

Transforming Practical Theological Education in the Changing Context of Non-Confessional Higher Education

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University
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Theology

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Declaration

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars, which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

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Transforming Practical Theological Education in the Changing Context of Non-Confessional Higher Education

Katja Sigrid Barbara Stuerzenhofecker

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with practical theological education in non-confessional higher education. If non-confessional Practical Theology is to take seriously its mandate to shape all of its students' orientation and future actions regardless of their position vis-à-vis religion, it needs to respond to the increasingly diverse character of younger generations' religiosity and the presence of non-Christian students. However, available studies of learning and teaching in Practical Theology, especially those originating in North America, predominantly focus on a Christian and clerical paradigm that is inappropriate for students of all faiths and none. Instead, I propose a reflexive process of formation in critical conversation with external norms and values. The development of this pedagogical reorientation requires an inductive study of participants' positionalities. I welcome this as an exciting opportunity to move on from the Christian and clerical heritage with its concomitant process of formation through integration of external norms and values.

My conceptual framework for this thesis is made up of four elements. The value of 'prefiguring flourishing' shapes my praxis in research and education. This leads me to adopt 'Transforming Practice' as the theoretical model for the design of my critical action research process. The hybrid positionality of 'insider-outsider' instead of a binary emerges from the research as a key concept that captures contemporary developments in religious identities, and affirms plurality and contingency in identity construction and group dynamics. This links to 'rhizomatic fragments' as conceptualisation of the ordering process in human life story construction, and in the research process and its presentation in the thesis.

Based on this framework, I show how critical, reciprocal conversation between theological scholarship and alumni perceptions of long-term learning outcomes of my teaching practice can generate normative pedagogical principles for non-confessional PT while also prompting revision of theological concepts. The normative principles inform my student-focused reorientation of the model and aim of non-confessional PT, relevant curriculum, and appropriate learning, teaching and assessment.

Secondly, I demonstrate how triangulation between these alumni-based normative principles, theological scholarship and autoethnography can contribute to the educator's personal and professional development to realise their values more fully in their practice. This involves first deconstructing my past identity in theological education and vis-à-vis religion, and second reconstructing a confident future-oriented identity as theological educator.

Summary of Portfolio

The 'narrative arc' of my doctorate moves from disclosure of values, needs, gaps and opportunities in my practice, my identity, my theologising and my research methods towards their transformation and/or consolidation. It is a progression from loss of religious agency and vocation to their retrieval.

My Literature Review (2009) identified useful forms of action research (AR) for practice-based investigations in third wave feminist practical theology¹ (pt). I concluded that the leading sources on AR in pt were authoritarian models affirming tradition over experience. Articulating my theological and methodological preference for orthopraxis over orthodoxy led me towards inductive, interpretative and contextual pt with reciprocal research processes that utilise otherness in pursuit of transformation, empowerment and flourishing. I proposed critical AR within the theoretical framework of Elaine Graham's (2002) 'Transforming Practice' approach for my research. At the start of my doctorate, I sought to insert myself into 'authentic' religious practice worth investigating. However, since this review built on my prior experience of AR in teaching, I became confident that my teaching was worthy of doctoral study.

For my Publishable Article (2010), I piloted a 'Transforming Practice' approach in an insider study of peer learning. By conceptualising this as the normative step of a traditional pastoral cycle, I was still holding on to inherited norms in pt but beginning to subvert them. I discovered my pedagogical pre-commitment to bringing diversities into dialogue for liberation. However, I realised that this was problematic for students of all faiths and none who were not ordinands. The data revealed the need for a study of long-term learning outcomes in order to formulate a student-focused model for non-confessional PT. 'Transforming Practice's postulation of intentional faith community as the source of practical wisdom prompted me to problematise the notion of 'community' in my classroom, and how my dysfunctional experience of community affected my teaching. Thus, I uncovered

¹ Throughout the thesis I use capitals to differentiate the learning and teaching of Practical Theology from the discipline of practical theology itself.

the impact of my hearing impairment.

I unpacked this in my Reflective Practice assignment (2011) by developing autoethnography-in-dialogue as a written, indirect alternative to the exclusive universalism of the feminist theological model 'hearing into speech' for dialogical learning. Using a 'Transforming Practice' approach to mutually deconstruct and transform feminist theology, my experience and my professional practice, I reconstructed myself as disabled. The resulting crisis threatened the research progress, yet I saved it by employing autoethnography for pastoral self-care. I concluded that I was indifferent to the question of God's presence in my new story.

I argued in the Research Proposal (2012) for a reorientation of non-confessional PT based on the inductive study of changing cohorts' hidden motivations and needs by applying 'Transforming Practice''s concepts of disclosure/foreclosure. I proposed my course *Religion, Culture and Gender (RCG)* as an appropriate case to fill the gap in the literature dominated by the clerical and Christian paradigms. However, the research proposal was still trapped in these inherited disciplinary boundaries. Although I stated the necessity to reflect on my multiple positionalities, including vis-a-vis the Church, I had no vision of integrating autoethnography into the thesis.

Through the thesis I worked myself out of inherited boundaries of pt as Christian and clerical in order to fully realise the inductive potential of 'Transforming Practice' for the excavation of normative principles. I discerned this process of theologising as a constructive resistance space. Through mutual critique of alumni data and theological scholarship, I arrived at my model of a heterogeneous heterotopia where I prefigure dialogue and collaboration for universal flourishing. By applying the alumni's normative principles to the autoethnography I resolved my professional 'exile' since my abandoned ordination training. I also reconstructed my identity as self-caring, future-oriented, community-seeking, and living faithfully. This in turn has ended my indifference towards the Divine by opening a tentative new perspective.

“A long time ago, when I was 16 and living in a Mini in Accrington (...) I realised that I needed to read myself as a fiction as well as a fact. The facts weren’t looking good for me – I had nothing and I was nothing. And I thought that if I understood myself as a story I might do better, because if I am the story I can change the story.” (Winterson 2016)

Preamble

This section maps out the two components of this thesis, how they advance its core argument together, and how they are distinguished through their layout. The thesis is composed of a conventional research narrative and twelve autoethnographic pieces of life-writing (Walton 2014) that I call Fragments. Beginning with the Introduction, the Fragments interrupt the research narrative in three chapters at irregular points. Only the alumni data analysis in chapter 3 stands as its own voice/s, without my immediate autoethnographic intervention. Conversely, chapter 5 is entirely dedicated to autoethnography.

Together, the two components of research narrative and autoethnography use ‘experience’ to deconstruct the disciplinary boundaries of theological education, and to reconstruct a new understanding of theologising in non-confessional contexts. The research narrative focuses on alumni experiences of my teaching practice as a source of pedagogical principles for PT. I argue that critical conversation between theological scholarship and alumni perceptions of long-term learning outcomes of my teaching practice can generate normative pedagogical principles for PT in non-confessional higher education (HE).

The Fragments function as a reflective practitioner’s self-care (Walton 2014, 98) by exploring what ‘calling’ (ibid, 94) might mean to me through the tracing of my journey (ibid, 96) in theological education, from dislocation and loss to retrieval of authority as theological educator and reconstruction of religious identity. I argue that critical conversation between autoethnography and the normative principles

generated from the alumni data can contribute to the educator's personal and professional development. My autoethnographic identity construction responds to bell hooks' (1994, 15) claim that pedagogy that aims for wellbeing can only be effective when the educator works on her own self-actualisation. In addition, the disclosure of my values and visions inscribed in my journey through theological education prepares me for establishing deeper congruence between my personal beliefs about teaching and my practice (Noffke 2009, 11). I use the Fragments to re-plot critical incidents in my past journey to reflexively write my way towards a confident and constructive professional identity as the theological educator I think I am (Ter Avest 2012, 1f).² The Fragments thus form an integral part of my research by bringing to the surface and exploring at length my own subjectivity as a researching professional, as a theology student-turned-educator, and as a woman vis-à-vis the Protestant tradition and church.

This journey is also mirrored in my teaching practice, which is at the heart of the research narrative: it is through my teaching practice and my reflection on this practice that I am gaining a constructive professional identity that allows me to speak with confidence into PT. The aims of the research and the contributions of the two components of the research narrative to achieving these aims are developed further in chapters 1 and 2.

The different styles of the two components pose a challenge to the effective presentation in a printed document³ that wants to be accessible to the reader but at the same time retain the disruptive and incremental dynamic of the empowering process of discovery-through-writing (see section 2.3 on 'writing to learn' in AR). Since the insights of the autoethnography are integral to the thesis as a whole, this

² Ter Avest (2012) presents eighteen religious and citizenship educators' autoethnographic reflections on their pedagogies as a means of clarifying their professional identities understood as a conscious sense of self (see also section 2.2). They "tell others who they are, but even more important, and by doing so, they tell themselves who they are and how they tried during their life span to act accordingly; they disclosed their professional identities (ibid., 8)." This personal approach has a significant tradition in educational AR (see Noffke 2009, 10f and 15).

³ Electronic formats allow the insertion of hyperlinks that move out of the current page into a third dimension. This has potential for combining accessibility with visual representation of the rhizomatic structure (see section 2.2). However, since academic convention requires that the hardcopy and the electronic copy of the thesis are identical, the option of hyperlinking the Fragments cannot be trialled.

needs to be reflected in the presentation while keeping within academic convention. Its potential for self-actualisation would be seriously diminished if the autoethnography were corralled into the introduction without interacting with the main body of writing (e.g. Clark-King 2004; Chopp 1995; see critical comments by Fisk 2014, 3f.) or if it was literally boxed off into a few text boxes in the conclusion (e.g. Lennon 2015)⁴. Also, the length of the Fragments would break the text boxes across several pages, thereby cancelling out their visual impact.

Like Björn Krondorfer (2010), I present most of the Fragments at the point where the production of the autoethnographic excursion originally took its cue from the research narrative⁵, thus making visible how the moments of reflexivity interrupt, enrich and complicate (Krondorfer 2010, 25) the research narrative. I explore the resulting rhizomatic structure in section 2.2. Each Fragment is prefaced with a short statement that highlights for the reader the point of departure from the research narrative, and summarises the Fragment's contribution to my self-knowledge (see also Levitt 2007). By retaining the chronology of production, I invite the reader to retrace my journey of self-construction (Walton 2014, xv) inscribed in the thesis.

To further signal to the reader the transition from research narrative to autoethnography, I offset the layout of the Fragments from the research narrative through the use of italics and the insertion of icons (see also Krondorfer 2010). However, this decision compromises the integrity of the thesis as the researching professional's holistic output, because the two components appear visually as if speaking in 'different voices' (see Krondorfer 2010, 26). Anna Fisk's (2014) placing of single pieces of autoethnography at the end of chapters avoids the need for a different format, and thus visually speaks with one voice. Yet, in my case, this option would have brought several unrelated Fragments together and removed them from their thematic context, thus breaking the internal connection of the two thesis components. My choice for different formats prioritises readability while being mindful of their representational limitations.

⁴ I trialled text boxes for short autoethnographic sections in my Reflective Practice piece (2011).

⁵ Except for the Fragments in chapter 5, which were originally written in response to early drafts of the concluding chapter.

1. Introduction

1.1 The changing context of Practical Theology in non-confessional higher education

What it means to be religious in the UK, what it feels like and how it is expressed in deed and word, has changed, as the increase of 'no religion' in the 2011 census shows. Elaine Graham (2013b, xv) argues that the diminishing identification with institutional, creedal religion, and the increasing disaffiliated and individualised religious observance, can take many forms that "may no longer fit into existing conceptual frameworks" (ibid., viii). Research on religious observance in the UK employs the concepts of 'believing' and 'belonging', with different authors arranging their relationship in various combinations: believing without belonging (e.g. Davie 1994), belonging without believing (e.g. Robbins and Francis 2010), or neither believing nor belonging (e.g. Voas and Crockett 2005). The last variation reflects an intergenerational process of decline in both assent to orthodoxy and affiliation through "failure in religious socialisation" (ibid., 20): succeeding generations are claimed to be less religious than their elders. However, this pattern of intergenerational decline is contradicted by more recent research regarding Muslims, which cites evidence of significant numbers of younger people 'returning' to the religion of their ancestors, which had lapsed in the intermittent generation (Taylor and Moore 2013, 12). Concerning British Jewry, it is of interest that the very high birth rate in the Haredi community is a significant factor in the overall increase of the Jewish population (Graham, D. 2013). It is apparent that theories based on generalisations have very little explanatory value.

This thesis is concerned with the implications of the changing patterns of religiosity for practical theological education in non-confessional HE. Whatever explanation of the *status quo* one prefers, the dynamics sketched out above are likely to be manifest among students in non-confessional Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) departments. It is reasonable to assume that TRS attracts relatively higher numbers of students for whom religiousness has a personal and social significance than might be found in other departments. Yet, recent studies of students from different

religious traditions suggest that even those who profess to be religious do not display their religiosity uniformly.

A key finding of Guest et al.'s (2013, 195) study of Christian identities of UK undergraduate students is that "Christian students' connections with the churches are highly disparate; some are very active and engaged in Church life, but a large number have no connection with any church at all." They see a direct link between active Church engagement and affirmation of 'doctrinal traditionalism and ethical conservatism', the latter being stronger than the former (Ibid, 196).

Moving on to Judaism, a recent analysis of survey data (Graham, D. and Boyd 2011, 24) claims that Jewish students are clustered in only eight higher education institutions (HEIs) with a preference for the 'Jewish' university towns of Greater Manchester, Leeds, Nottingham, Oxford and Cambridge. This suggests that Jewishness and high levels of feeling and being part of the Jewish People (ibid., 32) significantly determine their choice of university. While students' perception of being Jewish includes strong moral and ethical behaviour, for many this does not directly translate into their own practice (ibid., 32f). Similarly, among those who profess to have a religious identity, many do not participate in ritual practice during term time (ibid., 31). The report's authors consider this to be contradictory and showing dissonance between theory and practice (ibid., 31 and 33); the report also indicates that levels of congruence are affected by upbringing and the type of Jewish affiliation. When compared to Guest et al.'s (2013) findings, this mirrors Christian students' patterns during their time in HE. What Roman Catholic educator Thomas Groome (2011) recognises for Christian theological education can therefore be applied more widely: that religious education should balance orthodoxy and orthopraxy in order to bridge the widening gap in adherents' lives.

There are currently no comparable large-scale studies available for Muslim students, who are also a significant student group in TRS in the UK. Ahmad's (2007) qualitative, small-scale study of 35 female Muslim students' experiences of HE concludes that instead of becoming removed from their religion and culture (see Guest et al. 2013), they used the relative freedom and newly-gained knowledge and skills to rethink and re-energise their religious and cultural identity and practices.

They also responded to perceived racism and Islamophobia with “a sense of social responsibility” (ibid., 65) to break down stereotypes. Due to aspects of dominant campus cultures that are incompatible with Muslim norms and practices, Ahmad’s informants formed friendship groups with similar students, much in the same way as reported for Christians (see Guest et al. 2013) and for Jews (see Graham, D. and Boyd 2011).

Additionally, there are those whose identities defy characterisation in the binary of either religious or secular. Day, Vincett and Cotter (2013, 1) describe them as ‘fuzzy’; “not (...) in the sense of being confused or muddled, but simply ‘in-between’ (...) or on their way to somewhere else”, which the outdated binary view does not cover. The ‘fuzzy’ category includes those who have “multiple belongings that are strategically selected”, and who are sometimes religious and sometimes non-religious (Day, Vincett and Cotter 2013, 2). In addition, TRS departments also attract students who do not identify as religious in any form but want to study religion from the perspective of either curiosity or rejection.

This brief survey of student identities vis-à-vis religion in TRS departments gives an initial insight into their complex and pluralist demographics. This diversity poses a serious challenge for the design of student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, especially for PT, with its traditional link to ministerial training.

Not only TRS students’ identities and practices but also those of their lecturers might not fit into the traditional religious/secular binary, with all the consequences this has for professional trajectories and confidence in one’s own authority. Angela Pears’ (2007) self-justification as a non-Christian educator of Christian practitioners in practical and contextual theology is indicative: her paper is titled ‘Claiming the right to educate’. My own journey into a confident, constructive professional identity, which is written out in this thesis, has many points of overlap with hers, most significantly the articulation of our struggles with our respective insider/outsider status in the discipline. However, the main difference lies in the students we teach, with mine occupying a wide range of religious and non-religious positions.

I offer in the following section as my position statement my own current profile

based on some of Guest et al.'s (2013) categories. It indicates that I am currently a disaffiliated (post-) Christian. However, these categories are only useful to describe what I am not anymore, not what I am now. Kristin Aune (2015) discusses this as a common problem for feminists naming their religious identities⁶. Aune (ibid., 122) finds three common characteristics: being de-churched, being relational and emphasising practice, all of which describe my own current religiousness.

Depending on context, I describe myself strategically as religious but disaffiliated, or as not religious but spiritual. I was baptised and raised in the Bavarian Lutheran tradition, but I now reject most fundamentals of Lutheran and Protestant doctrine and ecclesial practices. However, I recognise that due to my upbringing, Christianity is one of several core reference points for my identity formation. It has increasingly become a negative, contradictory reference point as a force 'for and against' justice, liberation and flourishing (see Schüssler Fiorenza 1994; Research Design Fragment 2). I still draw ingredients for my ethos from my Christian heritage, but I have no institutional involvement; a disaffiliated post-Christian in *utopos*, 'no-place'.

Key indices of Christian identity such as Church attendance, prayer, Bible reading, and compliance with Church doctrines have been absent from my religious practice since I was an undergraduate. As a consequence of studying feminist theology, I have stopped believing in a personal and Trinitarian god; I reject marriage as an authoritative institution, and affirm gender equality and role change, reproductive choices for wo/men, and homosexuality. What is very significant for my choice of theological research methods is my rejection of the traditions of the Church as important sources of authority in favour of personal and wider experience, as a direct consequence of my increasing awareness of sexism within institutional Christianity. This also led to my increasing feelings of isolation from, and my rejection of, Christian peers during my studies in Heidelberg, and ultimately a negative vocational prospect, which is at the heart of the autoethnographic strand of this research.

⁶ On the use of categories of religious identity that are irrelevant to surveyees see also Wallis (2014).

What Megan Smith (2015, 223f) claims for Christian university chaplaincy strikes me deeply, as it links my own journey into disaffiliation to some of the students I teach; that there is a need to engage constructively with students such as my past self, “young adults in transition who are establishing their own world view”, including those whose developing practices and beliefs are in discontinuity with their prior Christian upbringing or ‘fuzzy’. Smith (ibid.) raises this in connection with university education’s purposes of interpretation and application of acquired knowledge within an ethical world view and influencing wider society. The scope of my investigation enlarges her focus from Christian students to those of all faiths and none, while sharing the assumption of university study being a time for clarification of identity, values and practices. Looking to the future, the current profile of students’ pluralist religiosities is an indicator of prospective TRS staff who will be bringing their practices and beliefs with them.

While some of the mentioned research points to a gap between students’ practices and their beliefs, there is a strong agenda among its policy makers that HE should ‘generate’ socially responsible graduates. In my local terms, the University of Manchester’s strategic plan (2012, 19; emphasis added) states the institution’s aim for its graduates to be “able to *act* as informed, thoughtful and critical citizens and future leaders, capable of *exercising* ethical, social and environmental responsibilities.” This clearly links education to students’ future action beyond the exercise of a particular professional skill set. I will argue that where non-confessional PT is oriented to the contextual study of lived religion, it can contribute substantially to this social responsibility agenda.

1.2 The research problem

If non-confessional PT is to take seriously its mandate to shape all of its students’ orientation and future actions regardless of their position vis-à-vis religion, it needs to respond to the two aspects introduced above, namely the increasingly diverse character of younger generations’ religiosity and the presence of non-Christian students. However, available studies of learning and teaching in PT, especially those originating in North America, predominantly focus on the clerical paradigm, and

posit educational aims, such as ‘formation in *Christian* discipleship’ (see e.g. Groome 2011; Bass and Dykstra 2008), that are inappropriate for students of all faiths and none in their explicitly Christian and normative orientation.

Other studies (see e.g. Le Cornu’s (2004) ‘Editorial’ of a special issue of *The Journal of Adult Theological Education (JATE)*) have addressed the relationship between Church and academy in TRS in the UK as a clash of confessional and non-confessional modes of studying theology. While Pears (2004) displays some awareness of student positionalities, her focus – as that in the other contributions to this special issue of *JATE* – is on the external framework, which she describes as “‘secular’ academic”. The point of contention is that academic study of theology is considered to be critical and scholarly, whereas confessional study is equated with indoctrination. However, the Church–academy binary is not relevant for many TRS students with diverse and increasingly ‘fuzzy’ religiosity.

Conversely, while Bennett (2006, 332f) and Ganzevoort (2008a, 117) emphasise the urgency for inter* education in TRS as a response to sectarian violent conflict, and as a contribution to the practice of peace, dialogue and reconciliation, they only address *inter-religious* contexts. This is evident, for example, in Ganzevoort’s (ibid.) discussion of three possible educational approaches in what he calls plural contexts, namely detached teaching about religious points of view (liberal), committed teaching from a religious point of view (kerygmatic), or dialogical teaching between religious points of view (communicative-communitarian). Non-religious and religiously fluid students are not addressed constructively in these pedagogical discussions.

I am not the first to identify normativity in the literature and in practice as limiting the disciplinary boundaries and the relevance of learning and teaching for non-traditional students; two decades ago, Rebecca Chopp’s (1995, 45) foundational research in *Saving Work: Feminist Practices in Theological Education* highlighted the operation of a normative *a priori* understanding of ‘Church’ that shaped the aims of theological education. She observed that this ignored the experiences, motivations and interests of many non-traditional students – in her case women – who had entered theological education in significant numbers. Chopp’s (ibid., 9) aim was to

fill this gap in the contemporary literature by asking *who* the subjects of theological education were in order to define what the aim of theological education should be. Diversification of the traditional student body through the significant influx of students from ethnic and class groups not previously present in a majority white, upper-middle-class institution also prompted Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's (2009) more recent *Democratizing Biblical Studies: Toward an emancipatory educational space*. Similar to Chopp, her aim is to develop a pedagogical model that is relevant to all students.

My thesis responds to Chopp's (1995, x) invitation to produce a 'second generation' of research "that is sensitive to issues of particularity and contextuality" within theological education. Applying Chopp's approach I argue that changing student demographics requires a reorientation of both the model⁷ and the aims of theological education to the post-secular conditions of the 21st century. I welcome this as an exciting opportunity for non-confessional PT to move on from its Christian and clerical heritage with its concomitant process of formation through the integration of external norms and values. Instead, in order to establish relevance and value for the diversity of students and staff, I propose an internal process of formation in conversation with external norms and values. The development of this pedagogical reorientation requires an inductive study of participants' positionalities.

I offer this thesis as a practice-based addition to the exploratory studies originating from the multi-religious Faculty of Theology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (see Ganzevoort et al. 2014 and Vroom 2008). In my view, this research has significance beyond HE and beyond formal theological education for institutional churches' engagement with younger generations, and with 'unchurched' and disaffiliated Christians⁸.

⁷ See Joyce et al. (2009, 117): "Learning and teaching models have a stated focus and aims for learning, and cover content, learning strategies and arrangements for social interaction that create appropriate learning environments. Models are able to adapt to a spectrum of curriculum areas and types of learners."

⁸ A recent example seems to me indicative: at the Society for the Study of Theology conference in 2015 entitled 'Thinking the Church Today', nobody offered systematic analysis of any of the

[The following Fragment further develops this aspect of my religious and professional identity by reflecting on my dislocation in German theological education for ordained ministry. I evaluate the significance of finding an enabling context in academic Biblical Studies with students of all faiths and none. I place my exodus in a line with other German feminist theologians.]

Introduction Fragment 1: From sola scriptura to the green books of England

My journey from Heidelberg to Man/Chester is full of chance events that became stepping stones in the right place at the right time. I see parallels in the journeys of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Ursula King, Dorothee Sölle and Uta Ranke-Heinemann – second-generation feminist theologians who found German theological education, Catholic and Protestant, to be a hostile environment.⁹ They left for different destinations inside and outside Germany, inside and outside the academy, to develop their feminist work, including their writing, which has become ‘home’ for me. In writing my own exodus story, I recognise a wider ‘movement’ with systemic causes, rather than individual biographies.¹⁰

When I first planned my move abroad – originally for the academic year of 1995-1996 and now in its twentieth anniversary – I settled on the Department of Biblical Studies in Sheffield, the home of the ‘green books’ in Hebrew Bible studies by Sheffield Academic Press. I had been introduced to the ‘green books’ by the then Dr. Bernd Jørg Diebner in Heidelberg’s Old Testament department. At the time, he was frustrated that at middle-age he still had not been promoted to a professorship.¹¹ As young academics, he and his colleague Herrmann Schult had self-published their

statistically significant groups I list above. The perspective was firmly inward-looking on traditional categories of ‘membership’.

⁹ See also Ina Praetorius’ (2015, 264f.) parallel story in Switzerland.

¹⁰ Elsewhere, Mary Daly walked out of Harvard Memorial Church in 1971, the year I was born (see Flanagan 1971).

¹¹ For his account of his lack of career progression in the light of his thesis on “the so-called Old Testament” as antique Jewish literature see Diebner (2003).

ground-breaking research on the dating of Old Testament literature in a xeroxed series entitled Dielheimer Blätter. Their hypothesis was unacceptable to the German mainstream, hence the lack of promotion. Perversely, it was this marginality in itself that attracted me, as well as their hypothesis.

I picked up from Dielheimer Blätter an enthusiasm for the exegetical consequences of the re-dating of biblical material. I deeply regret never making the revisions to my essay for Diebner's course on the Joseph cycle that Thomas L. Thompson requested for publication. I made initial efforts but gave up, because I felt overwhelmed and not ready yet. Looking back, it seems to me that I was not ready yet to take my academic potential seriously, even in the face of strong professorial encouragement.¹²

Not ready yet: I reflect now that I spent my early studies in a kind of Parusieverzögerung [parusia delay], a concept that fascinated me then. I lived in desperate hope that I could fulfil my academic potential in spite of the authoritarian didactic regime based on Barthian Wort Gottes theology (see Luther 1980). But I reined in that hope so I could function without breaking down spiritually. I did break down physically, however: I contracted tinnitus in my second year. The stress of not being able to hear in lectures, and of dissociating academically and religiously took its toll.

Considering my emerging resistance to the centrality of the biblical text in the study of theology, it was ironic but perhaps unavoidable, that it was precisely biblical studies that offered an alternative paradigm. I left Heidelberg before I was due to prepare for the compulsory examination in Bibelkunde, which involved the rote learning of scriptural passages and their location. I hoped that on my return from England I would be able somehow to avoid this epitome of everything I rejected in German theological studies. In the meantime, I followed the route that others saw as obvious for me; when asked where to study the Old Testament in the UK, one of

¹² Later, a similar fate befell my master's dissertation on Kierkegaard's *Either-Or*. However, thanks to editorial persistence and a growing self-caring determination, I have brought to publication two early writings from this doctoral project (Stuerzenhofecker 2015a and b). Other publications (Graham, E.L. et al. 2011; Benda et al. 2010; Powell et al. 2009; Stuerzenhofecker 2008) originated from collaborative and contractual contexts that mitigated my self-neglecting tendencies.

my lecturers said: “normally I would say Oxford or Cambridge, but knowing your interests I have to say Sheffield.”

To this day, whenever I see that green of Sheffield Academic Press’ Hebrew Bible publications, I feel a deep sense of gratitude, excitement and Heimat. It carries a promise of academic freedom fulfilled when I experienced a department for students of all faiths and none. A new day dawned when David Clines expressly forbade the use of secondary literature in our exegesis of the Book of Job: what did I make of the text? Not Gerhard von Rad or other approved eminences that restricted our horizon at Heidelberg. Also, Cheryl Exum introduced me to scholars who very obviously did not use Gesenius’ Hebrew dictionary, which was compulsory in Heidelberg; a circular work that predefines the translation depending on the biblical instance. The feminists I read with Exum used words such as ‘rape’ and named ‘women’s issues’ missing from Gesenius. The power of language and the power over language held by Gesenius and all it embodied impressed itself on me in a frightful revelation. I realised with hindsight why I had had to leave Germany’s stifling, normative-authoritarian theological education.

Another incident at Heidelberg had accelerated my growing sense of alienation. I had received a low mark for a Church History essay on a marginal(ised) medieval source on Francis of Assisi precisely because this source was discredited by the majority of the secondary literature. The feedback encouraged me to pursue academic research but in compliance with accepted frameworks. I was deeply disturbed by the underlying (un)scientific paradigm, which did not allow the critical retracing of prior research to forge a new path. It demanded unquestioning mastery of canonised sources, primary and secondary; what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2009, 133-136) calls the patriarchal ‘master-disciple model’ of teaching, which she encountered herself as a student in Würzburg and Münster.

Had I not taken Bernd Jørg Diebner’s Joseph course I would never have discovered the green books in Heidelberg library. I would never have come to Sheffield. I would never have found a home?

✱

1.3 The scope and definition of non-confessional Practical Theology

The changing demographics in TRS and the resulting need for reorientation of pedagogy¹³ described above is manifest in my own context in the department of Religions and Theology (R&T) at the University of Manchester, which is open to students of all faiths and none. Since 1904, the University of Manchester has offered the academic study of Christianity and other religious traditions and communities. At the inception of the then Faculty of Theology was the shared desire of a number of Christian nonconformist colleges in the Greater Manchester area and beyond¹⁴ to create an academic institution that met their needs in a way that existing Anglican institutions did not. This was realised in the establishment of “the first free-standing, non-sectarian theological faculty in the country” (Sell 2013, 268). The colleges supplied the faculty with students and staff, and for the first fifty years, the overall context focused on Christian ministerial training.

According to Ronald Preston (1979, 471), the early centrality of Christian ministerial training in the then Faculty of Theology diminished over time. The direct delivery of or contribution to Christian ministerial training ended with the introduction of the university’s validation of the affiliated theological colleges’ own degree programmes in 1984. Preston (ibid.) observed that the numbers of undergraduates¹⁵ compared to postgraduates had increased very significantly by 1979, with women, many of whom were excluded from ordination training, being over half the cohort. However, the legacy of the founders’ academic framework still shapes the department: what started out as a shared enterprise between Christian denominational colleges who negotiated a platform that was not inter-denominational but non-confessional, laid the foundations for the current pluralist

¹³ By pedagogy I understand the theory and practice of learning teaching and assessment with regard to content and process. See e.g. Miller-McLemore (2008) whose proposal for a pedagogy of Practical Theology is firmly rooted in the confessional context I do not share.

¹⁴ According to Sell (2013, 267) the colleges instrumental in the original foundation of the faculty were Didsbury Wesleyan College, Lancashire Independent [Congregational] College, Unitarian College, Victoria Park United Methodist Free Church College, Moravian Theological College, Hartley Primitive Methodist College, and Manchester Baptist College. Also involved was the Anglican Clergy Training College.

¹⁵ The BA (Theol) was available from 1946, and the BA (Rel. Studies) from 1969, see Preston (1979).

environment that attracts students of many faiths and none. In other words, today at Manchester non-confessional means more than intra-Christian engagement. From this, I arrive at the following definition of *non-confessional* PT as academic, not religiously affiliated and not offering clerical training, and open to and consciously designed for students of all faiths and none.

What is the scope of non-confessional study of religions and theology within the UK that makes it of wider significance beyond my own institution? Of a sample of thirteen TRS departments in the UK that explicitly offer courses in some form of practical or pastoral theology¹⁶, six self-identify on their web pages as offering those courses to students of all faiths and none¹⁷. Among them are the Professional Doctorates in Practical Theology at Glasgow, Birmingham, Winchester and Chester. Added to these six departments are a further two departments, namely at Durham¹⁸ and Kings College London¹⁹, where the disciplinary position is less obvious to an outsider, but which can also be counted among those offering pastoral or practical theology to students of all faiths and none. This means that over half of the pt courses in my sample do not directly contribute to ministerial training, and are open to students of all faiths and none. This shows that the Manchester context is not unique and my investigation is of wider significance to mitigate the persistent dominance of the Christian and clerical paradigm.

1.4 Research aims

Having clarified the research problem and its significance for TRS departments in

¹⁶ This is based on further investigation of the first 25 TRS departments listed in The Guardian's *University League Tables 2016* for TRS, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2015/may/25/university-league-tables-2016#S480> (accessed 21/10/2015).

¹⁷ <http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/religions-and-theology/>, <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/research/thr/practical-theology-doctorate.aspx#CourseDetailsTab>, <http://www.gla.ac.uk/subjects/theology/>, <http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/InstituteofTheology/AboutUs/>, <http://www.winchester.ac.uk/Studyhere/Pages/professional-doctorate-in-theology-and-practice.aspx>, <http://www.chester.ac.uk/postgraduate/doc-prac-theo> (all accessed 21/10/2015).

¹⁸ <https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/research/researchareas/contemp.religion/studyofreligion/> (accessed 21/10/2015).

¹⁹ <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/trs/people/staff/academic/index.aspx> (accessed 21/10/2015).

the UK, I present my research aims and my argument.

This thesis aims first to develop a student-focused pedagogical response to changes in the composition and character of student cohorts, and second to deconstruct and reconstruct this researching professional's identity in theological education. I follow Chopp's starting point in the subjects of education, who are firstly its students. In addition, I continue the established tradition in educational research (see e.g. Noffke 2009), including in theological education (see e.g. Ter Avest 2012), to consider the educator as a subject who shapes and is shaped by their educational practice. Consequently, my argument is twofold. Firstly, I argue that critical conversation between theological scholarship and alumni perceptions of long-term learning outcomes of existing teaching practice can generate normative pedagogical principles for PT in non-confessional HE. Secondly, and in continuation of my first argument, I claim that critical conversation between these normative principles and autoethnography can contribute to the educator's personal and professional development to realise their values more fully in their practice.

The first aim, to develop a student-focused pedagogical response to changing cohorts, is pursued by writing a case study of *RCG*, a course unit that is deeply embedded in the institutional culture and tradition of non-confessional TRS at the University of Manchester. *RCG* emerged out of particular concerns in social and pastoral theology to prepare students for informed engagement in contemporary issues (see 3.2.4). It is available as an optional to students on all BA programmes in R&T and on a changing range of other BA programmes within the Faculty of Humanities. Consequently, it reflects the diversity of students at the heart of the research problem. Additionally, *RCG* is usually one of the larger course units within R&T with between 25 and 40 students each year, which constitutes at least half of the total level 2 cohorts²⁰. Recruitment is supported by alumni's positive word-of-mouth. I conclude from the high recruitment and positive alumni evaluations that *RCG* offers something relevant and valuable to the student populations at the heart

²⁰ This ratio is changing, since overall recruitment in R&T has been declining while the course unit's enrolment has stayed the same, e.g. 34 students in 2015-16. Consequently, *RCG*'s significance within R&T is increasing.

of the research problem, and hence the course unit is a suitable case.

What this ‘something’ is, can only be identified by alumni themselves in their perception of long-term learning outcomes; in turn, these perceptions are the foundation for the formulation of normative pedagogical principles. The case study seeks answers to the question how the normative principles that emerge from *RCG* might be operationalised in order to contribute to PT in non-confessional HEIs with students of all faiths and none. This breaks down into four sub-questions, namely how the normative principles might inform a reorientation of firstly the *model* of PT, secondly the *aims* of PT, thirdly the relevant *curriculum*, and fourthly appropriate *learning, teaching and assessment*.

As an exercise in practice-based research, attention to the practitioner’s subjectivity in the Fragments directs the second strand of the research towards self-knowledge, namely to understand better my own journey in theological education as a journey of loss and retrieval, dislocation and relocation. This strand of the investigation draws attention to the international dimension of my trajectory and the differences in theologies of the study of theology in Germany and the UK, especially as it pertains to PT. The practitioner-focused strand also speaks into the current debate about gender inequality in TRS departments in the UK, and continues the ongoing debate of the marginalisation of feminist positionality in the Church and academic theology.

The ambiguity of my title phrase ‘transforming practical theological education’²¹ reflects the two related research aims: PT as the subject having transforming influence on those who engage it, and as the object being in need of transformation so that it can retain value and relevance to its changing participants.

[The following Fragment reflects on the fact that this self-constructive strand of the research was only developed during the thesis writing process, after external prompts. I locate this in my reactive socialisation that is also evident in how I had

²¹ This is modelled on Schüssler Fiorenza’s (2009) *Democratizing Biblical Studies*.

been called to teach in the third Fragment.]

Introduction Fragment 2: The thesis title and the amoeba

The formulation of the thesis title is so me: there is nothing about me in it! It was hidden and I have finally found it thanks to the vigilance of my supervisor and the workings of critical AR, but the I is not there in the title. This is so me.

The image of myself as an amoeba came to me when I was a teenager: a creature of no defined shape with the ability to mould itself around its environment. Reactive and responsive. A 'good girl', who only knows how to be 'good' in a context that is given, where the meaning of 'goodness' is externally set. In practice this meant shaping much of my tastes around other people's, putting my efforts into supporting others in their trials and tribulations rather than seeking help in my own, needing a brief to be creative: a craftswoman, not an artist. I suffered a major identity crisis towards the end of my secondary education when the question of the future impressed itself on me as an open space of many options but no guiding limitations. I was acutely aware that something was wrong about the dread I felt when I could not answer to myself what I wanted to be. I was secretly begging for a 'vocation', a calling from outside myself. The I that did not know how to assert its own needs and desires. I stumbled into theological studies by elimination of other options, choosing a subject that allowed me to continue my study of 'people', other people. But was I also subconsciously seeking something else that is increasingly asserting itself?

Here I am with a first-person AR project and a stated aim of my own personal and professional development, but no I explicitly in the title. All well and good that the starting point is my own practice, the I is there. But nothing in the thesis title itself pulls my research focus back from making a contribution to the wider communities of theological education and pt, back to the I. As usual, the amoeba shaping itself to fit its context, the 'good girl' busy helping others by becoming better in her role as facilitator. It was the vigilant supervisor who persisted, when I was resistant, that I should come back to autoethnography, that I should drop primary material that was distracting me from the I.

I was never averse to autoethnography, in fact I used it in my Reflective Practice (2011). But I didn't embrace it in the second phase of the Doctorate until I was actually beginning to write the thesis. Now another meaning of 'auto' in autoethnography impresses itself on me: 'auto' as in automatic, without my conscious doing, in spite of my persistent self-hiding tactics. The I that is writing itself into the story through the power and logic of the process rather than the author's conscious chipping away. Here is the point in the spiral of the AR process where I have finally become conscious of the lack of focus on my own learning in this research project and where I have at the same time understood what it is that I am learning. That the primary research question is not only 'what am I doing' but also 'what am I doing in PT', an insider by employment, an outsider by stance towards the Church. The answer I am finding is that I am – like my students – offered an opportunity for identity formation. That in fact I am offering this opportunity myself to my self. The amoeba is taking her own shape.



[The following Fragment uncovers the significance of my active construction of a positive professional identity by examining how I got on the path as a theological educator in the first place.]

Introduction Fragment 3: Being called to teach

I did not choose to become an educator in PT. I was called. Literally.

I was called on the telephone by a former lecturer of mine in R&T at the University of Manchester. I remember it as a dark, dank Mancunian evening. I was working at the time as a finance officer at a local women's further education college. My academic studies in theology and sociology of employment were still informing my life and work, but I was not planning a return to academia.

Was he right in thinking that I had studied feminism?, was the question coming out of the telephone. Yes. Would I like to cover the teaching for RCG? I remember this like a moment in a film, moving the handset away from my head and staring into it.

What do you say to a question like that? I remember thinking that I didn't feel good about this, but that I should not say no, even though the implications were entirely unclear. So I said yes. This conversation happened some time in 2002. I have delivered the course ever since.

Being called like that was what I had longed for when I was about to leave school and didn't know what career path to choose. Being called like that means somebody else sets the wheels in motion and makes a choice for me, I just need to respond by accepting and delivering my part of the deal. The classic Christian movement of accepting God's call and following in discipleship, entering into covenant. Just the kind of passive role that Nelle Morton (1985) rejects as part of a patriarchal relationship and which requires radical reversal.

But by meeting people where they are in their limiting socialisation, we recognise that they might only gradually work themselves out of their disempowerment by using the familiar mechanisms and patterns. Jantzen (1998, 60-61) acknowledges this when she explores from what position women can become subjects when they are "caught in a prior existing symbolic which prevents them from becoming subjects". Jantzen (ibid., 61) concludes that in order to break out of this vicious circle, the new can only come forth from within the old. This is a very comforting 'pat on the back' from one whose work has shifted mountains. It allows me to be reconciled with my past. If I had not been called, I am sure I would not teach.



1.5 Chapter overview

In chapter 2, I demonstrate how my research design allows me to achieve my research aims. I discuss my conceptual framework, which is made up of four elements, namely 'prefiguring flourishing', 'Transforming Practice', 'insider-outsider', and 'rhizomatic fragment'. Furthermore, I describe and justify the design of the project as insider AR with former insiders. This involves the case study of RCG, using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and theological reflection in order to generate student-focused, normative principles for non-confessional PT. The deconstruction and reconstruction of my professional identity is developed in

the action stage of thesis writing through the autoethnographic Fragments and the application of IPA. This chapter contains three Fragments that reflect on the origins of my justice agenda, demonstrate the power of reflective writing as a research tool, and examine my changing practice of reflexivity.

Chapter 3 forms the heart of the thesis and contains the case study of *RCG*. The objectives of the chapter are twofold. First, I argue that the design and practices of *RCG* offer a useful starting point for normative pedagogical principles that respond to changing student profiles in non-confessional PT. I offer a contextual description of *RCG* including student recruitment and progression as it relates to the studied cohorts. I also consider the motivation for the introduction of *RCG*'s forerunner within its academic and ecclesial context since this has a bearing on my proposal in chapter 4. Secondly, I argue that the voices of alumni from a spectrum of religious-secular identifications are vital to the reorientation of pedagogical design in non-confessional PT. To this end, I present their perceptions of long-term learning outcomes of *RCG*. The collaborative IPA of the data extracts six super-ordinate themes.

I demonstrate in chapter 4 how critical conversation between theological scholarship and alumni data can turn the six super-ordinate themes that have emerged in the previous chapter, into normative pedagogical principles, and operationalise them. To this end, I use theological concepts to critically interrogate the alumni's needs, motivations and intentions. At the same time, the data prompts the revision and development of the theological concepts by uncovering exclusive and damaging universalisms. In the second part of this chapter I progress the outcomes of the theological reflection to a formulation of normative pedagogical principles that inform my student-focused reorientation of the *model* of non-confessional PT and its *aim*, the relevant *curriculum*, and appropriate *learning, teaching and assessment*. The three Fragments in this chapter chart my exodus from the Church into literary community, offer my experience to expand theology, and reflect on a critical incident in *RCG*.

Having brought the alumni strand of my research to conclusion in the preceding chapter, I turn my attention in chapter 5 to the autoethnographic strand. I show

how critical conversation between my autoethnography and the outcomes of the alumni strand can contribute to my personal and professional development by deconstructing my past identity, and by reconstructing my future identity in theological education and vis-à-vis religion. The three Fragments that open this chapter focus on my experience of and contribution to community. In the second part, I connect my IPA of all the Fragments with super-ordinate themes generated from the alumni data, in order to reconstruct a confident identity as theological educator.

In the concluding chapter, I evaluate the findings regarding their significance for flourishing, their transformative potential, the disclosure of hidden experiences, and the fostering of heterogeneity. I highlight how my 'Transforming Practice' approach and the resulting evidence-based model for non-confessional PT both challenge the clerical paradigm. I identify an agenda for future pedagogical development arising from the articulation of learner needs and aspirations. I also suggest a demand for further student-focused investigation of PT as inter* education with an explicit future orientation.

2. Research design

2.1 Introduction

I argue in this chapter how the chosen research process allows me to achieve the research aims established in the previous chapter. My conceptual framework shows the relationships between my underlying values, theories and concepts, and the research process. It is made up of four elements, namely 'prefiguring flourishing', 'Transforming Practice', 'insider-outsider', and 'rhizomatic fragment'. The first two elements together with the research context determine my development of this project as critical insider AR in collaboration with former insiders. This involves the case study of *RCG* using IPA and theological reflection in order to generate student-focused, normative principles for non-confessional PT. The deconstruction and reconstruction of my professional identity is developed in the action stage of thesis writing. This takes the form of the autoethnographic Fragments and the application of IPA. This chapter contains three Fragments that reflect on the origins of my justice agenda, demonstrate the power of reflective writing as a research tool, and examine my changing practice of reflexivity.

2.2 Conceptual framework

My conceptual framework (see Leshem and Trafford 2007) has largely emerged from my past and present research of my teaching practice in *RCG*, but also from the literature. It helps me to organise my ideas for developing a person-centred model of non-confessional PT. Below, I describe the four elements of my conceptual framework in hierarchical order, and argue how they contribute to an effective research strategy.

- Value-guided praxis: prefiguring 'human flourishing and love of the world'

Following Graham, E.L. et al.'s (2005, 170) definition of theology-in-action, my praxis as theological educator and researcher is expressive of my radical feminist

values of human flourishing and love of the world, which I aim to prefigure (Maeckelbergh 2011) through my methods. Without this direction, I would not have identified the current research problem that the motivations and needs of non-traditional student and staff participants in non-confessional PT deserve and require a reorientation in order to support their flourishing.

I adopt the phrase 'human flourishing and love of the world' from the work of Grace Jantzen (1995) to describe my holistic, ecofeminist agenda (see Stuerzenhofecker 2015a). Writing against the background of the Christian doctrine of salvation, Jantzen's concept of flourishing aims for this-worldly growth, increasing strength and vigour in continuity with the present and past. Jantzen posits that her model of flourishing prompts action for love of the world through "the promotion of values of life, creativity, diversity and justice", which goes beyond the human to include also "non-human animals, the environment and the planet as a whole" (Graham, E.L. 2009, 9). I develop my critical understanding of Jantzen's work in chapter 3 in conversation with alumni data.

In the context of education, flourishing aligns well with student-centred learning which acknowledges the richness of students' prior knowledge and experiences, and aims to extend them. Jantzen's anthropological foundation encourages me to envisage the learner to be on an ongoing journey of development rather than as a fallen creature in need of rescue²². The model of flourishing offers an understanding of organic growth which does not vilify the *status prior* as deficient but organically builds on its existing resources.

In any case, not all students need to experience transformation understood as radical change because they might already be on the 'right' path – whatever that path might be in terms of intended learning outcomes – but they should all be supported to experience growth. To give an example, some of my students are already very knowledgeable of critical gender perspectives when they enter my gender advocacy classroom. They are not in need of transformation. In their case,

²² For this view see Higton (2012, 158): '...human learning is incomplete because human beings are sinful, and so see in distorted, deluded ways – hence the need for crucifixion on the way to truth.'

my task is to provide a conducive environment for their continuing development, maybe with a step-change in their emerging understanding and commitment to a certain course of action.

Does the same apply to those students who enter the advocacy classroom with hostility to the studied vision of social justice, possibly because they are members of the privileged group?²³ Should they not be considered to be 'deficient' and in need of transformation? The temptation to respond in the affirmative highlights the dilemma of the advocacy classroom in my context of non-confessional higher education. My institutional role does not allow me to indoctrinate students into a particular vision of social justice, yet I would not be teaching what I teach if I did not have my own convictions on the matter. Here, Jantzen's insistence on this-worldly flourishing in the immediate future together with her organic model of continuity sharpens my focus on the learning that can grow out of all students' biographies, whatever they might be. The educator is challenged to meet these biographies with integrity and to unlock their resources for active learning to take place.

My personal and professional commitment to flourishing has become clearer to me through ongoing reflection-on-action (Schön 1983), beginning with my Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCHE) in 2004. Its reflective practitioner approach enabled me to prefigure (Maeckelbergh 2011) or live out my commitment (Graham, E.L. et al. 2005, 171) more fully by achieving a higher degree of coherence between my values, and my teaching and research practices. The current research is a continuation of this trajectory to build up my capacity "not simply in terms of techniques or strategies, but in terms of [my] capabilities (...) to be schooled in the values that nurture [my] practice" (Graham, E.L. 2013a, 170). While my previous efforts have focused on pedagogical improvements with immediate impact on learners studying *RCG*, this research makes a step change by focusing on flourishing in the long-term. For the first time, it also includes reflection on my own flourishing as I journey through theological

²³ For a discipline-relevant investigation of social justice education with the 'privileged' see e.g. Turpin (2008). She refers to the classic conversation with Freirean pedagogy from the perspective of privilege in Evans et al. (1986).

education.

Therefore, the current study is one turn of an ongoing AR movement (see below) oscillating between practice and theory with "sources and norms of prejudgement, [which] have determined prevailing patterns of practice; but insofar as renewed experience and reflection upon contemporary positionality may lead to new insights, then the [practitioner] must arbitrate on the validity and authenticity of new meanings" (Graham, E.L. 2002, 164). In other words, my forerunning commitment to flourishing limits the selection of appropriate methods, which is discussed later in this chapter, as are the processes of theological reflection used to critique and operationalise the normative principles emerging from the alumni data, and the analysis of the autoethnography by reading it through the perspective of the alumni-generated themes. My commitment to flourishing also serves as a validity criterion that translates into the question of the significance of the research: are the research process and its findings truly worthy of human aspiration (Reason and Bradbury 2006, 12)? This will be assessed in chapter 6.

[The following Fragment interrogates the origins of my commitment to flourishing in relation to my Christian heritage and my theological education. It highlights my own experience of gender injustice as the contentious issue in my relationship with the Church.]

Research Design Fragment 1: The origins of my justice agenda and gender

When asked for my religious affiliation I find it easier to say what I am not than what I am: I am not Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist et cetera. Although it might give the wrong impression of my current practice and affiliation (or lack thereof), I am a baptised and confirmed Bavarian Lutheran Protestant, brought up in the Lutheran household of my 'liberal' birth family and in the Roman Catholic one of my 'traditional' childminder of eighteen years. Between these two family contexts, we observed the main Christian holidays and meat-less Fridays, said grace at least on

Sundays, sang Christian hymns and participated in the life of the respective parishes. This dual confessional heritage was an early embodiment of my sensitivity to 'diversities' within wider groupings such as the Church.

My father was born in the Bavarian Lutheran mission in Papua New Guinea and grew up in a POW camp in Australia, which was internally dominated by the German Christian internees. My grandparents were themselves children of Christian missionaries. Their tradition of Christianity mixed with the German social morality of the time emphasised the absolute need for compliance and punishment in the face of personal sinfulness. Even as a child I was aware of the cruelty of this tradition, a tradition that my father strongly renounced. The origins of my justice agenda are not there.

My mother took me to adult Sunday worship at the liberal Lutheran St. Sebaldus church, which had a strong political theology of liberation. This early direction was passed on to me most directly during preparation for confirmation. It was further developed by my Lutheran Religionslehrer of many years in secondary education, Pfarrer Gutmann, a staunch Barthian, who modelled faith-committed practice. These influences affected my choice for Heidelberg University to study theology. I dimly recollect – although I do not remember how I came to hear of it, since I was not at all plugged into the 'right' channels – that I was aware of Heidelberg's reputation of having a generally liberal, liberation outlook in comparison to some other German faculties of Protestant theology. While I still found myself to be an outsider among my peers regarding the depth of my confession and the breadth of my experience of the Church, the range of curriculum and staff at Heidelberg did allow me to further develop my emerging liberation theology. It is fair to say that my emerging liberation agenda did originate from the Church; it did not primarily come from humanist, anarchist or whatever other secular sources. However marginal my Christianness might appear to some, reflection on my biography reminds me that it is the primary reference point.

Unfortunately, my desire for social justice of gender was not nurtured by the Church. In the sermons I heard as a child and teenager, 'the poor' did not include women, and certainly not German women. They did not include my divorcee mother and me,

both victims of domestic violence. Many of my students assume that secular society is much more progressive in gender matters than the Church. I find it hard to disprove them. This is the great rift between my Christian heritage and my social justice agenda: do I have to call myself post-Christian until the Church catches up?



- Theoretical model: ‘Transforming Practice’

In order to pursue my research aims in a manner that prefigures my values of flourishing and love of the world, I have sought a theoretical model for theologising that pays careful attention to the research subjects’ hidden needs and motivations by in the first place making them explicit. In this, I have not followed Chopp’s (1995) example, even though we share the same research problem. While we are both concerned with changing theological educational practice in response to issues arising for new entrants to theological education, it is clear from the main chapters of *Saving Work* that Chopp’s deductive approach renders the students she writes for first passive and then absent, after the contextualisation in the early part. In the same vein, her own position statement is limited to the introductory chapter, as I have discussed in my Preamble. Conversely, I propose an inductive approach based in a practical theological model that takes experience as its starting and end point.

My research process is based on Elaine Graham’s inductive model (2002) of ‘Transforming Practice’.²⁴ She sees the task of pt as “the systematic reflection upon the nature of the church in the world, which is accessible only through the practical wisdom of those communities” (ibid., 208). This model allows new voices of non-traditional students and staff to guide the reorientation of PT by generating norms inductively and collaboratively without imposition of scriptural and ecclesial norms that are irrelevant to the research subjects. In Graham’s (2002, 112) understanding, “norms indicate the criteria by which sources are interpreted; the principles upon which sources are designated authoritative and binding”. As Kaufman (2016, 143-

²⁴ I have examined aspects of this model in my Publishable Article (2010).

144) emphasizes, 'Transforming Practice' "locates the ultimate normative mandate neither in the received ecclesial tradition nor in extant theological theory", but in that which is considered (by whom?) as *orthopraxis*.

Conversely, in his search for a methodology for issues-led theological reflection in HE,²⁵ Eric Stoddart (2004, 197) rejects Graham's model, because it is not "indissolubly anchored to the Christian narrative". Stoddart's canonical commitment leads him to adopt Thomas Groome's 'Shared Praxis' model, which aims for formation in Christian discipleship. This is similar to Swinton and Mowat's (2006) understanding that the task of pt is "critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to *ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God*" (Swinton and Mowat 2006, 25; emphasis added). As with Stoddart, Swinton and Mowat's aims are appropriate in a confessional Christian context, but not for students of all faiths and none. It is precisely what Stoddart rejects, i.e. the lack of confessional orthodoxy that renders Graham's model particularly suitable for unconditional investigation of heterodox experience (see Graham, E.L. 2002, 204). Furthermore, Graham's model fits my context because she (2002, 172) argues that a critical theology of pastoral practice should use specific case studies to identify appropriate evaluative criteria by exposing the practical wisdom of each case study and the nature of the prescriptive values expressed and enacted (ibid. 173). This method helps me to achieve my two aims of operationalising the normative principles that emerge from *RCG*, and of deconstructing and reconstructing my own journey in theological education. I have argued in section 1.4 that *RCG* is suitable for this investigation. Focusing on this single case study is the only way for me to achieve my research aims within the limitations of my employment and my research context.

To investigate the alumni strand, I am firstly engaged in the collaborative excavation of the sources and norms rising up in concrete ways from alumni

²⁵ This is the subtitle of the article. The points of overlap between Stoddart's and my pedagogical aims for PT are discussed in chapter 4.

experience in response to my course design (Graham, E.L. 2002, 204). A holistic understanding of my educational practice can only be reached by examining collaboratively how it is experienced by (all) participants (see Graham, E.L. 2013a, 164), not merely what is intended by the educator. This crystallises Graham's (2002, 8) claim that the discursive practices of a *community* – not merely the leader's intentions and actions – generate normative principles for transformatory practice.

Secondly, by extending the enquiry-driven element of the research to my own subjectivity and reflexivity as a crucial 'primary source' (Graham, E.L. 2010, 4; see also Graham, E.L. 2013a, 150 and 164), I am seeking to excavate my own hidden needs (Graham, E.L. 2002, 148) and aspirations: in what ways is my practice "a source of insight into the nature of [my] faithful living" (Graham, E.L. 2013a, 170) as an insider-outsider of the Church (see the following section)? I follow Graham's (2002, 111) claim that "pastoral practices (...) may therefore be seen as the foundation, and not the application of theological understanding".

- Research problem: insider-outsider

The key aspect of the research problem that emerged from the research process and which serves as a critical concept in this thesis are hybrid insider-outsider positionalities. The binary concept of the insider/outsider or emic/etic is widely used and contested in the study of religion (Chryssides and Gregg 2017; McCutcheon 1999). This debate is concerned with the researcher's and the informant's positionality vis-à-vis the investigated religious communities, practices and beliefs, and their respective access to experience and meaning-making. My survey of literature on contemporary religiosity (see Introduction) shows that a binary concept does not capture heterodox and temporary positionalities, hence my formulation of the insider-outsider hybrid that operates along a continuum and problematises fixed boundaries.

The insider-outsider hybrid is evident firstly in the positionalities of learners and educator who find themselves along a continuum of insider-outsider positionalities vis-à-vis the studied material and its related real-life phenomena, vis-à-vis each

other's backgrounds, aspirations and communicative practices, and vis-à-vis their own reflexive development in response to their studies, which emerges from the analysis of alumni data and the autoethnography. The initially unacknowledged origins of the research problem itself lie in my own position as a past-insider-become-outsider of the Christian church, an institution that might have eventually ordained me as a minister, and a community of believers and practitioners from which I am currently disaffiliated most of the time. The concept of hybrid insider-outsider positionalities guides my search for a pedagogical model and for my professional identity that responds constructively and affirmatively to said positionalities.

As an aspect of the chosen research process (see discussion of AR below), the insider-outsider problem appears in the way the alumni are former insiders of the research object, yet as *alumni* they are outsiders to the present and future RCG classroom. This affects their stake in the research, both positively and negatively, which is reviewed below.

- Anthropology, methodology and presentation: rhizomatic fragments

I understand a central aspect of this thesis, namely identity formation (see Preamble), as the narrative development of a conscious sense of self that seeks to answer the question who am I?²⁶ In the process of this research I have extracted my implicit theological anthropology from my teaching and research practice (Stuerzenhofecker 2015a). This has led me to consciously reject linear-progressive, normative models of identity and identity formation such as Eric Erikson's and James Fowler's.²⁷ Instead, I am drawn to the German practical theologian Henning

²⁶ My underlying definition of identity draws on several sources. Walton (2014, xv) describes identity as "a self-narrative, which demonstrates how they have achieved self-actualization and attained a position of personal authenticity". Ganzevoort (2012, 216) understands identity "as a narrative structure, that is, the person's reflective interpretation of him/herself. Identity thus is not some essential quality that needs to be uncovered, but the story one tells about oneself for a particular audience".

²⁷ See the critiques by Connell (2002) and Streib (1991; 1994).

Luther's (1992) model of human life as fragment.²⁸ Luther emphasises the temporal aspect of the individual life and life story, its internal plurality, and its incompleteness in becoming; "not seeking completion of knowledge and understanding, but development in the perpetual process of self-transcendence in reflexion" (Stuerzenhofecker 2015a, 7). Luther (1992), Streib (1991; 1994), Cavarero (2000) and Walton (2014) stress the dangers of 'ironing-out' processes in life-story composition that impose coherence and unity, and force positive narrative development and reconciliation at the expense of truthfulness and acknowledgment of pain, disappointment and loss. Additionally, Graham, E.L. et al. (2005, 67, emphasis added) lament that some theories of narrative identity show "a disturbing tendency to assume that the redemptive power of narrative can *always* bring healing and release, and that discordant elements can always be reconciled within a life story *properly* told." This research is itself an open-ended, multiplicitous fragment of my life-long learning.

Multiple fragments are linked both synchronically and diachronically, according to Pamela Cooper-White (2007, in Lassiter 2015, 54-56). She argues that the human mind is structured as both root and rhizome. Building on Deleuze and Guattari (1987), she defines the rhizomatic mind as a horizontal network of multiple, heterogeneous connections, which are not always visible and conscious. When disrupted, connections are repaired or new ones are established. Consequently, personal history is not a linear genealogy with a fixed past, but a provisional (re)mapping exercise:

"Imagine mind and self in terms of a three-dimensional multiplicity (or more) – neither vertical 'depth' nor purely horizontal 'plane', but an infinitely dimensional, quantum substance, with internal indeterminacy and some fluid parameters. Imagine a subjectivity, a multiple self, identifiable as both an 'I' and a 'Thou' simultaneously, and with a mobile consciousness that scans and networks various parts of the 'self', in an illusory but functional sense of self-

²⁸ See also Duncan Forrester's (2005) *Theological Fragments: Essays in Unsystematic Theology*, in which he posits the fragment as a more desirable model for theologising than encompassing systems. Similarly to Luther, Forrester claims that the fragment is a better reflection of life in all its multiplicity and limitations. Both build their thinking on Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*.

cohesion, self-regulation, and self-continuity.” (Cooper-White 2007 in Lassiter 2015, 55f.)

My autoethnographic Fragments are an effort to remap my journey through theological education in a way that makes a positive professional identity possible.

Additionally, the rhizomatic as a concept is significant for my methodology. As an alternative to Schleiermacher’s arborescent structure of theology (Baker 2013, 213f), Baker attests to Graham’s ‘Transforming Practice’ model as “the beginning of a fleshing out of a new theological rhizomatics; practices and discourses are emergent, manifestations of the ontological are multiplicitous, and whilst there are clear Christian principles and virtues that are evident, the final outcomes and manifestations are not predicted or patrolled. They are allowed to take shape and find expression in (again) a multiplicity of practices” (Baker 2013, 227). My rhizomatic research process supports both my pedagogical and my autoethnographic research aims. Firstly, it makes explicit non-traditional learners’ needs and aspirations by treating the fragmentary character of individual survey responses (see 2.3) not as statistical outliers, but as legitimate and meaningful off-shoots. It resists analysis and formulation of findings that reduce multiple and contradictory voices to a forcibly homogenised narrative. In the same way, the rhizomatic process validates my autoethnographic ‘excursions’ not as distractions, but as integral to meaning-making. The distinct narratives are linked through an “immanent process of self-organization” (Baker 2013, 221) that is worked out over several research cycles and brought together in the thesis.

Finally, the rhizomatic research and writing process that moves between the three strands of autoethnography, alumni data, and theological reflection gives rise to the challenge how to represent it in a linear document, and also offers the solution. The image of a rhizomatic triple-helix captures the movement of three strands along the axis of linear flow of the thesis with heterogenous, decentralised connections between strands and multiple uses of key secondary sources.

The following figure shows the four components of my conceptual framework and their respective role in and contribution to the research. My forerunning commitment to prefiguring flourishing directs my teaching and research, and

generates the research problem. The ‘Transforming Practice’ model allows new voices to contribute to pedagogical development that is mindful of the needs and motivations of insider-outsiders. These voices are brought together and held in multiplicity as rhizomatic fragments.

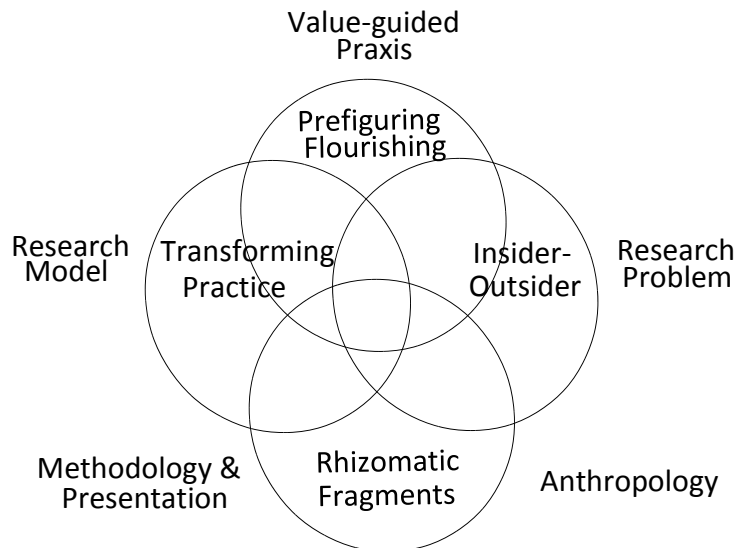


Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework

2.3 Research methods and tasks

This section argues that the chosen research methods and tasks contribute to the research aims in congruence with a ‘Transforming Practice’ approach that is guided by my commitment to flourishing. The first research aim, to develop student-focused pedagogical change, is pursued with insider AR in collaboration with former insiders. The AR process brings together the contributions of two distinct strands, namely the case study of *RCG*, and theological reflection on the case study in conversation with selected theology. The second research aim, to deconstruct and reconstruct my professional identity, is followed in the autoethnographic Fragments, and developed in their conversation with the outcomes of the *RCG* case study. Furthermore, this section describes and justifies the research tasks, and argues for the usefulness of IPA for collaborative alumni data analysis and for the analysis of the Fragments. Finally, the thesis writing process, especially of the Fragments, is presented as an action movement in the AR process.

2.3.1 Action research

I have chosen an AR process in continuation of prior AR cycles to improve my teaching practice, beginning with my PGCHE in 2004. AR is popular in practice-based research that aims for transformation and change, including in the field of education (Noffke and Somekh 2009, 2; Herr and Anderson 2005, 19-21). Thus, it is suitable for the investigation of my research problem, which requires a reoriented pedagogical model and a reconstructed professional identity.

According to Reason and Bradbury's (2006, 1) working definition "[AR] is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities." My Literature Review (2009) concluded that the aims and methods of feminist AR are compatible with my commitment to human flourishing, and therefore suitable for this research. More specifically, it established that the research methods should be democratic, and liberating through conscientisation and empowerment (see also Griffiths 2009), both of which are supported by AR.

A kind of AR that satisfies the requirements for single-authorship of doctoral theses (Herr and Anderson 2005, 73f) and is achievable within the confines of my given situation, is insider AR in collaboration with alumni as former insiders (Herr and Anderson 2005, 36). I have already trialled this collaborative AR model successfully in previous reflective practice investigations (Benda et al. unpublished; Benda et al. 2010; Stuerzenhofecker 2008), which benefitted from the active contribution of students throughout the process.

Although the alumni data is *their* data, which I could not generate myself, the present AR process is not fully participatory (Fals Borda 2006), since the present research problem is only *mine* and not a *shared* concern. Although participatory AR

reflects my values better (see Literature Review 2009) than the chosen approach, cohorts' stake in a particular course unit ceases with the end of its duration. Hence, the chosen collaborative analysis (see below) is a contextually limited compromise to involve alumni as much as possible in the change process.

I generated the present research problem from my previous *pragmatic* (Johansson and Lindhult 2008) AR projects, which sought improvements of specific pedagogical interventions (Benda et al. unpublished; Benda et al. 2010; Stuerzenhofecker 2008). This kind of pragmatic AR for micromanagement has recently been popularised in pt through Cameron et al.'s (2010) 'theological AR' model. Conversely, the present project is *critical* AR (Johansson and Lindhult 2008), which aims for a deeper understanding of RCG in its long-term effects on learners and educator. The resulting transformed consciousness should help me to cultivate a greater aptitude for action *and* reflection, and thus to live out my values (Graham, E.L. 2013a, 154). The *critical* approach also enables the pursuit of my emancipation (Johansson and Lindhult 2008) from my negative self-identity as *accidental* educator in PT even though I have exited the Church. This strand examines my 'life history and personal [narrative] of individual growth around teaching strategies' in order to make my 'personal beliefs more congruent with [my] practices' (Noffke 2009, 11). At the same time, the AR process supports my aim to increase future learners' well-being (see Graham, E.L. 2013a) by enabling my "data-based decision making" (Herr and Anderson 2005, 18).

2.3.2 Interpretative phenomenological analysis

AR does not dictate a given set of research methods. Rather it offers a methodological orientation for selecting which methods are appropriate for a given problem and its context (Noffke 2009 21). Graham's 'Transforming Practice' model guides me towards an *interpretative* account of the sources and norms that shape alumni and educator action (see Graham, E.L. et al. 2005). I have chosen IPA, first, because I have prior experience of its usefulness in my previous collaborative AR (Benda et al. unpublished; Benda et al. 2010), by allowing all co-analysts to make a meaningful contribution without additional training. Their status as participants in

the investigated phenomenon, i.e. *RCG*, and their experience of reflective writing in *RCG* assignments is sufficient, and therefore makes the aims of the process achievable. Second, IPA's aim to elucidate how "particular experiential phenomena (...) have been understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context" (Smith et al. 2009, 29) allows me to work inductively without imposition of external norms to generate normative principles from the alumni perceptions of long-term learning outcomes of my teaching practice, and to construct a positive professional identity from the autoethnographic Fragments that trace my journey through theological education. Since IPA is essentially a method for inductive single case studies (ibid., 30-32), it is well suited to my reflection on *RCG*. The alumni reflections and the autoethnography provide the kind of data IPA has been developed for (Smith et al. 2009, 32-34), because they capture personal and context-specific meaning-making of a specific phenomenon, in this case perceptions of *RCG* and my self-construction of my journey through theological education.

2.3.3 Description of research tasks

In order to answer my two research questions – how the normative principles that emerge from *RCG* might be operationalised in order to contribute to PT in non-confessional HEIs with students of all faiths and none, and how to use critical incidents to deconstruct my journey in theological education, and to reconstruct my professional identity – I generated alumni and autoethnographic data. I describe in the following section how the data was collected and analysed.

- Alumni data gathering

The alumni data was generated between November 2012 and January 2013 by means of a web-based anonymous survey. The research question concerning the student perspective required more targeted, long-term data than is available in standard institutional course evaluations. Compared to interviews or focus groups, the web-based survey was an achievable method, because it was easy for me to design, and a free and quick way of reaching widely dispersed alumni, and of

instantly receiving responses that did not require transcription.

In order to give survey participants “the opportunity to tell their stories, and to speak freely and reflectively” (ibid., 56), ensuring anonymity seemed paramount. This was an effective strategy to elicit a range of appraisals including a very negative one. For the reason of anonymity I also excluded identification of gender. Over the years, the same pattern of majority female cohorts has prevailed to such an extent that any identified male respondents who also declared their year of study would have inevitably been known to me. This decision has precluded a gender-sensitive analysis. However, lack of personal information makes it impossible to analyse individual experiences in their full context anyway. Therefore, the current outcomes are a provisional baseline for stratified investigation in the future.

The initial invitation with the link to the web-based participant information sheet, the consent form, and the web-based survey was issued by the Alumni Office to 79 contactable alumni from the cohorts between the academic years 2005-06 and 2008-09 (a total of 120 students). The survey generated fifteen narrative responses to a series of open-ended questions (see Appendix I). To achieve the first aim of developing a student-focused model of non-confessional PT that is grounded in the notions of relevance and value (see 1.4 Research Aims), the survey questions focus on what is considered by students as significant in the long-term with the benefit of hindsight, what has ongoing value in the light of individuals’ personal and professional journeys post studies. The questions cover core aspects of learning and teaching, namely course content, assessment, and interactions with the educator and peers (see Joyce et al. 2009, 117).

Following the IPA framework, the questions were designed to “invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences” (ibid.). This was effectively supported by the survey set-up with unlimited input fields so that respondents could “develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length” (ibid.). In addition, the fifteen responses are sufficiently few to allow “detailed engagement with a small sample” (ibid). At the same time, they are numerous and varied enough for analysis to access “the chosen phenomenon from more than one perspective” (ibid).

An important aspect of the research concerns plurality of student experiences, and hence the question arises which alumni voices are missing from the data. While the alumni data is sufficiently varied to cover a range of positive and negative experiences, there is a tendency for respondents to be either still involved in education, including at the University of Manchester, and/or to be on a third sector/social justice trajectory. Both aspects suggest self-selection, which limits the conclusions that can be drawn. If the timeframe had allowed a second survey run, the invitation could have been targeted at alternative trajectories. In addition, with the necessary financial resources, it would have been possible to use an additional recruitment channel and also to offer material incentives for participation.

- Alumni data analysis

The initial survey invitation also offered participants the opportunity to collaborate with me on the data analysis. This collaborative process was intended to achieve my research aim of developing *student-focused* pedagogical design by involving alumni in the first step of generating normative principles from the data. Two volunteers from different cohorts came forward, Emma and Lucy, and met separately with me at my university office for the initial analysis, and later via Skype for member checking of my written records (Herr and Anderson 2005, 85). Both co-analysts had a generally positive experience of *RCG*, and are both educators with broadly a social justice agenda. The similarities in their outlook and my own restrict the analysis.

This aspect is also evident from the extent to which my own voice dominates the audio recordings of the analysis meetings. With hindsight, this could have been prevented by using an independent chair. At the same time, I recognise that having a conversation partner was crucial for me to voice my own understanding of the data. Also, I am mindful of the exclusion of my institutional peers from this process for practical reasons. Especially the initial plan to include my graduate teaching assistant as co-analyst could not be realised due to his own commitments.

The small sample of data did not lend itself to the use of computer-assisted

qualitative data analysis software for coding. Instead, the collaborative analysis followed the four steps of IPA in an iterative and inductive manner (Smith et al. 2009, 79-107):

1. Reading and re-reading

All co-analysts had access to the survey data before the initial meetings. Both meetings opened with a shared re-reading of the data for initial clarifications, and to put the data at the heart of the analysis (ibid., 82) rather than our own individual experiences.

2. Initial noting

All co-analysts individually prepared initial annotations of each survey response to highlight content that was significant to them, and what seemed particularly significant to the respondent (see Smith et al. 2009, 83). I used my own initial annotations to draft a preliminary patterning document through ranking of numeration (ibid., 98) of significant issues across different responses. The analysis meetings recorded our conceptual comments when we reflected on key issues in the light of our own experiences and the rest of the data. Unlike some IPA (ibid., 83), this research does not require deep investigation of semantic content (ibid., 84) since the aim is not to gain understanding of participants' *ways of expressing* their perception of long-term learning outcomes.

3. Developing emergent themes

The initial analysis resulted in the emergence of some common issues, contradictory responses, and divergence between survey responses (see ibid., 79). Thus it became clear very early on that the data did not allow for a totalising interpretation. After both meetings, I noted in two separate diagrams the different emerging themes.

4. Searching for connections across emergent themes

I organised my analysis meeting notes, the meeting recordings and the two diagrams of emergent themes to facilitate the establishment of connections across themes before comparing the diagrams to identify overlaps and differences. In

order to focus the analytical process on relevant themes and issues, I used the four sub-questions of my research question, namely how the normative principles might inform a reorientation of the model, aims, relevant curriculum and appropriate learning, teaching and assessment of non-confessional PT. This resulted in the identification of six 'super-ordinate' themes by process of abstraction (identifying patterns between themes) and subsumption (moving a theme to super-ordinate status) (ibid., 96). The super-ordinate themes provide the focus for the theological reflection.

Finally, in 2013-2014, I used several internal institutional, internal doctoral, and external disciplinary fora for member checking by outsider peers, which fed into further development of the writing/reflection phase. These opportunities also served to hear myself articulate interim findings, especially what was painful to articulate and therefore had special significance.

- Theological reflection

Unlike Cameron et al.'s (2010) theological AR, I have not used scripture in the process of the theological reflection presented in my fourth chapter, because it is not normative for my practice. In keeping with Graham's 'Transforming Practice' model, I developed the reciprocal critique and enrichment of practice and theology. The super-ordinate themes that emerged from the data are not sufficient to be operationalised in PT, because they are not constructive in themselves. They require triangulation with theological material to critique the alumni's heterogeneous needs, motivations and intentions before they can guide the pedagogical reorientation of non-confessional PT.

However, theology is not allowed to simply dictate what should be considered desirable for my practice, nor am I instrumentalising theology to merely prooftext my practice. In a reciprocal manner commensurate with the AR process (see Literature Review 2009; Herr and Anderson 2005, 84), the diverse and contradictory experiences inscribed in the themes and norms arising from the data analysis are challenging the desirability of aspects of theology by uncovering their exclusive and

damaging universalisms. At the same time, theology offers resources for the exploration of the deeper theological significance and meaning of the data as it expresses a range of lived experiences in all their limitations and contradictions. Hence, the ‘findings’ arrived at through the reciprocal critique are deeper theological understanding and more sophisticated questions for the renewal of practice (see Herr and Anderson 2005, 86).

- ‘Writing to learn’

The ‘writing out’ of the thesis, especially my identity re-formation that makes sense of my journey into ‘disaffiliation’ and non-conforming, has been a creative *action* phase in the AR process, and a political process of *inquiry* (Holly 2009, 271; see also Bold 2012, 165 and 175) that goes beyond the ‘writing down’ of already available results (see Bold 2012, 164). With the integration of autoethnography into the thesis, I am enacting the feminist dictum that the personal is political: I am using my reflection on my journey to expose several systemic issues in theological education and ecclesiology. This follows Ellis et al.’s (2011, paragraph 9, n.p.) understanding that “[autoethnographers] must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyse experience, but also must consider ways others may experience similar epiphanies; they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders.” I am thus resisting the danger of reflexivity in research becoming a mechanism for de-politicisation through individualised narcissism (see Burman 2006).

In other words, I have not written a ‘female confession’. Although my Fragments share with the confessional genre the intention of identity formation (Krondorfer 2010, 4), I am not seeking a public audience for what would otherwise only be known to myself (ibid., 2). As professional and personal development, *I am* my primary audience for my own identity formation by writing into consciousness what I do not know yet prior to writing. As a contribution to practice, I model a process that others can adopt for their own development.

[This section is developed further in two Fragments. The first demonstrates the process of 'writing to learn' as I write myself through an impasse in the research narrative that got stuck on my negative attitude towards the Church, including reformist feminist ecclesiology. While the Fragment does not mention 'heterotopia' (see chapter 4), this reflection on 'prefiguring' opened my mind to conceiving a different place that is not defined negatively in contrast to what it rejects.

The second Fragment is a meta-critique of my past uses of reflexivity, first as a problematic survival mechanism that kept me isolated and locked in the *status quo*, and then increasingly in exchange with others to tell a new story of myself to my self, culminating in my work with the alumni data in this thesis.]

Research Design Fragment 2: Writing for epiphany: what is my practice prefiguring?

I feel the risk in writing up this autoethnographic AR: will the teachable moment come for me when material from present and past converge in a new constellation that will let my learning happen? Will I spot it or will the insight be obscured from view? If I see it, will I be able to translate it into writing?

My trust is in the process, as Herr and Anderson (2005, 85) urge. Watching the insights as they happened over the past ten years in the reflective writing of my students, some minor and mechanical, some life-changing and frightfully deep, observing it so many times, gives me the confidence that it might happen in my reflection, too. But this format is more open, and more fragmented in its many parts, the process goes through several cycles.

I know that I am not a natural experimenter, that I need to have a good plan with a clear idea of likely outcomes before I am confident to move on to action. I read the whole recipe to the end before I start cooking. If I cannot grasp the process in my mind, then I doubt the quality of the instructions. But here, insights only emerge as the process unfolds. This takes me way out of my comfort zone. Where teachable moments happen.

I am thinking this as I read Heather Walton's (2014, 12) description of Lefebvre's thoughts on 'disalienation':

"Festivals are carnivalesque occasions that similarly present to us a world as it might be, for a 'moment'. Such moments are revelatory – like surrealist art they break through the banality that occludes vision. In tragedy, in festival and in other instances of intensity (both social and personal) conjunctions occur that pierce through taken-for-granted life and allow us to see in new ways. This epiphanic vision is described by Lefebvre in terms that are not unfamiliar to theologians. Like forms of realized eschatology, they unite past and future and enable us to believe in the realisation of a possibility."

The professional doctorate process as a realised eschatological festival where the transformed academic production of knowledge is already experienced. Or to put it into yet different terms: a prefiguration of that which one sets out to achieve. I take the term prefiguration from the work of Marianne Maeckelbergh, which I discovered just this week (email by Jackie Stacey to the Manchester Feminist Theory Network, 19 March 2014):

"Prefiguration involves experimentation with ways of enacting the principles being advocated by activist groups in the here and now. 'Prefigurative politics' collapses traditional distinctions between means and ends in political action, and focuses attention on the possibility of realising change in the present. As Marianne Maeckelbergh explains, "prefiguration holds the ends of political action to be equally important as the means, and has the intention (over time, or momentarily) to render them indistinguishable" (Maeckelbergh 2009, 88).

This echoes my pursuit of coherence of pedagogy and research process with my ideological framework (see Stuerzenhofecker 2015b). Prefiguration or realised eschatology is laughing in the face of TINA, "there is no alternative": yes there is, we are already doing it.

What is my research prefiguring in addition to identity formation for myself and the students? If it is prefiguring anything. I remember now that the answer was suggested a few years ago by a fellow doctoral researcher – the same person who

had deeply unsettled me many years before that in R&T's women-only Wiley Seminar by asking what I had to say constructively to the material I had just deconstructed, and I had nothing to say at all – she asked me what kind of Church I am seeking for myself. My answer is now: a communio sanctorum where I can feel safe; not Church reformed by a feminist ecclesiology that still holds fast to some recognisably traditional Christian practices and structures in order to gain sanction, but a fluid place where critique and dissent of Christian 'orthodoxies' and 'orthopraxes' have their rightful place. A place, which might not be a space, where a fully worked out alternative is neither reality nor necessarily the aim. Where confessions and denominations do not impose their exclusivities. Ecclesiologically queer, radically inclusive? Never mind the labels, in any case a 'gathering' of people from many backgrounds on the shared quest to pursue practices of justice and flourishing.

Is this the epiphany I have been writing for?



Research Design Fragment 3: From endless self-interrogation to reciprocal autoethnography for flourishing

Reflexivity is my first language, a constant inner monologue of endless self-interrogation. I put this down to two factors. First, my post-natal unsupported hearing impairment (see Reflective Practice 2011) made it easier for me to talk to myself rather than to others. In my inner monologues I found a safe space where I didn't have to strain to hear correctly, where I was not perpetually in danger of misunderstanding. The self as another in the place of external others. Second, as a co-addict living with an alcoholic parent I was socialised into constant mindfulness of my own behaviour and adaptation in response to another's unpredictability. Reflection-in-action as a survival mechanism in the face of an assumed unchangeable status quo.

Neither contexts of hearing impairment and domestic violence are positive and life-

affirming. The first locked me into monologic isolation, which cannot replace the relationship of interpersonal communication. The second left me with the burden of maintaining and repairing broken relationships. Consequently, I first appropriated reflexivity as a problematic 'survival' tool that actually prevented life-giving change. I have been able to leave this behind with the help of two interventions. First, cognitive analytical therapy (CAT) – itself a form of reflexivity – supported me to break the pattern of thinking ten steps ahead in order to prevent anticipated negative outcomes of interpersonal interactions. Second, assistive hearing technologies have enabled me to live more reciprocal relationship patterns. I recognise that I sought both interventions for reasons that are not straightforward self-care. I initially went for bereavement counselling, which turned into a fuller investigation of how my primary relationships had impacted on my lack of sense of self. I acquired hearing aids on urgent recommendation by my PGCE mentor who had observed that I was unable to facilitate open classroom discussions.

I have not abandoned reflexivity, like a broken tool, as this thesis testifies. I have re-appropriated it for the two movements of emancipation and of improvement, for the critical and for the pragmatic dimensions of AR, which both oscillate between the inner and the outer towards new insights and change. The PGCE programme's Schönian reflective practitioner model initiated me into a spiral mode of reflexion that moves on from any assumed starting point through the stage of change/improvement. This spiral mode is not locked into endless return to the same place, like the pattern of my reflexion and behaviour before CAT. Although I have suffered several relapses into circular self-interrogation during the thesis writing, both as a means of sabotaging progress, and out of anxiety that my writing will not be good enough, I have been able to pull back and move on thanks to external prompts.

Whether in a professional or personal context, my feminist training helps me to discern the difference between a systemically disabling context and my own ineffective interventions in an otherwise enabling context. The former calls for a critical investigation focusing outwards beyond my own role, and not taking on the burden of resolving the problem by adjusting my own behaviour. Conversely, the

latter calls for a pragmatic strategy, reflexively seeking to improve my practice.

In this project I have broken my mould of self-sufficient reflexion. I recognise that by telling me their story of my teaching, the alumni help me tell my own story. In the words of Adriana Cavarero (2000): “tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti” [you who are looking at me, you who are telling my story].

Until I left school I always had one best female friend with whom I endlessly exchanged stories of ourselves. But I always had a great sense of a chasm of not-being-fully-known. I always felt that since I could not fully tell myself to another and since they did not fully tell myself to me, we would not attain a true and full friendship. Now, I consider my unacknowledged disability as the perpetual elephant in the room, the one lens that was never used through which to tell my story. Like Cavarero’s Emilia (2000, 56), I was “perpetually retelling [my] story in stubborn desire for narration.”

I am using the alumni stories to help me tell my own story yet again through a different lens, and only the professional part of my story. But more than ‘merely’ professional, it is also the story of my religion and/or my spirituality. I have not interrogated that part of my story for many years, because I did not want to tell it as a story of being in the wilderness of utopos, no-place. In Parusieverzögerung, I waited until a positive story of being at home seemed possible. In this thesis, I have been writing myself towards this story, and now this constructive place has come into sight.

Unlike Emilia, I have not come to full reciprocity with the alumni. With most of them, it is a Kierkegaardian relationship of indirect one-way communication. With two of them, it is a shared investigation of a narrow question with limited space for reciprocal narration. All of them have contributed amazingly rich stories without which this project could not have happened. The process has been safe for me. I have built up my trust in others having something insightful to say about who I am.

✱

2.4 Conclusion

In order to achieve the two stated aims of student-focused pedagogical transformation and practitioner development, the research process has advanced through a combination of value-guided decisions and pragmatic responses to the limitations of context and available data. The expectation of AR to be cyclically responsive to emerging findings has supported this organically. While the inclusion of autoethnography has put a strain on the space available in the thesis, it is vital to the grounding of the research in my practice. It also advances the research itself by interrogating research decisions at the fundamental level of the researcher's subjectivity. This is put on hold in the following chapter, which focuses entirely on *RCG* and the alumni data.

“In my own teaching practice, I find myself constantly trying to read the class of which both myself and the students are members. I always come away from a class as if I have just come away from reading yet another intriguing chapter in an intriguing book.” (Terry Veling quoted in Roebben 2016, 238)

3. Case study

3.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the heart of the thesis and contains the case study of *RCG*. The objectives of the chapter are twofold. Firstly, I argue that the design and practices of *RCG* offer a useful starting point for normative pedagogical principles that respond to changing student profiles in non-confessional PT. I contextualise the alumni data in a description of relevant aspects of *RCG* that covers the course unit itself, student recruitment and progression as it relates to the studied cohorts. I also evaluate the motivation for the introduction of *RCG*'s forerunner within its academic and ecclesial context as relevant to the development of theological education that is of value and relevance to students of all faiths and none.

Secondly, I argue that the voices of alumni from a spectrum of religious-secular identifications are vital to the reorientation of pedagogical design in non-confessional PT. To this end, they offer their perceptions of long-term learning outcomes of my teaching practice in *RCG*. I present the results of the collaborative IPA of this primary evidence, and extract six super-ordinate themes. These serve in chapter 4 as the foundation for the generation of normative pedagogical principles. I also use the six themes for the reconstruction of my professional identity in chapter 5.

3.2 Description of Religion, Culture and Gender in context

3.2.1 Curriculum

Since the course design has been continuously evolving, it is necessary to offer a diachronic account of the curriculum. However, the aspect of curriculum *development* itself is not relevant to this thesis. The comparative table of the lectures and seminars for the studied cohorts (Appendix II) identifies the continuity of the majority of the course content, as well as material that has been moved, phased out or added. In spite of changes and updates over the four studied presentations, the core of the curriculum continuously covered critical approaches to the study of gender, and examples of gender roles and representations in wider society, and in Christian and Jewish communities. The latter were explored through the study of religious institutions and practices as well as scriptures and teachings, and included non-hegemonic and ecofeminist perspectives. The movement of material invoked the history of feminist theory and theology from Western hegemony to diversification and intersectionality. Over the studied presentations, I aimed to establish equal focus on women's and men's issues, and on Judaism and Christianity. For the studied cohorts, it is only from 2007-08 onwards that the curriculum consciously approximated parity between the study of Judaism and Christianity.

3.2.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

The studied period covers the acceleration in the systematic integration and progressive embedding of enquiry-based learning (EBL) with a strong peer-learning element from 2006-07, which was not consolidated until after the studied period. Since no conclusive alumni data is available for 2005-06, the following description refers mainly to the model from 2006-07. I present in the following the key features of the integrative classroom activities and assignments, namely student-led discussions (SDLs), an EBL assignment called the Guide, reflective-reflexive writing, and lectures. For details of the contribution of individual summative assignments to the overall portfolio mark see Appendix II. The significant aspect to highlight here is that the design prioritised individual work over group assignments. This contradicted the aim of encouraging peer learning, and had a negative effect on

student motivation for attainment in the latter (see Boud and Falchikov, 2007).

- The student-led discussions

The main opportunity for peer learning with a high level of knowledge construction was offered in enquiry-based SLDs. For the studied period, students elected to join a small group organised around a tutor-set secondary reading. The SLD model required the small group to facilitate the plenary discussion of a set of questions that they formulated themselves. In the studied period, the SLD was only formatively assessed through a dialogical process of facilitators' individual self-assessment and tutor response. The small contribution to the Portfolio mark, introduced in 2006-07, was only an incentive to comply with the self-assessment task but not a summative assessment of the SLD itself. In addition, all students were required to include reflection on all SLDs in their Learning Journal (LJ) (see below).

In order to better prepare students for this unfamiliar model, I collaborated from 2007-08 with staff at the University of Manchester's Centre of Excellence in Enquiry-based Learning on workshops in facilitation skills²⁹ and question-design³⁰. While the gradual consolidation of the EBL model and the later introduction of skills training did not yet allow all the studied cohorts to benefit fully, the emerging model already gave them more freedom to collaborate on the set texts in a way that was meaningful to them.³¹

- The Guide³²

Second, and linked to the SLDs, the Guide offers a further enquiry-based learning opportunity, which allows students to construct their own topic within one of five

²⁹ Based on the model of peer-assisted study sessions, see <http://www.pass.manchester.ac.uk/>.

³⁰ Students are introduced to Bloom's taxonomy of thinking skills with examples for each category taken from the lectures.

³¹ In the current model, the facilitators are required to identify and present real-life case studies, which are then examined by the whole class with the aid of the facilitators' set of questions. This process is mirrored in the Pamphlet/the Guide, and also in Area 3 of the LJ.

³² This assignment has undergone several name changes since its introduction in 2006-07 to clarify its remit; it was 'Pamphlet Proposal' in 2006-07, and 'Guide Proposal' from 2007-08 on.

broad areas: popular culture; religious institutions; sexuality; reproduction; and everyday life.³³

Like the SLD model, the Guide aims to inculcate in students an open-ended alternative to the dominant Humanities format of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. The explorations need to inform a specific professional audience about current issues at the intersection of religion, culture and gender.³⁴ Students are required to present impartially a dialogue between a range of theoretical and practice perspectives on a self-chosen real-life case study in a balanced manner without polemic and personal judgement.

- Reflective-reflexive writing

The structured³⁵ LJ³⁶ and the Reading Log³⁷ (RL) have become defining features of the course unit. Their aim is to facilitate close and personal engagement with topics and sources, critical reading and understanding, and progressive integration. For the studied cohorts, the LJ contains one entry per lecture and per seminar. Students choose the relevant questionnaire for one of three Areas of Focus, which requires either reflection on learning (Area 1), reflection on the impact of students' standpoint on their learning (Area 2), or analysis of anecdotal evidence in the light of studied theories (Area 3). All three Areas encourage students to make connections across topics and sources within and beyond the course unit. Students are explicitly required to include reflection on peer contributions to discussions as a core source on *a par* with tutor input and course readings. The 'Before the Course'

³³ See the public online archive of the highest scoring Guides at <http://rcgguides.weebly.com/>.

³⁴ This assessment model is now embedded within R&T as 'looking outwards' tasks aimed at the public. Their purpose is to develop graduate employability and 'social responsibility' as defined by the University of Manchester's 2020 Agenda (2012).

³⁵ After initially leaving the format open, it was decided that a questionnaire is more appropriate at level 2, and makes assessment more transparent.

³⁶ The number of separate reflective tasks has been reduced in number and scope/word count in compliance with institutional dictates for administrative ease and parity of assessment tasks. The latter takes the form of a maximum word count for summative assessment tasks applicable to all of the administrative unit's courses. At level 2 the maximum word count is 6,000. I consider this a restrictive and pedagogically weak framework that disregards discipline and task specifics.

³⁷ From 2013-14, the RL has been integrated into the LJ in a severely reduced form to comply with the maximum word count.

and 'After the Course' logs frame students' learning journeys.

The RL covers all compulsory readings³⁸, and uses a questionnaire that guides the critical analysis of secondary literature. In addition, it requires students to make their own connections to other readings and sources they know, and to respond to the reading more personally by raising their own questions that might become a future research agenda.

The formative feedback for the LJ and the SLDs is a written dialogue between student and educator. The aim is to engage students actively in order to achieve effective work on unfamiliar tasks.

- Lectures

The two hour-long lectures per week provide the stimulus for the LJ, offer potential material for the Guide and SLDs, and model the SLD process by combining tutor input with classroom discussion of facilitator-set questions. The latter use the think-pair-share technique to build up individuals' confidence, to give them time to develop their response, and to interact directly with peers. Each lecture offers material for all three Areas of Focus in the LJ and thus enables students to choose which Area to use in individual LJ entries.

- Exam

The cohorts of 2005-06 and 2006-07 sat an exam, which I first reduced in contribution to the overall mark, and then removed altogether (see Appendix II). The exam paper covered a range of theoretical approaches to the critical study of religion, culture and gender. Its disconnection from practice was at odds with enquiry-based learning triggered by real-life case studies. In addition, the exam format's requirement of mastery of given knowledge was antithetical to the open-ended, self-directed and existential dynamic of all the other assignments (see Stuerzenhofecker, 2007).

³⁸ This is made up of twelve readings related to the lectures and two readings for the SLDs.

3.2.3 Recruitment and progression

As already mentioned in the Introduction, *RCG* recruits students from all BA programmes in R&T and from other BA programmes within the Faculty of Humanities. I have not collected specific demographic data regarding students' sex, religious affiliation and sexual orientation that could be correlated with recruitment patterns, and prior affinities with the course curriculum. However, my ongoing informal observations suggest that this would be highly informative for the study of advocacy courses' reach beyond 'preaching to the converted'. This links to another informal observation of a recurrent pattern in some students' course unit selections to construct their own 'issues-based' degree programme that includes *RCG* and similar course units.

3.2.4 The development of *RCG* within R&T

I sketch out briefly the pre-history of *RCG* for an understanding of the factors that initially led to the addition of this new strand to the teaching portfolio. The Faculty of Theology and its successors have been offering opportunities for the focused study of gender and Christianity since 1985. The previous year, Anthony Dyson (1984) had published a strongly worded call for public recognition of the vital contribution of feminist theology to the reform of the Church of England³⁹. Under his leadership, Myrtle Langley⁴⁰ and Heather Walton⁴¹ developed the first reading

³⁹ Dyson focused his editorial 'Repentance and the Synod's Task' in *The Modern Churchman* (1984, 1f.) on women's ordination in the Church of England: "In fact movements for the ordination of women have been formidably polite and strenuously rational. They have most chosen not to proceed under the banner of feminism in case ordinary churchpeople might be alienated. (...) Maybe this has been a mistake. For it has obscured what feminist analysis has to teach us about patterns and mechanisms of oppression and domination. For the plain truth of the matter is that women have experienced, whether they realise it or not, profound and continuing oppression in the Church of England – oppression by men, by other women, by liturgy, by preaching, by uniforms, etc."

⁴⁰ Myrtle Langley is listed in the Handbook of the Faculty of Theology, 1985-86 as honorary lecturer in Social and Pastoral Theology. My information that she was involved in the feminist theology course unit comes from an interview with Heather Walton on 12 June 2012.

⁴¹ The minutes of the Departmental Board of Theological Studies for 9 October 1985 record the appointment of "Miss Heather Walton" as honorary research assistant "to do a small amount of teaching in the area of feminist theology".

course in feminist theology for independent study (Walton, interview 12/06/2012). Walton (ibid.) highlights the pioneer work that was required for putting together feminist study options in the mid-1980s in the absence of comprehensive textbooks. Later, it took the form of the course unit *Women, Men and Christian Theology*, which was available at undergraduate, diploma and master's levels. The Departmental Handbook 1993/94 carried the noteworthy 'disclaimer' that the course unit was open to women *and* men. The interdisciplinary curriculum covered the critique of Christian theology by secular and Christian feminism, and feminist theology's own contribution to theological construction. This course unit was eventually superseded by Elaine Graham's *RCG*.

Prompting the introduction of feminist theological teaching at Manchester were intense debates and activism addressing women's issues in the churches. The inter-denominational Christian Women's Information and Resource Service was trying to build networks and share information since its inception in 1979. This had followed the vote against women's ordination by the Church of England's House of Clergy in the previous year. Pope Paul VI had issued the encyclical *Inter Insigniores* in 1976, two years before the Church of England vote. Roman Catholic feminists had worked together internally on reform of women's position since 1984 in the Catholic Women's Network. Dyson spoke into this broader context in a way that makes the link between Church and academy: he saw a need for teaching feminist theology, if only to add more well-prepared voices to these ongoing debates (see Dyson, 1984, n.33).

This concern to support students to hone their skills in using the acquired "theological tools" to respond intelligently and appropriately to "a plural society" and to "intellectual challenges to the Christian position" (Preston 1972, 48) was already voiced by Dyson's predecessor Ronald Preston. He (ibid., 46) emphasised the need to engage theologically with "different spheres of human life", and to develop a constantly evolving theology of culture. Again, this is mirrored in Dyson's contextual, dialogical and inductive approach instead of "the traditional, deductive

curriculum of ‘dogmatic’ theology” (Graham, E.L. 1999, 25).⁴² It is evident that PT and associated teaching has a long tradition at Manchester of a deliberately wide-ranging scope beyond the ecclesial.

3.2.5 Conclusion

RCG is part of an informal, self-selected issues-based strand of R&T’s degree programme with a wide scope of theological study of contemporary society. Its EBL model continues R&T’s tradition of integrative learning, teaching and assessment but heightens the existential potential by encouraging learners to self-select topics and issues of their own interest. This brings to the fore how their stakes create potential conflict in peer-learning situations. Continuous reflective-reflexive writing supports this challenging learning process by helping learners to manage the potential impact of their own bias on their knowledge construction, and to examine critically the connection of the studied material to their own life worlds.

Regarding learners’ positionality vis-à-vis their curriculum, I consider the early efforts to establish feminist theology in R&T primarily as an *emic* enterprise by and for insiders of debates on gender issues in the Church. Although Dyson supported the expansion of the curriculum beyond clerical concerns to include the laity, he implicitly envisaged *Christian* students. This has shifted over time to increasing numbers of students of all faiths and none who are *etic* spectators of internal Christian debates. However, the *emic* position that all *RCG* participants hold is in the area of gender. The analysis of the alumni data in the next section enables a more complex interrogation of learners’ emic-etic positionality and its bearing on the value and relevance of *RCG* to students of all faiths and none.

3.3 Religion, Culture and Gender alumni data

⁴² His implementation of the Chicago model of training for urban ministry in collaboration with Donald Reeves in the early 1970s is a prime example. Their Urban Ministry Project sought to offer experiential learning in a range of social contexts including homelessness.

3.3.1 Introduction

The fifteen survey respondents and the two co-analysts have contributed extensive reflections on the long-term learning outcomes of *RCG*. The first part of this section aims to identify common themes in the data. To this end, I organise the findings of the collaborative IPA of the primary evidence in relation to the four research sub-questions under the headings *curriculum; learning, teaching and assessment; trajectories* and *aims of theological education*. I summarise under each heading a number of significant issues emerging from the survey, and illustrate them with quotations, and with further material from the collaborative analysis. The statistical outliers, contradictory experiences and different life stories highlight the fragmentary character of the data, and provide a glimpse into the diversity of *RCG* students, which the missing respondents probably would have expanded. Consequently, the data and analysis are not representative but indicative.

The second part of this section condenses the common themes further into six super-ordinate themes in order to provide the foundation for the generation of normative pedagogical principles in chapter 4, and for the reconstruction of my professional identity in chapter 5.

3.3.2 Curriculum: enduring significance of topics, theories and approaches

- ‘interesting’

All but one answer to the question why alumni had decided to register on *RCG* contain the word ‘interesting’ or equivalent expressions. Even the response that does not explicitly evaluate the course content in this way can be interpreted to use ‘interest’ as a criterion: “I thought it was going to link current topics regarding culture in the UK with attitudes to gender from a religious perspective” (Q3 R2). This response clarifies that what made the course unit ‘interesting’ to several respondents (Q3 R3, 4, 12, 15) was the study of contemporary real-life issues. Many referred to its ongoing contribution to their understanding of current affairs and social practices (Q4 R1, 4, 6, 10), which some of them have drawn on in their

subsequent studies (Q4 R7, 8, 9) and in their professional roles (Q4 R5, 9, 15). In addition, respondents mention the relevance to their own practice, and existing or emerging interests that coincided with the curriculum (Q3 R1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14). Emma (E1 23:37 – 23:54) made a telling comparison with other course units: “You can apply it to your life and the life of the people around you, that’s what I meant by interesting. So, it wasn’t a course which was about a man that lived 2000 years ago, you know.”

Some material stirred student interest through its perceived controversial character as evidenced in R12’s (Q4) detailed list: “Jewish ideas surrounding menstruation and the rape of Dinah, Superman as Jewish! How phallocratic religion can be and is, the stigmatisation of women, learnign [sic.] about how positive stereotypes of the male have been created and perpetuated by religion, such as the word testament being related to the testicles etc.” Similarly, Emma and another peer kept up a running gag about the omnipresence of “phallic representations” (E1, 51:51 – 51:59) for years that stemmed from this course unit. She (E1, 50:38 – 52:13) also recognised her ongoing fascination with “odd” Jewish practices, e.g. around menstruation, instead of e.g. Rosemary Radford Ruether’s writings. Lucy (L2, 38:31 – 39:12) suggested that autoethnography served to raise individuals’ awareness of the subjective nature of what they considered to be ‘other’ and why. Having done overseas fieldwork herself, she (L2, 42:21 – 44:10) had witnessed the exploitation of research subjects. We discussed the potential of vicarious experience, e.g. through film, to create memorable but ‘safe’ learning moments.

- ‘foundational’

All survey respondents affirmed that they had thought of the course unit since completing it (Q4). One respondent qualified this with: “I generally think quite a lot about most of the issues covered, even if at the time I’m not thinking about the course per se” (Q4 R4). Yet, it is the foundational aspect of the course unit’s theme that is considered as significant: “Religion, culture and gender are great big parts of everyday life. I often think that if I hadn’t studied the course, I would be much less

aware of these issues, or at least my understanding of them would be more superficial” (Q4 R10).

In addition, two responses recorded a direct effect on their personal development and practice: “It was at a pivotal time for me. I was 19 almost 20 and I felt I needed to think wider about my own religion, my gender and my culture. Let alone the wider context of where we lived” (Q4 R14). “When I had my children, I kept thinking of the sessions that covered gender identity, nature/nurture etc.” (Q4 R13).

Lucy (L1, 35:50 – 39:48, 50:20 – 50:53) emphasised the enduring value of the curriculum as foundational in several ways. She highlighted the course unit theme’s relevance to students’ life worlds, and that the inductive method enabled transfer of the academic tools and theories to other contexts, both within and beyond academia: “And this came at a time when I was getting involved in students union, [inaudible] understand more of the complexities of especially trans identity. And it just came at a time where actually academic understanding of the things I was realising in society was really useful and beneficial to kind of see it wasn’t just a society at the university that thought such things, it was quite well founded in academia” (L1 50:18 – 50:53).

- ‘religious literacy’

Most respondents recorded an increase in their knowledge and understanding of the studied religious traditions. What is striking is the link many respondents made to the course unit’s focus on the ways in which religious beliefs are guiding action (Q6 R1, 4, 10, 11, 12, 14; Q9 R1, 5, 12, 13). As Emma (E1, 45:54 – 45:56) expressed it, “you’ve got to be able to understand where people are coming from.” This reflects Eugene Gallagher’s (2009, 208) extension of Stephen Prothero’s concept of ‘religious literacy’, which “must involve not only a degree of mastery of basic information (...) but also some insight how people use that basic information to orient themselves in the world, express their individual and communal self-understanding, and give their lives direction and meaning.”

Emma emphasised that the studied material challenged her own and others' prejudices, and helped them to develop empathy with alien perspectives. She recalled the experience of her own insider perspective conflicting with a Carmelite nun who she interviewed for her Guide: "You've got all these stereotypes about nuns, and isn't it weird that she had to sit behind steel and I couldn't even speak to her properly. And she was just the most lovely, normal person. (...) Hearing her, I still remember it so vividly, how fine she is with the gender roles in the Catholic Church and how much she believes in them (...) I still go to Mass but I've always been quite critical, and I've not been able to get that, I still can't understand, like, the different gender roles" (E1, 30:00 – 31:53).

R4's response (Q6) indicates that studying religious practices ethically (Q7 R4) might also take on personal significance: "[The course unit] has made me more keen to take time to understand Christian and Jewish practices and beliefs, and to appreciate the benefits that these can bring to practical living." While R4 professed that "I can't think of one particular way in which my life has changed" (Q8 R4), there is a clear statement that developing empathy is in itself change: "I'd say that [the course unit] has helped me to view situations and people differently and to have more patience" (Q7 R4).

3.3.3 Learning, teaching and assessment: contribution to life-long learning processes

Respondents credited the course unit with development of their skills in critical analysis of texts and contexts (Q7 R5, 7, 14; Q12 R4, 9), learning to learn (Q4 R14; Q9 R4; Q12 R4), and the development of their own arguments and reflective-reflexive thinking (Q4 R7, 10, 14; Q7 R7; Q9 R11; Q12 R6, 10, 11, 14).

- Assessment

It is noticeable that attribution of these positive outcomes to the portfolio is limited, and specifically the Guide is referred to only once (Q12 R7). The assessment method polarised the survey responses dramatically. At one end of the spectrum,

R13 was initially attracted to the course unit due to the portfolio (Q3), and reported its ongoing benefits for their long-term learning (Q11 R13) and subsequent studies (Q12 R13). Three respondents (Q12 R10, 11, 6) appreciated the assignments' requirement of reflexivity. As R10 (Q12) put it: "The assessments challenged me, they forced me to look at issues that I didn't really want to look at (both within the religious community that I was brought up in and within myself). That, in itself, was quite transformative." Conversely, R2 focused their strong dissatisfaction with the course unit as a whole on the assessment method and a perceived lack of support from staff to achieve a higher grade (Q4, Q9, Q12). R15 (Q12) stated that the RL was the worst task of their whole degree programme.

However, Emma emphasised how much the course unit's assessment model has influenced her own design of teaching A-level students, which includes reading logs and reflection (E1, 1:09:42 – 1:10:20). She compared the open-ended assignments on *RCG* and similar course units to what she called "old-school theology", which required students to "regurgitate" given material in a set way. She felt that this was inappropriate to the study of contemporary issues, which rarely produces right or wrong answers. We discussed our respective observations that some students prefer predictable, reproductive assignments for assurance of the desired outcome, whereas others see these as an unconstructive straightjacket on their own thinking.

- Peer learning

While two respondents recorded that peers did not contribute to their long-term learning (Q10 R2, 11), several respondents identified interactions with peers in the form of 'alterity' as particularly significant for their development of critical thinking, to broaden their own perspectives, and to gain new insights (Q10 R1, 4, 6, 9, 12). Several responses by R4 develop the theme of a lasting attention to "situations and people" (Q7) instead of abstract ideas and their sources in the study of religions. R4 singled out the SLDs as motivating enrolment (Q4), and subsequently peer learning as having contributed "a massive amount" (Q10 R4) to learning about and from different perspectives. R4 (*ibid.*) indicated a process of recognising classroom

participants as having complex life stories, “their own bias, interpretation and reasons” that are worth engagement. Similarly, Lucy recalled the value of having a discussion partner with very different opinions as a foil to sharpen her own reflection (L1, 58:52 – 59:55). She mentioned two factors for effective peer learning, namely a good relationship, and sufficient preparation, the latter being linked to overall workload (L1 59:56 – 1:00:07).

Emma (E1, 3:25 – 3:40) highlighted the significance of memorable personalities and personal stories for her learning, and how the learning and teaching model facilitated this: “I can’t imagine in another subject for someone to be able to start talking about those issues, you know, so openly in front of a group of people that she doesn’t really know.” Lucy (L2, 6:20 – 6:38) corroborated this: “The really interesting thing is I do remember this course as being one where we did have more debate and discussion than in most other subjects.” Emma (E1, 4:42 – 4:50) speculated about the subjectivity and unpredictability of what might become memorable: “Was there anything that shocked people that I’ve talked about? I suppose you don’t know, do you, because it’s their experience and not mine.”

- Classroom interaction

R4 stated that they realised during RCG “the importance of student-teacher dialogue in learning” (Q11 R4), which could be a reference to the *dialogical* written feedback process. Lucy’s reflection on her own emulation of the course unit’s pedagogical model also highlighted the significance of classroom discussions and reflexivity for “the development of relationships with the people you are teaching” (L1, 1:12:20-1:12:26).

As an example of a perceived dysfunction of educator-learner and peer interaction, R2 (Q11) recorded that the educator made “[n]o contribution” to their long term learning, and that “support was non existent [sic.]”. R2 perceived that this led to a poor grade (Q4 R2). Peers are also not given credit for contributing to R2’s learning (Q10 R2). Instead, R2 attributed their learning solely to “[t]he recommended books and the work I completed” (Q6 R2).

Two respondents (Q10 R3, 15) identified dysfunctional group dynamics in the 2006-07 cohort arising from incompatible perspectives. R3 (Q10) reported that the hostile behaviour of peers “taught me to be careful who I talk to about feminism!!” R15 (Q10) highlighted the effect of dominant discourses on learning: “I was annoyed at the split between the 'religious' group and the 'feminist/homosexual' group. Both groups were derogatory to the other and I felt caught in the middle. I thought it ment [sic.] discussion was predictable.”

Since the co-analysts were from the cohorts of 2006-07 and 2007-08 we were able to analyse the experience of R15 and the potential effect of the new peer learning and facilitation workshops.⁴³ Lucy was adamant that the classroom had been a safe space for developing her emerging feminist agenda. She was very surprised that R15 was from her own cohort: “That’s interesting ‘cause that’s certainly not what I felt, but I was probably quite in the feminist homosexual group not realising that I was annoying people” (1:01:53 - 1:02:10). As a member of the following cohort who took the new peer learning workshops, Emma emphasised that she did not experience a dysfunctional split in the cohort.

3.3.4 Trajectories: contribution to future ambitions and personal development

Respondents’ occupational trajectories after graduation demonstrated the significance of my inquiry, since none of them had aspirations for religious ordination. Instead, there was a noticeable prevalence of teaching, public and third sector employment and volunteering, and further study and professional development. The university’s alumni data for R&T (Alumni Office, R&T 10 year business data) show that these sectors are representative for the subject area as a whole. Five respondents (Q2 R2, 5, 10, 14, 15) explicitly acknowledged their social justice or caring agenda.

I discussed with Lucy how to make sense – in the absence of sex-segregated data – of the correlation between the high numbers of women taking the course unit and

⁴³ See also Benda et al. (unpublished), Benda et al. (2010).

the prevalence of third sector and care work with a social justice agenda. Lucy pointed to a reinforcing cycle building on what she called students' "prior social identity": "I think there can't be enough said for the continuous socialisation of women into those agendas, which probably is reinforced through the courses that are picked. So you know I mean the courses that have women or gender in the title do tend to have more women or more people who are questioning sexuality" (L2, 24:12 – 24:58). In her own case, while she entered RCG with an interest in gender issues, she only considered running for the Students Union's Women's Officer position after taking the course unit, when she had developed a consciously feminist agenda (L2 25:48 – 26:36). This suggests a positive fit between some students' motivations for enrolment and their long-term learning outcomes.

Another example of deepening prior social identity and politicisation is R11, who has become a social worker in the public sector (Q1 R11). He (Q3 R11) stated as his motivation for enrolment that it "seemed like an interesting module as I'm a male and hadn't considered the question before." At the same time, he reflects elsewhere (Q7 R11) that the course unit did not make a long-term *difference* to his beliefs and attitudes, because "I have always had reverence for women in religion and this I guess was one of the main reasons for studying [RCG] in the first place." After studying RCG he is, however, "more critical" of the use of religious arguments for inequality (R11, Q8). A similar process of continuity of prior beliefs but with a deepening of understanding through study is also evident in five other responses (Q7 R1, 3, 6, 8, 12).

R10's responses are evidence that the growth in awareness of social justice issues (Q4, Q7 R10), which included the losing of faith (Q7 R10), and its outworking in action (Q1, Q2 R10), was not a smooth process. "Since [studying RCG] in my life, I have noticed that I am very good at deconstructing things but I lack faith" (Q7 R10). "I am scared of really committing to something if I can still find things about it that I don't like. I find it difficult to compromise my ideals. On the other hand, I mentioned that I work as a mentor for disabled students. I believe that my ability to think deeply and reflectively, developed during the course, really helps me in my work. Religious, cultural, and gender issues are important in the lives of many

university students, and I think it helps that I can understand and empathise with them in this way. I want to be able to support other people in their explorations of these issues, because I think it's really important - I am quite passionate about that actually.” (Q8 R10). While there is at present a lack of integration of what might be a matter of propositional truth, R10 seems deeply committed to value-guided social practice: “I would like to be healthy enough to contribute positively to the lives of other people through the work that I do” (Q2 R10).

3.3.5 Aims of theological education: perceived long-term learning outcomes

Finally, the question of the aims of theological education for students of all faiths and none is approached by drawing together fourteen respondents’ indication of high value placed on aspects of *RCG* that endured beyond the end of their studies. R2 did not record any positive long-term learning outcomes, and therefore their response does not yield desirable attributes at this point.

- Awareness-raising of contemporary real-life issues and encouraging ongoing engagement

Fourteen respondents placed high value on the course unit’s awareness-raising of contemporary real-life issues, which they considered of enduring relevance to their personal and professional lives, and in their engagement with society, culture and politics beyond the end of their studies (Q3 R4, 3; Q4 R1, 4, 6, 10, 13; Q6 R11, 15; Q7 R7, 5, 9, 12; Q9 R1, 5, 10, 12). R10 sums up representatively their most important learning outcome: “Religion, culture and gender aren't simple, polarised categories – they are complex and changing. So many people and so many communities of people are misunderstood because they are over-simplified” (Q9 R10). R5 (Q9) distinguished this from other approaches in the study of religions that foreground tradition.

That the life-nearness of *RCG* and the practice of transferring theoretical and analytical tools to different contexts had equipped their *ongoing* engagement with current issues was appreciated specifically by nine respondents (Q4 R1, 4, 10, 13;

Q6 R11; Q7 R5, 8, 12, 14; Q9 R1, 5, 6, 11). “Plus it seems like a very important question yet again with the Church of England recently voting in Synod not to allow women bishops yet” (Q6 R11). Three respondents recorded their desire for ongoing learning about curriculum-related issues (Q4 R8; Q6 R4; Q10 R4), and R9 (Q9) has become an RE teacher out of a desire to instil interest in religious studies in the next generation.

- Shifting emic-etic positions

Eleven respondents credited the course unit with encouraging and equipping their empathetic engagement through listening to and appreciating perspectives and contexts different from their own (Q4 R9; Q6 R4; Q7 R1, 4, 5, 13, 15; Q8 R4, 10; Q9 R6, 11, 15; Q10 R1, 4, 9, 10, 14, 12). However, most respondents stated that their own beliefs had not changed as a result. Yet, two respondents made a transition from etic to emic positions with ongoing consequences beyond the end of their studies. A strong statement of change in self-identification that directly impacted action was offered by R7: “I remember in an early lecture we were asked if we were feminists, I didn't answer yes at the beginning but by the end strongly identified as feminist” (Q7). This was the most important outcome “[b]ecause it has helped empower me to feel confident working and campaigning tirelessly for women's rights” (Q9). “[The course unit] was key to directing my career, academic and voluntary work to issues around gender” (Q8). Similarly, R12 took on board the course unit's advocacy approach: “I do believe that it made [me] more conscious of the negative imagery surrounding women and the positive imagery surrounding men and has helped to lessen my own gender biases because of this” (Q7). However, unlike R7, this respondent described limited consequences: “I would not say that the course has had any affect [sic.] on my positive actions (positive in the sense of actuality not morality) however due to my increased knowledge regarding pervasive negative stereotypes and their origins the course may well have stopped me behaving in a certain way or doing certain things” (Q8).

The reverse move from emic to etic was made by one respondent whose insider

position vis-à-vis their faith community became so destabilised that they disaffiliated: “I remember that the course uncovered deep-rooted aspects of the Christian faith that I couldn't relate to, or even strongly disagreed with. I felt that the more liberal Christian theologies were clutching at straws and that I couldn't be true to myself and stay within the Christian Church” (Q7 R10).

A small number of respondents (Q7 R6, 15; Q10 R3, 6, 15) highlighted that surfacing prejudice and disagreement could lead them into temporary and strategic allegiance with the ‘other’ side: “I am atheist but the way people behaved on the course made me feel quite annoyed. It made me more sympathetic to religious people” (Q7 R15). That the insider position itself is not entirely stable and unambiguous becomes tangible in Emma’s reflection on her defensive response when her own faith community was accused of systemic abuse of women⁴⁴, which she actually disapproved of: “Why am I feeling this urge to stick up for Catholicism?” (E1, 48:39 – 48: 44).

- Equipping reflective-reflexive engagement and development of future strategies

Ten respondents singled out reflective-reflexive thinking as having high and ongoing value to them (Q4 R10, 14; Q6 R2, 14; Q7 R1, 3, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14; Q8 R10, 11; Q9 R3, 7, 11, 12; Q10 R6). Lucy suggested that the responses themselves attested to its level of embeddedness, even where this was not explicitly stated (L1, 46:24 – 46:53, 48:30 – 48:31). R11 (Q9) valued reflexivity, because it prepared you “for the possibility that your own view may be wrong!” This aspect of revision is also emphasised by R14 (Q9): “For me the important thing is 'it isn't necessarily so'. That is to say with more confidence the readings and discussions allowed me to not just belief [sic.], but to be informed that the staus [sic.] quo is made up of so much mythology, superstition, tradition etc. that what we thing [sic.] of as gendered, or cultural and religious activities are only so until they are not.” Emma (E2, 2:00 –

⁴⁴ The specific context was a discussion of Peter Mullen’s film *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002), which depicts the incarceration and abuse of Irish women in a laundry run by a Roman Catholic order.

5:43) considered the course unit's open-endedness and lack of prescription as important for its long-term learning impact. She reflected that her own growing maturity had made her recognise life as more contingent than static and predictable, and thus shaped by continuous deconstruction and open-ended learning.

Fewer respondents credited the course unit with an impact on their development of future strategies for social change (Q7 R14; Q9 R7, 14; Q10 R7). R14 (Q7) stated that “[the course unit] has given me a vocabulary that I can use for my own discoveries as I go through life and try to digest, wrestle with and understand both a historically patriarchal world, and religion. As well as giving me the basic tools to plan for the future and how I think it could alter.”

R10 (Q8) made a different connection between their own reflexivity and action: “I believe that my ability to think deeply and reflectively, developed during the course, really helps me in my work [as a mentor for disabled students].” Lucy (L1, 30:15 – 30:30) regretted that apart from *RCG*, very few course units in R&T trained students in the movement from practice to theory to practice.

3.3.6 Excavation of ‘super-ordinate’ themes to generate normative principles

In this section, I consolidate the findings of the collaborative analysis of the alumni data into six ‘super-ordinate’ themes (Smith et al. 2009, 96f.) by a process of abstraction that identifies patterns between themes identified in the previous section, and by subsumption, which moves a theme to super-ordinate status. The aim of these ‘super-ordinate’ themes is to provide the focus for my theological reflection on the alumni perceptions of long-term learning outcomes in my next chapter. Each super-ordinate theme retains the diversity of alumni experiences in order to enable the generation of normative principles that respond to heterogeneous needs and aspirations.

The rationale for the sequential ordering of the super-ordinate themes is this: the first three themes emerged from direct responses to the survey question on

perceived long-term learning outcomes. The first theme is what alumni consider the most important thing they have taken away from *RCG*, and the second and third themes consider existential links between the course and learners. The remaining three themes cover perceived factors affecting learning. The fifth and sixth themes explore the learning activities, while the fourth theme links back to the third theme, because both address the course content. The figure below shows that all themes are interlinked in a number of ways.

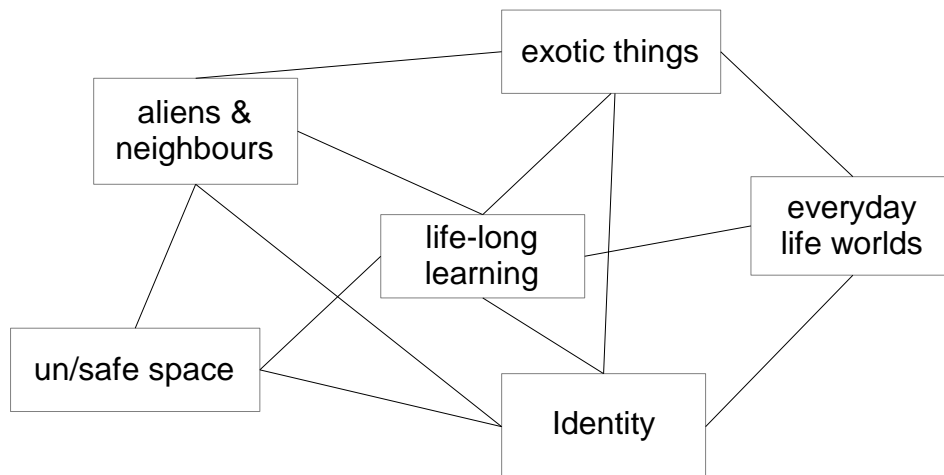


Figure 3.3.6: Super-ordinate themes 1

- Life-long learning

The majority of respondents named as the most important long-term learning outcome the enduring relevance of the course topics to current affairs, to their current job roles, and to their further studies. They also valued the way in which the academic theories and methods they learned to employ have given them useful tools for their ongoing social analysis (e.g. Q4 R7; Q5 R14). Yet, it is clear from many responses that learning does not necessarily and directly lead to revised opinions and actions. The course unit's inductive approach has affected some students' subsequent undergraduate and further studies, e.g. their choice of course units and dissertation topics (e.g. Q4 R8 and R9; Q6 R7; Q7 R14). Several are now using it in their own teaching (e.g. Q8 R9 and R15). What is striking is some respondents' lack of attribution of long-term learning outcomes directly to the assessment tasks.

However, the reflective-reflexive way in which the responses are written shows that the weekly practice of autoethnographic writing within a framework of open-ended learning activities can become embedded as a life-long tool for critical engagement with the world.

- Identity

A significant number of alumni reported a direct impact of their studies on their personal development and their identity formation. The topical nature of the course unit led to a selection process that – given the wide range of course units to choose from – brought together high numbers of students with prior interest in gender and social justice issues, albeit none on a pathway to religious ordination. However, survey responses do not reflect a simplistic and stable emic-etic split in any relevant positionality such as feminist – patriarchal or Christian/Jewish – non-religious, owing to the diversity of participants. Instead, position-crossing was reported as temporary and strategic (e.g. R15 on Q7, Q9, Q10), and incremental from emic to etic and vice versa (e.g. R4 on Q6, Q7, Q10; R7 on Q7; R10 on Q7, Q8, Q12). Where prior identity was held, some reported deepening convictions based on new knowledge and understanding. Several alumni reported that the conscious and reflexive encounter with ‘aliens’ had facilitated their process of identity (re-)formation. However, the experience of provisionality and fluidity of the self has not been welcomed as positive by all.

- Everyday life

All respondents highlighted the significance of the studied theme in contemporary life. Consequently, the course unit’s awareness-raising of relevant issues in their complexity was rated very highly, and learning was of enduring value beyond the course unit. Some alumni also highlighted that their studies connected directly to their own life worlds and made an enriching contribution. Conversely, some alumni acknowledged that the course unit’s inductive approach and the autoethnographic writing, which developed their own critical thinking, enabled them to establish a

personal connection even to issues and practices that were initially remote and alien to them. Many respondents claimed to have embraced the inductive approach in their professional and personal lives.

- Exotic things

Several responses highlighted the power of memorable learning moments, memorable ideas, and memorable individuals in face-to-face encounters with the curriculum. However, some of what alumni have cited as memorable, points to the danger of exoticism and Othering. Although the 'exotic' can be a catalyst for learning, it can also lead to ridicule and stereotyping (e.g. Q5 R12). However, many respondents have developed the necessary empathy and reflexivity to lower barriers between self and Other. The potential contribution of autoethnographic and open-ended evaluative assignments to embed these attitudes and habits is not widely acknowledged in the data.

- Un/safe space

Some of the alumni insisted that *RCG* provided a safe space to try out ideas that might change them, that might question their upbringing, the values and practices of their community, their own convictions and prejudices. All the assessment tasks required the evaluation of different perspectives without working towards a right answer. Some students considered this a safe space for risk-taking, others found this open-endedness unsettling and unsatisfactory. In addition, the deconstructive approach made some students question whether their community was still safe for them (e.g. R10). Finally, some did not contribute to classroom discussions, because they did not regard them as safe for themselves since others had vocally claimed that space, including the formation of clashing factions. This highlights the demand on the educator as sensitive facilitator not only of the classroom discussions but of all learning activities. What emerges is that this learning space was very fragile, and what made it safe for some made it unsafe for others.

- Aliens and neighbours

The effect of the learning spaces on individual participants was determined to a large degree by group dynamics, and appreciation for the classroom as a learning community was very mixed. Some participants emerged as ‘alien’ to each other, which captures dynamics of alienation that might or might not be overcome (e.g. Q10 R3). However, those who engaged as neighbours in community mentioned that peers’ otherness was a source of learning, because it offered a foil to offset their own perspective as specific and contextual, and thus enabled conscious reflexion (e.g. Q10 R1). In addition, continuous practice of evaluating different positions and experiences helped some to develop an empathetic disposition beyond their studies. Finally, the presence of some of the studied alien experiences as embodied in the classroom by other participants brought the material to life and thus made the encounter more memorable. As with ‘safety’, different alumni encountered ‘aliens’ as beneficial, inconsequential or obstructive to their learning.

3.4 Conclusion: Religion, Culture and Gender in continuity and change

Alumni’s overarching message is that *RCG* is an *equipping* course unit, first through its inductive study of contemporary issues that are close to students’ life worlds, and second through the reflective-reflexive learning opportunities across emic-etic positions. Following their studies of *RCG*, many alumni consider themselves to be prepared for well-informed intervention in plural society and public debate. These findings show that *RCG* has affinities with the tradition of Preston’s (1972) and Dyson’s (1984) outward looking, integrative theological education in a way that meets the needs and aspirations of students of all faiths and none.

Regarding the first finding, the data suggests that the value and relevance of *RCG* to students who are not on an ordination trajectory or members of the studied religious communities, is due to the wide scope of the theological study of a contentious contemporary social issue from a diverse range of perspectives – ecclesial as well as lay, Christian as well as other. The self-constructed EBL topics illustrate current student interests; instead of ordination or liturgy – the hallmarks

of second wave feminist practical theologies – *RCG* students explore popular culture, sexual orientation, gender violence and sexual abuse. This corresponds to the reported lasting relevance of learning to a wide range of social contexts, and its applicability in a number of professional and personal roles. It also indicates de-institutionalisation of Christian practice among the current undergraduate student generation. Additionally, activism might have played a significant role among students in the 1980s, but the current alumni data shows limited involvement in organised social movements, and generally limited impact of studies on action.

Secondly, the emic-etic aspect has shifted away from earlier emic motivations to offer feminist theology in response to ecclesial developments. Instead, *RCG* draws students into an interdisciplinary exploration of gender issues from the perspectives of religiously affiliated lay persons and society at large in addition to ecclesial practices and teachings. This multi-perspectival approach allows emic-etic positions to surface as complex and unstable. Their critical examination is supported by the open-ended Guide and the SLDs, because both require empathetic engagement across a range of diversities. The LJ also feeds into this process by encouraging learners to become aware of their own positionality and bias, and to examine them critically in the light of new learning from course materials and peers.

The six super-ordinate themes that I have generated from the alumni data represent different aspects of these two overarching findings, and retain a sense of what works and what is problematic for some students. As such, the super-ordinate themes constitute the foundation for achieving the first research aim to develop a student-focused pedagogical reorientation of PT but are not sufficient as normative principles for pedagogical design. They require further examination and critique by theological literature in order to be operationalised in non-confessional PT. This is explored in the following chapter 4.

With regards to the second research aim of deconstructing and reconstructing my professional identity in theological education, the super-ordinate themes focus my teaching practice under conceptual lenses through which I re-read my own journey in chapter 5. This indirect communication with participants in my teaching and

research practice significantly enhances the potential for my transformation by breaking out of the solipsistic isolation of private autoethnography.

4. Normative pedagogical principles for non-confessional Practical Theology

4.1 Introduction

I will argue in this chapter that a critical, reciprocal conversation between theological scholarship and alumni perceptions of the long-term learning outcomes of my teaching practice can augment the preceding six super-ordinate themes into normative pedagogical principles that are student-focused, yet also preserve the integrity of non-confessional PT. I first use theological concepts to critically interrogate the alumni's needs, motivations and intentions, and thus come to a deeper understanding of the data. I also show how the data uncovers exclusive and damaging universalisms in the theological concepts that require revision. I do not use scriptures in the theological reflection, because they are not normative for my practice.

In the second part of this chapter, I progress the outcomes of the theological reflection into normative pedagogical principles. I demonstrate how these principles inform my student-focused reorientation of the *model* of non-confessional PT and its *aim*, the relevant *curriculum*, and appropriate *learning, teaching and assessment*. I select existing resources in theological education in order to test these fundamental aspects of my research findings.

[The following Fragment explores the role of feminist theological literature as my alternative to the corporate Christian community I was progressively leaving.]

Theological Reflection Fragment 1: Feminist theological literature as spiritual community

My gradual emigration from corporate Church community has been accompanied by a gradual immigration into feminist theological literature. This virtual, literary community is my alternative to a corporate feminist pastoral and liturgical community. My last experience of corporate feminist theological community was in

1996-97 in R&T's women-only Wiley Seminar. It followed the feminist convention of sitting in a circle, sharing our work, and nurturing each other's progress. I have explored in 'Here in Two Beach' (2011) why for me the circular setup was an acoustic nightmare that precluded my full participation and flourishing. The Wiley Seminar was discontinued at some point. I have not joined similar gatherings, and I have not sought out feminist spiritual and theological networks online.

But I have read. Reading is a much more accessible, if not the mode of entering community for me.⁴⁵ It has been a safe because accessible space. Feminist literature in theology and beyond has functioned as a vicarious consciousness-raising group. In others' stories I have recognised the meaning of my own story (Cavarero 2000, 91), most recently in the context of this research: Anna Fisk (2014) is of my generation and hence shares much of my position vis-à-vis previous generations of feminist writers, Andrea Günter's (1996) account of the exodus stories of German women theologians alerts me that this is a systemic, not a personal issue as I previously thought, and Riet Bons-Storm's (1996) application of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's concept of the 'resident alien' to her story helps me to analyse my own past and present positions.

I also recognise my past receptive engagement with feminist theological literature as a resistance practice to my perceived marginalisation in the Church when the prospect of conventional ministry became precluded through my increasing engagement with feminist theological literature. A virtuous circle of disaffiliation, which I regard as an act of self-care that has allowed me to evade the symbolic violence the Church exercises over women, especially women ministers, and my responsabilisation for reform of the Church (see *Fragment: Conflict reform teaching*).

Jacqueline Kennelly (2014) argues that activism cannot be engaged vicariously via books. This perspective takes a normative view of participation and what constitutes 'action'. Since lack of accessibility for my hearing impairment created

⁴⁵ Since my master's dissertation on Kierkegaard's *Either-Or*, I have been drawn to his practice of indirect communication as a means of creating vicarious community. For Kierkegaard, it was not only or primarily reading but writing that provided his mode of access. If he had lived in our age, he would have been a most prolific blogger, no doubt.

*perceived and real barriers to my participation in face-to-face communities, activist and otherwise, I have sought other ways of following my desire for justice action by engaging with feminist academic communities of ‘thinking differently’. They are committed to inductive methods that stay in touch with ‘action’ as starting and end point of their theorising. I recognise that my future lies in increasing my contribution to the dispersed, predominantly literary community of feminist theologians by reflecting publicly on my practice. This is a way of nurturing my non-confessional religious identity extra ecclesiam where I find flourishing.*⁴⁶



4.2. Feminist theology in conversation with the super-ordinate themes

4.2.1 Introduction

In this section, I bring literature in feminist theology and philosophy of religion into conversation with the six super-ordinate themes (see diagram below) for the reciprocal critique and enrichment of practice and theology (see Herr and Anderson 2005, 84). The generation of normative pedagogical principles requires a theological understanding of the data as it expresses lived experience, while at the same time using the data to challenge the normativity of the theological concepts. I do not propose to use the literature as proof text for either validating alumni voices, or reshaping them, because this would mirror the normative power dynamics of scripture over experience found in variations of the pastoral cycle, such as found in Swinton and Mowat (2006), Cameron et al. (2010) and Osmer (2005). In my ‘Transforming Practice’ model, the role of theory is to critically interrogate the data in order to uncover hidden layers of meaning and thus to extend the inductive findings (see Frisby et al. 2009; Herr and Anderson 2005, 84). The outcome is a new

⁴⁶ Zeillinger (2013) offers the helpful rediscovery of the action-dimension of *ecclesia* to overcome exclusive attention to the institutional dimension. Samely (unpublished) observes how working in Jewish Studies functions to anchor their Jewish identity for some otherwise disaffiliated Jews. Watkins (2004) speaks of ‘intellectual discipleship’ as the emerging core of the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge; this is particularly relevant to my reflection as this is an exclusive space for Roman Catholic women.

kind of practical wisdom that responds constructively to changes in student profiles in PT without succumbing uncritically to student expectations and the accidental, fragmentary nature of the data. The *theological* reflection extends the pedagogical development beyond improvement of teaching technique into a deeper participation in *divine* life and practices in the world (see Graham, E.L. 2013a, 150). In the following, I address each of the six super-ordinate themes in turn. I present several theological concepts that speak to each theme and the related data, and I consider how they support, (re-)direct and challenge each other. Each reflection leads to a number of insights and generates further questions that contribute to the normative pedagogical principles and their operationalisation in the second part of this chapter. Although the theological reflection on the six themes is arranged in linear progression in the text, the following figure shows the rhizomatic connections between all themes. The figure is similar but different to the one in the previous chapter: life-long learning, the alumni's key learning outcome, has changed places with identity at the centre of the network. This reflects my emphasis on theological anthropology as the key aspect of my theological reflection on the purpose of my teaching.

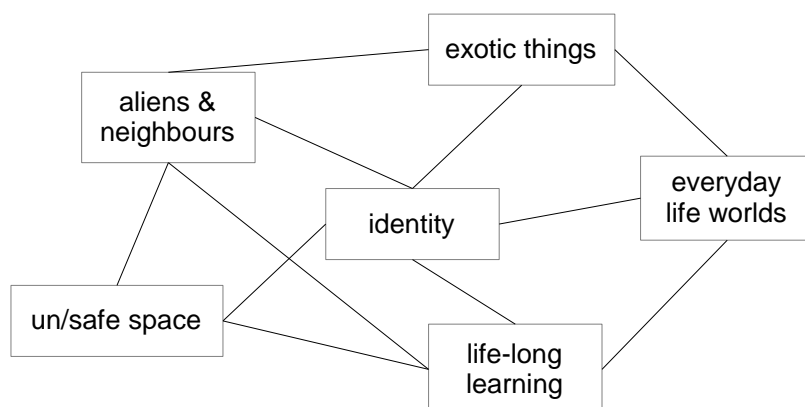


Figure 4.2.1: Super-ordinate themes 2

My choice of theological conversation partners does not aim to be comprehensive across a spectrum of relevant theological positions. I initially limited the material to a small number of mainly feminist theologians whose work has framed my doctoral

research and guided my pedagogy for many years. However, a number of gaps and problems in these sources, which have come to light through conversation with the alumni data, are addressed through inclusion of additional theological sources.

4.2.2 Life-long learning: promoting human flourishing and love of the world by 'thinking differently'

- Human flourishing and love of the world

The *life-long* aspect of learning that is highly valued by alumni communicates well with Grace Jantzen's concept of flourishing as an open-ended process of thriving and abundant growth, vigour and energy, productiveness, prosperity, success and good health (Jantzen 1995, 85). As I explain in my chapter 2, I aim to prefigure flourishing in all my teaching and research. Graham (2009, 10) describes flourishing as a model of absorption into "life in all its fullness". Furthermore, "[h]uman flourishing extends beyond the personal to the inter-and trans-personal dimensions, reflecting the spiritual and transcendental dimensions of human wellbeing" (Graham, E.L. 2011, 337).

The action orientation of the model of flourishing encourages learners to see the relevance of their lives, aspirations and careers to their studies and *vice versa*. What Graham (2009, 12) notes of Jantzen's commentary on her own discipline of philosophy of religion also applies to pt: "It is not about academic debate in some way abstracted from the concerns of everyday living, but knowledge generated in order to equip us for lives of virtue and wisdom."

Jantzen's theological anthropology offers an unreservedly positive appreciation of human beings "having natural inner capacity and dynamic, able to draw on inner resources" (Jantzen 1995, 87). An enabling environment with the right conditions and resources is required for this innate capacity to develop (*ibid.*, 85). The remainder of the conversation between theology and experience explores what these conditions and resources should be to enable learners' flourishing.

- Thinking differently

Jantzen postulates that a necessary process to promote human flourishing and love of the world is ‘thinking differently’ that takes problems seriously and invites alternatives (Jantzen 1998, 67). Its aim is to nurture “the habits of a guided and intentional life which seeks to shape itself towards the good and all that promotes human flourishing” (Graham, E.L. 2011, 336). Graham (2009, 4) highlights that thinking differently is not merely a cognitive exercise, but preparation for acting differently.

According to Jantzen (1998, 64), the dominant pedagogy in teaching philosophy of religion serves to maintain the status quo and to exclude/marginalise alternatives. Efforts to bring about change are caught in a vicious cycle of the old not having the capacity to image the new, but the need to begin deconstruction from within (Jantzen 1998, 61): whose interests are being served and who is excluded? Crucial ingredients in innovation are the mobilisation of desire and imagination (Jantzen 1998, 65): what else is possible? Jantzen (1998, 69) proposes that this approach requires the nurturing of sensitivity, attentiveness, well-trained intuition and discernment, creative imagination, and lateral as well as linear thinking.

As my data shows, although neither thinking differently nor acting differently are universal outcomes of *RCG*, there are several explicitly affirmative statements. The majority of respondents profess to continue to engage in Jantzen’s first stage of deconstructive social analysis that is nurtured through the continuous reflective-reflexive assignment. Considering the limited duration of twelve weeks, and the counter-cultural approach of sustained attentiveness versus the persistence of end-of-semester exam cramming, the data is encouraging.⁴⁷

Jantzen’s work highlights that what is not equally encouraged in my current curriculum and assignments is learners’ alternative visions to the *status quo*.

⁴⁷ A repeat survey should collect data on other courses studied by alumni, including their dissertation topic, in order to investigate possible links between progression from deconstruction to construction and third year study. Additionally, relevant data should also be collected from alumni who went on to postgraduate study.

Creative imagination and lateral thinking are limited to learners establishing their own connections across theory and practice, and between different topics and sources. This includes the evaluation of existing alternative proposals and practices. However, I realise now that none of the assignments reward students' *own* visionary thinking for change.

Jantzen's critique of the politics of the educational framework as maintenance of the *status quo* alerts me to the barriers to the individual educator's liberatory vision in HE. To what extent does the promotion of thinking differently to act differently – even where their content is not prescribed – break with institutionally set learning outcomes for a second year undergraduate course? However, my university's broader agenda (UoM 2012) to promote graduates' readiness to face pressing social, economic and environmental challenges offers an opening to expand opportunities for the second stage of thinking differently.

4.2.3 Identity: 'becoming divine' as fragment in relation⁴⁸

- Becoming divine

Jantzen has developed her understanding of identity formation for flourishing through the process of 'becoming divine', which is based on the work of Luce Irigaray. Becoming divine is the process that pulls the immanent towards the transcendent, where "the divine is inseparable from the physical universe" (Jantzen 1997, 271). For Jantzen, the divine horizon compels our contribution to human flourishing and active love of the world, the practice of justice in the here and now. Consequently, Jantzen's political theology of flourishing aims to promote values of life and creativity, diversity and mutuality, which are to be applied holistically and universally for the benefit of all creation. Jantzen's work needs to be understood as a radical alternative to what she calls pervasive 'necrophilia' in the Western imaginary as exemplified by Heidegger's definition of subjectivity via human

⁴⁸ This section draws on material published in Stuerzenhofecker (2015a).

mortality (Graham, E.L. 2009, 4f).

Selective enrolment in *RCG* results in cohorts with a high proportion of ‘the converted’, who subsequently move into education and third sector employment. This suggests that some learners are implicitly well aligned with Jantzen’s values, and their active nurture seems to be effective. But the presence of pain and separateness in the alumni data alerts me to the need for just pastoral practice in education that recognises barriers to ‘becoming divine *together*’ (Jantzen 1998, 243; emphasis added) that do not arise from a masculinist identity, and which require sensitive engagement to allow universal flourishing *in difference*. Jantzen’s competitive binary of masculinist-individualist/feminist-communitarian ignores other reasons for separatist tendencies that arise from real needs and are not driven by ideology, e.g. those of persons on the autistic spectrum, with mental health issues or (unsupported) communication impairments.

My institution’s disability support service recommends for such students to be exempt from peer learning and classroom discussion. While I embrace Jantzen’s insistence that becoming divine emphasises the ethical “as a response to the Other” (Jantzen 1998, 236), the data calls me to overcome her essentialist binary that fails to recognise some Other’s needs, whether they fit what is desirable in a feminist vision or not. If becoming divine is the process where embodiment and that of the highest value are inseparable, then specific and unique embodiments must be granted primacy to determine what is of the highest value. Creating separatist spaces strategically and temporarily is an accepted feminist practice for empowerment (see Theological Reflection Fragment 1), and thus there is already room for a feminist theory of mental health support. What do creativity and mutuality mean to e.g. learners with obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, or depression when their condition makes risk-taking, unpredictability, and face-to-face encounter so fraught that it would take them well beyond the constructive ‘out of the comfort zone’?

- Fragment

Becoming divine suggests an ongoing dynamic that is never completed in its striving for transcendence. I find helpful synergies in the late German practical theologian Henning Luther's⁴⁹ (1992, 160-182) work on the open-endedness of learning processes. Luther (ibid., 172-176) argues theologically that the incompleteness of becoming is the proper state of humans, while the seeking of completion and totality is sinful hubris. Following Kierkegaard (see ibid., 158f.), he considers human life (stories) as fragments that point beyond their current state backwards to their past with simultaneous and sequential dead ends and U-turns that contradict what went before, and forwards towards the future with the desire for coherence and closure, but always remaining open-ended (ibid., 168).

For Luther (1992, 177-179), learning and identity formation are not rightfully pursued if their aim is final, lasting completion and forced integration. Thus, personhood is not the end-state of a learning process that is considered successful *because* it has apparently come to an end-state. Consequently, he rejects Eric Erikson's sequential and hierarchical stages of development (ibid., 163-164).⁵⁰ In Luther's scheme, the educator's role is to facilitate the perpetual process of self-transcendence in reflexion. The aspect of initiating life-long learning about course-related issues is well evidenced in the data, and alumni acknowledge its benefits. However, Luther's pastoral attention to fluidity in personal development alerts me to learners' own anthropologies, especially those with a Christian, Jewish and Muslim background. To what extent does perpetual self-transcendence align but also conflict with their models of Christian discipleship, and Jewish and Muslim orthopraxis? Besides, the data shows that *RCG's* destabilising impact causes pain and disorientation.

Taking this seriously, Luther's work offers a response to Jantzen's question why Heidegger's acknowledgment of the fragmentary character of human life does "not translate into an ethic of recognising our fragility" (Graham, E.L. 2009, 5). However,

⁴⁹ The following references to Luther are based on my translation of the German original.

⁵⁰ Heinz Streib (1991; 1994) applies Luther's proposal to reject James Fowler's theory of faith development.

her proposal implies that becoming divine is benevolent, smooth, life-affirming without pain, loss, risk, anxiety. My data confirms the recognition of real lives in Luther's anthropology without nullifying the horizon of hope emphasised by Jantzen. Luther recognises that the experience of life as fragment is not without pain, e.g. with respect to the past as a 'story of loss' (Bieler 2014, 21). But pain stands in tension with desire that points to the potential for self-transcendence (ibid., 21f). Consequently, the hermeneutical task of pt is the communication of the experience of the world's fragility (Conrad 2014, 198f). How can I mobilise religious resources, including exemplary life stories that prefigure learners' own fluidity in hope and desire?

- Experience the Divine through identity-in-relation

Having examined the aspects of self-abandonment and provisionality, alterity remains as Graham's (2002, 207) third aspect of the Divine dimension of human experience and practice. Graham's (2002, 182-187) thoughts on identity-in-relation arise from her critique of Kathleen Fisher's (1989) model of feminist spiritual direction. Graham posits that "the Divine is experienced when we come to 'a deeper understanding of our own identity-in-relation'" (Graham, E.L. 2002, 206), and abandon claims to exclusive agency. The pastoral encounter is understood as revelation of the Divine as 'Other': "By going beyond – transcending – the margins of our own security and certainty, we encounter the Divine presence at the heart of otherness. (...) Such an experience of transcendence has the power to heal and inspire (...) The experience of God is one of wholeness, hope, resurrection and solidarity" (ibid., 187). This prospect inspires me to hold fast to peer learning in spite of the support required to make it constructive. When this succeeds, *RCG* prefigures the Divine dimension; when it does not succeed, the reflective assignments facilitate learning for future engagement. This is illustrated by R15's statement (Q7) that, although an atheist themselves, they were moved to empathy and solidarity with religious peers who were treated with hostility in the *RCG* classroom. As an example of a longer trajectory, R10 links their loss of commitment to their religious community to their new role as disability support worker with an

implication that orthodoxy has been replaced by orthopraxis in support of others. Graham (ibid., 186) appropriates from Fisher an emphasis on inclusion, connectedness, and mutuality, and offers the concept of ‘communitarian *phronesis*’ under the “ethical imperative towards communication, generosity and dialogue” (ibid., 206). Yet, Graham (ibid., 185) notes that Fisher shows no sense that the collective process could be “anything but benign and reciprocal” and “[t]hus it is assumed to be inherently healing and transformative, by simple virtue of disclosing formerly hidden and ignored experiences” (ibid., 183). Some of the alumni data, especially the raw emotion in statements by R2, and my own preference for vicarious community due to my hearing impairment, alert me that learning-with-others can throw up challenges of such enormity for some that they cannot realise their potential without adjustments. Instead of experiences of the Divine and transcendent, R2’s resentful statements of their lasting negative impression of myself and their peers seem to reflect practical, emotional and intellectual barriers. Disability support services in face-to-face tuition recommend exemption from small group work and alternative learning opportunities for learners on the autistic spectrum, and with anxiety disorders. What some experience negatively as isolation, and what feminism rejects as the exclusivity of a bounded self, is enabling seclusion for others. To what extent is the educator bound to prioritise students’ emotional well-being and their learning needs through flexibility in her emphasis on peer learning and autoethnography?

[The following Fragment illustrates further the potential threats to flourishing arising from identity-in-relation as I experience it during the writing of the thesis. It debunks feminist theological desire for unconditional positivity of relationality in contrast to assumed masculinist individualism as harmful universalism.]

Theological Reflection Fragment 2: The dark side of identity-in-relation

The progress of my thesis has been jeopardised for many months by my family

relations: illness, dependence, and tragedy calling on me for support and taking up my time, physical strength, and head space. The inevitability of being-in-relation has not been an unambiguously benign force recently. My academic work and my self have been under constant pressure to put others' needs and wants before my own. I have been supported through this period by disability support/coaching and academic mentoring, both of which offer a ring-fenced resource for focusing on my self: what is my identity-in-relation, what are the daily tasks of being-in-relation, is this sustainable without endangering my own flourishing? These support opportunities have prompted me to draw up my current input-output constellation that shows an imbalance to my own detriment.

Looking back, my hearing impairment has defined my identity-in-relation as deficitary. Striving for successful communication, a key aspect of being-in-relation, was predominantly only my struggle, very rarely a shared effort. More often than not, this struggle perpetuated the experience of exclusion, frustration and exhaustion. The reality of striving-for-relation was a stumbling block to flourishing, and threatening my self: having to work too hard to 'fit in' with my hearing peer groups, who – qua hearing – were not fully my peers. My experience tells me to expand Graham's (2002) binary in order to acknowledge a dark side of identity-in-relation.



- Self-in-relation

Identifying the limitations of identity-in-relation, I turn to Katharine Lassiter's (2015, 20) warning against feminist pastoral theology's reliance on identity frameworks, because they offer no guarantee for just care. Lassiter (ibid., 10) sees a danger in theological discourse mis/non-recognising subjectivity of persons outside the normative and maintaining social injustices (ibid., 6) if it does not start from experiences of marginalisation and oppression within ecclesial systems (ibid., 29). While feminist approaches claim to pay close attention to these experiences, my preceding confrontation of Jantzen and Graham with alumni data exposes

omissions of intersectionalities.

Lassiter urges that identity should not become the good in itself but a means to understanding barriers to flourishing, to discover new places of resilience, hope, metanoia, and transformation (ibid., 24). She proposes that more nuanced understandings of *self*-in-relation can serve to create conditions of just care (ibid., 25). I can indeed usefully examine R2 as a self-in-relation, but R2 does not construct themselves as identity-in-relation, rather as identity-in-seclusion. How can I support their becoming divine through a pedagogical practice of just care without losing sight of my feminist horizon?

4.2.4 Everyday life worlds as basis of moral reasoning

One of the most unanimous aspects of the data is the acknowledgement of the ongoing relevance of RCG's content in the inductive move from contemporary practice to theory. Jantzen argues repeatedly (Jantzen 1995, 95 and 100; 1998, 236; see also Graham, E.L. 2009, 12) that all moral reasoning needs to start from material reality rather than abstractions, because flourishing can only be achieved within the social nexus of this material reality: "A theology built on the model of flourishing, therefore, would be unable to ignore the physical and material realities of people, their bodiliness and their physical and psychological well-being" (Jantzen 1995, 95). To promote the right conditions for flourishing, Jantzen (1995, 100) advocates a political theology of advocacy and action "which confronted social and economic issues not as marginal theological interests but as central to theological thought."

Jantzen's vision for the relationship of the immanent and the transcendent is radically incarnational: "divinity – that which is most to be respected and valued – *means* mutuality, bodiliness, diversity and materiality" (Jantzen, 1997, 274). "Transcendence is not the opposite of immanence: indeed, immanence is the necessary condition of transcendence, since no one can achieve intelligence or creativity without the requisite physical complexity" (Jantzen, 1997, 276). Hence, what is considered to be of the highest value and embodiment are inseparable.

As I have argued above, by making lived experience the 'text' for learners' deconstruction, I prepare the ground for thinking differently in order to act differently. This grounding of theologising in everyday life worlds not only aligns well with the University of Manchester's (2012, 14-19) espoused agenda for its graduates' attributes to include the ability to confront pressing contemporary social and environmental challenges, it is also rated highly by alumni for personal development and employability. This gives added weight to Preston's (1972) and Dyson's (1983) plea for a re-orientation of Theology degree programmes towards PT (see section 4.1) with a view to external marketing and recruitment as well as internal justifications for Theology's *raison d'être* within non-confessional HE. However, I question in the following section whether any example of material reality is suitable for study to effect thinking differently in the pursuit of human flourishing and love of the world.

4.2.5 Exotic things: postcolonial contact zones of embodied otherness as transcendence

- Postcolonial: contact zone

Evidence of alumni's exoticisation of course material prompts me to pursue Jantzen's (e.g. 1992, 13) persistent question of who benefits and who suffers from my choices. Postcolonial theory offers "a reading strategy and discursive practice that seeks to unmask colonial epistemological frameworks (...) and interrogate stereotypical cultural representations" (Kwok 2005, 2) in my curriculum design and in learner engagement. The evidence of coloniser mentalities and practices suggests a one-sided approach to 'decolonising' RCG. Yet, Kwok Pui Lan's (2005) dialogical mode of postcolonial imagination alerts me to "the complicated process of cultural encounter between the colonizers and the colonized" (ibid., 41) and "the dilemmas and contradictions" (ibid., 38) of postcolonials' multiple identities. This requires not only the colonisers to decolonise their minds and practices but also the colonised to disengage from the colonial syndrome (ibid., 127). However, in my

context, the human objects of case studies cannot talk back to the interpreters unless they are embodied in the classroom. Does the mobilisation of embodied knowledge and experience mitigate the Othering process?

Yet, this raises the danger of abusing minority students as authentic “native informants” to help educate their hegemonic peers (Kwok, 2014). Due to the composition of diversities present in *RCG* as well as the range of topics and academic theories, who can function as native informant is fluid and complex: visualise the positionality of the elsewhere privileged heterosexual cis male in a majority female cohort with a vocal minority of queers. Insider-outsider positionality in a particular learning situation might be ascribed by others, temporary, and/or strategic. Is my facilitation sensitive enough to prevent the exploitation and alienation of native informants while encouraging peer learning?

Kwok (ibid., 99) argues that “reading together with others in community [can be beneficial] in order to challenge our own biases and investment in particular interpretive method. We have the challenge to turn the postcolonial ‘contact zones’ into places of mutual learning”. She (ibid., 43) borrows Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of the ‘contact zone’ as the place of encounter between dominant and subordinate groups, and between people with different and multiple identities. Pratt (2007, 7) defines contact zones as “social places where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination”. The data uncovers one cohort’s experience of such asymmetrical relations that led to one learner’s strategic alignment with another group (see Pratt 2007, 8). I recognise that the contact zone is not automatically benign and beneficial, and that the encounter should be framed to make explicit and work through participants’ subject positions in relation to others (see also Kwok 2014). Which recurring groups and relations can I identify in order to plan for more effective mutual learning?

Since not all diversities covered by case studies are embodied in my classroom, this leaves an “empty chair” (Kwok 2014) through the case studies’ passivity. While they give learners some vicarious access to communities and experiences they might not encounter otherwise, Kwok admonishes me to clarify how my classroom

management and assignment design mitigate against damaging Othering for the sake of memorable learning moments. For example, could postcolonial theory raise awareness of Othering processes in etic study? Could community placements provide the missing platform for mutual learning?

- Embodied otherness as transcendence

At a time when Europe experiences terrorist bombings and far-right violence, floods of refugees facing closed borders, and election successes of xenophobic parties and Brexit, it seems desperate to theologise encounters with otherness as encounters with transcendence, as Elaine Graham (2002) does. And yet this is precisely what helps me to hold fast to the imperatives of hope and obligation (ibid., 206). My classroom can foster disclosive encounters with alterity (ibid., 204) by affording them the highest value where “the human and immediate [is] the vehicle or sacrament for the transcendent and Divine” (ibid., 207). According to Graham (ibid.), the telos of pastoral practice “is to resist the foreclosure of absolute difference and disclose the experiences and voices of the ‘Others’ whose presence is a living reminder of that shared human nature”. Disclosive encounters with alterity should encourage empathy and solidarity, and open up enlarged horizons of understanding and commitment (ibid., 106) through engagement with a larger reality beyond the present and immediate (ibid., 206). Like Kwok (2005, 2014), Graham, E.L. (2002, 162) emphasises that pastoral practice should “foster models of being, acting and knowing which affirm and realize [the] qualities of positionality, provisionality, reflexivity and alterity”.

The data shows that some learners’ disclosive encounters with alterity have enlarged their horizons, made them aware of their own position, and led to reconsideration of their attitudes and behaviours. The assessment design already supports and rewards this; however, a detailed review of whether it is currently afforded the highest value seems called for.

Conversely, the data also evidences foreclosive encounters with alterity defined with Graham (2002, 9) as exclusive and reinforcing the boundary of self and Other,

imposing a unitary identity, and insisting on universalist and essentialist anthropologies. These occurrences challenge me to explore in what ways I might inadvertently foster them or not address them effectively, e.g. through a process of decolonisation.

Alternatively, the disclosure of hidden needs and experiences (Graham, E.L. 2002, 9) through disability support mechanisms, but not evidenced in the alumni data, suggests the inappropriateness of the binary of disclosure/foreclosure for learners with mental conditions linked to a bounded self and unitary identity in a way that is not subject to transformative learning. What might be the third category that acknowledges their special needs without abandoning a theology of solidarity and empathy?

4.2.6 Un/safe space: 'just hospitality' and recognition for flourishing within the social nexus

- Flourishing within social nexus

Following on from my ambivalent thoughts about the perception of identity-in-relation as potentially harmful or enriching, Jantzen (1995, 91) reminds me that flourishing is always rooted in an ecology of mutual dependence. She (1992) develops this insistence in rejection of competitive models of ethics based on atomistic individualism. "[P]ersonhood is not to be seen in terms of detached competing individuals, but in terms of a web of interrelationships. Our lived experience is that we become persons, and help others to become persons, through these interrelationships with one another which begin even before birth" (Jantzen 1992, 8).

At the time, Stephen Pattison (1992, 25) asked enthusiastically what the pedagogical implications of Jantzen's (1992) ethic of connectedness might be. More recently, Leona English (2008, 113) called for critical review of supposedly benign feminist principles of "inclusive, relational and connected knowing practices" to respond appropriately to learners' diverse experiences and needs. While Jantzen

(1992, 8) might be right that “it is misguided to see persons as in the first place private egos in competition with one another”, her construction of a binary of connection/competition misrecognises and/or ignores other experiences of personhood-in-relation.

The alumni data shows that relationship for flourishing should not default to direct, face-to-face contact, and when it takes place it requires very careful facilitation. Disability support services’ recommendation for some learners’ seclusion, e.g. for those on the autistic spectrum or suffering from anxiety, is in itself an instance of the social nexus at work. What supports particular learners’ flourishing becomes the super-criterion that liberates ‘inclusive’ strategies from potentially damaging feminist absolutes. Yet, does this mean that the feminist educator has to relinquish their ideal of “[fostering] the development of solidarity” and their concern for “the welfare of the community” (Jantzen 1992, 9)?

- Just hospitality

The theme of community is taken up by Letty Russell (2009) through the lens of ‘just hospitality’. This highlights the role of the educator as host in a space where difference and otherness can be explored safely, while at the same time modelling difference as a safeguard against domination through homogenisation (ibid., 54). Russell writes into the context of intentional Christian community whom she can call on to “share God’s welcome” (ibid., 62). In what ways can I better mobilise learners’ commitment to building learning community so that we can share more effectively the aims of just hospitality for “mutual welcome” (ibid., 83), “reciprocal relationship” (ibid., 84) and partnership working “with the one’s we call ‘other’” (ibid., 82)?

Russell aims for an approach to community building that does not exclude, silence or coerce those who are “different from ourselves” (ibid., 62). I recognise another way in which our contexts are different: while Russell admonishes a privileged hegemony to be more inclusive of the marginalised, in my advocacy classroom it is ‘the privileged’, ‘colonisers’ and ‘oppressors’ who are marginalised. To what extent

can I hold the tension between unconditional just hospitality and advocacy, and am I always willing to do so? Russell's concession that just hospitality needs to be practiced "so that we are more open to its blessing (ibid., 117)", and that it "might even come out of much struggle and pain (ibid., 118)" applies equally to learners and educator.

The data reveals learners' competition for claiming face-to-face space as safe for themselves. Russell acknowledges fear of "partnering with ones on the margin", sources being/becoming "unsafe", and desire for "safety" (ibid., 85), all of which is evidenced in my data. While it seems irresponsible to create an unsafe learning space, the data reveals transformative learning in response to what superficially seems failed interactions or experiences of "being brought up short" (Osmer 2008, 43). If Russell (2009, 123) is right that "[j]ust hospitality will not make us safe" but will lead to constructive risk-taking, then the educator's task is to be prepared for the likely unsafe moments and to support learners' reflexivity.

[The following Fragment explores the learning potential of unsafe moments as they happen in *RCG* with particular reference to a male student's engagement with gender issues and my response to his class contribution. It also continues my reflection on reciprocity in identity-construction.]

Theological Reflection Fragment 3: Missing Men⁵¹

*It was good to meet Martin*⁵² *again this week after several years since his graduation. He had been a lively participant in RCG, and my supervision of his third-year dissertation on gender and pedagogy extended not only his insight but also mine. I owe him my introduction to Bakhtin and heteroglossia.*

Martin is still looking for male role models that are not reinforcing the old damaging stereotypes or 'caricatures' as he calls them. He wants to keep up to date with theory in masculinities studies in order to inform his practice. He is involved in

⁵¹ This is a reference to Ganzevoort's (2011) paper on missing men in pt.

⁵² Not his real name.

designing and running an 'alternative' children's camp. While I am listening to his aspirations and desires I am keen to identify pointers how to realise these aspirations. I always emphasise in class that there isn't enough masculinities material available yet. I've also written this into a review of a book on the Church's approach to girls' development:

"But her hope 'that [girls] may enjoy abundant living as equal partners with boys and men' (p. 9) can only become reality when we also adopt a reformed approach to the socialising of boys. (...) I wonder if anyone could take this up and write the boys' companion to Phillips' urgent call for change." (Stuerzenhofecker 2013, 356)

Martin is not your stereotypical hegemonic male. He already embodies an alternative, more than he probably realises or gives himself credit for. But I understand this desire to reflect systematically on the self in conversation with others, including academic theory and the authors behind it. Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti (Cavarero 2000). And the desire to find ready-made resources that makes us experience that we do not have to do it all for ourselves.

Martin and I are having an ongoing conversation which started when he made an unbelievably (to me and some women in the room) misogynistic comment about gender issues in employment, which falls into his own category of 'caricature' masculinity. It still makes me cringe that I did not respond in the respectful and pedagogically sophisticated manner I aspire to. Instead, I outed it as an objectionable caricature. I responded from the heart as myself the feminist. It was a memorable teaching moment for both of us. Through Martin's daring opening of a private conversation about the incident, it became a memorable teaching moment in dialogue. I would undo it if I could but then, would this prevent the ensuing journey that Martin has been on to construct an alternative to being a caricature?

Years ago, we discussed the significance of being taken out of one's comfort zone for learning (see Benda et al. 2010). Norman Powell argued that it was not good teaching to make everything cosy. I myself have had significant insights after feeling offended by a remark about myself. So I am not chastising myself entirely for abandoning my professionalism for a moment with Martin.

This year more men than ever have enrolled on the course. How do I not put them off in the first week⁵³, how do I show them why 'we' need them. I hope to educate an ever-growing number of feminist men towards partnership.



- Recognition

To develop further my review of unconditional just hospitality in my classroom, I turn to Lassiter's (2015) study of the processes of recognition, misrecognition, and denial of recognition. She uses recognition as "a critical category of human experience which effects the movement toward a liberating interpersonal, social, theological, and pastoral space" (ibid., 30). She defines recognition as "the capacity, ability, and willingness to see another person as they are and as they hope to become" (ibid., 4) in order to nurture their growth and transformation. "As a social process, recognition is critical to create a more just society" (ibid.).

In educational contexts, recognition operates at both the interpersonal and the social levels. Alumni report perceptions of individuals' mis- or non-recognition by other participants and in relation to course content, and the negative effects this had on their self-determination and consequently on their participation in the classroom and in religious communities (see Lassiter, 2015, 26-27). How can I develop sustainable strategies of interpersonal recognition in the face of increasing cohorts but recurring learner types? How can I identify and respond constructively to strategic performance designed to receive the desired recognition to the extent of contortions becoming "intersubjective disfigurements of domination and submission" (ibid., 5)? Is selective denial of interpersonal recognition of hegemonic, privileged and oppressive positionality a legitimate strategy of social recognition in the practice of just hospitality?

⁵³ I am reviewing this Fragment in week 4: I have lost half the men without knowing their reasons.

4.2.7 Aliens and neighbours: fostering disclosive encounters with alterity as hermeneutic openness through recognition

- Right relationship

Like Russell, Denise Ackermann's (1998) demand for an ethic of right relationship in difference and otherness speaks into intentional Christian communities who are built around the notion of being (in) community. Even though this collective motivation does not apply in my context, what is useful is her starting point in the radical relatedness of human existence (ibid., 23) that she shares with Jantzen (1992; 1995; 1998), Graham, E.L. (2002) and Lassiter (2015). "For relationships to be right, loving and just they have to be mutual and reciprocal. (...) They can only be created out of mutual interdependence and they flourish only when both parties work on them" (Ackerman 1998, 18). "If not acting in relationship there is no hope for the building of community" (ibid., 19).

This is a sobering assessment of my educational context where learners have been socialised into processes of individual achievement, and peer learning is side-lined by pressure on individuals to achieve good degrees. While the data is disheartening, because it shows limited success to foster appreciation for and participation in peer learning, I am mindful of the very limited time we spend together, and of the extent to which my commitment to build community is counter-cultural. At the same time, Ackerman reminds me that any failure to realise community is not mine alone. She (ibid., 18) also alerts me to my own needs in reciprocal relationship with learners: the unequal power dynamics in the educational process that make me the initiator of relationship obscure my desire for mutuality. My collaborative educational research is one way of formalising this beyond *RCG*.

- Feminist pastoral theology of recognition and theo-praxis of encounter

Lassiter (2015, 157f.) helps me to connect my striving for a pedagogy for flourishing with theologising of inter* dialogue through her consideration of heterotopic spaces. I understand heterotopia with Foucault (1986, 23f) as a communal space of

alternate ordering, a non-hegemonic counter-site where my attempts at prefiguring can take place. However, the context of HE does not fit Lassiter's (ibid., 157) heterotopia as a space for collective power of resistance to assist building assertive movements: while many students in my gender-focused course are sympathetic to feminist goals, other ideologies are also present. It is thus a heterogeneous heterotopia.

Furthermore, some alumni's statements of growth and transformation disprove to some extent Lassiter's (ibid.) claim that heterotopia cannot be created for Others by authority. However, her insistence that heterotopia relies on praxis of encounter that bears witness to difference and possibility of recognition reaffirms my conclusion from Ackerman that my intentions for classroom processes only come to fruition through positive student participation. Does my assessment design reward peer engagement sufficiently to overcome atomistic behaviour?

Lassiter (ibid., 160f.) challenges me to an educational praxis of tactical encounter with students through 'roving listening' in order to offer recognition. Am I attentive enough to hear assertions even when they are silenced by the classroom's hegemonic discourse? Does my educational design recognise the assets of the range of selves-in-relation to build opportunities for transformation and growth? Following Lassiter's (ibid., 161) call for 'social critique', does my promotion of inquiry and relationships aim for the sharing of dreams, hopes and lament? This relates back to my discovery that my design for thinking differently does not clearly work towards visioning alternative futures.

- Hermeneutic of openness

Unlike the voluntary participation assumed in writing on interreligious dialogue (e.g. Moyaert 2011), *RCG* students do not sign up for inter* dialogue with peers but for advancing their individual degree attainment. Their motivation for active participation in peer learning has a significant impact on the way they participate. However, in spite of the different conditions, Moyaert's work offers useful resources.

She (2011, 265) recognises that an appropriate model of hospitality for interreligious dialogue needs to be fundamentally different from biblical hospitality that attends to the stranger in need: the religious other is not destitute but proud of the spiritual and moral wealth of their religious tradition. For dialogue to happen, participants need to practice 'hermeneutic openness' in a listening attitude of receptivity and questioning of self (ibid., 266).⁵⁴ This willingness to take seriously the other's otherness reflects the fragility and elusiveness of one's own identity (ibid., 263). Hermeneutic openness therefore sensitises to 'the strange' within and outside (ibid., 264), thereby encouraging the imagining of 'other possible worlds' (ibid., 268).

Moyaert (ibid., 276f.; see also Lassiter 2015, 157) makes explicit the tension between commitment to one's own position and openness to others, and the risk of dysfunctional dialogue as potentially unpleasant, disruptive and disturbing. "Heteronomy is difficult to bear, regardless of whether it comes from without or within (ibid., 283). Therefore, hermeneutic hospitality does not come naturally but is a calling (ibid., 296). Moyaert (ibid., 291) asserts that the tension between commitment and openness cannot be resolved but needs to be acknowledged, and the resulting unease accepted. Moreover, the hope for change that drives interreligious dialogue also supports the endurance of inherent tension and vulnerability (ibid., 299).

Moyaert's exploration of the risks and vulnerabilities arising in inter* dialogue remind me that I am asking a lot of students without giving them a choice. Underneath the focus on the low grade, is R2 resentful of the emotional scenario I have thrown them into? R10 expresses pain and a state of limbo at the loss of identity, but seems to accept it as an unavoidable development. R9 is grateful for the stimulus for transformation. To what extent am I offering effective, learner-centred resources to support *all* students' participation in inter* dialogue and their coping with tension and vulnerability?

⁵⁴ For a similar proposal from an ecofeminist perspective see Downie (2014).

4.2.8 'Transforming Practice' synthesis and conclusions

The preceding reflection and the following synthesis demonstrate the power of a genuine two-way conversation between practice and theory/theology. The triangulation of my aims, my design and learners' outcomes exposes significant points of convergence as well as misfit. Theology's contribution to the formulation of normative pedagogical principles lies in its insistence on processes and norms of building learning community and visioning alternative futures that are uncomfortable, challenging and not easily reconciled with alumni perceptions. It encourages me to be wary of a facile acquiescence to learner expectations and preferences, and it equips me to maintain and extend the integrity of my pedagogical and theological vision in future revision.

Conversely, the alumni data enables a focus on actual student needs by highlighting how the heterogeneous heterotopia deconstructs limiting normativities implicit in some of my feminist theo-pedagogical ideals. It facilitates the necessary "ontological shock" (Mullet quoted in Jantzen 1992, 13) to identify who benefits and who suffers in my classroom, which in turn is "a means to clarifying [my] vision" (Jantzen 1992, 14). My interconnectedness with learners becomes evident here: without their willingness to share their perceptions of my teaching, my efforts at renewed practice would be severely skewed by the limitations of my own observations. E.g. I would not have been aware of the negative experiences of R2 and R15, and consequently would not have been prompted to address the possible underlying issues.

By synthesising the theological reflection below in a number of provisional principles, the insights of both corrective and developmental strands of reflection contribute to the model proposed in the following section.

- Data challenging theology

Overcoming binaries by resolving conflicting norms to address (hidden) needs and open up learning opportunities

Fundamental issues arising from reflection on 'identity', 'exotic things' and 'un/safe

space' are binary constructions, absolutes and essentialisms, and the omission of intersectionalities that limit the benefits of feminist approaches. They lead to a failure to recognise the Other's potentialities and needs arising from their particularity, and distort the realities of struggle and pain. When universal flourishing is set as the highest value, then feminist vision needs to be flexible enough to dispense strategically and temporarily with its 'sacred cows' such as community, mutuality, and creativity to open up learning opportunities. Support mechanisms need to be designed not only for those who can access the hegemonic feminist learning opportunities, and alternative learning opportunities need to be made available.

Working towards communitarian phronesis to address the tension of advocacy in heterogeneous heterotopia

The reflection on learner engagement with 'everyday life' and 'aliens' in the 'un/safe space' of RCG highlights the reverse conditions between who and what is hegemonic and marginalised outside and inside this heterogeneous heterotopia. If the feminist principle of anti-hegemony is to be enacted and academic achievement is to be open to all learners, then a communitarian phronesis needs to grapple with the conflict inherent in this contact zone. Reflective writing has a key role to play in learning from (inevitable, possibly constructive?) dysfunctional encounters for future community building.

- Theology challenging praxis

Inclusive feminist pedagogy of recognition and just care

Beginning this section likewise with flourishing as the highest value that guides the design of enabling learning environments, theological reflection on 'identity' in 'un/safe space' uncovers a deep uncertainty how to reconcile feminist desirables with disabled learners' needs without creating a parallel classroom. No solution has presented itself other than taking this forward in future pragmatic AR to investigate how a social model of disability can be integrated with feminist theological

pedagogy.

Facilitating risky learning in and from heterogeneous heterotopia for decolonising and prefiguring vulnerability

Theological reflection on the interaction of ‘aliens’ and ‘exotic things’ in the ‘un/safe space’ names *RCG*’s aim to prefigure constructive collaboration across differences and self-interrogation for decolonising as heterotopic within the dominant educational paradigm of compliance and competition. *Qua* heterotopia, it requires carefully designed incentives and support to enable learner buy-in in the face of potential academic failure and personal struggle.

Nurturing desire/hope/imagination for alternative futures in conversation with religious traditions

Theological resources push my reflection on ‘life-long learning’ about ‘everyday life’ and open-ended development of ‘identity’ to recognise my own reluctance to face the challenge of alternative visioning. The discovery of the implications in my pedagogical design is sobering but also creates the opportunity for my own spiritual growth. Following on from the recognition of risks and barriers in the previous section, the mobilisation of religious resources for future visioning and *metanoia* seems constructive for religious learners’ development and to counter (secular?) representations of religious traditions as exclusively static.

The preceding demonstrates the richness of each super-ordinate theme but at the same time the limited space for their deep exploration in this thesis. In keeping with the open-endedness of the AR process, the theological reflections on each theme are indicative starting points for further work in the future. However, the outcomes are sufficient to inform the formulation of normative pedagogical principles in the following section, and for the proposal of a student-focused model of non-confessional PT.

4.3 A student-focused model for Practical Theology in non-confessional higher education institutions

4.3.1 Introduction

This section's task is to address the research question how the normative principles that emerge from *RCG* might be operationalised in order to contribute to PT in non-confessional HEIs with students of all faiths and none. To achieve this, I lift the insights gained from the six alumni themes and from the theological reflection out of their specific context of a unique course unit, and I reformulate them as general pedagogical principles. These serve as the basis for my student-focused reorientation of firstly the *model* of non-confessional PT, secondly its *aim*, thirdly the relevant *curriculum*, and fourthly appropriate *learning, teaching and assessment*.

In the following, these four sub-aspects are addressed in separate sections. Each section contains first a summary of key findings of the preceding critical conversation between theology and alumni perceptions of long-term learning outcomes of my teaching practice in *RCG*. The six super-ordinate themes – life-long learning, identity, everyday life, exotic things, un/safe space, and aliens and neighbours – and the conceptual outcomes of the theological reflection on the themes are highlighted in italics. Secondly, I formulate normative macro and micro principles for non-confessional PT with students of all faiths and none. By macro principles I mean the foundational framework, whereas micro principles are concerned with specific issues that affect the effectiveness of the framework. Thirdly, I synthesise these into each section's sub-aspect, i.e. the model and aims of non-confessional PT, and relevant curriculum and learning, teaching and assessment. Each section closes with a short critical discussion of the proposal that locates it in literature on mainstream and theological education. While the available space does not allow exhaustive critique, I indicate how existing resources in the scholarship of learning and teaching can be utilized to develop each aspect of my

proposal through further research.

4.3.2 A student-focused model for non-confessional Practical Theology: pragmatic public theology for flourishing

Students' *life-long learning* is supported through the ongoing relevance of what students consider to be *interesting* course content that links to the social context of their *everyday life*, and through the utility of *foundational* theoretical and methodological tools in their personal and professional roles. This should be directed towards *flourishing within the social nexus of material reality* as the highest value. The clarification and/or (re-)formation of students' *identities* is supported through the facilitation of *risky learning* in the *heterogeneous heterotopia* of a *reciprocal learning community*. This requires careful working towards *reflective-reflexive, communitarian phronesis* that mitigates the development of hegemony and marginalisation (see also Slee 2015, 23), and that sustains this uncomfortable and alienating classroom (see also Bennett 2006, 333) as a *un/safe space* where transformation can take place. *Memorable teaching moments* should be protected from the *exoticising* of informants and case material by *decolonising* students' minds through encouragement of empathy and reflexivity.

This generates the following set of macro and micro principles:

Normative macro principle: Ongoing critical engagement with contemporary public challenges is embedded by practicing empathetic participation in informed and reasoned debate across different positions.

Normative micro principle: The challenge of decolonising in the counter-hegemonic classroom requires careful attention to individual and fraction positions through reflective-reflexive thinking.

Model: pragmatic public theology for flourishing

I conceptualise the model for non-confessional PT that builds on the above principles as ‘pragmatic public theology for flourishing’. The key aspects of the normative macro and micro principles, i.e. ongoing critical engagement with contemporary public challenges through empathetic, reflective-reflexive participation in informed and reasoned pluralist debate, are addressed by Elaine Graham’s (2013b, 214) development of David Hogue’s concept of pragmatic public theology. This envisages a Christian public who work in solidarity with the secular (ibid., 220) in order to develop collaborative strategies to address concrete tasks (ibid., 214f). Graham’s (ibid., 211) resulting platform is a useful model for non-confessional PT: a plural public space where religious authority is not taken for granted but in which participation in reasoned public debate (ibid., 213) of collaborative strategies to advance the common good (ibid., 215) requires participants’ commitment to their understanding of orthopraxis, and literacy in their own and others’ traditions.

However, in the presence of ‘fuzzy’ (religious) identities with multiple and temporary belongings, the latter point on tradition literacy bears the imprints of the practice and concept of inter-religious dialogue involving clearly identifiable ‘representatives’ of single traditions. That this is unhelpful in practice and untenable in research is evidenced by the challenges of engaging with religious communities who do not have centralised structures, e.g. Muslims, and by ongoing academic debates about homogenising constructs in religious studies, e.g. ‘Hinduism’. I propose that for my current purpose, tradition literacy needs to include the understanding of ‘fuzzies’ as a significant demographic group both in the non-confessional PT classroom and in society.

This issue notwithstanding, Graham’s model offers the necessary non-confessional openness in comparison to Rob Warner’s (2013, 356) characteristics of an explicitly Anglican, and what he terms an inclusively Christian ethos for Christian HEIs in a secular age. Similar to Graham’s model of public theology, Warner emphasises public service through formation in social responsibility as an expression of

Christian orthopraxis, and education for fullness of life. Yet, while he claims inclusivity through respect for diversity, his demand for reflexivity that strengthens an orthodox identity to be dependent upon Christocentric meta-critique, reflects the normative horizon of a confessional institution. It is not clear how his model actually practices 'respect for diversity'. While Graham also emphasises "reflexivity in the face of pluralism" (2013b, 214), her intention is to strengthen the *sense* of orthopraxis (ibid., 215) without enforcing an *a priori* definition of orthopraxis.

A similar tension in Warner's model is evident in his discussion (ibid., 354) of how an Anglican institution can be both academic and faith-development friendly, while it takes into account the diversity of staff and students of all faiths and none who are likely to be present, and thus aims to support all faith development. As my alumni data shows, this can only be successful when it addresses the specific needs and aspirations of those who do not share the institution's confession rather than assuming that they are also included in a model of Anglican faith development. In comparison, Graham's model of pragmatic public theology is suitable for my context, because it centres on the shared task without being limited by a confessional foundation of the meeting place. She posits three motifs of post-secular public theology, namely concern for the common good beyond the institutional Church, speaking prophetically in the name of justice, and the ability to give a reasoned account of one's commitments in word and deed (ibid., 213). All three motifs are present in the emerging normative principles for the aims of non-confessional PT, for the curriculum, and for learning, teaching and assessment that are formulated in the following sections.

4.3.3 The aim of non-confessional practical theology: universal lay praxis for flourishing

My formulation of the aim of non-confessional PT that is relevant and of value to students of all faiths and none follows on from the model that I propose in the preceding section. It is supported by five of the super-ordinate themes, i.e. life-long learning, identity, everyday life, exotic things, and aliens and neighbours.

Life-long learning and active engagement are encouraged in the *heterogeneous* classroom when all students are existentially implicated in the *curriculum* regardless of their curriculum-related positionality and commitments. Embedding reflexivity in the universally relevant existential dimension supports the clarification and (re-)formation of *identity* as a foundation for *value-guided praxis*. *Religious and other resources* should be mobilised to support learners' development of *anthropologies of flourishing in fluidity, hope and desire* that underlie *risky learning for self-transformation*. Commitment to *value-guided, future-oriented praxis* is further supported by embedding critical engagement with *exotic things*, and by *prefiguring a heterotopia* where constructive task-oriented dialogue and collaboration with *aliens and neighbours* are the norm. In this heterogeneous, heterotopic classroom, particular attention should be paid to overt and hidden *hegemonies* that create *barriers to universal attainment*. Embedding the use of inductive methods with foundational analytical and theoretical tools from theology and the social sciences *equips* all learners for a wide range of *academic trajectories, professional careers and personal roles and development*.

This generates the following set of macro and micro principles:

Normative macro principle: The enduring value to students of all faiths and none is ensured by equipping them for personal development, citizenship, scholarship, and employment.

Normative micro principle: Based in their respective religious and/or ideological positions, individual students' definition of and commitment to 'orthopraxis' is encouraged through participation in reasoned debate and future-oriented assignments.

Aim: universal lay praxis for flourishing

The aim of a universal lay praxis for flourishing in my model of pragmatic public theology offers a constructive and creative place for students of all faiths and none. It draws them into a public vocation for the common good of society (Graham, E.L.

2013b, 211) where individuals act as citizens committed to their reasoned definition of orthopraxis. Graham's (ibid., 180f) reframing of public theology as a form of apologetics that points to transformational, not propositional truth (ibid., 214), serves me as a guide. In Graham's (ibid.) understanding, public theology extends an invitation to participate in a way of life that requires participants to imagine and to live according to a different kind of reality. This is clearly relevant to the liberation strand of PT that investigates society with the intention of changing the world (Ganzevoort 2008b, 18). Accordingly, the task of pragmatic public theology is to facilitate orthopraxis, and to nurture 'skilful' practitioners (Graham, E.L. 2013b, 214). In the process of reasoned debate and collaborative enquiry, all participants are shaping and shaped in civic virtue and practical wisdom, and building their capacity to live as responsible citizens (ibid., 227-229).

However, as the alumni data shows, this invitation to action requires the establishment of an existential connection to learners in order to meet a positive response. This is endorsed by Ganzevoort's (2008b, 16) category of 'experience-nearness' of praxis-oriented teaching that draws explicit connections between curriculum and students' lives and life stories, and relates these to their current and future roles. The notion of experience-near curriculum is developed further in the next section.

In addition to the 'what' of the existential connection expressed through the curriculum, I also attend to the 'how' of the process by which learners are moved to existential engagement that results in action. Following Leslie Orr Macdonald (2000, 17), I suggest that teaching needs to activate learners' "profound motivation" far beyond the hoped-for degree attainment: "What realities in our personal and corporate lives truly motivate us to act? What are the desires and longings that shape our decisions, our relationships, and the way we use our resources? How do we use the power we have to affect the world in which we live? What are the most profound motivations of our society; what do we collectively value the most?" Leading learners through the reflexive exploration of these kinds of questions to activate their profound motivation as individuals and as members of society supports their conscious identity formation that forms the basis of value-guided

praxis. Both Ganzevoort (2008a, 117) and Bennett (2006, 333) emphasise the conflict between conviction and provisionality that becomes apparent in the process. As the alumni data shows, this can be an upsetting experience and thus requires responsive design of learning, teaching and assessment in order to be constructive. This is developed in the final section of my proposal.

4.3.4 Student-focused curriculum: 'generative themes' beyond exclusively ecclesial relevance

Expanding on the element of student-focused curriculum, students' *life-long learning* is supported by embedding the inductive movement from contemporary practice to theory to practice.

Students make existential links to the practice material when it "matters" (Ganzevoort 2008b) to the diversity of their *life worlds*. Material should be inclusive by offering opportunities for the study of intersectionalities. Likewise, the chosen theories are of enduring value when they are applicable to a wide range of students' *own contexts and issues* beyond the specific curriculum. Both practice examples and theory should nurture *desire, hope, and imagination to envision alternative horizons for flourishing*. This should include the *mobilisation of religious and non-religious resources*.

The contact zone with *exotic things* where students are surprised by the course material's unfamiliar stories and perspectives can lead to transformative learning, but it can also be abusive (see also Morgan 2010). Students' *coloniser and colonised positionalities* vis-à-vis the curriculum should be deconstructed and reconstructed through academic practices of critical evaluation and reflexivity.

This generates the following set of macro and micro principles:

Normative macro principle: The enduring relevance of topics and the enduring utility of tools for reflective-reflexive habitus is established through the inductive study of student-near real-life problems.

Normative micro principle: The danger of inductive encounters being exploitative rather than transcendent requires careful facilitation and the provision of reflexive spaces to encourage just and sustainable learning.

Curriculum: ‘generative themes’ beyond exclusively ecclesial relevance

The above principles point to curriculum not as an end in itself but as a means for present and future learning for action. In the non-confessional context with students of all faiths and none, PT cannot claim to make a contribution to all learners’ future learning if it is solely concerned with “survival of the Church” (Graham, E.L. 2013b, 223). Instead, the alumni data shows that curriculum that works towards “salvation of the world” (ibid.) can be of lasting relevance and value if the conception of ‘the world’ reflects what matters to learners, and not what matters to the educator and to the institution they represent, be that the academy and/or the Church (see Ganzevoort 2008b, 13).

This points to the established method of using learner-originated ‘generative themes’ in the Freirean tradition. The work of Thomas Groome (e.g. 2011) builds on Freire and develops the use of generative themes in the ‘Shared Praxis model’ for confessional theological education. Here and also in Stoddard’s (2004) application of Groome in HE, Christian normativity sets the framework for the aims and content of curriculum. While Groome and Stoddard both acknowledge the significance of learners’ existential engagement, the movement is clearly from learner to curriculum, not vice versa.

Conversely, in a personal reflection that mirrors Kierkegaard’s famous ‘subjectivity is truth’ journal entry, Ganzevoort (2008b, 8) records his own “unfulfilled desire for a theology that mattered, that communicated beyond the theological department and the church”. If a *Christian* student such as Ganzevoort “found it difficult to understand the connection between the conceptual systems and ritual traditions that we studied and *the real life questions I encountered on the outside*” (ibid., emphasis added), how much deeper the disconnection is between Christianity-centric curriculum and non-Christian students. While Stoddart (2004, 192) rejects

Graham's transformative practice model as not identifiably Christian theology, this commends it as suitable for teaching students of all faiths and none, who do not all recognise the Christian narrative as normative and relevant, but who are seeking answers and solutions to the real-life questions and challenges they face.

In the diverse classroom, individual learners' positionality towards parts of the curriculum will vary, some being nearer and some being more distant. I argue in the following section how learning, teaching and assessment should respond to this movement, especially with a view to decolonising learners' minds.

4.3.5 Student-focused learning, teaching and assessment: future-oriented, reflective-reflexive, collaborative-dialogical

Five of the super-ordinate themes guide the learning, teaching and assessment design for non-confessional PT that is relevant and of value to students of all faiths and none.

Open-ended learning activities and autoethnography help learners to embed practices of ongoing critical engagement and reflexivity for *life-long learning*. They also have the potential of affecting learners' *future thinking and acting*. Learning opportunities should be designed to *nurture hope and desire* and reward *visionary thinking for change*.

Learners experience deepening, fluid and/or temporary aspects and expressions of their *identity* in the encounter with peers as *aliens and neighbours*, and with curriculum as *exotic things*. In order to *decolonise learners' minds*, *Othering* processes in the encounter with *exotic things* should be managed through open-ended learning activities and autoethnography that reward the development of empathy and reflexivity. When *aliens* become *neighbours*, the classroom functions as a *mutual learning community*, in which difference is used as a vital source of learning. Since mutuality in learning is *heterotopic* in HE regimes, learners' adoption of *hermeneutic openness* should be rewarded via assessment. The value of all participants' flourishing should guide the classroom facilitation, which needs to be adjusted constantly. Learners should be given active participation in facilitation in

order to develop a shared responsibility for *communitarian phronesis* that sustains *just hospitality* across otherness without perpetuating hegemonic practices of exclusion.

Making the *un/safe space* of the *risky learning* activities productive for all learners requires the careful management of a range of learning opportunities that are face-to-face and distance, individual and collaborative. In this way, some of them can function as 'break-out rooms' or 'comfort zones' from perceived unsafe spaces. The balance between exposure and retreat should give explicit *recognition of vulnerability*, and offer the *just care* that enables all learners to explore whether and how *self-transcendence* in the face of the Other might be desirable and achievable for them.

This generates the following set of macro and micro principles:

Normative macro principle: The disposition to seek alternative horizons for collective and individual flourishing is developed and rewarded by future-oriented learning tasks. The potential of living encounter with pluralism for transformative learning is channelled through the heterogeneous contact zone of peer learning, autoethnography and inductive, open-ended analysis.

Normative micro principle: Attitudes of depoliticisation and TINA ('there is no alternative') are countered with conscientisation, and with examples of existing prefiguring. The fragility of autoethnographic learning as de/stabilising and de/forming requires the provision of accessible supporting tools to encourage sustainable thought-processes. The fragility of the classroom as un/safe space requires careful facilitation and the provision of multiple spaces to encourage experimentation and neighbourly engagement.

Learning, teaching and assessment: future-oriented, reflective-reflexive, collaborative-dialogical

Graham's (2013b) model of pragmatic public theology covers the three key aspects

of learning, teaching and assessment that are of ongoing value to students of all faiths and none.

- **Future-oriented**

Firstly, pragmatic public theology prioritises transformational truth that finds expression in action in the public sphere (ibid., xxv). Applied to the pedagogical process, this requires learning opportunities that embed practices to continue over long periods of time (Welch 2012, 9f). Clearly, assessment by essay and an exam is not conducive to transformational truth but rather to propositional truth by one-off measuring of acquired knowledge and understanding. Instead, continuous reflective writing can go some way to form a long-term habit, especially when it is not confined to a single course unit but employed across a degree programme. As the data shows, however, this might stop at thinking differently without leading to action.

Jan Albert van den Berg and Ruud Ganzevoort (2014, 170) offer important pointers for linking the future-orientation of the PT curriculum to developing learners' action commitment by "equipping people with an approach to life that can change the world". While they (ibid., 167) recognise a future-sensitivity implicit in strategic, action-oriented approaches in pt, they lament that this is "mostly focused on working in the present, not on anticipating the future and even less on creating one". This is an accurate description of the limitations of *RCG* as highlighted by Jantzen's work.

These limitations can be remedied by applying a designing-creative mode of pt that envisions possible and preferable futures, and facilitates their realisation (ibid., 181). To achieve this, learners should be helped to "articulate their deepest desires" (ibid.), and "to consider what [they] could actually do in the present to increase the chances of realizing [these] desires" (ibid.). This could be set as collective and/or individual tasks for developing "desirable future scenarios" (ibid., 170) and strategies for their realisation or prefiguring. It would thus link directly to current HE agendas to prepare graduates as active contributors to social, economic

and environmental sustainability.

However, Van den Berg and Ganzevoort's (ibid., 180) discussion of the prognostic-adaptive mode of pt, which develops strategies for dealing with probable futures, highlights the challenge that learners should be prepared for roles in organisations and institutions *of the future*. Yet, the range of alumni's professions indicate that collaboration with HE careers services is needed to identify future developments in likely career destinations, e.g. in education, public services and the third sector. Practical theologians might want to balance narrow economic outcomes of employability with equipping graduates as shapers of preferable futures.

- **Reflective-reflexive**

Secondly, pragmatic public theology engages with pluralism reflexively by starting from participants' own traditions and their normative principles, while also working with their fluid boundaries and identities (Graham, E.L. 2013b, 214) that can attend to conversation partners and contexts (ibid., 215). The assumption seems to be that for effective collaboration on shared issues, a commitment to considered orthopraxis is preferable to apolitical relativism or reliance on authorities.

This view that reflective-reflexive grounding in a strong but open identity is required to enable constructive engagement with and in plurality, is shared by Ganzevoort (2008a) and Bennett (2006). Ganzevoort's (2008a, 122) emphasis on the polyphonic self is useful for the design of reflexive learning tasks, especially in the presence of 'fuzzies': "[t]o function in an interreligious, plural world, we have to acknowledge the plurality within ourselves." At the same time, Bennett's (2006, 341) demand for encouraging a sense of security in one's identity from which to face plurality constructively conflicts with the destabilising process of reflective-reflexive identity work as evidenced in the alumni data.

Fleming and Lovat (2015) examine this dilemma through the metaphor of learners 'leaving home', which reflects the dual aspects of being grounded and being open, of reflexivity being deconstructive and reconstructive. 'Leaving home' happens when the academic study of content of "enormous personal significance" (ibid.,

212) opens up critical reflection on previously unchallenged beliefs and values. The authors argue that serious critical engagement with both strongly held and rejected beliefs leads learners out of their comfort zone, and often results in fear, especially when the possibility of 'returning home' becomes improbable (ibid.).⁵⁵ In an advocacy classroom such as *RCG*, the danger of alienating the 'unreconstructed privileged' as well as the 'oppressed-in-denial' by threatening their 'home' is particularly pertinent. Instead of avoiding possible discomfort, Fleming and Lovat (ibid., 214) suggest that educators need to understand this fear and the related security ethic. The latter can lead learners to either reduce everything outside to their self or to refuse to look outside at all⁵⁶, thus preventing empathy, hospitality and receptivity towards otherness (ibid.). Consequently, educators should avoid triggering the security ethic, e.g. by making potential challenges explicit, and by offering coping strategies and their own experiences of 'leaving home' (ibid., 217; see also Barrett 2010, 11). They should also be aware of likely threshold concepts, and introduce them carefully to avoid barriers (ibid., 218). Their (ibid., 217) recommendation that educators should model the hermeneutical empathy and compassion (see also Barrett 2010, 11) expected of students leads to the next section of collaborative-dialogical learning opportunities.

- **Collaborative-dialogical**

Thirdly, the diversity of participants in collaboration and solidarity at the heart of pragmatic public theology requires a dialogical sensibility (Graham, E.L. 2013b, xxiii). The alumni data disproves Ganzevoort's (2014, 193) optimism that the heterogeneous classroom "by definition fosters interreligious and inter-cultural skills" without purposive intervention. Reflective-reflexive work as discussed in the previous section is an important method to process dysfunctional encounters so that conflict can become a "possibility for growth" (Ganzevoort 2008a, 121; see also Bennett 2006, 344f.). It can also consolidate good collaborative-dialogical practice

⁵⁵ R10's loss of faith and community can be read through this lens as 'homelessness'.

⁵⁶ This could be used to interpret R2's anger and retreat from the learning community.

and mitigate the danger of Othering (see also Morgan 2010, 260f.; Ganzevoort 2008b, 16).

Regarding face-to-face encounter, Bennett (2006, 342) examines the challenges of facilitating collaborative-dialogical learning across diversities “to prevent it becoming a mode of destruction”. In addition to space for reflection on the encounter, her strategy involves the creation of a “safe space” (ibid.) that involves group work skills and conflict resolution, participative methods, and attention to emotional intelligence. However, as the alumni data shows, the notion of a ‘safe space’ in learning is of ambiguous value, because it is exclusive as well as inclusive, and censorial as well as permissive.

Betty Barrett’s (2010) examination of ‘safe space’ as a threat to learning finds a fundamental contradiction between the facilitation of student engagement and academic outcomes. This occurs when ‘safe space’ is defined as “bordered temporal space in which discriminatory activities, expressions of intolerance or policies of inequity are barred” (ibid., 1), and which offers a degree of familiarity and comfort. On the one hand, it can facilitate risk taking (ibid.), and enable the expression of individuality (ibid., 2). What is particularly relevant to my proposal is Barrett’s (ibid., 2-3) claim that the educator has an ethical obligation to cultivate ‘safe space’ where learners are existentially implicated. However, Barrett (ibid., 6-7) problematises this by stating that ‘safe space’ inevitably privileges some students at the expense of others. This is apparent in the two contradictory alumni statements: one claiming *RCG* as a safe space for finding one’s voice, and the other lamenting this as silencing others. In an echo of the earlier discussion of ‘leaving home’, Barrett (ibid., 4-6) finds that unhelpful strategies to avoid conflict and vulnerability should be countered by resilience training.

Lena Karlsson (2015) examines particularly the formation of intra-classroom hegemony and marginalised Others through the comforting assumption of homogeneity vis-à-vis the course theme. In order to prevent differential experiences and limited academic outcomes of debate (ibid., 655-658), she proposes that educators should unmask the already-privileged status of certain identities, and investigate the production of normativity and make explicit how this

affects classroom dynamics in order to disrupt it. Similarly to Barrett, Karlsson argues that instead of desiring “the comforting repetition of normative knowledges, identities and experiences, [learners should be supported] to desire the discomforting process of unlearning” (ibid., 663). Following on from my Theological Reflection, I am well aware of the gap in these sources when it comes to addressing the special needs of some students beyond what might be considered ‘general’ support requirements for becoming active “citizens of the [collaborative-dialogical] space” (Barrett 2010, 10).

4.4 Conclusion

One of the two aims of this thesis is to develop a student-focused response to changes in the composition and character of student cohorts to ensure the continuing contribution of PT to participants’ formation. I now propose a model for non-confessional PT as pragmatic public theology that explores student-near generative themes through future-oriented, reflective-reflexive, and collaborative-dialogical learning opportunities that equip universal lay praxis for flourishing. This model offers constructive space for learners and educators of all faiths and none to grow and struggle individually and collectively towards considered ethical world views. They are nurtured and challenged to clarify their identities and commitments as the foundations for collaboration on shared tasks.

Throughout this chapter, it has been apparent that the alumni data serves as a vital corrective to exclusive normativities in existing theological and pedagogical literature by setting actual learner needs and experiences against proposed desirables and strategies. While the preceding has not been able to address all the gaps, they have been flagged up for the future, especially as they pertain to special educational needs. Secondly, further study of ‘fuzzy’ identities in PT and TRS more widely, seems to me of importance in order to develop appropriate models for learning and teaching. Also, the nurture of learners’ future-orientation seems a highly significant task that requires further research to establish a baseline of current learner orientation, and to design relevant pedagogical responses.

On the other hand, the theological reflection and the brief surveys of relevant pedagogical literature demonstrated that the super-ordinate themes are not sufficient in themselves for translation into practice. Theology adds a deeper critical dimension to the proposed framework such as the emphasis on future- and action-orientation of decolonised learners. Pedagogical literature offers suggestions and critique of existing resources for the design of participatory learning that matters.

Do not fear for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

(Isaiah 43:1)

[O]ne of the tasks of pastoral theology is to reflect on and develop theories of lived subjectivity, doing so in order to ascertain how best to critically accompany a self-in-relation as she seeks wholeness and healing. (Lassiter 2015, 19)

5. Nurturing (my) desire for flourishing

5.1 Introduction

Having brought the alumni strand of my research to conclusion in the previous chapter, I now turn my attention to the autoethnographic strand. I argue that critical conversation between my autoethnography and the outcomes of the alumni strand can contribute to my personal and professional development by deconstructing my past identity, and by reconstructing my future identity in theological education and vis-à-vis religion.

I preface this chapter with my confirmation motto, which I selected as a thirteen-year-old as a personal address of recognition from divine caller to human called. The significance of this scenario as central to my journey in theological education, and indeed to my religious journey *per se*, is explored in the second part of this chapter.

The three Fragments that open this chapter were originally written in response to my struggle with writing ‘not-an-ecclesiology’ in early drafts of the concluding chapter. In this final form, I have separated these Fragments out of the Conclusion in order to present the analysis of the autoethnographic strand in a separate chapter that mirrors the analysis of the alumni strand.

In the second part of the chapter, I construct a form of reciprocal life writing (Cavarero 2000) by augmenting my IPA of all the Fragments with the super-ordinate themes generated from the alumni data, the theological reflection and the

normative principles. I articulate in the concluding section how I have only been able to reach my findings through these prompts to take a different perspective on my story.

[The following Fragment reflects on my past attempts at assumed roles in community contexts as ultimately destructive due to lack of reciprocity. It positively evaluates my current gain of flexibility as self-care.]

Nurturing Fragment 1: Shaping my community

*I have often been a shaper of my community. In primary school I was always *Klassensprecher* [class representative], also in most years in secondary school. There, I was even *Schülersprecher* [leader of the class representative council] for a couple of years. I was ‘leader of the gang’ in my block of flats and with my friends at school.*

I now consider this leader persona in the light of my unsupported hearing impairment as a survival strategy. I took charge in order not to be left out. This reflects the pragmatic decision of directing and monopolising a conversation in order to maximise its predictability and to minimise the likelihood of failing to hear-understand. My hearing impairment intersects with other factors, of course. It intersects with class issues, which affected dynamics at school. It also intersects with the gender role of the caring female that I had been socialised into in my family. All of this – and what I cannot see at present? – pushed me to the front of the room, into a leadership position in many social contexts. But it was not for ‘good’ reasons and it was not life-giving for me: it masked my hearing impairment and my other needs at great physical and emotional expense. It socialised me into keeping people at a distance to maintain leadership without being a member, foreclosing reciprocity.

My move to Heidelberg and especially to England disrupted this pattern. I did not join any student organisations, and I had few student friends. This discontinuity in my accustomed role left me disoriented and struggling to feel at home. Instead I

experimented with the image of the 'lonesome cowboy'⁵⁷ with sarcastic and self-destructive abandon. In principle, there is nothing wrong with going out on your own sometimes. But I did this in a tangible cloud of hardening feelings towards the world that masked a deep unhappiness and loneliness. Even my desperate attempt to shape at least my shared home into an inclusive space for myself failed miserably, because I could not name my most essential needs. I reached breaking point in my third year at Heidelberg. And poof, nothing much happened. I was so distrustful of others' capacity to support me that I kept my breakdown largely to myself.

Neither attempts to forge a social role for myself, the leadership role and the loner role, had worked out. Was I ever going to be able to make a 'new' beginning? I have not established a large circle of friends here and I never managed to make a best friend like I had in Germany. But over twenty years in Manchester I have plugged myself into networks in the academy and my past work life. I deliberately moved to the last remnant of Hulme that deserves to be called a community of glocal activists. I have oscillated between more and less involvement in leadership in all these contexts, operating a number of 'leadership models', including broad-based community organising and radical workers' co-operation. I have become more flexible in my style and intensity of engagement and, since the acquisition of assistive technologies, a lot more comfortable with reciprocal social interaction. I can choose to lead as and when it is good for me – and others – but I do not need it anymore to create a false sense of belonging at high cost to myself.



[The following Fragment explores my lack of enthusiasm for ecclesial reform efforts in the light of my socialisation. It considers my teaching practice as an alternative space.]

Nurturing Fragment 2: Conflict, reform, teaching

Tova Hartman (2007) distinguishes three paths when subjective experience and

⁵⁷ I rode a motorbike in those days, hence the image is based in fact.

religious tradition collide, namely reaffirmation of tradition over experience, reform of tradition in the light of experience, and rejection of tradition. The reform path is one of conflict as the Church of England and Anglican Communion know. My thoughts about the core doctrines of Christianity and their reciprocal relationship with social organisation leave me no room for involvement in a reform effort. But even if there was, I would be struggling to take on an active role where this involves confrontation with the representatives and operatives of the status quo.

My earliest social context in my immediate family was deeply shaped by domestic violence through verbal, physical and emotional intimidation and threat. I do not like conflict. I see friends in radical movements who thrive on it, who search it out. I am the opposite. I am no revolutionary if that requires unleashing a torrent of confrontation. This alienates me from feminist movement in the Church and elsewhere. I understand that confrontation is necessary for change and I am deeply grateful to those who can face it. This sounds like a very lame way of saying, thanks for sticking your neck out so that I can stay put.

When the ordination of women bishops was finally approved by the Church of England, the university media office asked whether I would be available for comment. I understand that my job title Lecturer in Gender Studies in Religion makes me the obvious commentator. But no, I was not available for comment, because part of me does not want to be affected, does not want to get involved, does not care. I didn't want to say as an academic in public in a soundbite that I found the whole process pathetic, degrading to women and an insult to what I consider to be the Gospel message. What else is there to say? I don't make myself a place within the Church, and I don't make myself a place against the Church. Neither reform from within nor attack from without. 'Rejection' without making a fuss, a silent exit, disaffiliation into nowhere, utopos.

If I think about my 'retreat' as an act of self-care (Kennelly 2014), I can acknowledge that I need a different role to make a difference. I teach. Teaching on gender issues in Christianity forces me to stay in touch with the Church without having to participate, and to watch its moves from the side lines (see Samely unpublished). It allows my current insider-outsider position to continue, a hiatus in active

participation, which might become permanent or not. And it allows me to prefigure some of what I would like the Church to provide for me.



[This Fragment helps me to write myself out of another impasse to finish the thesis well by acknowledging my reluctance to leave the doctoral learning community.

This is compared to previous experiences of similar life stages.]

Nurturing Fragment 3: Leaving the community

I am having great difficulty with the process/progress of writing up. I make up distractions and don't put into practice the common sense tools for self-discipline and writing that I know. I recognise this pattern from previous occasions.

Apparently, a common reason for not writing up research is avoidance of the next stage of life after completion (Cryer 2006, 224). This strikes a chord: I will be leaving the community of fellow DProf students at Chester and the national consortium, the supervision relationship, interactions with the programme team, and the residentials, when this community physically comes together. I share with my peers at the residentials many overlaps of interests, methods, dilemmas, and life events. The annual timetable of this community punctuates the year: we come together, we disperse, we return. I have become comfortable with this rhythm.

The action learning sets at the residentials do not allow me to avoid seeking advice when I get stuck, they are reciprocal learning opportunities. I realise that my participation at the residentials would not have been possible without the hearing aids and a growing assertiveness about my hearing needs. My former impaired Heidelberg self would have anticipated the residentials with utter dread and turned this into contemptuous, toxic contributions. My social learning outcomes would have been self-destructive, and consequently, my curricular learning outcomes would have been limited and negatively inflected.⁵⁸ Instead, I now experience myself

⁵⁸ Is this what has happened in the case of R2? Has it happened in the cases of some students with

as an almost fully integrated member.

The precious residentials also provide research-only time without competing demands. The organisation of this learning community supports my progress of learning and identity formation. Graduation will leave a big hole.

I probably won't stay in touch even with those peers who have given valuable feedback and companionship on this journey. This reminds me of my feelings about leaving secondary school after so many years of sharing my life with the same people five days a week. The prospect of leaving that community plunged me into a deep emotional crisis. And like then, my fears about leaving are sabotaging my finishing the work well.

Much of this research has been around the notion of community and what I am seeking in/from community. The question what kind of community I am facilitating in my classroom has emerged as significant: a space for pragmatic public theology, where a diverse range of seekers become fellows for a time. This is what I have found as a peer in the residentials. How and where can I find this again in this intensity and regularity?

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[The final Fragment returns to the beginning of my journey in theological education in conversation with my old minister.]

Nurturing Fragment 4: Journey's beginning and end

Coming to the end of thesis writing, I return to the early days of my journey through theological education by re-reading an exchange of letters with my old Lutheran minister Rev. Bibelriether in 1994, the year before I came to England. Bibelriether had instructed and confirmed me ten years earlier, and had had a significant influence on my adolescent search for meaning and identity. I contacted him to obtain the required reference for admission to the register of ordinands in the

high levels of anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder?

Lutheran Church of Bavaria. Only Rev. Bibelriether's letters are available to me now, with him quoting myself back to myself.

What the Church was looking for before accepting me onto the register of ordinands was the referee's assessment of:

My motivation for ministry and for academic study of theology;

My experience of parish and Church life;

My family's response to my decision (Ha! My father declared me disinherited, a joke in the light of his relative poverty!);

My personal qualifications, e.g. interpersonal and communication skills, willingness to deliver apologetics outside the Church (Ha!!! See my recent unwillingness to comment publicly on the Church of England's vote on women bishops. Internal apologetics directed back at the Church to correct error (see Graham, E.L. 2013b) is the daily bread of my teaching.)

In his reference for the Church the Rev. Bibelriether wrote⁵⁹:

"Since confirmation in 1985 Katja has had many and varied experiences and encounters, viewing the Church from the outside as a motif for ministry: bringing what the Church has to offer to those who need it. The resources she has gained 'out there' are at least as important for this approach to ministry as theological knowledge; resources that are crucial for Christian witness in everyday life. This is more important than upholding divisions between denominations. The Church of the future needs such ministers in order to follow its calling." Rev. Bibelriether wrote that he was very happy to support my application so that I could, and here he quoted me: "make my conviction my profession".

He mentioned in his personal letters to me that he sensed a certain touchiness in me when it came to the assessment of my involvement in parish and institutional Church life as a qualification for ministry. Looking back, I agree that he had put his finger on the sore spot that made me an alien among my peers of theology students: unlike them, I was not involved in Church life, neither at home nor in

⁵⁹ My translation and paraphrase.

Heidelberg. This was not a problem for me, but it seemed to be a problem at university and also for this ordination reference. It questioned the legitimacy of my desire to study theology, my professional outlook, and my place in the Church. In fact, which Church; the institutional Church of some specific denomination, the communion of saints, the community of all people working towards justice in love of the world?

Rev. Bibelriether told to me that bringing one's own experiences together with beliefs as one's vocation in life requires being authentic. He considered me to be the right kind of person for 'our Church', and that a range of ministries was now available beyond traditional parish ministry. "If you don't let yourself be bent out of shape – I can't imagine this to happen – then you will make your way in our Bavarian Church." It has taken me twenty years to be brave enough to tackle the question of my vocation, alas not in the service of the Bavarian Lutheran Church.

I didn't know then when I asked for this reference that I would be leaving Germany 'for good' and that I would not be seeking ordination, neither here nor there. But I was already feeling a strong sense of isolation from the student community at Heidelberg. To understand more fully what kind of place the Faculty of Theology was, I consult Henning Luther's (1976) doctoral thesis on the history of the German Protestant study of theology until the 1970s. While Luther's material does not cover the time of my studies, the same practices and policies were still in operation.

Luther's⁶⁰ (1976, 3) examined sources present the aim of theological education as preparation for the professional reality of the theologian as ecclesial officeholder. Luther comments that this destroys prematurely the diversity of all other development opportunities and choices. He (ibid., 282-284) traces the theological heart of this design to the Barthian Word of God theology. This entails the expectation of the student as believer who encounters the Word of God as an individual existential act. The resulting structure of theology study moves from past proclamation in the biblical text to contemporary proclamation through preaching (ibid, 285). Luther (ibid.) considers this to be an authoritarian-hermeneutic model of

⁶⁰ The following is my translation and paraphrase.

the normative, applicative interpretation of a binding text.

The transmission model is organised as a conversation context that spans history back to Israel and to Jesus Christ (ibid., 286-7). The student works in the continuation of the chain of student-teacher conversations, in collaboration with predecessors, turning to the source, submitting to the norm, hearing the original witness itself. Again, Luther (ibid., 287) identifies this as an authoritarian model of narrative transmission of tradition in the father-son-relationship (see also Schüssler Fiorenza, 2009, 133-136 in Introduction Fragment 1) that makes no room for reflection on context, neither historical nor contemporary. He also acknowledges the lack of dialogical interaction between the educator and the learner. Instead, the student has to learn deference to a God-given intergenerational tradition, which a priori prevents subjectivity, reflection and discussion. Critique as a medium of independent discovery cannot be permitted in the face of what is to be learnt. Therefore, the study of theology does not serve the scientific construction of knowledge and insight but the socialisation into the ecclesial faith community.

Finally, the authority of past proclamation means that the study of theology should not make reference to contemporary needs (ibid., 288-291). The theologian is bound to use theology as the measure of what can be considered to be a 'real problem'. Theology does not require alien means to make itself attractive to 'modern' persons, and ministry should not be oriented towards the needs of parish and public, but it is the theological teacher of Scripture towards the Kingdom of God.

Reading Luther's analysis helps me to understand why I felt so out of place at Heidelberg, and why I felt so at home at Sheffield, Manchester and Chester. Fundamentally, I did not conform to the Barthian norm of the Christian believer-student. Even before my feminist critique of Christian practice and theology had taken full shape, I had not come to university to be unquestioningly socialised into a vocation that still only made room for me begrudgingly. I was increasingly uncertain whether ordination was the right path for me, and felt like an alien on this priestly production line. I also found that theology's polarisation of 'Church' and 'world' left me and my liminal perspective in no place, utopos. I feel a sense of kinship with Luther, who was clearly seeking an alternative to this authoritarian mode of

theological studies, an alternative I was desperately missing among my evangelical fellow students⁶¹. On the other hand, Sheffield, Manchester and Chester offered me enabling environments with alternative career paths beyond ordination. These departments also encouraged me to pursue my desire for scholarly discovery. It is not a banal point for me that the continuation of my studies in Manchester allowed me to avoid forever the dreaded 'study' of Bibelkunde (see Introduction Fragment 1). Luther (1980, 1) also singles this out as an extreme example of theological studies for the acquisition of knowledge, not pursuit of research.



5.2 Gathering the Fragments or what the alumni tell me about my teaching practice and myself

In the following, I open up my IPA of the Fragments through indirect communication with participants in my teaching and research practice to come to a deeper understanding of how I have made sense of my theological educational journey in my autoethnography. This dialogue allows the insights gained from analysis of my practice, i.e. what the alumni value, and how this is developed in theological reflection, to reflect back on myself as practitioner. I am thus able to break out of the solipsism of static reflexivity, and to avoid the danger of depoliticised atomisation in reflexive research (Burman 2006).

I use the alumni themes of *identity*, and *aliens and neighbours* in connection with *un/safe space*, and *life-long learning*, to trouble the themes that I have extracted from comparison of the Fragments. This process forces me to face up to unresolved issues in my relationship with theological education. Elements of the preceding theological reflection and normative principles together with additional theological scholarship direct my reflection toward a new personal and professional horizon.

⁶¹ In preparation for this Fragment I discussed my positive response to Luther with an old Heidelberg friend of strong evangelical bend, who I had lost touch with: he ended up calling me a heretic, invited me on a trip to the Holy Land, and recommended my reading of Paul. As a student I would have worn 'heretic' as a badge of honour in late-puberty defiance. But now I can admit my deep grievance at the chasm it opens up, which prevents our 'belonging' to each other. There is also something utterly comical about the recommended conversional trip and reading.

5.2.1 Identity (re-)construction: from reactive to purposive becoming the subject in community

The story of my self that runs through the Fragments begins in the past with my reactive attitude and self-harming survival strategies, and moves towards my present becoming a flourishing subject. In spite of the remnants of my learned behavioural patterns, thinking and acting differently are gaining ground. To analyse my changing identity construction, I combine Ganzevoort's (unpublished; 2014) theory of the complementarity between self-roles and significant others with Ina Praetorius' (2015, 262) concept of the personal symbolic matrix. The latter consists of "words, phrases, gestures, stories, images that were becoming part of me before I started to talk" (ibid.).

Significant aspects of my personal symbolic matrix were shaped by four sources. First, the dynamics of domestic violence (Introduction Fragment 2, Nurturing Fragment 2) and the lack of support for my hearing impairment (Introduction Fragment 2, Reflective Practice (2011)) did early long-term damage to my emotional development, and led to a lack of sense of self as expressed in the metaphor of the amoeba. Consequently, I was reactive for the sake of others (Introduction Fragments 1 and 3), and isolated-in-relation (Theological Reflection Fragment 2, Nurturing Fragments 1 and 2). Second, my primary environment's ambivalence towards Christianity (Research Design Fragment 1) was progressively heightened by my increasing awareness of the disjunction between me and the Lutheran tradition and practices (Nurturing Fragment 4).

Following Ganzevoort's theory of complimentary roles, my long exposure to domestic violence and lack of disability support affected my construction of myself as abused and neglected, and of significant others as abusive and neglecting. The predominant God image of my Lutheran upbringing as exemplified in my confirmation motto is the Redeemer (see also Ganzevoort 2014, 288), with the complimentary human role of the sinful but redeemed. From my experience of abuse and neglect, I was unable to fill 'redemption' with concrete positive meaning. The clash between my lived experience of the Divine-human relationship and the

biblical ideal as being perceived and understood in one's existential condition ('I have called you by name') and belonging ('You are mine') led me to assert 'tradition' over 'experience' (Hartman 2007): if God does not extend help (and neither do His human agents), then there is no need for it. I find my interpretation supported by Ganzevoort's (2014, 289) claim that the Reformed tradition neglects deliverance from evil. The Divine as a helping presence did not speak to my situation, and it still does not resonate with me.

I share Praetorius' (2015, 264f) contradictory experience of German-speaking theological studies being equipping but also rejecting of women, especially feminist women (Introduction Fragment 1, Theological Reflection Fragment 1, Nurturing Fragments 2 and 4). In Ganzevoort's terms of complimentary roles, this is a vicious dynamic in which the learner can never find the acceptance she craves when she uses her acquired knowledge and skills. It is a perverse variation of the Garden of Eden where the fruit should be eaten, but the seeds must not be planted in non-conformist ways.⁶² Bearing in mind that German-speaking theological studies are an instrument of the Church (see Luther in Nurturing Fragment 4), the mediated God image is highly authoritarian. I observed in my Reflective Practice piece (2011, 35) that "Currently, I do not interpret my story through the eyes of faith. That line has gone quiet." Praetorius (ibid., 255) describes this as a "period of indifference" that is common among those who dismiss "the traditional management of transcendence". Together with Aune's (2015) observation that many feminists experience difficulties in naming their religious identities, Praetorius and Ganzevoort remind me that the problem is not my lack of faith but the inadequacy of what is on offer and how it is offered. Ganzevoort (unpublished, 6) claims that when traditional roles of the Divine meet the individual's roles inscribed in their life story, then the two sides are negotiated to construct a meaningful religious story, unless the discrepancy of complementary roles is irreconcilable and thus prevents relationship [Begegnung] (Ganzevoort 2014, 286).

Is there a way forward then for me with a Church that proudly professes to be

⁶² My use of the Eden image continues my thinking about the classroom as a 'walled garden' (see Stuerzenhofecker 2015b).

backwards, as Praetorius (2015, 266) interprets the principle of *ecclesia semper reformanda*? If this Church does not provide God images that affirm my past life and offer life-affirming complementary roles, then Ganzevoort (unpublished, 10f) suggests that I should start from my emerging transformed role: what “adequate images of God” can I experience now? My research and writing on the DProf programme have functioned as a pastoral encounter “in which new roles are explored, enacted, tested and validated” (ibid., 10). I am discovering myself as deserving and needful of my self-care (Introduction Fragments 1 and 2, Research Design Fragment 3, Theological Reflection Fragments 1 and 2, Nurturing Fragments 1-3), and in self-care participating constructively in community through an increase in my role flexibility (see Ganzevoort 2014, 291) (Research Design Fragment 2, Theological Reflection Fragments 1 and 3, Nurturing Fragments 1-3). Professionally, I am defining myself as educator equipping other lay people for universal flourishing (Theological Reflection Fragment 3, Nurturing Fragment 2). I realise through my engagement with Jantzen’s ‘thinking differently’ and Ganzevoort’s critique of the neglected future-orientation of pt that my own imagination and desire for self-directed growth into a future could otherwise have been stunted. Yet, through the pastoral encounter of the thesis, questions of my personal future are becoming integral, self-caring and welcome, as is my active contribution to social transformation.

If my emerging role is that of a flourishing facilitator of flourishing rather than the un-helped helper of the past, then what is the complimentary role for God? Returning to Jantzen (1995, 85), flourishing requires an enabling environment with the right conditions and resources: maybe God as the provider of what is needful in the image of the gardener? This is certainly not entirely alien to the Biblical tradition. However, now that I can articulate my needs and find that they are beginning to be met, do I wish to recognise God in the role of the provider or do I continue to claim exclusively human resources? Is perhaps the image of the Divine as the garden itself more complimentary: a vibrant, cyclical ecology that holds me?

5.2.2 From alien in unsafe space to neighbour in heterotopia

Another integral part of the story of the Fragments, which is related to identity, tells of my journey through theological education. I begin with my experience of alienation from German theological studies (Introduction Fragment 1) and from the Church (Research Design Fragment 1), and I end the Fragments by returning to the beginning and how I closed down the ecclesial prospect (Nurturing Fragment 4). Instead, I moved on to three of England's TRS departments for students of all faiths and none, enabling environments where I am learning to believe in and live out my own potential (Introduction Fragments 1 and 2, Research Design Fragment 2, Nurturing Fragment 2).

During my time in Heidelberg I struggled not to be overwhelmed by my latent sense of "personal annihilation" (Muers 2007, 110) by the German model of Protestant theological studies as preparation of the orthodox believer for ecclesial office. I developed a resistance position to the dominant mode of studies, and I was drawn to lecturers who I also perceived as marginal and anti-establishment (Introduction Fragment 1). Vicky Gunn (2013, 5) values this "capacity to identify with one another and thus share our subjectivities [as] a fundamental aspect of successful pedagogy". She explains my course choices as motivated by 'mimetic desire': "the intersubjective transference which occurs through imitation, 'mind-reading', and inter-individual communication" in order to "take [my] cues about what is important to develop within the discipline" (ibid., 3). My mimetic desire was more fully satisfied in Sheffield by its non-confessional, academic agenda – embodied for me especially by Cheryl Exum and David Clines, as well as my diverse student peers – than by my selective course choices within Heidelberg's hostile framework: I held fast to my subjectivity, I did not "let myself be bent out of shape" as Bibelriether put it (Nurturing Fragment 4). I was privileged with the financial, educational, emotional and social capital necessary for physical exodus.

My spiritual and theological exodus has led me to a literary community of dispersed academics that I have assembled according to my own needs and tastes (Theological Reflection Fragment 1), and to heterotopic learning communities for flourishing in my own classroom (Theological Reflection Fragment 3) and on the

DProf programme⁶³ (Nurturing Fragment 3). Fundamental to putting myself in these communities is my growing self-acceptance and self-care. I have created for myself a space of resistance and alternative to perceived hegemonic and exclusive Church (Research Design Fragment 2). I am beginning to see how my practice is prefiguring a non-conformist, (post-)Christian religious identity in a 21st century context of high levels of disaffiliation (see Praetorius 2015, Aune 2015). I do not ask for the Church's sanction; this is the beauty of prefiguring.

My participation in reciprocal learning communities has been predicated on my acquisition of assistive technologies and impairment assertiveness, as well as on the communities' inclusive frameworks and practices (Nurturing Fragment 3). This makes it possible for me to embrace what Praetorius (2015, 260f.) calls 'Durch ein Ander': navigating the disorder [German: Durcheinander, literally through-another] of contemporary life⁶⁴ in collaboration, through an Other. The DProf's action-learning sets and supervisions, and the alumni perceptions of my teaching, have created many pastoral encounters of compassion and grace (Ganzevoort unpublished) when I felt recognised, called by name.

Cavarero (2000) explores the significance of *reciprocal* narrative exchange of our own life-stories. She emphasises this dialectic, collaborative aspect to the point that she shows the autobiographical effort to be seriously limited when carried out in isolation. It needs the input of an Other for a relatively *more* complete and reliable account of who we are, even though it always remains incomplete and subjective (Cavarero 2000, 39-45). Similarly, Streib (1991) posits that narrative identity is formed in dialogic relation to alterity, in a reflexive stance that is not only self-generated. By using the alumni themes to direct my analysis of the autoethnography, and by re-reading Bibelriether's letters, my experience of the

⁶³ The learning communities for learning and teaching that I have participated in at the University of Manchester during the time of my doctoral studies have not featured in my Fragments. This is not a true reflection of their significance for my professional development. What is significant for me to note at this point is that I do not associate them with my exodus story – hence their absence from the Fragments? – but I should consider them as an intrinsic part of my exile-become-home story. It is there that I first encountered AR, which put me on the path towards inductive theologising.

⁶⁴ I do not share Praetorius' evaluation of the contemporary situation of disorder as post-patriarchal. In my view, we still live under patriarchal hegemony interrupted by numerous heterotopias.

dialogic dynamic in the research process expands my role repertoire of ‘DIY transformer’ through the addition of the ‘cared-for member’.

In addition to reciprocity in life-story construction, Andrews et al. (2008, 7) highlight that the socially constructing powers of language interact with and limit the agency of the narrative subject. I have not considered in this thesis whether and in what way it matters that my narrative identity construction employs a ‘foreign’ language that has become my primary language in my professional and in my private life over the past twenty years. Is my narrative more or less ‘authentic’, because I am not using my ‘mother tongue’? Has this helped me to gain distance from my own story in order to tell it (better)?

John Swinton’s (2012) differentiation between inclusion and belonging serves as a final evaluation of my places of study and work. While the Lutheran Church and German Protestant theological studies might have been open to me in principle, the Fragments convey my deep sense of alienation and exclusion. I did not feel that I truly belonged. Swinton (ibid., 183) defines belonging as being missed when absent, and one’s contribution as being longed for by the community. While my current personal and professional contexts do not entirely fulfil Swinton’s ideal of belonging, I recognise that this is what I am seeking, and so I should. I discuss in the following section the significance of group belonging for activism in the context of future-orientation.

5.2.3 Life-long learning: semper transformanda

A third strand of the Fragments traces the way my acquired trauma from conflict has made me unfit for active participation in reform movement (Introduction Fragment 2, Research Design Fragment 3, Theological Reflection Fragment 1). Rather than pushing myself to fight change in the Church so that I could fit in, I have used the available freedom within R&T to prefigure what I now call pragmatic public theology in the context of HE. In this, I have made use of my strengths and acknowledged my wounds (Nurturing Fragment 2).

By making myself a new home (see Fleming and Lowat 2015) *extra ecclesiam*, I have

avoided the potentially debilitating effects of responsabilisation on women that Jacqueline Kennelly (2014, 243) discovered in her ethnography of global justice activists. Kennelly argues that the “combination of retraditionalised gendered subjectivities [see Introduction Fragment 2], the gendered incorporation of reflexivity as *habitus* [see Research Design Fragment 3], and the pressures on young women under neoliberal times, ultimately create a situation of what Bourdieu terms *symbolic violence*, felt by women within social movement organising as burnout, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorders.” What strikes a chord with me is Kennelly’s (2014, 244) conclusion that the (women’s own) interpretation of these pathological responses as “individual frailties or personal decisions” instead of the result of social conditions, has consequences for gender-differentiated pathways with women being more likely to disengage. This mirrors my own experience of breakdown on my journey into disaffiliation and the abandoning of my studies in Germany (Introduction Fragment 1). Kennelly (ibid., 253) suggests that the strengths of activist networks as collectives need to be mobilised to create sustainable (for the individual member) communities of practice where the burden of responsabilisation is shared. One way of doing this, Kennelly (ibid., 254) proposes, is by telling one’s story to others as a form of action, not simply in order to seek therapeutic release but to reduce the internalised sense of crippling responsibility and thus enable continued involvement in activism. I find this dynamic of support in the (virtual) community of like-minded scholarship (Theological Reflection Fragment 1), and I contribute my own story in this spirit. Reading back over Bibelriether’s letters helps me to understand my teaching as religious practice that is expressive of my feminist spirituality (see Aune 2015, 140; Praetorius 2015, 255). It is deeply comforting to have been known so profoundly in this pastoral encounter. I can see now that my subconscious desire for a place to fulfil my vocation carried me forward to leave my old home (see Fleming and Lovat 2015) and build a new one in the heterotopia of RCG and other learning communities where I am a co-learner searching for meaning, and preparing for and prefiguring a more just social order (Theological Reflection Fragment 3, Nurturing Fragment 3). Thus, my learning is a perpetual ‘leaving home’: the journey is home

(Morton 1985).

My teaching is not 'Church' in the conventional sense, and I do not regard it as a form of ministry in order to give it credibility (see Slee 2010). It is *ecclesia* as action by nurturing (my) desire for flourishing. It gives me a sense of belonging (see Swinton 2012) that some alumni tell me they value this, because it makes a difference in their lives; that it "brings what the Church has to offer to those who need it" as Bibelriether wrote. I understand now that I have achieved what I set out to do twenty years ago. It puts to rest my suppressed negative feelings of exile in *utopos*.

What I consider as a valuable offering from the Church goes through my feminist filters. In my past teaching, this has been predominantly the internal apologetic of feminist theologians. In terms of a story-guided pedagogy (Lunde-Whitler 2012), this focus is in danger of perpetuating for learners and for me the impression that while things are not right, there is no alternative. Lifting my eyes towards a divine horizon (see Jantzen 1998) guides me towards a designing-creative mode of future-orientation (see Van den Berg and Ganzevoort 2014, 181) in hope, desire and imagination, where I am a member of *ecclesia semper transformanda* (Praetorius 2015, 266).

5.3 Conclusion

I have discovered new ways of constructing my past, present and future journey in theological education thanks to the alumni themes of *identity, aliens and neighbours, and life-long learning*. My engagement with the theme of *identity* has led me to face the long-suppressed twin issue of self-role and God image. I do not bring it to a facile conclusion, but indicate how the provisional insights and questions raised by this research point me in a constructive new direction.

While I had already formed a story for my self as *alien in unsafe space* before writing this thesis, reconstructing my present as a *neighbour in heterotopia* is an entirely new horizon. Although my hearing impairment is likely to remain a challenge to participation, I have gained an appreciation for the benefits of

reciprocity that I never envisaged, as my Reflective Practice (2011) testifies.

On one level, the theme of *life-long learning* is the least challenging for me. I have spent almost my entire life in formal and informal education, and I seek opportunities for learning in its many forms. However, I have now come to perceive my role as educator as my vocation, and the design and delivery of *RCG* as religious practice. When I started working on the final chapter of this thesis, I struggled with and ultimately abandoned the resistance notion of 'not-an-ecclesiology'. How much more life-affirming is the prospect of developing future-oriented learning and teaching as my participation in the action of *ecclesia semper transformanda*.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary and evaluation of findings

I have achieved the two aims of this practice-based critical AR, first, to develop a student-focused pedagogical response to changes in the composition and character of student cohorts, and second, to deconstruct and reconstruct my own journey through theological education. In both strands, I have realised an internal process of identity formation without the imposition of external norms.

Applying the theoretical model of 'Transforming Practice', I found in my case study of *RCG* that a varied range of alumni reflections on the course is a crucial source of practical wisdom that speaks into non-confessional PT for the 21st century. Through critical conversation between theological scholarship and alumni perceptions of long-term learning outcomes, I have constructed a model of non-confessional PT as pragmatic public theology that explores student-near generative themes through future-oriented, reflective-reflexive, and collaborative-dialogical learning opportunities that equip universal lay praxis for flourishing.

I discovered through the collaborative analysis of the alumni data that *RCG* is valued because it equips and prepares learners for well-informed intervention in plural society and public debate. First, alumni attribute this to the inductive, multi-perspectival study of contentious contemporary social issues that are close to their life worlds. They report that this results in the lasting relevance of learning to a wide range of social contexts, and its applicability in a number of professional and personal roles. However, the data analysis also reinforced my argument that there is a need for revision of PT by demonstrating de-institutionalisation of Christian practice among the current undergraduate student generation. It also showed that the preparation for intervention and action is not widely put into practice.

Second, alumni emphasise the contribution of reflective-reflexive learning opportunities across emic-etic positions to the course's lasting value as 'equipping'. Alumni appreciate the way in which reflexive engagement with the course's multi-perspectival approach makes them aware of their own positionality, and allows

emic-etic positions to surface as complex and unstable.

In the final stage of alumni data analysis, I generated the six super-ordinate themes of life-long learning, identity, everyday life, exotic things, un/safe space, aliens/neighbours. By triangulating them with theological scholarship, I found the following five principles:

- Overcoming binaries by resolving conflicting norms to address (hidden) needs and open up learning opportunities;
- Working towards communitarian phronesis to address the tension of advocacy in heterogeneous heterotopia;
- Implementing inclusive feminist pedagogy of recognition and just care;
- Facilitating risky learning in and from heterogeneous heterotopia for decolonising and prefiguring vulnerability;
- Nurturing desire/hope/imagination for alternative futures in conversation with religious traditions.

My rhizomatic approach to integrating the varied and contradictory alumni data without homogenisation highlighted differential benefits of the current pedagogical design, and ensured my recognition of actual student needs. On the other hand, through the triangulation with theological scholarship I prevented my facile acquiescence to learner expectations and preferences, insisting instead on building learning community and visioning alternative futures.

Also, by taking a rhizomatic approach to generating and analysing the autoethnographic Fragments that map critical incidents on my journey in theological education, I discovered the religious and vocational significance of my teaching practice. With the help of the super-ordinate alumni themes of identity, aliens and neighbours, and life-long learning as critical lenses, I shifted my self-role from abused and neglected helper of others to deserving self-carer and flourishing facilitator of flourishing. I tentatively arrived at the corresponding image of the Divine as a vibrant garden. I deconstructed my previously negative story of being an alien in unsafe space, and reconstructed my current position as a neighbour in the heterotopic communities I participate in. Through the process of autoethnography,

I am free now to embrace a pro-active, future-oriented outlook in my personal and professional life.

To evaluate these findings, I apply validity criteria used in AR and extrapolated from some of my theological sources. The primary evaluation question concerns the significance of the research: are the process and its findings worthy of human aspiration (Reason and Bradbury 2016, 12), and do they support flourishing (Jantzen 1995)? The findings of the autoethnographic strand are evidence of the progress I have made towards an affirmative personal and professional identity that allows me to grow further in confidence, and to support the flourishing of others without jeopardising my own wellbeing. This process of reflexivity has been painful and overwhelming at times, requiring a support network to avoid it becoming destructive. The findings of the alumni strand offer a responsive pedagogical reorientation that could benefit all learners in PT. The research process with alumni has been constrained by pragmatic decisions that limited the potential of direct benefits for participants.

The second dimension of my evaluation considers whether the research has freed up the present for new forms of thought and practice (Lather 1993, 676; see also Ellis 2004, 124) that lead to thinking differently and becoming divine (Jantzen 1998). I have already discussed the transgressive aspect of the autoethnography in the previous section. The critical AR of *RCG* has yielded many alumni-based questions and insights to guide my work on future improvements (see section 4.2). More generally, it has generated a model of non-confessional PT that breaks out of inappropriate inherited boundaries, and seeks all its students' flourishing.

The 'Transforming Practice' approach in both research strands has also disclosed many hidden needs (Graham, E.L. 2002). I have gained a deeper understanding of the alumni's experiences, and I have monitored my own change process in the analysis of the Fragments (see Herr and Anderson 2005, 55f; Ellis 2004, 124). While the discussions with the two participants in the IPA show that they also benefitted by coming to new insights of their experience, I am not able to gauge whether the survey participants did. Similarly, the restrictions on research participation leading

to missing voices of many alumni and my peer educators in R&T and within PT, limit the findings' democratic validity (Herr and Anderson 2005, 55f; see also Graham, E.L. 2002).

On the other hand, the process and findings have been effective at fostering heterogeneity and letting contradictions remain in tension (Lather 1993, 686; Ellis 2004, 124; see also Russell 2009; Ackerman 1998). Especially the autoethnography highlights tentativeness (Lather 1993, 686) and provisionality (Graham, E.L. 2002).

6.2 Contributions to Practical Theology, practical theology research and professional development

This research contributes to the evidence-based development of non-confessional PT by collecting and analysing experiences of students of all faiths and none. My proposal of a student-focused model of pragmatic public theology that equips universal lay praxis for flourishing emerges from their perceptions of their needs and aspirations. While I respond to the changing expressions of post-secular religious practices and identities, I retain PT's general aim of formation. However, my findings challenge hegemonic pedagogical boundaries of PT that prioritise institutional Church and separate it from 'the world' as inappropriate and insufficient in non-confessional, heterogeneous contexts. My alternative is a constructive framework for heterogeneous positionalities ranging from traditional affiliated religious to 'fuzzies', working collaboratively towards the common good.

Through practice-based research in non-confessional feminist pt, I demonstrate the utility of the 'Transforming Practice' model for the non-conformist theologian 'becoming the subject' by fully integrating and triangulating substantial autoethnography with the alumni data and theological scholarship. The rhizomatic self-ordering principle resists forced coherence, and thus supports provisionality and plurality. I pilot this form of indirect reciprocal life-writing as an alternative to Morton's (1985) widely-used 'hearing into speech' model, because the latter is not universally accessible (see Reflective Practice 2011).

My autoethnography challenges my inherited German understandings of pt's

clerical paradigm as the dominant professional horizon with all the concomitant demands of Christian orthodoxy and discipleship that make me an outsider. What emerges from reflection on my practice of the past decade is a non-confessional alternative to ministry, where I am an insider to the prefiguring of a heterogeneous heterotopia for flourishing. I model an emancipatory route to professional development in the autoethnographic strand of the 'Transforming Practice' process that has revealed my practical wisdom and values without imposing external norms.

The above three aspects are linked through my construction of pt. By not taking my starting point in pt seeking to discover "Christian significance in practice" (Beaudoin 2016, 8), but by beginning from my teaching practice and how it is perceived by alumni, I am now able to recognize myself as participating in the emerging paradigm of post-Christianity⁶⁵ that "[dispossesses] the need to maintain a Christian center" (ibid, 24) in pt. Accordingly, I do not acknowledge the authority of the Christian and clerical paradigm that declares my religious and professional identity as heretical (see ibid, 19), and thus rejects my practice as *not* practical theological: "When we name and question the Christianity in practical theology, we are able to see that practical theology 'evangelizes' frequently by implicitly and explicitly disambiguating theological from nontheological material, prising apart theological, religious, spiritual, or sacred practice, action, performance, or experience from what is invented as its other" (ibid, 23). My struggle for a constructive religious and professional identity and similar efforts evidenced in the alumni data support Beaudoin's (ibid, 23) rhetorical question whether "Christianity is adequate to the range of needs of contemporary persons for choosing integral lives that make sense to them". Similarly, Elaine Graham (unpublished, 22) considers whether the contributions of students of all faiths and none on the Professional Doctorates in Practical Theology programmes challenge the discipline "to develop multi-faith practical theology that fully addresses traditions other than Christianity". I welcome this innovation of the discipline that promises to "hold open pre-Christian, Christian, post-

⁶⁵ Beaudoin (ibid, 18f) defines 'Christianity' as the "active, ongoing invention of Christian experience (...), "what is taken to be real for Christians and how that being-taken is generated".

Christian, and non-Christian meanings all at once, and let those meanings be non-exclusive to each other” (Beaudoin 2017, 28). In this sense, my practices of teaching and research are practical theological contributions to our learning of ultimate reality (see *ibid*, 29).

6.3 Implications for future research

In response to the theological reflection on the alumni data, I raised a number of questions that are pertinent to improving my design of *RCG*. Yet, this research also has wider implications for learning and teaching in PT and TRS, and for transformative pedagogy in other Humanities disciplines. I differentiate these implications for micro projects, which investigate specific aspects of pedagogical methods, and for macro projects, which are of a more fundamental nature.

The first micro project should investigate differential attainment of learners with mental health issues in autoethnographic assignments. The analysis of the alumni data raises the question whether the reflexive turn might exacerbate conditions such as obsessive-compulsive disorders and pathological anxiety, which in turn results in lower attainment compared to the cohort. This investigation is important, because the number of learners with disclosed mental health conditions in HE is increasing.

Similarly, the second micro project should examine whether autoethnography in issues-based and advocacy courses leads to unhelpful responsabilisation of learners. A gender-sensitive study similar to Kennelly’s (2014) promises to further our understanding whether the emotional labour involved makes the use of autoethnography fit for the purpose of supporting human flourishing.

The third micro project addresses the elephant in this thesis, namely the missing men and their engagement with a gender-focused curriculum. In general terms, it is important to investigate the question of differential attainment of the ‘privileged’ in advocacy courses as a result of frustrated mimetic desire that leads to alienation and resistance.

Turning to macro projects, the other elephant in this thesis is *RCG's* bi-tradition curriculum that is split equally between Judaism and Christianity. While the focus of this thesis has been on the diversity of learners, a future investigation should examine the potential of a bi-/multi-tradition curriculum to deliver comparative religious literacy, and to model best practice in interreligious engagement.

Secondly, I propose that the study of 'fuzzies' as a demographically increasing group within TRS should be a priority in pedagogical research. This promises significant impulses for the design and marketing of degree programmes.

Finally, the lack of action-orientation evidence in the alumni data together with Van den Berg and Ganzevoort's (2014) call for explicit future-orientation in pt make a strong case for a systematic investigation of effective learning, teaching and assessment that prepares learners in PT for active contributions to social, economic and environmental sustainability, and trains them to envision alternative futures.

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Appendix I *Religion, Culture and Gender* online survey questionnaire

[The first part of the online survey contains the consent form with yes/no options. If consent is not given, then the participant cannot proceed to the questionnaire. They receive a thank you message instead, and have to exit the survey.]

Consent form

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information for this study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to take part in this survey.

Survey questionnaire

Your degree programme

In which academic year did you study Religion, Culture & Gender?

Q1: What have you been doing since graduation, e.g. travelling, working, caring for others, studying, volunteering etc.?

Q2: What are your long-term aspirations?

Q3: Why did you register on Religion, Culture & Gender?

Q4: What was the course's reputation among students before, during, and after the course?

Q5: Have you thought of the course since it ended? If yes, what have you thought of?

Q6: Has the course made any long-term difference to your knowledge and understanding of Christian and/or Jewish practices and beliefs? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?

Q7: Has the course made any long-term difference to your own beliefs and attitudes? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?

Q8: Has the course made any long-term difference to your actions (e.g. religious observance, lifestyle, career choice, volunteering, leisure activities)? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?

Q9: What, if anything, is the most important thing you have taken away from Religion, Culture & Gender?

Q10: What contribution, if any, did the other students on the module make to your learning in the long term, i.e. after the end of the module?

Q11: What contribution, if any, did the teaching staff make to your learning in the long term, i.e. after the end of the module?

Q12: What contribution, if any, did the assessment tasks make to your learning in the long term, i.e. after the end of the module?

Appendix II Religion, Culture and Gender lecture and seminar outline

2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
L: 'Sex' and 'gender'	L: 'Sex' and 'gender'	Introduction to the course: 'Religion', 'culture' and 'gender'	Introduction to the course: 'Religion', 'culture' and 'gender'
S: 'Religion' 'culture' and 'gender'	L: 'Religion' 'culture' and 'gender'	L: 'Sex' and 'gender'	L: 'Sex' and 'gender'
L: The Psychology of Gender	L: Gender theories (psychology)	S: Introduction to Facilitation & Group Work (Karen O'Rourke, CEEBL)	S: Introduction to Facilitation & Group Work (Louise Goldring, CEEBL)
L: Religion, gender and identity	S: Transgendering	L: Gender theories I: Psychology of Gender	L: Gender theories I: Psychology of Gender
S: Does religion make a difference?	L: What is feminism?	L: Gender theories II: Society, Culture and Gender	L: Gender theories II: Society, Culture and Gender
L: Transgendering	L: Studying Masculinities	S: Forming of Student-led Discussion Groups (Karen O'Rourke, CEEBL)	S: Peer-Learning and Facilitation II (Louise Goldring, CEEBL)
L: Gender and sociobiology	S: Gender and the study of religion	L: What is feminism?	L: What is feminism?
S: Is Gender socially constructed?	L: Religion, gender and identity	L: Studying Masculinities	L: Studying Masculinities
L: The politics of gender I	L: Religion and Sexism	S: Transgendering	S: Student-led Discussions trigger texts
L: The politics of gender II	S: Does religion make a difference?	L: Religion, gender and identity	L: Religion, gender and identity
S: Women, religion and the politics of gender	L: The politics of gender I: Society	L: Theology and Sexism	L: Theology and Sexism
L: What is feminism?	L: The politics of gender II: Religions	S: Does religion make a difference?	S: Student-led Discussions trigger texts
L: Religion and Sexism	S: Redeeming Men?	L: The politics of gender I: Society	L: The politics of gender I: Society
S: Fundamentalism and gender	L: Fundamentalism and gender: Women	L: The politics of gender II: Religions	L: The politics of gender II: Religions
L: Studying Masculinities	L: Fundamentalism and gender: Men	S: Redeeming Men?	S: Student-led Discussions trigger texts synthesis
L: Studying Masculinities and religion	S: Religious bodies - suppressed bodies?	L: Fundamentalism and gender: Women	L: Fundamentalism and gender: Women
S: Redeeming Men?	L: Gender and representation I: Media	L: Fundamentalism and gender: Men	L: Fundamentalism and gender: Men

2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
L: Gender and representation I: The Media	L: Gender and representation II: Body Image	S: Religious bodies - suppressed bodies?	S: Student-led Discussion Everyday Life
L: Gender and representation II: Body Image	S: Does Popular Culture contribute to Women's (and Men's?) Oppression?	L: Gender and representation I: Religious Images	L: Gender and representation I: Religious Images
S: Does Popular Culture contribute to Women's (and Men's?) Oppression?	L: Sources for the feminist study of religion I: Bible	L: Gender and representation II: Body Images	L: Gender and representation II: Body Images
L: Gender and God-talk	L: Hermeneutics of Suspicion workshop	S: Does Popular Culture contribute to Women's (and Men's?) Oppression?	S: Student-led Discussion Popular Culture
L: (How) Can feminists speak of God?	S: Alternative readings (Diamant, Maitland, Ostriker)	L: Sources for the feminist study of religion I: Hebrew Bible	L: Sources for the feminist study of religion I: Hebrew Bible
S: Do women (and men) need the Goddess?	L: Gender and God-talk	L: Sources for the feminist study of religion I: New Testament	L: Sources for the feminist study of religion I: New Testament
L: Sources for the feminist study of religion I: Bible	L: (How) Can feminists speak of God?	S: Alternative readings	S: Student-led Discussion Religious Institutions
L: Sources for the feminist study of religion II: Womanist Theology	S: Do women (and men) need the Goddess?	L: Gender and God-talk	L: Gender and God-talk
S: Reimagining Feminist Studies of Religion	L: Religious Lives: Mysticism (Jantzen)	L: (How) Can feminists speak of God?	L: (How) Can feminists speak of God?
L: Global Feminisms	L: Sources for the feminist study of religion II: Womanist Theology	S: Women and Men / Goddesses and Gods?	S: Student-led Discussion Sexuality
L: Postmodern feminisms and post-feminism	S: Reimagining Feminist Studies of Religion	L: Sources for the feminist study of religion II: Womanist Theology	L: Sources for the feminist study of religion II: Womanist Theology
S: Is there a future for feminism?		L: Religion, culture & gender in a global context	L: Religion, culture & gender in a global context
		S: Reimagining the Study of Religion and Gender	S: Student-led Discussion Reproduction

2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Exam (60%), Learning Journal (40%), Student-led Discussions Self-assessment and Tutor Feedback (formative)	Exam (20%), Portfolio (80%: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Journal (30% of the overall portfolio mark) • Reading Log (30%) • Pamphlet Proposal (20%) • Confidence Log 'Before the Course' and 'After the Course' (two parts making up 5%) • Set Question Week 3 (feminist epistemology) (5%) • Student-led Discussions Self-assessment and Tutor Feedback (5%) • Student Response to formative assessment of the Learning Journal (5%) 	Portfolio (100%: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Journal (25% of the overall portfolio mark) • Reading Log (25%) • Guide Proposal (40%) • Confidence Log 'Before the Course' and 'After the Course' (two parts making up 2.5%) • Week 3 Questionnaire (feminist epistemology) (2.5%) • Student-led Discussions Self-assessment and Tutor Feedback (2.5%) • Student Response to formative assessment of the Learning Journal (2.5%) 	Portfolio (100%: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Journal (25% of the overall portfolio mark) • Reading Log (25%) • Guide Proposal (40%) • Confidence Log 'Before the Course' and 'After the Course' (two parts making up 2.5%) • Week 3 Questionnaire (feminist epistemology) (2.5%) • Student-led Discussions Self-assessment and Tutor Feedback (2.5%) • Student Response to formative assessment of the Learning Journal (2.5%)
Seminars: Student-led Discussions of set secondary sources	Seminars: SLDs of set secondary sources	Seminars: SLDs of set secondary sources	Seminars: SLDs set secondary sources under five Guide-generated themes

Appendix III Portfolio phase I

[supplied on CD]

1 Literature Review (2009)

2 Publishable Article (2010)

3 Reflective Practice (2011)

4 Research Proposal (2012)

5 Participant Information