socialising (stickiness) and course legacy.

Here I review literature that helped me research these three characteristics of my practice, notably: the work of Alison Gilchrist (2019), Etienne Wenger (1998), Sfard and Prusak (2005), and Sara Ahmed (2014). Later, I explain why I selected their work. Matching recurrent themes with these writers' ideas prompted a cycle of circulatory reflexive understanding-making (see pages 70-72). Through this method, I sought to dig deeper and produce nuanced understandings.

Where necessary, I provide theoretical orientations and a conceptual framework. I use theory to generate, through reflection, my own theories (explanations). I review the theory in detail to demonstrate how my theorising developed from them.

### 4. Communities of Practice Theory

Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998), a sociocultural theory, highlights the importance of active participation and collaboration by individuals in knowledge generation and learning. The theory was helpful when examining how my practice developed, my educator identity, and the networking (boundary spanning) I undertake. It also helped me consider the social learning aspect of my teaching.

Emerging from social constructivist traditions, Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the notion of 'situated learning', where learning emerges from engagement in social practices. 'In our view, learning is not merely situated in practice… learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world' (Lave and Wenger, 1991:51). The theory provides a framework for examining how individuals collaborating with others (social participation) create knowledge and facilitate learning.

#### 4.1 What is a Community of Practice?

Communities of Practice are 'groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger et al., 2002:4). According to Wenger, Communities of Practice vary in size (ranging from a few people to thousands of members), lifespan (long-lived or short-lived), location (co-located or distributed), membership (homogeneous or heterogeneous), boundaries (within businesses, across business units, across organizational boundaries), and formality (spontaneous or intentional, unrecognized or institutionalized), (Lai et al., 2006).

Communities of Practice Theory originated in the 1980s at the Institute for Research on Learning, funded by the Xerox Corporation (Daniel et al., 2004). John Seely Brown, the Corporation's Chief Scientist, sought to rethink learning and give researchers from diverse disciplines the opportunity to step back and consider the assumptions we make about learning, teaching, and education as embodied in our institutions (Wenger, 2013). Lave and Wenger, part of this initiative, chose to study apprenticeship because

its ancient precedents enabled them to examine learning before the institution of schooling. Being a theory of learning and applicable to both business and educational establishments, it suited my research as I run a social enterprise to deliver learning.

The theory is useful when considering emergent practice because it presents learning as agential and dynamic, situated in the practice and the interaction of participants. For example, from their research, Lave and Wenger (1991) dispelled the notion of a master-apprentice relationship based on transmitting knowledge from one to the other. They found the pragmatics of the learning relationship more complicated. The master was often too busy or important to deal with the everyday learning needs of the lowly apprentice. So, this novice would seek the advice of apprentices slightly ahead of her and learning developed as a living curriculum – a community. Lave and Wenger named this living curriculum a 'community of practice' because it embodied the notion of a social structure (several teachers rather than one) facilitating learning interactions. The body of knowledge was contained in the social engagement of that practice, and therefore, the body of knowledge was dynamic. Learning was 'situated' in practice - 'situated learning.' Situated learning suggests that learning emerges from engagement in social practices rather than from the individual acquisition of skills and knowledge. Also, Benzie and Somekh (2011) observe that the environment in which the learner engages is integral to the learning experience and shapes what is learned.

Consequently, for my research, Communities of Practice has advantages: a theory of practice, tied closely to education, with social (Marxist) roots and commercial application. Another benefit to my research is the subsequent large uptake of the term Communities of Practice and a growing body of work I could consult. Over the decades, Communities of Practice became a hub for information exchange, knowledge creation and organizational innovation (Lai et al., 2006).

### 4.2 Identity

I found Communities of Practice helpful because it provided a model and a vocabulary to examine my practice and identity. Sfard and Prusak's (2005) studies on identity construction through storytelling helped me consider the narratives we construct of

ourselves. The study prompted me to re-analyse my interviews. Where I perceived Communities of Practice Theory's limitations on power and hierarchy, Biesta's discussion of the 'role' of public pedagogue helped me view my identity through a political lens. It helped me consider the reasons why I deliver education and the power dynamics at play.

In Communities of Practice Theory, identity is built over time, constructed through a layering of 'participation' and 'reification' (Wenger, 1998:151). Through participation (with others), we mutually construct our identities, and through reification (to make concrete), we identify and accord meanings to abstract concepts (e.g. inclusion), take ownership of them and use them for our purpose. Reification is central to every community of practice and includes 'abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts that reify something of that practice in a concrete form.' (Wenger, 1998:59).

Wenger suggests identity is formed in the engagement in practice with others, characterised by participants actively negotiating meaning. Engagement is coupled with 'imagination' - holding an image of the world that makes sense to who we are. Identity is also shaped by reflexivity - standing back from direct engagement, acquiring an awareness of the history of the practice and the perspectives of others. Identity is also formed through 'aligning' ourselves with common patterns of action – global practices we generally share and identify ourselves engaged within. This aspect was helpful in providing a framework to address my perceived lack of educator identity, exemplified by the (apparent) absence of shared signs, symbols and practices, typical in an established practice.

Wenger stipulates identity is mutable with individuals moving in and out of practices on several trajectories, sometimes as a peripheral participant on the way to full participation, sometimes as an insider participating in the evolution of a practice, sometimes as one who spans the boundaries between practices, and sometimes on the way *out* of a practice (Wenger, 1998:154-5).

However, Sfard and Prusak (2005) challenge Wenger's assertion of a mutable identity. They find Wenger's explanation of identity construction limited in failing to define identity. Contrary to Wenger, they believe identities can be fully formed and collectively

shaped (2005:16). They offer a model of 'identity acquisition' and 'equate identity-building with story-telling' (2005:21) - that individual identity is constructed through collective storytelling where individuals tell stories about themselves and others, and in the process, our identities are our stories. Here, stories act as 'discursive counterparts of ones' lived experience' (p. 17) and having no fixed identity, we enact an identity. Here, 'enact' means we *perform* identity and *relate* identity to ourselves and others.

Their findings are based on a study of Russian immigrant children learning mathematics alongside classmates born and raised in Israel. The researchers examined whether there was any difference in how the two groups interacted with learning. They asked why different individuals act differently in the same situations and why different individuals' actions often reveal a distinct family resemblance. They examined the shared attitudes between parents and their children.

They found the immigrant children scored higher in mathematics than their indigenous classmates. Although employing concepts from Communities of Practice, they developed a different explanation of how social interaction develops identity. This involved storytelling, listening to stories and adding to an enduring narrative. The researchers argue stories can 'designate' identities to the listener, which over time, mould them into that identity. For example, the immigrant children, as part of their designated identities, saw mathematical proficiency as crucial to their development as people: to becoming a 'fully-fledged human being' (2005:20) while the indigenous students saw passing mathematics as a means to an end – entry to university and good careers.

In terms of identity, the 'NewComers' saw themselves as outsiders in their local environment and mathematical prowess as a means of bestowing them a status of people of culture and education. This brought meaning to the immigrant learners' engagement with learning and made learning meaningful. However, the immigrant children's view of meaning and their identity had been shaped by the narrative designated them by their parents. The parents, through 'repeated positioning' that is, repeating the same story, had moulded their children into an identity. In this manner, we are 'designated' identities. Stories often emerge collectively from pre-existing

narratives, a 'discursive diffusion' of 'strips of things said by others even if we are unaware of these texts' origins' (2005:18).

In their model of identity acquisition, evolving stories are indicators of evolving identity. Sfard and Prusak argue designated identities formed in childhood are difficult to change. Designated identities can result in labelling – a summation of an individual's character based on the narrative – for example, a narrative of continued underachievement results in the ascription, 'loser', or 'failure'. If the individual begins to believe the story, it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Solomon, 2015). These are 'critical stories' - those core elements that, if changed, would make one feel as if one's whole identity had changed: the person's 'sense of identity' would be shaken' (2005:18).

I found their model useful when examining the 'stories' my learners told, many wary of returning to any form of learning, following anxieties of school, where teachers had labelled them 'slow' or used 'non-academic pejoratively. These memories remained potent enough for many in the groups to address them in writing. Lilly's poem in the thesis preamble provides an example of such writing. In terms of Sfard and Prusak's research, by writing her poem, Lilly stories an identity (see Figure 1).

Sfard and Prusak's research was useful in providing a tool to consider the interviews I conducted as collective storytelling - stories both researcher and interviewee engaged in collaboratively in telling. This focused my attention on what stories may emerge from such storytelling. It also made me consider what critical stories we brought to the interview.

I found Wenger's (1998) discussion on practitioners establishing competence (proficiency) useful when examining my educator identity. Wenger states because each community of practice has its own competences, who have the right to claim or assess competence often indicates who holds power. This observation made me examine my trajectory into my teaching practice and query who assesses my claim that I am competent to teach in my community. Wenger's discussion also made me consider the competences I must demonstrate and enact to teach.

While his 1998 model offered a way to examine trajectory into practice through legitimate peripheral participation (see below), Wenger (2014) states that in the twenty-first century, establishing competency is far more complicated. In the twenty-first century, an individual may work in multiple communities of practice, often overlapping, often competing. To reflect this complexity, Wenger introduced 'knowledgeability' to his theory. Knowledgeability' is part of the identity-forming process - it is an individual possessing competence that is no longer defined in relation to one community but in relation to a whole landscape of different practices (Wenger, 2014). This insight resonated with my teaching, where the other tutors and I work in several practices, including networks. Wenger (2013) describes a 'knowledgeable' person as someone able to transform that complex landscape into a useful moment of engagement in practice, for example, a teacher dealing with a student has to translate all these different aspects of several communities she interacts with, into a meaningful moment with that student.

Knowledgeability is allied to competence and accountability. Wenger (2014) admits that from the perspective of the theory, in complex landscapes, we no longer have an evident community to judge a newcomer's competence. Because the newcomer is navigating a complex landscape and creating a unique trajectory through it, no community can define, in a simple way, what it means to be knowledgeable. The more complex the trajectory into practice, the heavier the burden falls upon the individual to establish a practitioner identity. Wenger asserts the burden of identity has become a 'project of you' because, in a complex learning landscape, there is no one else with the same trajectory as you (University of Brighton, 2013:41mins,15). He admits this issue remains unresolved.

I found knowledgeability a useful concept for my research because my practice and professional identity involves being accountable to a complex social landscape of funders, community officers and organisations. Somehow, I must transform that accountability into a moment of meaningful engagement in the service of another person (mainly the learner). Concerning my practice, knowledgeability led me to examine in my complex community landscape who or what determines my teaching competence.

Wenger's discussion of competences led me to consider my own competence and what essential competences others perceive necessary to teach in community settings. Considering knowledgeability led me to re-consider interview responses and then chart instances of the tutors ascribing themselves knowledgeability.

Communities of Practice has its critics. Busher and colleagues, in their studies of middle leadership in schools, argue that Communities of Practice is limited by 'its inadequate theorising of power and micro-politics' (2007:418). Likewise, Fuller and colleagues state Communities of Practice 'acknowledge[s] but never fully explore[s] the significance of conflict and unequal power relations' (2005:66). Here I found the 'plug and play' aspect of the theory and its ability to connect with Biesta's work on public pedagogy helpful when examining my educator identity in the broader context of lifelong learning, power and politics.

Biesta's prodigious body of work, often cited in research papers, provided a contemporary and detailed analysis of lifelong learning at the intersection of politics and pedagogy, relevant to my educator identity. Biesta believes that lifelong learning promotes democracy, social justice, social cohesion, and a means to achieve individual emancipation. He advocates a public pedagogy that can open public space and facilitate 'human togetherness' (2012:683). Public pedagogy in public space, in turn, promotes political freedom. Public space is a 'space not determined by private agendas or interests' (p 684). Drawing on the work of Arendt (1977), Biesta views the public sphere as a process rather than a physical location - a facet of human togetherness. Biesta argues that it is a particular type of action that makes spaces public and capable of allowing action that might be characterised as 'political' (p. 686).

'Action' here means our agency to do something not done before and to bring new beginnings into the world through what we do and say. Action is the freedom 'to call something into the world which did not exist before' (Arendt 1977: 151). For Arendt, 'freedom' is political and needs a 'public realm' to make its appearance (Arendt 1977:149). Action cannot exist in isolation and requires others to take up, react and interact with the beginnings we create. Freedom requires constant human interaction (Arendt, 1958). This interaction is served best through a plurality of people that prosper through difference rather than sameness.

Biesta believes the educator's role (as public pedagogue) instrumental in facilitating this but notes a tension between educator and policymaker and argues adult educators and community educators often encounter the expectations of policymakers who want them to deliver on 'social capital' 'community cohesion' and 'good citizenship'. He considers this problematic because community education is a fragile and unpredictable art, particularly when compared with school education, which always operates in and through robust institutional infrastructures. I found this observation useful in defining my educator role, and it raised issues I could explore in my interviews.

Regarding educator identity, some writers, ascribe a political role to the educator teaching in lifelong learning. Krasovic (2017) views her as a 'public andragogue' and argues that 'learning takes place not only in educational institutions but on every level of social life' (p. 4). Krasovic ascribes the role as dynamic - initiating learning among different groups, creating and maintaining social space while encouraging diversity among learners engaged in education. This made me consider my educator identity, its agency and political function. It made me re-examine my data and evaluate whether my interviewees considered their teaching roles 'political'. For my research, Biesta's discussion of public pedagogy provided a useful link between political theory and lifelong learning and the ongoing debate regarding the marginalisation or exclusion of some groups of learners, including the older learners I teach.

Some writers suggest that lifelong learning is instrumental in shaping an individual's political trust in institutions in later life to improve levels of trust (Schoon and Cheng, 2011). They argue that trust in institutions is not entirely ingrained at an early age and develops over time and in context. Cook and Smith (2004) highlight the vital role lifelong learning plays in community building. They reference Freire's (1993) approach to informal learning rooted in community-based education and notions of 'listening to the community'. Given my situated practice, the educator's potential to community build was an unexpected outcome of the review and led me to reflect on my role and re-consider interview data to see if the interviewees considered themselves community builders.

### 4.3 Boundary Spanning and Networking

Given my liminal position in education and the networking I undertake, Wenger's work helped me consider my positionality in these networks. (Wenger, 1998) observes that we participate in multiple communities of practice at once, especially those affecting our own lives. Good boundary relations are crucial in the continuous co-construction and transformation of practices (Somekh and Lewin, 2011). Here, 'boundary objects' – artefacts, procedures and concepts that reify practices help Communities of Practices 'organize their interconnections' (Wenger, 1998:105), and brokers play an important role leading the process of interconnection by engaging in 'translation, coordination and alignment between perspectives' (1998:109). Given my perceived lack of teacher identity and a dearth of artefacts to lend substance to my practice, I found this notion useful to my research because it set me considering what artefacts, if any, may be emblematic of my practice and be used to render it corporeal.

'Peripheries', a region not quite within nor without a Communities of Practice, provide a fertile and dynamic area. An individual on the periphery can engage with other views and propagate their own (Solomon, 2015). 'Brokers' operate in peripheries - people able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination, and open new possibilities for meaning. Wenger remarks that some individuals thrive on being brokers and engage in "import-export" and would 'rather stay at the boundaries of… practices than move to the core of any one practice' (Wenger, 1998:109).

For example, Trimmer's (2013) study charts the interaction and key role 'network brokers' play as intermediaries between a housing organisation, public employees, and residents. In her study, the 'network brokers' were active residents who linked other residents to the housing association and public services. As formal and informal relationships developed between resident and public service employees in informal peripheral network spaces, the brokers influenced policy-making decisions.

Here, Gilchrist's (2019) work was beneficial because of her background in community work and her extensive research of the subject, rooted in phronetic knowledge: knowledge derived from practice and experience. Her books *The Well-Connected*

*Community* (2009/2019) and *The Short Guide to Community Development* (2016) are standard texts for community workers. I identified with much of her writing and found her discussion on networking helpful in my studies.

I also found helpful her discussion of connexity. Connexity is an old English word, revived by Geoff Mulgan (1997/2004) to emphasise 'our mutual interdependence and the abundance of everyday interactions that characterise the modern world.' (Gilchrist, 2019:ebook). Gilchrist notes that practitioners need to be ever more versatile and willing to work across boundaries. She states that lateral, often boundary-spanning, connections brokered and nurtured by intermediaries and community connectors are essential features of network governance models, partnership working, and different forms of community development. As much of my practice involves networking and making these connections, I returned to my interview data and examined instances of brokerage and connexity by and with those I interviewed.

Gilchrist's discussion of Livingstone et al.'s (2008) work on attachment to places (such as a neighbourhood or village) helped me frame my practice as a generator of social capital. Citing the earlier study, Gilchrist (2019) remarks that where there is high population turnover, due to, for example, rented housing provision or migration, this tends to undermine feelings of trust, personal security, and cohesion. Gilchrist's findings support Putnam's (2000) extensive research on declining social capital in neighbourhoods of the USA. Given that Wythenshawe would fit Gilchrist's profile, her observation helped me consider if the course carried out a function in addition to learning that included providing routine, company, a sense of security and generating social capital.

Her discussion on the 'energy and efforts' of 'low-flying heroes' (MacGillivray et al., 2001), the 'under the radar' activities and micro-social enterprises that go mostly unnoticed by policymakers yet are a vital dimension of civil society, resonated with my practice and community work (Gilchrist, 2019:ebook). I found Gilchrist's lack of sentimentality regarding 'community' useful. She acknowledges its negative side and those of networks which 'also include relationships based on fear, jealousy, animosity and suspicion' (2016:36). Her comments reflected my lived experience. Using the

framing Gilchrist provided, I viewed the WhatsApp group as an emergent learning network.

### 4.4 Course Legacy and 'Stickiness'

Affect Theory, as conceptualised by Ahmed (2014), helped me examine the strong emotional bonds that develop between participants and tutors, exemplified by relationships continuing long after a course ended. It added an extra lens when analysing these bonds by looking beyond narrative storytelling and considering non-linguistic effects, for example, how mood, atmosphere, and feelings may contribute to this bonding.

Originating in the mid-nineties with precedents set earlier by Tomkins in the 1950s and 1960s, Affect Theory continues to evolve. From 2000 onwards, Affect Theory became a dominant paradigm of literary studies and a bridge to other fields, notably social psychology, anthropology, and political theory. Affect Theory attempts to synthesize body and mind and counter the notion that we understand the world primarily through language. Scholars like Sara Ahmed (2016), Sianne Ngai (2005), Brian Massumi (2015) and Ann Cvetkovich (2012) began exploring the world as shaped not simply by narratives and arguments but also by non-linguistic effects — by mood, by atmosphere, by feelings.

Affect Theory is criticised for its imprecision, 'maddening incoherence' and for presenting 'purely subjective responses to the world' (Anable, 2018, Google Books Edition) and its multitude of ways of conceptualizing affect; all one might expect with a theory in development. I focus mainly on the work of Sara Ahmed because of its relevance to my research on boundary crossing and course stickiness. Sara Ahmed's widely referenced *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014) offered me context and examples of Affect Theory applied to current social and political issues, including marginalisation, populism, and racism.

Ahmed examines the narratives we collectively create and how this 'we' assumes a 'you' – the 'other' necessary to buttress a sense of 'we'. Additionally, the collective narratives Ahmed references helped me consider my educator identity and were useful

when drawing comparisons with Sfard and Prusak's (2005) work on acquired identity (see above).

The theory was useful when reanalysing my data. Affect Theory directs the researcher to look beyond what individuals take for granted and seldom reflect upon - the 'unconscious' structures', 'shared meanings' and 'agreed and shared perceptions'. These include social norms and the perceived 'common sense' (Ahmed 2014a:208), which populate our worlds. Here 'shared meanings' includes meaning-making 'beyond words'. Here 'beyond words' means, an 'affective logic' operating and influencing social norms (Åhäll, 2016:8) that we are often 'unconscious' of and perpetuate. Ahmed states that what is unconsciously agreed between individuals often 'does not tend to be registered by consciousness' (2014a:219). Similarly, Åhäll (2016) urges us to critically examine any narrative seen and consumed as common sense, which may reveal underlying hierarchal structures. Drawing on the work of Hall (1985: 100), Åhäll (2016) recommends we examine, through analysis and deconstruction, language but also behaviour to decipher the patterns of ideological thinking inscribed in them.

Ahmed emphasises the importance of emotions in affecting the attitudes and responses of individuals and groups. She refutes the common presumption that emotion is interior. Instead, emotion is a social construct – the social and cultural practices that circulate between bodies and 'stick' as well as move. Emotions do not rest in the individual or the social – they produce surfaces and boundaries that delineate (define) the individual and the social as if they are objects. Our emotional responses to others as objects create surfaces and boundaries. I found this insight added depth to my research on the practice of networking and boundary spanning Wenger describes. Wenger lends insights into this practice. Ahmed's model provides an understanding of the composition and delineation of their boundaries. Their substance.

Ahmed (2014:ebook) argues emotions can 'move us' (metaphorically in our response) or move us (literally, to undertake an action), yet they can fix us, hold us in place and give us a 'dwelling place'. She believes emotional intensities allow social structures to be reified as forms of being.

Ahmed (2014) argues that our general unawareness of emotions' ability to affect us does not imply their absence. Emotions generate different affective responses in others and, in turn, become the objects of others' affective responses. Ahmed emphasizes that our histories play a part in shaping these responses and the pre-existing notions we hold of an individual or a group. In this sense, the individual or group is an 'object'. Ahmed illustrates this with an example of a stranger. Before we even meet the stranger, we hold notions of him and perceive him as dangerous. Therefore, we must not only focus on the actual affective encounter when one body is affected by another but on the 'histories that come before subjects' to understand how 'our reactions are mediated' (Ahmed, 2014a:22).

Affect Theory led me to consider what commonly held notions tutors and learners hold regarding course content and duration. For example, despite the common notion of a course, there were ways to view them beyond stand-alone, self-contained boxes of learning we stack away at their end. The theory made me re-consider the ways tutor/learner relationships could be re-defined beyond the general notions held to be 'common-sense'. Ahmed's insight prompted me to return to my interview data and examine my subjects' and my own commonly held notions regarding courses and tutor/learner relations. The reason for re-examination was to look for evidence, if any, of something I was doing that was different enough from established educational practice to consider it emergent.

Another facet of Affect Theory is its ability to examine contradictions in our opinion of issues. Affective dissonance, an approach Clare Hemmings (2012) introduced to feminist theory to engender feminist reflexivity, links dissonance to political change. As a methodological tool it can be applied to analyse the politics of emotion more broadly and inspire critical thinking (Åhäll, 2016). The dissonance here is, on the one hand, common sense and accepted norms, and on the other, our sense of being and our perception of the 'reality' of a situation.

Through affective dissonance contradictions are made explicit. Affective dissonance acknowledges that objects bring histories attached, 'the histories that come before the subject' (Ahmed, 2014). Applying affective dissonance involves examining these

histories and people's emotional obsession about the particular 'objects' we are examining. Here 'objects' are people, concepts, or items.

Through a moment of affective dissonance, a representational gap is identified. Åhäll (2016) provides a useful case study where Affect Theory is applied to examine representations of 'woman' as an object. She considers the case of Lynndie England, one of several military personnel publicly vilified and later imprisoned for the torture, by her and others, of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib jail. Åhäll detects a dissonance in the public's emotional response to England, singling her out for public vilification more than the other perpetrators, all men. Drawing on histories, Åhäll explores how the object - 'Woman' affectively flows in a context of torture, and the public's emotional response that a woman committing torture is worse than by a man as it contravenes notions of femininity, woman the carer and woman the nurturer. A woman torturer challenges these notions, and a dissonance occurs, and a representational gap identified, leading to an examination of gender, agency, and political violence. Ahmed's study of racism and populism and Åhäll's smaller-scale research demonstrate the theory's viability as a method for introducing a political dimension to my research which Communities of Practice arguably lacks.

Regarding research method, Affect Theory recognises that ethnographic research cannot be clinical and detached from human emotions, and 'ethnographers' emotions are valuable data when conducting research, particularly when researching marginalised communities (Campbell and Pahl, 2018). It features strongly in recent feminist studies and has general application, for example, examining all marginalised groups and the everyday practices we take for granted with scant consideration of the 'patterns of ideological thinking inscribed in them' (Åhäll, 2016:7), referencing (Hall, 1985:100).

Given the Writing Well group's composition, predominately women, arguably marginalised through their life histories, Rasool's (2018) description of a women's writing group in Rotherham was helpful. It provided an example of Affect Theory applied to field research. In Rasool's study, writing was a liberating experience: a means to challenge gender inequalities, discrimination, and patriotism. It 'gave a voice to the

voiceless' and space for women to share very personal life stories (2018:117). It led me to consider what histories came before the object - the writing group. Rasool's study was pertinent to my analysis of an interview with Miriam, a learner on the Writing Well course. Miriam, forced to flee Iran to escape charges of apostasy, saw the course and the socialising which emerged from it, an opportunity to express what she had been unable to express in her homeland.

### 4.5 The Potential Gap in Wenger's Model of Emergent Practice

Having re-examined my interview data, Lave and Wenger's (1991) model of communities of practice provided several analytical tools to examine emergence. Also, because it is a theory that continues to develop, and Wenger (2014) acknowledges that there are gaps in it, there are opportunities for me, through my study, to contribute, however, minimally.

One potential opportunity to contribute relates to emergent practice. I identified a potential gap in one aspect of Wenger's model of 'legitimate peripheral participation'. His account of trajectory into practice did not reflect my lived experience.

Wenger believes that in an established community of practice, moving through practice is a process of transition (a trajectory). Here, 'old-timers' (those familiar with the established practices of this community) offer newcomers legitimate peripheral participation' in the practice. Over time and acquiring greater skill, newcomers progress to full participation and become old-timers in turn. For example, trainee teachers passing through their formative year of training into their NQT year and beyond.

Wenger (2013) states the process is dynamic and successful negotiation requires highly developed social skills as relationships are worked out, processes invented, situations interpreted, artefacts produced, and conflicts resolved. This 'involves the same kind of embodied, delicate, active, social, negotiated, complex process of participation' (1998:49). I found this useful in considering my current practice – with whom I negotiate and renegotiate with and whether my practice can be reproduced or transformed. Again, this informed my questions and data analysis.

However, I found that Wenger's vocabulary and framework were more straightforward to apply to established educational practices than mine. As I examined the ground zero of the model – emergent practice, I found applying it to my practice problematic. I found identifying and ascribing participants in my practice the roles of newcomers and old-timers difficult. Identifying the mechanisms of reproduction and transformation in established practice was far easier to do than in mine.

Concerning emergence, Wenger (1998:118-119) states:

> A community of practice as it unfolds is, in essence, produced by its members through their mutual engagement, it evolves in organic ways that tend to escape formal descriptions and control. The landscape of practice is, therefore, not congruent with the reified structures of institutional affiliations, divisions, and boundaries. It is not independent of these institutional structures, but neither is it reducible to them.

To me, 'members' assumes there is somebody or something (an awarding body) with authority to ascribe to individuals membership and competences in that practice. 'Members' also assumes there is existing practice. Wenger's comments led me to consider what 'mutual engagement' looks like in emergent practice, where there are no apparent old-timers. Or where the 'practice' is a practice of one. Wenger's model helped provide a means for reflection. It provided one way to examine emergence and compare his model with my experience of starting a teaching practice from scratch. Through comparison and reflection, I was able to form my own theory on emergence. Please refer to the Analysis and Discussion of Data Chapters.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The Chapter details my research design and the cyclical reflective analysis process I employed. There follows a discussion of my interview method and the questioning techniques I used. Unanticipated issues that arose from interviews are then examined, and this is followed by a section on essential elements of research and includes data organisation and storage. Next, I present an overview of the theories I drew upon in my study. I demonstrate how I followed the university's guidelines on ethics, then critique my methods' limitations and what I might have done differently, for instance, drawing on a larger interview sample.

I set out primarily to investigate my preconception that I was teaching in an emergent practice. By emergent, I mean a process that becomes a practice. A process that begins as a loose collection of decisions and actions, with general aims and objectives and over time develops into a practice that is corporeal - substantive. Emergence offers me a conceptual resource for thinking about the many different aspects of my practice as a unity. Without a complete definition, it motivates and directs my thinking in this study (see page 9).

**My Research Method**

I detail my method in five sections:

1. Design

2. Data gathering

3. Choosing and Applying Theory

4. Ethical Considerations

5. Closing Observations.

**1. Design**

From the start, I decided that I would be positioned squarely within my study of adult community education. While following the general conventions of a thesis, I wanted my voice to be integral, as much as possible, mainly as this was, in part, a case study,

a personal account, and interview-based. For this reason, I write much of my inquiry in the first person with many meta moments - asides and commentary, particularly in the literature review.

I, therefore, conducted a social hermeneutic analysis of data sources to present a lived-life account of teaching. I used this approach to let my experiences speak to me, reflect on these experiences, and extrapolate the themes I examined. I employed an iterative process, a hermeneutic circle of exploration, reflection, explanation and understanding. I worked on the premise that no understanding is ever final nor certain. Consequently, my findings in Chapters Four and Five are presented as provisional 'understandings' and 'possibilities'.

A cyclical reflective analysis process lent itself well in a study where I am positioned as an instrument of observation and a participant in the situation I am observing. Being positioned firmly within the community I describe, a sociological interpretation of lived meanings (Hall, 2008:43) enabled my authorial voice to remain present throughout and undertake an analysis of my practice through 'engaged, personal, empathetic, located' writing (Pahl, 2014:4).

This approach enabled me to story my teaching motivations, aspirations, and concerns and shape my experiences into a framework of understanding my positionality within my practice and this study. Research procedures were shaped primarily around autobiographical data (I maintained a reflective journal throughout my research) and field notes containing 'thick description'. This fuelled the process of cyclical reflective analysis, enlarging the body of narrative data and broadening opportunities for new understandings of self and my practice to emerge. The interviews I conducted between 2016 and 2019 added further opportunities for new understandings to emerge. Later, I added the ideas of theorists to the process of circulatory reflexivity and understanding making.

Because I used interpretation, language played a critical role in shaping the world I wished to describe and describing the world that shaped me as a tutor and a researcher. Through this circulatory process, my journal entries prompted me to reflect upon the different people I was at different times and in different situations and the many

professional identities I assumed to facilitate networking and teaching. This process led me to understand that networking and teaching were not discrete social interactions but integral components of my practice. These examples demonstrate how my interpretations relied much on the circularity of language, shaping life and life shaping language. Storying was how I made sense of my world of practice and how I represented it. Through storying and authorial voice, I sought to provide a lived life study of community practice entanglements and engagements and provide understandings and possibilities for explorations, reflections, re-evaluations, and understandings in the future.

Through this iterative process, recurrent themes emerged, which included networking and tutor insecurity. Grouping my data into themes organised my thoughts and provided framing for further reflection. I later introduced theory to my data to introduce new perspectives of my practice, challenge my understandings, and facilitate further circulatory reflective analysis. I read theory like I read any other literature: assuming that texts hold explicit and implicit ideas that connect with the reader to produce understandings often unanticipated by their writers.

Given the time constraints of being a part-time student with family and work commitments, I was always mindful of whether I was reading enough and whether the ideas I engaged with, however interesting, were relevant to my research. This angst was prevalent 2016-2018 but dissipated when recurrent themes emerged from the reflective process, and I could draw upon writers whose ideas resonated with these themes and my lived experience. These writers included Etienne Wenger (1999), Sara Ahmed (2014) and Alison Gilchrist (2018). My engagement with these writers provided a springboard to generate and test my theories (explanations). As recurrent themes were matched with others' ideas, the cycle of circulatory reflexive understanding-making gathered momentum. When utilising this interpretive process, the research trajectory was back and forth, moving between and within possible meanings, challenging my earlier assumptions. Through this method, I sought to dig deeper and produce nuanced understandings.

Using theory interchangeably to acquire alternating perspectives of the phenomena I was reporting was another way I sought to lend nuance to my study. Drawing on

alternative ways of reading the data, particularly if these ways differed widely, challenged me not to play safe with my data and resist drawing easy conclusions that perhaps supported my confirmation bias. For example, Communities of Practice theory provided a workable social learning model that I could have drawn solely upon to provide understandings of why learners attended my lessons and how they learned. To counter complacency, I drew on Ahmed's (2014) ideas within Affect Theory to challenge my data, my understandings so far in the study and offer an alternative reading of the same social situation. For instance, Ahmed's work coupled with Clare Hemmings's (2012) method of affective dissonance challenged me to look beyond the concrete and reifying structures of the Community of Practice model and the 'safe' framework of explanations I had built, and while not abandoning it, to seek other pathways into and out of my data. These new methods of viewing added further nuance to my understandings. For example, now, I could view my lessons as a community of practice (Wenger) or as a collective of emotions working within a collective identity (Ahmed) while challenging commonly held notions of course length and learner engagement (Hemmings). Although the relationship between theory and practice is complex, describing, and re-describing a feature of my practice through different theories, in turn, helped me formulate my theories – here, meaning explanations. These explanations form the provisional understandings and possibilities of Chapters Four and Five.

I brought several assumptions at the start of my research acquired from my experiences of teaching in a community context. One assumption I held was challenged early in my inquiry at the interview stage. I had assumed that practising in the community where I live held benefits beyond ease of commute. These advantages included: a deeper understanding of the issues affecting participants and finding commonality with them. My virtue signalling only matched my smugness in living in the community where I practised. Yet shortly into my research, the limitations of my inductive reasoning were demonstrated when, on 6 December 2017, I interviewed Ruth, an experienced third-sector practitioner.

Ruth highlighted the problematics of delivering workshops in one’s community, particularly those requiring participants to detail personal aspects of their lives. Ruth

runs courses on coping with depression, low self-esteem, and misconceptions about menopause. For Ruth, who lives in a small town, meeting attendees 'in the street' was a source of constant discomfort and embarrassment for both participant and educator, particularly as many were neighbours. Some saw chance meetings with Ruth as opportunities to extend these sessions. Consequently, Ruth will only run courses outside her community. Her pragmatic framing of this aspect of educator practice in community settings prompted me to reassess my earlier conviction and re-evaluate the validity of my other assumptions about delivering educational activities in my community.

I considered to what degree confirmation bias – 'the tendency to search vigorously for evidence that confirms what one already believes' (Haidt, 2018:109), might influence my research. The interview with Ruth cautioned me to be mindful of confirmation bias and consider its potential effect (Nickerson, 1998:175). Naturally, I have opinions, but only to listen and not hear would devalue my research. Beyond my research design, institutionalised disconfirmation – the testing of my thoughts and conclusions by communities of scholars through scrutiny and debate is another means to cancel out confirmation bias

I was grateful for Ruth's timely lesson. It made me aware of how a researcher's assumptions, if unchallenged, might devalue their research. It made me reflect upon my assumptions and convictions and cautioned me to approach the study with an 'open mind'. To this end, in my literature review, I consulted a broad range of writers from across the political spectrum and commentators on the education and political systems of other countries.

Also, interviewing Ruth made me aware that having one's beliefs challenged can assist knowledge production. Consequently, I added opportunities in my interviews that would challenge my assumptions and the assumptions of my interviewees.

When design making, I decided that my study would not seek to create dichotomies and privilege one form of education over another, for example, university, over my practice. Instead, where necessary, my research would reference established settings to compare a feature of practice there with my educator practice and evaluate whether

this feature was sufficiently different from established educational norms to indicate emergence.

The practicalities of what was manageable and achievable with a minimal budget and resources determined my research design. Also, what was available to me. Belonging to many local networks and delivering education allowed me to observe at close hand tutors, learners, and lessons.

At the early stage of this study, my questions were broad but provided a foundation for data gathering. As themes and issues emerged from interviews and journal entries, I refined my questions and research focus. This iterative process of knowledge production, although lengthy, facilitated reflection and opportunities to acquire knowledge.

I identified recurrent themes through an iterative process of analysing and reanalysing interview transcripts and journal entries before and after a literature review and reflecting further. Where in a text I identified a theme, I flagged it with an initial, for example, 'I' for identity or 'P' for practice/practise. I then conducted a second and third run-through of the data, where I consulted additional literature on the themes which best demonstrated emergent practice.

Initially, my data gathering and literature review consisted of relatively straightforward information gathering. I gathered details of my community, Wythenshawe – its population size, demographics, and social indicators.  Manchester City's Council curate these datasets at Intelligence Hub:

https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200088/statistics-and-intelligence/7611/intelligence-hub

The Neighbourhood Officer provided this link and data for Northenden. The fact that I could obtain data from the Neighbourhood Officer directly from her highlights how networking assisted this study. The Intelligence Hub enabled me to compare local and national statistics on poverty, employment, and health. The Office for National Statistics (https://www.ons.gov.uk/) also proved a useful research resource. This research enabled me to acquire a deeper (if narrow) understanding of my community (see Introduction).

To answer the broader question of what is going on in my practice, I relied on unstructured observations, and I recorded these in notebooks and journals. I also considered various texts:  bid applications, Company House documents, schemes of work and lesson plans, publicity posters and the websites I run.

My design included a case study of the Writing Well course (please see Introduction). I chose Writing Well because it provided comprehensive data, and the course was representative of my community teaching. I searched blogs, news articles or academic papers for details of similar teaching initiatives as mine. I used Google Chrome to search 'community adult education delivered by a community interest company' and used keywords including 'community tutors' and 'tutors teaching adults in their own community' and their permutations. Later, I used Google Scholar to link my searches to academic papers and reports.

## 2. Data Gathering

### Interviews

My primary data comprise five in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews with three people I interviewed individually between 2017 and 2019. A Table of Interviews is provided in Appendix One. I selected interviewees on the basis that their experience of community teaching would assist knowledge production. Over this period, I interviewed Ruth, Miriam, and Clare. Although the subject sample is small, it allowed longer, nuanced, in-depth discussions to develop. I already knew my interviewees, which made establishing rapport easier. However, I was concerned that this might make them reticent to answer sensitive questions about themselves or those they considered might injure my feelings, for example, how they perceived me as a teacher. I was also concerned that they might furnish me with answers they supposed I sought. Thankfully, these concerns proved unwarranted, and their responses, as far as I can be sure, were forthright and candid - please see examples below and Appendix Three. Also, the small sample of tutors I interviewed reflected the absence of any others practising in my community, and this too may indicate emergent practice.

Interviews provided a means to mutually examine my practice, and recurring themes emerged. Breaking the interview data into themes helped organise my thoughts and

provided a framework for further study. I considered these themes alongside my journal reflections to add nuance to my study. Some themes that emerged from the interviews included tutor insecurity, emotional attachment, and identity. Then, I re-examined my data for examples that supported or challenged my assumption that my practice was emergent.

### The Participants

I approached the participants independently and explained the purpose of my study. I explained why I considered the study necessary: that it would examine an aspect of community teaching they were part of but had hardly been researched (please see Literature Review). I invited them to participate but did not ask for an immediate response until they had read the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix Six). I allowed them time to consider their commitment and raise queries regarding their involvement. By agreement, we set a time for responding – two weeks. All responded within seven days. All were enthusiastic about taking part in the study and being interviewed.  Below I provide additional information about my interviewees (see also the Introduction).

Ruth

I interviewed Ruth in December 2017 and January 2018. Ruth is a third-sector practitioner with many years' experience teaching in community settings. At the time of interviewing her, she was studying part-time for a master's degree in Education. Ruth's work pattern is irregular and uncertain. Like millions of other workers, she is part of the 'gig' economy, working zero-hour contracts, supplementing her income by working at a telephone polling agency. When she secures funding or hired, Ruth runs courses in community settings. I chose Ruth because of her experience of community teaching, including courses run in Wythenshawe. At the time of interviewing her, I had limited experience of running such courses. Ruth's insights provided a point of reference and comparison with my lived teaching experience.

Miriam

When I interviewed Miriam in June and July 2018, she had been living in England for eighteen months. A refugee from Iran, her first language is Farsi. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from her local (Iranian) university and is a qualified teacher. I selected Miriam to interview because, having settled in Wythenshawe recently, she offered fresh insight into my community. Also, she attended my Writing Well courses and could provide insights as a learner and perceptions of me as a teacher. Miriam was also attending adult classes at a community college and able to comment on whether Writing Well or my teaching differed in any discernible way from her established course.

Clare

Clare is an art teacher; her portraits win awards and exhibit in London galleries. She works part-time in a Sixth Form and recently began teaching in community settings. Clare and I collaborated on a National Heritage Lottery First World War project I was running. As part of the project, Clare ran art classes at a local primary school, and I commissioned from her 12 original portraits commemorating the communities of Northenden during the First World War. When the project finished, Clare began delivering art classes to learners at a residential home in Wythenshawe.

In April 2019, when I interviewed her, she had been running the art classes for four months. Clare was able to relate her first-time experience of teaching in the community. Because she was eighteen months behind me teaching in this setting, I could compare her experiences with mine and with Ruth's, who was more experienced than both of us. Clare was also able to compare her community practice with her sixth form teaching. Her dual roles proved helpful in gauging emergent and divergent practice and how she perceived her teacher identity in her new teaching environment.

Also, through interviews, I hoped to address my situated identity, that is, my long-time immersion in my community. At the start of my inquiry, I was concerned that my immersion might render invisible local practices (including my educational practice) by taking them for granted and assuming them to be universal. I hoped my interviewees

would provide insights on Wythenshawe, to which I had become inured through over-familiarity.

For ethical and safeguarding reasons, the interviews were conducted at neutral venues, in public, and I arranged locations and times convenient to the interviewees. To interview Ruth, I travelled to Buxton Library, and I interviewed Miriam at Wythenshawe Library so she could leave the interview promptly and resume her studies nearby. On the day Clare and I met because the local library was closed, we chose a quiet spot in a student-friendly coffee shop. On all occasions, I obtained the staff's agreement before conducting the interviews on their premises.

**Transcription**

I recorded and transcribed all the interviews. Although a lengthy undertaking, transcribing made revisiting them easier and afforded close analysis of non-diegetic features in the conversation. These included hesitations, tone, false starts, coughs, laughter (yes, there was at times). I supplemented the recordings with handwritten notes regarding the interviewees' posture, body language and eye contact. Because I recorded the interviews (two recorders in case one broke down), I could raise my head and observe and listen for nuances in our conversations.

I began transcription within a day of the interview, and although the process often took over a week to complete, I resisted the temptation to transcribe only select pieces. Full transcription meant I could factor in any changes to my inquiry focus - where passages formerly of lesser importance became central to knowledge-gathering. As I transcribed, I was surprised at how much I had forgotten within only a few days of the interview, and this challenged my assumption that focus alone would secure my memory of events.

As my research progressed and my focus and questions developed, I returned to the interviews regularly. The themes and issues which emerged from the interviews drove changes in my research focus and questions.

### Questioning Technique

My questioning technique involved using open questions. Please see Appendix Four for a sample of the questions I asked. Oppenheim remarks, 'The chief advantage of the open question is the freedom it gives to the respondents' (2000:112). Open questions allowed opportunities for my interviewees to set the agenda and determine the issues they regarded as important. It also created opportunities for knowledge to be co-produced (Banks and Hart, 2018). These often occurred unexpectedly. For example, when discussing the boundaries to Clare's teaching, we raised the hypothetical of a learner creating something controversial and 'offensive'. In response, Clare championed art's duty to shock and offend. Besides being a stimulating topic, the discussion provided an insight into Clare's teaching philosophy.

### Interviewing as a Method

The interview method acknowledges my immersion in the world about which my research later theorises. Etherington's (2004) demonstration of narrative inquiry, through interviews, helped me examine how my participants shaped a sense of self and constructed meanings from within systems of belief, attitudes, values, and ideas. Stronach et al. (2007) stress how narrative analysis underpins the reflexive layer within and between researcher, participants, and data. Reflexivity was central to this process to ensure a robust critical approach. I detail reflexivity's importance in the summary section of this chapter.

Because my research examined how people who teach and study in community settings perceive their role, the interview provided an established and valid method for acquiring this research data. Like all research methods, the interview has strengths and limitations. Being interpretative, active meaning-making practices (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995), there are potential pitfalls which, if unconsidered, may compromise the data gathered or render its eliciting ineffective. By 'meaning-making', I refer to our natural inclination to attempt to adduce meaning or 'truth' from random, seemingly unconnected events and datasets that may have no meaning - seeing shapes in clouds. I found this aspect of knowledge acquisition a delicate balancing act between interpretation and fanciful speculation, a skill that required practise.

Because interviews were my primary means of knowledge acquisition, and I had a small number of interviewees, I wanted to make the most of the opportunity. The participants had kindly agreed to give their time, and I did not want to waste it. After the interviews, I noted the limitations of my technique and sought ways to improve. If I were interviewing the person for a second time, I introduced different types of questions and re-framed previous questions to see if they would elicit different responses.  Below I detail my approaches.

Here I use 'interviewee' and 'interviewer', 'questioner', and 'respondent' interchangeably. The interviews were conducted on the premise of valuing alternative ways of knowing and creating 'knowledge through learning from the experiences of participants' (Banks et al., 2014:38). In their paper, Banks and her colleagues promote collaborative reflexivity to enhance the research process and learning. Concerning my research, the paper offered useful case studies of UK research collaborations I could draw upon, and while my study is a personal account, my interview approach incorporated principles of co-inquiry to facilitate knowledge (see p. 166). Accordingly, I viewed my interviewees as more than 'objects of research' (Banks et al., 2014:37) but rather collaborators in a mutual enquiry.

Heron and Reason (2008) advocate an extended *epistemology* (the theory of how we come to know the world) as an alternative to *theoretical, abstract* and *propositional knowledge*, 'the intellectual knowing of ideas and theories, knowing about' (Banks et al., 2014:38). Heron and Reason advocate three alternative types of knowledge: *experiential, presentational,* and *practical*. Experiential knowledge is gained through face-to-face contact with others, a place, or an object and based on resonance and empathy. Presentational knowledge grows from experiential knowledge and includes how respondent's express (present) knowledge – often through story. Practical is knowing how to do something – a skill or competence. Knowledge produced in these three ways suited my research approach: a lived-experience account of tutors engaged in community practice, where interviews provide much of the data. Knowledge acquired through the presentational approach linked well with Sfard and Prusak's (2005) study of storytelling and how it facilitates identity formation (see the Literature Review and

below). It attuned me to the stories my interviewees told and how these formed their tutor and learner identity.

I hoped the interview process would be mutually beneficial. Before each interview, I explained the purpose of my study so that the interviewees might find it relevant to their teaching and learning. As we discussed our teaching and learning identities, Sfard and Prusak's (2005) research was useful in viewing our discourse as collective storytelling. I consider this below.

The interview methods I employed sought to facilitate a more authentic discourse. Here 'authentic' means an interview framed as a conversation of equals rather than, in terms of power dynamics, that of 'analyst' and client (Sennett, 2017). By 'conversation of equals', I mean an interview conducted in a spirit of cooperation and respect - that we are both engaged in a cooperative venture to produce knowledge. It assumes that we are 'accountable agents' able to give reasons for our 'actions, feelings, and beliefs' (Brinkmann, 2013:165). It also assumes that because we are both engaged in knowledge production, I actively contribute to the discourse and be willing to have my own beliefs challenged by the respondent. I sought to bring the respondent and myself from a state of being opinionated to a state of knowing, however aspirational this might be.

When planning how to achieve this, Brinkmann (2013) offered a helpful overview of interview approaches, including their strengths and weaknesses. Drawing on his observations, I devised my approach. To conduct a conversation of equals, I acknowledged that listening was as privileged and important to knowledge gathering as speaking (Rogers, 1945).

My approach acknowledges Holland and Lave's (2001) observation, based on Bakhtin's (1981) work, that persons are not 'metaphorical recorders designed for faithful reproduction of the discourses or texts to which they were exposed' (p. 12) but rather meaning-makers of these discourses, who take active stances and self-author. While undertaking this cooperative venture, there was an acceptance that these interchanges would likely have no outcome, neat conclusion, or synthesis. However, we may still

derive a better understanding of each other. By their end, many of the interviews generated more questions than answers and provided fertile ground for reflexivity

This cooperative venture of interviewing included dialogic and  discourse, formal and informal speech, empathy, and sympathy. I employed *dialogic questioning* to elicit the respondent's experiences and beliefs. I sought to produce knowledge through *dialectical examination*. Dialogic here means being a good listener and paying attention to what the respondent implies but does not make explicit. In these circumstances, I used 'in other words' or an equivalent phrase to clarify what began as a misunderstanding or uncertainty. To promote open discussion and acknowledge that our conclusions were likely to be tentative, I employed the subjunctive mood, for example, 'perhaps'.

Sennett (2012) remarks, 'The dialogic conversation prospers through empathy, the sentiment of curiosity about who other people are in themselves' (p. 23) while maintaining a respectful distance to avoid ruining the conversation through too much identification with the other person. The extract below, from my interview with Miriam on 18 July 2018, provides a sample of the types of questions I asked and the strategies I employed.

Stephen: Do you think there is a social element as well? (Closed question)

Miriam: Yes.

Stephen: As well as an educational?

Miriam: Yeah.

Stephen: Whereas you can't do that in a classroom (me figuring as I go along, during the ebb and flow of the conversation), can you?

Miriam: Exactly

Stephen: You can take that outside, later maybe, you make friends in the classroom, but people can socialise while learning, I would imagine. (The use of the subjunctive mood)

Like you say, we have a chat, don't we?

Miriam: Yeah, and you break some rules that are boring in the classroom.

Stephen: What like? (open question)

Miriam: Erm, people can say something that they, you know suddenly some idea just comes to your mind and you won't say that but, in the classroom, you should be careful always, if it is the right time to say that.

To facilitate a conversation of equals, I centred myself at all times in the conversation. I employed an approach pioneered by Carl Rogers (1945) in his psychotherapy practice and described by Brinkmann (2013). This approach views the interview as a conversation and privileges the interviewees as experts in the field of their experiences, narratives, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs (Brinkmann, 2013). In this method, the interviewer takes a non-judgemental stance and uses active listening to bring out the respondent's attitudes and feelings. My questions were pre-determined but non-directive as I sought to avoid leading questions that the interviewee might perceive indicated the answer I preferred.

A conversational style allowed me to express emotions and for my personality to be present throughout. I hoped this approach would facilitate authentic discourse and build trust between interviewer and interviewee. However, listening is a difficult skill to perfect; it often seemed to get in the way of the next question I was straining to ask. With practice, I improved.

When I interviewed, I sought to open social space, being receptive to changes in the discussion's direction, and restrain the 'fetish of assertiveness' (Williams, 2002). Opening an indeterminate open space (Sennett, 2017) while 'practising' empathy allowed the forging of a bond based on encounter rather than embrace. As Sennett (2017:34) remarks, 'empathy attends to another person on his or her… terms'. However, a conversation of equals precludes mutual self-disclosure, and I resisted matching the respondent's divulgences of personal information with some revelation of my own. There was no intended reciprocity of self-revelation, but I cannot discount unintended disclosure.

However, I wanted a duel, not a duet and asked challenging and searching questions. I prepared for disagreements and unresolved issues. In return, I was content to receive 'curve-ball' questions and roll with the blows. Dialectic examination suited this approach.

With its precedents in philosophy, notably the Socratic method, dialectic examination is a back and forth process, where opposing ideas are expressed to facilitate an understanding of the other's beliefs. Sennett (2012) notes that there may be tension and conflict in the exchange, but this remains a cooperative undertaking.

An approach founded on cooperative argument, through an exchange of questions and answers, proved a useful tool to explore how tutors viewed and implemented abstract teaching concepts in their practice, for example, diversity and inclusion. Examples of its use are presented below and in Appendix Three.

Below I present three examples of the collaborative and dialectic approaches I employed. The three examples are from my interview with Clare on 29 April 2019. My first interview for the study was in 2017. By 2019, when I interviewed Clare, my technique had developed, and my inquiry was centred around themes, which, by then, had emerged from the social hermeneutic analysis of data sources (see Chapter Three).

Example One demonstrates the collaborative method.

EXAMPLE ONE

Stephen: What qualities do you think you need to be an educator in the community?

Clare: You have to be quite easy-going, not be too authoritarian, make sure it's about them completely. But chat as well and be relaxed with them. What do you think?

Example Two demonstrates our collaborative exploration of inclusion.

EXAMPLE TWO

Stephen: What does inclusion mean to you?

Clare: Making things accessible to people.

Stephen: What does it look like in your teaching in the community?

Clare: Making sure everyone has the right amount of time each; that I give them all the right amount of attention... also there's different people and how they learn differently.

Stephen: Are there any people or groups you would refuse to teach?

Clare: I've never come across that. I'd say no. I've worked in prisons with murderers and sex offenders so no.

Stephen: What would you do if you were in a community situation and… someone there… was very sexist and… patronising towards you and coming out with really 1970s'-type jokes to others?

Clare: I'd… try and reach them somehow, talk to them.

Stephen: You'd open a conversation?

Clare: Absolutely. I'd probably try and win him over.

Stephen: How would you do that?

Clare: Get to know them, ask them about themselves. They'll have their reasons… just find out someone's background and what it is.

Stephen: So, you couldn't think of anyone – a holocaust denier? Would you still take that on board and have that discussion?

Clare: Yeah. Because there's no way forward otherwise. You want to bring down barriers not keep them there.

Stephen: At what point would you say this is a lost cause?

Clare: If the whole group is really upset or he's, or she's really horrible, but there would be mental health issues… wouldn't there? If someone's that bad.

Example Three is a discussion on whether teachers should limit freedom of expression. The tone is conversational as we attempt to figure a solution to the unsolvable and apply abstract concepts to realistic scenarios. Although I had planned my questions, I also factored in flexibility and opportunities for the interview to go 'off-road', hoping it would produce unexpected data.

EXAMPLE THREE

Stephen: Say they produced certain art. Is there anything where you would say that's beyond the pale… beyond all decency?

Clare: There was a guy on my foundation course [whom Clare taught] whose theme was about emasculating men in society. It was advanced, his research, and he was talking about graffiti where you'd see a willy and what that meant. So, a lot of his artwork was about that image, and his research was about that as well. Obviously, there was a problem because we had to show this work at the end of the year show, and there's the legalities of under eighteen-year-olds so his work was in a room and it had to have a label saying 'this could cause offence' because it was quite explicit.

Stephen: How do you feel about that?

Clare: Well, it was intelligent, and it was well-researched.

Stephen: Any issues?

Clare: None at all.

Stephen: What would you do if someone created that in your community art class and the majority of people objected to it?

Clare: I think it's fine as long as you've got the research to understand what… you're doing. For example, say one of the gentlemen was drawing page 3 girls, I'd probably show him artists who paint the nude and I'd probably have a discussion about this image- is it romanticised, is it stylised, do you think you should be looking at the nude in a different way to what is perceived? I would have that conversation with them.

Stephen: Would you have to explain to the majority who didn't want that person taking part or drawing that? Would you accede to their wishes eventually or would you stand up and protect that person?

Clare: If you had a discussion about it, I think it would be alright.

Stephen: What if a student drew Mohammed?

Clare: You know we've been so lucky... I've not come across that.

Stephen: These are all hypotheticals- it could happen, and I don't know what I would do or what the solution would be in that situation. I would probably have a discussion… do they realise the offence they can cause and why are they drawing that. The person who'd researched it – if it were to make a… profound point, but if it were just for attention, to trivialise or possibly not well thought out but to shock…

Clare: In the art world, there is this picture. [using her smartphone Clare shows me a portrait of the child-murderer Myra Hindley] There's an art gallery called Sensation; basically it's about shocking people – this is a good example, it's a painting by Marcus Harvey – it was done with children's handprints, so there's arguments- people say it's distasteful…

Stephen: There's good shock, and there's a bad shock? It's an interesting debate...

This approach allowed for meta-moments where I could step back and explain to the interviewee why I was pursuing a line of questioning and explain to her that I did not have a solution to the hypothetical or issue I raised. I reassured my interviewees that I was not trying to trick them or require from them a neat solution or tidy answer. I shared my predicament and puzzlement with them and invited them to help me figure out a solution (if any) together.

Concerning epistemology (the theory of how we come to know the world, Banks et al., 2014:38), a more experienced researcher might have seen past Clare's statements and contradictions and probed for the origins of her opinions and on what they were based. As Boghossian and Lindsay (2019) comment, 'The most common mistake in conversations is focusing on what people claim to know (beliefs and conclusions) as opposed to how they came to know it, their reasoning processes' (p. 60).

**A Key Issue Arising from Interviewing**

A key issue when interviewing with Miriam was that English is not her first language, and I was mindful of possible barriers or false steps during our conversation. For example, when trying to communicate a concept for which she cannot find the appropriate English word or where there is no corresponding English phrase. Some English words might carry a cultural significance different from their accepted meaning in Iran. It is difficult enough to pin down a widely used English word people use whose first language is English. Gee (2004) provides an example from Fillmore (1975) to demonstrate how difficult 'bachelor' is to define and receive the full agreement of all.

During my interviews, I was mindful of potential difficulties with words and concepts like education, socialising, and volunteering. The advantage of employing figured worlds theory (Holland, 2001), initially to analyse the interviews, was its caution that meaning is local (Gee, 2004), and the words Miriam translated into English may have attached norms, habits and idioms from her own culture (Hanks, 2018). On a practical level, I tried to address the issue by flagging abstract words (no easy task as we often take meaning for granted) and asking Miriam to clarify whether the meaning of a word she or I used was broadly the same in Iran, for example 'family'.

Another issue was that my conversations touched upon issues capable of propagating debate along social, cultural and historical lines and dichotomies, including East -v- West relations, religion -v- secular, male roles -v- female roles, individual rights -v- state rights. However worthy their consideration, I attempted to resist employing 'easy binaries' (Barron, 2016:331) or straying into unfamiliar territory. Instead, I focussed on education in community settings and considered the macro themes only when relevant to my research.

### Journal Entries

Journaling provided opportunities to acquire knowledge through reflexivity. In turn, the themes my journals highlighted informed my further reading and drew me to writers and theories that might help me explain these phenomena. Drawing on my supervisors' feedback on draft sections of this thesis also formed part of the method of study and knowledge gathering.

### The Challenges of Data Organisation

By the second year of my thesis, workflow and data organisation became a pressing concern. The sheer volume of materials and data I had accumulated made it necessary to re-examine my workflow and data organisation. I wanted a method to organise my data that would best produce knowledge and understanding. Although I used Evernote and Dropbox for storing notes and journals, these were separate systems with limited connectedness. I sought a streamlined system that enabled me to locate and access my papers and notes quickly. Concerning referencing, I trialled EndNote and Mendeley but found them difficult to integrate with my main storage systems. Eventually, I selected Zotero, which also integrated well with EndNote.

I found Sonke Ahrens *How to Take Smart Notes* (2017) particularly useful when organising workflow and data organisation. The book referenced a system capable of generating knowledge through linking ideas. Ahrens advocated the practice of Niklas Luhmann, a prolific author of academic texts including 60 books. Luhmann recorded his notes on index cards he placed in a zettelkasten (slip box) and connected them to existing notes through tagging keywords (not subjects or categories). Through this, Luhmann created 'a system of growing interconnections of thoughts and ideas' (Schiller, 2017:228). These notes he would later turn into developed arguments and fully formulated texts. Luhmann used index cards and boxes, but I adapted this to Microsoft Word using a Cornell notes template in which I would record ideas and notes and tag keywords inside the document, e.g. #emergence, #affect theory. I titled the word files in the same order: DATE-MONTH-YEAR-TIME-SUBJECT, for example, 040320200830-Affect-theory-methodology-politics-of-emotion. A practical solution to arranging my notes, it also helped organise my thoughts and generate knowledge. For

example, seemingly disparate thoughts and ideas were able to link, find commonalities and cross-pollinate.

### 3. Choosing and Applying Theory

To make sense of my data and ultimately apply my own theories, I drew on Figured Worlds, Communities of Practice and Affect Theory applied by Holland (2001), Wenger (1998) and Ahmed (2014), respectively. These theories helped me think about what I perceived was going on in my community practice.

Methodologically, the research process and the nature of what emerges from it are conceptualised as contested (Barron, 2016:8). All have their strengths and weaknesses. These theories were my prime 'lenses' of analysis because they suited an examination of lived practice within a theoretical framework. While all theories are simplified representations of the world, open to challenge, and the data to re-interpretation, for a study of emergent practice, the three approaches opened opportunities for nuanced exploration. The theories I considered were not applied exclusively or at the same time. When focusing on the same phenomena, I used them interchangeably to give alternating perspectives and lend nuance. For example, when studying the WhatsApp group, the learners and I established, I could examine it as a community of practice (Wenger) or as a collective of emotions (Ahmed). Although the relationship between theory and practice is complex, because my study took an emergent approach to theory-making, describing, and re-describing a feature of my practice through existing theories, in turn, helped me formulate my own theory.

Below I give a short account of the theories.

#### Figured Worlds Theory

Figured Worlds (Holland, 2001) provided a dynamic tool of inquiry because it acknowledges: that the 'worlds' we inhabit are not static and, as society changes, that which people take as typical can and does change (Gee, 2011). It was a useful tool for analysing the gaps and silences in interviews and provided a means to explore these spaces and speculate their meaning. Over 20 years old, the theory has generated a substantial body of research I could consult. As it focuses on practice, a significant part

of my study, I found it combined well with Communities of Practice Theory when meaning-making.

### Communities of Practice Theory

Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice Theory helped me examine my teacher identity, my networking (boundary spanning), and the social element of my teaching. It helped me view Writing Well as a hub for information exchange and knowledge creation (Lai et al., 2006). Communities of Practice was also useful as a theory of social learning.

Communities of Practice was relevant to my methodology because it provided a framework for examining how individuals collaborating with others (social participation) create knowledge and facilitate learning. It was useful when considering emergent practice because it presents learning as agential and dynamic, being situated in the practice and in the interaction of participants.

Sfard and Prusak's (2005) study of identity construction through storytelling provided a tool to consider the interviews I conducted as collective storytelling - stories both researcher and interviewee engaged in collaboratively in telling. This focused my attention on what stories may emerge from such storytelling. It also made me consider what critical stories we brought to the interview.

Communities of Practice provided me with a means to examine and understand the networking and boundary spanning aspects of my practice. These insights were supplemented by the work of Alison Gilchrist (2019), who examines in detail the dynamics of community networks. Her insights were beneficial because they are based on her long experience of community networks and resonated with my practice. I examined my networking practice in terms of her concept of connexity, boundary-spanning and virtual networks. Having considered these, I re-examined my interview data and searched for examples of my interviewees' networking in their teaching roles.

Having re-examined my interview data, Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice model afforded an array of analytical tools to examine my practice. It helped me relate my educator experience to the model and identify a potential gap in Wenger's

theory (1998) regarding trajectory into practice. I considered this worthy of further exploration and an opportunity for me to contribute to the understanding of legitimate peripheral participation from the perspective of an emergent micro-social enterprise.

### Affect Theory

In examining the strong emotional bonds that develop between participants and tutors, exemplified by relationships continuing long after a course has ended (course stickiness), I was drawn to Sara Ahmed's (2014) work within Affect Theory. Her observations allowed me to apply an additional analytical lens. Her work helped me analyse the strong emotional bonds which develop between learners and tutors in my practice. It led me to consider non-linguistic features of practice, for example, how mood, atmosphere, and feelings might facilitate bonding.

## 4. Ethical Considerations

Ethics within research are there to protect, guide and give clarity to the research for all stakeholders (British Educational Research Association, 2018), and I acknowledge the important responsibilities I hold to the university and participants. In November 2017, The Manchester Metropolitan University approved my research design and application for ethical clearance, and throughout my study, I have followed the university's guidelines.

Having selected my participants and speaking with them, before securing their agreement, I forwarded them a Participant Information Sheet which explained inter alia, the study's purpose, how data would be used and stored, the participant's right to withdraw from the study and contact details. I ensured the participants had time to consider what their involvement entailed and to raise queries before signing the agreement.

Before the start of each interview, I allocated time to enable the participants to raise queries and for me to address these fully. Participants signed consents after the interview once they were satisfied with its content. A copy of the Participant Information Sheet is found in Appendix Six. I reassured participants that pseudonyms would replace their names and details that might identify them redacted from the thesis. During the proofreading and editing process, I did a specific run-through of all

the chapters to ensure my participants' anonymity was protected. The participants' anonymity will be assured outside the thesis by me using their pseudonyms at the Viva or any research presentations.

I also assured participants that data generated from the interview, including recordings and transcripts, would be held securely online using Dropbox servers which require password verification to access. Consents were signed, and the participants kept a copy.

On 23 May 2018, the Data Protection Act came into force and applied the provisions of the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). In anticipation, I researched the principles of the legislation and then attended an all-day seminar on how the regulations affected the handling of data, my responsibilities, and the rights of individuals whose data I held. After this, I contacted my participants to confirm that I had examined how their data was stored and assured them it complied with the new legislation and regulations.

As the participants and I regularly keep in touch, I have provided updates informally and verbally. However, in May 2020, I contacted the participants formally to update them on the study and offered them an opportunity to read my finalised interview analysis and findings. They all responded. Although they did not take up my offer to share the findings, all confirmed they would view my findings in the completed thesis.

**The Dataset and Reflexivity**

Dewey notes that it is only 'reflective thought… [that] is truly educative in value' (Dewey, 1920/2004:3). Throughout my study, I actively sought opportunities for reflective enquiry and chose datasets that would facilitate this.

The iterative process was conducive to reflective thought. Working from a range of data (journal entries, notebook observations, and interviews) and revisiting them regularly, in tandem with literature reviews, enabled me to reflect on themes in several ways and add depth and nuance to my study. The process of analysing the interview transcripts, organising themes, reordering, ranking and then mediating the data also assisted reflexivity.

I developed the habit of carrying a notebook at all times and recording my thoughts or observations contemporaneously or shortly after. I often wrote these notes in fuller form as a journal entry, and this process aided reflexivity. Journal writing, a solitary activity, lends itself to reflection. Journal writing generated knowledge by linking my reflections to information in the interview transcripts.

Reflective thought was critical in generating ideas and involved examining evidence, thinking about it critically and assessing it. This elevated thinking involved me questioning the grounds of my beliefs and the beliefs of my participants. Reflexivity affirmed or challenged my ideas and generated new ones.

Reflective enquiry requires time. Time helped me process and formulate my own theories. Part B of the doctorate programme gave me adequate thinking time to formulate the questions I asked myself and the interviewees. The study taught me to be patient and devote adequate thinking time to my study. Initially, I found this frustrating. I wanted to move on at the expense of gathering only the low hanging fruit. However, in the final twelve months, as many new (and exciting) ideas and theories emerged from my study, I learned that reflexivity works to its own schedule and is worth the wait. As theory emerges in its own time, there was little point in finishing the thesis early. Seeking to finish the thesis early was to finish the thesis prematurely.

Interviews enabled opportunities for reflection. The participants' contribution is a strength of this study. All were generous with their time and willing to engage with broader discussions on education and debate hypothetical scenarios (see above). Collaborative exploration gave my interviewees a sense of active participation and a stake in the outcome of this study.

An unexpected result of the interview process was finding myself able to formulate ideas and articulate my thoughts far better when speaking with another, rather than thinking things through in isolation. In hindsight, I could have involved my interviewees more. For example, after the interview, I could have invited them to formulate questions for me to answer at our next interview. This approach would have given the interviewee opportunities to reflect, and their questions might have revealed themes I

had not considered. I feel a triangulated discussion, later in my study, involving two participants and me in conversation may have provided opportunities for participants to share their reflections and generated further knowledge.

### Limitations to My Method

Arguably the limitations of this study lie within the small sample of interviewees I use as primary data. However, a smaller sample allowed for in-depth interviews and analysis. Using an empirical and interpretive method meant much rested on my skills in interpreting these interviews; encouraging the interviewees to be candid in their responses balanced these concerns.

Although a small sample may be a limitation in this study, my lived teacher experience is its strength and an integral research method. My positionality is what makes this thesis unique and my contribution original. The thesis was created from my reading but also from my lived teacher experience. I reached a point in the study when I moved beyond reading theory and began creating my own. Reflection enabled this moment (see Reflection Chapter).

In this respect, writers who provided insights based on their unique positionality within the subject of their study helped me enormously. For example, Alison Gilchrist (2019) presented valuable insights because of her background in community development work which she brought to her research. Her lived experience of community work aided my reflexivity and theory-making. Likewise, Sarah Banks's (2018) work on dialogical inquiry aided my research. Her active engagement in community development brought practical experience along with her theoretical perspectives.

### 5. Closing Observations

Regarding research, when I set up my practice, guidance on how to run a social enterprise to deliver community education in one's community was hard to find. In part, this was because there was little advice relating to my particular situation. Yet, ironically, it was also because there is voluminous general information out there. Enough to overwhelm. Some sites held snippets of useful advice, and through a process of stitching these together, I fashioned guidance of sorts. As there was no 'go-to'

website, my learning was overwhelmingly experiential, and my best teachers were the mistakes I made and reflecting on these.

Had I known of its existence, the *Connected Communities Report* (Facer et al., 2016) usefully charts community dynamics and would have served me as an old-timer (see Findings Chapter and Analysis Chapter). The report provided examples of university and community participatory practice. It offered insightful reflections on the research process: 'Recognise that time is to collaborative research what a supercomputer is to big data' (p 7). Like many of the Connected Communities publications, its use of plain English wherever possible makes it accessible to a broad audience, including community partners working alongside the academy.

My experience of using Internet search engines has made me aware of their strengths and weaknesses as a research tool. Research using search engines is not a level playing field. Algorithms are critical determiners in how websites are ranked, and researchers signposted to them. A hierarchy of sites exist. Search engines rank websites in terms of relevance, popularity, and ideology. It means that I would not have found helpful sites (helpful for my work and my research) without personal recommendations. Therefore, word of mouth remains relevant despite living in a technological age where information supposedly lies at our fingertips.

The research process has taught me that knowledge is a frail thing, and although I make several bold statements in my study, little is certain. In support of my bold statements, I rest these on my positionality within the study as a researcher documenting my lived teacher experience (see below).

# CHAPTER FOUR: EMERGENT FEATURES AND THEMES FROM THE PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION

This Chapter details the features and themes that emerged from the social hermeneutic analysis of data sources (see Chapter Three). The features are presented as possible indicators of emergent or divergent practice and include excessive networking, boundary spanning and indeterminate course duration (see 1. below). The conclusions I draw from these features are tentative and presented as a basis for discussion, reflection, and further exploration. For structure and presentation, I provide sub-headings - an artificial but practical imposition, although the features I present in this Chapter are best considered holistically.

These features frame my study. They were chosen because they were significant indicators of emergent practice. For example, identifying emergent modes of practice involved examining how tutors approach teaching differently in the community compared to established settings. Tutor identity involved me examining the many roles tutors undertake to secure teaching opportunities in the community. These differ from the roles and responsibilities that colleagues in schools, colleges, and universities typically carry out. I focused on tutor uncertainty and vulnerability because it is likely caused by teaching in a newly established teaching environment and therefore indicates emergent practice. Although compartmentalised for this study, many features could serve to illustrate other facets of my teaching. For example, accounts of tutor agency would also illustrate facets of educator identity.

## 1. Emergent or Divergent Modes of Practice

Throughout my study, a line of inquiry is whether my educational practice is sufficiently divergent from that practised in established settings to be described as 'emergent' (see page 8). In this study, 'divergent practice' refers to practice and practises different from those I experienced or observed when teaching in schools, college, and university. In this study, I employ divergence as an indicator of emergent practice: if my community teaching diverges significantly enough from teaching in school, college, and university, it may indicate an emergent practice.

In this study, 'emergent' refers to a process that becomes a practice. That is, a process that begins as a loose collection of decisions and actions, with general aims and objectives and over time develops into a practice that is corporeal – substantive (see pages 8 and 9).

Emergence offers me a conceptual resource for thinking about the many different aspects of my practice as a unity and whether my practice contains enough variation and divergence to make it a singular form of educative practice**.** Therefore, I worked on the premise that if I encountered examples of tutors (including me) applying established educational norms differently in the community or developing new ones, it might indicate new modes of practice. Similarly, evidence of new cultural symbols (Holland and Lachicotte, 2007) referencing Vygotsky (1978/1997) or artefacts (Wenger, 1998) arising from our teaching might indicate emergence. These are discussed in the Literature Review.

For example, excessive networking (see page 112) in my practice indicates divergence from established teaching. Although networking per se is not divergent, it being a feature of established teaching, *excessive* networking is. Also, where my networking occurs (cafés, bars, church halls) when it occurs (weekends and late weekday evenings), and the associated pro bono civic work (chairing community meetings, leafleting door-to-door to promote events and attending them) all strongly suggests divergent practice and by implication, emergent practice.

Related to networking and relevant to tutor identity is boundary spanning (see page 46), which involves securing teaching opportunities through operating across (spanning) many interconnecting networks, formal and informal. In turn, I shapeshift (assume different roles and identities) to operate within each network. Networking and boundary spanning are significant components of my educator identity, requiring me to assume many identities (administrator, project developer and manager, bid-writer and recruiter) to secure teaching work. The degree of shapeshifting necessary to boundary span is excessive compared to when I taught in school, college, and university. Again, this strongly suggests divergent practice and, by implication, emergent practice.

Indeterminate course duration is a phenomenon I had never encountered in established teaching and challenges traditional notions of the tutor–participant relationship (see page 109). Indeterminate course duration, again, indicates emergent practice because it is a feature divergent from established teaching.

In this Chapter I begin by examining aspects of community practice that suggested some deviation from established practice but, on balance, were insufficient to demonstrate divergence and emergent community practice. However, I include them because while on the surface, they appear enactments no different from established practice, the *reasons for their enactment differ* and, in this respect, may indicate emergent or divergent practice. I then present aspects of my practice that strongly indicate emergent practice.

### 1.1 Planning Lessons

My study found that, like their colleagues in established settings, tutors spent considerable time planning lessons, conducting assessment for learning, and preparing differentiated materials. Also, in the absence of an established curriculum, tutors prioritised the learners' personal development.

Ruth and I prepare formal lesson plans and schemes of work. Interestingly, tutors still prepared these documents even when not obliged to do so. Tutors planned lessons that were learner-centred rather than syllabus driven. For example, Clare, who teaches art to residents at an apartment complex, facilitated learner-centred lessons based on her learners' interests. My study found that tutors seeking guidance and ideas for course content often consulted a syllabus used by schools and colleges. Also, tutors often used the same teaching materials they had used in established settings.

Clare's learner-centred approach, based on her learner's interests and needs, contrasted with the approach she took with her sixth form students. With no formal curriculum to guide her, Clare allowed the sessions to develop organically based on the learners' interests. The lessons were structured, but the learners' interests informed her planning. Responding to the interests of each learner allowed her to differentiate activities and assignments. From our interview, 29 April 2019:

> Clare: There's a guy who loves working from his imagination, and at college, I'd be telling him to be working from primary sources, but I haven't said that to him because he loves drawing from his imagination… I'm not going to change what he loves doing. He says, 'Are those eyes right?' and I say, 'What I'd do is…'. I would find it really hard to do it from my imagination, but… you take the lead from them.

Planning learner-centred lessons involved Clare creating differentiated materials. She drew upon her pre-existing knowledge of teaching approaches from established practice and adapted these to meet the needs of her community art class. Clare plans lessons as rigorously as she would at her sixth form. From the same interview:

> Clare: I do plan- it takes quite a bit of time… I usually write out a handout – these personal projects they're doing. I'll give them two or three artists to look at, and I'll put images down and give them a little outline about each artist. At the beginning of the session, I'll talk about what these artists do and about their artwork. They've been doing a copy of the artist's work, and they go off and do their own thing related to that subject.

Context appears to determine the formality of planning. While the courses Ruth and I run require structured planning, Clare, by contrast, runs an open-ended course that people can join at any time. Her planning reflects this. In the same interview, Clare described her planning. At her sixth form, Clare follows a syllabus. At the residential home, she does not, but she still applies aims and objectives. She holds aspirations for her art-class learners, which include, through art, their self-improvement and wellbeing:

> Clare: You can be anywhere in the world, the most horrible place on Earth but you could look and see something amazing in it. So, art is about sharpening your vision and seeing things which you might not see before, and the world becomes a more interesting place.

**Summary**

My findings suggest that established practice still informs tutor practice in the community. When tutors encounter uncertainty regarding their practice, they often turn to established practice for solutions. This supports Holland et al.'s (2001b) observations on how smaller worlds of practice are influenced by the 'gravitational pull' of larger worlds. Also, in the absence of a curriculum, tutors adopt a learner-centred approach, introducing opportunities for differentiated learning based on the learner's interests. I

suggest the uncertainty driving tutors to maintain the artefacts of established practice indicates emergent practice.

### 1.2 Constrained Educator Agency

Although the examples above imply tutors have more freedom to choose how and what to deliver than colleagues in established settings, my study found several factors that constrained agency. For example, funders that set criteria determined course content and outcomes.

Fee-paying learners also influenced course content, often viewing lessons as a collaborative process of negotiation between the tutor and themselves. Location affected the lesson's power-dynamic, particularly if, like Clare, tutors taught at the learners' residence.

#### The Need to Meet Criteria Set by Funders

My study found that the agency to plan lessons was often tempered by the criteria funders set. The funder's definition of success and the criteria they set determined how tutors planned courses and delivered lessons.

Ruth, an experienced third-sector practitioner, highlighted the gap between the community model's potential to deliver bespoke learning and the limitations of enacting this. In our interview, 3 January 2018, Ruth highlighted this gap.

> Informal education can offer a more person-centred approach, in that you can tailor it more to the individual needs of participants as opposed to the Government prescribing what the students must learn.

Clare's teaching practice supports this observation, but Ruth introduced the proviso:

> So, in modern times you can be *potentially* [my emphasis] more creative and less stressed-out, but it depends on how it's funded. The funding stream may set the criteria.

My experience of the Writing Well course supports Ruth's observation. The NHS funds the course, and the scheme of work and lessons I plan must meet the outcomes it prescribes. We are required to conduct detailed monitoring and assessment throughout, then feedback to the funders. We must set outcomes based on the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing', which are:

- Keep learning
- Connect
- Take Notice
- Be Active
- Give to Others

Also, to secure funding, tutors must demonstrate how they will incorporate the Five Ways in lessons and provide opportunities for learners to trial these pathways in their lives.

**Learner – Tutor Power Dynamics**

My study found that a tutor's agency is tempered by the dynamic interplay between them and their learners, especially when learners self-fund their studies, and the relationship is one of tutor and customer. My findings suggest that paying for lessons facilitates more learner engagement with the course and often makes the learner the dominant partner in the relationship.

Clare highlighted the learners' power to hire and fire.

> Clare: It's definitely about them in every sense. They know it's their home, and they feel quite powerful about that. I tend to find they are committed. I think because they're paying, there's an investment there.

Clare's experience finds commonality with universities which, since the introduction of tuition fees, has transformed students into customers who want more bang for their buck. Clare also highlighted a lesson's location as a key element of the learner-tutor power balance.

**Location**

Unlike established settings, where educators own the education space, and the students' occupancy is transitory, Clare teaches her learners at their homes, on their patch. Being the outsider and a transient has practical implications which affect Clare's agency:

> I haven't got keys to get in, so I have to wait for someone to let me in.

All Clare’s learners are elderly residents, and many own their apartments. Living there is a life choice: Many sold their homes to move into apartments with communal space and staff that provide twenty-four-hour security and assistance. They are relatively wealthy, and staff refer to them as 'the owners.'

Yet, despite the potential power imbalance, and basic facilities to deliver art classes, Clare saw the benefit of tutors leaving their established settings to teach in the community. In our interview, 29 April 2019, she perceived pedagogical advantage in tutors teaching at learners' homes because it created a relaxed teaching environment.

> Clare: Even though it can be a lot harder, it's still interesting to go out of an educational venue to somewhere different. It is more relaxed; it's more directly to do with the people who are there than in an establishment.
>
> Stephen: Do you think that adds to or detracts from the teaching?
>
> Clare: I think it can add because education can take place anywhere, especially in that place… it's at their convenience; they don't have to go anywhere it's in their home, that's a massive benefit.

Being taught at home led the art group to assume responsibilities above those in an established setting. These included cleaning and tidying equipment and maintaining a storeroom.

In contrast, I deliver Writing Well on neutral ground - at a local library, and a wellbeing centre. Unlike the art class, the course is free for my learners because the NHS fund it. Although learners cannot directly hire and fire me, my agency is limited because if I do not meet the funder's criteria, it could stop funding me (see above). Also, given the insecure nature of our tenure, reliant always on participant (service user) feedback to funders, there is often the added pressure of ensuring learners are satisfied with the course and their tutor’s support.

**Boundary-Spanning**

I found tutors have the agency to continue to work in both established education and community teaching. Clare still teaches at a sixth form, and I occasionally undertake gig work for a university.

In our interview on 6 January 2018, Ruth demonstrated that tutors interweave between the community and established settings:

> I've taken a slightly sideways shift, and I'm looking at developing emotional education courses for communities of interest and identity, geographic communities for instance… and also, I am working with Dr----  who created a community education programme called Menopause Swings and Roundabouts, which empowers women to manage their menopausal years better.

Prima facie, Ruth's 'sideways shift' remark belied no sense of a hierarchy between established education and emergent community practice. The fact she maintains links with established worlds of education through Dr –--- demonstrates her agency to span worlds of education. The interviews provided many instances of tutor's boundary-spanning as part of their practice. However, Ruth later revealed her frustration at failing to secure sustained employment. My study found boundary-spanning was no guarantee of sustained employment, and Ruth often undertook gig work unrelated to education. Boundary-spanning and tutor identity are areas examined by Alison Gilchrist (2019) and Etienne Wenger (1998), and I discuss their contribution to this study and my theorising in the Discussion Chapter.

### Summary

My study found that a tutor's agency in the community is often curtailed as much as in established settings but for different reasons. These included funding criteria and power dynamics between learners and tutor. Course funding and lesson location curtailed agency. While tutors had the agency to work in both established and developing educational settings, working in both did not guarantee secure employment. Because a community tutor's reduced agency occurs for reasons different from their colleagues in established settings, this may indicate divergent practice.

### 2. Course Legacy and Social, Co-Produced, Learning

My study found high degrees of social interaction between learners and their tutors. Many learners wanted to maintain ties with other learners and with their tutors even after the course ended (see below). My findings suggest that post-course socialising is higher than in established settings and indicates divergent practice. From tutor and volunteer accounts, socialising inside and outside lessons not only assisted bonding but generated knowledge through co-production (see below and the Discussion Chapter).

My findings suggest maintaining bonds through socialising occurs more on my courses than in established education. In comparison, a course delivered in established settings is transactional - more focused on learners gaining skills and qualifications and moving on. In schools, colleges, and universities, the tutor-learner relationship tends not to continue beyond the course or develop into a social relationship. In contrast, it is difficult to pinpoint precisely when the Writing Well course has ended as participants and tutors tend to 'stick around'. Relationships continue to develop, and practice continues in new forms. For detailed examples of post-course socialising, please see Literature Review.

Maintaining these bonds requires much goodwill from former learners and tutors. At their request, the tutors established a Writing Well WhatsApp group (see Literature Review). Tutors consistently post links to writing resources and attend the former learners' café mornings. Eighty per cent of former participants are signed up to the WhatsApp group, although commitment varies with some posting more often than others.

My study suggests that socialising outside the course sustains continuing education. For example, 'former' learners meet at cafes, they share and discuss their new work. The WhatsApp group provides opportunities for collaborative learning. There, learners engage in discussions and, if feedback is requested, post constructive comments about each other's work. These examples demonstrate social learning's potential to produce knowledge through co-production (Banks et al., 2014) beyond a course's formal end date.

This unexpected side-product of the course has implications for tutor identity and challenges conventional notions of a tutor's need to remain professionally distanced from her learners (please see below). It also challenges the assumptions we make regarding a course's ending (please see below). This has implications for learner identity and traditional notions of when learners cease being learners. It also asks when does a tutor's responsibility towards their learners end?

The strong bonds Writing Well facilitated, I named 'course stickiness' (see the Discussion Chapter), and the WhatsApp group provides a strong example. As I detailed

above, the WhatsApp group facilitates social learning, as do the events we organise (please see Literature Review). Like the WhatsApp group, these events provide opportunities for collaborative learning and knowledge production. Regarding identity, my findings suggest these events create a blurring of participant, volunteer, learner and tutor roles.

My findings suggest that learners use socialising as a dynamic tool to claim ownership of the course and adapt it to their own needs through operating a 'covert curriculum' where the learners' investment in the course can develop independently of the tutor (please see Discussion Chapter). When Writing Well ended, the course, in a sense, continued. It became an artefact and acquired a symbolic status – a function above the course. Former learners maintained its name, its memory and re-defined it. It became a symbolic rallying post for learners to meet and build activities around. In this respect, the course shape-shifted, akin to its learners and tutors.

Clare's account of learners creating and maintaining a storeroom suggests learners invest in a course and stake a claim in it. Also, through socialising, her learners continued to learn outside lessons.

From our interview, 29 April 2019:

> The group started to come together at regular intervals, and… formed… a social group. Every two weeks, they meet up independently as a group – I set them a project, and they meet every two weeks and talk about what they've done, and they've created this little storeroom for the art materials, and it's great.

Clare provides a similar account of socialising and bonding between her learners and knowledge being co-produced. Like Writing Well, bonding occurred within and without lessons.

In the same interview, Clare described an extempore lesson on ageing. Her 'classroom' was a learning space where the tutor and learners co-produced knowledge. These interactions were informal ('conversations') and rewarding experiences. As she related the story to me, Clare's fondness for her learners was tangible. She smiled as she described them.

The 'lesson' involved a gentleman who was fighting a severe illness, describing his life.

Clare: There's some really nice conversations; I once nearly came to tears on one of them- I was so close. He was talking about his childhood and his mum and stuff. I was filling up; it was so sad. What an amazing life he's had. That's what's l love about working with adults, especially that age – they've got a whole life to talk about.

And he wasn't just telling me; he was telling the group – it was really interesting. You're going on about educate, but actually, I have definitely been educated by them.

Stephen: What do you mean by that?

Clare: About life. And about what it is like to get older – I'll be old one day so, I love hearing about their lives and what the day to day life's like as well – their ailments I'm interested because I always think that could be me one day!

From a teaching perspective, social interaction generated opportunities for both teacher and learner to learn. Clare's account suggests a fluid tutor and learner identity, which lent itself to 'role swapping. In her account, the male learner becomes the tutor, sharing with the group his experiences of growing old and bereavement, and Clare is now a learner. The identity switch is smooth and natural and demonstrates the potential of community courses to produce knowledge through co-production (Banks et al., 2014).

From a learner perspective, the Writing Well course afforded Miriam, who lives alone and has no family in the UK, an opportunity to socialise and to learn through socialising. In our interview, 11 July 2018, I asked her what she liked about Writing Well.

Miriam: The feeling of being supported, that you can find some friends; if you have some problem you can talk so for a person. Like me, without any family or here isn't my original country, some people like me, we really need to be in a friendly environment. To receive and to give. That's the best way to communicate...

For Miriam, opportunities to socialise were also opportunities to learn. Through socialising in class, she learnt English customs and idioms, which helped orientate her within her new community.

However, as an educator, I see drawbacks to socialising. Several of the Writing Well WhatsApp group refer to its members as 'Fam' (family), yet a family can be excessively hierarchical and restrictive. Although I am unaware of 'personalities' dominating the group, I am mindful of the risk and that it might go unnoticed by me. Some former

learners did not choose to join the group and can only speculate the reasons for this. Perhaps this 'socialising' is not for them, they have other commitments, or they maintain a traditional outlook that when a course ends, it is time to move on to pastures new. They possibly disliked some of the other learners. Here is my study's limit – I can only speculate but cannot discount these reasons.

Also, the needs of my learners, all of whom experience mental health problems, counsels caution when recalibrating the tutor-learner relationship to one geared to socialising. Because Writing Well's core purpose is to address mental health issues, and many participants are vulnerable, there is a need to remain vigilant and be wary of over-familiarity for their sake as much as for mine.

My study highlighted how, as an educator from established worlds of education, I continue to follow prescribed and habituated modes of conduct in my community practice (also see above). Following established practice helps me deliver the Writing Well course, where many participants recount traumatic incidents in their lives. Often participants are keen to know more about me and my home life. At these moments, I draw on the teaching experience developed over the years in established settings and maintain a professional distance. I am old school – old 'world' in this respect. By contrast, in lessons, Ruth, a trained counsellor, uses familiarity as a counselling tool because supporting the learners involves her confiding personal details and incidents from her past and modelling how she addressed them.

In contrast, I draw issues for discussion from the texts we study rather than from me. Studying only the text; helps me remain one step removed from my learners. My professional identity is a shield. Ruth's professionalism drives personal disclosure while mine counsels reticence. It is the legacy of established education, ingrained through teacher training and practice.

When I interviewed Clare on 29 April 2019, we discussed the tutor and learner relationship. Her response suggests that she, like me, followed the teaching standards of established settings.

> Stephen: Do you reveal more of yourself to them than you would to your students at sixth form?

Clare: No, about the same.

Stephen: Do you tell them about your family and what your family is doing?

Clare: I mention a few bits but probably about the same really. I think people like to talk about themselves, don't they? So, I'm quite happy to listen to them. I mention a few things like my son's doing this; my daughter's going here, but nothing in-depth.

However, Clare gives her community learners generous hugs and kisses, something she does not do with her sixth form learners. Perhaps teaching in this 'gentler' environment (see below) prompts tutors to express emotions openly. Clare, a warm, friendly person, feels secure and confident enough to reveal this side to learners through physical contact. It may also be an empathetic act which recognises that many of the older adults she teaches are poorly and lonely. Many may not experience physical contact other than at the art lesson.

Socialising within courses presents tutors with a dilemma because we encourage relaxed conversation and for the learners to express their feelings. They are pedagogical tools we employ. In established practice, colleagues use these teaching tools sparingly, if at all. I suggest their use by community tutors indicates emergent practice.

One further complication is the difficulty demarcating our personal and professional selves – both blur when course participants become volunteers and volunteers, course participants. Also, when we socialise at the café meetings and events (see above) and relationships recalibrate. When in doubt, I err on caution and play my identity cards close to my chest. Social learning is explored in the work of Etienne Wenger (1998), and knowledge production through co-inquiry is examined in the work of Sarah Banks and colleagues (Banks and Hart, 2018), (Banks et al., 2014). (Ahmed, 2014) examines the power of emotions as a bonding agent. I discuss their contribution to this study and my theorising in the Discussion Chapter.

**Summary**

The high level of socialising within and without the classroom may indicate divergent practice. Socialising provides continuing opportunities to learn and generate knowledge. This knowledge is predominantly co-produced. The high numbers of former

learners who wish to continue to socialise and learn under the banner of their former course may indicate divergent practice. It appears that socialising recalibrates the nature of the course and the tutor-learner relationship. However, although a useful educational tool, socialising must be treated with caution where it involves the participation of vulnerable adults.

### 3. Indeterminate Course Duration

Although this is a study of emergence, my findings demonstrate that consideration of when a course ends helps define my practice. My research suggests that Writing Well resists definition by traditional measures such as course length, end date and the conclusion of learner participation.

Writing Well challenges conventional notions of course closure, indicating divergent practice and, by implication, emergent practice. In established settings, closure is generally when the course ends, but closure is an elastic concept in my practice because, as I discussed above, learner engagement continues under the course name. After Writing Well's official end, it transitions, becoming a vehicle for former learners to socialise and, through socialising, to continue their education and co-produce knowledge (see above).

When I interviewed Clare on 29 April 2019, she was concerned about course closure and unsure how long her art classes would run. An unbounded course presented to Clare a practical teaching issue - how was she to plan lessons that would sustain learner engagement and develop their skills. Clare's uncertainty was evident in our interview.

> Stephen: What do you find the downside is, [her art course] what do you not like about it?
>
> Clare: You don't know what the end is, there isn't an end, I'm not quite sure how long, there's no end to it, or is there an end to it? We just don't know so there's that lack of beginning and end at the moment. Is it going to last for a couple of months is it, or not?

My study suggests my courses have a longer shelf-life compared to established ones, and closure in this sense is difficult to define, especially when activities continue under the course banner; for example, former learners refer to themselves as 'The Writing Well Group'. However, whether they still are 'our' learners is uncertain. I had to

recalibrate my relationship with my former learners to accommodate their post-course needs. This demonstrates a community tutor's multi-faceted identity.

My study found that community tutors are affixed to a course (especially one they created) more so than in established education. In the latter setting, a tutor may leave their post, but the course continues. But in the community, where a course and its funding are often tied to its creator, it is not as straightforward. Also, tutors who create the course often have an emotional investment in its success. The issue indicated divergent practice. It made me consider what would happen if I no longer wanted to run Writing Well, or I wanted to step back from the WhatsApp Group and stop meeting former learners. There is no guarantee I could find a replacement to teach the course or a tutor prepared to spend excessive unpaid time socialising with the former learners. Here the study hits a dead end.

I can speculate. Given the course's potential to morph and shape-shift, perhaps it will change once more, becoming a separate and independent entity. I would hope the former learners would take ownership of it and shape it to meet their new needs - something beyond what its creators envisaged. However, to test this, the tutors would need to remove themselves from the group and risk its collapse and the learners drifting away.

### Summary

Considering course closure is one way to assess emergent practice. Writing Well resists conventional notions of closure. Courses outlast their official end date as former participants continue to engage with them. This often leads tutors to recalibrate their relationship with their former learners and assume one more tutor identity. Uncertain course duration may indicate emergent practice but can cause tutors concern. Where tutors have an emotional and personal investment in a course, its closure raises practical uncertainties which differ from established practice.

### 4. A 'Gentler' Teaching

My study found that tutors and learners perceive community lessons 'gentler' compared with lessons in established settings which are often results driven with tutors under

time constraints and pressure. While 'results' driven, community courses do not view qualifications as the standard in gauging personal development.

When I interviewed Clare on 29 April 2019, I asked her what she liked about community teaching and how our teaching differed from established education.

> Clare: It's gentler. It should be gentler at college, but because of the regime and the rules and Ofsted…
>
> Stephen: What do you mean by gentler?
>
> Clare: I'm not having to tell someone can you hang your coat up? Can you hang your bag up? Have you got your badge? or you're late. Can you be quiet – just that whole baggage of discipline which I'm not very good at, really. I don't like, for example, if someone's late you're supposed to put them on… disciplinary or something –if they've got a hat on, you're supposed to tell them to take their hat off.

Clare perceived established education as a world of restriction – 'that whole baggage of discipline' – a 'regime' with petty rules she often fails to implement: 'you're supposed to tell them to take their hat off' you're supposed to put them on… disciplinary'. Through listing the class violations, she must address, 'hang coat up'; 'hang your bag up' she presents a routine the tutor and the learners find wearisome. In comparison, Clare perceived community teaching 'gentler'. Implicit is the notion that teaching at sixth form is harsher, perhaps harder. Significantly, Clare did not feel the need to explain to me the power dynamics and politics of college education. She later described community teaching as 'more relaxed'.

However, this does not mean a power dynamic is absent from community teaching. In Clare's community practice, her learners became her de facto managers (see above). Also, rules and regulations, however irksome, provide certainty. From my study, the absence of rules and guidance in community practice often led tutors to feel vulnerable and uncertain about their teaching.

From a learner perspective, when I interviewed Miriam, we explored her perceptions of my community teaching and the established adult classes she attends. From our interview, 18 July 2018.

> Stephen: Is [established teaching] any different from what I'm doing?
>
> Miriam: More strict here. [Referring to the formal courses she attends nearby].

Stephen: How does that manifest itself- that strictness?

Miriam: Because we have to... be ready for the exam and they [the tutors]... evaluate us every time, but we don't have to do that on the creative course, we just say something then we write something and every time you just encourage people to share what they think but here it's more educational.

Miriam's response aligns with Clare's remark that our teaching is 'gentler'. Earlier, Miriam had described Writing Well as 'friendlier'. Miriam perceived differences based on procedures and authority rather than course structure and content, for example, constant evaluation as one defining difference. She believed the adult education classes 'more educational' in its traditional framing of qualifications and accreditation as its success criteria. And perhaps more stressful because its lessons involve constant assessment.

In the formal setting, she appears more aware of the power dynamics at play - the tutor is 'more strict' - she might be 'told off' and has to guard what she says. Yet, in established settings where courses are often results driven and teaching time at a premium, a teacher's need to steam through the syllabus, with little time allocated for discussion, might wrongly be perceived as strictness. Although Writing Well is time-bound and our funder's objectives must be met, discussion is a key pedagogical tool we use and encourage. Discussion can facilitate the co-production of knowledge (Banks and Hart, 2018).

**Summary**

Learners and tutors perceive community lessons as' gentler' and 'relaxed' compared to lessons in established settings which are often results driven and tutors under pressure to deliver. While 'results' driven, community courses do not view qualifications as the standard in gauging personal development. Discussion is a key pedagogical tool in our lessons, and time is allocated accordingly. All these features suggest divergent and emergent practice.

**5. Excessive Networking and Civic Work**

My study found networking and civic work potent ways to generate opportunities to teach. However, the time I spend networking and undertaking civic work is

disproportionate to the modest teaching opportunities it generates (see Introduction Chapter). My study revealed other downsides to networking and civic work. Often, these involved personality clashes and a perceived failure to see anything achieved.

Ruth, an experienced community practitioner, confirmed the importance of networking but highlighted its limitations. She found network meetings frustrating, especially for those wanting meetings to lead to concrete action. At our interview, 6 December 2017, she told me that as part of a transition movement, she volunteered on the committee 'for about a year until I'd had enough of the committee meetings.' I asked her to explain her disaffection.

> Stephen: What do you mean by you'd 'had enough' of those committee meetings?
>
> Ruth: Well, sometimes meetings can involve people who like the sound of their own voice rather than actually making a difference to the community. I didn't feel that they were a good use of my time, and they didn't motivate me.

In my initial analysis of Ruth's remarks, while considering a tutor's agency, I wrote:

> Although this narrative could be read as one of agency, it could be read as defeatist. The people who liked to hear their own voices, I assume, remained in situ. Is Ruth's agency amid the constant committee drone only the agency to grab a parachute and bailout?'

On reflection, it is also a narrative of frustration I share and relate to having attended meetings where inertia reigns and personality clashes are frequent. I have seen many able people quit committees through disillusionment and the call to do better things with their time. At many community-level meetings, I encounter people with little training on how to conduct them or themselves. 'They didn't motivate me' might make a perfect meme.

And yet, meetings in the community are beneficial if people feel emboldened enough to speak their minds. Politically, these unassuming meetings are as potent as rallies; they maintain the public space and invite debate. It is no place for anonymous keyboard warriors or those preferring an echo chamber to the draughty village hall I attended one wet Monday evening in 2017 to chair a meeting. Residents attended this meeting to grill Council Officials over plans to build a school for 'challenging pupils' on land adjacent to their homes. Such meetings provide opportunities for people to hold

organisations to account. Emotions frequently erupt. However, a little 'clearing the air' has a cathartic benefit which can bond rather than divide, and compromise is the goal. At the many meetings I attend, people still exercise the freedom to cause offence and to be offended in return.

When I attend meetings, I accept that communities comprise different sorts, a benefit and sometimes an impediment, but for the greater good, we work together. Many people do not possess training in community etiquette; many retired professionals bring their brand of professionalism to the table and find it at odds with the way committees in community locations operate. Community committees, by their nature, if genuinely representative of their area, will bring people of diverse backgrounds, skills life experiences. Sometimes this mix is stimulating and can drive a project forward, sometimes not. Yet, it is a forum for community issues to be aired at the community level.

Regarding education, networking, including civic engagement, generate opportunities to teach. They are invaluable in establishing one's credentials with the community and the large organisations working in it and can open doors to funding. The networking that bookends most community meetings are also opportunities to secure support for educational initiatives (see Discussion Chapter).

My findings highlight the excessive hours spent networking to secure enough funding to cover the cost of a printer, paper, and cartridges. Despite their limitations, they are a crucial means of initiating education in the community. Their role is often overlooked because perhaps it is hard to picture (or believe) how the community meeting on that wet Monday evening produced the Writing Well project. It did, but the connections are often invisible lay lines linking community events, with community groups, with teaching opportunities.

Regarding identity, networking is often a way of raising one's self-esteem - that your skills are recognised and your contribution to the community valued. This acknowledgement is significant. In community settings where tutors often need to self-validate their competences to teach (see below,) networks offer unofficial accreditation. In her research, Alison Gilchrist (2019) explores local networking and, self-validation is

a theme in the later work of Etienne Wenger (2014). I discuss their contribution to this study and my theorising in the Discussion Chapter.

### Summary

However time-consuming and problematic, networking is an essential part of my practice and necessary in generating community education. Civic engagement, including attending community meetings, is also a potent means of generating opportunities to teach in the community. This engagement is underrated because the link between meetings and community education is often subtle and difficult to detect. Through networking and civic engagement, tutors receive recognition and informal accreditation of their competence to teach in the community.

### 6. Tutors Voluntarily Undertaking Pastoral Responsibilities

My findings show that tutors voluntarily assume pastoral roles. These often exceed the pastoral support given in established settings. Assuming pastoral roles may demonstrate how established educational habits and norms influence teaching in community settings. However, in the absence of clear guidance, a tutor must rely on their judgement of what constitutes appropriate learner support and where to set limits. The absence of guidance for tutors often created tensions and uncertainty.

When I interviewed Clare on 29 April 2019, she provided an example of a tutor undertaking a self-appointed pastoral role. She described a learner with an 'absolutely outstanding' talent for art, 'about seventy' and caring for 'a sick husband'. Clare was passionate about encouraging her to enrol on a degree course at university. 'I'm grooming her to go'. Clare was mindful of the couple's sensibilities and the learner's care commitments but wanted both to share her aspiration - that the learner should take her art further. Clare was pro-active in this cause:

> I'm going to take them to the MMU's [Manchester Metropolitan University's] art shows, do it as a trip but in my head, it's for her...

She researched a Bachelor of Arts course accredited by MMU and discussed it with her learner. However, Clare also expressed her doubts about whether she was doing the right thing and acknowledged the fine line between encouraging, and pushing her learner down a learning pathway.

> Clare: I was saying maybe you could do that part-time; you could manage it around your husband, it just seems... I don't know if the right word is- waste – because that's an awful thing to say, and does all artwork have to go into education? But it's just to push her because what we do in the classes – she's beyond that; I think she would really benefit from a more academic approach.

In the extract, Clare elected to attend to and value caring as an aspect of her teaching practice. She assigned herself a role above and beyond the remit of delivering art lessons. In her unpaid time, she actively supported a learner's development by researching courses for her and encouraging the lady to attend art exhibitions.

As she recounted her relationship with the learner, Clare aligned with the dominant caring values of the teaching profession. She brought these values into her community teaching practice. Clare drew upon the cultural resources available to her from established teaching practice and equated learner development with academic achievement in higher education: 'you should really go to university'.

Yet as we proceeded, Clare expressed her concerns – she was 'wary of pressuring her', and contradictions and ambivalences emerged as aspirations converged with reality. Competing values regarding what was in the learner's best interest created tensions.

> I've got to know her, and she's bringing in more work, and I'm chatting to her, and it's a difficult conversation because I'm really encouraging and saying, gosh you should really go to university, and I don't know if I'm putting pressure on her I don't... I've got to be careful...

Below, Clare demonstrates her indecision and conflicted approaches. She finds it challenging to balance active encouragement with measured restraint:

> It would be fantastic for her, but I'm also wary of pressurising her, so I'm going to show her the sketchbooks and take them to the MMU shows.

A strategy one might interpret as continued pressure. Clare's fluctuating position on the matter underlined the lack of guidance in community teaching. The absence of a line manager or a policy relating to pastoral responsibilities likely exacerbate this. Ironically, Clare at Sixth form was critical of the rules and regulations she was required to enforce (see above). She saw them at odds with her values and what she perceived were the best interests of her students. This 'splitting' between a teacher's judgements about 'good practice' and student's needs and the rigours of performance prescribed by the institution is an area explored by Ball (2010). In what he terms a 'values

schizophrenia' (p. 21), he argues that a teacher's wish to demonstrate commitment, judgments and authenticity within practice are often sacrificed for 'impression and performance', what Ball calls 'performativity'.

Yet, given the opportunity to exercise her judgment in what she perceives her learner's best interest, and without managerial restraint, Clare wavers. It is pertinent that Clare used our research interview to discuss her concerns and seek my opinion. My study suggests that in the absence of management structure, we turn to our co-tutors for support and advice.

Clare self-electing a pastoral role aligns with Ruth's experience and mine. My study found that tutors do more than deliver lessons and often undertake additional non-remunerated work. For example, as the end of Writing Well approaches, learners often seek help editing their writing, and I will meet them at the library and proofread their work.

On the Writing Well course, one of our learners was unable to hold a pen, so we met outside lessons, and I transcribed her work so she could read it to the other learners. At the lesson's end, some learners stay behind to discuss their problems with my co-tutor, a trained counsellor. She often spends 30 minutes with the learner – all unpaid time. There have been situations when learners have reported incidents which we believe amount to safeguarding and mental health issues, and Ruth and I have referred them to health professionals and contacted social services. It is a necessary intervention and another aspect of our teaching role.

### Summary

Community tutors voluntarily undertook pastoral duties that often exceeded the pastoral support given in established settings. The absence of guidance led tutors to apply their judgement of what was appropriate and where to set boundaries. When tutors found setting boundaries difficult, tensions and uncertainty arose. Self-elected pastoral care may indicate emergent practice.

### 7. Relaxed Attitudes Regarding Professional Distance and Personal Space

My findings suggest that tutors and learners develop relationships that in established settings might be sanctioned for infringing professional distance. It is a by-product of the high level of socialising within and without our lessons and likely a facet of the 'gentler' teaching participants perceived.

This relaxation also relates to personal space. For example, Clare, when she had not seen her learners for a month, makes her fondness for them explicit:

> I gave them a hug and a kiss each – because they're really, really, sweet, all of them.

Hugs and kisses might be the way learners demonstrate their gratitude and value Clare's work. A symbolic gesture. In the absence of someone to judge and validate Clare's teaching, a hug and kiss might be a symbolic approval of her teaching competency. Whatever the reason, it demonstrates an interaction between a tutor and learners generally absent in mainstream teaching.

> Stephen: In what way do you feel valued for the work you do in the community?
>
> Clare: Well, they ask me back (laughs). One of the little fellows likes to give me a little kiss when I go.

### 8. Censorship and Self-Censorship

My findings suggest that while censorship and self-censorship are issues shared with established settings, how we handle learner or tutor complaints indicated *divergent practice.*

Censorship was one way to examine emergent and divergent practice. I queried whether words or opinions deemed offensive by learners and tutors in established settings might be viewed differently in my practice. Self-censorship was an unexpected finding that arose when I interviewed Miriam.

My journal entries record instances of my learners' frequent use of 'love' and 'darling' as forms of address and gratitude, for example, 'Thank you love'. On the second Writing Well course, the learners were all women, many over 60, and used 'love' and 'darling' frequently. It seemed endearing to me and growing up in Northern England, I am

inured to its use. Learners also addressed tutors 'love' confirming the informality of lessons again and more 'relaxed' tutor-learner relationships.

On the third course, male participants attended and, some addressed women 'love' and 'darling'. Curiously, although the women learners seemed unfussed and used these words to reply to the men, it was the first time in my new practice that I was conscious of their use. In established practice, some teachers and learners would find these terms patronising. After the lesson, my co-tutor mentioned that she was more alert to learners using these words. Although we agreed they were regional and friendly, we remarked on how our experience of established educational settings still impacted our community teaching and 'triggered' this response. It was a reminder of how much we remain connected to established settings and our antennas tuned to the old frequency.

So far, the issue of 'inappropriate language' in lessons has not arisen. So far. If a learner or co-tutor were to raise a complaint, we have safeguarding policies and our learner agreement advocates treating others respectfully. Our mission statement also includes valuing all and inclusion. Yet, our enactment of these abstract concepts has not been tested in the context of a learner complaint. Our reliance on safeguarding policies highlights our continued connection with established practice and the 'gravitational pull' of larger worlds.

### Learner Self-Censorship

Related to the discussion of 'relaxed', 'gentler' and 'friendlier' teaching, an interview with Miriam highlighted the issue of learner self-censorship. It was an unexpected finding in my study.

By self-censorship, I mean being mindful of what one says for fear of causing offence that results in a complaint and lands the comment-maker in serious trouble. It is distinct from elective non-disclosure of personal details (see above). Perhaps Miriam's experiences of Iran made her attuned to self-censorship.

My finding arose from interviewing Miriam, a learner on adult education courses. At the time, we were comparing Writing Well with the established courses she attends. In our

interview, 18 July 2018, she disclosed her reluctance to speak freely in her adult classes.

> Miriam: [Speaking about Writing Well] People can say something…suddenly, some idea just comes to your mind. But in the classroom, [Speaking of the adult learning class] you should be careful always… It's more formal. [Writing Well] is friendlier… it wasn't like a class at all, sometimes we did laugh, that this is not a classroom so… you don't get told off.

In the established setting, she appears mindful of what she says, 'have to be careful always' and avoids speaking spontaneously. In contrast, Miriam perceives the Writing Well course affords her agency – an absence of self-censoring where she feels comfortable and able to give authentic responses. In the gentler, more relaxed atmosphere, she feels confident to speak freely and express her opinions. She perceives we are less strict. As part of the interview method, this co-productional approach to meaning-making and knowledge production (Banks et al., 2014) highlighted this facet of my practice.

From a teaching perspective, self-censorship is an educational issue because Writing Well encourages people to express themselves freely to encourage learning and wellbeing.  Freedom of expression is therapeutic.

My findings suggest a divergence between my practice and established settings. For example, freedom of expression, hate speech, and no-platforming is a current issue in established educational settings – originating in North American campuses with instances in English universities. Its prevalence was enough to prompt Haidt and Lukianoff (2018) to study the phenomena. In their book, *The Coddling of the American Mind* (2018:50), they ask should a student saying "I am offended" be sufficient reason to cancel a lecture. Or what if many students or members of the faculty are offended too? The likeliest scenario in my practice would involve learners or my co-tutor taking offence at some remark I make or a text we study. Heidt and Lukianoff believe the answer relies on what one considers the purpose of education. They support the teleological principle offered by Hanna Holborn Gray, the former president of the University of Chicago: "Education should not be intended to make people comfortable; it is meant to make them think." (p 50).

Miriam's comments regarding self-censorship drew my attention to the micro-uncertainties of my practice and, unlike established settings, the absence of guidelines. Her comments also led me to examine my tutor identity. For example, where is a tutor positioned should an issue arise? Should the tutor be viewed as someone learners can appeal to over their perceived offence, or am I simply the guy who delivers the lesson? Am I the coach or the umpire? Learners might interpret my neutrality as condoning the perceived offence. Should I be setting examples, promoting values and if so, what values? In established educational settings, there exist procedures and systems for dealing with such complaints. These uncertainties demonstrated that I needed to address some fundamental housekeeping issues and introduce a complaints procedure. Although the practice had safeguarding policies, we lacked a procedure to address learners' complaints relating to course content or remarks by other learners.

Identifying norms and rules present in educational institutions (a complaints procedure) but absent in my practice was important to this study. Their absence indicated my practice remained a work in progress – in an emergent state (see pages 8 and 9). Although troubling on a practical level in leaving the social enterprise and tutors vulnerable to complaints, it was a useful indicator of emergent practice for this study.

**Freedom of Expression**

My uncertainty and concern prompted me to seek guidance. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), who research inter alia, freedom of speech at universities in the USA and the rise of non-platforming, perceived micro-aggressions and trigger warnings, support The Chicago Statement on Principles of Free Expression adopted by the University of Chicago. In February 2019, the social enterprise adapted a version of the statement to offer guidance for co-tutors, participants, and volunteers. Although the topic is worthy of discussion and easy dichotomies made, I reference these issues and the Chicago Statement as examples of how much larger, established worlds influence my community practice. Tutors rely on the codes and habituations of 'big sister' worlds for guidance and protection.

## 9. The Enactment of Abstract Concepts in our Practice

Similar to the issue of censorship, my study found differing tutor positions regarding the enactment of the typical abstract concepts teachers frequently encounter in their practice. These include *equality, diversity,* and *inclusion*. Ruth and Clare interpreted differently 'inclusion' and 'freedom of expression'. This was not unexpected as the concepts are abstract and their meaning frequently debated. However, the tutors' responses, worthy in their aspirations for open discussion and inclusion, highlighted their potential to create tensions between learners and prompt complaints. It demonstrated again the tutor's vulnerability to complaints and the difference between practice conducted by a small social enterprise and that of a college or university. These institutions have in place systems and procedures for dealing with complaints arising from perceived breaches of these aspirational yet, vague concepts.

Ruth saw the community classroom as a forum for discussion and for challenging stereotypes. Also, as a vehicle for dynamic action and political change. From our interview, 3 January 2018:

> Ruth: I think it's really important that people have a forum where they understand the importance of not oppressing others. They get to bust the myths that are around - particularly in popular media so the lies about refugees, the lies about unemployed people for instance, and benefit scroungers or single parents or teenage mums or menopausal women. And that a forum is created whereby people... who may inadvertently use language that's not seen as politically correct, are given a safe forum in which they can explore why that language might not be appropriate today, where their own language has come from and what they can do about that without feeling like they are being punished for being their age.

Ruth's response supported my findings that a key feature of a course is social with a 'covert-curriculum' (Rogge et al., 2020) to promote the importance 'of not oppressing others'. She perceived the classroom as a 'forum' for agency and empowerment, affording opportunities for learners to 'bust' myths, promoted by the popular media about specific groups in our society and provide a safe space to explore meanings. Ruth ascribed herself the cultural competence and confidence to know the attitudes of older learners. Ruth's forum, however well-meaning, is problematic because it already assumes what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate language (see below).

Clare's outlook was libertarian. At our interview, 29 April 2019, when we discussed inclusion and freedom of expression, she advocated including all learners regardless of their outlook and beliefs, even in the face of opposition from other learners. However, as we explored the application of these abstract concepts, contradictions and uncertainties emerged.

> Stephen: Would you have to explain to the majority who didn't want that person taking part or drawing that, would you accede to their wishes eventually or would you stand up and protect that person.
>
> Clare: If you had a discussion about it, I think it would be alright.
>
> Stephen. What would you if a student drew Mohammed?
>
> Clare: You know we've been so lucky; I've not come across that.

Despite my extreme hypothetical, our discussion highlighted the dearth of procedures my practice had in place to deal with such contingencies. Although we have safeguarding policies, which may cover such occurrences, the tutor would still have to interpret these policies and make decisions. Their position is difficult and adds to the general uncertainty of tutor identity (see below).

### Summary

To date, my practice has not had to address the complexities that educational institutions face regarding freedom of speech and related issues. If tutors adopt a libertarian approach in the face of learner opposition, we may have to address similar issues and complaints but lack the support of a large educational institution or a union. If tutors bring preconceptions of appropriate and inappropriate language into lessons, we risk stifling self-expression and the wellbeing benefits derived from open discussion. My findings highlight the complexity of the issue and the absence of neat solutions. My study also demonstrates that where uncertainty arises, community tutors turn to established education for guidance.

## 10. A Recalibrated Tutor Identity to Practice in Community Settings

I researched whether tutors had recalibrated their educator identity to address and negotiate a different set of challenges in their practice. An adapted tutor identity might indicate emergent practice. In considering this aspect, I drew upon the experiences of

other educators engaged in a similar practice as my own and asked how they perceived their educator role and identity. I asked tutors how they perceived my educator role. I sought Miriam’s opinion of my educator identity to gain insight from a learner's perspective.

My findings show that despite working in an emergent practice, tutors still considered themselves educators and often recalibrated their tutor role to practice in their new teaching environment. For example, in our interview, 29 April 2019, Clare perceived herself as an educator delivering education. Here, she discusses her art class and still-life:

> This is where the education comes into it… what you usually think of as still life is some apples and a pear in a bowl, but if you have a look at this artist here [Clare shows me a still life art image on her mobile phone] it is just incidental still life – a pair of shoes thrown on a carpet… or a coat thrown over a chair. So think of still life in those terms- it isn't just painting a nice pretty picture – something beautiful just happening within the space.

In her narrative, Clare ascribes herself a facilitator and enabler role - the provider of knowledge and educational resources. She highlights her specialist knowledge and educational background: 'this is where the education comes into it'. Through sharing her expertise with her learners - offering a detailed description of still life art, Clare is an important learning resource.

When I interviewed Clare, 29 April 2019, four months after starting her art classes, I asked whether she perceived her learners viewed her as an educator.

> Clare: I wouldn't say they see me as a hardened educator – I chat to them about other things, though. I do chat, and I like hearing their stories.

Perhaps not being a 'hardened' educator supports Clare's view that lessons in the community are less restrictive, geared to socialising and 'gentler’; than at the sixth form where she teaches.

When I interviewed Ruth on 6 December 2018, she was equally sure she was an educator.

> Stephen: Do you consider yourself an educator?
>
> Ruth: Yes.

Stephen: Why do you consider yourself an educator?

Ruth: Because a certificate tells me I am (laughs). I'm flippant, but that's part of it. Because I'm qualified as an educator, because I've learnt and worked hard to get that qualification as an educator, because people say to me that they've learnt things that they didn't know before that has made a difference to their lives.

My findings highlight the various roles tutors undertake as part of their practice and secure work. In addition to being tutors, they have to be networkers, project managers, committee members, volunteers and many other roles. To secure teaching work, Ruth assumed many roles. These included a volunteer on women's projects, a consultant, the managing director of her own company and a director of other social enterprises. Like me, she networks to create teaching opportunities. Clare's roles include tutor, volunteer, project manager, event organiser and networker while maintaining her sixth form teacher identity.

When I interviewed Miriam on 18 July 2018, to gain a learner's perspective, I asked her whether she considered me a teacher.

Miriam: It depends on some situations. You should be a teacher because you are explaining something that we don't know. If you are talking about a person who teaches and he gives homework and expects to receive the homework – you were not a teacher, but if we are talking about a person who wants to share something, if you call this person a teacher – yes, you were a teacher because you just want to share something, to give some more ideas about writing. You used to teach these techniques to us, and you were a teacher.

Miriam's perception that I generally was a teacher except in terms of authority and strictness because I did not rebuke learners for not completing their homework might support her perception of a gentler form of teaching.

In the same interview, I asked Miriam how she perceived the basis of my authority to practice. Miriam had explained earlier that on her adult education course, a learner's continued absence from lessons could result in their removal. I discussed the ground rules and learner agreements I use for Writing Well as a potential source of my authority.

Stephen. We also had ground rules. Teachers have… authority, don't they, but where's my authority based? Did I have authority?

Miriam: Not authority… it depends on the situation. In [the] creative courses, some ladies, 70, 80, 60, you don't need any authority, but you could manage the class by just making a friendly atmosphere.

Perhaps Miriam's perception that I had 'no authority' indicates the absence of a hierarchy of power. Instead, she perceives a hierarchy of competences: knowledge, understanding and social skills. Social skills create 'a friendly atmosphere'. These are competences I can enact without overt familiarity with participants, and 'friendly' lies well within my professional comfort zone. With a limited dataset of interviewing only one learner, my finding is speculative but provides a basis for further study.

On the Writing Well course Miriam references, the learners were older adults (average age 68) with little need for overt demonstrations of authority apart from the learner agreement (an artefact symbolic of power). Learner 'compliance' was procured through encouragement and nudges. My co-tutor and I did not reproach learners who did not complete 'homework' but stressed how completing the tasks would develop their writing skills and might improve their wellbeing. In class, I found participants generally self-regulated their behaviour (not speaking over each other, arriving back from break on time), rendering tutor intervention unnecessary. Over four courses, on only three occasions did I refer to the 'one-voice' and 'hands-up' ground rules to stop interruptions and provide everyone with the opportunity to contribute to discussions.

### Summary

The study demonstrates that tutors delivering community education consider themselves educators. In terms of hierarchy and authority, learners may perceive community tutors differently from colleagues in established settings. They may see our need to demonstrate authority as redundant given the older demographic of learner. This may account for Miriam's notion of 'friendlier' and 'gentler' lessons. To test the accuracy of this finding requires an extensive dataset – more learners to interview, more lessons to observe.

### 11. Tutor Insecurity and Vulnerability

When I interviewed tutors, their responses revealed a prevalent uncertainty and vulnerability which matched my own. This was likely caused by engaging in a practice

still developing and undefined. If eventually frameworks and boundaries develop into something concrete, this uncertainty might diminish. However, it can be argued that the uncertainty and lack of prescribed frameworks are what makes the practice dynamic and different.

My study suggests tutors harbour prevailing insecurities about their roles and teaching practice. For Ruth, reliant on zero-hour employment between tutoring gigs, the absence of someone other than herself to validate her competence to teach fuelled her uncertainty. For Clare, confident in her tutor role, the absence of guidance and management caused her concern. My study found that tutors actively seek to address their uncertainties. Throughout my study, I found that in times of uncertainty, tutors drew upon established teaching practice for guidance (see above). In the absence of a person or body to ascribe them the competence to teach, tutors self-validated this competence.

Regarding competence to teach in the community, Ruth privileged experience over qualifications. When I interviewed Ruth on 6 December 2017, we discussed the qualifications and the qualities she thought necessary to teach in the community.

> Ruth: There are some great educators out there without… qualifications. I've always believed that we… have something to learn off each other and that everybody in the room is an educator.

However, Ruth had enrolled on a master's degree course in education. Throughout our interviews, she emphasised her qualifications as much as her experience.

> Ruth: I think I have a personal passion for the work I'm doing within emotional education. I am pretty well-qualified for the role as well, being an educator as well as a qualified counsellor.

The interviews highlighted that in the absence of someone to validate their competency, tutors validate it themselves. Both tutors pro-actively addressed their uncertainties. Ruth sought qualifications to validate her insecurities regarding competence to practise, and Clare adapted the syllabus she uses at sixth form to meet her learners' needs.

As part of addressing uncertainty, Clare saw our interview as an opportunity to discuss her practice with me and seek a second opinion. On 29 April 2019, when we interviewed, Clare taught art classes in the community for four months.

> Stephen: In terms of monitoring and assessment, how do you assess the development of your learners?
>
> Clare: At the last session, I think they've all improved on some level. It's not a direct evaluation. At the end of the session, completing a set task, how they've used the materials, the fact that they've held their concentration for a whole two hours on a piece of artwork- that in itself is an achievement.
>
> Stephen: Do you use post-it notes?
>
> Clare: You know, I don't do any of those sorts of things – I don't know whether I should start jigging it up more?

When we discussed her practice, the issue of indeterminable course duration arose and highlighted the uncertainty tutors face in community teaching.

> Clare: It's early days. It's been fine up to now- if you had the same group for years, you would need to move it on – I don't know… would they be bored? There's only so much you can give them whereas, if they were doing a course, they might move on to the next and have a different tutor – I don't know.
>
> … they wanted to put an exhibition on, but some of them brought their old work! But what I'm going to do, they want these monthly projects, but I'm going to ask them, at some point, do you want to change that, how is it going for you? Evaluate what they feel about it.

In her response, Clare attempts to figure a solution to practical issues: when her lessons should end and how to sustain learner interest. Again, she draws upon the established norms and habituations of the established world of education to form comparisons and to start her search for solutions. In the established world, learners move on, they meet new tutors, and the former tutor meets a new cohort of learners. Usually, closure is accompanied by a symbolic marker- an event or certificate. Here the learners are seeking their symbolic closure and request an art exhibition.

As we continued our discussion, Clare highlighted the lack of guidance in her practice. She found projecting herself and the course into the future a challenge, and uncertainty crept into her response.

> Clare: You don't know what the end is, there isn't an end, I'm not quite sure how long, there's no end to it, or is there an end to it? We just don't know so there's that lack of beginning and end at the moment. For this particular project, I don't know how long it's going to go on. Is it going to last for a couple of months, is it not? I don't know educationally if that is a problem because what's crossed my mind is the sort of sessions… are obviously quite light, but the longer you do something, maybe, the more you want from it.

Clare's rhetorical questions reflect her uncertainty and her attempt to figure a solution. She can accommodate uncertainty for a while because she perceives her lessons are 'lighter' compared with her sixth form practice, where lessons are implicitly substantial, and time is a resource allocated, protected, quantified, and utilised. At present, in delivering art lessons in the community, notions of teaching time and time management appear fluid and 'relaxed', allowing Clare to develop her lessons without the same urgency and pressure to produce and deliver, unlike at her sixth form.

Clare's response and inability to project herself and her course into the long-term suggests her uncertainty regarding her community practice. With funding uncertain, tutors develop a short-term to medium-term outlook on their teaching prospects. My findings suggest this indicates emergent practice because it diverges from established practice where tutors can project themselves into the future and plan a long-term career path that includes a Head of Department post or Deputy Headship. My findings suggest that a tutor's uncertain employment prospects impede their ability to plan for the long-term.

### Uncertain Employment Prospects

When I interviewed Ruth on 3 January 2018, her account of uncertain employment and the constant need to find funding demonstrated the economic concerns underlying tutor insecurity and vulnerability. During the interview, I asked her about a project she was developing on menopause education.

> Stephen: So, you see this project as more of a short to medium-term rather than a long haul?
>
> Ruth: You don't hear on the radio of whole weeks being dedicated to 'periods' anymore because I think it's been done. In terms of individual coaching, maybe there might be some legs in it in terms of raising awareness and changing culture. I'm hoping it will be a short to medium-term thing.

Despite courses like Writing Well defying closure, in the usual sense (see above), payment for their delivery does end. Employment prospects are often uncertain. Many projects are time-limited and run only for short periods. Courses, like the one Ruth is developing, might last longer but are continually dependent on obtaining pockets of grant money. When asked about her plan to develop a course on managing menopause, Ruth considers that this will be a short to medium-term project. Ironically, the course's progressive irrelevancy and in-built obsolescence will provide the ultimate means of measuring Ruth's and the project's success. Perhaps losing one's job as a result of one's success is the ultimate altruism. The constant need to find funding acknowledges that community tutors 'gig' like many of their colleagues at colleges and universities. Ironically one reason I left university was through disillusionment and frustration at this practice.

### Validation and Accreditation of Tutor Competence

My research found that, unlike established education, community tutors self-validate their teaching competence. We select a job and assert we can do it. We do not interview formally (although networking is an informal interview of competence), and we may receive funding without ever meeting the funders. In our interview on 6 December 2017, as part of an enquiry on course emergence, I asked how Ruth gained work and demonstrated her competence to practice.

> Stephen: How were you selected for this role?
>
> Ruth: Self-selection… rather than me applying for a form… with an organisation. Because I have quite a background in the voluntary sector, I'm looking at creating opportunities for myself...
>
> Stephen: Is it like you've created this role?
>
> Ruth: Yes.

In the same interview, Ruth highlighted how tutors take responsibility for their own professional development.

> Ruth: The training for my current role has been self-administered, as it were. I put myself through my counselling diploma, I put myself through the PGCE, and I am now completing the master's in education and am now in my third year.

I suggest Ruth's response demonstrates that educators working in community locations self-select their role without an interview, letter of appointment or employment contract. We self-assess our capabilities and suitability for the role and appoint ourselves to the position. We undertake our own CPD. Therefore, there is a large element of self-qualification and self-evaluation regarding our capabilities to undertake and complete projects. There is also a need for self-belief in one's capability to undertake projects which may manifest itself as over-confidence or making remarks capable of being (mis)interpreted as boastful.

Also, my study suggests that in the absence of an accrediting person or authority to ascribe tutor competence, positive learner feedback provides essential validation. From the same interview:

> Stephen: In what ways do you feel valued for the work you do?
>
> Ruth: Well, some days I don't. Some days I feel valued because I get great feedback- some days. It's about valuing yourself and what you do and not waiting for others to prop up your sense of worth.

Likewise, Clare remarked that her learners acknowledged her teaching competence by inviting her back to teach.

Prima-facie self-validation might reflect agency, but my study found it was a cause of uncertainty, with tutors often experiencing self-doubt. Ruth's remark, 'It's about valuing yourself and what you do, and not waiting for others to prop up your sense of worth', I recognised in my situation. The insecurity I ascribe Ruth is something I equally recognise in me.

On the 24 April 2019, having gathered my interview data and reflected on self-validation, I wrote:

> We are the right person for a project because we say we are, but we would say that wouldn't we? Our skills are subject to self-scrutiny and reflection; we are self-regulating, self-questioning. Self-reliance is crucial, as is self-validation.

My repetition of 'self' in the paragraph indicated this 'go-it-alone' mentality which is an agency of sorts but only of sorts. Despite the transformative and agential potential this world may offer, it is a world without induction, supportive line-managers, grievance

procedures, employer contributions, study days, time in lieu, paid holidays, and pension plans. It is a world bereft of the signifiers, norms and cultural tools associated with 'proper' employed work, rather than gig work. There are few service contracts, no salary slips, appraisal meetings or CPD. Official documentation mainly consists of the bid form and, hopefully, a formal notice confirming the bid's success. It is the primary means of validating our competence for the job. Once the project is running, formal and informal feedback from participants and steering group stakeholders are a means to check competence.

Self-validation and trajectory into practice in a twenty-first-century landscape are examined in the later work of Etienne Wenger (2014). I discuss his contribution to this study and my theorising in the Discussion Chapter.

**Summary**

For tutors habituated to the norms of employed work, education in community settings, often lacking 'signs' and common points of reference, may seem disorientating. The absence of guidance and a 'career' path fuels tutor insecurity. Tutors validate their own competence to practice. While this appears agential, it masks underlying uncertainty and anxiety. Clare and Ruth's concerns reflect my lived teacher experience. The potential agency of my practice may seem tantalising and seductive, but the freedom of the high seas is also the freedom to sink and drown.

**Findings Chapter Conclusion**

My findings found several features of my teaching that strongly suggest emergent practice. These are:

- The high use of socialising and co-production to facilitate learning and produce knowledge
- The indeterminable duration of courses that resist traditional notions of course length and closure
- Increased emotional investment in courses
- Undertaking pastoral roles above and beyond the teaching remit

- Unbounded time dedicated to the practice with little adherence to typical teacher work patterns, for example, nine to five work, Monday to Friday
- A gentler, relaxed teaching delivery with learner success measured by personal development rather than qualification
- A relaxed attitude towards professional distance and personal space
- Untested systems to address complaints and potential vulnerability. Established educational settings have robust systems and dedicated personnel for handling learner or tutor complaints
- Excessive networking and pro-bono civic work undertaken to create opportunities to teach
- A fluid educator identity with the need to act in several capacities, including administrators, entrepreneurs, project developers, bid-writers, promotors, and recruiters
- In the absence of a validating authority or body, the need for tutors to validate their competence
- Tutors experience a high degree of insecurity due to the uncertain nature of their community practice and employment prospects.

# CHAPTER FIVE: POSSIBILITIES AND TENTATIVE UNDERSTANDINGS OF EMERGENCE

## Introduction

Here I match ideas and theories to the features of my practice I presented in Chapter Four. I reference literature that offered ways to see my practice differently and challenge pre-existing notions I held. In turn, these ideas became catalysts for my own theory making (explanations), and I also present these here. Like Chapter Four, my explanations, understandings, and conclusions are tentative and provisional - a basis for further discussion, exploration, and reflection. I draw on theory, practitioner insights and case studies, notably the work of Wenger (1998), Gilchrist (2019), Banks (2018), Jones and Perry (2019) and Campbell and Pahl (2018). I detail my engagement with Sara Ahmed's (2014) work within Affect Theory and Clare Hemmings's (2012) method of affective dissonance and how their insights helped counter any potential complacency in my research conclusions. I then demonstrate how using theory interchangeably helped me acquire alternating perspectives of the phenomena I was reporting to lend nuance to my study (see Chapter Three).

In the last chapter, I provided an analysis of the main features of my practice. In this chapter, I narrow my focus to features of my practice that are potentially divergent from established education.

Given the complexity of defining my practice, I take a pragmatic approach and locate it within the context of what I do. Implicit in this study is that my practice defines me, and I define my practice.

After re-analysing my interviews and journal entries, I turned to theories and ontologies, which would help me better understand my practice and lived experience. For example, how did my practice develop, and what characteristics lend it definition?

I use theory like I would use general literature - to help me see the world differently, particularly my practice. I respect theory but am wary of it. It is like fire and has to be regulated and tightly controlled, or it may consume everything. I resisted throwing my work into the flames to feed the theory. Nor did I want theory to be an indulgence. I,

therefore, prioritised examining my work and my lived experience over theory. I let my research breathe. First, I reflected on my interviews and the recurrent themes they produced. Second, I sought to locate my practice and pin it down within draughty church halls, makeshift classrooms with no socket for a laptop and countless café meetings. Then I turned to theory.

I sought theories that matched my concerns and my lived practice: the concrete world of poverty, exclusion, zero-hours, foodbanks, loan sharks and fractured relationships. I sought theories that reflected the actual rather than the virtual world. A world the people I taught and interviewed populate. The type of 'theory that works for people' (Pahl and Pool, 2018:18) and in this sense 'useful'.

These theories encompassed Communities of Practice (Wenger 1998) and Wenger's subsequent refinements to his theory, particularly 'knowledgeability' (2014), Figured Worlds (Holland, 2001), (Gee, 2010), and Affect Theory notably Sarah Ahmed's (2014) work on emotion. I drew upon studies I considered relevant to my lived experience. These included Alison Gilchrist (2019) on networking, Sarah Banks (2018) on co-production and co-inquiry and the series of contemporary community research books in the *Connected Communities series*, notably (Campbell and Pahl, 2018) and (Jones and Perry, 2019). For a full synopsis of the theories and the reasons I chose them, please refer to the Literature Review.

My study suggests my practice is dynamic: intersecting with other fields of educational provision, notably lifelong learning and wellbeing. It intersects with other features of practice, for example, networking. These overlapping connections often make distilling my practice into a distinct entity difficult and locating it within a context helped.

While presenting them in this order adds coherence and clarity, being an account rooted in social interaction, my examples often interlink and interweave, without hard and fast parameters. An example I use to address one question might also serve to address the other questions, and my account is the sum of its parts.

## 1. How do Education Courses in Community Settings Emerge?

Etienne Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice, mainly his work on trajectories into practice and legitimate peripheral participation, helped me examine emergent practice. His theory provided a framework to compare my lived teaching experience with the processes he describes. Concerning trajectory into practice and by association emergence, I found that networking played a significant part in how education in community settings facilitated emergence. Below, I explain why.

### 1.1 Networking is Crucial for Courses in Community Settings to Emerge

Networking is a salient feature of my practice which, with participatory community practice, creates opportunities to teach and produce knowledge. My networking developed gradually, with setbacks along the way. These setbacks were frustrating but provided essential lessons on how to engage with my community.

### 1.2 Educators Must Quickly Establish a Network Identity if Courses are to Emerge

My research suggests that an educator seeking to establish their practice but lacking a network identity will experience setbacks and delays. I experienced a setback in September 2017 while designing educational projects and seeking project partners. Being new to community education, I needed to work with organisations with project experience to demonstrate probity to potential funders and make my bid credible.

Yet, at first, gaining the support of established organisations proved difficult. On reflection, this was because I lacked an established community identity. Because I possessed scant community credentials, organisations were unable to define me or place me in their hierarchy. This made it difficult for me to establish relationships with potential project partners. When I met representatives from established organisations to discuss co-production, they often could not relate to me. While frustrating, I did not recognise the cause.

My journal entry, 4 September 2017, encapsulates my naivety and ignorance of the cause. It details a meeting I attended with a manager from an established education organisation and her boss:

> Although I was punctual, they were already waiting for me, and it was an unnerving and disorientating feeling like I had walked into the second act of a play and missed all the vital exposition. They were playing me. Despite my passionate pitch, they didn't seem interested in the project itself. It was clear during the discussion that both saw my project as a means solely to convince their organisation to fund the appointment of a part-time tutor on the pretext that they were helping me with the project. When I asked what would happen to the tutor if I were not successful with funding, they smiled, looked at one another, and the manager said their organisation would still fund the tutor and find them something to do. Little was offered me in return. After ten minutes, they stopped making notes.

This setback was frustrating but having since reflected on my data, I view the situation differently. On reflection, I understand that my vague network identity confused the professionals I met. They had established professional identities while mine was ill-defined. Likely, they were uncertain about how to conduct our discourse and the correct register to employ. To them, I might have been an educator, an entrepreneur, a chancer, or an amalgam of each. At this time, even I was unsure of my professional identity, so it must have been equally perplexing to them. The meeting came to nothing, and I remained on the periphery awaiting entry into the community of networks and networking.

### 1.3 A Social Enterprise delivering Education Must have a Clear Community Identity

My research suggests that educators who deliver education through a social enterprise need to ensure it too has a clear community identity (brand) that project partners can recognise, including its core values. However, my study shows that the intrinsic vagueness surrounding a social enterprise's purpose can impede establishing its identity. As I detailed in the literature review, a social enterprise's purpose is often unclear due to inherent conflicting objectives. Should its prime purpose be *social* - to serve the community or *enterprising* - to generate profits (surpluses) and income? The ambiguity of my social enterprise's purpose often confused the organisations I sought to work with, and they often mistook my social enterprise for a charity.

My journal entry 16 December 2017 evidences this confusion:

> It never fails to surprise me how often salaried staff in organisations assume you will work for free.

Between October 2017 and March 2020, I encountered 12 instances of this assumption. All occurred in meetings where community professionals (salaried) would invite my involvement in community initiatives. All assured me how good it would be if I could 'get on board'. They never discussed remuneration until I raised it, and their response, I perceive, was disappointment. Perhaps they considered me mercenary. Seven times out of the twelve, all communication relating to my proposed involvement ceased.

I suggest these situations arise through confusion regarding my professional identity and my social enterprise's purpose. Community professionals often focus solely on my company's social purpose but not its brief to be enterprising and generate income. Secondly, I suggest that many larger organisations are over-reliant on volunteers to support their initiatives. They mistake me for a volunteer they need not pay. This confusion continues.

My journal 12 February 2020:

> A representative from ---------- wanted my social enterprise to haul its cinema equipment around various venues in Wythenshawe, three times a week, to screen films in the evenings – for free. When I raised the delicate issue of remuneration, I received the stock reply that this initiative would generate positive publicity for my social enterprise and more 'opportunities'.

My study found among community professionals dissonance and a failure to understand that without income, my social enterprise would fail, and consequently, no more 'opportunities' for community teaching. I suggest this confusion indicates emergent practice because many professionals are used to working within traditional models of education delivery. My use of a social enterprise to deliver education may challenge commonly held assumptions (misconceptions) that its primary objective is social objective and income generation its secondary objective. This confusion between theory and the reality of my teaching may be considered an example of affective dissonance (Åhäll, 2016), (Hemmings, 2012); see below.

However, my study showed that undertaking pro bono civic work offers another trajectory into community practice.

### 1.4 Pro-Bono Civic Work Can Lead to Teaching Opportunities and Emergent Practice

My research suggests that pro-bono civic work plays a significant role in creating teaching opportunities. This work also aids a teacher's trajectory in community practice. My work for the social enterprise is distinct from the pro bono civic work I do in my community, like chair meetings and sit on committees. Yet even this community interaction is strongly connected to my educational practice and, through networking, generates learning opportunities. Unpaid civic work created these opportunities because it established my community credentials and afforded me entry to local networks.

Undertaking pro-bono civic work can accelerate the educator's trajectory into the community of practice and speed the process of acceptance and admittance into other local networks. I found that once individuals and organisations start to realise and appreciate your value to them and to the community, relationships develop then strengthen. Network-brokering (Gilchrist, 2019) plays a significant part (see below). Through chairing meetings, working event stands, posting event flyers door-to-door, penning articles for the local free paper and running guided walks, my community identity and that of my company gathered 'substance'. Although these activities seem remote from education, cumulatively, they build trust and strengthen community bonds, and these facilitate teaching opportunities.

My study suggests demonstrating usefulness in various capacities, educational and non-educational, paid and unpaid, facilitates formal and informal relationships and eases the process of acceptance and admittance into networks and practices. Wenger (1998) calls the process *legitimate peripheral participation* where I, formerly an outsider, am admitted into the community of local networks and organisations. Becoming what Morgan-Trimmer (2014) terms a 'usual suspect' - a familiar face at community meetings and events aids legitimate peripheral participation. Entry to the 'club' brings privileges invites to community events, fast-tracking to the tables of the movers and shakers, and personal mobile numbers are exchanged. It is improbable the situation where I perceived I was 'being played' would arise again. Admission to the network generates social capital and the increased resources that individuals gain from

personal connections, what Putnam (2000) terms 'the Rolodex effect' (p. 169). In turn, access to the leading players in the community and a reputation for getting things done brings credibility - the gold standard in this arena.

### 1.5 Interlocking Networks Strengthen Community Bonds and Accelerate Emergent Practice

My study details the journey from the side-lines of practice towards its centre, what Wenger (1998) terms a 'trajectory'. My trajectory occurred over time and within several interlocking networks. My research records how entry to one network accelerates entry into others because members of one network belong to several more, which they invite you to join. This accelerates trajectory into communities of practice as many networks link like concentric circles, each affording teaching opportunities. For example, through my membership of a small network, I was invited to join BW3, a significant network in my area. BW3 includes large and small enterprises, social trusts, housing groups, charities, Manchester Airport, NHS Trusts and Manchester United. BW3's 'About' webpage states:

> Typically, 80 to 100 people attend the free BW3 Gateway business networking events from across 65 different businesses.

The quarterly meetings it runs offered me opportunities to co-produce educative projects. Through BW3, I established links with groups that later became project partners. These relationships often involved brokering and network spanning.

### 1.6 Teaching Opportunities and Courses Emerge Through Brokering and Boundary Spanning

My study found that boundary spanning and network brokering secure opportunities to teach and accelerates trajectory into communities of practice. Gilchrist (2019), Morgan-Trimmer (2014) and Wenger et al. (2002) acknowledge the importance of lateral, often boundary-spanning connections brokered and nurtured by intermediaries and community connectors. These intermediaries and connectors are conduits sharing information and negotiating ways of seeing and doing things across different communities of practice and networks. To successfully boundary-span and

broker, community educators must assume several identities – shapeshift (see Findings Chapter).

My research supports Morgan-Timmer's (2014) view that once established, network brokering is an integral part of getting things done in the community and creating opportunities to teach. My study identified many examples of the brokering I do. Having established my 'community credentials' (by attending many local meetings), councillors viewed me as a 'go-to' person they can rely on to develop initiatives and connect with the community. Community Development Officers new in situ will arrange meetings with brokers (including me) to gain an understanding of the area. City organisations use my social media, and their officers attend meetings I chair to share information and promote their initiatives with my community. With trust established, there develop reciprocal relationships which lead to teaching.

Reciprocal relationships encourage brokering and generate teaching. To illustrate, the local newspaper editor promoted Writing Well in return for an article on local history as a filler between adverts. Reciprocity includes councillors funding my projects through neighbourhood investment funding (NIF). In return, they can demonstrate to potential voters how they have promoted community initiatives in the ward and share in the project's success. A community cinema I started in November 2019 is a collaborative effort through Council and Housing Association support and funding. Network brokering afforded opportunities to generate informal learning and promote culture – see later. This informal networking was necessary to secure teaching opportunities. My research supports Morgan-Trimmer's (2014) findings that informal relationships strengthen community bonds. I rely on these bonds to teach.

However, my research found that network brokering required a disproportionate amount of time and effort to yield educational opportunities. My finding supports Gilchrist's (2019) observation that community links require nurturing and time to develop. There are other downsides. 'Doing favours', joining committees, and dutifully attending network events, however worthy, are non-remunerative and extremely time-consuming. However, the significant amount of brokering and network spanning I do to secure teaching work may indicate emergent practice. For further examples of my network brokering, please see the Literature Review.

2. **What are the practises and processes around attendance?**

My study found several notable features around attendance, and I discuss these below.

### 2.1 Networking Co-Produces and Generates Knowledge

Co-production and co-inquiry feature strongly in my *teaching practice*, greatly assisted by networking. My journal entry October 2018 details an instance of co-inquiry and co-produced knowledge. Please see Appendix Three.

The entry records how knowledge arrived 'sideways' - unexpectedly and unintentionally, sparked by a chance encounter and conversation at a community meeting. The episode demonstrates the vital role networking plays in knowledge production and supports studies by Banks (2018) and Gilchrist (2019).

The journal entry in Appendix Four documents my attendance at a Royal British Legion Branch meeting in Northenden, 21 October 2018. The meeting (on a Sunday morning - this is relevant) concerned the Branch's involvement in a First World War art project I was leading, and they were supporting. Branch members, a local councillor, and members of several community groups were present.

The journal entry records how network meetings act as spaces for the cross-pollination of ideas, learning and co-production. A meeting in every sense because it was a meeting of several concentric circles of diverse individuals and groups linking to produce educational opportunities. A team effort. It developed through diverse elements converging and linking at one point - the meeting.

Not all meetings are as dynamic as my example, but when they are, they often provide learning opportunities. At this meeting, my learning opportunity arose when I spied a photograph of the 1922 unveiling of the local war memorial. Until then, I was aware of only two other photographs, and they featured the great and the good of the area – the MP, the squire and assorted clergy. But the new photograph recorded a people's history and provided a new perspective and narrative. It emphasised the scale of the public outpouring of grief in an era when, through social convention, people were reserved. The meeting generated opportunities for learning and understanding.

Below are the photographs. Local networking helped me gain new knowledge and understanding of a significant community narrative. The images are of historical and cultural importance, and I use them in my teaching, in presentations I deliver in the community and on the local guided walks I organise. In 2018, I forwarded the latter photograph to the local newspaper for publication and sharing.

Figure 5. Photographs of the War Memorial Commemoration 1922.

I was familiar with the following two images. Both represent pre-existing knowledge.

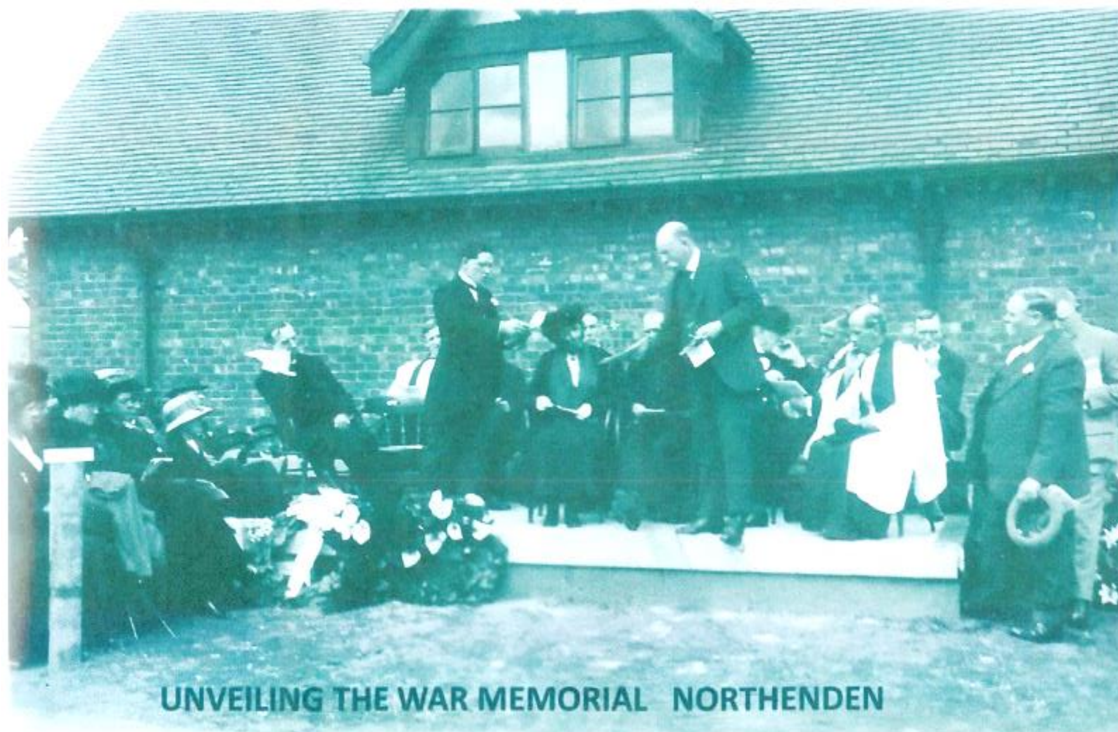

Figure 6. Post-meeting. Acquiring new knowledge and perspective.

By attending the meeting, I came across this photograph (below) of the same event. It was the first time I had seen it.

All these opportunities for knowledge gathering arose from making an effort to attend a meeting on a Sunday morning. I suggest these opportunities would rarely arise had I been furrowing a typical eight to four teaching practice. For this reason, I suggest that this practice and process indicates divergent practice. My practice allows me time to conduct educative research outside typical teaching hours. It affords opportunities for co-productive inquiry with individuals outside the education bubble. This co-productive inquiry can lead to new community narratives or the re-discovery of ones lost and forgotten.

For example, in June 2017, as part of the First World War project, the Church Warden of St. Wilfrid's Church and I researched the Parish Magazines of the period to acquire an insight into the communities of Northenden at the time. Also, the churchyard contains Commonwealth War Graves Commission graves, and we hoped that the magazines would provide more personal details of the servicemen buried there. During our research, we came across an article referring to two urns, the gift of Mrs Lowry-Hamilton, the rector's wife, for a shrine built outside the church in 1917 to commemorate those from the village so far killed in the war.

In her forty years as warden, it was the first time she had heard of the shrine and its urns. Time had erased the urns from the community narrative - its shared memory. After weeks of searching the church cellar and crypt, the warden discovered the urns, tarnished but undamaged. After a careful polish, the church placed them on public display. As artefacts, the urns have significant historical and cultural value for the Northenden and Wythenshawe communities. Through co-production, we created new knowledge or re-discovered it, and a silenced narrative once more spoke.

Figure 7. The shrine urns 2018.

Again, the peculiar nature of my practice presented opportunities to co-produce knowledge. It brought the flexibility to spend four days, over two weeks, examining parish records. This opportunity would not arise in a typical teaching role, although in higher education, colleagues engaged in a research project might encounter similar opportunities.

Concerning co-production, I suggest that casting the net wide and collaborating with people from a wide range of life experiences enhances the cross-pollination of ideas. In my journal 6 August 2017, I wondered whether educationalists in their professional role meet mainly other educationalists (my experience over ten years is they do). I considered this often reductive, whereas, in contrast, educationalists meeting non-educationalists and stirring the professional gene pool was conducive to generating fresh insights and ideas.

### 2.2 Co-inquiry and Co-Production Require Strong Grassroots Support

In this study, I employ 'divergence' as a means to examine whether my practice is emergent (see pages 8 and 9). By 'divergence', I mean practice and practises different from those I experienced or observed when teaching in school, college, or university. Such departures from established education I term *divergent practice*. An indicator of

divergent practice is my delivery of educative projects with strong grassroots links similar to ones documented by Jones and Perry (2019) and Campbell and Pahl (2018). My study suggests that for co-produced knowledge production to occur and be of long-term educational benefit to learners and the community, tutors must ensure their initiatives receive grassroots support. Participants must have a personal investment in the project and recognise its potential benefit to them.

Projects the community perceive relevant tend to garner grassroots support, prosper, and leave a legacy. The World of Wythenshawe initiative that ended in 2017 is an example of a successful grassroots-driven project. One of its legacies is an interactive mural at the local library charting Wythenshawe's historical development. Local schools use it as a learning resource. When I spoke with the project's organisers, they said that in 2015, they responded to a need identified at the local level. Before the project, pupils studying Wythenshawe's history had few resources they could access. Schools also sought engaging ways to teach local history. The subsequent 'WOW Zone' the project created met both these needs. When I started my community practice, this project's success informed my planning.

Applying the template the earlier project provided, when I start to plan a course, I assess, through consultation and inquiry, whether the community needs it. If so, I garner grassroots support before applying for funding. (See 2.3 below). As an educator seeking guidance in community practice, the World of Wythenshawe project provided an exemplar of good practice, and as such, can be viewed as a *surrogate* old-timer (Wenger, 2008). By surrogate old-timer, I mean something that, in the absence of a 'real' mentor, could act as a virtual one and guide me (please see below).

In contrast, many projects planned without grassroots input afford few opportunities for co-production and leave little legacy. Ruth, who had worked in community education since 2003, recounted such projects. When I interviewed her on 6 December 2017, she detailed how social enterprises lacking community connectedness or motives beyond gaining funds and fame floundered. In the interview extract below, Ruth also highlighted the importance of holding a community identity and a 'good reputation.'

> [They were] doing it for the wrong reasons, so, in the time of plenty under the Labour Government, there were people coming into the voluntary sector just because they thought that was the place that they could get funding, and they chased the funding. They didn't have a proper mission statement and looked to do anything really if there was a funding stream available. What happened to those groups was that they didn't sustain a good reputation because nobody actually knew what they did. They just chopped and changed depending on funding streams.

Like Ruth, I have witnessed initiatives with little grassroots support fail. Jones et al. (2019) recount a relatively unsuccessful project run by a community interest company (the type of social enterprise I run) - 'Some Cities' that taught photography to a community in Birmingham. The account helped me make comparisons with my practice and course legacy.

The 'Some Cities' co-founders, Burwood and Jackson (2019), offer candid accounts of how the Birmingham initiative emerged: meetings over beers or coffees, a 'desire' and an 'ambition' to map the city through photography and preserve images of communities already in transition. The project emerged from the founders' desires rather than demand in the communities where filming would occur. They secured funding from Arts Council England and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The account does not detail whether the writers had ensured there was community interest in the project before seeking funds. I assume consultation was limited because the organisers reached out to communities only after receiving funding. They used social and local media and 'invested in PR' to promote the project.

Despite the project leading to several exhibitions of the organisers' and participants' work, Burwood recounts, 'for reasons that are hard to clarify... the momentum we gained after our initial successes didn't carry *our* ambitions' [my emphasis] (p. 118). Burwood mentions 'personal factors at play' but does not elaborate. The project ended with limited legacy, and the organisers left the area. As Jones remarks, the Same Cities project is emblematic of the potential ephemerality of community projects (p. 17).

### 2.3 Funding Applications and Networking as a Practice and Process

By comparison, in my practice, before I seek funding, I identify a grassroots need. I gauge community needs by discussing the idea at meetings and polling opinions through questionnaires. Networks assist my enquiries. If the feedback is positive, I

identify a funder and contact potential project partners to secure their support. Gaining grassroots support secures opportunities for co-inquiry and knowledge production.

My findings support Perry and her colleagues (2019) recommendations on co-production. Perry et al. recommend initiatives be driven by those within the community, with professionals giving support and guidance (p. 123). Also, key individuals and organisations should be identified to motivate engagement, and local people should develop their ideas for activities to produce cultural content that is meaningful in their own lives (Jones et al., 2019:123).

Equally, Campbell and Pahl (2018) demonstrate co-production as a powerful tool of collective inquiry in communities. They demonstrate how community engagement can be mobilised and encouraged by including participants at the planning stage. Securing grassroots support demonstrates the importance of local networking again. It is one more role a community tutor must assume if they are to teach.

Another feature of the process of practice is the many identities tutors assume to secure teaching opportunities. A cultural intermediary is one more.

### 2.4 Tutors as Cultural Intermediaries

My research suggests that my teaching practice and role includes 'cultural intermediary' work because my social enterprise delivers culture. This adds a further level of complexity to my tutor identity and the role of my company. Jones and Perry, in their book *Cultural intermediaries connecting communities* (2019), define a cultural intermediary as one of a small number of particularly dedicated individuals who see working with socially excluded communities as a crucial part of their activities within the field of culture. Regarding identity, I suggest my practice and the tutors I interviewed are cultural intermediaries. Jones states, when working in these communities, the role of cultural intermediaries is as much about education, skills, and confidence-building as it is about artistic production (p. 12). Clare, who builds the confidence of the elderly learners she delivers art lessons to and Ruth, who teaches coping strategies for anxiety and depression, fit this definition.

In Jones and Perry's (2019) book, De Propris (2019:47) lists cultural intermediary roles. These roles include '90030' individuals engaged in 'artistic creation' (this would include Clare's art classes and the Writing Well course), '59112 video production activities' (our YouTube Channel and the Filming Well course fit this category). Interestingly 72200 is 'research and experimental development on social sciences and humanities', which technically makes my thesis, if not a work of art, a cultural artefact.

Jones (2019) details how the financial crisis of 2008 hit the cultural sector hard, as many organisations sunk for want of funding. The crisis meant intermediaries had to work in highly innovative ways to find external resourcing of different kinds to sustain their work within communities. Jones et al. (2019) identify an emerging intermediation sector driven by austerity that has 'refined its practices, adopting new funding models and arenas of activity' (p. 3).

My lived teaching experience supports Jones's observations. A little has to go a long way, and tutors work on relatively small budgets. We have to be innovative. For funders, there is an attraction in small social enterprises delivering education and culture because we are cheap to keep. As Jones et al. (2019) remark, 'cultural intermediation is how individuals and broader communities can engage with cultural activity' (p. 12).

Concerning positionality, my practice may be operating in the wake of art's upheaval. Yet Jones argues that the work of cultural intermediaries operating in the liminal spaces between arts and community action is poorly understood and recognised within existing policy frames (p. 80). My lived-teacher experience supports this observation (see below).

In the next paragraph, I describe how delivering courses with strong cultural content is one more facet of tutor and course identity and an indicator of emergent practice.

### 2.5 Multifunctional Courses, Multitasking Tutors

My research suggests that courses with cultural content (like Writing Well), if they are to receive funding, must demonstrate a practical 'usefulness'. To be funded in this

economic climate (perhaps new teaching paradigm), courses must be multifunctional, and their tutors multifaceted.

Jones et al. (2019) comment that over the last 30 years, culture has become valued by what it 'does'. My experience in bid writing supports this observation. In the case of Writing Well, I had to demonstrate to funders its usefulness. I stressed its wellbeing element – that the course promoted preventative health and could reduce government spending on curative health. Had Writing Well been purely a creative writing course, the funders most likely would have rejected my funding application.

Demonstrating usefulness is crucial if my educational initiatives are to emerge. The Block Cinema's funding is dependent on encouraging people experiencing isolation and loneliness to attend screenings. It must also encourage youth participation. As achieving both targets might reduce expenditure on health and youth crime, the cinema has a 'use' beyond providing culture, entertainment, and education. The cinema's need to welcome the lonely and vulnerable (wellbeing) and disaffected youth (social), and introduce people generally to a range of film genres and styles (cultural and educative), demonstrate that educational activities need to be multi-performing and its tutors, multitasking. This has implications for the tutor's trajectory into communities of practice and professional development because it demonstrates the raft of skills she or he must acquire to teach in this emergent world of education.

Also, co-production drove the cinema (wellbeing) initiative. Gilchrist (2019) states that co-production paves the way for more community-orientated approaches to health promotion, including community care outside medical institutions (South and Stansfield, 2018). Beard (2012) asserts arts interventions can assist particular healthcare issues, including reminiscence therapy for dementia. However, Jones (2019) concedes therapeutic success is difficult to measure.

### 2.6 Social Enterprises as Providers of Culture

My findings suggest that through co-production, social enterprises can create opportunities for the community to access culture within and outside teaching. My findings demonstrate that a community enterprise delivering education can be more than a recipient of funding. The income it generates can fund educative projects run

by others, and my social enterprises have done this (see Appendix Five). My findings support the argument that social enterprises be viewed as income-generating concerns as much as providers of education (see above). My social enterprises' ability to fund community initiatives from their income adds one more dynamic to tutor and company identity and may indicate emergent practice.

On a political level, I found Perry's (2019) case study of Ordsall, Salford, useful because it is local to the geographic area of my research and helped me make comparisons. Jones (2019), commenting on the study, describes Ordsall as a rich cultural infrastructure of deep-rooted community organisations. Yet, he contrasts this starkly with the affluence of Media City UK, within its boundaries and home to ITV, the BBC, and the Lowry Theatre. As Jones comments, this contrast between extremely wealthy and extremely deprived parts of the ward is a reminder that proximity to the creative industries does not translate into rapid growth for poorer neighbourhoods.

This resonated with my study and lived experience of teaching in Wythenshawe. In my introduction, I detailed that despite Wythenshawe hosting a major international airport, a new Airport City business park which includes Amazon's flagship depot, this wealth does not translate into growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods where many of my learners live. In Wythenshawe, cultural and material poverty co-exist.

Yet, my study supports Jones's (2019) optimism that structural poverty and inequality do not preclude people from engaging in culture (Jones et al. 2019: 1), particularly if it embraces the expansive view of culture promoted by Raymond Williams (1958) that 'culture is ordinary' and part of the community fabric (see Introduction and Literature Review).

I suggest culture assists community cohesion, augments its identity and facilitates knowledge production. Providing communities with the means to make and appreciate culture is essential. If communities are refracted through voices, which are necessarily diverse, disparate, and multiple (Campbell and Pahl, 2018), then, by implication, rationing access to art and the tools to make art silences these voices. It deprives people of the means to represent their community on their terms and challenge

dominant narratives often introduced from outside (see Introduction). This restriction also impedes the production of community knowledge.

Access to art and the means to make art feeds into the broader topic of lifelong learning and the allocation of resources which I discuss in the Literature Review. Culture is relevant when examining the purpose of Writing Well. If viewed as a vehicle for delivering culture, and its tutors as cultural intermediaries, Writing Well provides learners with the tools to produce, individually and collectively, community knowledge. Writing and storying is also an opportunity for learners to present alternative community narratives which may challenge existing dominant ones. Clare's art classes also fulfil this role.

Initiatives like the community cinema and Writing Well demonstrate that social enterprises can provide opportunities for individuals to access culture (and wellbeing) cheaply and innovatively. However, uncertainty over sustained funding is a downside.

### 2.7 Writing Well Viewed as a Co-Produced Course

My study suggests Writing Well is a co-produced work in progress. It is a course that continues beyond its official end date because it is not a course in the traditional sense (see Analysis and Findings Chapter). Its learners and tutors co-produce learning with all having a stake in its success. My study suggests that each learner defines success in their own terms. They operate a 'covert' curriculum pertinent to their needs and personal development (see below). Socialising is a significant learning process whereby my learners achieve the goals they set themselves (see below). Again, this way of viewing the course suggests emergent and divergent practice.

### 2.8 Social Learning as a Process in my Practice

My study found that social learning was a significant learning process throughout my practice. The high level of socialising I observed, which occurred within and without the classroom, may also indicate divergent practice. I drew on a major theory of social learning, Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) because it examines learning as a social activity. I also drew on a study by Rogge et al. (2020), who provide a practical example of social learning in a twenty-first-century communal setting.

Their study showed how Wenger's theory could be applied to diverse learning environments and resonated with my lived experience. While acknowledging that social learning is a broad concept still in development, their study flagged its potential as a learning tool. Rogge et al. (2020) conducted an extensive study of informal lessons held in German community gardens. They noted how socialising acted as a bonding agent, particularly between people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. There, knowledge was produced informally, in practical, hands-on situations through learners cooperating and collaborating. Their research suggests that social learning can integrate people, reduce prejudice, and promote heterogeneity.

The study explained how a *covert curriculum* could generate knowledge. In this study, a covert curriculum enabled learners to acquire an understanding of German society. Social bonding is a pertinent concern in Germany which in 2015, under its policy of *willkommenskultur,* recorded its highest ever number of migrants in a single year with 2.14 million people (Kroet, 2016), including nearly one million refugees (AFP, 2015). Germany has the task of assimilating huge numbers of fledgeling citizens, many of whom were new to the customs and practices of a Western European country. Rogge et al. (2020) noted that in these lessons, a covert (informal) curriculum operated. Informally, learners learnt skills for life, including cooperation and conflict resolution between themselves. They also learnt that the gardens were managed through democratic decision making. The study demonstrated to me how learning could be social and socialising.

The concept of covert curriculum resonated with my observations of the social aspect of my courses. It helped me reflect on my interview with Miriam, a refugee and Writing Well participant. Miriam used socialising as a learning tool. She socialised with the other learners to learn English customs and idioms. She embraced Writing Well's potential beyond its formal curriculum to provide her with an understanding of her new community and British society generally. Without input from her tutors, Miriam adapted and moulded Writing Well to meet her additional educational needs - learning about the United Kingdom, her new home. This 'covert curriculum' was an augmentation to the course and embodied her personal learning goals. For extracts of my interview with Miriam regarding social learning, please see the previous chapter.

My study suggests Miriam is not atypical and that many of the participants mould the course to meet their needs, interests, and lifestyles. I suggest the course's flexibility and adaptability in meeting the learner's needs and interests indicate emergent and divergent practice. I suggest my finding complements Rogge et al.'s (2020) empirical study. In their study, learning often occurred 'subconsciously' (p 12), with the learners unaware that they had learned something new. Concerning Writing Well, my study suggests learners devised their own (covert) curriculum and success criteria *consciously* in advance of any social learning. Because they had set their criteria for success, often learners were aware whether they had achieved the goals they had set.

One legacy of socialising is course stickiness and involves learners actively maintaining contact after the course ends (see the previous chapter). I use 'stickiness' plainly to describe the learners keeping in touch with each other and the tutors and bonding under the banner of Writing Well - we all stick around. However, Sara Ahmed's (2014) reference to emotional stickiness provided an apt and nuanced explanation of why learners wanted to maintain these links and stick around.

Through the regular group meetings, they organise, learners socialise and share their writing. Under the Writing Well banner, they use a WhatsApp group to exchange wellbeing information and writing. Through the meetings and the WhatsApp group, the course continues beyond its formal shelf-life. As I noted in the previous chapter, Writing Well is a course that shapeshifts to meet its learners' needs. It is educational, health-centred and a pastime. It is likely a deliverer of culture too (see above) and a driver for dynamic socialising. Its multi-functionality indicates emergent and divergent practice.

The informal community locations where many of our educational activities occur (in our interview Miriam did not describe our teaching room as a classroom and Clare teaches at her learners' home) may aid socialising. These informal community settings may enable collective emotions to become visible and connect with and mediate individual emotions (Hedges, 2019), (Roth and Lee, 2007).

Concerning education, socialising is also co-production, providing continuing opportunities to learn, generate knowledge, and facilitate personal growth. Socialising was capable of recalibrating the tutor-learner relationship and removed pre-existing notions of a hierarchy of knowledge.

In my study, my observations of socialising showed me what was occurring but did not fully explain how and why this happened time after time, on every course. Also, although the engagement I observed was 'active… dynamic and personal" (Dewey, 1913:21), it did not fully explain why this continued long after the course ended. It did not explain why, post-course, the learners sought to meet as a group rather than break into several friendship groups.

Also, at the start of every course, my co-tutor and I perceived some learners as introverted, reserved and untrusting. This was more than first-lesson nerves and likely the result of negative life experiences. Yet, as the course progressed, they embraced socialising and, by its end, were some of the most enthusiastic of the learners wishing to maintain contact as a group. At the end of every course, most learners were 'distraught', a word two used on separate courses. I found this curious. I considered what drove this attachment to the course and the desire to socialise. What was in it for them?

One explanation is the learners' high degree of personal investment through operating a covert curriculum (see above). While a reasonable assumption, I felt there was another element that bonded learners. Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014) afforded a framing of the learners' emotional attachment to the course and each other. I also considered whether the wellbeing focus of the course accounted for this attachment.

I suggest the learners' emotional attachment to the course and to each other is driven by an overwhelming need for a 'collective healing' that is healing occurring only through socialising. Writing Well is, after all, a wellbeing course, and its learners have experienced and continue to experience great emotional pain. A shared narrative, strengthened through mutual disclosure of painful episodes in their lives and empathy, might produce collective healing. Ahmed (2014) posits that part of becoming a group

and assuming a 'we' involves sharing a narrative. Collective healing is a documented phenomenon. Rasool (2018) provides an example of collective healing in a women's writing group in Rotherham. Concerning my learners, sharing their narratives was also a dialogical co-inquiry through which knowledge is produced (Banks and Hart, 2018), (Banks et al., 2014). Discussion is a critical pedagogical tool in our lessons, and we allocate time accordingly. If Writing Well is more than a course and also a vehicle for collective learning and for collective healing, it would indicate divergent practice.

Ahmed provided an alternative way to view what I described as 'stickiness' or bonding. Ahmed refers to stickiness borne from emotional attachment. She believes that emotions create surfaces and boundaries. She argues that to view emotions as interior to us is a misconception. Emotions are capable of circulating between bodies and 'stick' as well as move. Our emotional responses to others or objects make boundaries and surfaces. Referencing Collins (1990:27), Ahmed remarks that emotions do not come from within the individual body but are what holds or binds the individual body together. The participants of Writing Well may stick together through 'shared meanings' and 'agreed and shared perceptions', social norms and perceived 'common sense' (Ahmed 2014a:208). However, the reasons that drive the learners to stick together may not be apparent to them. What is agreed is unconsciously between individuals: it 'does not tend to be registered by consciousness' (Ahmed 2014a:219). This insight led me to re-examine my data on 'course stickiness' and examine what unconscious agreements might exist, unarticulated in words but present in affect. Ahmed's insight afforded me a critical lens to examine socialising, bonding and course legacy.

Considering collective healing, in turn, led me to reconsider Sfard and Prusak's (2005) research on collective identity. I considered whether collective healing might require the learners assuming a collective identity. Sfard and Prusak argue that pre-existing and negotiated narratives shape who we are, especially in our formative years. As the course's participants have formed identities, I considered whether, through group participation, learners temporarily discard their individual identity and share (in) a temporary collective identity to enable collective healing. Sfard and Prusak (2005) argue that by adulthood, an individual's identity is often immutable. I suggest that if this is so, a group identity (a narrative shaped and shared by the group) enabled them

to bypass their immutable, individual identity. If so, the learners' socialising and co-production of knowledge (reading their new work to one another, writing and publishing work) and collective healing occurred within a collective identity.

The learners' emotional attachment to Wythenshawe may strengthen this collective identity. Hanley's (2007) study of estates highlights the important function place plays in forming an individual and collective identity. While students on established courses, on completion, will leave the area, many to pursue careers, the Writing Well learners are mainly elderly, some with underlying physical and mental health conditions. It is unlikely they will leave the area. The area provides for them a shared point of reference and history (see Introduction).

My study of The WhatsApp group suggests that collective narratives and shared histories can form quickly – over months, not years. Necessity or a collective experience (attending the Writing Well course) may accelerate the process. I observed in the WhatsApp group a collective narrative that revolved around living in Wythenshawe, childhood experiences, including school, shopping, favourite food, and pets. These often became the subject of their writing. Sharing experiences and finding commonality in these created a collective narrative. These strands fed into the larger narrative and shared experience of being former learners of Writing Well. Reminiscing about performing their work on radio and at events cemented the narrative. Although this collective narrative involved a sharing of the past, it was also forward-looking. Group members discussed writing in progress arranged meetings. This post-course collective identity may indicate divergent practice.

When reflecting on divergent practice, the concept of *affective dissonance* proved helpful. An analytical tool introduced by Clare Hemmings (2012), affective dissonance helps analyse the politics of emotion and employ critical thinking. This approach highlights contradictions between our assumptions and the 'reality' of a situation (the lived experience). It helped me consider how society generally views adult learners and defines educational success. It helped me consider whether Writing Well challenged these preconceptions. For example, through this prism, my learners 'talking in class' is a powerful pedagogical tool to be encouraged rather than silenced because discussion

and airing feelings have wellbeing benefits and are something we encourage. Viewed in this context, a silent student is a cause for concern.

Using affective dissonance and using Writing Well as 'the object', I noted that my practice challenged assumptions about adult education. Notably, the assumption that courses are bounded. For the reasons I detailed earlier, Writing Well resists this preconception. It demonstrates that courses are not always tidily packaged with a use-by date. Instead, courses can have long shelf lives and be recycled to meet other educative needs. Writing Well indicates that courses can be multifaceted, in Writing Well's case, a writing and wellbeing course, a cultural endeavour, and a place of collective healing.

### Summary

My research suggests that my practice enables learners to become agents of their learning. On the Writing Well course, learners create a covert curriculum to meet their individual learning needs. This shared ownership in the course may indicate a teaching practice divergent from mainstream education. Learners develop a strong emotional attachment to the course and each other. Many wish to socialise as a group after the course has ended. Learners address their individual mental health needs collectively by assuming a group identity and participating in a shared (collective) healing. Attachment to place (Wythenshawe) assists socialising by introducing common points of reference.

Socialising is also a story of learner engagement with the course; however, I focus on stories of tutor engagement because of the rich research content the interviews with tutors produced. The interviews with tutors revealed their uncertainty about teaching in developing practice. Their stories raised a broader issue regarding the twenty-first-century employment landscape and the complexity newcomers face in planning a straight trajectory into practice.

Now I consider themes relating to tutor identity and engagement within the teaching practice.

## 3. What are the Critical Features of Tutor identity and Engagement Within my Teaching Practice?

### 3.1 Tutor Identity, Uncertainty, and Vulnerability

My study found that, for tutors, community teaching was a cause of insecurity and uncertainty. With a constant need to shapeshift whilst working for a chameleon-like social enterprise, it is understandable that Ruth and Clare felt insecure in their professional identity and role.

Networking might also contribute. My study found that while networks can promote tutor confidence (Gilchrist, 2019), they can equally demoralise. On the plus side, networking can raise one's self-esteem: your skills are recognised and your contribution to the community valued. In my practice, where tutors need to self-ascribe their competence to teach, recognition by network peers is an informal accreditation (see below).

Yet my study highlighted instances of networks causing tutors stress and anxiety. For instance, networks vary in quality with no guarantee that X investment of time will yield Y, a teaching opportunity. Networks are often undemocratic, lacking mechanisms for dispute resolution between individuals and groups. Power differentials are inevitable. By joining the club, you are enrolling into the prevailing hierarchy.

Ruth, when interviewed, related her anxiety and frustration of civic work and networking in her town. Frustrated, Ruth left the network. As Gilchrist (2019), referencing (Freeman, 1973:1), remarks, networks can be a tyranny: a 'smokescreen for the strong to establish… hegemony over others.' Rumour can tarnish reputations (the grapevine is also a powerful network) and individuals ostracised. Gilchrist notes that many networks have hidden elites and cliques which are hard to challenge and so legitimate peripheral participation can take you so far into the circle but does not guarantee you the power to influence community policy.

My journal entries reveal my constant fear of falling from favour and exclusion from networks. Ruth also recounted such exclusions. FOMO – fear of missing out – pervades,

especially when networking is essential for securing teaching opportunities. Yet despite this, networking gets things done and can produce knowledge.

### 3.2 Community Tutors Draw Upon Established Teaching Models of Practice

My study found that tutors, uncertain of their practice, draw upon established teaching models for guidance and support (see Findings Chapter). For example, tutors prepared lesson plans and schemes of work, although funders did not stipulate their use. They also assumed the title 'tutor' to lend legitimacy to their new practice and meet learner expectations (see below). Likewise, most of the texts tutors teach are ones they taught in established settings. Even in interviews, when discussing emergent practice, tutors employed the lexis of established education as their lingua franca.

Tutors used the norms of established education as a yardstick to compare their community practice, for example incorporating equality and diversity, inclusion and differentiation in their lesson planning and delivery. As my journal 15 January 2018 records:

> Having spent my entire student life in established and 'orthodox' worlds of education and later teaching in these settings, I am habituated to their norms, and it is always difficult to kick a habit.

I suggest that in an uncertain teaching environment, the examples I list have a symbolic function. Their association with established education allay the tutors' doubts and reassure them that despite teaching in informal settings, they remain professional educators. Such instances might serve as the artefacts, procedures and concepts that reify practices and help a community of practices 'organize their interconnections' (Wenger, 1998:105).

Despite my practice being prima facie emergent, the gravitational pull of established practice - a 'master-figured world' (Gee, 2010), (Holland, 2001) was evident. Ruth, in an interview, demonstrated how community tutors remain attuned to established education. From our interview, 6 December 2017:

> Ruth: I am working with Dr-----, who created a community education programme called Menopause Swings and Roundabouts, which empowers women to manage their menopausal years better.

Prima Facie, Ruth in maintaining links with established worlds of education through Dr ---– supports her agency and freedom to boundary span and weave between several worlds. Yet, implicit is the shared understanding of a university's power to confer status and legitimacy to a project. Applying Vygotsky's (1978) observations on cultural tools, and discussed by Penuel and Wertsch (1995), 'doctor' may be considered a cultural tool that society generally associates with high academic achievement. Ruth drew upon these cultural resources to confer status and legitimacy to the course she sought to establish.

In our interviews, Ruth also drew upon the educational norms of qualifications and training to designate to herself an identity of an experienced tutor. In establishing her professional credentials, Ruth employed the cultural tools and jargon of education: 'safeguarding', 'equality and diversity' that provided common points of reference between us and coordinated our discourse through the interview. During the interview, Ruth frequently referred to her qualifications, her pending master's degree and experience in the voluntary sector. In my journal entry, January 2018, I considered whether this constant reference to qualifications and experience was a sign of insecurity, almost a need to justify her competence to teach in the community. Please see Appendix Three for the transcript extract and journal entry.

Likewise, Clare, new to community teaching, drew upon established notions of learner success. She saw admittance to university and receiving a Degree as the pinnacle of achievement. Clare wanted one of her elderly learners to enrol on a part-time University Arts Degree.

My study, therefore, suggests that schools, colleges, and universities play a significant role in emergent practice. As established settings, they provide a reference point and a yardstick for tutors to gauge their emergent practice and teaching success. Established settings provide a teaching framework where no framework is apparent. Even the title 'tutor' is a legacy of established education. We describe ourselves, tutors, to meet participant expectations that qualified teachers run the sessions. Symbolically it connotes professionalism, skills and learning. Tutors adopt the symbolism of an existing world of education. Perhaps we also appropriate the label 'tutor' to paper over our insecurities.

Drawing upon established practice was one way tutors redressed their uncertainty. The tutor's reliance on established practice indicates emergent practice because their uncertainty is caused by practising in a new teaching environment and possibly working within a new paradigm of community teaching.

Tutors appear not to create dichotomies (in terms of preferencing) between teaching models but rather make comparisons. Aspects of established practice may aid a tutor on their trajectory into their new practice and be considered a surrogate old-timer (see below). This is important where a trajectory into practice is no longer as straightforward as thirty years ago.

### 3.3 There is No Longer a Straightforward Trajectory into Practice

To add to the complexity (and uncertainty) of our community practice, we teach in a landscape of many competing and often contradictory communities of practice. We operate in and across a multitude of practices and are responsible for our trajectories through them. In a sense, tutors new to community practice are also learners. But there is no old-timer to guide a tutor through her 'apprenticeship' into community practice or accredit her competence. The following sections discuss these issues and describe how tutors address them.

Wenger's (2014) refined model of communities of practice and knowledgeability helped me reflect upon these contradictions and examine in more detail divergent and emergent practice. Wenger's refined model addresses societal changes since its original design in the 1990s. It seeks to address the growing complexity of communities of practice in a world of individual development over collective learning. Wenger recognises that in the twenty-first century, learning is a trajectory through an increasingly complex landscape and belonging to one practice may not be enough. The learner now needs to know about a whole variety of practices, many of which she or he will not be a member. Knowledgeability is possessing a unique knowledge base to navigate through this complex learning landscape. This need for knowledgeability resonated with me because it reflected the complexity of my learning trajectory into community practice.

The complexity of the twenty-first-century landscape means tutors have difficulty evidencing their knowledge and competency within a single community of practice. In Wenger's original model competence is defined socially and through negotiation, usually between the newcomer and an old-timer in that practice. But where there is no clearly defined community of practice, how can practitioners evidence their competence and to whom? Wenger (2014) argues that if you are in a complex landscape and creating a unique trajectory through that landscape, no single community is going to define simply and clearly what it means to be knowledgeable or competent.

Wenger (2014) provides an insight into the insecurity the tutors I interviewed were experiencing but can offer no solution because, with the burden now on the individual to create a professional identity, each situation is unique. He argues the burden of ascribing oneself a professional identity is more challenging in the twenty-first century because acquiring identity is now a project of 'you', and there is no one else with the same trajectory as you.

I suggest the insecurity I noted in tutors is also caused by the limited means to accredit their competence to practice in the community. A prevailing lack of someone or something to ascribe competency or to guide them exacerbate these doubts.

In our interview on 6 December 2017, Ruth ascribed her own competence to teach in the community: 'Self-selection role rather than me applying for a form… because I have quite a background in the voluntary sector'. Yet, to support her claim to competence, Ruth was studying for a master's degree. Higher education and a master's degree remained potent symbols of her competency to practice in the community. To address her uncertainty, Clare, new in her role, used our interview to discuss these uncertainties with me. Although a more experienced teacher than me, I perceived she still sought reassurance from a peer of her competence to teach in the community. (see the Analysis and Findings Chapter).

Wenger states that if your trajectory is an overly complex one (and mine is), identity is more of a burden for the individual. Wenger states, knowledgeability, competence, and accountability remains an 'unresolved problem' (2014). By contrast, in established education, the community of practice is tangible, and competences and accountability

are clearly defined. There, tutors have a clearer understanding of the teaching world they inhabit and align their work with colleagues.

My study suggests that community tutors must be resigned to a practice of contradiction and uncertainty and recognise these are what makes it dynamic. They need to possess knowledgeability if they are to practice effectively, operate between and across several, often competing, communities of practice, span boundaries and broker the interchange of information between diverse organisations and networks. Possessing knowledgeability enables a tutor to assemble these diverse practices into an entity of a lesson and an instance of teaching.

I suggest that in this complex landscape, tutors select a range of old-timers to guide them and help them gain knowledgeability. In emergent practice, surrogate, actual or virtual, old-timers facilitate the acquisition of knowledgeability.

### 3.4 Emergence and Old-Timers

In the Literature Review, I stated that Wenger's model is easier to apply to established educational practices than mine. Its strength is identifying mechanisms of reproduction and transformation in established practice but is less effective when examining emergent practice. For example, in my practice, I found it difficult to detect corresponding newcomer and old-timer roles. Wenger (1998:118-119) states:

> A community of practice as it unfolds is, in essence, produced by its members through their mutual engagement, it evolves in organic ways that tend to escape formal descriptions and control. The landscape of practice is, therefore, not congruent with the reified structures of institutional affiliations, divisions, and boundaries. It is not independent of these institutional structures, but neither is it reducible to them.

The passage suggests, Wenger did not elaborate on emergence beyond generalisation. He focused on existing practice and how it is reproduced or adapts. Reproduction or adaptation is commonly achieved through negotiation between the apprentice (newcomer) and an old-timer. An old-timer is an experienced hand who can initiate the newcomer into the practice through legitimate peripheral participation until they, in turn, become an old-timer. In this way, the practice is reproduced, adapted, and continued.

Yet, Wenger's model did not reflect my experience of starting a teaching practice from scratch. His model assumes a practice with somebody with authority, already in situ, to ascribe membership and competence to newcomers. When I set up my practice, there was no old-timer. Wenger (2014) acknowledges that in a twenty-first-century landscape, competence is more challenging than ever to validate. The complexity of my teaching situation led me to question, in emergent practice, who or what do newcomers turn to guide them and ascribe competence – who or what is their old-timer?

Adapting Wenger's (1998) model to my research needs, my study suggests that tutors in an emergent practice, intentionally or not, often acquire knowledgeability through a surrogate or 'virtual' old-timer. By this, I mean various knowledge sources tutors access. They 'negotiate' meaning with these sources, adapting the knowledge this produces to their community-teaching needs.

The old-timer may not necessarily be a person. Old-timers can include the artefacts from existing practices that tutors adapt to their new practice. Included in these artefacts would be lesson plans and schemes of work (see above). The old-timer is also an amalgam of self-help books, training courses, and peers. The tutors 'consult' these virtual old-timers as and when required to address any skills and knowledge gap in their practice. This collection of disparate practices and artefacts help reify the emergent practice. My research suggests that by this process, emergent practice becomes corporeal and knowledgeability attained. Over time, these become the abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts that reify something of that practice in a concrete form (Wenger, 1998:59).

Returning to my interview with Clare and discussed in Chapter Four, Section 11, the extract provides an example of peer support and mutual inquiry reifying our practice. Although we spoke as peers, at times, Clare assumed the role of newcomer and me of an old-timer. While this study is not an instance of co-inquiry, dialogic principles, for instance, dialogic co-inquiry spaces (Banks et al., 2014), proved a powerful tool for reflection and helped Clare and me share our thoughts on course delivery. Clare used the interview to discuss her practice with me and seek a second opinion from someone

who had more experience of community teaching, albeit limited, with me ahead of Clare in teaching in the community only by 18 months.

Stephen: In terms of monitoring and assessment, how do you assess the development of your learners?

Clare: At the last session, I think they've all improved on some level. It's not a direct evaluation. At the end of the session, completing a set task, how they've used the materials, the fact that they've held their concentration for a whole two hours on a piece of artwork- that in itself is an achievement.

Stephen: Do you use post-it notes?

Clare: You know, I don't do any of those sorts of things – I don't know whether I should start jigging it up more?

Although in this extract, I assumed an old-timer role, later, I sought guidance from Clare and benefited from her insights. We spent much of the interview trying to figure out our practice together. Please see Appendix Three for a fuller version of this extract.

### 3.5 Knowledgeability and Self-ascribed Competence

#### Tutors Are Doing It for Themselves

Concerning knowledgeability, my study examined who judges a tutor's competence to teach in the community. In established education, this would be a range of people, including line-manager, professional mentors, subject tutors and CPD course providers.

My study found that tutors assumed the responsibility of acquiring knowledgeability. They pro-actively upskilled to acquire knowledgeability and ascribed themselves the competence to teach.

My study also found that in emergent practice, project-partners, funders but primarily learners judged and affirmed the competences tutors had ascribed themselves. Consequently, when tutors hug and kiss their learners, they may be seeking validation of their teaching competence and addressing their insecurities. These shows of affection may be informal feedback and confirmation of teacher competence.

Acquiring knowledgeability involves tutors taking steps to upskill so they can ascribe themselves the competence to practice. As Ruth commented in our interview on 6 December 2017:

> The training for my current role has been self-administered as it were, so I put myself through my counselling diploma, I put myself through the PGCE and now completing the Master's in Education and am now in my third year, so this is a unique situation in that I'm setting up my own project.

And:

> Stephen: How were you selected for this role?
>
> Ruth: Self-selection… I'm looking at more creating opportunities for myself… to take a new project forward.
>
> Stephen: Is it like you've created this role?
>
> Ruth: Yes.

**Summary**

My study demonstrates that when tutors perceive a gap in their skills and lack CPD, they reflect, appraise themselves, and upskill in their own time. In the absence of an old-timer, tutors turn to an amalgam of people, objects, and habituated norms and practices from established education. Coproduction offers peers opportunities to address issues (Banks et al., 2014).

Often, where there was no old-timer, mistakes and reflection guided my trajectory into practice. 'Mistakes are the best teachers' is only a cliché because it contains a kernel of truth. When I started my practice, I made many mistakes and took numerous false steps along the way – for example, the 'playing me' meeting of 2017 (see above). Mistakes and reflection are powerful old-timers.

# CHAPTER SIX: REFLECTIONS ON POSITIONALITY

This Chapter considers my positionality within the study and my engagement with the research process. It examines how being centred in the heart of the study enables me to present a unique, personal account of lived-life community teaching and make an original contribution to knowledge. I discuss my positionality in relation to the interviewees and how the principles of co-inquiry within the limitations of the methods available to me informed my approach to interviews. I conclude the Chapter by examining knowledge production within communities and how the cross-pollination of ideas through university and community collaboration can enhance knowledge production.

## My Positionality

This study is my original contribution to knowledge because my positionality makes this thesis unique. The lens I apply to my practice is unique because I created it from my lived teacher experience. I reached a point in the study when I moved beyond reading theory and began creating my own. Theories helped me reflect and provided a launchpad for my theory-making.

The interviews demonstrate the complexity of my researcher role and my positionality in this study. Like my practice and teacher identity, I shapeshift my way through this thesis – sometimes the researcher, sometimes the researched, at times the interviewer and then the interviewed. I am embedded in the data I seek to analyse.

Although the study is a personal account and not an instance of co-inquiry, I sought to include other voices to produce understanding and my approach to interviewing drew on *dialogic principles*, for instance, valuing alternative ways of knowing and creating 'knowledge through learning from the experiences of participants' (Banks et al., 2014:2) and regarding their perspectives as equally valuable. My journal entries recount a personal narrative, but it is a narrative established on collaborative reflexivity as interviewees recount their experiences and both them and I engage in a mutual figuring out of our teaching practice. The contribution of others added texture and nuance to my study and helped me reflect.

My research is a pared-down, small-scale version of collaborative reflexivity. My interviewees were more than 'objects of research' (Banks et al., 2014:1); they were collaborators in a mutual enquiry. I wanted my interviews to be a collaborative attempt with Ruth and Clare to understand our teaching practice and Miriam providing a learner's perspective. Banks et al.'s (2014) paper on the research process argues for a greater focus on collaborative reflexivity to enhance learning. Banks believes this develops sustainable and ethical collaboration. My wish to undertake a joint investigation of my teaching practice with those who experienced aspects of it determined my interview style and my choice of interviewees (see Methodology Chapter). For example, Ruth was an experienced community practitioner and tutor. Miriam was a learner and a volunteer for my social practice. Clare was a tutor new to teaching in the community and still making sense of her practice. We all were.

However, this did not mean pulling punches. My questions were robust and designed to facilitate debate and possible disagreement – to cause a dissonance that might shake a bough to make the fruit fall. Similarly, reaching an answer or consensus was never intended – this was an exploration, and given the small interview sample, it was a tiny step but perhaps a step that could be orientated in the direction of substantial future research (see Methodology Chapter).

My interviews supported the premise of valuing alternative ways of knowing to 'create knowledge through learning from the experiences of participants' (Banks et al., 2014:2). I held the interviewees' perspectives to be of equal value to my research. I encouraged my interviewees to actively participate and attempt to 'work things through' together with opportunities to ask me questions. As well as the interviewees kindly allowing me to interview them, I hoped there would be mutual benefits to them, for example, a shared understanding of the practice in which we were, to differing degrees, engaged. I hoped the tutors I interviewed might find the semblance of an answer to why they felt uncertain and anxious about their practice and could start to address these.

On a broader canvas, this thesis and this study is an invitation to the reader to participate and, through engagement with the text, co-produce further knowledge. The

thesis in work in progress: the opening of a discussion regarding models of community education and not its conclusion.

### Improvisation

This study of emergence is also a study of improvisation. This improvisation could be one more facet of emergent teaching, and it is pertinent to mention it. Therefore, I include improvisation as a facet of emergence and part of the tutor's repertoire. We often improvise alone (like Clare, the art tutor) and, to address a dynamic teaching environment, often apply flexible teaching approaches and practices.

### A Study of Closure as Much as Emergence

On reflection, it became apparent that my study was as much about closure as emergence. The tutor's emotional connection to a course, particularly one designed by them, was an indicator of divergent practice. Considering Writing Well's closure placed the course's uniqueness in sharp relief. For example, Burwood and Jackson's (2019) Birmingham project began with high ambitions but fizzled out, leaving little legacy. Both organisers became dispirited and moved on to other artistic endeavours. Their study made me realise closure was a way to examine my practice and illustrate divergent practice.

Until reflecting on the Birmingham project, I had not considered the ending of my practice and the fallout that might ensue. In established education, there are procedures to address course closure. A tutor leaves, another takes her place. In established settings, a course rarely shares the same DNA as its tutor, and this might be an advantage. Reflecting on closure highlighted the perils of becoming too attached to a course.

I invested much time, energy, and emotion, establishing Writing Well. The study made me reflect on a series of hypotheticals. For example, what might happen if funding for Writing Well should end? Would it end my involvement with the WhatsApp group? How would ending my involvement with the course impact my former learners, who benefit from its social legacy and its wellbeing properties? Perhaps by then, Writing Well will have shapeshifted once more as the learner's mould it to their needs. Time will tell. This fretting over a course, my course, a course co-produced with the learners, makes

it as much an emotional investment as an educational one. My intense concern over *my* course's end reveals my positionality in this study and evidences divergent and emergent practice.

**Knowledge production**

I hope my study demonstrates that the process of knowledge production can take place outside university and that the 'building blocks' of theory formulated there may in community settings make little sense when applied to the lived experience (Pahl and Pool, 2018:18). Communities can contribute different ontologies, and these can be enhanced and nuanced through co-inquiry and co-production with other agents, including universities. The community represents a fertile ground for cross-pollinating ideas and generating learning.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

## Introduction

This chapter draws together the conclusions and implications of the research findings. It starts by presenting a brief overview of the research aim and the methodology used for the data collection. I then provide a summary of the main findings. There follows a discussion of the implications of the findings for theory and practice. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed together with suggestions for further research.

## This Study's Aims and Methods

This empirical study set out to examine the processes and practices of community teaching delivered by a social enterprise between 2017 and 2020. It sought to document the entanglements, discourses and practices that underpin and construct understandings about teaching, learning and relations with others in this teaching environment. The study sought to give a working account of community practice. It therefore drew upon tutor and learner accounts of teaching and learning to build a layered description of practice there. It also investigated whether these practices differed sufficiently from those of established teaching to be considered emergent.

I sought to present a candid and balanced account. The study refrained from creating dichotomies between established teaching and community teaching based on value judgements and offered comparisons instead. It detailed the downsides of my practice, including the excessive networking and time involved to secure work and the insecurity and uncertainty of teaching in the community.

As the study proceeded, it identified networking, socialising and the co-production of knowledge as significant features of my teaching. Each of these features suggested my practice was emergent or divergent from established teaching. Concerning emergence, my study examined tutor identity and trajectory into community teaching to offer a comparison with established settings. It considered the mechanism for this trajectory, particularly if the practice was emergent. Unexpected themes arose from my research, particularly tutor uncertainty, censorship, and course legacy.

### Summary of the Main Findings

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the research, I believe my positionality supports any bold statements I make regarding my findings because I am living this practice every day. The individuals I interviewed also shared perspectives based on their lived experiences of teaching, learning, and volunteering in the community.

This study has identified many of the critical features of community teaching delivered through a social enterprise, particularly a community interest company. It has examined the strengths and weaknesses of this form of delivery.

This study suggests there is sufficient difference in my practice and established practice to consider it emergent and provided examples to support this claim. These differences include excessive reliance on networking and pro-bono civic work to secure teaching opportunities. Other examples of divergent practice include courses that resist traditional definition. The study identified high degrees of socialising to facilitate learning and frequent instances of co-production and co-inquiry to produce knowledge.

My findings highlight that in a twenty-first-century landscape, trajectory into practice is complicated and difficult. One difficulty a newcomer encounters is finding someone or something to adjudge a tutor's competency to teach. My findings detailed the time and effort tutors expend upskilling and self-ascribing their competency to teach.

Another finding was the absence of an old-timer: someone to guide the tutor's trajectory into and through practice. In the absence of an actual old-timer, the study found that tutors turn to virtual old-timers, people or artefacts that act as surrogates to guide their trajectory.

### Implications of the Study

The main implication of my study is that this type of teaching may be considered a new paradigm of community education, and its findings are relevant for future teaching practice. Concerning teaching, I began this study by stating that education is in a state of flux. Due to the pandemic, this change is acute, with established education having to rethink teaching and learning quickly. It is reasonable to assume the 2020 pandemic will shake up education, and new teaching models will emerge.

For example, two crises bookend my study. The first was the 2008 financial crisis; the second is the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. While seismic and traumatic, my findings suggest such crises spark innovative educational practice.

For example, the 2008 crisis led to the rise of small organisations and social enterprises delivering community-centred initiatives. By 2014 the financial cuts lead to the closure of the college courses I taught and set me on the path to 'gigging' and zero-hours teaching. Yet my practice is a product of the crisis in the same way Jones and Perry (2019) suggest the 2008 austerity measures forced the arts to deliver culture to communities in innovative and small-scale ways. My research ended before the 2020 pandemic, and although it is difficult to make long-term predictions regarding its effect on society and education, some broad observations can be made in the context of this study.

Firstly, it is reasonable to assume that the crisis will accelerate the need to find innovative ways to deliver teaching. The pandemic is driving new practice as educators figure innovative ways to deliver teaching, mainly through video-conferencing technology. The crisis has forced educators to reflect on the basics of their practice. It has asked us to consider the opportunities online teaching affords while acknowledging that, for the time being, fundamental pedagogical tools (group work, paired work, and others) may have to be mothballed.

Secondly, it is reasonable to assume that the end of furlough payments will result in substantial job losses. There will be fierce competition for secure employment, and some will consider self-employment an option. There will be a need to upskill and perhaps retire later than planned.

Here I consider the implications of my study topical and relevant because it documents the difficulty, in the twenty-first century, of securing a trajectory into a practice. Who will guide newcomers and affirm their competency? Likely some individuals will work part-time on a permanent contract while undertaking gig-work elsewhere. They may have to assume several identities and boundary span. Again, my study records the strengths and weaknesses of boundary spanning and the need to assume diverse professional identities. While not a handbook or a 'how-to' guide, my study, I hope,

starts a discussion for others to join and contribute. In this respect, the study's findings may be a small contribution to the communities of practice model regarding legitimate peripheral participation and trajectory into emergent community teaching practice. It may be relevant to emergent practice generally.

Given the current job losses and an anticipated rise in unemployment, in September 2020, the Government announced plans for free courses and retraining, which will likely affect the lifelong learning sector. Concerning my study, the Government's decision shows how rapidly research can date as events overtake it – it also demonstrates that community learning and adult learning remains a rich vein for study, now and in the foreseeable future.

Also, in a post-Covid world, society will likely experience a sharp rise in people with mental health problems and a corresponding rise in demand for wellbeing courses. Perhaps small enterprises situated in their community and populated with educators skilled in delivering creative arts and wellbeing courses will be a resource a larger institution, like the NHS, will draw upon, particularly as part of social-prescription measures. Again, the implications of my study demonstrate that this is achievable and, if delivered with grassroots support, is sustainable and can leave a positive legacy in the community.

In this section, I have made a realistic, if somewhat gloomy, forecast of the short and medium-term future of lifelong learning. I wanted to conclude on a positive note concerning local networks.

The strength and value of a system is evaluated best in times of adversity. During the first months of the pandemic, strong community networks demonstrated their worth. From March 2020, when restrictions were applied and venues closed, my teaching was put on hold and Writing Well suspended. My engagement with my learners was limited to individual telephone calls, emails, and WhatsApp messages. It was a frustrating and worrying time. However, by April, the larger organisations, including Manchester City Council, I Love Manchester, and the NHS, offered community groups financial support. During the uncertainty, they took the lead coordinating community support to the

vulnerable in my area. They threw me a lifeline; by funding equipment and software licences so I could provide online lessons for learners.

In Wythenshawe, community initiatives included volunteers delivering food to the vulnerable and sharing relevant information on health, transport, and care services. A local organisation set up a friending initiative to address isolation and loneliness. Like many local organisations, my social enterprises shared details of this initiative and others on our social media platforms, including educational platforms (the WhatsApp group, the course website). I devised a weekly film quiz and shared it via our email contact list. We also produced the Age Friendly Northenden newsletter, which contained information and wellbeing advice. BW3 offered financial advice to small companies.

The crisis demonstrated the importance of community networks and their resilience in a time of adversity. This experience supports the implications of my study that a community practice does not operate in isolation but as part of formal and informal networks across boundaries that interlink. Also, the implication that communities can find solutions to their particular issues if allowed to operate at the grassroots level. It also shows the value of small organisations working with larger, central bodies who can coordinate and channel funds quickly and efficiently, while ground-level organisations can identify local need and deliver support effectively.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study documents emergent community teaching. However, it is not without limitations, and I detail these below.

Firstly, the interview sample is small. While adequate when interviewing tutors, for reasons discussed in the Methodology Chapter, in hindsight interviewing more learners would have presented an opportunity to compare their perceptions of practice and tutor identity.

Secondly, with semi-structured interviews being a primary research method of the study, and data entirely self-reported, there is always its reliability to consider. Also,

the interview analysis I provide relies on my interpretative skills. I discuss this in the Methodology Chapter.

This is an empirical study recording the lived experience of tutors and learners. While using an interpretative approach enables an understanding of my specific community practice, my findings are open to accusations of generalisation based on anecdote, opinion, and speculation. While affirming the strengths of my method, I acknowledge that this is a valid concern. My findings are part of a conversation to be scrutinised by the academy and, in turn, accepted or rejected.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

A study involving a larger cohort of interviewees over a more extended period and involving a co-researcher (preferably from established education to add perspective) would address the small sample size and the researcher's positionality. Examining the experiences of more learners would have added depth to my study's findings. After interviewing participants individually, interviewing them as a group would have presented more opportunities for knowledge production and may have enhanced the study.

A study situating my practice in a broader historical context of community teaching would, I believe, have allowed an opportunity to examine whether my practice is one of emergence or re-emergence. By this I mean, whether I am following a tradition of similar models of educational practice, now vanished.

Another pertinent area for further investigation is whether this model of practice is capable of replication and modification. My practice may provide a template to many who, sadly, may have no choice but to seek a living in their community. My practice may be one of many models of community teaching that develop in the next five years.

I did not create the paradigm I describe – I am a product of a shift. New grassroots teaching models may evidence this shift. This paradigm shift is worthy of further study.

**Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

Given the range of views around social enterprises operating in communities, the evidence from my research suggests that they can deliver education targeted at

marginalised groups, including older learners excluded from established education or individuals experiencing mental health problems.

My study recommends more targeted funding for social enterprises operating in the community they seek to support, provided the organisation can demonstrate grassroots need.

My study recommends that funding should be flexible and allow social enterprises to trial innovative ways to deliver education to match their community's particular needs rather than be required to implement a one size fits all approach.

My study's findings dispel all romantic notions that social enterprises are agential and work to their agenda. Given the study's findings of the power of co-production and networking, it recommends more opportunities to draw upon the substantial intellectual and material resources of local universities and work in partnership with them. Collaborative community initiatives would be mutually beneficial and create opportunities to co-produce knowledge.

### Concluding Remarks

This thesis is as much about my emergence as a doctoral student as the emergence of my practice. On this journey, I have been as much a learner as a researcher. On a professional level, I have developed research skills I did not possess before. These skills helped me conduct a research project within a social studies context using qualitative methods of inquiry. The skills I acquired still have rough edges, which I continue to hone. I have been fortunate to engage with interesting writers and texts to generate my theorising. The knowledge and skills I acquired have a practical application in any future work I undertake. The theory and views I encountered in my research helped me view differently many aspects of my life; I had before taken for granted and given little thought.

As well as skills, on a personal level, I have developed qualities such as tenacity and a stoical outlook; for example, a fruitless study day will be followed by a fruitful one, eventually. Doctoral study is as much a test of character as possessing intellectual prowess. It also tests one's patience and the strength of one's relationships with others.

What did I learn, or what did this study re-confirm?  This study demonstrates that, at best, knowledge is provisional. My inquiry provides a snapshot of the knowledge I had acquired at the time of publication. Secondly, my inquiry has made me aware that the research journey never ends; it merely reaches a stopping-post before continuing onwards and developing.

My experience of research for this thesis has made me aware that knowledge acquisition arrives unexpectedly, sideways when one is not even seeking or thinking about the subject. Research often brings an answer to a question you did not ask and then points you in a new direction. My study taught me (eventually) the importance of self-restraint and that one cannot join every research expedition. A study needs to be bounded – one adventure at a time. The study taught me research essentials – to carry a pencil and notebook at all times. And always be prepared.

I enjoy the writing discipline and clarity a doctorate demands. However, adapting my writing style to its genre and conventions took a long time. It is something I still find challenging and has resulted in countless revisions and edits. At first, I found including myself in the study difficult. Using 'I' and 'me' and 'my' seemed counter-intuitive, non-academic, boastful, and arrogant. When I overcame this reluctance, I could not get enough of 'me', and I had to rein myself in. In the endless quest for clarity, I have ironed out many asides and colloquialisms. The guidance of my supervision team was invaluable in finding the correct balance and ensuring enough voice and personality remains to render this an authentic account of my lived experience.

Ironically, in this study, personality is likely another element to consider. Concerning the replication of the teaching model, could any tutor pick up the template and teach to it, or does it take a type of tutor? What personality would she need to network, what philosophy or ideology would sustain her when the bank balance shrivels and the funder has emailed a rejection? Is this model capable of replication? I don't know. If it is, I suggest it takes a particular type of tutor to deliver it: one who is brave and fool-hardy, confident and riddled with doubt, persevering and committed to their learners; enjoying the flexibility of work while yearning for a nine-to-five job with paid holidays.

This study has been my escape from the humdrum and the ordinary. Amid the hugger-mugger, it created a calm space for reflection. It has been a profound, frustrating, enjoyable, anxiety-inducing, unique and elating experience. I have spent so long 'at it' that I cannot remember the reason why I enrolled. Would I go through it all again? Yes.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX ONE

Table of Interviews

## APPENDIX TWO

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## APPENDIX THREE

Extracts from Interviews and Journal Entries

## APPENDIX FOUR

1. Questions prepared in advance of the interview with Clare: 29 April 2019.
2. Follow up questions to answers from previous interviews or formulated during interviews.

## APPENDIX FIVE

Cultural Activities Undertaken by my Social Enterprises 2017 – 2020

## APPENDIX SIX

Participant Information Sheet

Appendix One: Table of Interviews

| Date | Duration | Interviewee | Where | What About |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **6 December 2017** | **55 minutes** | **Ruth** | Buxton Library | • Her current educator roles and teaching experience.<br>• Her pathway to teaching in community contexts.<br>• Her motivation for teaching in the community.<br>• Her impressions of teaching in the community.<br>• Other community or volunteer work.<br>• Successful and unsuccessful projects she has been involved in.<br>• Her impressions of the people she teaches and engagement with them.<br>• Socialising aspect of her teaching and course legacy.<br>• Her comparisons between teaching in community contexts and established education settings.<br>• Benefits of education projects to the wider community<br>• Her perceived teacher identity.<br>• Formal and informal qualifications.<br>• Power dynamics of teacher and learner.<br>• Qualities you need to teach in the community.<br>• Ruth's notion of community. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | • Ruth's notions of equality, diversity, and inclusion. |
| **3 January 2018** | **48 minutes** | **Ruth** | Buxton Library | • Her definition of educative activities.<br>• Accountability.<br>• Pathways into volunteering.<br>• Motivations for volunteering.<br>• Limits and boundaries when applying equality, diversity, and inclusion to teaching.<br>• Her plans to start a CIC and what she seeks to achieve.<br>• Social capital. |
| **11 July 2018** | **1 hour, 25 mins** | **Miriam** | The Forum Library, Wythenshawe | Her background and qualifications in Iran.<br>Her current situation in the UK.<br>The reason why she left Iran.<br>The current role education plays in her life.<br>Her motivation for attending courses.<br>Her perceived learner identity.<br>• Her community or volunteer work.<br>Miriam's notion of community<br>Miriam's impressions of her present community<br>• Her comparisons between learning in community contexts and established education settings. |
| **18 July 2018** | **40 minutes** | **Miriam** | The Forum Library, Wythenshawe | • Her perceived volunteer identity.<br>• Her notions of equality, diversity, and inclusion in education.<br>• Limits and boundaries when applying equality, diversity, and inclusion to education, learning and teaching. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | • Her notions of equality, diversity, and inclusion in education.<br>• Her perceptions of the courses I run in the community.<br>• The social side of learning in the community.<br>• Her comparisons between my teacher identity and the WW course and the tutors at her adult education classes.<br>• Power dynamics between teacher and learners. |
| **29 April 2019** | **1 hour, 20 mins** | **Clare** | Costa Coffee, Gatley | • Her current educator roles and teaching experience.<br>• Her pathway to teaching in community contexts.<br>• Her impressions of teaching in the community.<br>• Her impressions of teaching in the community.<br>• Other community or volunteer work.<br>• Her impressions of the people she teaches and engagement with them.<br>• Socialising aspect of her teaching and course legacy.<br>• Her comparisons between teaching in community contexts and established education settings.<br>• Changes in education.<br>• Benefits of education projects to the wider community. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | • Art as a subject and its benefit to learners.<br>• Her perceived teacher identity.<br>• Power dynamics of teacher and learner.<br>• Qualities you need to teach in the community.<br>• Clare's notion of community.<br>• Clare's notions of equality, diversity, and inclusion.<br>• Limits and boundaries when applying these concepts. |

Appendix Two: Research and Events Chronology

| | |
|---|---|
| 2017 | |
| 10 February | Journalling Commences |
| 29 March | Now Forever Heritage CIC incorporated |
| 4 September | I attend the 'playing me' meeting |
| 6 December | First Interview with Ruth |
| 2018 | |
| 3 January | Second Interview with Ruth |
| 12 January | Analysis First cycle |
| 19 April | Writing Well starts |
| 11 July | First Interview with Miriam |
| 18 July | Second Interview with Miriam |
| 30 July | Analysis second cycle |
| 8 November | First World War Art Exhibition |
| 14 November | People's Culture Award Ceremony |
| 16 November | Be Proud Awards Ceremony |
| 30 November | Writing Well WhatsApp Group starts |
| 12 December | Literature Review starts |
| 2019 | |
| 21 January | Village by the River Art Competition ends |
| 31 January | Words are Wands event |
| 29 April | Interview with Clare |

2019 Cont.

| | |
|---|---|
| 12 June | Analysis third cycle |
| 25 June | Together One CIC incorporated |
| 19 August | Peterloo event in Northenden |
| 10 September | Speaking Well starts |
| 2020 | |
| 8 January | Analysis fourth cycle |
| 8 April | Literature Review ends |

## Appendix Three: Extracts from Interviews and Journal Entries

13 September 2017

This journal extract is from early in my study. It documents an event where a guest speaker spoke of her memories of Wythenshawe Park in the 1950s and 1960s. The entry records a stage where I was still formulating my questions. I was still trying to define my practice. What struck me at the meeting was how places become symbolic and representative. Wythenshawe Park was a symbol that individuals could rally around and establish a sense of community as a group. I had been reading Robert Putnam's study of social capital and community *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000), and it made me aware of the limited bridging social capital the meeting I had attended generated. The attendees were of a similar demographic – homogenised. The observation led me to explore ways my social enterprise could attract diverse individuals to work collaboratively on educational projects. I have used pseudonyms.

13 September 2017

> Last night I attended a talk by Mary, a former apprentice gardener at Wythenshawe Park. It was well attended by people from several community-based organisations. While it created bridging social capital, it was evident we were catering for people of a similar age - all white, no young people, which seemed a pity. We had reached people who lived in Wythenshawe, yet people from more diverse backgrounds and cultures might have different experiences of Wythenshawe to share. If they had, we would all have benefited because we could have made connections, shared our experiences, encountered new perspectives. When these occasions arise, and people from different communities, backgrounds, cultures are present, I always find the events are enriched and leave us aware of our commonalities rather than our differences.

6 December 2017

In this transcript, extract Ruth, an experienced third-sector operator, how she judges a successful project. At the time, I did not place value on this extract; however, after I undertook a second literature review, I found Ruth's comments helpful. They helped me explore course legacy and equate success with project sustainability. I was able to compare Ruth's reflections with Burwood and Jackson's (2019) account of an

unsuccessful project.

.

Stephen: How would you describe a successful project?

Ruth: A successful project is when someone comes up to you three years later and says that little, tiny thing that you said that you'd completely forgotten about made all the difference in the world to me. A successful project also gets re-funded.

Stephen: What do you mean by that?

Ruth: Brass tacks wise, a successful project has got good monitoring, good outcomes, good evaluations, good marketing and is sustainable and continues to get funding.

3 January 2018

In this transcript extract, Ruth discusses what motivates her. She highlights her several roles: a worker for a research company, the second as a tutor and project developer, and the third as a volunteer conducting pro-bono work. Ruth explains why she finds the second role more rewarding. She also demonstrates her frustration at the limited opportunities she has to teach, especially as she has upskilled to be competent for this role. She also explains her vulnerability through employment and limited means. Although I did not refer to this extract early in my study, it became helpful as my research focused on tutor vulnerability and uncertainty. It also helped me reflect on tutor identity. Ruth's remarks at the end also made me aware of the importance of funding to enable tutors like Ruth to teach rather than, as she feared, it falling to the province of those with the means to teach. The extract also demonstrates how I followed up on Ruth's replies from our previous interview.

Stephen: [On] lines 56 and 57. You said, 'Yes, I work for a research organisation for a minimum wage but it's kind of soul-destroying compared to the... work that I do. What do you mean by soul-destroying?

Ruth: Because I'm working for a private organisation that... benefits mainly them... the bosses... . One of the main things that makes it soul-destroying is that I have really no idea what difference any of the research makes, whereas when I'm working directly with people I have a more tangible result as far as I'm concerned,

because I can get feedback and understand what difference has been made.

Stephen: Compared to what you're doing now and the tentative steps into your own projects, do you, therefore, believe that the work you are going to do in the future is by comparison far better for you in terms of a positive move for you?

Ruth: I hope so. I think I can be a passionate person, potentially, not as realistic as I'd like to be or need to be, so but I hope that – I spent a long time learning how to be a facilitator of learning, and I think I'm probably better at it than I am managing Excel documents, so I hope that it will sustain me, but yeah, there is other stuff going on, that's a priority to do with finances, so it's not always what you want, and as I say, it may, community education may become the luxury of the rich, and those with pensions who can afford to volunteer in such situations.

6 January 2018

This journal entry concerns my first reflections on tutor insecurity. Here I consider whether Ruth's repeated referencing of her qualifications and experience belied underlying insecurity.

> Despite Ruth's outward bravado and her self-authoring of a qualified, experienced, and aspirational professional, do I detect an underlying insecurity? Does she feel a need to justify her competence to practise education in this world? Some elements of the first research interview seemed like a job interview with Ruth continually citing her qualifications and experience. Why does she need to 'pitch' for the gig, and why to me?

21 October 2018

The journal entry below records a meeting with the branch members of the Royal British Legion. We were partners working on a project commemorating the community of Northenden during the first world war. Present were representatives from other organisations. My journal entry records how the meeting presented an opportunity for co-produced knowledge. It also reflects on the nature of my educational practice and how irregular work patterns (attending a Sunday morning meeting) could provide opportunities for new learning. I have used pseudonyms and initials to ensure the individuals' anonymity.

21 October 2018

> A thought struck me today – what other educational role offers me an opportunity to meet so many diverse groups and people? Today I met W, a volunteer at Imperial War Museum North who agreed to attend on his day off and act as a guide for the visit of the pupils from --. He will let the children handle artefacts, including a Queen Mary tin, a 'death coin', helmets, and

trench equipment. He has agreed in advance of the school visit to meet Clare [an artist I interviewed for my study] and me and show us the collection of uniforms and artefacts from the era to help her [Clare] research for her WW1 portraits. At the meeting Councillor, H agreed to help out with the pupils' visit [to the museum].

Then I… spoke with Mrs B, who has led an exciting life. She was born in Punta Arenas, Chile. Her father was a Falklander who fought in both world wars, firstly serving in the Cavalry with the horse he brought over with him from the Falklands and during the second world war in the RAF balloon section. Mrs B also served in the Second world war – she described herself and her father as 'Colonials' – she lives at ----------- which is fantastic as some of the pupils and I will be recording living histories there, and she has kindly agreed to allow me to record her history for this project and for the Wythenshawe History Group.

Another benefit of attending was seeing a photo of the war memorial unveiling ceremony I'd never seen it before, and it's amazing as it shows the large crowd of villagers who'd gathered for it – many women dressed in black, men in their finest clothes, bring the Village to a standstill blocking Palatine Road. When I asked the Secretary about the image, he told me Mr P gave it to him, and he is… knowledgeable about the layout of the old Village. The Secretary took my details and will pass them on to Mr P. Mr S; the Secretary is happy to meet me at the War Memorial and give short talks about its history whenever I give guided walks.'

22 October 2018

After reflecting on the meeting and co-production, the following day, I wrote.

22 October 2018

Meeting diverse people offered a different perspective and opportunities to learn. Also, as Mrs B demonstrated, there are many amazing narratives to add to our knowledge and understanding. However, Mrs B's contribution might never have been obtained had it not been for meeting her in her space, in her time by attending the meeting.

17 November 2018

The journal entry below records my reflections on the importance of networking and informal relationships in securing teaching opportunities. The event I attended and subsequent journal entry supported the observations of (Gilchrist, 2019) and (Morgan-Trimmer, 2014) regarding network interweaving, the importance of strong informal

relationships and how they developed.

17 November 2018

> Manchester City Council organised its annual Be Proud Awards and nominated me in the category 'Bringing Communities Together'. Last night I attended the ceremony, and Wythenshawe Forum Trust Limited, a substantial Wythenshawe organisation and member of the BW3 network, sponsored the category. Many representatives from Manchester organisations were present, including councillors and council staff.
>
> After the ceremony, many of us… socialised into the early hours, the Council footing the bill for taxis home. And it was at this point in the socialising that followed that I felt I was witnessing the after-party of a play, where the actors have discarded their roles and are 'themselves'.

29 April 2019

In this transcript extract, Clare and I discuss social learning and group identity, on which by now my research had focused. Clare's response enabled me to compare her learners with mine and assess whether a group identity was developing. Considering this helped me later in my study of emotional attachment and the work of Ahmed (2014). It was an early stage in considering adult learner motivation and whether the learner's improvement was linked to them socialising as a group.

> Stephen: What benefits do the group… get from the sessions?
>
> Clare: Obviously, the social aspect where a group has got to know each other and like meeting up. They like to see themselves separate from the other residents, a bit more cultured… that's what I've picked up a little bit, 'we're not the bingo players'. I think most of them were interested in art before they came. Watching some of them work, I do think they've developed, some of them and have improved with their work.

In this transcript extract, Clare and I exchange observations on community teaching. Together we attempt to figure out the qualities needed to be an educator in the community. Our attempt to gain knowledge is collaborative and tentative, evidenced in our exchange of questions.

Stephen: What qualities do you think you need to be an educator in the community?

Clare: You have to be quite easy-going, not be too authoritarian, make sure it's about them completely. But chat as well and be relaxed with them. What do you think?

Stephen: I agree with you totally. I think you have to have a fair bit of social skills, haven't you really?

Clare: Yeah.

Stephen: Have to be good at psychology of what makes people tick, be very respectful…

Clare: … ask them what they think; let them tell you.

Stephen: Yeah.

Clare: I don't want to be the one that knows it all because I don't actually.

Stephen: We're all the same, aren't we?

29 April 2019

Following my interview with Clare on 29 April 2019, I reflected on our exchange, and the following evening I wrote in my journal.

> I felt today was more than an interview for the thesis. It turned into a discussion of pedagogy, where we exchanged ideas and our experiences. If anything, it served as an appraisal or a line-management meeting.

2 February 2020

After considering communities of practice theory in January 2020, I returned to the transcript of the interview with Clare and in my journal 2 February 2020, I wrote.

> So, in the absence of a Yoda (old-timer), Clare and I were continually interchanging the old-timer role as and when required to obtain the information and support we both sought.

16 March 2020

This lengthy journal entry followed much reflection on my trajectory into a community of practice and the role an old-timer plays. It lists the surrogate old-timers I turned to in the absence of an actual old-timer. The extract documents how I upskilled to practice in the community. The absence of any ascribing individual or body demonstrates the

tutor's responsibility for their continuing professional practice.

16 March 2020

Mistakes and self-help books… I often turned to for DIY CPD. Many of these books have an American twang, offering top tips which one has to glean from a swamp of anecdotes and testimonies of success framed in a neoliberal narrative of hitch up your breeches, work hard, and you will achieve your dreams. Some of these books included 'Wake up Successful (Scott S.J.) and 'Goals' How to Get Everything You Want – Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible (Tracy, B.). I walked away from these old-timers.

Trial and error served as dependable old-timer replacements. From the saner self-help books, I found Manage Your Day – To – Day: Build Your Routine, Find Your Focus and Sharpen Your Creative Mind (Glei, J. and Belsky, S.) helpful in offering tips on negotiation and time management. A more practical course of action was joining Community and Voluntary Services East (CVS East), an organisation that supports voluntary community and faith organisations across East Cheshire. Through them, I acquired a real business mentor whom MOT'd my social enterprise, ensured my policies were fit for purpose and searched a dedicated database that matched educational ideas to potential funders. My mentor and I hold three-monthly regular face-to-face meetings.

I addressed the issue of limited CPD by enrolling on CVS East's free and paid courses. Through these, I learnt bid-writing, prepped for the changes in data legislation in 2018 and gained a qualification in emergency first aid. In 2018 I attended an all-day workshop on project management delivered by Barclays Bank and organised through CVS East. I also attended their network meetings (yet more networking) which included meet the funders evenings. This network contains organisations different from their Manchester counterparts, thus spreading the net for more educational opportunities. I also maintained CPD by enrolling on a 10-week course run by Yale University run by Professor Laurie Santos called the Science of Wellbeing, organised by Coursera and gained a certificate. Peer advice from tutors teaching in similar if not identical settings supplemented these other sources as well as accessing numerous 'how-to' online tutorials. Through them, I learnt video editing and podcasting. These were all surrogate old-timers.

## Appendix Four: Question Samples

1. Questions prepared in advance of the interview with Clare, which took place 29 April 2019.

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 29.04.2019**

| Issues/topics | Possible Questions | Possible-follow-up questions | Probes |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Establishing experience and reasons*<br><br>*Depending on the role, 'volunteer' may be or not be used.*<br><br>Alternative framed questions in brackets. | Can you tell me what your current educator roles are?<br><br>How long have you been a qualified teacher?<br><br>Can you tell me about the projects you are currently engaged in, and how would you describe your role in the project?<br><br>How many hours a week are you involved in teaching in the community?<br><br>Have you ever been a participant in other projects but not as an educator (volunteer)?<br><br>Can you describe the types of people who attend the art classes? | Can you tell me why you started to teach in community locations?<br><br>Are you involved in any other type of work, paid or unpaid?<br><br>YES: Why did you participate? | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | What groups and organisations have you worked with on projects? | | |
| | Do you know colleagues at college who do similar work in the community? | YES: Why do they do it?<br><br>NO: Why do you think that is? | |
| Reflexive thinking | What qualities do you think you need to be an educator in the community? | What are the most rewarding parts of your work?<br><br>Are there any downsides to working on projects? | Tell me more…<br><br>Tell me more… |
| | Can you describe the different ways people who participate in the projects benefit? | How do you benefit? | |
| | In what way do you feel valued for the work you do? | | Please take your time. |
| | How would you describe a 'successful' lesson? | Can you provide examples? | |
| | Do you create lesson plans for your lessons at (REDACTED) or any other type of planning? | How did this make you feel? | Really? |
| | How do you monitor and assess the development of your learners when delivering lessons in community settings? | YES: in what ways do you provide feedback?<br><br>NO: Why not? | Tell me more. |
| | In what ways can participants provide feedback to the | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | organisers during the project? | | |
| Community awareness and a sense of contextual awareness | What does 'community' mean to you | What is your community? | |
| | Do you belong to any other community groups and organisations?<br><br>Can you provide examples of how a project you were involved in, benefited the wider community? | YES: Why did you join these?<br><br>YES: Would you say this is typical of other people (volunteers) who work on projects. | Can you provide more examples of this?<br><br>Tell me more. |
| Locating the interview and project within the realm of education | Can you tell me about your educational background, for example, what qualifications do you hold and whether you have a teaching qualification? | | |
| | What does the word 'education' mean to you? | What does the word 'educator' mean to you? | Please take your time to think about these words. |
| | How would you define your role when you are running the classes at (REDACTED) | | |
| | Would you consider yourself an educator when you run classes at (REDACTED) | YES: Why do you consider yourself an educator?<br><br>NO: Why do you feel you are not an educator? | Can you tell me more?<br><br>Can you tell me more? |
| | How do your learners or participants view you? | Do they see you as an educator or not? How do you know? | |

|  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | What do you like about teaching in community settings?<br><br>What do you not like about it?<br><br>What differences are there regarding your educator role when delivering classes in your established location (Sixth Form) and the community?<br><br>Can you tell me how education during a project may be different from the way people teach or learn in other settings?<br><br>Do you think what we do differs from the way we deliver teaching in established settings?<br><br>What do equality and diversity mean to you?<br><br>Are there any people you would refuse to teach either in established settings or in community settings? |  |  |

2. List of Indicative Questions: Follow up questions to answers from previous interviews or formulated during interviews.

RUTH – INTERVIEW 6.12.2017

1. Stephen: Could you provide or describe a time when you have acted like an educator, perhaps a teacher, during one of the projects?

2. What key elements do successful projects share or have in common?

RUTH – INTERVIEW 3.01.2018

1. Stephen: As you know, I started a Community Interest Company last year… but from what you know about it… would you say there are elements in the activities that amount to education, and if so, what are these?
2. Stephen: You said in our previous interview that your motivation is to make a difference to communities in my own terms and in doing so not tied down to contractual restraints and boundaries. What do you mean by contractual restraints and boundaries?
3. Stephen: Do you know of any other people who started as volunteers and then started their own, CIC or organisation and begun running projects and activities themselves?
4. Stephen: Your first taste of volunteering, was at school, how important was that link, that you experienced volunteering at an early age at school? Do you think if that happened to most people, they may promote this sense of volunteering and civic duty?

MIRIAM – INTERVIEW 11.07.2018

1. Stephen: What does community mean to you personally? You said family, anything else?
2. Stephen: Are there any negatives about communities? Is there a downside to a community?

MIRIAM – INTERVIEW 18.07.2018

1. Miriam: [Referring to her adult education classes] More strict here.
   Stephen: How do you see that strictness? – I mean, how does that manifest itself that strictness?
2. Stephen: Do you see me as a teacher there or a different word?

   Miriam: it depends on what's your conception of a teacher.

   Stephen: What's yours?

CLARE – INTERVIEW 29.04.2019

1. Stephen: Do you have anyone with earphones at ---------? Has anyone requested music while they work?

   Clare: No. I think they like chatting.

2. Stephen: What benefits do the group at ---------------- get from the sessions?

## Appendix Five: Cultural Activities Undertaken by my Social Enterprises

2017

- The commissioning of twelve portraits for a First World War art exhibition. Also displays of the artwork of pupils from a local junior school.
- Eight presentations on the History of Wythenshawe.
- Six presentations on Northenden in the First World War.

2018

- Thirteen presentations on the History of Wythenshawe.
- Two presentations on Northenden in the First World War.
- Producing the Age Friendly Northenden monthly newsletter. Contributing, editing, and printing.
- Hosted First World War Art Exhibition at The Message in Sharston.
- Writing Well Course- creative writing and wellbeing.
- Village by the River Competition. Representation of Northenden through art.

2019

- Six presentations on the history of Wythenshawe.
- Four presentations on the history of Baguley Hall.
- Guided walk and readings of war poetry to commemorate the centenary of the Armistice. Event co-produced with the Northenden Players (Amateur theatre group).
- Speaking Well initiative. Spoken word and wellbeing course.
- Commissioning a Peterloo Flag to commemorate the event's bicentenary. Another entrant of the Village by the River competition designed the central motif. The flag was hoisted at the commemorative event and will be used at future local events. At the event, former Writing Well learners read their poems on freedom and liberty.

- Founding The Block Community Cinema.

- The Words are Wands Event at the Forum Library 31 January 2019. An evening of dance, music, and poetry readings. Writing Well learners performed their work to promote creativity as a means of improving mental
- wellbeing.

- Horror fiction writing workshop at Halloween held at Salutem Café Northenden.

2020

- Organising 'Love Triangle' a Valentine's night event of music and poetry to raise money for my social enterprise. The event was held at Salutem Café in Northenden and featured local poets and the singer Claire Mooney.

- Founding a YouTube Channel dedicated to writing.

- A guidebook of Northenden with illustrations by the winning entrant of the Village by the River competition. Publication scheduled for January 2021.

Appendix Six: Participant Information Sheet

**Participant Information Sheet**

Faculty of Education
Manchester Metropolitan University
Brooks Building
53 Bonsall Street
Manchester
M15 6GX

Tel: +441612472320

**Research Study:** The role of educators engaged in community activities that have an educational focus.

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or would like more information. Take time to decide whether to take part.

The study will examine the involvement of educators, like yourself, engaged in community-based activities which have an educational focus and outcome. To help me understand this type of work better, the study seeks the opinions and reflections of educators involved in these activities.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

The research has an educational purpose and will form part of my doctoral thesis. I hope it will have a wider application, in understanding the different ways education is being delivered in a community setting and in examining how educators engaged in these activities, view their own practise and 'teacher identity'. By carrying out this study, I hope to gain a greater understanding of the work you are doing, why you are doing it and whether this type of education is different from community education in the past. It will also help create a better understanding about the work educators do in the community. I am also a practising educator within the community and your involvement would enable me to make comparisons with my own practice and experiences.

There has been very little research on this emerging area of education. If you decide to help, you will be contributing to new research, knowledge and understanding.

**Why have I been invited?**

You have been invited to take part because you are an educator involved in community education and can offer a first-hand account of the work you and your colleagues do. You may also have been invited to participate because you continue to teach in an established educational setting, for example, a college, school or university and are therefore able to offer insights regarding teaching in both settings.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide. **Participation is voluntary.** I will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which we will give to you. I will then ask you to **sign a consent form** to show you agreed to take part. **You are free to withdraw at any time**, without giving a reason.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you take part:

- Your involvement would be for a period of **18 months,** although the research will continue, possibly, for a further 18 months.

- You would be required to meet with me for a maximum of **3** interviews and **2 unobtrusive visits** to observe you delivering education in a community environment or a more established educational setting. The observation may form the basis of the interviews mentioned above.

- You would be required to complete a confidential questionnaire.

- An observation visit would only be carried out with your agreement regarding the date and time and with the agreement of those of participants in your lesson/activity. The visit would be unobtrusive, lasting the maximum of **one hour** each. The 3 interviews would last a maximum of **1 hour** each.

- The interviews will take place at a convenient time and location and would involve you and the researcher only. The interviews will be recorded (audio only) and later may be transcribed. On the transcription, your identity will remain anonymous (please see below for further information regarding the use of data in the study).

- The date and time of any observation will be arranged through agreement. The visit to observe you teach would be conducted discreetly and unobtrusively. It would only be carried out by the researcher only. Notes pertinent to the research study will be taken but no notes will be made relating to your teaching ability. The notes will not be judgemental of the activities observed during the lesson and will be anonymised. They may form the basis for interviews and you are entitled to read any observation notes the researcher makes.

- The identities of all participants present during the observation will be anonymised and consents obtained beforehand.

- On occasion, you may be offered the opportunity to contribute to the study further by writing down your thoughts and feelings concerning your role as an educator. All such contributions will remain anonymous.

- The research will respect confidentiality and anonymity and data shall be kept securely with digital data being password-protected and access regulated.

- All data derived from any questionnaires you may be required to complete will be anonymised.

**Expenses and payments?**
To ensure impartiality, volunteers will receive no payment or expenses for participating.

**What will I have to do?**
As mentioned above, you would be expected to allow the researcher to attend scheduled visits and undertake scheduled interviews with you. You would be required to complete a questionnaire, and should you agree, keep a diary or other written record of your reflections.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**
No disadvantages and risks have been identified for taking part.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**
I cannot promise the study will help you personally but the information from the study will contribute to a wider understanding of the role you play in education within the community.

**What if there is a problem?**

1. If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to me and I will do my best to answer your question. My contact details are at the end of this letter/document.

2. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally you can do this through the University complaints procedure. The university supervising the research study is **Manchester Metropolitan University.**

3. Details of the University Complaint's Procedure can be found at the University's website: http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/graduate-school/online-forms/complaints-and-appeals/

4. My **supervisor** can also be contacted directly: **Doctor Catherine Pearce,** C.Pearce@MMU.ac.uk.

5. If you feel your concern has not been dealt with to your satisfaction, you can contact the **College Research and Innovation (R&I) Manager.** Full details are available through the university website (link above) or by contacting the researcher's supervisor.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

**Yes.** Your confidentiality will be safeguarded during and after the study.

All information which is collected about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential, and any information about you which leaves the university, will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised.
This means:

- Your data will be collected in written form and in digital audio format.
- All your data will be stored safely, and shall remain anonymous. It shall be given a research code, known only to the researcher
    - A master list identifying participants to the research codes data will be held on a password protected computer accessed only by the researcher
    - hard paper/taped data will be stored in a locked cabinet, within locked office, accessed only by researcher
    - electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer known only by researcher
- The data will be used for educational purposes and its primary use will be to contribute towards a doctoral thesis. The data may be used for future studies (for example a research paper) and subject to the same stringent confidentiality.
- Only authorised persons such as researchers within the team and supervisors for monitoring the quality and regulatory authorities will be granted access to view identifiable data.
- Data will be retained a minimum of **3 years** and will be disposed of securely.

### What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you withdraw from the study, we will destroy all your identifiable data including tape recorded interviews, but ***we will need to use the data collected up to your withdrawal.***

### What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research study will contribute towards my doctoral thesis. Some of the results may be used in further academic studies or research papers. You will not be identified in any report/publication unless you have given your consent.

You will be given the opportunity to be kept informed on the progress and results of the research.

### Who is organising or sponsoring the research?

The research is supervised by Manchester Metropolitan University. I am funding the research.

### Further information and contact details:

Should you wish additional information or have any comments regarding the research study please contact me:


**Stephen Evans**

**Tel: 07945789747**

**Email:** stevans4444@gmail.com